# FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

*Systematic Theology Series*

# BIBLIOLOGY

*The Doctrine of the Word of God*

**UNIT 2: THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE**

## Lesson 5

# THE DUAL AUTHORSHIP OF SCRIPTURE

*The Divine and Human Concursus*

*Key Text: 2 Peter 1:19–21*

> *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*
>
> **2 Timothy 3:16–17, NASB 1995**

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# Introduction

In the last two lessons, we have established that the inspiration of Scripture is verbal and plenary, extending to the very words of the text and to every part of the canon equally. We have seen that the Bible is the product of divine action, not merely human achievement: God breathed it out through human agents superintended by His Spirit, so that every word is both fully divine in its origin and fully authoritative in its claim upon us.

But this affirmation raises a question that must be faced honestly and fully, because it lies at the heart of some of the most persistent misunderstandings of the doctrine of inspiration. The question is this: If the Bible is the Word of God, what are we to make of its obvious and undeniable humanity? The Bible is not written in a timeless, celestial style that rises above all historical particularity. It bears the marks of its human authors everywhere. Isaiah does not write like Amos. John does not write like Paul. Luke's Greek is polished and literary; Mark's is rapid and colloquial. The psalmists pour out their anguish and their joy in intensely personal language. Paul dictates letters to deal with specific problems in specific congregations, and the urgency of those particular situations shapes every paragraph. How do we account for all of this humanity if the Bible is truly the Word of God?

The answer that Scripture gives, and that the church has articulated with increasing precision across its history, is the doctrine of dual authorship and concursus. The Bible has two genuine authors: God and man. Not God "instead of" man. Not God "correcting" man. Not God "speaking through" man in a way that bypasses his humanity. God "and" man, simultaneously, in a mystery of cooperative action that the theologians call the "concursus": the running together of divine and human agency to produce a text that is, without remainder, the Word of God and, without qualification, genuinely human writing.

This is the great and glorious mystery at the heart of the doctrine of inspiration, and this lesson is devoted to exploring it. We will examine the biblical basis for dual authorship, the theological analogy of the hypostatic union, the specific evidence of human personality and style in the inspired text, the remarkable examples of Luke's research and Paul's personal notes, and the organic model of inspiration that best captures how the Spirit works through human authors rather than apart from them.

# I. THE MYSTERY OF CONCURRENCE: GOD AS PRIMARY AUTHOR, HUMAN WRITERS AS SECONDARY AUTHORS

The doctrine of dual authorship begins with a fundamental distinction: God is the "primary" author of Scripture, and the human writers are "secondary" authors. This does not mean that God is the important author and the humans are the unimportant ones, or that God's contribution to the text is larger than the humans'. It means something more precise and more theologically significant: the designation of primary and secondary reflects the order of authority, the direction of causation, and the locus of ultimate responsibility for the text.

God is the primary author in that He is the origin of Scripture's content, the guarantor of its truthfulness, and the one who stands behind every word as its ultimate source. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. When the Bible promises, God promises. When the Bible commands, God commands. The human authors are genuine authors, not mere conduits or passive instruments, but they write under the sovereign superintendence of the primary Author, so that what they produce is exactly what He intended to say.

This is precisely the picture Peter gives us in our key text:

> *"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."*
>
> **2 Peter 1:20–21, NASB 1995**

Peter identifies two dimensions of the one prophetic Word. On the human side, men spoke: real human beings, with real voices, real experiences, real vocabularies, and real theological perspectives. On the divine side, they spoke from God, moved by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word translated "moved" is "pheromenoi" (the present passive participle of "pherō"), the same word used in Acts 27:15, 17 for a ship being carried along by the wind. The wind does not destroy the ship; it carries it. The ship's own nature is not suppressed; it is engaged and directed by a force greater than itself. So the human authors were carried along by the Spirit. Their own natures were fully engaged and expressed, but they were directed by the sovereign breath of God so that the course of their writing arrived exactly where God intended.

