

THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE AS A TEST CASE FOR MODELS OF PROVIDENCE

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According to Graham Cole, “The doctrine of Scripture ... may usefully be located within the doctrine of special providence. It is a crucial element in God’s provision for his people, their preservation and government.”¹ Scripture is one way that God has provided for his people, and the manner in which he has given us Scripture is an example of how he governs all things.

Though inspiration is an important aspect of divine providence, most philosophers of religion, and even many theologians, do not connect these two doctrines. That is unfortunate. To paraphrase the Lord, what God has joined together, let not philosophical theologians separate.

In this paper, I suggest that these two doctrines should be examined together. More specifically, I suggest that the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible should be used to test models of divine providence. If a model of providence, held consistently, cannot adequately explain the inspiration of Scripture, then that model should be rejected.

Defining Providence and Inspiration

When I refer to divine providence, I have in mind God’s relationship to the world that he has created, a world he continues to preserve and govern.²

As for inspiration, I believe the following propositions accurately describe how the Bible was written:

¹ Graham A. Cole, “Why a Book? Why This Book? Why the Particular Order within This Book? Some Theological Reflections on the Canon,” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 466n28.

² Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 2:596.

- (1) God “breathed” out all Scripture by means of the Holy Spirit, who caused the Bible’s authors to write what God wanted them to write. The Holy Spirit spoke through them, and they wrote “in the Spirit.” This close relationship between divine and human activity in the writing of Scripture is best described as concursive. The activity of the Holy Spirit ensures the verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible.³
- (2) Inspiration took place through various modes, which rarely involved dictation, and more frequently occurred in seemingly mundane forms of writing. Such writing included human effort as well as the continuous activity of the Holy Spirit.
- (3) God providentially prepared the human authors of Scripture prior to inspiration.
- (4) Inspiration often occurred in a manner not discernible from a human perspective. Unless they were taking dictation, the human authors of Scripture were most likely not aware that they were writing Scripture.
- (5) The human authors of Scripture wrote freely. The only exception to this rule may be when prophets were commanded to write down the words God dictated to them.

These five propositions regarding the Bible’s authorship can serve as *explananda*, features that an adequate model of providence (the *explanans*) should be able to explain.

I regard propositions (1), (2), and (5) to be clear elements of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture. They are supported by texts such as 2 Timothy 3:16 (“All Scripture is breathed out by God”⁴) and 2 Peter 1:21 (“no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”), as well as observations about the undeniably human cast of Scripture, the variety of literary styles of the Bible, and what we know of the Bible’s human authors.

Propositions (3) and (4) require some elaboration. Proposition (3) concerns the authors’ backgrounds. The Holy Spirit clearly used the backgrounds, experiences, and personalities of the Bible’s authors in directing them to write what they wrote. Yet we should not view these

³ This premise is supported by the fact that some arguments in the New Testament regarding Old Testament Scripture seem to rest upon the meaning of a single word, such as in Matthew 22:31–32, or the wording of a single sentence, as in Matthew 22:41–46. Many passages indicate that the Spirit spoke through the human authors of the Bible, including Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 22:43; Acts 1:16; 4:25; and Hebrews 3:7; 4:7.

⁴ All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV). While certain translations refer to “inspiration,” the better translation of the Greek word in question, *θεόπνευστος*, is “God-breathed.” This compound word is formed from the Greek words for “God” and “to breathe” (*θεός*, *πνειν*). See William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 2000), 566. God “breathed” out his word by means of the Holy Spirit moving the human authors to write what they did. (The Greek word *πνεῦμα* can be translated as “breath” or “spirit,” depending on context.)

biographical details as outside the realm of God’s providence. It seems that God prepared certain men to write Scripture, so that they would have and be shaped by certain experiences to which they could then refer in their writings. Think of the apostle Paul: Before he was born, he was set apart to be an apostle (Gal 1:15), and his writings include biographical details (e.g., Phil 3:4–6). Of course, it could be that he just happened to have that background, and only after the fact did God choose to incorporate such biographical details into Paul’s letters.⁵ Yet it is not unreasonable to think that part of God’s setting Paul apart was his determining that Paul would have a certain history, one that would be reflected in his ministry and in his writing of Scripture.⁶

