

## THE FORMATION OF THE NT: THE ISSUE OF CANONICITY

**INTRODUCTION:** Topic is canonicity - but what is that? - Canonicity involves two principle questions:

1. Which books should be received as canonical, out of all literature being produced at the time.
2. On what basis are these books regarded as canonical, and all others as not.

Several Questions Related to Canonicity:

1. How did these books, which we call our Bible, get accepted and not others?
2. Why did the Protestant Church not accept the Apocrypha writings?
3. Did church councils *determine* the canon?
4. Did time and veneration and spiritual usefulness dictate inclusion into the canon?

<b>THE FORMATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON</b>
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### **A. THE HIGHER CRITICAL VIEW OF NEW TESTAMENT CANONICITY:**

Briefly: Only after passage of time did the commonly called NT writings become viewed as the inspired Word of God, and because of confusion as to which books were to be so viewed, the Church through a council determined the canonicity of the NT books, Council of Carthage, AD 397.

Contemporary (dis-believing) Scholarship: Based on the historical thesis that “winners” write history, there are NT scholars who favor the Gnostic gospels and writings over and against the canonical NT writings, and who claim that Gnostic writings were left out of the canon, on the basis of “Pauline” or “Petrine” party being more “powerful.”

### **B. CONSERVATIVE VIEW – that which takes the Bible as God’s Word:**

1. The apostles and the early church possessed a canon from the beginning - the OT (2 Tim 3:16). Yet there was no idea that the canon was closed; rather, as noted below, there was conviction that the canon was open. What is important is that the Jewish apostles inherited an already embedded idea that a set of writings was God’s Word and absolutely authoritative – thus a “canon” - a rule of measurement.
2. Among the Jews there was a virtually unanimous recognition that after Malachi (430 BC) the prophetic spirit was absent from Israel. No writing after Malachi was admitted as canonical. Both Talmudic references and DSS substantiate this.
3. Yet in the OT the prophets predicted that the time of the Messiah was to be an unparalleled time of prophetic revelation and outpouring of the prophetic Spirit (Joel 2:28-29).

**Joel 2:28** *And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*

4. The apostles self-consciously recognized themselves to be living in the days of the Messiah and claimed the outpouring of the promised prophetic Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:16ff). **"No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams."** They believed themselves filled with this Spirit and able to speak under His divine empowerment (Acts 2:4). **"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."** They saw their day to be uniquely revelatory because of the prophetic ministry of Jesus (Heb 1:1-2), **1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.** And they believed that God's direct revelations to them were attested by divine signs (Heb 2:4): **4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**

5. Thus the apostles saw themselves as both possessing a canon, and as possessing the prophetic gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby new revelation was forthcoming. Further, they possessed a positive commission regarding the prophetic ministry in their lives from Jesus Himself (John 14:26; 16:13). **14:26 "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." 16:13 "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."**

**a. John 14:25-26 a two-fold promise:**

- 1) The Holy Spirit was to teach all things - to be taught in this fashion is divine revelation.
- 2) The Holy Spirit was to bring to remembrance the teachings of Jesus; i.e., H.S. would, by the same exercise of His power to give new revelation, insure that the teachings of Jesus would be a permanent and perfect memory in the minds of the disciples. This is how John could write these long discourses of Jesus years later. The memories of the disciples needed miraculous influence to preserve the perfection of Jesus' teachings, or his teachings would suffer loss. The express command of Matt 28:19-20, to teach all Jesus commanded, would require this preservation of memory in a miraculous fashion, analogous to preservation of OT teachings.

**b. John 16:13 (15:26):** The very promise of the revelatory ministry of the Holy Spirit is enhanced and emphasized by how Jesus designates Holy Spirit, i.e., "The Spirit of Truth." - This ministry: to guide into all truth. - The role of the Holy Spirit as

agent of the Father and Son, not as Himself the source of revelation, but serving the Father and Son. Thus He speaks what He hears (from the Father). -Holy Spirit will foretell (primary activity of prophetic spirit). Vs 14 - Center of the revelatory ministry shall be Christ, who is Himself the revelation of God the Father (John 14:6).

