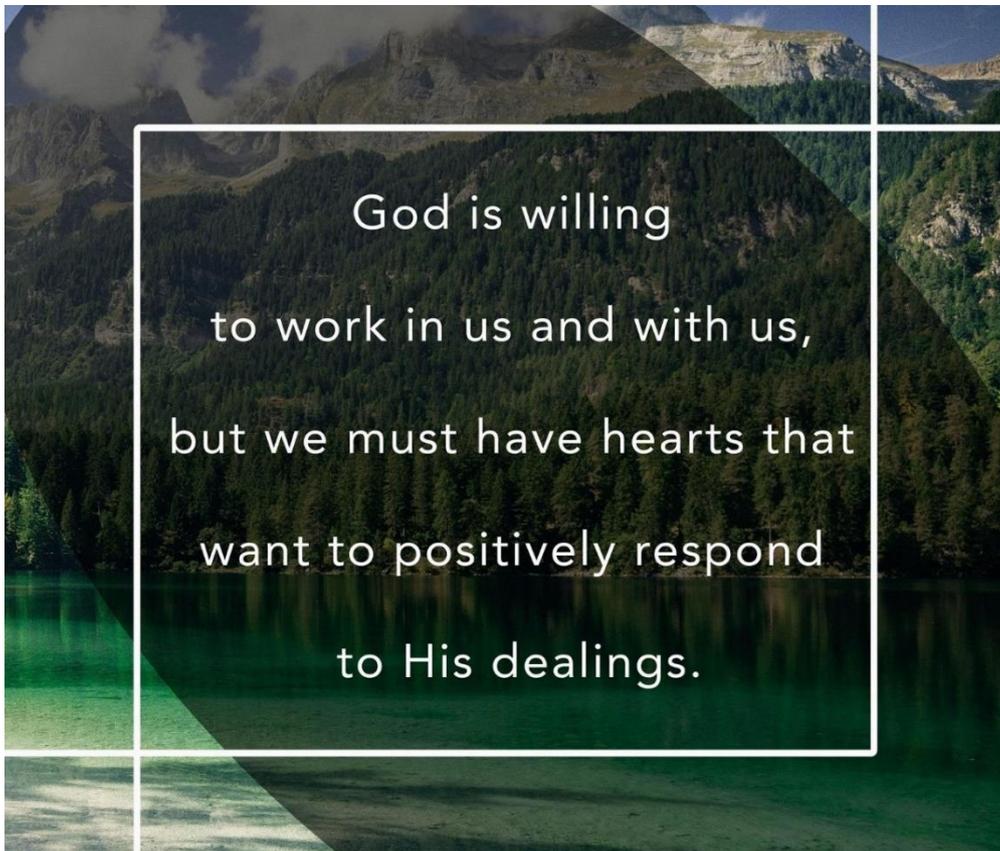


Bible Study

What is 'Inspiration'?

By C M White
Version 1.9



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What is 'Inspiration'?

Version 1.9

Authored by Craig Martin White.

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What does *inspiration* mean?

Every now and then one may hear someone saying how God inspired this or that. Or how He inspired a person. Or that the minister is inspired. But is that true?

Much of this idea about "inspiration" is something that has crept in from Pentecostals and evangelicals and has been acquired by some Church of God folk to seek and find some evidence for their inspiration or decision-making.

For instance, some believe that you don't need training or Bible guidelines on making judicial decisions, counselling etc as God inspires them to make the correct decisions. Others feel that you just "have to accept" this and that without even thinking about it as the decision made behind members' backs is a test of conversion – giving yourself over to them and their decisions.

Others think that just about anything they do (even if unsuccessful) is inspired and get upset if it doesn't work out.

Still others talk about this and that is inspired or this or that in their lives are inspired.

Finally, there are also those that believe God is in all that they do and will go around telling everyone that. However, when their task or project falls down or is even a disaster, they no longer talk about it, but start talking about something else God is inspiring them to do.

They believe that everything in their life is controlled and pre-planned by God – a sort of predestination or fatalism.

So, does God inspire Christians and ministers all the time; sometimes; or only on occasion? How does inspiration work? (refer to the **Appendix** for further information)

NB: this is a Bible study, not an article or an academic paper.

How were the Scriptures inspired?

The highest level of inspiration mentioned in the Bible is that of Christ and then those that were inspired to record the words and visions that God decided needed to be preserved and assembled into what we call the Bible today.

The Bible is actually "God breathed" given its Divine source and inspiration:

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
That the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." (II Tim 3:16-17)

“... knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the holy spirit.” (II Pet 1:20-21)

This does not mean possession by the holy spirit, over-riding human minds. They didn't become an automaton or typewriter of some sort. They were more like secretaries, recording God's revelations.