This is the concursus: not God and man in sequence (first God gives a revelation, then man writes it down), and not God and man in competition (God overpowering man's natural inclinations to produce a supernatural text), but God and man acting simultaneously and cooperatively, each in a manner appropriate to their nature and role, to produce a single text that is the Word of both.

# II. THE ANALOGY OF THE HYPOSTATIC UNION: ONE BOOK, TWO NATURES

To illuminate the mystery of dual authorship, theologians have long drawn on the analogy of the hypostatic union, the Christological doctrine that Jesus Christ is one person in two natures, fully divine and fully human. The Council

of Chalcedon (451 AD) defined this with characteristic precision: the two natures exist in Christ "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." The divine nature does not absorb or override the human; the human does not dilute or compromise the divine. Both are fully present, fully real, and fully operative in the one person of the Son of God.

B. B. Warfield was among the most articulate in pressing this analogy into service for the doctrine of Scripture. Just as Christ is one person in whom divinity and humanity coexist without mixture or diminishment, so Scripture is one book in which the Word of God and the words of human beings coexist without the divine element compromising the genuine humanity of the text or the human element introducing error into the divine content. The analogy is not perfect (no analogy of the divine is), but it is illuminating precisely because it is the only other instance in Christian theology where we are called to affirm a genuine and undiminished duality within a single unified reality.

## *A. One Book, Fully Divine*

Just as the full divinity of Christ means that everything He says and does carries the weight of God's own authority, so the divine authorship of Scripture means that everything the Bible affirms carries the weight of God's own authority. There is no part of the biblical text that is less than the Word of God. There is no section that represents the human author speaking on his own apart from the divine. The whole of Scripture, in every part, bears the character of the divine breath. When Isaiah speaks, God speaks. When Luke records his carefully researched account, God is narrating. When Paul argues his case for justification by faith, God is making the argument. The primary authorship of God extends to every page, every paragraph, every word.

## *B. One Book, Fully Human*

At the same time, just as the full humanity of Christ means that He genuinely experienced human limitation, weakness, growth, and emotion without sin, so the full humanity of Scripture means that the text is genuinely human writing. It is shaped by the particular personalities, experiences, literary styles, and historical contexts of its human authors, without those human dimensions introducing error. The humanity of Scripture is not a problem to be explained away; it is a feature of God's gracious condescension, His willingness to speak to us in our own language, through our own kind, in the forms and patterns of human communication that we can receive and understand.

This has a significant implication that is often overlooked: the humanity of Scripture is not evidence against its divinity. When critics point to the obvious human marks of the biblical text (the personal concerns of Paul's letters, the historical particularity of the Gospel narratives, the emotional rawness of the psalms of lament) as evidence that these texts are merely human and therefore fallible, they are making the same error that docetists made about Christ. The docetists, unable to accept that the eternal Son of God had truly become human, concluded that His humanity must be an appearance only: He only seemed to be human. The parallel error regarding Scripture is to conclude that, because the text is truly divine, its humanity must be only apparent. Both errors destroy what they intend to protect. The humanity of Scripture, like the humanity of Christ, is not a concession or a limitation but a glorious expression of the same God who became flesh and dwelt among us.

# III. THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SUPERINTENDING THE HUMAN AUTHORS

The specific agent of the divine side of the concursus is the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who moves upon the human authors, carrying them along to produce the written Word of God. This is consistent with the Spirit's broader role in the economy of the Trinity as the one who applies and communicates what the Father purposes and the Son accomplishes.

The Spirit's work of inspiration is not uniform in its outward form. The biblical authors were prepared for their task in a variety of ways. Moses was drawn into a unique face-to-face relationship with God through decades of providential preparation. David was shaped by the full range of human experience: triumph and failure, intimacy with God and the consequences of sin, the heights of worship and the depths of anguish. Luke's preparation included careful historical research and the gathering of eyewitness testimony. Paul's preparation included his Pharisaic training, his Damascus Road encounter with the risen Christ, and his years of theological reflection in Arabia. In every case, the Spirit worked with and through what the human author brought to the task: his background, his vocabulary, his emotional range, his theological understanding, his literary gifts.