6. The apostles show a self awareness of their authority to give the very word of God (I Thes 2:13; 4:2-3; I Cor 2:12-13,16; Gal 1:8).

7. Both Peter and Paul combine NT statements with the OT as Scripture: II Peter 3:16 - quoting Paul as Scripture; I Tim 5:18 where Paul quotes both Dt 25:4 and Luke 10:7 as Scripture. The Apostles were self-consciously aware that they were adding to the NT canon.

**Summary:** Thus the Apostles imposed their writings on the NT Church as of divine authority and these writings were immediately received. There was no period of incubation, while early Christians came to believe in the writings' inspiration. *Recognition was immediate*, because the writings were apostolic or had apostolic approval as given under the prophetic Spirit of God.

### **C. EARLY ACCEPTANCE OF THE NT WRITINGS AS CANONICAL.**

1. Some principle was in operation in the early church after the time of the Apostles, by which certain writings were recognized and accepted as God-breathed, on par with the Old Testament, and to be received as having the same authority.

2. One of the best historical witnesses to the wide-spread acceptance of most of the NT writings is called the "Muratori Canon" from approximately AD 170. This manuscript fragment is damaged, but sufficiently clear in mentioning the four gospels, Acts, 13 epistles of Paul, Jude, I and II John and Revelation. Missing are Hebrews, James, III John, I and II Peter. II Peter has less manuscript attestation than any other NT book, while these other books were strongly attested by other early writers as being authoritative in the church.

3. By the end of the period AD 70-170 almost all of the NT books were collected, revered, and canonized, and no book not presently in the NT was ever collected, revered or held to be canonical. The Apostolic Fathers (AD 70-120) and the Greek Apologists (AD 120-170) give us ample citations of the 4 Gospels, all the writings of Paul and all the other NT books, except II Peter. But even II Peter was known and cited or alluded to even earlier than I John and Revelation.

4. Thoughts to consider: The NT Church spread further and faster than the NT canonical writings. Not every church established received an Epistle, nor were all apostolic writings easily circulated among all churches. Thus, because the writings were geographically and ethnically designated, (Revelation geographically, and Hebrews ethnically, most notably), the acceptance by the whole church was dependent

upon the process of copying and sharing and circulation - and there is no evidence of any central planning to insure that all regions of the Church got all that was written. Yet nevertheless, within 100 years of the end of the apostolic era, virtually all of the NT was being circulated as the NT addition to the OT Scriptures.

Table Summary of Views on Role of Church in Canonicity

<b>The Critical &amp; Catholic View</b>	<b>The Reformation <i>Sola Scriptura</i> View</b>
The Church is Determiner of Canon	The Church is Discoverer of Canon
The Church is Mother of Canon	The Church is Child of Canon
The Church is Magistrate of Canon	The Church is Minister of Canon
The Church is Judge of Canon	The Church is Witness of Canon
The Church is Master of Canon	The Church is Servant of Canon
The Church is Regulator of Canon	The Church is Recognizer of Canon

Sources:

B. B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Scriptures

R. Laird Harris, The Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible.

Josh McDowell, The New Evidence that Demands A Verdict

**DEFINITION OF TERMS:** from the world of biblical scholarship.

1. Basic twofold division: Approach to interpretation. Two schools of thought -

**- *Reformation approach:*** founded by Luther, Zwingli, Calvin - Historical grammatical interpretation. Job of interpreter is to discern the author's meaning and intent, in the historical context of his day and age, according to sound literary principles of interpretation. Task is not to judge the text, but to explain it.

**- *Enlightenment:*** founded by a host of skeptical thinkers, from various schools of philosophical thought, all committed to a philosophical bias against the involvement of the supernatural in the world, i.e., against miracles. Called the historical critical method. Task was to critique the text of the Bible, to discern the historically true from the superstitious and fictitious miraculous elements, and to affirm any religious and spiritual values that are left over. Often motivated by desire to modernize the Christian faith and make it compatible with modern knowledge, or to demythologize the Bible story and make it credible to the scientific mind of the 20th century.

2. For our purposes: settle on two terms.

(1) Conservative interpretation for the historical grammatical approach - task is to conserve the meaning of the actual text we have.