There are different ways He has inspired biblical revelations (Heb 1:1-2) and you can read about how He has appeared to men of God and inspired them (Rev 1:19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; Isa 8:1-2; Hab 2:2-3).

God can even speak through His enemies (Num 23-24; John 11:49-52), but this is very rare. And there are times that he even prepares His servants for the Divine revelation (Gal 1:15; Isa 49:1; Jer 1:3).

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (II Tim 3:16)

None of us Christians today are inspired like that.

Concerning the inspiration of the Bible, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* explains:

“Inspiration

that extraordinary or supernatural divine influence vouchsafed to those who wrote the Holy Scriptures, rendering their writings infallible. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (RSV, "Every scripture inspired of God"), 2 Timothy 3:16 . This is true of all the "sacred writings," not in the sense of their being works of genius or of supernatural insight, but as "theopneustic," i.e., "**breathed into by God**" in such a sense that the writers were supernaturally guided to express exactly what God intended them to express as a revelation of his mind and will. The testimony of the sacred writers themselves abundantly demonstrates this truth; and if they are infallible as teachers of doctrine, then the doctrine of plenary inspiration must be accepted. There are no errors in the Bible as it came from God, none have been proved to exist. Difficulties and phenomena we cannot explain are not errors. All these books of the Old and New Testaments are inspired. **We do not say that they contain, but that they are, the Word of God. The gift of inspiration rendered the writers the organs of God, for the infallible communication of his mind and will, in the very manner and words in which it was originally given.**

As to the nature of inspiration we have no information. This only we know, it rendered the writers infallible. They were all equally inspired, and are all equally infallible. The inspiration of the sacred writers did not change their characters. They retained all their individual peculiarities as thinkers or writers.” [emphasis mine]

Various Scriptures on divine inspiration follows:

"Yet **the Lord warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer**, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets."" (1Kings 17:13)

"However, You bore with them for many years,
And admonished them by Your spirit through Your prophets,
Yet they would not give ear.
Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands." (Neh 9:30)

"Come near to Me, listen to this:
From the first I have not spoken in secret,
From the time it took place, I was there.
And now **the Lord God has sent Me, and His spirit.**" (Is 48:16)

"**The spirit then entered me and made me stand on my feet**, and He spoke with me and said to me, "Go, shut yourself up in your house. As for you, son of man, they will put ropes on you and bind you with them so that you cannot go out among them. Moreover, I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be mute and cannot be a man who rebukes them, for they are a rebellious house." (Ezek 3:24-27)

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones." (Ezek 37:1)

"Surely the Lord God does nothing
Unless **He reveals His secret counsel**
To His servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7)

"On the other hand **I am filled with power—**
With the spirit of the Lord—
And with justice and courage
To make known to Jacob his rebellious act,
Even to Israel his sin." (Mic 3:8)

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,
inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.
It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those **who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven**, things into which angels long to look." (1Pet 1:11-12)

"Then **Jesus was led up by the spirit** into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."
(Matt 4:1)

"Immediately **the spirit impelled Him** to go out into the wilderness." (Mark 1:12)

"And **he came in the spirit** into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law." (Luke 2:27)

"**Then he opened their understanding**, that they might understand the scriptures,
And said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to
rise from the dead the third day:
And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among
all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:45-47)

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,
even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him
[it] nor knows him. **You know him, for he [it] dwells with you and will be in you.**
"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:15-18)

"And **he [it], when he [it] comes, will convict the world concerning sin and
righteousness and judgment;** concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me."
(John 16:8-9)

"... but **you will receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you;** and you
shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to
the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

"Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which **the holy spirit foretold by the
mouth of David** concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested
Jesus." (Acts 1:16)

"Then **the spirit said to Philip**, "Go up and join this chariot."" (Acts 8:29)

"While Peter was reflecting on the vision, **the spirit said to him**, "Behold, three men
are looking for you. But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without
misgivings, for I have sent them Myself."" (Acts 10:19-20)

"**The spirit told me to go with them without misgivings.** These six brethren also
went with me and we entered the man's house." (Acts 11:12)

"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, **the holy spirit said**, "Set apart
for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, **the holy spirit said**, "**Set apart
for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.**"

"So, being sent out by the holy spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus." (Acts 13: 2, 4)

"For **it seemed good to the holy spirit and to us** to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials." (Acts 15:28)

"They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, **having been forbidden by the holy spirit to speak** the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the spirit of Jesus did not permit them." (Acts 16:6-7)

"Now after these things were finished, **Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem** after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."" (Acts 19:21)

"And now, behold, bound by the spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there." (Acts 20:22)

"And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "**The holy spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers**" (Acts 28:25)

"For to us **God revealed them through the spirit; for the spirit searches all things**, even the depths of God." (1Cor 2:10)

"**Immediately I was in the spirit**; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne." (Rev 4:2)

"And **he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness**; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns." (Rev 17:3)

"And **he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain**, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." (Rev 21:10)

These Scriptures give us a glimpse into how the prophets and apostles were inspired and how powerful that inspiration was – but it was not possession and we normally do not experience that level of inspiration today.