This is what the Westminster Confession of Faith means when it describes the Spirit as the one who "superintended" the human authors. Superintendence is not dictation. It is not the overriding of the human author's natural faculties. It is the sovereign governance of those faculties (their direction, their protection from error, their elevation), so that the writing they produce is exactly what God intended, without being anything other than the genuine expression of the human author himself. The Spirit did not make Isaiah write like David, or Paul write like John, or Luke write like Mark. He worked through each author's distinctive voice to produce the particular text that the divine plan required.

# IV. HUMAN PERSONALITY, STYLE, VOCABULARY, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN THE INSPIRED TEXT

One of the most compelling evidences for the genuine humanity of Scripture, and therefore for the authenticity of the dual authorship model, is the sheer diversity of literary character observable across the books of the Bible. This diversity is not a problem for the doctrine of inspiration; it is a demonstration of the organic model's explanatory power.

## *A. The Diversity of Style*

Isaiah writes with a grandeur and poetic elevation that has earned him the title "the Shakespeare of the prophets." His metaphors are sweeping, his visions majestic, his language dense with theological and literary richness. Amos, by contrast, is earthy, direct, and agricultural. He was a shepherd and fig-tree dresser from Tekoa whose prose carries the smell of the soil and the heat of the Palestinian sun. His oracles are blunt, his comparisons concrete, his anger at injustice barely contained.

The Gospel of Mark is rapid-fire and action-oriented; the word "immediately" ("euthys") appears over forty times, driving the narrative forward with breathless momentum. John's Gospel is meditative, circular, and theologically profound; it returns again and again to the same great themes (light and darkness, life and death, above and below), as though circling the sun of the incarnation from different angles. Matthew's Gospel is structured and Jewish, organized around five great discourses that mirror the structure of the Pentateuch. Luke's Gospel is literary and expansive, with a historian's eye for detail and a physician's sensitivity to the suffering of the marginalized.

None of this diversity is explained by a model of mechanical dictation, in which the Spirit simply spoke words into the authors' ears and they transcribed them. It is perfectly explained by the organic model, in which the Spirit worked through the distinct personalities, training, and literary gifts of each author to produce the precise text that He intended.

## *B. The Diversity of Vocabulary*

The vocabulary of the New Testament alone spans an enormous range. Paul's letters deploy the technical vocabulary of Hellenistic rhetoric and rabbinic argumentation. Hebrews uses some of the most sophisticated Greek in the entire New Testament, with long, periodic sentences and a fondness for alliteration that suggests an author of considerable literary education. The book of Revelation, by contrast, is written in a Greek that frequently breaks the rules of classical grammar in ways that most scholars attribute to John's Semitic background as a native Aramaic speaker writing in his second language under the pressure of overwhelming visionary experience.

The vocabulary differences between the Pauline letters and the Petrine letters, between the Johannine writings and the Synoptic Gospels, between the wisdom literature and the historical books of the Old Testament, are not evidence of different divine inspirations working at different levels. They are evidence of different human authors, each writing in their own voice, under the superintendence of the same Spirit who worked through each voice to produce the specific text He intended.

## *C. Historical and Cultural Embeddedness*

The biblical texts are also deeply embedded in their historical and cultural contexts. Amos speaks to the specific social injustices of eighth-century Israel. Jeremiah addresses the crisis of the Babylonian threat. Paul's letter to the Corinthians responds to specific problems in a specific congregation in a specific city. The letter to the Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians facing the pressure of apostasy in a particular moment of redemptive history. This historical particularity is not a limitation of inspiration but its very form, the mode by which the eternal Word of God addresses the contingent circumstances of real human beings in real history.

The Spirit did not inspire a timeless, ahistorical theological manual. He inspired documents written by real people to real audiences at real moments in history, because the God who inspired them is the God who acts in history, the God whose eternal purposes are worked out through the particular events of time and space. The historical embeddedness of Scripture is an expression of the same theological conviction that lies at the heart of the incarnation: the eternal Word became flesh and dwelt "among us", in a particular time and place, in a particular culture and language, as a particular person. The inspiration of Scripture is, in this respect, the literary analogue of the incarnation.