(2) Higher-critical interpretation for the approach to the Bible that takes issue with anything supernatural. No time in this course to take up the issues between these two approaches - involves a course in apologetics. Approach of this course, of this church, is the conservative one

## THE BIBLE AND ITS CRITICS: "What About The Errors?"

### I Definition of Inerrancy - What Do We Mean By This Term?

#### A. Chicago Statement of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (1980's):

##### A SHORT STATEMENT

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.

2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.

4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

**B. If The Bible Is The Word of God, Then The Presumption Is Against Any Original Errors In It.** This is the point of #4 above - scope applies to all of Scripture, not just what specifically relates the message of salvation.

1. Problems in the Bible and Defining an error. Question of Logic: To prove there is a contradiction between one part of the Bible and another, or some part of the Bible and history, science, etc., one must be able to show two things:

- (1) that the statements do show a formal contradiction and
- (2) that no current or future information could possibly harmonize the two statements.

**Example:** True story told by Dr. Kenneth Kantzer (January 1966, **HIS** Magazine, pg 19): "Several years ago the mother of a friend of ours was killed. We first learned of her death through a trusted mutual friend who reported that the woman had been standing on a street corner when she was hit by a bus; fatally hurt, she died a few minutes afterwards. A little later, we learned from the grandson of the dead woman that she had been involved in a collision, was thrown from the car in which she was riding and killed instantly. The boy was quite definite; this was all the information he had.

His story was not only clear and positive, but he had secured his information directly from his mother.

No further word was available from either source, so which were we to believe? We trusted both our friends, but we certainly could not put the data together."

**Comments:** Certainly the appearance of a contradiction - two statements that formally contradict - [fatally injured as a pedestrian by a passing bus] or [killed instantly, being thrown from an automobile during a collision].

**Solution:** "Much later we learned that after the woman was hit by a bus and fatally hurt, a passing car picked her up and headed for the nearest hospital, on the way colliding with another car. The injured woman was thrown from the car and died instantly."

**Kantzer comments:** This story presents no greater difficulty than any recorded in the gospels - such coincidences do happen - and they are inherent in any independent detailed descriptions of events.

"...there are difficulties of significant proportion, but this should not surprise us. The Bible contains thousands of statements covering centuries of history. The amazing thing is that there are not more presently insoluble problems...When modern authors document their case against the inerrancy of the Bible, they don't cite new discoveries in science or archaeology, but those problem passages that have been known to the church down through the centuries, and in full light of which the doctrine of inerrancy was formulated. Despite unproved generalizations and occasional sweeping rhetorical statements, the arguments used against inerrancy by contemporary opponents are not new at all..."(ibid.).

**2. Today's Climate:** Never been better for doctrine of inerrancy. Cf., "The Bible: The Believer's Gain," **TIME**, December 30, 1974.

"As Catholics swing away from the right, Protestants have been nudged by new research toward a more traditional view [of the accuracy of Scripture]. In 100 licensed sites in Israel, archaeological digging continues to turn up new evidence that the Bible is often surprisingly accurate in historical particulars, **more so than earlier generations of scholars ever suspected** (my emphasis). By establishing physical settings of scriptural accounts and certain details of corroboration (finding horned altars like those mentioned in I Kings 1:50, for example) recent archaeology has enhanced the credibility of the Bible..."

"The breadth, sophistication and diversity of all this biblical investigation is impressive, but it begs the question: has it made the Bible more credible or less? Literalists who feel the ground move when a verse is challenged would have to say that credibility has suffered (I know of no such literalists among conservative scholars). Doubt has been sown, faith is in jeopardy. But believers who expect something else from the Bible may well conclude that its credibility has been enhanced. After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived -- and is perhaps the better for it."

**3. Why does the skepticism persist** - why do the critics not quiet down? **Answer:** If the Bible is true, then all the intelligence and **energies of Hell** will be arrayed against the Bible - it is an issue of spiritual warfare. **Human level:** The intellectual commitment to skepticism in regards to the Christian religion, existence of the Bible's God, occurrence of the miraculous in history, etc, are **threatened** by confirmations of the Bible. And it is the nature of scholars to relinquish **cherished positions** very reluctantly, and rather, to reengage more vigorously in defense of one's position.

