

HOW CAN THE BIBLE BE

human AND divine?

“All scripture is inspired by God (God breathed)” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Christians believe that the Bible is divinely inspired. However, it is also a very human book.

HOW IS IT A HUMAN BOOK?

It draws from other sources, such as the creation myths of other cultures.

It is obvious as well that being breathed by God cannot mean that the personalities, experiences, and characters of the individual authors are not included in the Bible.

Paul says that he cannot remember who he baptised. (1 Corinthians 1:16). Matthew has Jesus incorrectly referring to Zechariah as the son of Berekiah instead of the son of Jehoiadah. (Matthew 23:35).

Large parts of the Bible are not written as God speaking to us, but rather humans *speaking to God* - in Psalm 89 the writer accuses God of breaking His promise. Most of what Job and his friends say to God throughout the book of Job is not true.

WHY IS THIS A GOOD THING, AND NOT A PROBLEM?

Rather than this being a problem which we have to try and find ways around, the human-divine nature of the Bible precisely reflects the way God usually works.

It is consistent with the way in which God always works with human beings to achieve His purposes.

The way God relates to the world is not one-way but through *mutual relationships*. The Bible is a *partnership* in the same way that God making humans in His image is a partnership. This means that...



GOD BREATHES HIS WORD

by emptying Himself. Throughout the Bible God accommodates Himself to us in order to reach us – most fully by becoming human. This means that He is willing to speak to human beings *from inside the world*, taking our own experiences as His starting point. So it is not a case of God taking away human beings' ability to speak so that He can replace our words with His words.

THROUGHOUT THE WRITING OF BIBLE GOD ACTS TOWARDS HUMANS

but He also allows them to act towards Him (just as we see most fully on the cross), even at the cost of absorbing our sin and mistakes as part of the text.

John Henry Newman describes this way of God “breathing Scripture” by comparing two Latin words for writer.

Author describes someone who creates a work without any help or influence from anyone else – much as the Quran is a direct reciting of Allah's words.

Auctor describes someone who is the first cause of a work, but who allows for other influences to contribute to the work that the writer produces.



**INSTEAD
AS AN AUCTOR**

God takes the words and actions of human beings and uses them to become the reliable “word of God”.

He takes the initiative as His Holy Spirit works in the hearts and minds of the human writers, but always leaving the personhood of the human authors in place, which affects the results of His breathing through them.

**WE DO NOT HAVE TO
DEFEND THE BIBLE AS
BEING “WITHOUT ERROR,
OR NOT CAPABLE OF IT”
(INERRANT OR INFALLIBLE)
FOR IT TO BE GOD’S WORD.**

Nor does every part of the Bible has to be equally inspiring in order for the Bible to be divinely inspired.

Instead it might be helpful to see **the Bible as a whole as divinely inspired**. (This is known as “plenary (full) inspiration”).

**WE DON'T
CHOOSE**

**WHICH PARTS OF IT TO PAY
ATTENTION TO**

and which to reject (as if we are a greater authority than the Bible).

But we read the whole Bible faithfully, as a human-divine book,

trusting that the content *and* nature of the Bible *both* draw us to knowing the “foolishness” and beauty of the cross.

**SO THE BIBLE DOES NOT HAVE
TO BE ERROR-FREE TO BE
DIVINELY INSPIRED.**

Because...

God always honours the partnership He has with us – even when writing the Scriptures.

And God has always revealed His love most fully by being willing to take on human imperfections.

The relatively small number of “human errors” in Scripture do not have to be signs that God has not inspired the Bible.

They can strengthen the credibility of the Bible because *they are consistent with the loving way in which God works*.

His power is made perfect in our weakness.

**THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE
DOES NOT FAIL TO FULFIL ITS MAIN
PURPOSE – TO BEAR WITNESS TO CHRIST
AND HIS CRUCIFIXION AS THE CENTRAL
WAY WE KNOW GOD.**

Jesus said, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:39-40).

He explained to the disciples on the road to Emmaus “...what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27)

The whole Bible is perfect in pointing us to Christ. In Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Colossians 2:3)