# V. LUKE'S RESEARCH AND PAUL'S PERSONAL NOTES: THE EVIDENCE OF CONCURSUS

Two passages in the New Testament provide particularly striking illustrations of how the Spirit's inspiration and the human author's natural activity coexist and cooperate in the production of Scripture.

## *A. Luke 1:1–4: Research and Inspiration*

The prologue of Luke's Gospel is one of the most theologically rich passages in the entire New Testament, not for its explicit doctrinal content, but for what it reveals about how an inspired author understood his own process of composition:

> *"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."*
>
> **Luke 1:1–4, NASB 1995**

Notice what Luke says about his method. He investigated everything carefully ("parēkolouthēkoti pāsin akribōs"). He gathered eyewitness testimony. He consulted earlier accounts. He organized his material in consecutive order ("kathēxēs"). He wrote with the explicit goal of providing Theophilus with an accurate, reliable account of the events of Jesus' life and ministry.

This is the language of a careful historian, not a passive recipient of divine dictation. Luke exercised his full capacities as a researcher and writer. He used his intelligence, his access to sources, his literary skill, and his historical judgment. And yet the result, the Gospel of Luke, is the inspired Word of God, fully authoritative, fully inerrant, the product of the Holy Spirit's superintendence.

This passage demonstrates the concursus in action. Luke's research was not something the Spirit worked around or despite; it was the very instrument through which the Spirit worked. The Spirit moved Luke to gather exactly the sources he needed, to interview the eyewitnesses whose testimony the Spirit intended him to include, to organize the material in the order that the Spirit intended, and to write in the style that the Spirit intended, all without bypassing Luke's own historical intelligence and literary gifts. The result is a text that is simultaneously the product of Luke's careful research and the Word of God breathed out by the Holy Spirit.

## *B. 2 Timothy 4:13: Personal Notes and Inspiration*

A very different but equally illuminating example is found in Paul's second letter to Timothy, where the apostle writes from prison:

> *"When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments."*

**2 Timothy 4:13, NASB 1995**

This verse has puzzled some readers. What is a request for a winter cloak and some personal reading materials doing in the inspired Word of God? Is this really the Holy Spirit speaking? The answer is yes, and the reason illuminates the doctrine of dual authorship with great clarity.

Paul, writing from a Roman prison, is cold. He misses his books. He wants Timothy to come before winter. These are the perfectly natural, entirely human concerns of an aging apostle facing execution in a cold cell. And the Spirit, superintending Paul's letter, did not override these personal details or replace them with more explicitly theological content. He worked through them, allowing Paul's genuine human situation (his cold, his loneliness, his desire for his books and his friend) to be expressed in the inspired text, because these details serve purposes that the Spirit intended: they establish the authenticity and historical particularity of the letter, they reveal the humanity of apostolic ministry, and they preserve for us a window into the last days of the greatest missionary the church has ever known.

The fact that 2 Timothy 4:13 is fully inspired does not mean that every time a Christian is cold and wants their coat, they are recording Scripture. Inspiration is a unique, non-repeatable divine act applied to the canonical authors in the production of the canonical text. But within that unique act, the Spirit was not embarrassed by Paul's personal needs. He breathed them out as Scripture, because the God who became flesh and grew hungry and tired and wept at a grave is a God who is not embarrassed by the humanity of His servants.

# VI. THE THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS: FULLY DIVINE, FULLY HUMAN, WITHOUT ERROR

The doctrine of dual authorship carries several theological implications of great importance.

## *A. The Humanity of Scripture Does Not Entail Its Fallibility*

The most common and most consequential error in the modern approach to Scripture is the assumption that because the Bible is a genuinely human document, it must therefore be a fallible one. This inference seems obvious to those shaped by the Enlightenment's confidence in human reason and its suspicion of supernatural claims. Human beings make mistakes; therefore, a book written by human beings will contain mistakes. The conclusion seems inescapable.

