

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Revelation and Scripture, Session 17, Special Revelation, Holy Scripture, Evaluation of the Seven Views of Inspiration, A Theology of Inspiration, Results of Inspiration

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Revelation and Holy Scripture. This is session 17, Special Revelation, Holy Scripture, Evaluation of the Seven Views of Inspiration, a Theology of Inspiration, Results of Inspiration.

We continue our lectures on special revelation, specifically in Holy Scripture, the crown of our course.

We set forth seven views of inspiration, and now it is time to evaluate them before I propose an evangelical view of inspiration. Evaluating the views of inspiration. First of all, the intuition theory.

Contrary to the intuition theory, inspiration is not a matter of religious geniuses exercising spiritual insight. Inspiration is a special work of God, speaking his word through the scripture writers. God is the author of scripture in a much more immediate sense than this theory allows.

It only allows God's activity in an immediate sense through religious genius, which they could say, well, that's God's gift, but there's no special superintendence of the Holy Spirit when the writers write. It is correct to think of inspiration as involving God's providential preparation of the writers before writing. This is a great contribution of B.B. Warfield and the old Princetonians.

It is correct to think of inspiration as involving God's providential preparation of the writers before writing. In that regard, Moses being raised in the household of Pharaoh's daughter and Moses being on the actual wilderness wanderings qualifies him to write of some of the matters that he did in the Pentateuch, especially in Exodus and Numbers. It is incorrect to say that God is the source of scripture only in the sense of endowing those writers with great religious awareness.

God is the source of his word in that he is its ultimate author. The spirit directed the writers so that they spoke for God, 2 Peter 1:21. The illumination theory.

Contrary to the illumination theory, the inspiration of scripture is different in kind, not only in degree, from other types of inspiration, so-called. Every scripture passage

is the result of God speaking his word, 2 Timothy 3:16. All scripture is God-breathed, is God spoken.

The dynamic theory is correct in seeing both God and humans as actively working together in the production of scripture. This is an advance. This is a better view because God and human writers did work in the production of scripture.

God works with the writers of scripture and uses their styles, vocabularies, and personalities to express his word. Real humans speak when they write God's word. However, this theory errors the dynamic theory when it limits God's influence to the thoughts of scripture.

God also breathes out and speaks forth the words of scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16. The verbal theory of inspiration is correct in what it affirms, but it is incomplete. It is not enough to affirm that God inspires the words of scripture and to deny dictation, although both of those things are good.

Contrary to the intuition theory and the illumination theory, God inspires words, and they are correct, as the verbal theory espouses. He does not inspire the words by virtue of divine dictation, at least commonly in scripture. Uncommonly, in some part, a few things are dictated, but it's not as common mode.

It's not enough to affirm God inspires the words of scripture and to deny dictation. The Bible gives, the Bible gives information that leads us to say more about scripture's production. The divine human working together in the dynamic theory is also an important part of the biblical theory of inspiration.

So verbal theory is a major advance over theories such as intuition and illumination theories, but it's, it's, it's incomplete. The dictation theory rightly affirms that the words of scripture are the words of God. And ironically, that is what the Protestants and Orthodox meant when they used the word dictation.

They were not speaking about the mode of God's inspiration or how he inspired the Bible. Dictation theory rightly affirms the words of scripture are the words of God, but it incorrectly posits dictation as the mode of inspiration. The means, the method, and parts of the Bible are dictated.

For example, the 10 commandments. Nevertheless, the different styles and vocabularies of the writers, the statement of Luke one, one, the four that he studied, and other scriptural data will not allow for dictation for the dictation of the whole. I should read Luke One, one, the Four, having referred to it numerous times without reading it is not good in as much Luke as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us.

Just as those who, from the beginning, were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us. It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. Luke studied Luke and thought he was actively involved with his mind in researching as preparation for writing scripture.

And God took that into account. God authors the Bible through human writers. I'm still speaking vis-a-vis the dictation theory.

The result is God's words in human language. This is an expression of God's grace as he reveals himself through human beings to human beings. The Bible is thus not God speaking some language only he knows or angels speak.

It is God's very word in human words. The neo-orthodox view rightly affirms the importance of God's personal revelation, but it errors in at least four ways. First, it denies that personal revelation occurs in words and posits a false dichotomy between personal and verbal inspiration.

