
The Scriptures as God-breathed: Implication for the Authority of the Scriptures

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v21i2.3>

Abstract

The doctrine of biblical inspiration is the view that the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the sacred texts so that the resultant Scripture is the word of God. To say that Scripture is “God-breathed” does not mean that the scrolls fell down from the sky. Inspiration, in this sense, is the supernatural force that moved the sacred writers to transmit what God has revealed using, human language. How does one understand the Bible as the inspired word of God despite the apparent and sometimes manifest inconsistencies that one finds in the Scriptures? Does inspiration imply divine dictation, as taught by the Augustinian school of thought? Is the Bible purely a product of human ingenuity as held by some humanists? Or are we dealing with a confluence of divine will and human ability? This is the problem that this article intends to address. This will be done by applying an exegetical study of the relevant Scriptural passages dealing on this subject.

Keywords: Inspiration, revelation, biblical inerrancy, *theopneustos*, God-breathed.

Introduction

Biblical inspiration is the doctrine which states that God or the Spirit of God inspired or moved certain chosen instruments to commit in writing what God has revealed. Both Jewish and Christian traditions hold that the Bible is the word of God, that the

contents of what the biblical authors wrote were revealed by God, and that the human writers were prompted by the Holy Spirit to transmit in writing that which God has revealed. Because the Holy Spirit superintended the writing of Scripture, the Holy Spirit has been regarded in the tradition of the Church as the primary author of Scripture, and the sacred writers as secondary authors. When Scripture is said to be divinely inspired, what is implied is that the sacred texts constitute the exact expression of God's revealed truth. It cannot be denied that the Holy Spirit is the originator of the Scriptures in the sense that he inspired the sacred writers. However, the sacred writers employed human language, idioms and metaphors in writing of Scriptures. Thus, while God is the real author of the Scriptures, the human authors are co-authors. The fact that the Holy Spirit prompted the human authors to write does not mean that the human authors were mere stenographers or secretaries who merely took down divine dictations. Inspiration does not mean that the Holy Spirit overruled the personalities of the human authors. While the human authors wrote freely and spontaneously, God was also at work through them to produce the Scriptures. Thus, it is right to say that while God is the real or primary author of Scripture, the human writers were the co-authors or secondary authors. The fact that the holy Spirit prompted the biblical authors to write, underlines the authority of the Scripture. This is the objective that this article seeks to establish.

What is Biblical Inspiration?

The word, "inspiration," is derived from the Latin words *in* and *spiratio*, meaning, "a breathing" (Rooney, 1952). In the original physical sense of the term, "inspiration" means "taking a breath." Biblical inspiration refers to the extraordinary, supernatural influence exerted by the Spirit of God upon the persons who wrote

the Scriptures, with the effect that the resultant Scripture has a ‘specifically supernatural character’ and is actually the Word of God (Warfield. 1948, Begbie, 1992; Bruce. 1946; Daniel-Rops, 1958). To say that the Biblical writers were divinely inspired means that the sacred writers were prompted by the Holy Spirit. That the Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit emphasizes the truthfulness and the integrity of the contents of the sacred texts (Hodges, 1994). The books of the Bible are called “sacred” because they were written under divine inspiration and are referred to as “canonical” because they are enumerated in the authentic list of sacred books called the “Canon”.

Biblical Foundations of Inspiration

a. Witness of the Old Testament

It is important to note here that there is no explicit mention of the word “inspiration” in the OT; there are, however, many passages which hint at it (Harrington, 1965). To be sure, the Jews stood for a high doctrine of inspiration, particularly in relation to the *Torah* (Bromiley, 1959). The Jews firmly believed that all the books contained in their Bible were inspired by God. When we talk of inspiration of the Bible, we mean that God or the Spirit of God inspired or moved certain chosen instruments to write down the contents of what he has revealed. The Scriptures attests that God prompted a number of chosen instruments to act or perform certain roles. For instance, the phenomenon of prophecy was attributed to the spirit of God that filled the prophet (Num 11:25-26). Moses and the Prophets of Israel were themselves conscious of speaking to the people in the name of God (e.g. Exod 4:15-16; 19:7-8; Jer 1:9; 20:7-9; Ezek 38:1). The Prophets of Israel were primarily moved by God to speak the word of God to their contemporaries. The clear testimony of the OT writings is that God spoke to

people, and he instructed certain persons to write down the things he said. The rabbis so venerated the sacred texts because they saw a divine hand in the Sacred Scriptures (cf. Matt 5:18). According to the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (*Ant.* 4:118), the Prophets wrote by inspiration received from God.

