### Literary Criticism

[Aune, The Blackwell Companion to the NT]

Historical Criticism - Historical-critical method - reading the text in light of the ancient historical and social setting and as objectively as possible.

Literary Criticism (Source Criticism)- the text, author, form

Form Criticism - the form of oral tradition then turned into the form of writing

Rhetorical Criticism - methodology of NT scholarship

### Authors (Secretaries & Scribes, …)

God: "Paul says that God inspired the Scriptures ‘through' people (Rom 1:2), which suggests that the author’s point corresponds with God’s point. It is therefore important to understand the author’s point." [Keener, 103]

The Scriptures were written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by about 35 different authors, (Moses to John), over a period of about 1600 years. The authors of the Bible had very different life experiences, and wrote in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek.

What did the author mean? Answering this question is the first and most important task of hermeneutics. Our task is to discover what the author meant - not to twist the Scriptures to say what we want them to mean. Interpretation is an explanation of the author’s meaning.

### Determining Authorship

**Conservative / Traditional** - single author, usually named, no later editing, no added commentary, writing is the closest date to the events, most writings are literal history (not much allegory, parable, poetic form, hyperbole,...). Attributes books of collections to a sole author (or limited authors) based on tradition.

**Conservative/Critical Mix** - the majority of the writing is a sole author or compiler but there have been additions or commentaries added over time or editing by later scribes. The events are literal for the most part but there is room for poetry, verbal forms of hyperbole, or narration. Some books are seen as wide collections of cultural pieces of literature (Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs,...).

**Critical (Literary Criticism, Historical Criticism)** - breaks books into multiple author when there is vocabulary, style, form, or timeframe change. Identifies portions that seem to be by the original author and the looks for additions, commentaries, and sees the books as evolving through a editorial and scribal process.

**Liberal** - rejects the miraculous and predictive prophecy. Advocates multiple authorship, later changes, redactions, editors, and scribal changes. Much of the genre is more like story, allegory, parable. Moves dates to much later to account for predictive prophecies being written as history.

#### OT Authorship

<https://zondervanacademic.com/search/results?q=who+wrote> (scroll down to the 246 blog posts)

**[Dillard and Longman, An Introduction to the OT]-- Great OT Book for Hermeneutics Studies**

Pentateuch/Torah - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers Deuteronomy.