So we have to do our part for the spirit of God to reveal things to us (1Cor 2:9-14) which includes Bible study and prayer – this is how the spirit is stirred up (1Tim 1:6). Over time it leads to unity (John 17:23) and develops the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5) and the blessings or beautiful attitudes that Christ extols in Matt 5.

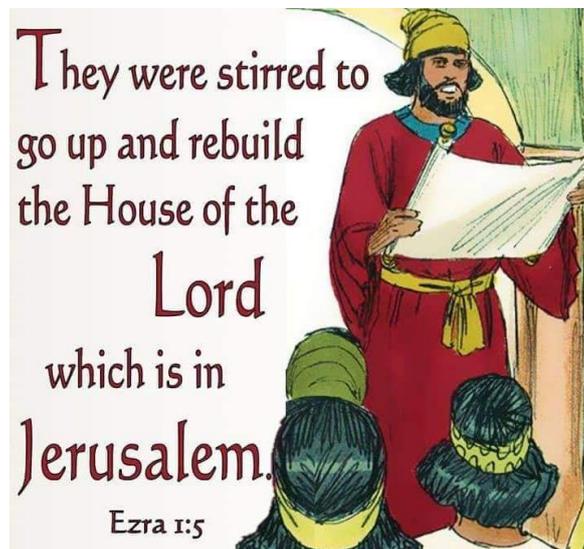
My observations is that the Pentecostal and evangelical approaches are outside these parameters and are of another spirit. Instead, the Scriptures teach us that we should be

“eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph 4:3)

Are Christians Inspired?

Over the years I have heard members make declarations that they feel “inspired” and that God was leading them to undertake such and such a task.

One even has talked about how they see angels and these have appeared in their paintings of various scenes. That is how inspired they felt.



Others have presented themselves as inspired with insights about other members as if they were psychologists or counsellors without any qualifications. This “inspiration” can be very dangerous and cause much hurt to those they discuss behind their backs – especially when they get in with the ministry or leaders to try and convince them.

And some even felt that God led them or inspired them to interpret various Scriptures this way and that, contradicting what others felt God had inspired them to believe. So which was the correct interpretation I have often wondered. They cannot all be correct and therefore not all inspired.

Given all this, in the first instance we need to know what inspiration really is.

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from who you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” (II Tim 3:14-16)

This shows us that the Old Testament was inspired. It was supernatural inspiration over an extended period with extraordinary powers and influences coming upon righteous men resulting in a number of books being inspired and written. The preservation of these books over centuries was likewise also inspired as was their assemblage into what we call the Old Testament.

This was the use of gentle, but powerful energies by God to develop His Word in writing. In other words, these books were breathed into existence by God, but via the human mind and hands.

No possession took place as happens with demon influences. Instead, it seems that the power of the holy spirit came into their minds to write down Divine revelation which expresses His mind.

Do any of us experience such today? The answer is a resounding "no!"

So, if we are not inspired at that level or grade, how are we inspired or led by God's spirit? Below are some Scriptures that I trust assists in understanding what the Bible says about inspiration for Christians, and not what we think the word means, influenced by Pentecostalism and evangelicalism.

This is how God inspires us through His holy spirit. His very life energy that we can have dwelling within us, connecting us to Him. And thereby very gently leading us:

The spirit of God infuses His love within us:

"and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the holy spirit who has been given to us." (Rom 5:5)

We become more like Jesus Christ due to the indwelling of the spirit:

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the spirit." (II Cor 3:18)

In this instance, Christ is the spirit that is referred to by Paul.

Due to its divine nature, the tiny spark of the holy spirit can help us:

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go I will send him to you." (John 16:7)

The spirit of God can help us gain insights:

"But the helper, the holy spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26)

We are sanctified by the spirit:

“And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God.” (ICor 6:11)

To be sanctified is to be approved by God after cleansing.

Amazingly, our prayers can even be guided by the spirit of God!

“Likewise **the spirit helps us in our weakness**. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the spirit, because **the spirit intercedes for the saints** according to the will of God.” (Rom 8:26-27)

God’s spirit can even give you hope – after all it is a part of or extension of God Himself:

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that **by the power of the holy spirit** you may abound in hope.” (Rom 15:13)

It provides a means to undertake the will of the Father and to help others:

“And the spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.”
So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”
And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.” (Acts 8:29-31)

Admittedly the above it is unclear what spirit is being referred to. An angel? The holy spirit metaphorically leading him?