But the conclusion does not follow from the premise, because the premise omits the decisive element: these particular human beings were writing under the sovereign superintendence of the Holy Spirit. The humanity of the biblical authors does not, by itself, entail the fallibility of the biblical text, any more than the humanity of Jesus entails the sinfulness of His life. Jesus was fully human and yet sinless, not because His humanity was overridden or suppressed, but because the Holy Spirit's unique work in His conception and the divine nature of His person preserved His full humanity from the particular corruption that afflicts the rest of Adam's race. In a formally analogous way, the humanity of the biblical authors does not entail the errancy of their inspired writings, because

the Spirit's superintendence preserved those writings from the particular corruption that attaches to uninspired human literature.

This is why the dual authorship model is not a compromise between the divine and the human but a genuine affirmation of both. The Bible is not divine despite its humanity, or human despite its divinity. It is genuinely both, fully and without remainder, because the God who became incarnate in human flesh is the same God who breathed out His Word through human authors.

### *B. The Human Marks of Scripture Are Hermeneutically Significant*

If the Spirit inspired Scripture organically, working through the human authors' own personalities, historical situations, and literary forms, then those human marks are not obstacles to interpretation but aids to it. The historical context of a letter, the literary genre of a psalm, the biographical background of a prophet, and the rhetorical conventions of a particular ancient culture are all part of the meaning of the text, because the Spirit worked through them to produce that meaning.

This is why good biblical interpretation is always historically and literarily informed. We are not trying to strip away the human context to find a timeless divine core. We are trying to understand what the Spirit said "through" the human author, "in" the particular form and context He chose, "for" the purposes He intended. The human marks of the text are the very vehicle of the divine message.

### *C. The Diversity of the Human Authors Reflects the Fullness of the Divine Revelation*

The remarkable diversity of the biblical canon is itself a testimony to the wisdom and richness of the divine Author: sixty-six books, written by over forty human authors, spanning fifteen centuries, in three languages, across an enormous range of literary genres and historical contexts. God did not produce a single, stylistically uniform document. He produced a library, and a vast, diverse, intertextually rich library at that, precisely because the fullness of His self-revelation required the full range of human expression to contain it. The God who is simultaneously holy and merciful, majestic and intimate, wrathful and gracious, sovereign and personal, required the full emotional range of the psalmists, the full rhetorical power of the prophets, the full narrative sweep of the historians, and the full theological depth of the apostles to express Himself adequately to His people.

The diversity of the human authors is not a problem to be explained; it is a gift to be celebrated. It is the Spirit's way of ensuring that the full-orbed reality of God and His saving purposes could be communicated to the full-orbed complexity of human experience.

## VII. THE ORGANIC VIEW OF INSPIRATION: THE SPIRIT WORKING THROUGH HUMAN FACULTIES

The model of inspiration that best captures the biblical evidence, the theological tradition, and the observable features of the text is what B. B. Warfield called the "organic" view of inspiration, as distinguished from the "mechanical" or "dynamical" views.

The "mechanical" view holds that the Spirit operated the human authors as a musician plays an instrument, effectively setting aside their personalities and faculties to produce a text that is purely divine in its character. This view cannot account for the evident humanity of the biblical text and effectively denies the genuine secondary authorship of the human writers.

The "dynamical" view holds that the Spirit elevated the religious consciousness and spiritual sensitivity of the human authors, producing writings of unusual spiritual depth and insight, but does not guarantee the inerrancy or even the unique authority of the resulting text. This view cannot account for the biblical claim that all Scripture is the product of the divine breath.

The "organic" view holds that the Spirit prepared and moved the human authors in such a way that their own personalities, experiences, backgrounds, vocabularies, and literary gifts were the very instrument through which He produced the text He intended, without error and without bypassing the genuine humanity of the authors. The term "organic" is apt: just as an organism grows and develops through the expression of its own internal nature rather than by being mechanically manufactured from the outside, so the inspired text grew from within the human authors' own natures and capacities, shaped and directed from within by the Spirit who had prepared those natures for exactly this purpose.