* + Strictly speaking the Torah is anonymous within the text. Traditional conservative academics hold Moses as a sole author and claim it is implicit in the text (not explicit). Early Jewish and Christian tradition point to Moses as the author, as well as Jesus and the early Church. Interbiblical data for Mosaic writing: (i) God commanded Moses to record certain historical events (Ex 17:14; Num 33:2), and laws (Ex 24:4;34:27) and songs (Deut 31:22), (ii) Moses has a major role in the Torah receiving revelation and witnessing redemptive acts; so he is a natural candidate for authorship, and (iii) book of the law is associated with Moses (Josh 1:7,8) and The Book of Moses (2 Chron 25:4; Ezra 6:18; Neh 13:1).
  + However, Moses as a sole author is unlikely according to the critical position as there is post-Mosaic activity recorded (namely his death Deut 34, the mention of the city of Dan which got its name much later (Gen 14:14, Gen 32:32; 35:31; 40:15; Deut 3:14;34:1,6,10), and Abraham’s Ur with the Chaldeans which was a first millennium name (Gen 11:31)). Some passage are also awkward if ascribed to Moses and seem to be added later, like referring to Moses as the most humble man who ever lived (Num 12:3).
  + So the “essential authorship” is most likely Moses but there are obvious later additions that are still canonical. It seems that sources were also used to write the Torah like The Book of the Wars of the Lord which seems to be a post-conquest document (Num 21:14) and the Book of the Covenant (Ex 24:7). Scripture at times is based on external source documents.
  + There are critical approaches to the literature that separate the book into many authors based on word usage and the name of the Lord. These are questionable.
* Deuteronomy History (DH) Theory - Deut - 2 Kings is sometimes considered one Historical set of books. The themes, theology, and vocabulary of Deuteronomy carries through them. Some posit Josiah finds the book of the law and these books were composed to legitimize Josiah’s reforms. The evils of Jeroboam had split the kingdom and Josiah could rectify this with Deuteronomic reforms (ending with 2 Kings 23:15-20). Then a later historian/redactor would be needed to update the manuscript in the Exile (as the exile seems implied in numerous verses) or a number of scribes added commentary.
* Joshua - the book is anonymous. The Talmud claims Joshua is the sole author but the book contains the account of his death, so that is unlikely. The phrase “to this day” (4:9;5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 8:28-29;9:27; 10:27; 13:13; 15:63; 16:10) suggests some time had passed and make a later date of writing much more likely. External sources are mentioned (10:13) citing earlier events. Some posit Joshua - Kings as “Deuteronomistic History” with one author.
* Judges - a historical book that is anonymous and possibly the same author as Deut-2 Kings of an exilic author-compiler. The Talmud tradition names Samuel the writer of Judges, Samuel, and Ruth. It was probably written after the monarch began in Israel (17:6; 18:1; 19:1;21:25). The author may have some idea of a captivity, whether it be in Samuel’s day or later (Judges 18:30-31) as the author sites “as long as the ark was in Shiloh”, the captivity of the land, and Micah’s idols. The motivation of writing the last portion of the book (Judg 17-18) seems to be about the idolatry of the north (Micah’s shrines and idols and the golden calves of Jeroboam) which was in the monarch period.
* Ruth - anonymous authorship and dating the writing is difficult. The Talmud tradition names Samuel the writer of Judges, Samuel, and Ruth. It is most likely pre-exelic because not marrying a Moabites is shamed (where after Ezra and Nehemiah’s marriage reforms it may have been). The book may have been written as part of David’s kingship showing his lineage (that Ruth adopted Yahweh) and that he was legitimate (after Saul).
* 1 & 2 Samuel - anonymous. Samuel dies by 1 Sam 25; so he is most likely not the author. The book has both favorable (1 Sam 9:1-10:19; 11:1-11) and unfavorable (7:1-8:22; 10:17-27; 11:14-12:25) tones toward the monarchy. This may have been written while there was still a transition into the monarchy before it was seen more positively. 2 Sam 21-24 is considered “appendix” with intrusive material of 2 lists, 2 narratives, and 2 poems, chronologically dislocated, in its own chiastic structure. There may have been some compilation of early writings into this one larger book.
* 1 & 2 Kings. Jewish tradition identifies Jeremiah as the author (Talmud). The book of Jeremiah quotes extensively from the last chapters of Kings. But scholars believe that probably Jeremiah was not the author and it was some other exile in Babylon (2 Kings 25:27-30). It seems to be written in the exile with the questions: “Has God failed?” No the people failed in their idolatry.
