

Sunday, January 24, 2016—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 17 Divine Dictation: The Mechanism of Inspiration? Part 4

Introduction

- In Lesson 14, I told you that we were going to study the following three points regarding Divine Dictation:
 - Study what modern theologians have said regarding the notion of dictation (Lesson 14).
 - Consider historic articulations of inspiration before the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* in 1859 under the following three categories.
 - The Pre-Reformation Fathers (Lesson 14)
 - The Reformers (Lesson 15)
 - Post-Reformation Theologians (Lesson 15)
 - Consider the Bible's testimony concerning itself. (Lessons 16 & 17)
- Last week, in Lesson 16, we began looking at the third and final point regarding Divine Dictation i.e., the Bible's testimony concerning itself. In doing so, I outlined the following three sub-points under which we would consider the Bible's testimony concerning itself.
 - Testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Testimony of the Law and the Prophets
 - Testimony of the Apostle Paul
- This morning, in Lesson 17, we will look at the final sub-point regarding the Testimony of the Apostle Paul and end with some concluding remarks regarding the issue of Divine Dictation.
- Remember, just because a host of Christian theologians and philosophers throughout church history have used dictation to describe how inspiration was accomplished, it is meaningless if the notion is not substantiated by scripture.

Dictation: What Saith the Scripture?

Testimony of the Apostle Paul

- Acts 22:14-15—And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, **and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.** 15) **For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.**
 - What did Paul hear? He heard the words of Christ's mouth. He had direct revelations from the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Acts 28:25—And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, **Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet** unto our fathers, (quotes Isaiah 6:9-10)
 - Who spoke Isaiah 6? When you go back there and read it you are reading what the Holy Spirit spoke. God breathed it! The thing that he wrote down back there came out of the mouth of God Almighty. God dictated the words of Isaiah 6 through the penmanship of Isaiah so that the very words that Isaiah wrote down were the very words that God determined should be written down. So, what Isaiah 6 says is what God said. So, when you are dealing with Isaiah 6, you are not dealing with Isaiah, you are dealing with God.
- Galatians 1:1-12—But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12) For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, **but by the revelation of Jesus Christ**.
 - Read the verse closely, it was not *by* the revelation from Christ, not just something sent to him, but it was the revelation *of* Jesus Christ. In other words, the Lord revealed himself to Paul and spoke with Paul face-to-face just like he did with Moses. He put his words in Paul's mouth, and Paul went out to preach and write those things down.
- I Corinthians 14:37—If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that **the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord**.
- I Timothy 6:2-3—. . . **These things teach and exhort**. 3) If any man teach otherwise, and **consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ**, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;
 - The words that Paul wrote down in I Timothy were the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's words were the words of the glorified Christ. Not only are these passages from the pen of the Apostle Paul strong with regard to Pauline authority, but they are also strong in regard to the doctrine of inspiration. The words of Christ to us today are found in Paul's epistles. Paul's epistles are not made up of Paul's interpretation of the things that Christ gave him. It is not just Paul's interpretation of the ministry of Christ, but you have the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ given to Paul and written down for you and for me.
- II Corinthians 13:3—Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.
 - That is something, isn't it? Who is speaking in Paul? Christ is speaking in Paul. The words that Paul speaks came from Christ.
- I Corinthians 7:12, 25— But to the rest **speak I, not the Lord**: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. . . 25) Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

- Here is one example from the pen of Paul where he says that he is speaking to the Corinthians “not the Lord.” Yet, what Paul wrote to them is considered scripture. This is evident by the very fact that it was included in the book of I Corinthians.
- Later, in I Corinthians 14 Paul states the following:
 - I Corinthians 14:37—If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.
- Paul did not say, “Everything I wrote unto you were the commandments of the Lord accept that part in chapter 7 where I offered my own judgement.” No, everything Paul wrote to the Corinthians was to be taken as the commandments of the Lord even the part where Paul offered his own judgement in chapter 7.
- I Corinthians 5:9—Paul wrote other things to the Corinthians that did not qualify as scripture because they were not written by inspiration of God. Consequently, they are not found in the cannon because they were not inspired. Yet, Paul’s judgment recorded in I Corinthians 7 is.
- Therefore, Paul’s judgement in I Corinthians 7 would be subject to all the verses we have studied regarding inspiration (II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:21). How can that be the case? Paul, on the basis of a mind that had been stirred by God the Holy Spirit and saturated with the words of God through the process of inspiration, was able to, out of that mind, write something that the Holy Spirit considered scripture.
- This is not hard to see when one considers the context of I Corinthians 7. In verse 1, Paul begins to address the Corinthians with respect to the questions they had written him about.
 - I Corinthians 7:1—Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman.
- In seeking to answer their questions, Paul references the teachings of the Lord during his earthly ministry regarding divorce and remarriage in verses 10 and 11 when he states:
 - I Corinthians 7:10-11—And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: 11) But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.
- The statement recorded in verses 10 and 11 does not go beyond the teaching offered by Christ in Matthew 5:32, 19:6-9; Mark 10:11-12, or Luke 16:18 on the subject of divorce and remarriage. In verse 12 and following, Paul expands upon the teaching of the Lord during his earthly ministry by offering instructions regarding divorce and remarriage not found in the gospels. Thus it makes sense to view Paul’s, statement in verse 12, “speak I, not the Lord” as a statement regarding the specific nature and more complete nature of the content revealed to him on the subject of divorce and remarriage as it relates to the body of Christ. In other words, Paul is not saying that he is just speaking and offering his