Warfield captures this beautifully:

> *"The Holy Spirit's superintendence extended to the choice of words by the human authors (verbal inspiration), and that this divine control was exercised through the human authors in such a way as to preserve the free and natural operation of their human faculties (organic inspiration). The result is a text that is wholly the product of the Spirit and wholly the product of the human authors, not partly one and partly the other."*

This is the mystery that the doctrine of dual authorship invites us to confess: not that God and man each contributed half of Scripture, but that God contributed all of Scripture through man, and man contributed all of Scripture under God. The full sovereignty of the divine authorship and the full genuineness of the human authorship coexist without competition, in the same mystery of concursus that makes the incarnation possible, because both rest on the same sovereign, gracious, life-giving act of the God who is always at work in, through, and with the creaturely instruments He has made.

# Key Text: 2 Peter 1:19–21 (NASB 1995)

*So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention*

*as to a lamp shining in a dark place,*

*until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.*

*But know this first of all,*

*that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,*

*for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will,*

*but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

# Theological Terms and Definitions

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| **Dual Authorship** | The doctrine that the books of Scripture have two genuine authors: God as the primary author, who breathed out the text and bears ultimate responsibility for its content and truthfulness; and a human author, who wrote freely and naturally in their own style, vocabulary, and historical context, yet was superintended by the Holy Spirit so that every word is exactly what God intended. |
| **Concursus (Concurrence)** | From the Latin concurrere, "to run together." The theological term for the simultaneous and cooperative action of God and the human author in the production of Scripture. The divine and human agencies do not operate in sequence (God then man) or in competition (God overriding man) but together, with God working through the human author's full exercise of his own faculties to produce a text that is wholly divine and wholly human. |
| **Primary Authorship** | God's authorship of Scripture as its ultimate origin, its supreme authority, and the guarantor of its truthfulness. God is the primary author in that He is the one who determined what Scripture would say, superintended its production, and stands behind every word as the one who breathed it out. The designation 'primary' does not mean that God's authorship overshadows or erases the human author's contribution; rather, it establishes the proper order of authority. |
| **Secondary Authorship** | The genuine, active authorship of the human writers of Scripture, who wrote with full engagement of their own personalities, experiences, vocabularies, research processes, and literary styles. Secondary authorship is real authorship; the human authors are not mere conduits or transcription machines. But it is secondary in that it operates under the sovereign superintendence of God the Holy Spirit and does not introduce error into the inspired text. |
| **Hypostatic Union** | The orthodox Christological doctrine that Jesus Christ is one person in two natures, fully divine and fully human, without mixture, confusion, separation, or division (Council of Chalcedon, AD 451). Used by analogy in the doctrine of Scripture to illuminate how the Bible can be simultaneously and wholly the Word of God and a genuinely human document, without either its divinity compromising its humanity or its humanity compromising its divinity. |
| **Organic Inspiration** | A description of the mode of inspiration that emphasizes the Spirit's working through the human authors' own faculties, personalities, and experiences rather than apart from them or in spite of them. The term 'organic' (from the Greek organon, 'instrument') captures the idea that the human author is a living instrument through whom the Spirit works, not a mechanical device that the Spirit operates independently of its own nature. |
| **Superintendence** | The work of the Holy Spirit in guiding, overseeing, and governing the human authors of Scripture in such a way that what they freely wrote is precisely what God intended, without error and without ceasing to be genuinely human writing. Superintendence is distinct from dictation: the Spirit did not bypass the human authors' faculties but worked through them, ensuring the result without eliminating the process. |
| **Idiolectic Variation** | The observable differences in vocabulary, style, tone, and literary character between different biblical authors: the grand poetry of Isaiah, the earthy directness of Amos, the theological depth of Paul, the pastoral warmth of John, the historical precision of Luke. These variations are evidence of genuine human authorship and are entirely consistent with (indeed, are produced by) organic inspiration, in which the Spirit works through each author's unique personality rather than imposing a uniform divine style. |
| **Accommodation** | The theological principle that God condescends to reveal Himself to human beings in ways that are suited to finite human understanding, using human language, human literary forms, |

