

How did we get the Bible we hold in our hands?

The Bridge Session One July 2015

Affirmations:

- The Bible is the word of God that reveals the Word of God. It is God's word for God's people.
- The Bible is much more than a book to be analyzed as we would another book of literature. It is sacred at its core.
- Our exercise is designed to strengthen one's faith as one sees the remarkable way God has moved through history to bring us the Bible.
- There are some elements of Divine mystery to the way the Bible speaks and moves in our lives.

Means of Inspiration:

There are three major approaches to Biblical inspiration:

Dictation: The approach that God dictated the Bible word for word to the writers. Who the writer was, their story or their unique experience with God is not a part of the equation. This is held by those that are most conservative in their approach to Scripture.

Verbal Plenary inspiration: The word *plenary* means "full" or "complete". Therefore, plenary verbal inspiration asserts that God inspired the complete text(s) of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, including both historical and doctrinal details. The word *verbal* affirms the idea that inspiration extends to the very words the writers chose. In this view the human writers' "individual backgrounds, personal traits, and literary styles were authentically theirs, but had been providentially prepared by God for use as his instrument in producing Scripture."ⁱ

Dynamic inspiration: The thoughts contained in the Bible are inspired, but the words used were left to the individual writers. This is also referred to by some as **Limited inspiration:** This view proposes that Scripture is inspired, yet it is limited to certain aspects. It affirms that God guided the writers, yet also allowed them the freedom to express their own thoughts regarding history and experiences they had. This allows the Bible to contain historical errors, yet, it is claimed that the Holy Spirit protected writers against any doctrinal error. Thus, the Bible may contain historical errors, but it remains a reliable source of doctrine.

Other tools used by those with the breadth of the church to shape our understanding of Scripture:

- **Papal "ex cathedra" pronouncements**
- **Ecumenical Councils**
- **History**
- **Tradition**

Place of the Bible in faith and understanding

Sola scriptura holds that the Bible is the supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. *Sola scriptura* does not deny that other authorities govern Christian life and devotion, but sees them all as subordinate to and corrected by the written word of God. (Most Protestant/Evangelical traditions)

Prima scriptura holds that while the canonized scripture is primal, there are other means of inspiration that include nature, personal experience, tradition, common sense, and parallel teachings. (Anglicanism, Methodism)

Critical movements in the birth of the Bible

- **The Biblical story begins before written language.**
- **The means of transmission across time and place.**
- **The gathering of the stories.**
- **The place of Law (Torah) (400 BC) against the Prophets (132 BC) and the Writings (90-118 AD)**
- **The gospels.**
- **The letters (epistles).**
- **NT prophecy – foretelling verses forth-telling.**
- **The canonization process.**

ⁱ Myers, A. C. (1987). The Eerdmans Bible dictionary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. Entry on *Inspiration*