

Father of Mercies, In Thy Word

Anne Steele (1717–1778)

Father of mercies, in thy word
What endless glory shines!
For ever be thy name ador'd
For these celestial lines.

Here, may the wretched sons of want
Exhaustless riches find:
Riches, above what earth can grant,
And lasting as the mind.

Here the fair tree of knowledge grows
And yields a free repast,
Sublimers sweets than nature knows
Invite the longing taste.

Here, the Redeemer's welcome voice
Spreads heavenly peace around;
And life, and everlasting joys
Attend the blissful sound.

O may these heavenly pages be
My ever dear delight;
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light!

Divine Instructor, gracious Lord,
Be thou for ever near,
Teach me to love thy sacred word,
And view my Savior there.



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In the Nick of Time

Jesus and the Dual Authorship of Scripture

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Which of the following statements is true? (1) The Bible comes from about forty authors, or (2) The Bible comes from a single author.

The answer, of course, is that both statements are true, but in different senses. The Bible was written by over forty *human* authors. It is genuinely the work of Moses, John, Paul, and others. Yet it was also inspired by a single *divine* Author through the Holy Spirit. It is all the Word of God.

The dual authorship of Scripture is one of the keys to a correct understanding of the Bible. Dual authorship is not just a doctrinal theory. It is the very thing that the Bible has to say about itself. The Bible teaches its own dual authorship.

Specifically, Jesus assumes the dual authorship of Scripture in His teaching and preaching. These references, though not great in number, are very specific. They lead unavoidably to the conclusion that Jesus saw both human authorship and divine authorship at play in the production of Scripture.

One example occurs in Mark 7:6–13. Here Jesus accuses the scribes and Pharisees of setting aside the commandment of God in favor of human traditions (7:8). In the next verse He repeats the charge (7:9), preparing to cite an example. This example (7:10) draws upon quotations that Jesus attributes to Moses (Exod 20:12; 21:17). He alleges that Moses's teachings clearly require care for parents, but the Pharisaic standards permit people to avoid this obligation (7:11–12). By avoiding Moses's requirements, the Pharisees are “making the word of God of none effect” (7:13, KJV). Jesus calls this Old Testament text the commandment of God (7:8, 9), but He also cites it as a saying of Moses (7:10). He also refers to it as the Word of God (7:13). This is a clear attribution of dual authorship.

Another example comes from Mark 12:35–37, where Jesus is defending His claim to be the Messiah. He has been approached with trick questions by His adversaries. Now He turns the tables and asks them a question: how can the scribes claim that Messiah is the son of David (12:35)? Jesus then quotes Psalm 110:1, which has David speaking to Messiah as his Lord (12:36). Jesus poses a puzzler for His critics: if Messiah is David's Lord, then how can He

also be David's son? This is an important messianic question, and Jesus's use of Psalm 110 also has implications for our view of Scripture. When He quotes Psalm 110:1, Jesus introduces it by saying that "David himself said by the Holy Ghost" (12:36, KJV).

That is the point. Psalm 110 is genuinely the words of David. In fact, Jesus's argument hinges on the fact that they are the words of David. Nevertheless, Jesus insists that David spoke these words by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, Jesus uses the verse as completely authoritative. He is able to use it as the Word of God. Jesus's use of the text shows that dual authorship is at work.

If Scripture always has the same divine author, whoever its human authors might be, then certain consequences must follow. Some of these consequences are clearly articulated by Jesus. They include at least the following.

First, Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). The verb that Jesus uses is a form of *luo*, and in this context it has the idea that Scripture can neither be set aside nor pitted against itself. In other words, if God is the author of all Scripture, then the Bible contains no genuine internal contradictions. It is never right to ignore Scripture or to throw one verse against another.

Second, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus states that not even a jot or tittle will pass from the law until it all comes to pass (Matt 5:18; the verb is a form of *ginomai*). In other words, everything that Scripture declares will happen exactly as God said it would happen. Every promise, whether threat or blessing, will be kept. Scripture is absolutely reliable in all that it says.

Third, when the Sadducees try to trap Jesus with a trick question about marriage in the resurrection (Matt 22:23–33), Jesus retorts with a three-part reply. First, He tells His opponents that they are ignorant of both Scripture and the power of God. Second, He states that no one is married in the resurrection. Third, He appeals to Exodus 3:6, where God tells Moses that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus infers that God is the God of the living, and not the God of the dead. In other words, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive.

What is significant about this reply is that Jesus relies upon an inference from the text and not the direct statement of the text itself. In drawing this inference, He appeals to a single verb, *is*, which is understood rather than stated by the Hebrew text. Furthermore, the validity of Jesus's reasoning hinges upon the tense of this verb, which must be present tense for the argument to work. In sum, Jesus bases a significant theological conclusion on the tense of a single verb that is implied by the Hebrew text.

If Jesus treats the text of Scripture this way, then dual authorship must extend to the very words of the Bible. Jesus's use of the Bible certainly ratifies the notion that the inspiration of Scripture is verbal (the words are inspired)

rather than simply dynamic (only the concepts are inspired). For Jesus to use the Bible the way He does, the very words have to matter.

The evidence indicates that Jesus held a very high view of Scripture indeed. He used the Bible in His own temptation. He endorsed the miraculous elements of the Old Testament, including some that are most frequently attacked by critics. He recognized the dual authorship of Scripture as writings that were both human and divine. His teaching even implies the verbal inspiration of Scripture. If we follow the example of Jesus, then we should accept and use the entire Bible as the very Word of God while also recognizing it as the words of its human authors.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
