

### (c) Confluent

With respect to inspiration, we have seen that inspiration being plenary means that the entire Scripture is inspired by God. It is not as though there are simply some books or some portions of those books that are inspired, but the entirety of Scripture is the bearer of God's inspiration. So inspiration is plenary.

The second quality has to do with the depth of inspiration. That is that inspiration is verbal. It is not only the breadth of Scripture in its entirety, but it goes down to the very words of Scripture which are inspired.

The third property is that inspiration is *confluent*. This comes from the word meaning "to flow together." The idea here is that Scripture is the product of both human authors and the divine author. God is the author of Scripture, but also the Scriptures are human products as well. People wrote Scripture. The books that they wrote reflect their individual personalities, their vocabularies, their education, their training, and so forth. These are very much human products. A correct doctrine of inspiration needs to be confluent to allow the Scripture to be both a human and a divine product.

## (2) Theories of Inspiration

So inspiration of Scripture is plenary, verbal, and confluent. The question then is: how do you get such a text? How is such a text inspired? This brings us to theories of inspiration.

### (a) Dictation

The first theory of inspiration that might seem the most obvious would be a *dictation* theory of inspiration; namely, God

tells the human author what to write and the human author simply records what God has dictated to him. On this view the authors of Scripture are essentially stenographers. They take dictation from the Lord and write down what he says when he tells them to, and hence Scripture is God's Word to us.

This is essentially an Islamic view of inspiration. This is what Muslims believe about the Qur'an. The Qur'an is not written by Muhammad. The Qur'an is dictated by Allah to Muhammad, and Muhammad is simply a recorder – a stenographer – who writes down the dictation that God has given him in the Qur'an. So the question is: is this sort of theory of inspiration one that is also applicable to the books of the Bible in the same way that the Muslim thinks it is applicable to the Qur'an.

It is agreed by virtually everyone that a dictation theory of inspiration is inadequate. It doesn't explain the nature of Scripture adequately, particularly with respect to the property of being confluent. Certainly, dictation could give you a plenary inspiration. It could give you a verbal inspiration if the person doing the dictation gives you the actual words. But it won't give you a confluent inspiration because the human author here plays no role. He simply writes down what God tells him to. So it is not really a product of that human author.

This theory is difficult to square with some of the data of Scripture. For example, the so-called *levicula* of Scripture. That is to say, those elements in Scripture that are literally lightweight or trivial, if you will. To give an example of this, look at the last chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, where he sends all his greetings to various Roman Christians. So he says in verse 16:6ff,

Greet Mary, who has worked hard among you. Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners; they are men of note among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, eminent in the Lord, also his mother and mine. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren who are with them. . . .

Are we really to think that these greetings are dictated by God and that they are the same sort of inspiration that attends the teaching of the book of Romans in the first twelve chapters? These lightweight or seemingly trivial parts of Scripture don't seem to be things that would be appropriately ascribed to divine dictation. Certainly they might be of some historical interest, but for the most part we don't even have any idea who these people were that Paul has greeted here. So these seemingly trivial parts of Scripture don't seem to accord very well with a theory that God has dictated to Paul to greet these various people or to say a lot of the other things that he will say particularly in the closing sections of his letters.

The other datum that is difficult to square with dictation would be those passages expressing the very human emotions of the authors where the authors' own personality and emotions come very much

into view. This certainly doesn't look like a dictation from the Lord. It looks as if the author is really expressing his own anger or joy in his written word. One very powerful example of this would be the Imprecatory Psalms. These are the Psalms that express terrible anger on the part of the psalmist where he is calling down God's curse upon people and which seem very ill-suited to think that God dictated these. Look at Psalm 139:19-24 for example:

O that thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God,  
and that men of blood would depart from me,  
men who maliciously defy thee,  
who lift themselves up against thee for evil!  
Do I not hate them that hate thee, O Lord?  
And do I not loathe them that rise up against thee?  
I hate them with perfect hatred;  
I count them my enemies.

Here, and in other Imprecatory Psalms, the psalmist expresses his own emotions and anger that do not seem to be very plausibly ascribed to dictation.

So the dictation theory cannot really account for a confluent Scripture which is the product of both the human authors and the divine author. It makes the only author of Scripture God, and there really isn't place for these very human elements in the Scripture.