Scriptures, narratives, psalms, and parables are not ends in themselves. Rather, they are God's means to draw people into fellowship with him. So, yes, neo-orthodoxy emphasizes the personalness of revelation.

That's good. That's good. But they do not need to set that up against verbal revelation.

It is a personal verbal revelation, and God is capable of that. Second, the neo-orthodox view caricatures the verbal theory. Though God dictates parts of scripture, he mostly uses the author's experiences, vocabulary, and so on to produce his holy word.

Evangelicals have consistently rejected the dictation theory, adopting instead an organic view of inspiration in which God and human authors play roles—more about that when I seek to summarize, really. I'm not being creative.

An evangelical and orthodox view of scripture. Evangelicals consistently reject the dictation theory, adopting instead an organic view of inspiration in which God and human authors play roles. In ways we do not understand, God directs their writing as, quote, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21.

Third, the neo-orthodox view deserves critique because God reveals himself in deed and word. So, George Ladd's Biblical Theology book describes God's regular revelation as deed hyphen word revelation.

God acts in history, but he reveals himself in deeds, as we saw in Moses' song and Miriam's song after the exodus from Egypt. But deeds are not self-interpreting. People in the ancient Near East who heard of the plagues and the exodus would not thereby automatically conclude that Yahweh is the only true and living God and forsake all their own deities.

It's absurd. No, they would view that even if they heard of it and believed in light of their own worldview, which includes their own gods. Furthermore, the greatest deed of all, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus, was misinterpreted by people who stood at the foot of the cross.

Deeds are not self-interpreting. They must be interpreted for us to understand them. And God does both.

He acts, and he speaks. His revelation is deed word revelation. George Ladd is exactly right.

God acts in history, but deeds don't interpret themselves. So, God acts and speaks to interpret his acts.

The fourth criticism of the neo-orthodox view of inspiration is this. Though people do not benefit spiritually for always, and though people don't always benefit spiritually from God's word, it is true whether they benefit from it or not. Without faith, they don't benefit from it. Nevertheless, revelation occurs whether or not they appropriate it.

Yes, the subjective is important if anybody's going to be saved, and that is also the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who gave the word works in the receiver, works in the preachers of the word and also in the receivers of the word enabling them to understand. He illuminates many people when they hear the word and even gives them the gift of saving faith.

1 Corinthians 12, early on, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8, around verse 15, we receive the spirit of adoption by which, by whom we cry Abba Father. The Holy Spirit enables sinners, those who aren't God's children, to call God Father with the cry of faith and become the children of God.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ, 1 John 5, 1 has been born of God. God's regenerating work by the Spirit enables people to believe savingly in the Lord Jesus. But nevertheless, whether people believe the Bible or not, it is the revelation of God.

I want to point out a book that has done great harm. The writers were believers, there's no question, but Jack Rogers and Donald McKim wrote the book *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible and Historical Approach*, 1999. They, throughout that book, posit a false dichotomy, a disjunction between personal and verbal revelation.

It's embarrassing. John Woodbridge wrote a book, John Woodbridge, his titled escapes me [*Biblical Authority, Infallibility and Inerrancy in the Christian Tradition*] He wrote an answer to them that is very well done.

Limited inerrancy rightly denies that the Bible is a history text or a science text. It is not. Its advocates are, however, when they teach that scripture, stumbles in matters of history, science, and other subjects.

God speaks truth in his word. Its purpose is not to give history lessons and science lessons. Its purpose is to save and sanctify his people.

We admit it's a religious book. In writing to accomplish these major goals, God speaks truthfully of other matters as well because he is God, he is truth, and he is true. The Bible may not speak with modern scientific precision.

It doesn't, thankfully, because many of us couldn't understand it if it did. But it speaks the truth. Some holding to limited inerrancy deny inerrancy but hold to infallibility, as they term it, which they redefine as scripture unfailingly accomplishing God's purposes.

This misuses the word infallibility to teach errancy, to teach the untruthfulness of scripture. Scripture uses various literary genres to accomplish God's many purposes, to accomplish God's many purposes, but it does so inherently. The biblical concept of truth involves not only faithfulness; it does involve, but also factualness, factual accuracy, and completeness.