* 1 & 2 Chronicles - anonymous. The Hebrew Bible lists these last. The writing of Chronicles was far after the events. They were written last in the post-exilic time and cite Cyrus (2 Chron 36:22-23) and construction of the temple in darics (not minted before 515BC). These books cover geneologies from all of human history from creation to the author’s day. They act like a supplement to Samuel and Kings and cited from them heavily. It was written as a national history but to address a theological issue post-exile: not “has God failed?” but “has God ended His covenant with us?”
* Ezra-Nehemiah (one book). Possibly written near the time of Chronicles. Tradition cites Ezra as the author. Ezra speaks in first person in 8-10, so did he write the whole book? There is shifting in this book between first and third person which may indicate quoted sources (possibly like a historical document, Ezra’s memoirs, Nehemiah’s memoirs, lists, letters,...)
* Esther - anonymous. Probably written close to the time of the events (no Greek vocabulary and working knowledge of Persian court life). The book was written to present the oritin of hte festival of Purim (9:18-10:3).
* Job - anonymous, no hint at author. Many scholars believe this book came about by a process. Conservatives hold that most books were written as a whole. For this book they cite early Jewish tradition that the book was authored or rewritten by Moses. It is an early book so some time passed between the events and writing. Job’s historical setting is much like Abraham’s time where he was the priest of the family. But his age points to an even earlier time frame than Abraham. Some believe the language of the book is slightly after the time of Moses.
* Psalms is a collection. David is linked to many Psalms. The author superscriptions are most likely added later and are somewhat questionable: Asaph 12, sons of Korah (11), Solomon (2), Jeduthun (4), Heman, Etan, and Moses. Jewish tradition attributes 73 psalms to David but the Greek and Latin versions increase this. Psalms 90 was possibly written at the time of Moses and Psalms 126 could be post-exilic (one thousand year span). Some Psalms seem to be adapted during the OT time period. Psalms 72 says “this concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse” but we see some Davidic psalms after it and some non-Davidic psalms before it; so psalms may have not been added in time series. Ps 69 could have been written at David’s time but v34-36 seem to be exilic. Some of the psalms reference the temple (post-David) or use a Ugaritic preposition. Psalms 29 seems to be a Canaanite poem, similar to others found in Ugarit. The style and form is like Ugaritic poetry and not Hebrew. The geography seems northern region toward Ugarit and Canaan. It changes normal Baal imagery of storms, lightening and thunder to Yahweh. This should not be seen as borrowing but a polemic (an argument that Yahweh is the true one God).
* Proverbs. Anthology of texts from various time periods and authors. Captions cite authors like: “the wise” (22:17; 24:23), Agur (30:1), King Lemuel (31:1), and Solomon (1:1; 10:1; 25:1). Solomon is connected to the book by Proverbs 1:1-7. Conservatives want to credit the whole book to Solomon but the attribution throughout the book does not say he wrote or compiled it all. (Liberal scholars say none of the book is Solomons). Solomon’s most probably contribution was 10:1-22:16 and 25:1-29:27. Solomon was in the 10th century BC. There are some similarities with the Amenemopet text from Egypt (Prov 22:28 and Amenemopet chapter 6 have almost identical proverbs about moving boundary stones). Prov 23:4-5 and Amenemopet Chapter 8 have about 4 lines that are incredibly similar. Which came first? Can the Bible have secular wisdom texts quoted or adapted?
* Ecclesiastes. Author Qohelet (Assembler - Preacher/Teacher) which is a pseudonym. The Traditional view is that Solomon is the author. Traditional Judiasm attributes it to Solomon. The Conservative view differs, as the book may have a late post-exilic date due to vocabulary and syntax (but it could be linguistic updating). One voice of the book seems unorthodox but the epilogue reads more like an orthodox redactor (and it seems impossible it is Qohelet). Some believe another author is fantasizing about being king Solomon and finding meaning “under the sun.” Prov 1:16 boasts of his wisdom more than the other kings before him (which seems not to be Solomon himself bragging because he was king three). 1:12 speaks of his kingship in the past tense; Solomon never retired. The historical setting of Proverbs is a time of misery and vanity (1:2-11) (Solomon’s time was the most prosperous) and a time of injustice and violence (4:1-3) (Solomon’s time was peace).
* Song of Songs. Anthology, collection of poems. Probably different authors from different times. Solomon is usually connected with the book but it may not be written by him. He had a harem and this was a problem in his life. Some of the poems may be his. Is this book just about physical marriage and no religious themes? It is probalby a series of love poems (not one unified drama/narrative) to be read at marraiges about distinctly different couples (coming from various regions and socio-economic backgrounds). It is similar to other Mesopotamian and Egyptian love poems. The Hellenistic gnostic view of Aristotle and Plato which saw the body as evil, would allegorize this poetry to the spiritual life; the monastic (sexual abstinence) movement would do the same. The pope pointed out that Origen did to the Song of Songs what he did to his own body (castrated it); “he denatured it and transformed it into a spiritual drama free from all carnality.” The academics view this as human romantic poetry (with a secondary theme of the relationship between God and his people) while many pastors spiritualize or allegoricalize it completely.