Finally, the holy spirit provides gifts to God’s children in service to others:

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” (ICor 12:4-11)

Various Scriptures on how we are led by the spirit follows – this is a whole lot different to the idea that we are inspired to do this or that like the patriarchs or prophets of old.

"Teach me to do Your will,
For You are my God;
Let Your good spirit lead me on level ground." (Ps 143:10)

"For **all who are being led by the spirit of God**, these are sons of God." (Rom 14:10)

"But **if you are led by the spirit**, you are not under the [penalty of the] Law." (Gal 5:18)

The leading of the spirit is not anything at the same level as the prophets or Christ. Instead of possessing one, the spirit of God guides us like a shepherd. It's insertion into our brain and mind gives us a new heart that is open to God's instructions to enable us to walk in His way. It is a help, not an energy that forces one to do something:

"And I will give them one heart, and **a new spirit I will put within them**. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, **that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules** and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezek 11:19-20)

Having the indwelling of the holy spirit is not enough. It does not force you to do anything including making correct judgments – it is something that is studied and the Biblical guidelines followed. Nor does it operate outside of the Law of God – for God's way is based on law and order. It operates when one studies the Word, hears the Scriptures preached and as Christians assist one another via fellowship. It then helps us to keep these Laws and in developing character (which includes the fruit of the spirit and the beatitudes). This is quite contrary to the evangelicals and Pentecostals who proclaim that the holy spirit "inspires" Christians. Rather, it softens one's heart (makes us receptive) so that when one hears or studies the Laws of God, one wants to internalise and apply them.

It is up to YOU to put in the effort to follow God's ways and to do the right thing thereby developing character. Because God does not force you to do anything or develop character for you – because you and I have free moral agency – very gently led by the spirit of God.

I should add this point: do we see God's fingerprints in our lives? Is there an awareness that He is developing character in us through various experiences and situations. Many of these come out of nowhere, are completely unexpected and totally unfair. But with that spark of holy spirit inspiration, can we inch forward in our daily battles toward the Kingdom? Or do we give up?

How will our reaction impact the reward God eagerly wishes to bestow upon us

Think about what happened leading up to your calling? Were there influences from family members; what historical events in your life help shape you; and as a result do you notice God's hand in your affairs? This influence is also inspiration. But it is subtle and normally not compelling you to do anything, but suggests a way forward. With the holy spirit working with you, then you make choices.

The old Worldwide Church of God knew that members could possess some inspiration including during the song brackets in Sabbath services:

"Can WE BE INSPIRED? Rightly inspired?
Not by selfish interests, lust for personal gain or partisan views, but by God's Spirit!
Not inspired to wild demonstrations of frenzy, but to an emission of sincere love and
praise to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ." (David Antion, *Church of God
News*, Southwest District, Nov 1964, p. 2)

The issue is, do fully understand what this means?

The Meaning of Isaiah 30:21

As we have seen, there are different forms and types of inspiration. One of them is a metaphorical voice that seems to tug at one. A conscience or feeling to do or not to do something. But it is not an overwhelming force.

A Scripture that is used by some to promote the idea that in the Millennium people will be prevented from doing wrong by quick intervention is

"And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it,"
when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left." (Is 30:21) [cp Is 29:18]

The assertion that people will be prevented from doing wrong may be the case; or it could be that instead of preventing, it may be suggesting what one shouldn't do; or it could be metaphorical of the holy spirit's influence.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible explains:

"And thine ears shall hear a word - A command or admonition. You shall not be left without spiritual guides and directors.

Behind thee - That is, says Vitranga, the voice of conscience, as an "invisible" guide, shall admonish you. The idea, however, seems to be that if they were ignorant of the way, or if they were inclined to err, they should be admonished of the true path which they ought to pursue. The idea is taken either from the practice of teachers who are represented as "following" their pupils and admonishing them if they were in danger of going astray (Grotius; or from shepherds, who are represented as following their flocks, and directing them when they wandered. The Jews understand this voice 'from behind' to be the *בת כל* bath kol - 'the daughter of the voice;' a divine admonition which they suppose attends the pious. The essential thought is, that they would not be left without a guide and instructor; that, if they were inclined to go astray, they would be recalled to the path of truth and duty. Perhaps there is the idea, also, that the admonition would come from some "invisible" influence, or from some unexpected quarter, as it is often the case that those who are inquiring on the subject of religion receive light from quarters where they least expected, and from sources to which they were not looking. **It is also true that the admonitions of Providence, of conscience, and**

of the Holy Spirit, seem often to come from "behind" us. that is, they "recall" us from the path in which we were going, and restrain us from a course that would be fraught with danger.