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| | and the categories of particular historical and cultural contexts. Accommodation does not imply that God's revelation is distorted or erroneous; it means that the infinite God graciously stoops to speak in forms that finite creatures can receive. |
| **Autographic Inerrancy** | The doctrine that inerrancy applies to the original autographs of Scripture (the manuscripts as produced by the inspired human authors) rather than to every subsequent copy or translation. The dual authorship of Scripture, in which God works through human faculties, produces writings that are without error in their original form. Copyists and translators, not being inspired, may introduce errors; but those errors do not attach to the God-breathed original. |

# Practical Application

## A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the Bible has two genuine authors, God and man, and that this dual authorship is not a tension to be resolved but a mystery to be confessed and celebrated. We must resist two opposite errors: the error of docetism, which so emphasizes the divine character of Scripture that it cannot account for its genuine humanity; and the error of mere humanism, which so emphasizes the human character of Scripture that it cannot account for its divine authority. The orthodox doctrine of dual authorship holds both in irreducible tension, just as orthodox Christology holds together the two natures of Christ.

Practically, this means that we approach the biblical text with two convictions simultaneously: the conviction that what we are reading is the very Word of God, and the conviction that we are reading a genuinely human document that must be understood in its historical, literary, and cultural context. These convictions are not in competition; they are both required by the nature of the text the Spirit has given us.

## B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

The doctrine of dual authorship should fill us with wonder at the God who stooped so low and worked so graciously. He did not bypass humanity to give us His Word; He worked through humanity, in all its particularity and diversity and even its frailty, to give us a text that is rich precisely because it is so fully human and authoritative precisely because it is so fully divine. The God who became flesh and dwelt among us is the same God who breathed out His Word through fishermen and shepherds, through scholars and kings, through the broken and the triumphant, because He is a God who delights to use creaturely instruments to accomplish His eternal purposes.

Let the humanity of Scripture draw you in. Let the earthy honesty of the Psalms, the personal warmth of Paul's letters, the careful historical eye of Luke's Gospel, and the pastoral urgency of Peter's epistles all speak to you as the condescending grace of a God who meets you where you are, who speaks your language, who has entered your world to bring you into His. And in every human word, hear the divine voice that breathed it out.

## C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

**1.** Study the historical context of Scripture. Because the Spirit inspired the human authors in and through their particular historical and cultural situations, understanding those situations is essential for hearing what the Spirit said. Use good commentaries, biblical backgrounds resources, and study Bibles that illuminate the world in which each biblical text was written.

**2.** Attend to the literary character of each biblical book. Because the Spirit worked through diverse literary forms (poetry, narrative, epistle, prophecy, wisdom, apocalyptic), reading each book well requires sensitivity to its particular genre and literary conventions. A psalm of lament should be read differently from a Pauline theological argument. A prophetic oracle should be read differently from a historical narrative.

**3.** Appreciate the diversity of the biblical authors as a theological gift. When you notice the differences between Isaiah and Amos, between Mark and John, between Paul and James, do not treat those differences as a problem. Celebrate them as evidence of the Spirit's organic working through the full range of human personality and experience, producing a canon rich enough to address the full range of human need.

**4.** Resist the temptation to pit the divine and human dimensions of Scripture against each other. When someone argues that the Bible cannot be the Word of God because it is a genuinely human document, help them see that the dual authorship model is not a contradiction but the very shape of the incarnational gospel: the eternal comes to us in the temporal, the divine in the human, the infinite in the finite, without the eternal being compromised or the temporal being destroyed.

**5.** Trust the whole text. Because the Spirit worked through the human authors' full humanity to produce a wholly inerrant text, there is no part of Scripture that we may safely set aside as merely human and therefore unreliable: not the personal notes, not the genealogies, not the historical narratives, not the cultural instructions. The whole text, in all its human richness and particularity, bears the mark of the divine breath.

## D. *For Every Season of Life*

"For the new believer discovering the richness of Scripture:" The diversity you will find as you read through the Bible (the many voices, the varied styles, the different historical moments) is not a sign of confusion. It is a sign of the Spirit's creativity and the God's inexhaustible wisdom. As you read the Psalms and feel the rawness of their emotion, as you read Paul and feel the force of his logic, as you read Luke and feel the narrative pull of the Gospel story, know that in all of it you are hearing the one voice of the God who breathed it out.