* Isaiah. Critical scholarship splits the book into three Isaiah authors because they do not believe in prophecy (starting in the 1800s). Conservative scholars see Isaiah as the only author.
* Jeremiah. Probably oracles of Jeremiah, written by his amanuensis (secretary/scribe) Baruch. Chapter 52 is drawn from 2 Kings 25 and probably appended after his death. It seems like a book of unordered oracles from his life and ministry. Some believe that there are six total (7 year intervals) times when Jeremiah addresses the assembly of Israel. Jehoiakim cut the original scroll to pieces (Jer 36). Jeremiah dictates it again to Baruch (36:32). The manuscripts of Jeremiah (longer Hebrew Masoretic Text and Greek Septuagint LXX) have 2700 words different and recording issues (some Qumran manuscripts validates both). It is now described that Jeremiah has undergone “literary growth” with editorials, added phrases, and exegetical changes; but these are not theological additions. But it is possible Baruch added the extra content after Jeremiah’s death. Can books of the Bible have been rearranged or edited?
* Lamentations. Anonymous. Tradition ascribes it to Jeremiah (the text does not insist on it and the interpretation does not depend on it). Hebrew textual tradition does not link Jeremiah to it; the Greek OT places Lamentations with Jeremiah and adds Jeremiah to the opening words of the book.
* Ezekiel. It is most likely Ezekiel. For centuries no one questioned Ezekiel’s authorship. Critical scholarship questions it (but they questions everything).
* Daniel. It is most likely Daniel and unquestioned until the twentieth century. There is some third person editing that may indicate someone did some editing.
* Hosea. Hosea is the most likely Hosea. There are some unusual features as he is a prophet to the North but the book is dated by the southern kings (was there some additions of this timeline?)
* Joel. Joel is probably the author. There are over ten Joels with that name but he seems well known to contemporaries. It is meant as temple liturgy.
* Amos. The book describes his life. There is a mix of first person oracles and third person narrative. Literary critics as usual posit that the third person narration and portions were added later.
* Obadiah. The superscription on this book is incredibly limited, even the name of Obadiah has been questioned. He may have been well known by his contemporaries.
* Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Joel - limited information is known about these prophets
* Jonah. Anonymous. Jonah is the main character but no author is listed. It is a historical narrative and Jonah was known as a real prophet. Some reject it as narrative and believe it is a parable, first because they do not believe the miracle of the big fish but also because of the “repentance of the animals” (3:7-8), unnamed king, and description and size of Nineveh (3:3-5). But Jonah was a real known prophet. Jesus refers to Jonah and Nineveh as real places.
* Micah. Micah (a common name) is most likely the author. Critics do not like predictive prophecy and sometimes want to post date the book and change the author of parts of it.
* Nahum. Nahum is probably the author.
* Habakkuk. Habakkuk is probably the author. Little is known about him. This book may have been for temple liturgy and is of the lament genre.
* Zephaniah (contemporary of Jeremiah and Habakkuk). He is introduced with a lineage and genealogy. It is probably before Josiah discovered the book of the Law and implemented reform. Critics inconsistently try to separate the original words of the prophet from possible later additions and glosses. But others see the book as a carefully constructed unit.
* Haggai. Probably written by Haggai (contemporary with Zechariah). It has a great density of dated material. The book may have been a four month period of ministry for Haggai to get the people rebuilding the temple, and he may have been elderly and died shortly after.
* Zechariah. Difficult book. Various authorship is posited. 25 people in the Bible have the name Zechariah. Zechariah 1-8 are about restoring the community after exile. Chapters 9-14 are quite different and contain apocalyptic prophecies of the distance future (Revelation draws from it). So critics will split the book into two periods and authors based on the changes in vocabulary, syntax, content, and form. 9-14 also do not seem to be from the restoration period (Assyria and Egypt as enemies). But this could be the same author writing two different forms of literature.
* Malachi. He is named the author in the superscription.

