

Idea vs. Verbal Inspiration
Oct. 2, 2007

I believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the New Testament to write every word of their messages because:

1) If only the thoughts are inspired, who chose the words to express those thoughts? The answer must be either a) the authors themselves with no help from the Holy Spirit, **or** b) the authors themselves with the help of the Holy Spirit

If **a)** then how can I have confidence in the words chosen. The authors were but men and most unschooled. How can I have confidence that these unlearned (for the most part) men picked the exact word that correctly present to us the thoughts of the Holy Spirit. If any of the New Testament writers at any time, to any degree, incorrectly choose a word that did not exactly represent the meaning of the inspired thought then that thought did not get to me as the Holy Spirit intended. If this happened even one time and I don't know which word was incorrect, then it might be any of the words and therefore I have reason to doubt any of the words in the New Testament and can have no confidence in any of it. But this scenario is very probable since the writers were untrained in writing and a total of 27 books were written over a period of about 50 years. To assume that every writer every time choose the correct word to exactly express the inspired ideas that were new and not previously known and were on the most complex subject (how to live a good , hopeful, confident, fulfilling and pleasing-to-God life) would "require a willing suspension of disbelief." (... To quote a famous person)

If **b)** "the writers received help from the Holy Spirit" and that help was sufficient to insure the accuracy of the word chosen then I have no trouble with this definition of inspiration and would accept it on an equal basis with "verbal inspiration." It is just a different way to say the Holy Spirit approved or chose each and every word.

2) If only the thoughts (or ideas) are inspired then it is only the thoughts that I have to obey. Therefore every belief that is based on the individual words is questionable because those particular words might have been chosen incorrectly. Yet I must obey all the thoughts that are inspired, else I will be lost. But how can I know the thoughts to obey? Thoughts are only conveyed by words and if I can have no confidence in the words then how can I know what the thoughts are in order to obey them? In that case God has given us rules that we must obey and has given us no absolute way to determine what they are. But this is a contradiction in His nature of love and infinite power and wisdom. If God gives us rules that we must follow, He loves us enough to give us these rules in a fashion that we can understand (1 Corinthians 1:13) and have complete confidence in their accuracy, so that men are without excuse.

3) If dictation make the writers robots then any time I obey what God says I too am a robot. Remember that dictation does not mean suspension of free will. God chose these men very carefully. ***He knew what they would write before He inspired them.*** The indwelling Holy Spirit helped them in remaining faithful to God in writing what he told them to write.

4) How to explain the different personalities apparent in the various writings? Some say that if the Holy Spirit inspired the words only one personality would be displayed. I guess that one personality would be that of the Holy Spirit himself. This is a perfect example of

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anthropomorphism. **In the first place**, for any God fearing man to attribute to God (Holy Spirit) not only human characteristics but even less than human characteristics by saying that God can or would choose to write in only one literary style in all circumstances and to all audiences is no more than an unfounded assumption. **In the second place**, since God created all human personalities He would know them perfectly and could use as many of them as He chose to dictate the Bible. **In the third place**, knowing each of the New Testament writers completely and perfectly the Holy Spirit could have chosen the word to dictate that would perfectly match the personality of each writer and at same time correctly express the thought or idea inspired. **In the fourth place**, the Holy Spirit could have assisted the writer in his chose of words so that the writer would have chosen exactly the correct word that would have correctly expressed the inspired idea and, at the same time, perfectly fit his personality. Any of these four methods could have been used without denigrating the process of dictation as the definition of “Biblical inspiration.”

Since God is all powerful He is certainly able to have a book written correctly. He is all wise and therefore it is reasonable that the book He caused to be written correctly is exactly what he wanted us to know. Because His love for us is also infinite, He certainly would have provided us with such a book.

Would God allow any incorrect word to get into the Bible without giving us a means to discover that error and correct it?

Maybe our friend Ockham (see Ockham's razor in Hermeneutics) could help us. Dictation is a simple explanation that fits all the know facts and presents us with the fewest (and no insurmountable) difficulties.