

Views of Biblical Inspiration and Authority

1. Bible is authoritative because it's accurate/factual. God "dictated" the words.

The Bible is the inerrant Word of God. The writers were inspired and protected by the Holy Spirit from inscribing any error of any sort, including historical or scientific ones. In some views of inerrancy, the biblical writers' choice of words was providential guided by God. The Bible, whenever it is not obviously being metaphorical, is referring to events and states of affairs in the cosmos. The "literal" sense is just that. For example, "a thousand years" is not a poetic way of moving the reader to feel the weight of "a very long time," but refers exactly to a one thousand year period.

2. Holy Spirit is active in inspiring the writers, but the words come from man.

God inspired the biblical writers (and redactors, tradition transmitters, etc.) with wisdom, insight, and truth, but allowed them to express themselves in their own way according to the ethos of their cultures. Consequently, the assumptions, world views, biases and prejudices of their cultures are present in the text. The Bible is the infallible Word of God communicated through the fallible, culturally-conditioned words of human beings. We must look beyond the human letter in order to discern the Divine spirit.

3. God isn't involved in the writing process, but is active in what happened, the events described in the Bible. The Bible is human witness to God's activity.

God was active in certain historic events in ancient times, e.g. the exodus event, the giving of the Laws, the establishment of the various covenants, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, etc. The real revelation is what actually happened. The Bible is a human, and therefore culturally-conditioned and errant witness to these revelatory events.

4. God guides the process somehow, so the Bible has authority. The Bible won't fail you in matters of worship and practice.

God providentially guided the canonizing and transmission process of the biblical texts, making sure that the essential religious themes were expressed in them, but did not plant special ideas in the brains of the biblical authors nor put special experiences in their hearts.

5. I don't know how or why; I just know it works. The functional approach—You shall know them by their fruits. Devotional reading of Scripture.

No one knows how the Bible got to be the way it is; no one knows what is due to human agency and what is due to divine agency. Moreover, no one really needs to know. All we need to appreciate is the reality that somehow the Bible has the power to transform lives. It works, and therefore we declare it to be divinely authoritative and revelatory.

6. The Bible has as much authority as any other "classic" text. But then who decides which books are profound / "classic?"

The Bible, like other classic texts cherished by human cultures, is the product of purely human experiences and spiritual struggles. God was no more especially active in its composition than God was active in the production of other texts. Much of the material in it expresses genuine human spiritual insight, but much of it is the fruit of wrong turns, hurtful values, and bad ideas that have afflicted humanity in the past. It gives voice to human wisdom and to human folly, much as Beowulf or The Iliad does.

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