b. Witness of Jesus

It is clear that Jesus acknowledged the OT writings as being of divine origin. Jesus cited the OT as the authoritative and reliable word of God (Matt 5:18; 22:31; Mk 7:13; 12:35; Jn 10:34f) which must be accomplished (Matt 26:54; Lk 24:44f.). In Matt 5:17-19, Jesus affirmed the Law as being fixed and above the whims of men. Jesus drew on the teachings of the OT in his encounter with Satan (Matt 4:1-11). His responses, “Man shall not live on bread alone” (Deut 8:3), “The Lord your God you shall fear; him you shall serve” (Deut 6:13), and “Do not put the Lord your God to the test” (Deut 6:16), are all drawn from the book of Deuteronomy. Each statement was prefaced by “It is written” (*gegraptai*) or “It is said” (*eirētai*, perfect passive of *eiro* - to say.), thus underlining the authority of the OT Scripture.

c. Witness of the Apostles

Like Jesus, the Apostles quoted the OT texts (cf. Acts 1:16; 4:25). In the context of the election of Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot, in the days between Ascension and the Pentecost, Peter addressing about a hundred and twenty brethren gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem, said: “Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus” (Acts 1:16). Peter obviously was citing Ps 69:25: “May their camp be a desolation; let no one live in their tents.” The second part of Peter’s citation

concerns the filling of the apostolic position which Judas by his action has made vacant: “May his days be few; may another seize his position” (Ps 109:8). This suggests that Jesus and the apostles recognized the divine authority of the Scriptures. The apostles had been authorized by Jesus as special ambassadors to teach what he had taught them (cf. Jn 20:21). The message they preached was the one they wrote down. The NT, like the OT, claims very clearly to be the inspired word of God.

d. New Testament Writings

In particular, there are two main passages of the NT which explicitly underline the divine character of the Scriptures. These are 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:20-21.

2 Tim. 3:16 and the Divine Authority of the Scriptures

The word ‘inspiration’ (Greek: *theopneustos*) occurred only once in Scripture, in 2 Tim. 3:16. Here Paul emphatically says:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

Pasa graphē theopneustos, kai ophelimos pros didaskalian, pros elegmon, pros epanorthosin, pros paideian tēn en dikaiosunē.

When Paul declares that “every scripture is God-breathed,” he is asserting that Scripture is a product of a divine operation. The point Paul makes here is that God is the author of all Scripture. That Scripture is God-breathed emphasizes the fact that Scripture is divinely inspired (Alans, 1959). The interpretation of this passage involves two distinct but not unrelated questions. The first has to do with the meaning of *pasagraphē*. The Greek particle *pasa*

can be used collectively or distributively. The particle *pasa* may be translated either by “all” or by “every.” According to 2 Tim 3: 16, “every Scripture” (*pasa graphe*) or every individual scriptural passage, is “God-breathed.” Whether the passage is referring to Scripture collectively (“all Scripture”, i.e., the whole body of the OT [see Gal 3:8]) or distributively (“every Scripture”, i.e., particular passages of Scripture (see Acts 8:35), Paul underlines the divine hand in Scripture.

The word *graphe* could mean any writing whatsoever, since the basic word simply means “writing”; it may refer to the OT in toto or in part; or it may be construed to include even recent Christian literature (Feinberg, 1980). Paul is here referring collectively to the Scriptures. The phrase, “All scripture is inspired by God” may also be rendered “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (*KJV*). “All Scripture” (*pasa graphe*) refers to the “sacred writings” (cf. 2 Tim 3:15), i.e., the whole OT (Harrington, 1965). What is being declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a divine product (Bahnsen, 1973).

The second question concerns the meaning of *theopneustos* in 2 Tim 3:16. The word *theopneustos* functions here as a verbal adjective. Such adjectives are formed by suffixing *-tos*. Further, this particular word is a compound of *theos* (“god”) and *pneo* (“to breathe”). The Greek word rendered as ‘inspired’ is *theopneustos*. Grammatically *theopneustos* is an adjective. Literally the word *theopneustos* means “God-breathed.” The translation of *theopneustos* in many English versions is “inspired” or “inspiration.” The rendering of *theopneustos* as “inspiration” may be somewhat misleading, since it could convey the idea of God’s breath being infused into the word - that is, energizing it. God does energize his word, but that is not the point here (Feinberg, 1980).