When ye turn to the right hand ... - When you shall be in danger of wandering from the direct and straight path. The voice shall recall you, and direct you in the way in which you ought to go." [emphasis mine]¹

From this it seems that there will not be anyone or spirit being controlling humans. Rather, it will be the holy spirit, like a shepherd, very gently prompting our conscience.

Note the following Scriptures that may provide further insights into how God actually works, thus aiding our understanding of Isaiah 30:21:

"Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." (Deut 5:32)

"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." (Jos 1:7)

"Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left." (Jos 23:6)

"Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He shows sinners the way. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way." (Ps 25:8-9)

"in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." (Prov 3:6)

"Then the wayward in spirit will come to understanding, and those who grumble will accept instruction." (Is 29:24)

"And there will be a highway called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not travel it, only those who walk in that Way--and fools will not stray onto it. No lion will be there, and no vicious beast will go up on it. Such will not be found there, but the redeemed will walk upon it" (Is 35:8-9)

"I will lead the blind by a way they did not know; I will guide them on unfamiliar paths. I will turn darkness into light before them and rough places into level ground. These things I will do for them, and I will not forsake them.

¹ Refer also to the *Pulpit Commentary*: "Verse 21. - Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee. Kay says, "The teacher will go before his flock, marking out the way before them." But in that case, the flock would hear the word before them. Delitzsch explains better, "They (the teachers), as the shepherds of the flock, would follow the people with friendly words of admonition." Even in the East, shepherds sometimes follow their flocks (see Genesis 32:17). When ye turn, i.e. when ye are about to turn."

"Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you for your benefit, who directs you in the way you should go."
(Is 48:16-17)

Are elders and pastors inspired like prophets and apostles?

Some years ago a pastor's behaviours, slander, gossip, filthy talk, laziness and undermining many Church of God doctrines was reported to the local governing body by members. He claimed that God inspired him in his ministry and especially not preaching many doctrines of the Church.

The governing body accepted that excuse because he used the term 'I am inspired of God.' This hoodwinked them because they really believed that elders and pastors were inspired by God and this over-rode Church policies and teachings. Though this 'inspiration' belief was not taught by the Church, they felt impelled to support one of their own, despite the Scriptures – because he used the word "inspired".

Some seem to think they are inspired like the apostles, prophets and patriarchs! Yet nowhere in the Bible are pastors and elders portrayed as having inspiration on the same level as prophets, patriarchs or apostles.

Concerning one thinking that they are inspired - would not Christ have been the most inspired man in human history? Others at the top level would be men such as Moses, Noah, Abraham and later the prophets and apostles? Are not Christians inspired, but at a much lower level than the aforementioned? But are elders inspired like the holy men of old? The Bible does not reveal such a status.

Alas! Raising oneself to a level far higher than the Bible does, results in all sorts of problems and abuses.

Concluding Remarks

From the above we can see that Christians are nowhere near inspired to the degree that some believe or think actually happens to them. They cannot see that everything is *not* planned out for them in the main. That instead we live our lives like everyone else and make decisions and build character by studying the word and using the holy spirit's energies.

Tests and situations are also Divinely inspired from time-to-time, but in the main we live our lives like everyone else without God intervening, pre-arranging and inspiring everything.

A lot of this is wishful thinking, self-deception and perhaps even exaggerating their experiences to others. They may like to be told that what has transpired in their life is inspired – without even knowing what inspired means. They feel a sense of self-importance beyond what they should. Unfortunately, this is preyed upon by others that wish to use them.

Our inspiration should be looked upon in Biblical light and not something to be sought out and "proven" to ourselves as if we are on a pedestal.

One final thought: God gives humans the capacity to do things and to improve (this depends on upbringing, natural ability etc). But in addition to that, Christians are gifted the holy spirit – a tiny bit of power that influences us. It does not possess, overpower or force us to do anything.

So, it is still 90% perspiration (your efforts) and 10% inspiration as some say (the percentages are mere guesses to demonstrate a point). But, because God has given you a body and mind to do the 90%, all glory and thanks must go to Him. In addition He provides the holy spirit to assist us.

Repentance and faith are also gifts from Him, though it is up to us to do apply the energy to repent and have faith in Him. As such, He must be praised and glorified for what He has done for us. After all, He is the One that provides all good things to us puny humans. In His graciousness, He even offers us eternal life!

So, there is inspiration, but it is at various levels, and ours is nowhere close to what many think Christians are inspired.

