



SURVEY OF THEOLOGY

Bibliology

Grace Institute - Pastor Jim C. Davis

Lecture Four: Theories of Inspiration

1A. Inadequate theories of Inspiration

These theories attempt to describe or explain the process or method of inspiration instead of focusing on the resultant product [the Bible]. (Notes from DTS Prolegomena and Bibliology class, Witmer 1986)

1B. Theories that deny the reality of inspiration as a distinct work of God, the Holy Spirit:

1C. Natural inspiration

1D. Held by deists

*2D. The Bible is the product of Hebrew religious genius

2C. Mystical inspiration or dynamic inspiration

1D. Advanced by Schleiermacher and held by modernists.

2D. Inspiration is “an awakening and excitement of the religious consciousness, differing in degree, rather than in kind for the pious inspiration or intuitive feelings of holy men.” Friedrich Schleiermacher

2B. Theories that deny the universality of inspiration to all the Bible

1C. Partial Inspiration

*1D. Only doctrinal or revelational portions are inspired.

2D. Only material dealing with Christ is inspired.

3D. The theory of degrees of inspiration carried to its irreducible minimum.

4D. “Few enlightened Jews or Christians of our times can think of all parts of their Scriptures as in any very deep sense sacred.” Frank Eakin, *Revaluing Scripture* p41

2C. Psychic Inspiration

1D. Neo-orthodox position

*2D. Only Scriptures commended to me as inspired are inspired.

3D. “Those passages, and those only, are felt to be inspired which still have power to inspire the sympathetic reader, which impart life to his spirit.” Russell Henry Stafford, “The Bible” in *Whither Christianity?* Lynn Harold Hough, ed, p85

3B. Theories that deny the plenitude of inspiration in the Bible

1C. Degrees of inspiration

1D. Accepted by some early conservatives who could not accept verbal-plenary inspiration, but generally held by modernists. Frequently coupled with concept theory.

*2D. "Within this one great function of inspiration, considerable variety exists. The inspiration of Isaiah or Paul is different from that of the compiler of Proverbs or annalist who drew up Chronicles." Marcus Dods, *The Bible, Its Origin and Nature* p127

3D. "God inspired not a book but men, and the book is inspired in varying degrees as the men who wrote it surrendered themselves to the living Spirit of God." A.E. Garvie, *The Christian Certainty Amid the Modern Perplexity* p349.

2C. Concept Inspiration

1D. Related to partial inspiration in that ideas but not words are inspired.

2D. Held by older conservatives and neo-liberals

3D. "It is the man who is inspired." Marcus Dods, p 117; Also Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* p25

4B. Miscellaneous Theories

1C. Endorsement Theory

1D. Held by some modernists

2D. Related to concept theory because God gave human authors basic ideas. Human authors expressed those ideas in their own words.

*3D. Authors wrote as human beings, but God approved or endorsed what they wrote and accepted and uses it as His message.

4D. "Holding this comprehensive endorsement theory, we never say, 'the Bible contains the Word of God.' We say, 'The Bible is the Word of God.'" O.A. Curtis, *The Christian Faith* p180

2C. Barthian Inspiration

*1D. Has some similarity to endorsement theory, because God designs to have the Scripture become the Word of God in the revelatory moment. It is irrational in character.



SURVEY OF THEOLOGY

Bibliology

Grace Institute - Pastor Jim C. Davis

- 2D. Inspiration tends to be caught up together with revelation and illumination as part of one process
- 3D. Barth limits God's instrument of revelation to the Bible, the preached Word (of Scripture), and the Sacraments, but Brummer and others do not limit revelation.
- 3C. Mechanical Inspiration, or Dictation Theory
 - 1D. In seeking to protect the Bible as God's Word verbally, it rejects its genuine human authorship.
 - 2D. Human authors become merely stenographers transcribing what is told them.
 - 3D. Ignores personal preferences, individual human style.
 - 4D. The position verbal-plenary inspiration is accused by liberals of taking.
- 2A. Arguments for Verbal, Plenary Inspiration of the Bible
 - 3B. The *a priori* deductive argument
 - 1C. God is the self-existent, infinite, sovereign Creator and Ruler of all things.
 - 2C. God's nature includes infinite goodness and infinite power.
 - 3C. As a personal Being, God desires to communicate with His creatures.
 - 4C. As a God of infinite truth who cannot lie, God can guarantee the inerrancy of His message. Carl Henry in "Foreword" to Edward Carnell's *Introduction to Christian Apologetics* p6
 - 5C. The Holy Bible alone qualifies as the inerrant Word of God.
 - 2B. Argument from the unity of the Bible
 - 1C. Human authors represent diversity
 - 1D. Forty Human Authors
 - 2D. Produced over a period of 1500 years
 - 3D. Involves different backgrounds, cultures, literary forms, etc.

2C. Divine Author represents unity

1D. Unified doctrinal system

2D. Unified moral and ethical standard

3D. Unified plan of salvation

4D. Unified plan of the ages to glorify God

3C. The Bible “is not such a book as man would write if he could or could write if he would.” L.S. Chafer I:22