

The Inspiration of The New Testament

In this final article on the inspiration of the Scriptures I intend to consider the testimony of the New Testament to its inspiration and the relationship of 2Timothy 3:16 to the New and Old Testaments.

The Testimony Of The New Testament To Its Inspiration

In the last article we saw that Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide His people into all truth, and that the promise guaranteed that we would have God's words given to us by the Spirit through the apostolic Christians. Let's see if the New Testament writers ever acknowledged that to be the case as they wrote.

The apostolic Christians knew that the Holy Spirit was going to be sent to testify of Christ, because Jesus had promised that He would (See John 15:26). This promise also contained within it the understanding that the apostolic Christians would bear witness to Jesus as well. After His resurrection, Jesus again told them that they would bear witness to Him after that the Spirit fell upon them (See Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8). The book of Acts gives to us the record of how the early church, being filled with the Spirit, testified to Jesus. I believe that it is a fair statement to say that the evangelists were testifying of Christ as they gave to the church their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. But what about the rest of the New Testament?

Romans: Paul opens the epistle to the Romans, "*PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Romans 1:1-7, AV 1873)

Paul's statement is that he is writing concerning Jesus Christ. While there is certainly room for someone to dispute this, it is certainly plausible that Paul understood himself to taking part in the work that Christ promised would be done by the Spirit.

1Corinthians: The apostle says, "*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 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 Corinthians 2:12-13, AV 1873)

Here we find Paul saying that his teaching was that of the Holy Spirit. He has no problem stating that the words that he is teaching are of God. Paul explicitly rules out his writing in the fashion of worldly writers, but claims that he is teaching the words which the Holy Spirit teaches, thus claiming Divine sanction for the very words that he wrote.

There are some who contend that Paul claimed that some of his words were not the Word of God, but his own. They do so because Paul said, "*And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:*" (1 Corinthians 7:10, AV 1873) (See also 1Corinthians 7:12,25) The context of this passage shows us, however, that Paul was stating that the Lord Himself had given no commandment regarding this issue when He was ministering upon the earth. In fact, Paul later states again that what he is saying is the work of the Spirit of God saying, "*and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.*" (1 Corinthians 7:40, AV 1873) Far from disclaiming inspiration, Paul states that his words are indeed inspired of God.

Concerning this passage Meyer said, "Paul knew from the living voice of tradition what commands Christ had given concerning divorce, Matt. 5:31 f., 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18. Hence ὁ Κύριος, *sc. παραγγέλλει*, for the authority of Christ lives on in His commands (against Baur, who infers from the present, which is to be supplied here, that Paul means the will of Christ made known to him *by inspiration*). It is otherwise in 1 Thess. 4:15. As regards the ἐγώ, again, Paul was

conscious (ver. 40) that his individuality was under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He distinguishes, therefore, here and in vv. 12, 25, not between *his own* and *inspired* commands, but between those which *proceeded from his own* (God-inspired) *subjectivity* and those *which Christ Himself supplied by His objective word*.¹” In other words, Paul knew and claimed that his words were inspired of God.

John Calvin made a similar statement: “But why is it that Paul speaks of himself as the author of these regulations, while they appear to be somewhat at variance with what he had, a little before, brought forward, as from the Lord? He does not mean that they are from himself in such a way as not to be derived from the Spirit of God; but, as there was nowhere in the law or in the Prophets any definite or explicit. statement on this subject, he anticipates in this way the calumnies of the wicked, in claiming as his own what he was about to state. At the same time, lest all this should be despised as the offspring of man’s brain, we shall find him afterwards declaring, that his statement are not the contrivances of his own understanding.”²”

2Corinthians: Here Paul once again speaks of himself as being a minister of Gospel who is working under the power, influence, and leadership of the Spirit of God who was promised by Jesus. “*And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*” (2 Corinthians 3:4–6, AV 1873) He later states that he has a God-given authority both in his preaching and his writings: “*For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. Let such a one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.*” (2 Corinthians 10:8–11, AV 1873) Though he doesn't explicitly state here that his words are inspired of God, these passages give us reason to believe that Paul saw himself as writing words that were given to him by the Spirit of God.

Galatians: In the book of Galatians Paul insists that he did not learn the gospel from men, but received it by revelation from Christ. He then speaks of the fact that the apostles gave him the “right hand of fellowship,” thus acknowledging that Paul was sent of God as they were. Though there is no mention of inspiration in this epistle, we can see that once again Paul sets forth an understanding that his preaching and teaching was of the same source as that of the other apostles, which source was the Spirit of God.