Appendix

Inspiration

The supernatural action of the Holy Spirit on the mind of the sacred writers whereby the Scriptures were not merely their own but the word of God. Scripture not merely contains but is the word of God. As the whole Godhead was joined to the whole manhood, and became the Incarnate Word, so the written word is at once perfectly divine and perfectly human; infallibly authoritative because it is the word of God, intelligible because in the language of men. If it were not human we should not understand it; if it were not divine it would not be an unerring guide. The term "scriptures" is attached to them exclusively in the word of God itself, as having an authority no other writings have (John 5:39; John 10:34-36). They are called "the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2), i.e. divine utterances.

If Scripture were not plenary and verbally sanctioned by God, its practical utility as a sure guide in all questions directly or indirectly affecting doctrine and practice would be materially impaired, for what means would there be of distinguishing the false in it from the true? Inspiration does not divest the writers of their several individualities of style, just as the inspired teachers in the early church were not passive machines in prophesying (1 Corinthians 14:32). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). Their will became one with God's will; His Spirit acted on their spirit, so that their individuality had free play in the sphere of His inspiration. As to religious truths the collective Scriptures have unity of authorship; as to other matters their authorship is palpably as manifold as the writers. The variety is human, the unity divine. If the four evangelists were mere machines narrating the same events in the same order and words, they would cease to be independent witnesses. Their very discrepancies (only seeming ones) disprove collusion.

The solutions proposed in Harmonies, being necessarily conjectural, may or may not be the true ones; but they at least prove that the differences are not irreconcilable and would be cleared up if we knew all the facts. They test our faith, whether on reasonable evidence we will unreservedly believe His word in spite of some difficulties, designedly permitted for our probation. The slight

variations in the Decalogue between Exodus 20 and its repetition Deuteronomy 5, and in Psalm 18 compared with 2 Samuel 22, in Psalm 14 compared with Psalm 53, and in New Testament quotations of Old Testament, (sometimes from Septuagint which varies from Hebrew, sometimes from neither in every word), all prove the Spirit-produced independence of the sacred writers who under divine guidance and sanction presented on different occasions the same substantial truths under different aspects, the one complementing the other.

One or two instances occur where the errors of transcribers cause a real discrepancy (2 Kings 8:26, compared with 2 Chronicles 22:2). A perpetual miracle alone could have prevented such very exceptional and palpable copyists' mistakes. But in seeming discrepancies, as between the accounts of the same event in different Gospels, each account presents some fresh aspect of divine truth; none containing the whole, but all together presenting the complete exhibition of the truth. Origen profoundly says: "in revelation as in nature we see a self concealing, self revealing God, who makes Himself known only to those who earnestly seek Him; in both we find stimulants to faith and occasions for unbelief." The assaults of adversaries on seemingly weak points have resulted in the eliciting of beautiful and delicate harmonies unperceived before; the gospel defenses have been proved the more impregnable, and the things meant to injure "have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."

When once it is admitted that the New Testament writers were neither fanatics nor enthusiasts, (and infidelity has never yet produced a satisfactory theory to show them to have been either,) their miracles and their divine commission must also be admitted, for they expressly claim these. Thus, Paul (1 Corinthians 14:37), "if any man think himself a prophet, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." And not only the things but the words; (1 Corinthians 2:13) "we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth." The "discerning of spirits" was one of the miraculous gifts in the apostolic churches. His appeal on the ground of miracles (1 Corinthians 2:4) which are taken for granted as notorious rather than asserted, (the incidental mention being a clear mark of truth because it excludes suspicion of design,) and to persons whose miraculous discernment of spirits enabled them to test such claims, is the strongest proof of the divine authority of his writings.

Peter (2 Peter 3:16) classes Paul's epistles with "the other Scriptures"; therefore whatever inspiration is in the latter is in the former also. That inspiration excludes error from Scripture words, so far as these affect doctrine and morals, appears from Psalm 12:6, "the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." As our Lord promised the disciples His Holy Spirit, to teach them how and what they should say before magistrates (Matthew 10:19-20), much more did the Spirit "abiding" with the church "for ever" (John 14:16) secure for the written word, the only surviving infallible oracle, the inspiration of the manner as well as the matter. So (John 16:13) "the Spirit of truth will guide you into all (the) truth," namely, not truth in general but Christian truth.

Also (John 14:26) "the Holy Spirit shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." "He shall testify of Me" (John 15:26) "He will show you things to come ... He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-14). Paul (2 Timothy 3:16) declares that no part of the written word is uninspired, but "ALL" (literally, "every scripture," i.e. every portion) is "profitable" for the ends of a revelation, "doctrine, reproof (conjuring error: the two comprehending speculative divinity; then follows practical), correction (setting one right, 1 Corinthians 10:1-10), instruction (disciplinary training: Deuteronomy 13:5; 1 Corinthians 5:13) in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"; as it makes him "perfect" it must be perfect itself.