**ALSO:** This generation of critics **do not necessarily know the history of the vindication** of the Bible against the claims of its inaccuracy in the way that conservatives know it. As the ancient Egyptian and Assyrian Kings did not record their dishonorable defeats in battle, **so critical scholars are loath to publish retractions of their mistakes.**

## **II In Conflict With Biblical Criticism, History, Archaeology.**

A. Examples of the shrinking world of biblical problems.

Critics of a generation and more ago believed the following problems (and others) challenged the doctrine of inspiration and made the claim to inerrancy laughable. But these, and many more, have cleared themselves with the advances of biblical archaeology.

**1. Moses and writing** - The modern critical view up to the early part of the 20th century believed writing to have been invented much later than time of Moses. On that basis the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was rejected, and skepticism about the historicity of the early chapters abounded. Archaeology discovered many examples of writing as far back as 3000 BC.

(Assur-banipal, founder of Nineveh's great library, d. 630BC, referred to inscriptions of the time before the Flood.)

**2. Gen 14** - Both the existences of Sodom and Gomorrah, and these cities and kings which went to war, were all considered by the critics to be fictitious. But the Ebla Tablets (from 24 century BC) speak of the commercial relationship between Ebla and Sodom and Gomorrah, confirming their historical existence. Also, the words, expressions, names all used in this chapter are now known to be exactly historical.

**3. Parting of Red Sea** - One of the most rejected stories of the OT by the critics, who maintain the Exodus was through the "sea of Reeds," a shallow swamplike area. But recent research published in the Bulletin of the Meteorological Society indicates that "a moderate wind blowing constantly for about 10 hours could have caused the sea to recede about a mile and the water level to drop 10 feet, leaving dry land, in the area where many biblical scholars believe the crossing occurred."

**4. Tiglath-Pileser - 2 Kings 15:29** - But generation ago critics did not believe in TP's existence, and believed the whole account of Israel's fall to Assyria was mythology. But when archaeologists excavated his capital city and found his name pressed into bricks with the inscription: "I, Tiglath Pileser, king of the west lands, king of the earth, whose kingdom extends to the great seas..." This is the Mediterranean, thus including at least parts of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, as the Bible says.

## **B. Examples of biblical problems and solutions.**

**1. Two Genealogies of Jesus:** Matthew and Luke do not give the same ancestry for Jesus from David to Joseph. One Answer: Joseph's royal lineage, Mary's biological lineage. Married son can claim his father-in-law's lineage. (As son-in-law of high priest could succeed his father-in-law as high priest).

**2. Luke 2:1-2** - Census at time of birth of Jesus held to be a mistake by Luke. Jewish historian Josephus mentions a census in AD 6, but not one near time of birth of Christ (7-4BC). Solution: Luke mentions this was the "first" census, implying a known second. These took place in approximate 14 year intervals, putting a former at around 7 BC. Also we do have evidence that Quirinius held a ranking military position in the Near East from 12BC to 2BC, and may well have been placed in charge of this census. If this is so, then his capable job in 7 BC would explain Augustus putting him in charge of the next census in AD 7.

**3. Mk 2:26** - Jesus says "in the time of Abiathar the High Priest" but this episode actually occurred when Abiathar's father was high priest. Thus either Jesus was mistaken, or the recorder of the words of Jesus didn't get it right; either way a supposed error. Solution. Note exactly what Jesus says, and apply the logical canon of what an error is. Jesus does not say that David interacted with Abiathar in any way in citing this story. He only calls attention to the period of time in which this story took place. Abiathar became the high priest soon after, because Saul slaughtered Ahimelech and all the other high priestly family. Abiathar continued as high priest throughout the reign of David. We may suppose Jesus was speaking properly in referring to this episode as during the time of Abiathar, even as the gospel writers refer to both Caiaphas and Annas as high priests, though only one was actually in official office. An error would require that (1) Jesus intended to say that the actual person David spoke to was Abiathar - but Jesus does not say that, nor imply anyone in particular that Jesus spoke to, and (2) that there is no possibility that the manner in which Jesus "dated" this episode is allowable.

