

The Inspiration of the Bible

by William Evans

I. What is Meant by the Term "Inspiration"?

This question is best answered by Scripture itself. It defines its own terms best. Let us, then, "to the Law and to the Testimony!"

In 2 Tim. 3:16 we read as follows:
"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

The word "inspired" literally means "God-breathed." It is composed of two Greek words—*theos*, meaning *God*; and *pnein* meaning *to breathe*. The term "given by inspiration" signifies, then, that the writings of the Old Testament, of which Paul is here speaking, are the result of a certain influence exerted by God upon their authors.

The force of the word "breathed," as used in this passage, is brought out very forcibly by the comparison of two other words translated in the same way. The one is the Greek word *psuchain*, which means *to breathe gently*, while in 2 Tim. 3:16 the term denotes a forcible respiration. The other is the Hebrew word *ah-ayrh*, which denotes to breathe unconsciously, while 2 Tim. 3:16 denotes a conscious breathing.

Inspiration, then, as defined by Paul in this passage, is the STRONG, CONSCIOUS INBREATHING OF GOD INTO MEN, QUALIFYING THEM TO GIVE UTTERANCE TO TRUTH. IT IS GOD SPEAKING THROUGH MEN, AND THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THEREFORE JUST AS MUCH THE WORD OF GOD AS THOUGH GOD SPAKE EVERY SINGLE WORD OF IT WITH HIS OWN LIPS. The Scriptures are the result of divine inbreathing, just as human speech is uttered by the breathing through a man's mouth.

Another helpful suggestion regarding the Inspiration of the Scriptures is found in 2 Pet. 1:21:

"For not by the will of man was prophecy brought at any time, but being borne by the Holy Spirit, the holy men of God spoke." (This is a literal rendering, and brings out the sense more clearly.)

The participle "moved" may be translated "when moved," so this passage teaches that holy men of God wrote the Scriptures *when* moved to do so by the Holy Spirit.

Further, the participle is passive, and denotes "to be moved upon." This distinctly teaches that the Scripture was not written by mere men,

or at their suggestion, but by men *moved upon* prompted, yea indeed, driven by the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

This declaration of Peter's may be said to intimate that the Holy Ghost was especially and miraculously present with and in the writers of the Scriptures, revealing to them truths which they did not know before, and guiding them alike in their record of these truths, and of the transactions of which they were eye and ear witnesses, so that they were enabled to present them with substantial accuracy to the minds of others.

The statements of the Scriptures regarding Inspiration may be summed up as follows: Holy men of God, qualified by the infusion of the breath of God, wrote in obedience to the divine command, and were kept from all error, whether they revealed truths previously unknown or recorded truths already familiar. In this sense, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," the Bible is indeed and in truth the very Word of God, and the books of the Bible are of divine origin and authority.

II. The Distinction between Inspiration, Revelation, Illumination, and Verbatim Reporting.

1. The distinction between Inspiration and Revelation.

It is of the greatest importance in considering the theme of Inspiration to distinguish it clearly from Revelation.

The most cursory perusal of the Scriptures reveals the fact that they consist of two different kinds of records: first, records of truth directly revealed and imparted to the mind of the writer by God, and which he could have learned in no other manner (such, for example, as the story of Creation); and second, records of events that occurred within the writer's own observation, and of sayings that fell upon his own ears (such as Moses' account of the Exodus, Paul's account of his interview with Peter at Antioch). In the one case, the writer records things that had not been revealed to man before; in the other case, he records facts which were as well known to others as to him.

Now, Revelation is that act of God by which He directly communicates truth not known before to the human mind. Revelation discovers new truth, while Inspiration superintends the communicating of that truth.

All that is in the Bible has not been "directly revealed" to man. It contains history, and the language of men, even of wicked men. But there is absolutely no part of the Bible record that is not inspired. The history recorded in the Bible is true. The sacred writers were so directed and influenced by the Spirit that they were preserved, in writing, from every error of fact and doctrine. The history remains

history. Things not sanctioned by God, recorded in the Bible, are to be shunned (2 Tim. 3:16). Nevertheless, all these things were written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is Inspiration.

This distinction should be definitely and clearly understood, for many of the most plausible arguments against the full Inspiration of the Scriptures have arisen from the fact that this has been either unrecognized or ignored.