Some parts were immediately communicated by God, and are called "apocalypse" or "revelation," as that to John, and to Paul (2 Corinthians 12:1; Romans 16:25). Others, as the historical parts, are matter of human testimony. But inspiration was as much needed to write known facts authoritatively as to communicate new truths; else why should certain facts be selected and others be passed by? Inspired prohibition is as miraculous as inspired utterance. Had the evangelists been left to themselves, they doubtless would have given many details of Jesus' early life which our curiosity would have desired, but which divine wisdom withheld, in order to concentrate all our attention on Christ's ministry and death. The historical parts are quoted by Paul as God's "law," because they have His sanction and contain covert lessons of God's truth and His principles of governing the world and the church (Galatians 4:21).

Considering the vast amount of Mariolatry and idolatry which subsequently sprang up, the hand of God is marked in the absence from the Gospel histories of aught to countenance these errors. Sacred history is like "a dial in which the shadow, as well as the light, informs us" (Trench). The Spirit was needed to qualify the writers for giving what they have given, a condensed yet full and clear portraiture of Messiah, calculated to affect all hearts in every nation, and to sow in them seeds of faith, hope, and love. The minor details, such as Paul's direction to Timothy to "bring his cloth and parchments," and to "drink a little wine for his stomach's sake and his infirmities," are vivid touches which give life and nature to the picture, making us realize the circumstances and personality of the apostle and his disciple, and have their place in the inspired record, as each leaf has in the tree.

The genealogies, as in Genesis 10; Matthew 1, form most important links between the progressive stages in the sacred history, and are anything but dry and profitless to the diligent student. There is a progress in the manifestation of the eternal and unchangeable principles of morality, in the New Testament as compared with the Old Testament God never sanctioned evil, but dealt with the nonage of the world as to revenge, divorce, etc. as its case required, less strictly marking sin than under the clear light, of New Testament. (See REVENGE; DIVORCE.) The mode of God's inspiring the writers it is not essential for us to know; the result is what momentously concerns us, namely, that their writings are our sure guide; for (2 Peter 1:21) "the prophecy of Scripture (the written word of men inspired, as 'prophet' means 1 Corinthians 14:29, not merely a foreteller) came not by the will of man, but holy men spoke as they were moved (literally, borne along, Acts 2:2; rapt out of themselves, yet not losing self control 1 Corinthians 14:32) by the Holy Spirit."

Every word of inspiration is equally the word of God; but there is a progress in the mode of revelation and there are degrees in the importance of the words uttered. With the prophets God spoke in vision, but with Moses "face to face" and "mouth to mouth" (Exodus 33:11; Numbers 12:6-8). The highest revelation of all is that of God manifest in the flesh. But, however varied the mode, the result is that all Scripture alike is sanctioned as the word of God. Caiaphas is an instance showing that the words were sanctioned as divinely inspired; while the speaker himself did not know the deep significance of his own words (John 11:50), "he spoke not of himself." So (1 Peter 1:11) the Old Testament prophets "searched what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory, ... unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister," etc.

They too knew not the full meaning of their own words. For "no prophecy of Scripture proves to be of private solution" (Greek text of 2 Peter 1:20), i.e. it is not the utterance of the mere individual, and so to be solved or interpreted by him, but of "the Holy Spirit" by whom the writer was "moved"; Scripture is not restricted to the immediate sense in the mind of the individual writer, but has in view "the testimony of Jesus," which is "the spirit of prophecy" in the "holy men moved by the Holy

Spirit." The words of one compared with those of another from whom the former may be separated in age and in country often bring forth some truth evidently not contemplated by the writer, but designed by the ONE MIND who inspired, overruled, and sanctioned both. There is throughout the whole a consistently developed scheme, too grand for the mind of anyone writer. Our Lord and His apostles make vital truths hinge on single words. The force of Jesus' three answers, "It is written," to Satan's three temptations lies in single words (Matthew 4). So in Matthew 19:4.

Also He confutes the Sadducees and proves the resurrection of the body from words which otherwise we should scarcely have regarded as proving it (Matthew 22:32), "I am (not I was) the God of Abraham" (namely, the man in his integrity, body, soul, and spirit). The one word My is Christ's proof of His Godhead (Matthew 22:43), "the Lord said unto MY Lord (Psalm 90:1): if David call Him Lord, how is He His Son?" David could not have understood the full force of his own words (Psalm 22) as to the "gall," the "vinegar," the "parting of His garments," and "casting lots for the vesture," and other minute details fulfilled in Messiah. He who, working through means, creates the minute leaf as well as the mighty forest, saith of all His word, "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18; "law" means the whole Old Testament, as John (Matthew 10:35) uses "law" of the psalms).