**4. Mark 15:25 and John 19:14: The time of the crucifixion is not the same.** Mark says it was at 9:00am (the 3rd hour) when they crucified him, and John says it was at noon (6th hour) when he was still being condemned, and crucifixion happened later. There is at least a three hour discrepancy. Solution: The Jews commonly reckoned time from sunup to sundown. Three hours after sunrise was approximately 9:00am. But the Roman timekeeping was also used in official records. If John used Roman time reckoning, especially as he reports what was happening before Pilate, then there is no discrepancy at all. At the 6th hour, (reckoning from midnight), or approximately 6:00am, Jesus was being arraigned before Pilate at the judgment seat. During the next three hours he was condemned, led out of the Praetorium, taken to Golgotha, strapped, and nailed to the cross, and cross raised - all to coincide with the timing Mark gives.

**5. Thieves Cursing Jesus:** Mt 27:44, Mk 15:32 but Lk 24:39-43 has only one thief casting insults, the other repenting. Solution: first, does this pass the logical canon of a clear formal contradiction? No: the three texts do not say that while both were casting insults one was also repenting. Is there any possible logical harmony? If the one thief felt remorse for his insulting Jesus, especially after seeing Him and hearing Him, then his repentance after having insulting Jesus makes coherent sense.

### III In Supposed Conflict With The Natural Sciences

**The Non-issues:** Phenomenal Language - Bible people and writers use the natural language of expression: Sunrises, sunsets, four corners of the earth, without this committing them to literal belief in inaccurate views of the universe.

**Colloquial precision:** In the estimation of times and distances, approximations do not constitute errors of fact. Yet I Kings 7:23 is often charged with a false value for pi. What is the correct value of pi. How many significant digits required before we have a correct value of pi? Isn't 3 a correct value for one significant digit?.

**A. Cosmology, Creation and the Age of the Universe:** Here there is genuine conflict between scientific theory about the age and development of the universe with how some, but not all, Christian theologians view the account in Genesis. Approaches:

**1st – Those holding a “Recent Creation”** do not feel intellectually bound to accept any scientific theory which they see is in conflict with their view that the Bible's account of creation takes us back less than 10,000 years. In response to modern science, they attempt an alternative scientific account based on a short age of the universe

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Those holding the “Ancient Creation”** seek an interpretation of the Genesis account that allows for much longer time periods, while rejecting any teaching of science that replaces God by natural processes only. Thus Darwinian evolution is rejected, but not the billions of years of time associated with evolution.

**B. Evolution:** Here there is genuine conflict between a theory and the biblical account of the special creation of life. Recent books, eg., DARWIN ON TRIAL, by Berkeley Law School professor, Phillip Johnson, and EVOLUTION: A THEORY IN CRISIS, By Michael Denton, Australian doctor and scientist, point out the grave weaknesses in macro-evolutionary theory. There are no known facts which contradict the biblical account.

### IV In Actual Conflict with the Social Sciences

**A. Ethics:** The Bible asserts positions held to be morally unnecessary or morally repugnant to modern intellectual Americans: Marital Sexual faithfulness, condemnation of homosexuality, legitimacy of capital punishment.

**B. Psychology:** The background of much current psychological theory and social practice is the premise that persons are non-responsible victims of their circumstances. As victims they cannot be held accountable for their reactions to their psychological injuries. The Bible views people as morally responsible agents, even where they are circumstantial victims. God holds people morally accountable to how they respond to being injured or victimized.

**V CONCLUSION:** The critics approach the Bible with their anti-supernaturalistic bias - and every aspect of the Bible's teachings are negatively critiqued. Yet those areas that can be checked out, where archaeology and history shed light, the critics have lost ground. The conflict between the Bible and secular thought will continue, but the secular scholar has yet to prove, according to the criteria mentioned earlier, one single error in the Bible.

## **THE BIBLE AND ITS NATURE**

### **"What The Bible Says About Itself"**

#### **THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION**

A. Consider II Tim 3:16 in several translations, oldest to most recent.

(KJV) 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

(ASV) 16 Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness.

(NAS) 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

(NIV) 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

(ESV) 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

Notice the changes from older translations to newer. Why?