own judgment, rather he is referring to the further revelation committed to him with respect to the questions raised by the Corinthians.

- I Corinthians 7:40—the Spirit of God in Paul was able to bear witness to the authenticity of Paul’s judgment. In other words, Paul’s judgment was completely congruent with the mind of God the Holy Spirit on the matter.
- So here is an example, where God the Holy Spirit is able to record God’s word out of the mind, experience, and vocabulary of the Apostle Paul. This brings to mind what we studied about inspiration in Job 32:8 (But *there is* a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.). The book of Luke stands out as another example of this type of phenomena.
 - Luke 1:1-4—Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2) Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3) It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4) That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.
- Luke did not just write the book of Luke out of his own understanding from having interviewed the eyewitnesses alone. Rather, the Holy Spirit reached into the research that Luke had conducted to draw out and set forth in writing via the process of inspiration the Holy Spirit’s inspired history. The Holy Spirit used the knowledge gleaned from Luke’s research to state the history in God’s own words.
- What’s going on in I Corinthians 7 is very similar to what we saw last week in Lesson 16 where the Old Testament claims that Moses said something unto Israel (Exodus 3:1-6) while the New Testament clearly states that God said that unto Israel (Matthew 22:31). I Corinthians 7 states that Paul said something or offered his judgment while I Corinthians 14 says that what Paul wrote in chapter 7 was the commandment of the Lord. The only difference is that in I Corinthians we see the example occurring within the same book, not across the testaments.
- Verses like I Corinthians 7:12, 25, and those few like it, do not disqualify the notion of divine dictation. They fit the pattern exhibited across the whole of Scripture where a thing attributed to a human writer/speaker in one place is elsewhere attributed to God himself in another. Paul was able to write out of the supernatural understanding that God had given him and still have what was written qualify as inspired scripture. This could not be said for Paul’s first epistles addressed to the Corinthians, referred to in I Corinthians 5:9.

The Word and the Words

- Finis Dake stated, “The bible writers say 3,808 times that they were writing the words of God.”
- According to Dr. E.W. Bullinger, “The Word of God is thus for those "that believe." The "Word" as a whole; and the "words" of which it is made up. They cannot be separated.” (Bullinger, 3)

- Jeremiah 15:16— Thy **words were found**, and I did eat them; and **thy word** was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.
- John 17:8, 14— **For I have given unto them the words** which thou gavest me; . . .14) **I have given them thy word**; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.
- While Bullinger does not use the term dictation or offer any theories with respect to how it was accomplished, he just believed it. He believed it to be the *word* of God made up of the *words* of God. That being said, Bullinger did believe that all the *words*, every single one came from God and without them one would not have the *word* of God.
- Bullinger concludes his “Preliminary Remarks” to *How to Enjoy the Bible* with the following words:
 - “With these introductory remarks we shall proceed to divide what we may call our essential and fundamental principles of Bible study into two parts:
 - First, those connected with THE "WORD" as a whole; and
 - Second: those connected with THE "WORDS" of which the Word is composed.” (Bullinger, 6)
- John 8:58—Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, **I am**.
 - The Lord Jesus Christ hung the doctrine of his deity on the tense of one verb. The Jehovah God of the Old Testament is the Jesus Christ of the New Testament. Jesus means “Jehovah Saviour”. And Jesus built that whole doctrine on the tense of a verb, not just the verb but the tense.
- John 10:34-35—Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? 35) If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;
 - Christ hinges an argument about his being the son of God, and he states that they do not have any right to argue with him about calling himself the son of God if the scripture called them gods. He takes that one word of Psalm 82 and builds his case on it. That is how carefully the Lord Jesus Christ considered the authority of that book down to one word, one phrase. The verb tense is even important and not only that but the very number of the noun is important.
- Galatians 3:16—Now to Abraham and his **seed** were the promises made. He saith not, And to **seeds**, as of many; **but as of one**, And to thy seed, which is Christ.
 - The whole argument of this passage is that God used the singular, and not the plural, of the noun. I am saying that the bible writers make an entire point and depend upon one phrase, or the tense of the verb, or a single word in a passage, or the number of the noun. That is how minutely close God calls it. The words are important, not just the phrases, or the concepts, or the idea, or the sense and the flow.