Christ's argument, "if He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" rests on the one word "gods" being applied to rulers, as types of the Son of God, therefore still more applicable to the Antitype Himself. Our Lord makes it a fundamental principle "the Scripture cannot be broken," even as to one word (John 10:35). So also Paul shows unhesitating confidence in the divine authority of special words, as "seed" not "seeds" (Galatians 3:16), "all" (Hebrews 2:8), "brethren" (Hebrews 2:11), "today," and "My rest" (Hebrews 4:1-11). To crown all, Revelation (Revelation 22:19) at its close declares, "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."

Often it is a single verse that, by the same Spirit as inspired the word, has breathed new life into the sinner. The diligent student too is often struck by the unexpected light which one expression on examination affords, as in some masterpiece of art a single touch can impart life and meaning to the whole. Verbal inspiration does not require that every saying reported in Scripture should be a literal transcript of the speaker's words, but that it should be substantially a true statement, and such a one as the Spirit of God sanctions for the ends of the revelation. Moreover, in recording wicked men's sayings or doings, Scripture does not sanction but simply records them. So in the case of merely human utterances. In 1 Corinthians 7:5-6, Paul distinguishes his words "by permission" from those of commandment; and in 1 Corinthians 7:25-38 he gives his "judgment" as one faithful, but as having on the point "no commandment of the Lord."

Here his inspiration appears in his expressly declining to command as divinely authoritative a certain course as an apostle, and merely advising it as a Christian friend. How important it was to make this distinction appears from the subsequent error of the church in imposing vows of perpetual celibacy. So in 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 (1 Corinthians 7:10) he says on a particular case, "I, not the Lord," whereas he had on the main point said, "not I, but the Lord." Every word employed by the sacred writer in all cases is sanctioned as suited in its place for the Holy Spirit's purpose. Various readings in manuscripts do not invalidate verbal inspiration. It is the original Scriptures whose words have inspired authority, not the subsequent copies or versions. The words of the Decalogue were written by the finger of God, though the manuscripts transmitting them to us contain variations.

Like other gifts of God, this may be lost in whole or part by man's carelessness. Yet a remarkable providence has watched over Scripture, keeping the Jews from mutilating the Old Testament and the

Roman and Greek Catholics from mutilating the New Testament though witnessing against themselves, frontCANON.) Moreover God has preserved by human means a multitude of manuscripts, patristic quotations, and ancient versions, enabling us to restore the original text almost perfectly for all practical purposes. The range of doubt remaining is confined within narrow limits. Exemption from all transcriptional errors would have needed a perpetual miracle, which is not God's mode of dealing with us. While some passages affecting vital doctrines are on examination rejected as not in the original, the doctrines themselves stand firm as ever, because they rest on the agreeing testimony of the whole of God's word; in other passages the orthodox truths are confirmed more fully by restoring the original text.

Irenaeus (Adv. Haeres., 2:47) says, "in the many voiced tones of Scripture expressions there is one symphonious melody"; Origen (Hom. 39), "as among plants there is not one without its peculiar virtue ... so the spiritual botanist will find there is nothing, in all that is written, superfluous." The prophets preface their prophecies with "thus saith the Lord," "the burden (weighty utterance) of the word of the Lord" (Zechariah 9:1; Zechariah 12:1; Malachi 1:1). The apostles declare of them, "the Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spoke," "God showed by the mouth of all His prophets that," etc. (Acts 1:16; Acts 3:18; Acts 3:21; Acts 4:25). They rest the truth of the Holy Spirit's outpouring, Christ's resurrection, and the mystery of the admission of the Gentiles to be fellow heirs in the gospel, on the Old Testament as infallible (Acts 2:16; Acts 2:25-33; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 16:26).

If then the Old Testament prophets were infallible, much more the apostles in their New Testament Scriptures; as these and even the least in the gospel kingdom rank above those (Matthew 11:11; Ephesians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10). Paul received the gospel which he preached, by extraordinary revelation; therefore he claims for it divine authority (Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:3). His word is "the word of God" which "he speaks in Christ," also "Christ speaking in Him" (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 13:3). Just as Haggai was "the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message" (2 Corinthians 1:13), i.e. in vested with His commission; and Nehemiah 9:30, "by Thy Spirit in Thy prophets"; and David (2 Samuel 23:2), "the Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue."

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What is Inspiration?

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For the great enemy of truth
is very often not the lie--
deliberate, contrived and
dishonest--but the myth--
persistent, persuasive, and
unrealistic. Too often we
hold fast to the cliches of our
forebears. We subject all
facts to a prefabricated set of
interpretations. We enjoy the
comfort of opinion without
the discomfort of thought.

– John F. Kennedy