For an article that argues this way, an essay in a book, see Roger Nicole, The Biblical Concept of Truth, in a book entitled Scripture and Truth, edited by D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge. Ah, I found my note for the Woodbridge critique of the Rogers and McKim book. John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority, A Critique of the Rogers McKim Proposal*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1982, which means I have the wrong date in the book.

It is the wrong date. Rogers and McKim, I'm going to guess, is 1979. It certainly isn't 1999.

If Woodbridge wrote a response in 1982, I don't think he wrote a response to a book that came out 17 years later, unless he's got some abilities I'm not aware of. Ah, typo

in the theology book. It is time to draw some things together and to make an attempt to give, to set forth a theology of inspiration.

It's time to draw together a theology of the inspiration of Scripture. We espouse an organic view of inspiration in which both God and human beings play roles. This view has been called *concursum*, underlining the co-authorship of Scripture.

God and the writers work together. It's also been called *confluence*, which makes sense here in my hometown of St. Louis, where the Missouri and Mississippi rivers come together. *Confluence* describes two rivers running together to become one.

Scripture is thus *confluent*. The divine and human aspects work together to produce God's divine human word. Thus it will not do to speak of God's inspiring the authors, but not the words.

2 Timothy 3:16, all Scripture is inspired by God, or possibly every Scripture passage is inspired by God. God is Scripture's ultimate author. This is our starting place.

God directly inspires the autographs, the original manuscripts of Scripture. The autographs are indeed the original text of the biblical books, not copies. In his providence, God also preserves Scripture through the centuries so that the Bibles we have today are reliable copies.

God uses human authors to produce his word. Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit, 2 Peter 1:21. The Spirit guides the writers so that they speak his words. Scripture is human.

It is a human book. We don't deny it. I see that as a subset of the doctrine of grace because God wanted to communicate to human beings.

So, he used the language of his Old Testament people, Hebrew. I know with a couple of Aramaic sections, but what was overwhelmingly Hebrew because that was the language of his people. And he used common household, little boys' homework, wives' laundry lists, Greek, in writing the New Testament.

Actually, believing scholars actually had a theory of Holy Ghost Greek for a while because the New Testament was different than the Greek of ancient Athens, say, 500 BC, and it's different than the spoken on the streets of Athens today. It's Holy Ghost Greek, they thought. It's a special language given by God.

It's not stupid, but it's wrong because discoveries of Greek manuscripts, Greek writings, it's not even so high-powered as manuscripts, laundry lists, homework lists, and all kinds of commonplace writings were in this same koine or common Greek as

the New Testament. So, it turns out that as Alexander the Great tried to conquer the world, he spread Greek influence. It was a process of Hellenization.

He spread Greek language everywhere. So, Peter and then Paul, especially as he went to Gentile cities in the book of Acts, he may not know Lyconian as we saw from Acts chapter 14, but he didn't need to because he and they, the Lyconians, people at Lystra, spoke common or koine Greek. So the humanity of scripture conveys God's and indicates God's desire to communicate with the world, not just with Jews, but with everyone in that New Testament world.

The humanity of scripture would be worthless without the divinity of scripture, as it were, without the Bible being the very words of God in human words. The humanity of the Bible is evident. The writers have different vocabularies, styles, and emphases.

They study Luke 1:1 to 4 and write of their experiences. First of all, John 1:1 to 3, John says, we, I think it means the apostles, we saw, we heard, our hands touched the word of life, the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 11:21 to 33, Paul speaks of his travails, his punishments, and his suffering.

It's an amazing list. Shipwrecked, beaten by rods, tortured, my goodness, it's a wonder, well, he was left for dead outside of Colossae, but God preserved him that he might continue to write. The point is that the scripture writers not only studied, but they wrote out of their experiences.

God graciously uses human beings to communicate to humans, but he communicated his word through humans to humans. We reject the idea that the writers got their ideas from their own minds apart from God. God uses their minds, no question, but they never get their information merely from themselves since no prophecy of scripture comes from the prophet's own interpretation.

2 Peter 1:20. Likewise, we affirm that God providentially guided in giving scripture. He used Moses' education and background as he wrote the Pentateuch.

He uses Paul's rabbinical training as he writes his letters, but we affirm that God does more than exercise his providence in preparing the writers. He not only guides, he speaks. He works in a special way when the writers write.