Ephesians: “*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*” (Ephesians 3:8–13, AV 1873) Note that Paul sees himself as one whose apostleship is to bear witness of Christ (John 15:26) to the world. He also recognizes that the work he is doing for/in the world is also for the Ephesians. All of this is a gift from God to Paul that he might perform this ministry. He also recognizes that his work is to make known the revelation of Christ. These things demonstrate Paul's understanding that his words are of the Spirit of God, because he is making known the revelation of Christ, teaching

1 Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians, Volume 1*, ed. William P. Dickson, trans. D. Douglas Bannerman, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 201 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1879).

2 John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 1 Co 7:10 (Galaxie Software, 2002; 2002).

truth as an apostle, and testifying of Jesus. In fact, he later states that he is testifying “in the Lord” (Ephesians 4:17), meaning that he is not simply speaking in self.

Let us then note that Paul quotes both Deuteronomy and Luke and calls them both Scripture. “*For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.*” (1 Timothy 5:18, AV 1873) Paul, we see, considers Luke's gospel account to be the inspired Word of God just as Deuteronomy is.

Furthermore, Peter implies that the words of the apostles were of the same authority as the words of the Old Testament prophets (2Peter 3:1-2) and states that Paul's writings were Scripture, thus attributing to them the same source and authority that we have already seen that the Old Testament Scriptures have as the inspired Word of God (2Peter 3:15-16).

Then we find John testifies of Christ as an eyewitness (1John 1:1-4) of Christ. He goes farther than that and states that his words are the very testimony of God. “*And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*” (1 John 5:8–11, AV 1873) John states that the Spirit bears witness in the earth, and the what he writes is the witness which God gave of Christ. This means that John was convinced that his words were the words of God, testified through him by the Spirit.

Revelation: The last book in the New Testament begins by stating that it is “*THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*” (Revelation 1:1–2, AV 1873) John states what he is writing is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and that this revelation would tell us of things to come. When we recall John 15:26;16:12-17 we can see that John no doubt understood that what he was writing was the work of the Spirit of God. Not only so, but John stated that God gave this revelation to Jesus, who sent it to John. As he closed the book, John stated that what he was writing was the words of the Spirit of God. “*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*” (Revelation 22:17, AV 1873) Then he clearly states that the Revelation is of the same authority as the Old Testament Scriptures by saying, “*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*” (Revelation 22:18–19, AV 1873) This echoes Deuteronomy 4:2. Finally, John closes and repeats that the Revelation is the Word of Jesus (Revelation 22:20).

Given By Inspiration Of God

In 2Timothy 3:16 Paul tells us that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The literal meaning of “given by inspiration of God” is “God-breathed.” When we speak we breathe. “Given by inspiration of God” is Paul's way of saying that Scripture is God's Word. William Hendriksen, in his commentary on 2Timothy, said, “The word *God-breathed*, occurring only here indicates that “all scripture” owes its origin and contents to the divine breath, the Spirit of God. The human authors were powerfully guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. As a result, what they wrote is not only without error but of supreme value for man. It is *all* that God wanted it to be. 3”

3 William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 4, *New Testament Commentary : Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, New Testament Commentary, 302 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001).

I am certain that Paul was speaking of all of the Old Testament, but I am also convinced that he had the New Testament in mind as well. B.B. Warfield, speaking about the canon of Scripture said, “In the apprehension, therefore, of the earliest churches, the 'Scriptures' were not a *closed* but an *increasing* 'canon. Such they had been from the beginning, as they gradually grew in number from Moses to Malachi; and such they were to continue as long as there should remain among the churches 'men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' We say that this immediate placing of the new books—given the church under the seal of apostolic authority—among the Scriptures already established as such, was inevitable. It is also historically evinced from the very beginning. Thus the apostle Peter, writing in A.D. 68, speaks of Paul’s numerous letters not in contrast with the Scriptures, but as among the Scriptures and in contrast with “the *other* Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16)—that is, of course, those of the Old Testament.⁴”

Looking back over the course of this article we see that Paul recognized Luke's gospel as being Scripture. If we are correct in assuming that Luke did indeed follow Matthew and Mark, Paul probably knew of them as well. Having seen that Paul understood his own writings to be the inspired Word of God, we can reasonably assume that he was referring to them as well.

Having considered these things, it is safe to say that, when Paul spoke of Scripture being given by inspiration of God, he had the New Testament Scriptures in mind as well as the Old Testament Scriptures.

Concluding Thoughts

This series of articles is a series about the inerrancy of Scripture. Being given by inspiration of God, Scripture is God's Word. God is true and cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Deuteronomy 32:4; Titus 1:1-2; Hebrews 6:17). We can conclude that the Scriptures, being the inspired Word of God, are true and without error.

4 Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, Volume 1: Revelation and Inspiration*, 452 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2008).