According to B. B. Warfield (1948), the term *theopneustos* relates to the production of sacred, authoritative Scripture. The Scriptures are the “spirated” breath of God. For this reason, Paul can say that the Scriptures are God’s speech (Gal 3:8, 22; Rom 9:17). Thus, P. D. Feinberg (1980) would say that God is the author of what is recorded (Acts 13:32-35), and the entirety of Scripture is the “oracle of God” (cf. Rom 3:2). As Bahnsen (1973) has said, the metaphor, “God-breathed,” does not suggest that the scrolls fell down from the sky. God communicated his will through human agency; and Scripture, being the word of God, is communicated to us by the sacred writers, using human language. In theological usage, inspiration denotes especially “the influence of the Holy Spirit in the origination of the sacred Scriptures,” by means of which the Scriptures become the expression of “the will of God,” or “the word of God” (Warfield, 1948). Because the Scripture is inspired by God or “gifted with God’s Spirit,” it contains God’s will and is indeed the word of God.

We have earlier noted that there is no explicit mention of the word “inspiration” in the Bible. The use of the word “inspiration” in Scripture was introduced by the Vulgate, which renders “*pasa graphe theopneustos*” (2 Tim 3:16) as “*Omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata*.” When we say that Scripture is divinely inspired, we are saying that the sacred texts constitute the exact expression of God’s revealed truth (Decker, 2006). The purpose of inspiration is made clear in 2 Tim 3:15-17: God inspired the Scriptures in order to give sound teaching concerning the faith and to equip the people of God to bear witness to their faith (Bloesch, 1980).

Pet 1:20-21: Men Spoke from God

Another scriptural text which emphasizes the inspiration, divine origin, character and authority of the Scriptures is 2 Pet 1:20-21. This text reads:

...no prophecy ever came by human will, but men [and women] moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet 1:21).

Ou [gar] thelēmati anthropou ēnechthē prophēteia pote, alla hupo pneumatōs hagiou pheromenoi elalēsan apo theou anthropoi.

When Peter says that men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (*apo theou*), he is saying that, God, not the human agents, is the originator of the message. The human authors spoke as they were moved by God. They were instruments through whom God spoke. The Holy Spirit was the active agent in the writing of the Scriptural texts. Because prophecy was never produced by an act of human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet 1:20-21). Mickelsen (1963, p.92) says of the prophets, that “when they spoke (and, by inference, when they wrote) with a God-directed sense of urgency, they were speaking and writing as divinely energized persons.” Further, Mickelsen writes that inspiration involves the things we speak or write, “not in words taught of human wisdom but in words taught of the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:13).

The Bible indicates that inspired messages were sometimes regarded as merely human utterances. In 1 Thess 2:13, St Paul gives thanks to God that the Thessalonians did not take his message as merely human words:

We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers (1 Thess 2:13).

Paul evidently is saying that both his teaching and his writing are prompted by the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, need to be given heed to by his Thessalonian audience.

Testimony of the Early Church Fathers

From the earliest times, the Church Fathers of the 2nd century held that the Holy Scripture is plenarily and verbally inspired. They referred to the Scriptures as the “oracles of God” which were “dictated by the Holy Spirit” who used the human authors as “instruments.” Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 150-215), Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 140-202), and Origen (ca. A.D. 184-253) spoke of the Scriptures as divinely inspired (Earle, 1963). Later writers (of the 3rd and 4th centuries) spoke of the Holy Spirit as the “Author” of Scripture. They asserted that both Testaments were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The belief in the scriptural doctrine of inspiration in the Patristic Period was never in doubt. St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) described the Bible as a Letter from heaven; St. Jerome (A.D. 347-420) spoke of the sacred writer as an instrument of God; St. Gregory the Great (d. 604) stressed that the author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit. The actual writings of the Old and New Testaments are seen to be derived from the Holy Spirit and, therefore, carry divine message (Bromiley, 1959).

