

God's Word Alone

Johann Walter (1496–1570); tr. C. Armand Miller

God's Word alone can e'er afford
Sure ground for faith's foundation;
It is a treasure from the Lord,
Brings trust for full salvation.
No human wisdom can compare
With that of God's own giving,
What God's Word clearly doth declare
Sufficeth for our living.

On God and His pure Word alone,
My heart can rest confiding;
From its bright pages light is thrown,
Our pilgrim footsteps guiding.
O God, let no false doctrine turn
My heart from true devotion;
O fire my soul, that it may burn
For truth, with strong emotion.

In God alone I put my trust,
On His rich care depending;
He will ward off each deadly thrust,
'Gainst Satan's craft defending.
By Thy dear Word, uphold me, Lord,
And let me keep it purely,
Against the devil's wrath and sword
And wiles, preserved securely.



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.
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May 12, 2023

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

The Biblical Writers on Inspiration

Kevin T. Bauder

Christians affirm that the Bible was written by both human authors and a divine Author simultaneously. One of the most interesting consequences of this simultaneous authorship is that the human authors were conscious of the fact that they were writing Scripture. This consciousness shows up in several ways. It is evident among the Old Testament prophets when they claimed that they wrote when the “word of the Lord” came to them (Jer 1:4, 11, 13; 13:3, 8; 24:4; 32:6; Ezek 3:16; 6:1; 11:14; 12:21; 13:1; 14:2; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1, 11; 18:1; 20:45; 21:1, 8, 18; 22:1, 17, 23; 24:1, 15, 20; 26:1; 28:11; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:1, 23; 34:1; 35:1; 36:16; 38:1; Zech 4:8; 6:9). It is also evident in the Old Testament authors’ awareness that the Holy Spirit was controlling them as they wrote (Ezek 3:24–27; 2 Sam 23:1–3). The Old Testament writers knew that God was using them.

The apostle Peter is reflecting the dual authorship of Scripture when he insists that the Holy Spirit spoke about Judas “through the mouth of David” (Acts 1:16, citing Psalm 69:25; 109:8). Furthermore, Peter denies that the Old Testament prophecies were written by any human initiative, instead affirming that the prophets spoke as they were “borne along” by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). Similarly, the writer to the Hebrews attributes Old Testament Scriptures to the Holy Spirit (Heb 3:7, cf Psalm 95:7; Heb 10:15, cf Jer 31:33–34).

The apostle Paul does not assign the authorship of Scripture to the Holy Spirit in particular, but he does speak about the Old Testament as if it comes from God. In the introduction to Romans he states that God promised the gospel ahead of time by His prophets in the holy Scriptures (Rom 1:2). Paul also tells the Galatians that the Scripture foresaw that God would justify the heathen through faith and so preached the gospel to Abraham (Gal 3:8). This statement treats what Scripture sees as identical with what God sees. Furthermore, Paul introduces Old Testament texts with an interesting parallel construction, stating that God spoke to Moses and that Scripture spoke to Pharaoh (Rom 9:15, 17). For Paul, Scripture saying something is identical to God saying it.

Paul's high view of the Old Testament led him to consider it as profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim

3:16–17). He believed that it was written for “our sakes,” i.e., for Church saints (1 Cor 9:10). He understood it to provide examples (patterns or analogies—the word is *types*) for us (1 Cor 10:11). Even though the Old Testament was not written *to* Church saints, they benefit from it by looking for analogies to their own situation.

Remarkably, the apostle Paul does not limit his endorsement to the Old Testament Scriptures. In 1 Timothy 5:17–18 he makes the argument that preachers ought to be paid. He bases his argument partly on two citations of Scripture. He first quotes Deuteronomy 25:4, which forbids muzzling an ox while it is threshing. Obviously, that is an Old Testament reference. But Paul immediately follows it with the saying that the laborer is worthy of his hire. While the principle behind this saying can be found in the Old Testament, the saying itself is from the teachings of Jesus as found in Luke 10:7. Paul cites both texts side by side, and he makes it clear that they are both Scripture. Paul used Luke’s Gospel with the same level of authority as the books of Moses.

This kind of attribution is not unique. Peter does something similar when he is constructing an argument about God’s longsuffering. For evidence he cites Paul’s authority (2 Pet 3:15–16). Peter notes that Paul’s writings are sometimes hard to understand. He further observes that false teachers (who are unlearned and unstable) attempt to twist Paul’s writings. Then he adds these words: “as they do also the other Scriptures.” In other words, Peter classifies at least some of Paul’s epistles as Scripture, right alongside the Old Testament Scriptures.

If Paul is any indication, the New Testament writers saw their own writings as genuinely authoritative. For example, 2 Corinthians sustains an ongoing, threatening undertone about a projected visit from Paul. He makes it clear that he intends to hold the congregation accountable for obeying his words in the epistle (see especially 2 Cor 10:8–11). In an earlier letter, he had already warned them not to go beyond the things that were written (1 Cor 4:6, though the KJV obscures the translation of this verse).

Given this abundant evidence, the inescapable conclusion is that the writers of Scripture knew what they were doing. They were conscious that their words were more than simply human instruction. They understood that the Holy Spirit was using them to author Scripture and that what they wrote was genuinely authoritative. They held a high view both of each other’s writings and of their own writings. Their understanding of their own written documents is fully consistent with a doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration and robust view of New Testament authority.

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.