#### NT Authorship

[Aune, The Blackwell Companion to the NT]

* Gospels- orally transmitted for several decades. How can we be sure these were saying of Jesus and not creations of the early church? Matthew, Mark, and Luke seem to have a literary relationship (flow and storyline.). Posited document Q ("sayings source”) or that Matthew and Luke worked from the Mark text. <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-gospels>
* Apostle Matthew, anonymous within the text. Matthew was an Apostle. Uses the OT and shows fulfillment of the passage by Jesus. The early church fathers attribute the work to Matthew. Matthew speaks more about money than anyone else and this may make sense for a tax collector.
* Mark - anonymous within the text but probably John Mark a companion of Paul and Peter. He was not an Apostle or eye-witness. Mark was probably compiling the oral stories of Peter. Irenaeus in 180AD and other early church fathers speaks of four gospels. Mark has a highly disputed ending by qutie possibly a different author, but it is still usually considered canonical.
* Luke-Acts - two volume series by Luke (27% of the NT). Luke was an ancient historian and companion of Paul. Luke-Acts is an apologetic historiography (theological thrust) about the Gentile inclusion.
* John the Apostle. John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John- anonymous within the text. Revelation is stated to be written by John. The early church regarded these four works to have been written by John. The Gospel of John was originally anonymous and the letters also only had a superscription of John added later. 2 and 3 John are said to be written by “The Elder”. 1 John is a homily and 2, 3 John are more letters with openings and closing addresses. "Apocalypse of John” (Revelation) is claimed to be written by John in the text. The style and writing are very different from the Gospel of John and 1,2,3 John. Some questions whether this is by the same author.
* Pauline (not one of the 12 Apostles)- Reconstructing Paul’s life, travels, and writings is difficult/impossible. Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galations, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon are definitely Paul’s writings. Some question Paul as the author of Ephesians, 1, 2 Tim and Titus and others questions Colossians and 2 Thess (seeing these as psuedographical - someone elses added his name). Issues like the content of the impending Parousian of 2 Thessalonians seem different from other Pauline writings, so does this mean there is a different author?
* General Epistles - James, 1,2 Peter, Jude.
* James. The leader of the Jerusalem believers from AD40-62 and most likely the brother of Jesus. Not one of the Apostles but named bishop by the Apostles.
* 1 Peter. Apostle. 1 Peter written in a “high register of Greek” and “eloquent." Deals with persecution (probably around Rome). But also seems to be a baptismal homily. 2 Peter was slow to canonize because the early church regarded it as pseudonymous. The language is both Jewish and Hellenistic and the vocabulary “reflects a preference for uncommon and unusual words which he uses in a florid style."
* Jude. “Jude, slave of Jesus the Anointed One, and brother of James,” which would most likely make him Jesus’ brother (not an Apostle). The book contains wordplays, alliteration, and other skillful rhetorical devices. It’s possible that an amanuensis helped him. <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-jude>
* Hebrews - anonymous homily (sermon). “Only God knows” (Origen). Written in the highest form of Greek and rhetorical style of the NT. Traditionally, the book is attributed to Paul because has many similarities in terminology to the epistles. But it may have been someone associated with Paul and well versed in rhetoric and the Greek style out of Alexandria like Apollos. The Christology of Hebrews is more complex than in the Epistles. 1 Clement quotes from it in 90AD. <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-the-book-of-hebrews>

**Apocrypha**

"In this phrase the term “apocrypha” connotes “noncanonical,” while “New Testament” implies that such works imitate the genres found in the New Testament canon. We therefore have apocryphal gospels (e.g., the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*), apocryphal acts (e.g., the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*), apocryphal letters (a small pseudepigraphal collection of letters purportedly exchanged by Paul and Seneca) and apocryphal apocalypses (e.g., the *Apocalypse of Peter*). Many of these works may have arisen as early as the late first century (e.g. the *Gospel of Thomas*) and continued to be produced through the fourth century and beyond. Until recently works categorized as New Testament apocrypha were almost ignored as slavishly imitative, fictional, and heretical. {June 14]

**Author’s Style**

"Jeremiah and Isaiah and Ezekiel all heard God’s message, but each has a very different style.” [Keener, The Bible and Its Context]

Some authors had a more extensive background with the audience and ongoing conversations about a topic that we are not informed about. Sometimes we are only reading half of the discussion or conversation.