From the 6th century to the 13th century, it was repeatedly stated that the books of the Bible are sacred because God is their author. In the *Summa Theologica* (ST 2a2ae, 173.4), Thomas

Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274) spoke of the sacred writer as an instrument. The human writers are at the same time true authors in their own right, even though they acted only when moved by the Holy Spirit (Forestell, 1967). Although, God is ultimately the author of Scripture, the divine authorship does not lessen the contribution of the human author or the redactor (Piper, 1976). In the 18th and 19th centuries, with the rise of rationalism and positivism, the inspiration and divine authority of Sacred Scripture were seriously questioned. Textual, literary, and historical criticisms discovered many imperfections, apparent errors, and seeming contradictions in the sacred texts. Despite these tendencies, the Council of Florence (1441) declared that God is the Author of both Testaments because the sacred writers wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This position was repeated by the Council of Trent (1546) and the First Vatican Council (1869-70). While it must be admitted that the free use of the sacred writers' faculties was at play in the writing of the Bible, this does not imply that Scripture is a human creation. The Church believes in a two-fold authorship of the Bible, divine and human (McKenzie, 2002).

During the Reformation (1517-1648), the subject of inspiration came to the fore again. Martin Luther (1483-1546) declared the full divine authority of "the Scriptures alone" (*Sola Scriptura*). Protestant theology after Luther developed the doctrine of verbal inspiration, which emphasizes that the very language of Scripture is God-breathed. The Calvinist school of thought asserts nothing less than verbal inspiration. Calvin emphasized the divine authority of the Bible (Earle, 1963). Quite a number of Protestant creeds after the Reformation emphasized the divine authority of Scripture. The French Confession of Faith (1559) maintained that the word contained in both the Old and New Testaments "has proceeded from God, and receives its authority from him alone,

and not from men.” The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) stated that all the canonical books “are given by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life” (Earle, 1963, p.10). The Baptists also adopted the position that the Bible is of divine authority. The “Philadelphia Confession” asserted that the authority of the Holy Scripture is “dependent upon God” who is the “author of Scripture” (Nix, 1982). In 1925, the New Hampshire Declaration of Faith stated that “the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; and that God is its author,” and that the truth it contains is “without any mixture of error” (Nix, 1982, p.447). Indeed, the Bible is of divine origin, but we cannot deny that it was composed and written by men. A. N. S. Lane (1986) noted that the marks of its human character are ineradicably stamped on every page of the Scriptures. According to Lane, the fact that “God is the author of the Bible,” does not mean that the human writers simply received the text of Scripture by “divine dictation.” A mechanical theory of inspiration is untenable. It must be held that while God is the author of Scripture, the human writers were co-authors.

Papal Encyclicals

The fact that biblical writers wrote under divine inspiration is further underlined by a number of Papal encyclicals. Three Papal Encyclicals are of great importance to the study of Holy Scripture. In 1893, Leo XIII issued the first of these Encyclicals on the study of Holy Scripture, *Providentissimus Deus* (Divine Providence). In this Encyclical, Leo XIII spoke of the sacred writers as instruments of the Holy Spirit. Here Leo XIII emphasized the divine role in the production of the Scriptures. In 1920, Benedict XV issued another Encyclical on the Scripture, *Spiritus Paraclitus*. In this text, Benedict clarified certain points in the previous Encyclical

(*Providentissimus Deus*), pointing out more particularly the contribution made by the human author. In 1943, Pius XII issued the third Encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, which completed the Papal trilogy on Biblical studies. In this Encyclical, Pius XII called for new translations of the Bible from the original languages, instead of the Latin Vulgate. The previous two Encyclicals had projected the divine origin and character of the Scriptures. In the *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, Pius XII paid emphasis on the nature and function of the human authors.

Authorship of Scripture

Although Christian theologians have always recognized the role of human agents in the writing of Scripture, this role was undeniably minimized. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, rumblings of discontent with the classical doctrine of inspiration began to be heard among Catholic theologians. These misgivings broke into public view with Benedict Spinoza's publication of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in 1670. In addition to denying the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Spinoza attacked the traditional doctrine of inspiration. Spinoza held that the prophets were only inspired when speaking directly the word of God; when they spoke in ordinary conversation as private individuals, their words were not inspired. Spinoza's *Tractatus* sparked off debates throughout Europe. His insistence on the humanity of Scripture seemed to be incompatible with the traditional doctrine of inspiration. However, the debates that ensued in the 17th century awakened the Church to the human side of Scripture. It now seemed altogether implausible to suppose that the means of biblical inspiration was divine dictation to the human authors. The authors' variety of styles, their divergence in narrating identical events, grammatical mistakes etc, point to the fact that human agency was at work in the authorship

of the Scripture. The discussions on the extent of the role of the divine or the role of the human agent gave rise to a number of theories of inspiration.