"For the long-time believer who has grown overly familiar with the text:" The doctrine of dual authorship is an invitation to read Scripture with fresh eyes. Read it as a historian reads a primary source, attending to its particular historical moment, its cultural context, and the specific situation that called it forth. And then read it as a child reads a letter from a beloved parent, knowing that through every human word the Father is speaking to you directly.

"For the doubter wrestling with the humanity of Scripture:" The human marks of the Bible are not evidence against its divine authority. They are the form that divine authority takes when the infinite God stoops to speak to finite creatures. The God who is not embarrassed to become a carpenter from Nazareth is not embarrassed to breathe out His Word through the pen of a shepherd from Tekoa or a fisherman from Galilee. The humanity of Scripture is the humanity of the Incarnate Word: real, particular, fully engaged, and wholly without error.

# Study and Discussion Questions

## *Opening Question*

1. Think about a piece of writing that you found both deeply personal and profoundly true, such as a letter, a memoir, or a poem. What made its personal, human character an asset rather than a liability to its truthfulness? How might this illuminate the relationship between the human and divine dimensions of Scripture?

## *Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)*

2. Read 2 Peter 1:19–21. Identify both the human and the divine elements Peter describes in the production of prophetic Scripture. What does the word "moved" tell us about the relationship between the human authors and the Holy Spirit?
3. Read Luke 1:1–4. List the specific activities Luke describes himself as undertaking in preparing to write his Gospel. What do these activities tell us about the nature of his authorship? How does this passage challenge the mechanical dictation theory of inspiration?
4. Read 2 Timothy 4:9–13. What are the personal, human concerns Paul expresses in this passage? Why might God have chosen to include such personal details in the inspired Scriptures?

## *Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)*

5. Explain the distinction between primary authorship (God) and secondary authorship (the human writers). Why is this distinction important? What would be lost if we denied either dimension of the dual authorship?
6. The lesson uses the analogy of the hypostatic union to illuminate dual authorship. What are the strengths of this analogy? Are there any ways in which it breaks down or needs to be qualified?
7. What is the difference between the mechanical, dynamical, and organic views of inspiration? Why does the organic view best account for both the divine authority and the genuine humanity of the biblical text?
8. The lesson argues that "the humanity of Scripture does not entail its fallibility." What is the argument, and do you find it convincing? How does the analogy of Christ's sinless humanity help clarify this claim?

## *Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)*

9. How should the doctrine of dual authorship affect the way we study Scripture? What disciplines or practices does it require of the interpreter that a purely "devotional" approach might overlook?
10. The lesson argues that the diversity of the biblical authors (their different styles, vocabularies, and personalities) is a theological gift rather than a problem. Do you agree? How does the Spirit's organic working through human diversity enrich the canon as a whole?
11. A skeptic argues: "The Bible was written by human beings, so of course it contains human errors." Using the doctrine of dual authorship and the analogy of the hypostatic union, how would you respond to this objection?
12. Read 2 Peter 1:19 again: "we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place." In your own life, in what "dark places" has the lamp of Scripture given you light? How does the dual authorship of Scripture, its genuine humanity and its divine authority, make it uniquely suited to speak into the specific, particular darkness of your own experience?

## Prayer Focus

Spend time in prayer as a group, marveling at the condescension of a God who chose to give us His Word through human instruments: through shepherds and fishermen, scholars and kings, the broken and the triumphant. Thank Him for the richness that the diversity of the human authors brings to the canon, and for the faithfulness of the Spirit who worked through each of them to produce a text without error. Ask the Lord to give you a deeper appreciation for the full humanity of Scripture (its historical particularity, its literary variety, its personal warmth) and to hear in every human word the divine voice of the Father who loves you enough to speak your language. Pray for those who use the humanity of Scripture as an excuse to question its authority, that they might encounter the God who became flesh and understand why He speaks to us in human words.

***Soli Deo Gloria***

*To God Alone Be the Glory*

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