Our inability to understand fully how God does this is not surprising, for divine-human interaction is often beyond our grasp. We believe Christ is God and man, although we cannot fully explain the incarnation. It's a good parallel.

We believe in the incarnation of the Son of God. The Holy Spirit did it. He caused Mary to conceive.

He'll overshadow you, and the that which we born in you is the Holy Son of God. Luke 1, Matthew 1, twice. This conception will be from God.

It tells us God did it. It doesn't tell us the modus, the manner, the mode, how exactly he did it. It's the same in the inspiration of the Bible.

The Lord's concern is that we regard the end product as the very word of God in human words, not that we understand all the means that God used. Perhaps he used various means. We're not really told.

We believe Christ is God and man, although we cannot fully explain his incarnation. Likewise, we believe that the Bible is God's word without fully understanding the manner of inspiration. We know that God works through people to give us his word.

The result is the very word of God written, the sacred scriptures. Second Timothy 3:15, the holy scriptures. From childhood, Paul writes that you've known the holy writings, sacred scriptures, and holy scriptures, which can make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus.

The ways that God does use us to do this, giving us the sacred scriptures, remain a mystery. Organic inspiration affirms a divine-human working together, a concursus, a confluence, two rivers coming together. This is in keeping with the language and message of scripture, which tells us the results of inspiration, but little about the means that God employed.

I elaborate on this because it is good for us not to think we know more than we do. It is good for us to understand our limitations and to respect God's silences. We affirm the plenary, the full and verbal, wordy, word-like inspiration of scripture on the basis of Second Timothy 3:16.

All scripture is inspired by God. Plenary means that not only the parts of scripture, but also the whole of scripture, is God's word. Verbal means that not only the ideas, as in some of those weak intuition and illumination theories, and even the dynamic theory, but also the ideas and words are God's words.

You say, but they're also human words. We'd already been over that. We can't explain that, but they're God's words in human words.

Inspiration pertains to the writers and their writings, to the process and the product of scripture, mainly the latter. Jesus and his apostles affirm verbal inspiration. Jesus said, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.

Matthew 5:18. His point in Matthew 22:32 rests on the tense of a verb in Exodus 3:6. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He's got God of the living, not of the dead, Paul says. Jesus says.

Similarly, Paul's point in Galatians 3:16 rests on the singular noun in Genesis 12:7. And Paul says, he said seed and not seeds. Seed refers to Christ and not seeds pertaining to God's people. Actually, Paul uses the idea in both ways in Galatians 3. Later on, he uses it in the plural collective sense, but he is working with a single noun instead of a plural noun to make his case when he says Jesus is the seed, the descendant of Abraham.

Moreover, God directs the writings of the word of scripture to convey the thoughts he wants. Words convey thoughts. Thus, we cannot talk about the inspiration of the words apart from thoughts, and we cannot talk about God giving thoughts apart from words.

The whole purpose of the words is to give thoughts. So he didn't give thoughts apart from words. It's actually impossible.

He didn't give words, so we might focus on the words and neglect our thoughts. No, he gave the words that we might understand the thoughts, the results of inspiration. We're way past that.

Past? Whoops. I'm sorry—results of inspiration.

Would you go back to the previous one? I beg your pardon. What does this one say? Ah, okay. Yes, it's the next whole slide.

I'm sorry. The results of inspiration. Let me give an overview.

Vital results follow from the fact that God is the ultimate author of the Bible. Because this is so, scripture is God's word. Number one, it is authoritative.

Two, it is inerrant, rightly understood, sufficient, clear, and beneficial. We will take up these important ideas one after another in the next couple of lectures. Scripture is God's word.

It's authoritative, inerrant, sufficient, clear, and beneficial. Scripture is God's word. We referred to Carl F. H. Henry before, a tremendous leader.

Well, you'll see in this little description of him. I'm introducing a quotation of Henry. Henry, 1913 to 2003, was an American evangelical Baptist theologian who helped lead evangelicalism in the mid to late 20th century.

He helped create the Evangelical Theological Society to encourage academic dialogue among evangelicals. He was the founding editor of *Christianity Today* as a scholarly voice for evangelical Christianity and a challenge to the liberal Christian century. In 1978, he signed the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

He finished his most famous work, the six-volume *God, Revelation, and Authority* in 1983. Quoting Carl Henry under the fact that the point that as a result of inspiration, Scripture is God's very word. Quote, God's revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible ideas and meaningful words.