Theories of Inspiration

We may summarize the theories of inspiration under the following headings:

1. Plenary Theory

This theory holds that all of Scripture, not just portions of it, is God-breathed (inspired). The divine authorship of the Scripture guarantees its authority and inerrancy. This does not imply that all parts of Scripture are equally important or equally relevant at various times and places.

2. Verbal Theory

This theory holds that the very words of Scripture are inspired. The Bible, as a linguistic deposit, is God's word. Hence, not just the thoughts expressed, but the very language of Scripture is God-breathed.

3. Dictation Theory

This theory is also known as the mechanical theory. According to this theory, God dictated the words of the Bible to the human writers. This theory perceives the prophet's role as simply that of a secretary who takes down the boss' dictation word for word. In this model, the secretary is not at liberty to change anything that has been given by the dictator. This would mean that God is the primary author of the Scriptures. This theory has its root in Augustinianism and Calvinism. St. Augustine, for instance, describes the Bible as a "Letter from heaven."

4. Elevation Theory

The Elevation Theory is a contrast of the Dictation theory. This theory holds that Scripture is nearly 100% human. This theory is influenced either by rationalistic or naturalistic models that do not see God active in the world, or by atheistic or agnostic thinking that does not acknowledge anything other than humanity (Bratcher, 2016).

5. Dynamic Theory or Confluent Theory

This theory holds a middle position between Dictation and Elevation Theories. This theory holds that Scripture is the product of dual authorship, human and divine. The human authors wrote freely and spontaneously, and yet God was also at work through them to produce Scripture. The human writers of Scripture were not mere stenographers; they were also real authors, whose individuality shines through their works. At the same time, God is the author of Scripture (Craig, 1999).

Two Authors, One Book

God is the literary author of the Scriptures. This is explicit in the declarations of the Council of Trent (1545-63) and the First Vatican Council (1869-70). God is the author of the Scriptures since it is he who inspired the biblical writers. It cannot be denied that the Holy Spirit is the originator of the Scriptures in the sense that he inspired the sacred writers. In that sense the Holy Spirit is the real author of the Scriptures. While the Holy Spirit is the real author, the human authors of the Scriptures are not secretaries who merely took down divine dictations. Karl Rahner (1962: pp.13-14) writes that the divine authorship “is neither a rival nor diminution of human authorship, which is not to be limited or reduced to a secretarial function.” Inspiration does not mean that the Holy Spirit

overruled the personalities of the human authors; instead the Holy Spirit worked in and through the human writers to produce the Scriptures (Bloesch, 1980).

Biblical Inerrancy

The notion of biblical inspiration is based on the idea that God communicates through the Scriptures, and that the human authors are merely God's instruments. If God is the author of Sacred Scripture, it follows necessarily that the judgments of the sacred writers were guided by the divine light, and that the teachings contained in the sacred Scriptures are clothed with divine truth. The belief that the Holy Spirit superintended the writing of the Scriptures gave rise to the belief in the inerrancy of the Bible. Biblical inerrancy is the doctrine that the Sacred Scripture, being God's own word, written by men under divine inspiration, "is without error or fault in all its teaching" because God is the Author (Williamson. 2001, p.395). The belief in the inerrancy of the Bible is in keeping with the character of God, who is totally faithful and reliable. The truthfulness and reliability of God are the basis of the truthfulness and reliability of the Scriptures, being as they are "God-breathed." According to Jones Hywel (1985), the very fact that the writers of the books of the Bible were led by the direction of the Spirit testifies to the trustworthiness of the entire Bible.

The Church holds that Scripture is not only inspired, but also inerrant. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) declares that "since everything written by the inspired authors or sacred writers is inspired by the Holy Spirit," their teachings are without error. The term, "inerrancy", is used to affirm the total trustworthiness of all the contents of the Bible. This teaching holds that Holy Scripture, being God's own word, written by men prepared and superintended by his Spirit, is of infallible divine

authority. Therefore, 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.