Though all Scripture is inspired, it does not stamp with divine authority every sentiment which it reports as uttered by the men of whom it speaks, nor does it mark with divine approval every action which it relates as performed by those with whose biographies it deals. In the book of Job, for example, Inspiration gives with equal accuracy the language of Jehovah, the words of Satan, and the speeches of Job and his three friends; but it does not therefore place them all on the same level of authority. Each speaker is responsible for his own utterances. Neither Satan, Job, nor his three friends spoke by Inspiration of God. They gave utterance to their own opinions; and all that Inspiration vouches for is that no one of them is misrepresented, but that each one spoke the sentiments that are attributed to him in Scripture. So, again, the fact that David's cruelty to the Ammonites is recorded in the book of Kings does not imply that God approved it any more than He approved the king's double crime of murder and adultery, which "displeased Him." The Inspiration of the Book vouches only for the accuracy of the record.

2. The distinction between Inspiration and Illumination.

Spiritual Illumination refers to the influence of the Holy Ghost, common to all Christians. No statement of a truth about God or spiritual things can be understood by a man unless the Holy Spirit takes it and reveals it to him. It is only the spiritual man who can understand spiritual things. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit" (I Cor. 2:14). No learning of the schools can lead him to know God. Flesh and blood cannot reveal God to men (Matt. 16:17).

There is a vast difference between "a divine revelation of the mind of God," and "a divine action on the mind of man." The former is Revelation; the latter is Spiritual Illumination.

Those who hold to the Illumination theory to account for the origin of the Bible revelation, claim that there is in every man an intuitive faculty that grasps the supernatural, that lays hold of God and spiritual things; and that whatever insight into the nature and being of God is given man, is produced by the divine Spirit playing upon this spiritual faculty in man, illuminating and irradiating it, so that it sees the perfection of God and is enabled to penetrate into His will.

According to this view, the Bible is the result of the meditations of godly men whose minds were acted upon by God. Any revelation of divinity of which man is the recipient, comes in this manner. Subjective illumination God has carried on since the world began, and is still carrying on by a great variety of methods. The Scriptures are not in any way the oracles of God, nor do they come to us as direct, logical utterances of the divine mind. The patriarchs, prophets and apostles of old so deeply meditated on God and the things of God that their spiritual faculties were enlarged and illuminated to such a degree that they conceived of these visions of God, His nature, His will, etc., as recorded in the Scriptures.

Now, it is true, doubtless, that a man may be granted a very deep insight into the nature and being of God by spiritual meditation. That a fire does burn in the Bible, we do not deny. Throughout all ages of the Jewish and Christian church men have lit their spiritual torches at this fire, and in their light, they have seen Him who is invisible. This fire still burns, and today the devout student may catch its flame if, with uncovered head, with shoeless feet, and with humble spirit, he stands before the bush that ever burns and yet is never consumed. But this working of the truth of God on the mind of man is not God's revelation of His mind to man which the Bible professes to be. The Bible must of necessity be not merely a repository or receptacle of spiritual influences fitted to act upon the mind; it must be—it is—God making Himself known to men. It is God speaking to man through men.

In contradistinction to the Illumination theory we have instances in the Bible where God made revelations of Himself, His truth, and His will to men who were by no means at the time meditating upon God. For instance. Balaam (Numbers 22:34, 35), Caiaphas (John 11:49-52).

And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again. And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. Num. 22: 34, 35.

And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. John 11:49-52.

3. The Distinction Between Inspiration and Verbatim Reporting.

Inspiration is not necessarily Verbatim Reporting.

It is not absolutely necessary to make such a claim to prove the Inspiration of the Scriptures. Verbatim Reporting is, in a sense, a mere mechanical operation. It would have robbed the writers of their individuality, and made them mere machines. But no; the Holy Spirit used the memories, the intuitions, the judgments, and indeed the idiosyncrasies of the writers, so that while each recorded that part of the event or discourse which (as we may express it) adhered to himself, he was enabled to give it with substantial accuracy.

III. Various Theories of Inspiration.

It will be in order here to note briefly various theories of Inspiration; for it must be known that all students do not agree as to the degree of inspiration that characterized the writers of the Scripture. When a man says, "I believe in the Inspiration of the Bible," it will be quite in place in these days to ask him what he means by Inspiration. Following are some of the views of Inspiration held at the present day.

1. Natural Inspiration.

This theory identifies Inspiration with genius of a high order. It denies that there is anything supernatural, mysterious, or peculiar in the mode of the Spirit's operation in and upon the Scripture writers. It claims that they were no more inspired than were Milton, Shakespeare, Mahomet, or Confucius.