"jumping carelessly from one author to another, say from Paul to Revelation, can often yield inaccurate results."

Examples (from Keener):

* "when some people today claim that “abundant life” in John 10:10 refers to material prosperity, we should note that this is not what John means by “life” anywhere else (1:4; 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 35; 5:24, 26, 29, 39-40; 6:27; etc.)"
* "When we read Isaiah and the Psalms, “salvation” has a broader meaning than it usually bears in the New Testament"
* "some say that the Church will not go through the Great Tribulation at the end of the age because Paul declares that we will not experience God’s “wrath” (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9). Occasionally Paul speaks of God’s “wrath” in the present era (Rom 1:18), but usually when he uses the term he speaks of future wrath on the day of God’s judgment (Rom 2:5, 8; 5:9; 9:22).” Revelation is not yet written so looking up “wrath” there will not help inform on Paul’s usage.
* "Paul is the trumpet in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52; the latter text calls it the “last trumpet,” so some interpreters want to parallel it with the seventh trumpet in Revelation. But again, Paul’s original audience had no access to a book that had not been written yet…They could not even flip from 1 Thessalonians to 1 Corinthians, since most of the first audience in Thessalonica would not have a copy of 1 Corinthians.

### Approaches to the Inspired Scripture[[1]](#footnote-0)

**Jesus**

“Jesus never had any criticism of the OT as the divine record. Although He was not a rabbi, nor trained in their schools, but he was familiar with their methods. Jesus often described them as, “ever hearing but never understanding, . . .ever seeing but never perceiving.” (Mt. 13:14) Jesus credited David’s words to the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36) Jesus accepted the historical reliability of the scriptures citing stories about Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Jonah, Isaiah, etc. as true and accurate. Jesus interest was in the spiritual values of the OT. He could see God’s purpose in the scriptures for the human race.” [Mancari notes]

“Jesus gave 36 direct quotes of the OT. He often used OT terminology. When he did use the OT it was to reinforce his own teaching. Jesus appealed to no higher authority when he taught. He was the source of his own teaching. “He taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.” (Mark 1:22) Jesus’ interpretation method was completely new as he explained the meaning of the OT. Jesus did not give a new intellectual approach, (such as literal or allegorical), but instead was the coming of God into the world to explain His written word, His plan. (Matthew 5:17) A change occurred with the coming of Christ because the question was not the true meaning of the text but the relationship of the text with Jesus and his purpose. “He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27)” [Mancari notes]

**Apostles**

“As always, inspiration did not separate the writers of the NT from their own personal culture, background, vocabulary or education. Extreme liberalism of the rabbi’s appears in Gal. 3:16 and Hebrews 2:11-13. Rabbinic disregard of context and historical background appears in Romans 9:25. Although Paul disregards the context and historical background here, he did not abuse the intent of the passage to reveal God’s character. The coming of the Messiah had shed light on these words and opened a new door of application. An example of Rabbi allegorical interpretation is found in Galatians 4:21-31. Paul does not deny the historical accuracy but does find a parallel in his own life. The apostles looked for Christ in every passage of the OT as can be seen by Matthew’s use of Hosea 11:1 in Matt. 2:15.” [Mancari notes]

**Early Church Fathers**

“During the Patristic Period, the Scriptures were considered to be the unique work of the Holy Spirit carrying forth a divine message. To the church fathers, inspiration extended even to the phraseology of the Bible. Thus, Clement of Alexandria underscores Christ’s words in Matthew 5:18 by saying that not a jot or tittle shall pass away because the Lord had spoken it (Protepticus, IX, 82, 1). Gregory Nazianzus suggests that the smallest lines in the Scriptures are due to the care of the Holy Spirit, and that we must be careful to consider every slightest shade of meaning (Orat., 2, 105). Justin Martyr distinguished between human and divine inspiration and spoke of the divine word that moved the writers of Scripture (Apology I, Ch. 36). Iranaeus thought of the Scriptures as “beyond all falsehood” (Apology, Ch. 18). There can be little doubt that the early fathers had a very high view of inspiration, and that this view extended to the minutia of Scripture.” [Mancari notes]