To affirm the infallibility of Scripture means, as Bloesch (1980) said, that Scripture does not lead astray, i.e., that it does not deceive (cf. Ps 119:86; Prov 8:8). Its witness is compelling and decisive, for it proceeds from God (cf. Isa 55:10-11; 1 Cor 1: 21; Heb 4:12-13; 1 Pet 1:23). Scripture is the word of God and the only perfect rule of faith and life (Bruce, 1946). To say that Scripture is inspired by God stresses the spiritual power inherent in the text (Bradshaw, 1990). The Bible, as the word from God, contains the treasure of eternal salvation (Bloesch, 1980); it has the capacity to give meaning to those who live without purpose. It is a lamp that illumines the pathway of people who dwell in spiritual darkness (Ps. 119:105; 2 Pet. 1:19). The doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy does not suggest that "Scripture gives exact knowledge of mathematics or biology or any other science. The Bible nowhere claims to give instruction in (for instance) any of the natural sciences (Packer, 1958). Neither does it present a history of Israel nor a biography of Jesus that accords with the standards of historical science. While some biblical statements agree with actual historical facts, they are sometimes imprecise and incomplete, and therefore not a basis for a modern history.

Distinction between Revelation and Inspiration

Inspiration and revelation are not identical; neither do they conflict; nor does one follow the other in chronological order. They operate simultaneously and harmoniously. In order to communicate revelation reliably, inspiration is needed (Mueller, 2006). Revelation is an act of God in which he reveals to specific human beings supernatural truths which would not otherwise be

knowable. Inspiration signifies a special divine influence which guides the human instruments to transmit in writing the content of the revelation they have received. J. T. Burtchaell (1969) writes that in biblical inspiration, the human writer is moved by the impulse and direction of the Holy Spirit to transmit that which God has revealed.

Biblical revelation refers to the contents of the message communicated by God to his prophet. With reference to the prophets, this revelation is often communicated to them at their prophetic call or sometimes during their inaugural vision. For instance, the prophet Jeremiah testifies that “the Lord...touched my mouth; and...said unto me, ‘Behold I have put my words in thy mouth’” (Jer 1:9) (Coon, 1981). Revelation is the Spirit’s act of communicating divine knowledge to the mind. Inspiration is the same Spirit’s act of prompting those to whom these supernatural truths are revealed to communicate them to others. This transmission takes two forms: oral transmission and written accounts. If their inspiration terminates in speech, we call it prophecy, and if it terminates in writing we call it Scripture. Both revelation and inspiration are actions of God upon the prophet or writer. As F. Canale (1993) writes, revelation involves God’s action in making known the supernatural truths to a person or group of persons; whereas inspiration involves God’s action in moving the prophets to write down the revealed truths and produce the Bible. First, God generates the content; and second, he enables the prophet to transmit the content of what he has revealed.

The inspired writers were transmitters of revelation. They received the supernatural truths (messages) from God and passed them on to others by word and writing by the prompting of God’s Spirit. The sacred writers, as transmitters of revelation, may be considered as witnesses, to whom God has made himself

personally known. The sacred writers have written for the guidance of the people of God (Harrington, 1965). The human component in the transmission of the content of revelation may be understood as playing not merely a passive role, but also an active one” in as much as the language in which the content of the revelation is transmitted is the human language.

The Church regards the Bible as the Word of God, a source of revealed doctrine and a part of the rule of faith. As Begbie (1992) has said, the Bible is not simply a record of, or witness to, revelation; the Bible is revelation. Because the Holy Spirit superintended the writing of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit has been regarded in the tradition of the Church as the primary author of Scripture, and the sacred writers as secondary authors. Corroborating Begbie’s view, Bloesch (1980) held that the Holy Spirit is not only a past author but also a present teacher, for it is he who opens our eyes and guides us to the truth attested in Scripture (cf. Jn 16: 13; 1 Cor 2: 12-16).

Conclusion

The notion of biblical inspiration is based on the idea that God communicates through the Scriptures, and that the human authors are merely God’s instruments. If God is the real author of Sacred Scripture, it follows necessarily that the sacred writers were guided by the divine light, and that the teachings contained in the sacred Scriptures are clothed with divine truth. The belief that the Holy Spirit superintended the writing of the Scriptures gave rise to the belief in the inerrancy of the Bible. Biblical inerrancy is the doctrine that the Sacred Scripture, being God’s own word, written by men under divine inspiration, is without error or fault in all its teachings because God is its Author. The belief in the inerrancy of the Bible is in keeping with the character of God, who is totally

faithful and reliable. The truthfulness and reliability of God are the bases of the truthfulness and reliability of the Scriptures, being as they are “God-breathed.” While Scripture is God-breathed, the contribution of the human writers is undeniable. Thus, it is right to say that while God is the real or primary author of Scripture, the sacred writers are the secondary authors.

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