B. God's ability to use human authors illustrated - God's use of Balaam.

- Num 22:27-34 – with Balaam's donkey
- Num 22:35-38 – with Balaam himself
- Num 23:3,11-12 – with Balaam himself

Implications:

A. Consider II Tim 3:16. Oldest to most recent

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(ESV) 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

Notice the changes from older translations to newer. Why?

Many translations use the English phrase "inspired by God" to describe the Greek term "theopneutos." This translation of the Greek word, though it has given us the basic way we describe the inspiration of the Bible, has also allowed some serious misconceptions. For example, we may speak of a book being "inspiring" to the reader or we may speak of a poet being "inspired" in his writing. This meaning of inspiration refers to an effect, on the one hand to the reader, and on the other to the writer. But this is not what Paul intended in II Tim 3:16-17.

The meaning of Bible inspiration does not pertain to the effect upon the reader. Nor does it pertain to any influence, in the first place, on the human author. Rather, the Greek term is a description of the writings (Scripture) themselves. The Greek term makes this clear. As with the NIV translation, 'theopneutos' = 'God-breathed.' Paul says "All Scripture is are God-breathed."

The significance of this term is found in the relationship between the two aspects of breathing, when one breathes in and when one breathes out. In English we use two terms to distinguish this. We use "inspire" to designate a breathing in (or more commonly today, inhaling). We use "expire" to designate breathing out (exhaling). In the process of speaking, we breath out, we exhale. But no one speaks while breathing in. Thus, Paul's description of the Scriptures is not

properly described as God breathing in these writings, (God inhaling), but rather as a process of God exhaling these writings, breathing out. For this reason, Paul describes the Scriptures, which are the writings in which God communicated to us, as God-breathed, as His spoken Word, which He exhaled, which He has breathed out.

Thus: the biblical writers were not 'inspired' according to the common English meaning of that word. The ancient Greeks held that a divine influence breathed into their poets and oracles, thus heightening their natural abilities. But the biblical writers did not have their natural abilities heightened by some any mystical divine influence. This is not the meaning of biblical inspiration. Rather, the biblical meaning of inspiration describes the writings, which have been produced by human authors, as produced at the same time as the very word of God. This is to declare that the primary production is from the mind of God, yet through the instrumentality of the human authors. Or we may say that simultaneously, Scripture is the Word of God and the Word of man, with God being its originator and primary author.

As an example of God's ability to insure that His Word is uttered by human authors, consider the nature and meaning of this instrumentality in God's use of Balaam.

- a) Num 22:27-34 – with Balaam's donkey
- b) Num 22:35-38 – with Balaam himself
- c) Num 23:3,11-12 – with Balaam himself

1. God is sovereign over his creation, even enabling a mindless and speechless donkey to utter rational discourse, to say exactly what God intended to be said.

2. God is sovereign over Balaam's will. Balaam had to say only what God put in his mouth.

a) God's ability to do this, when Balaam was conscious of it, and willing his will contrary to it, shows the true power of God to breath out His Word, and it demonstrates a property of God's inspiration of Scripture that supports inerrancy as well.

b) If God is able to so control a knowing Balaam, who was setting his own will contrary to God's, how much more God could breathe out His Word through a prophet or other biblical person who was willing to do God's will.

**THE SCOPE OF INSPIRATION** - Paul says that "All Scripture" is "God-breathed." – The term describing this is called "plenary" inspiration. There are 2 parts.

1. The scope of Scripture is more than "spiritual" or strictly "religious" teaching. In the Scriptures we find a number of genres and types of writing, touching on all sorts of matters: history, law, covenants, ethics, weather, the physical world and physical phenomena, plant life and animal behavior. All kinds of subject matter are mentioned in the Scriptures and all such subjects fall under inspiration.

2. All of the OT Canon is meant. No part is excluded: genealogies, names of kings, soldiers killed in battle.

a) It also applies to NT as well - as the completion of the canon. The OT was an incomplete and open canon, not a finished book. Though Paul made this statement before the canon was complete, this was a description of why any of the OT books was part of Scripture; thus the description "God-breathed" expresses the essential character of a canonical writing, and applies to the finished Bible as much as it did to the incomplete canon of the OT.

b) The plenary nature of the God-breathed character means the authoritative nature of the Bible in all that it teaches, and over everything it speaks about, according to the proper rules of hermeneutics.