### God Inspired Scripture[[2]](#footnote-1)

Biblical inspiration may be defined as God's superintending of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities (and even their writing styles), they composed and recorded without error His revelation to mankind in the words of the original autographs. Inspiration means "the Holy Spirit of God superintended the human writers in the production of Scripture so that what they wrote was precisely what God wanted written." [Dr. Mancari notes]

E) REFORMATION INTERPRETATION

The reformers, in a search for authority, readily accepted the doctrine of inspiration and, by implication, the doctrine of inerrancy. Zwingli appealed consistently to the Old Testament and New Testament in his defense of pure Christian doctrine. Calvin described the Scriptures as the “only record in which God has been pleased to consign His truth to perpetual remembrance, until we have a perfect conviction that God is its Author” (Institutes, I, 7, 2, 4). Luther argued for a high view of inspiration, once the question of canonicity was settled, and thought of the Scriptures as being above error. While the reformers did not devote a decisive part of their theology to the subject of inspiration, it is conclusive that they accepted the full authority of the Scriptures.

F) MODERN INTERPRETATION

Protestantism developed its own traditionalism based on the principle of verbal inspiration of Scripture and the original confessions of faith of the Reformers.

Historical Criticism challenged the inspiration of the Bible. This began in England with Deism and Germany with Enlightenment in the 1700’s. They taught the gospels contained only a hint of the original Jesus. Leader in this was Albert Schweitzer

1. Liberal View

The Bible is a record about human concepts about God, in particular, the Hebrew view. The writers were inspired in the same way that Shakespeare or Plato were.

1. Neoorthodox View

The Bible becomes the Word of God when it is read and the message affects the reader personally. The mythological elements of the Bible must be removed.

1. Orthodox View

God used the persons and the personalities of the writers in such a way as to proved the message He wanted. The message is inspired (God breathed) not the writers. There is diversity among this view as to whether the Bible is inerrant in all its details (without errors). Or inerrant in all that it claims to teach regarding salvation and God’s dealings with humanity. The latter position would allow for some historical, geographical, scientific or numerical errors.

Orthodoxy appealed to rationalization. They argued that since the Bible is without error, it is thereby inspired. This does not mean that we should accept a lower view of inspiration, nor that we should reject the doctrine of inerrancy; it only suggests that our appeal must arise from the claims of Scripture alone. The Scriptures are inerrant because they are inspired of God-not inspired because they are inerrant. The first approach is biblical and leads to a correct view of inspiration and errancy; the second approach is rationalistic and opens the door to human speculations.

Karl Barth challenged Historical Criticism purely scientific approach to scripture. He said Historical Criticism was simply useful in establishing the facts to be interpreted, not to give the final explanation. He returned to the Reformers idea of scripture interpreting scripture. He said Historical Criticism had the first word for the interpreter but revelation had the last word.

G) OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINES OF INERRANCY

1) Since we do not have the original autographs, any doctrine of inerrancy is without value. The answer is twofold. First, the science of textual criticism has assured us, by the estimates of competent scholars, that our present texts (Greek and Hebrew) are without errors of significance. The text we work with is therefore trustworthy and deserving of the most careful and detailed study. Second, to reject the doctrine of inerrancy transfers the question of truth from the objective into the realm of the subjective. Who is to decide what part of the Scripture is true and what part of it is false? What part is trustworthy and what part is untrustworthy? The Scriptures’ claim to divine authority is lost when we subject them to the rationalistic, subjective appraisals of men.

2) The doctrine of inerrancy necessitates a doctrine of inspiration that eliminates human personality in the composition of the Scriptures. We hold that God, by the superintendency of the Holy Spirit, so prepared the authors of His Word that they were able to write precisely what He intended to have written. The total personality of each author was utilized by the Holy Spirit in the conveyance of the divine message, thus allowing for variety and individuality, yet not destroying the message God desired to entrust to man (2 Peter 1:21).