Concluding Thoughts on Dictation

- Based upon the verses we have considered in Lessons 16 and 17, it seems reasonable to conceive that God accomplished the inspiration of His *word* by dictating the *words* to human authors.
- In Lesson 3 of Manuscript Evidence 101 Brother Jordan states the following regarding dictation before he touches upon the verses contained in this lesson. He states:
 - *God dictated the words of the scripture through human authors.* In other words, God reaches into the library of their vocabulary in such a way that the very words they used were the very words God had determined they would use from eternity past. That is where you take into account the human element. You take into account the fact that it is not a sterile kind of a thing – the writers were not glorified stenographers who had no part in it. God reaches into the library of their vocabulary; he reaches into their personality, and their circumstances, and he writes the words out through that.

Now, there are limitations on inspiration that we will study in future lessons, and you will see all the nuances of this. But the point that Paul is making in 2 Timothy 3:16 is that what is written on that page are the words that God Almighty put there.

Some of you people are writing with pens. Some of you are writing with pencils. You write with different instruments. What you write down takes on the character of the personality of that instrument. I have two pens in my pocket, and one has a finer tip than the other. The tip determines the way the characters look in large measure. You can write with a fountain pen or a ball-point pen, and you will notice a difference when you write with them.

The different characteristics of the instrument that is writing are there as God dictates the words out, but God Almighty is responsible for the words that are recorded. That means that whatever the scripture says, God says, and that is important!” (Jordan, MSS 101 Lesson 3)

- In Lesson 2 we covered the following presuppositions with respect to the word of God.
 - God exists. (Psalms 14:1)
 - God has magnified his *word* above his own name. (Psalms 138:2)
 - God’s *word* is eternally settled in heaven. (Psalms 119:89)
 - God, through the process of inspiration, has communicated his *word* to mankind. (I Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:21)
 - God’s *words* were written down so that they could be made eternally available to men. (Isaiah 30:8, I Peter 1:23)
 - God promised to preserve those *words* that he inspired. (Psalm 12:6-7)

- In determining whether or not dictation is an appropriate descriptor for how inspiration was accomplished one must consider the following questions.
 - Which one of the Biblical presuppositions listed above would the notion of dictation undermine?
 - What attribute of God or aspect of His fundamental nature and character does the notion of dictation overthrow?
 - What passage of scripture falsifies (proves false) the dictation view of inspiration?
 - Are there passages that suggest that God dictated his word to the human authors (see passages cited above)?
- So then, why should we let a group of unbelieving critics who deny all the presuppositions identified above talk us out of a particular view of inspiration?
- In seeking to save the doctrine of inspiration from how it had been “stigmatized” by its critics, modern Theologians failed to adequately meet the critics’ accusations. The critics claim the Bible is not of divine origins and cite the “human elements” as their proof. If God created humans he can certainly use their individual styles and vocabulary to record his word. How does changing the definition of dictation or just backing away from it all together solve the critics’ accusations of the Bible not being a divine book? The real issue is, IS THERE A GOD TO DICTATE? (Contributed by Nathan Kooienga)
- When we consider the Genesis creation account along with the account in the first chapter of John and also Colossians 1:17, we meet a God that Creates and sustains in being all things (besides Himself), *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). We are confronted with a terribly powerful and wise being. Is it possible to approach this topic with the idea of it being too large a task for God to dictate His word? Do we really want to say God had no idea what had transpired in the lives of these writers? NO! David wrote how well God knew him in the 139th Psalm. David tells us God knew everything about him even to his very thoughts. Likewise God knew these men intimately, for he created them and sustained them, in being, from moment to moment. If this is an accurate picture of the God we serve, then we must listen to God’s words to Job (Job 38:4), “where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.” How can we side with the critics and say the creator cannot use his creation to complete His will as He pleases? Again God’s word recorded by Jeremiah (32:27) “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?” In my opinion The God of the Bible, the creator of the cosmos is capable of dictating his book while using “human elements”. If God chose to do it this way that is his prerogative who are we to say he cannot? He is an awesome God and not prone to writer’s block. (Contributed by Nathan Kooienga)
- When one combines these presuppositions with the verses we studied in this lesson regarding how inspiration was accomplished it is not hard to see why many throughout church history

conceived of *Plenary Verbal Inspiration* (or just *Verbal Inspiration*) as having been accomplished through the mechanism of dictation. How else does God take his eternally settled upon word and communicate it to human authors without error? I see no problem with viewing God as having accomplished the inspiration of every word (*Plenary Verbal View*) through a process of dictation.

Works Cited

Bullinger, E.W. *How to Enjoy the Bible: A Guide to Better Understanding and Enjoyment of God's Word*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications: 1990.

Jordan, Richard. *Manuscript Evidence 101*. Grace School of the Bible.