Such a theory we absolutely reject. For if such be the character of the Inspiration possessed by the Scripture writers, there is nothing to assure us that they were not liable to make the same errors, to teach the same false views of life, to give expression to the same uncertainties concerning the past, the present and the future as did these shining lights of mere human genius.

When David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue," he meant something more than the prayer which forms the gem of *Paradise Lost*. When Isaiah and his brethren said, "Thus saith the Lord," they claimed something higher than that they were speaking under the stirrings of poetic rapture. When Paul said to the Corinthians, "Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth (I Cor. 2:13)," he used language to which you will find no parallel in the literature of mere human genius. And no man of candor or intelligence can pass from the writings even of the unapproachable Shakespeare into the perusal of the Bible without feeling that the difference between the two is not one simply of degree, but of kind; he has not merely ascended to a loftier outlook in the same human dwelling, but he has gone into a new region altogether. There is a certain "unknown quality" in this Book which clearly distinguishes it from all others; and if we may take

its own explanation of the matter, that unknown quality is its divine Inspiration.

2. *Universal Christian Inspiration, or Illumination.*

According to this theory, the Inspiration of the Bible writers was the same as has characterized Christians of every age; the ordinary Christian of today is inspired as much as was the apostle Paul.

If this be the true view, there seems to be no plausible reason why a new Bible should not be possible today. And yet no individual, however extreme his claims to Inspiration may be, has even ventured such a task.

3. *Mechanical, or Dynamic, Inspiration.* (see Distinction Between Inspiration and Verbatim Reporting above)

This theory ignores the human instrumentality in the writing of the Scriptures altogether, and claims that the writers were passive instruments, mere machines, just as insensible to what they were accomplishing as is the string of the harp or lyre to the play of the musician.

How then do we account for the differences in style of the various writers, the preservation of their individualities, their idiosyncrasies?

It seems evident that Scripture cannot be made to harmonize with the application of this theory.

4. *Concept, or Thought Inspiration.*

This theory claims that only the concepts, or thoughts, of men were given by Inspiration. It will be examined more fully later. Concept inspiration is opposed by

5. *Verbal Inspiration.*

Here it is claimed that the very words of Scripture were given by the Holy Spirit; that the writers were not left absolutely to themselves in the choice of words they should use. (See Plenary, or Full, Inspiration below)

6. *Partial Inspiration.*

The favorite way of expressing this theory is. "The Bible *contains* the Word of God."

This statement implies that it contains much that is not the Word of God, that is, that is not inspired. A serious question at once arises: Who is to decide what is and what is not inspired? Who is to be the

judge of so vital a question? What part is inspired, and what part is not? Who can tell?

Such a theory leaves man in awful and fatal uncertainty.

7. *Plenary, or Full, Inspiration.*

This is the opposite of Partial Inspiration. It holds all Scripture to be equally inspired, as stated previously. It bases its claim on 2 Tim. 3:16.

Here let it be said that the Revised Version translation of 2 Tim. 3:16 is grievously erroneous and unsafe. The reader might infer from it that there is some Scripture that is not inspired.

(1) If Paul had said, "All Scripture that is divinely inspired is also profitable, etc, he would virtually have said, "There is *some* Scripture, *some* part of the Bible, that is *not profitable, etc.*, and therefore is not inspired." This is what the spirit of rationalism wants, namely, to make human reason the test and judge and measure of what is inspired and what is not. One man says such and such a verse is not profitable to him, another says such and such a verse is not profitable to him; a third says such and such is not profitable to him. The result is that no Bible is left.

(2) Is it possible that anyone need be told the flat and sapless tautology that all divinely-inspired Scripture is *also* profitable? Paul dealt in no such meaningless phrases. The word translated *also* does not mean *also* here. It means *and*. Its position in the sentence shows this.

(3) Again, the Revised rendering is shown to be openly false because the revisers refused to render the same Greek construction elsewhere in the same way, which convicts them of error.

In Hebrew 4:13 we have: "All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The form and construction are identical with those of 2 Tim. 3:i6. Were we, however, to translate this passage as the Revisers translated the passage in Timothy, it would read: "All naked things are also open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." All naked things are also open things! All uncovered things are also exposed things! There is no *also* in the case.

Again, 1 Tim. 4-4: "Every creature of God is good and nothing is to be rejected." According to the principles the revisers adopted in rendering 2 Tim. 3:16, this passage would read: "Every good creature of God is also nothing to be rejected."