3) The Bible contains errors in matters of science, history, morality, reasoning, quotations, etc., so as to render it untrustworthy.

First, while this is a popular claim, it is difficult to substantiate. Both science and time tend to vindicate the Scriptures.

Second, the Bible does not claim to be a textbook on nonreligious topics. Yet, when it does speak in these areas, its statements, though incomplete and expressed in popular terminology, are never in error.

Third, the Bible must be studied against the background of its day. Matters of culture, language, and literary procedure must be carefully considered. If the Scriptures are approached with an attitude of sincerity and intelligent inquiry, they will prove to possess the quality of infallibility.

1. A high view of inspiration does not necessitate the doctrine of inerrancy.

An appeal must be made in three directions. As has been seen, the testimony of history is convincing. The church generally has held to a high view of inspiration, holding to the inseparability of inspiration and inerrancy.

Second, a study of the Scriptures demonstrates the correlation between inspiration and inerrancy. It is difficult to imagine that the Bible writers thought of the Scriptures as being anything other than infallible and without error.

Finally, we appeal to logic. Since God is himself free from error, which is the clear testimony of the Scriptures (Psalms 31:5; 100:5; John 7:28; 8:26; Romans 3:4; 2 Corinthians 1:18; 1 John 4:6; 5:20; Revelation 6:10), and since He has chosen man as the vehicle through which He would disclose His truth, it is wholly consistent that He should conduct the process of providing Scripture so as to avoid all error, and wholly inconsistent if any minute part of it should be in error.

Biblical inspiration may be defined as God's superintending of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities (and even their writing styles), they composed and recorded without error His revelation to mankind in the words of the original autographs. Inspiration means "the Holy Spirit of God superintended the human writers in the production of Scripture so that what they wrote was precisely what God wanted written."

H) THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct.

1) We refer to original autographs. While the science of textual criticism assures us of a trustworthy text, inerrancy can be claimed only for the original writings (Jeremiah 36:2).

2) We conceive the Bible to be in actuality the very Word of God. The divine Author prompted the original thought in the mind of the writers (Amos 3:8); He then guided their choice of words to express such thoughts (Exodus 4:12,15); and, lastly, He illumines the mind of the reader of such words in a way that the reader potentially may comprehend the same truth as was originally in the mind of the writer (1 Corinthians 2:12; Ephesians 1:17,18). Thus, both thought and language are revelatory and inspired.

3) We understand inspiration to mean that special act of the Holy Spirit by which He guided the writers of the Scriptures. Such superintendency made full allowance for the divergent backgrounds, abilities, and personalities of the writers, and applies to all they wrote as it is found in the canon of Scripture.

4) We define inerrancy as meaning “exempt from error” and infallibility as a near synonym meaning “incapable of error, certain.” If there is any difference in the shade of meaning between the two terms, inerrancy emphasizes the truthfulness of Scripture, while infallibility emphasizes the trustworthiness of Scripture. Such inerrancy and infallibility apply to all of Scripture and include both revelational inerrancy and factual inerrancy. It is truth (2 Samuel 7:28; Psalm 119:43,160; John 17:17,19; Colossians 1:5).

When you break the doctrine of inspiration down to its essential elements, there are seven key factors: divine origin and causality; human agency; written verbally (in words); plenary (all of Scripture is inspired, not just parts of it); Only the "autographs" (the original documents penned by the biblical authors) are inspired; because Scripture is inspired, it is inerrant; and because Scripture is inspired and inerrant, it alone has final authority.

Jesus seems to have accepted the Old Testament as authoritative and infallible in all its aspects, even the historical details. He claimed authority and claimed that He was truth. It is hardly conceivable that He could have allowed for error in the Bible and yet gave the impression that He believed in its authority and infallibility. He did not interpret allegorically. The Bible itself makes no distinction between revelatory and non-revelatory data.

1. [Dr. Mancari’s notes] [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. [Dr. Mancari’s notes] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)