**CHRIST AND THE BIBLE:** For the disciple of Jesus, His Lordship over our lives means that His view of the Bible will be ours.

- 1. He viewed the Bible as the very Word of God. Matt 4:4.
- 2. He used the formula of authority - "It is written." Matt 4:4,7,10.

3. He affirmed the indestructible nature of the Scriptures. Mt 5:17,18.
4. He affirmed the Holy Spirit speaking through the OT writers. Mk 12:36.
5. He affirmed the Scriptures could not be broken. Jn 10:35.

### **THE APOSTLES AND THE BIBLE**

1. Paul's view is clear - II Tim 3:14-17.
2. Peter affirmed God speaking through the OT prophets. II Pet 1:21.
3. Author of Hebrews, having quoted the Scriptures extensively to make his arguments, now describes the power of the Word of God. Heb 4:12.
4. Paul calling NT writings Scripture - I Tim 5:18 (Dt 25:4, Lk 10:7)
5. Peter calling NT writings Scripture - 2 Pet 3:16.
6. Apostles self-conscious of their authority as revealers of God's words and will for the Church - 1 Thes 2:4,13; 4:2,3,8; 2 Thes 3:4,14.

### **BIBLE WRITERS ON THE BIBLE**

1. Ascribing the Words of Scripture to God or the Holy Spirit as the speaker or author.

Acts 13:34 (Isa 55:3)  
 I Cor 6:16 (Gen 2:24)  
 Matt 1:22 (Isa 7:14)  
 Matt 2:15 (Hos 11:1)  
 Rom 1:2  
 Heb 3:7 (Ps 95:7-11)  
 Heb 9:8  
 Heb 10:15 (Jer 31:33)  
 Acts 1:16, 4:25, 28:25.

2. Citations of passages which originally were not spoken by God, but because they are Scripture, they are ascribed to God.

Acts 4:24,25  
 Acts 13:34,35  
 Mt 19:5  
 Heb 1:6-8,10  
 Heb 4:7  
 Heb 7:21  
 Heb 10:30 (quoting second half of verse Dt 32:36).

3. Instances of where human writers are "in" the Holy Spirit, or treated as the media or instrument through whom God the Holy Spirit speaks.

Mk 12:36  
 Mt 22:43  
 Acts 28:25  
 Rom 1:2

4. Affirmation of whole of Scripture designed for spiritual benefit of God's people.

2 Tim 3:16-17  
 Rom 15:4  
 I Cor 10:11  
 Rom 4:23-24  
 I Cor 9:10  
 Gal 3:8,22

5. Passages where the phrase "Scripture says" is an actual quote of what God Himself said, showing the identity of what God says with Scripture.

John 19:37 (Zech 12:10)

Rom 9:17 (Ex 9:16)

Rom 10:11 (Isa 28:16); and I Pet 2:6

and the reverse, where what God is quoted as having said is simply a statement of Scripture - Matt 19:4-5. (Jesus' own handling of Scripture).

**INERRANCY** - If such an identification can be made between the actual words of the Bible and the words of God Himself, then what the Bible says, God says. To say the Bible is the very Word of God is to assert the entire trustworthiness of the Bible, its entire truth, its infallibility, its inerrancy.

1. Application to original autographs -

2. 1980's Chicago Statement on what inerrancy is: "Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

"The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church."

#### **NECESSITY AND SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE:**

1. Why is a God-breathed and inerrant Bible necessary?

- The basic difference between God and man means God must disclose Himself to us.
- The sinful nature of man means man will distort his natural knowledge of God, thus making an infallible revelation from God indispensable.

2. What is the sufficiency of the Bible?

- 2 Tim 3:16-17 affirms that the Bible is sufficient to make a person adequately equipped for every good work.

- Thus in spiritual terms we think of the Bible as sufficient for salvation, sanctification.

- But the sufficiency is human condition, human malady, human need directed - and sanctification is the reordering of the personality under the power of the Gospel, rescuing the whole person from the distortion of life under sin.