The Greek language has no such meaningless syntax. The place of the verb *is*,—which must be supplied,—is directly before the word

"inspired," and not after it.

The great rationalistic scholar, DeWette, confessed candidly that the rendering the revisers here adopted cannot be defended. In his German version of the text, he gave the sense thus: "Every sacred writing, i. e., of the canonical Scriptures, is inspired of God and is useful for doctrine, etc." Bishops Moberly and Wordsworth, Archbishop Trench, and others of the Revision committee, disclaimed any responsibility for the rendering. Dean Burgon pronounced it "the most astonishing as well as calamitous literary blunder of the age." It was condemned by Dr. Tragelles, the only man ever pensioned by the British government for scholarship.

In accordance with this weight of testimony, therefore, we hold to the rendering of the Authorized Version, and claim that all Scripture is equally and fully inspired of God.

IV. The Claims of Scripture to Inspiration.

That the writers of the Scriptures claimed to write under the direct influence of the Spirit of God there can be no doubt. The quality or degree of their inspiration may be called into question, but surely not the fact of it. Let us examine the testimony of the writers themselves.

1. The claims of Old Testament Writers to Inspiration. (We use the word Inspiration here as including Revelation.)

Compare and examine the following passages:

And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. Ex. 4:10-15.

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. Deut. 4: 2.

But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. Then

the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. Jer. 1:7-9.

And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. Ezek. 3: 4.

But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. Micah 3: 8.

These are but a few of the many passages in which the inspiration of the writers is affirmed and claimed.

Note further that the "words "God said" occur ten times in the first chapter of Genesis. Such expressions as "The Lord said," "The Lord spake." "The word of the Lord came," are found 3,808 times, it has been calculated, in the Old Testament. These writers who claimed to be the revealers of the will of God, almost always commenced their messages with the words, "Thus saith the Lord." That they were not deceived in their claims is evident from the minuteness and detail as to names, times and places which characterized their messages, and from the literal fulfillment of these oracles of God.

2. The claims of New Testament writers to Inspiration.

It is worthy of note here to observe that Inspiration is claimed by New Testament writers for Old Testament writers as well as for themselves. Read and compare the following passages:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 1 Peter 1:10, 11.

Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. Acts 1:16.

And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers. Acts 28:25.

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 1 Cor. 2:13.

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. 1 Cor. 14:37.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 1 Thess. 2:13.

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: 2 Peter 3:1, 2.

For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. Matt. 10:20.

But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Mark 13:11.

For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say. Luke 12:12.

Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. Luke 21:14, 15.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:4.

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:31.

It is evident from these and many other passages of Scripture that the writers of both the Old and New Testaments were conscious of having received revelations from God, and considered themselves inspired of God to write the Scriptures, and felt while writing that they were giving expression to the infallible truth of God, and were conscious that the Holy Spirit was moving them to the work.

V. What is the Nature of the Inspiration that characterized the Writers of the Scriptures, and in What Degree Were They Under Its Influence?

Much has been said and written in answer to this question. Were the *thoughts* or *concepts* alone inspired, or were the *words* also inspired?

Were the words dictated by the Holy Spirit, or were the writers left to choose their own words? These are the knotty questions current today regarding the Inspiration of the Bible. We may say with certainty that

1. At least some of the words of Scripture are the identical words written or spoken by God Himself.

Note Exodus 32:16—"The writing was the writing of God"; Exodus 31:18—"Written with the finger of God." Compare also Deuteronomy 10:2, 4; 9:10; Exodus 24:12. See also 1 Chronicles 28:19 (R. V.)—"All this, said David, have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of Jehovah"; Daniel 5:5—" [there] came forth the finger of a man's hand and wrote..."

In the New Testament God is heard speaking both at the baptism and the transfiguration of Jesus, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."

It is clearly evident from these passages that some part of the inspired record claims to be a record of the exact words of God.

2. It is also very definitely stated in Scripture that God put into the mouths of certain men the very words they should speak, and told them what they should write.

And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. Exodus 4:10-15.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. Exodus 34:27.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers. Numbers 17:2-3.

And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. Deuteronomy 6:9.

And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: Deuteronomy 11:20.

Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Mahershalalhashbaz...For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Isaiah 8:1, 11, 12.

But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Jeremiah 1:7.

Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them. Jeremiah 5:14.

Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. Jeremiah 7:27.

Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word; Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine? Jeremiah 13:12.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. Jeremiah 30:1-2.