That is, in conceptual verbal form. The mediating agent in all divine revelation is the eternal logos, Jesus, preexistent, incarnate, and now glorified. God's revelation is uniquely personal, both in content and form.

God reveals himself not only universally in the history of the cosmos and of the nations but also redemptively within the external history in unique saving acts. For example, the Exodus, the church, etc. The climax of God's special revelation is Jesus of Nazareth, the personal incarnation of God in the flesh.

In Jesus Christ, the source and content of revelation converge and coincide. Jesus of Nazareth is not simply the bearer of an inner divine authority. He is himself the word in flesh.

We affirm that Scripture is the word of God for four reasons. First, it is routinely called and equated with the word of God. It is the sacred writings, 2 Timothy 3.15. It's breathed out by God, verse 16.

It's the word, 2 Timothy 4:2. It is the truth, 2 Timothy 4.4. Paul does not break new ground in saying this, but reminds Timothy of what he already knows from the Old Testament. Indeed, texts such as Psalm 19, 7-11 underline that the Scripture is the word of the Lord, using repetition to good effect. We read Psalm 19, 1-6 previously as we studied general revelation.

Now, Psalm 19:7-11, studying special revelation in Holy Scripture. It is wonderful that the Psalmist and David combined both. Psalm 19:7, the law of the Lord is perfect.

It is not lacking. Reviving the soul is also morally perfect, and perhaps that might be the major idea here. It revives the soul.

It refreshes us spiritually. It refreshes the people of God. It refreshed them in the past, in the Old Testament.

It refreshes the people of God today. The testimony, another word for Holy Scripture here, of the Lord is sure. It is reliable, making wise the simple.

The simple in the Bible's wisdom literature means those who are influenced easily. Youths, for example, and others who are easily influenced. Oh, because the word of God is reliable, it makes even the simple wise.

The precepts of the Lord, another synonym for Scripture, are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. God's word is morally pure.

The scriptures are the holy writings. As the Jews said, remarkably, they preserved God's word, which judged and condemned them regularly in the law, the prophets, and the writings. Incredibly.

Why? Because they knew it was God's holy word. They called it the scrolls of the Old Testament, the scrolls the books that defile the hands. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is either a synonym for Scripture or maybe the result of Scripture. The fear of the Lord is clean. Again, the moral quality keeps coming up, enduring forever.

God's word lasts. The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

The writer, David, shows the desirability of the word of God. It is more desirable than we would say than money and possessions. It is sweeter to the taste than your favorite food.

The ancients knew sweetness because of honey, of course. Moreover, they warn your servant. This speaks of the utility of Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16, all scriptures are inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. Reproof shows us where we're wrong, and correction shows us how to make it right. Already in Psalm 19, verse 11, by the words of God, by them is your servant warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.

This text that we just read shows that God's word is his word. He uses it to accomplish his purposes in the lives of his people, purifying them, guiding them, warning them, and encouraging them. And God is good and he gives us his good word.

Second, as we saw, God directs the writers so that Scripture is inspired by him. 2 Peter 1:20 and 21, 2 Timothy 3:16. This is dynamic and verbal inspiration.

The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit upon Scripture's human authors so that they write what God intended to communicate his truth. This definition speaks both of God's action by his spirit in the human authors and the nature of the resulting text. Third, Scripture bears the characteristics of God and performs key functions for him.

In Psalm 19, as quoted above, we have this pattern. The law of the Lord, a synonym for Scripture, is then described. And then he says, the writer says, David says, what it accomplishes.

Scripture, a synonym thereof, described its utility, its purpose, the law, the testimony, the precepts, the commandments, and the rules. Those are different ways of referring to God's holy word. It's perfect, sure, right, pure, pure, clean, true, and righteous altogether.

It revives the soul, makes the simple wise, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, and lasts forever. It's a beautiful pattern that teaches us about the usefulness of God's holy word. Because God's word bears these marks, the descriptors of Psalm 19, it's effective in accomplishing God's purposes.

It renews life, brings wisdom, fosters joy, teaches truth, warns, and leads to blessing. Fourth, Jesus and the apostles attribute to God many Old Testament statements not originally attributed to him. We will pick this up in our next lecture and go on to speak of the other results of inspiration.

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