And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day...Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book...When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD...Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the

night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words. Jeremiah 36:1, 2, 4, 11, 27-32.

And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. Ezekiel 2:7.

Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Ezekiel 3:10-11.

Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day. Ezekiel 24:2.

Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: Ezekiel 37:16.

And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. Habakkuk 2:2.

And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. Zechariah 7:8-12.

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 14:37.

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks...And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive...And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges...And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira

write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass. Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18.

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead...And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth...And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. Revelation 3:1, 7, 14.

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. Revelation 10:4.

To sum up these two arguments, then, let us say, regarding the nature of the Inspiration of the sacred writings, that part of them claims to be the very words and writings of God Himself, spoken by His own mouth, written by His own hand: that another part claims to be the record of words spoken to certain men who wrote them down just as they were spoken.

And yet if this is all that is involved in Inspiration, shall we not be robbed of a very beautiful and helpful fact, namely, that the Holy Spirit saw fit to preserve the characteristics of the writers? Do not the works of James, the faith of Paul, and the love of John appeal to us in their own peculiar way? This leads us to say that

3. In a certain sense, and in respect to some parts of the Scripture, the authors were (humanly speaking) left to choose their own words in relating divine truth.

This was by no means true of all the sacred writings. There are instances recorded of men who spoke without knowing what they were saying; and of men and animals speaking without knowledge of the substance of their message. See John 11:49-52; Numbers 22:28-30; Daniel 12:8, 9.

And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. John 11:49-52.

And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam

said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Numbers 22:28-30.

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Daniel 12:8-9.

And yet the gift of inspiration admitted of personal, diligent, and faithful research into the facts recorded—Luke 1:1-4. It allowed the expression of the same thought in different words, such differences (by no means discrepancies) between the accounts of inspired men as would be likely to arise from the different standpoint of each.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. Matthew 26:26-27.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. Luke 22:19-20.

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 1 Corinthians 11:24-25.

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Matthew 3:17.

And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Mark 1:11.

And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. Luke 3:22.

The Spirit employed the attention, the investigation, the memory, the fancy, the logic, in a word, all the faculties of the writer, and wrought through these. He guided the writer to choose what narrative and materials, speeches of others, imperial decrees, genealogies, official letters, state papers or historical matter he found necessary for the recording of the divine message of salvation. He wrought in and with and through their spirits, so as to preserve their individuality to others. He used the men themselves, and spoke through their

individualities. The gold was His; the mould was theirs.

If the question be asked whether or not Inspiration affected the words, it must be answered in the affirmative. It is hardly possible that Inspiration could insure the correct transmission of thought without in some way affecting the words. Yet it affected the words not directly and immediately by dictating them in the ears of the writers, but mediately, through working on their minds and producing there such vivid and clear ideas of thoughts and facts that the writers could find words fitted to their purpose.

We must conclude, therefore, that while from the divine side the Holy Spirit gave through men clearly and faithfully that which He wished to communicate, from the human side that communication came forth in language such as men themselves would naturally have chosen.

This may seem to some to be an impossibility, and they would allege that if the words were affected by Inspiration at all, there must have been dictation. But the must is a "non sequitur." It is admitted that God works His purposes in the world through the ordinary actions of men, while yet no violence is done to their freedom. It is admitted, also, that God, through the gracious operations of His Holy Spirit, works in the hearts of His people so as to develop in each of them the new man, while yet the individuality of each is preserved; and the type of piety is just as distinct in each Christian as the style is in each of the sacred writers. These cases are so nearly parallel as to suggest that all denials of the possibility of Inspiration without the destruction of the individual characteristics are as unphilosophical as they are unwarranted.

We may therefore safely say that we believe in Plenary and Verbal Inspiration—that is to say, the words as well as the thoughts have been given, whether mediately or immediately, under the influence of the divine Spirit. We claim that the Bible is in deed and in truth the very Word of God; that it is the Word of God in the language of men; truly divine, and at the same time truly human; that it is the revelation of God to His creatures; that infallible guidance was given to those who wrote it, so as to preserve them from error in the statement of facts; that what the writers of the Scriptures say or write under this guidance is as truly said and written by God as if their instrumentality were not used at all; that the ideas expressed therein are the very ideas the Holy Ghost intended to convey; that God is in the fullest sense responsible for every word. This is what the Bible claims for itself.

Source: *The Book of Books: What It Is; How to Study It* by William Evans. Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Ass'n, 1902. Chapter 3.