Proposition (4) states that the Bible’s human authors were not always aware that they were writing Scripture.⁷ If the biblical writers were aware that they were writing Scripture, such knowledge might have been a hindrance.⁸ Would the Psalmists write with such passion, wrestling with God as they did, if they were aware that they were writing Scripture? Would Paul have declared his wish for the Judaizers who insisted on circumcision to “emasculate

⁵ This could be the case on open theism. On Molinism, God could use his middle knowledge to know what the Bible’s human authors would write in certain circumstances, including their backgrounds.

⁶ One specific example of God’s providence related to the inspiration of Scripture is revealing. The book of 1 Samuel reports the rise and fall of the first king of Israel, Saul. It also introduces us to David, who is anointed as Saul’s successor and who slays the Philistine giant, Goliath (1 Sam 17:48–51). After that event, Saul starts to become jealous of David (1 Sam 18:6–9). Then, “a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul” (1 Sam 18:10) and Saul hurled his spear at David. This occurs again in 1 Samuel 19:9. Then, Saul plots to kill David (1 Sam 19:11). The superscription to Psalm 59, a prayer that God would deliver the psalmist from his enemies, ascribes that Psalm to David, “when Saul sent men to watch his house in order to kill him,” a reference to 1 Samuel 19:11. It seems that God’s sending a harmful spirit upon Saul led to this attempt to kill David, which led David to hide from Saul and to compose this Psalm. While it is possible that David might have written this Psalm in different circumstances, this connection between divine activity and biblical composition fits a pattern we find throughout the Bible.

⁷ According to I. Howard Marshall, “it would be wrong to suggest that the writers felt conscious that they were writing Scripture” (*Biblical Inspiration*, [Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004], 29). Charles Hodge claims that the writers of Scripture might not have been aware of the Holy Spirit’s work in them any more than the average Christian is aware of the Spirit’s work in the process of sanctification. See Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 1:157. D. A. Carson agrees: “judging by the text of Scripture, it is far from clear that all of the biblical writers were always self-consciously aware that what they were writing was canonical Scripture” (“Approaching the Bible,” in D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010], 32).

⁸ See the thought experiment in Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 140.

themselves” (Gal 5:12) if he knew that such a statement would be included in God’s word for millennia?⁹ These authors might not have written as freely as they did if they knew that they were writing Scripture.

Three Models of Providence

Which model of providence is the best *explanans* for these *explananda*? I will consider three prominent models of providence: open theism, theological determinism, and Molinism.¹⁰

According to open theism, God limits his control of human beings. Open theists believe that God desires humans to be morally responsible and able to love, both of which supposedly require libertarian freedom.¹¹ And God cannot control what an agent possessing libertarian freedom does.¹²

As for the future, open theists believe that God knows everything that can be known. Yet the future does not yet exist; it is not something that can be known by anyone, even God. God knows what he will do in the future, but he does not know what his creatures will freely do.¹³

If God is committed to libertarian freedom, he could not *determine* what the Bible’s authors would freely write. The Holy Spirit could *persuade* them to write certain words, but the Spirit’s persuasion could have been rejected. Therefore, if the human author of Scripture wrote

⁹ Paul undoubtedly was aware that he was called by God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. He knew that his basic message came from God. That, however, is different from believing that his letters were also God’s words.

¹⁰ Terrance Tiessen identifies eleven different models of providence in *Providence and Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000). While it would be useful to see how each of those models might address the doctrine of Scripture, such an evaluation would require a monograph.

¹¹ Gregory A. Boyd, “Response to William Lane Craig,” in *Four Views of Divine Providence*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 138; Gregory A. Boyd, “God Limits His Control,” in *Four Views of Divine Providence*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 188.

¹² Boyd, “God Limits His Control,” 191; Jason A. Nicholls, “Openness and Inerrancy: Can They Be Compatible?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 4 (December 2002): 640.

¹³ Nicholls, “Openness and Inerrancy,” 629n2.

freely, there simply was no guarantee that what he wrote is what God wanted him to write.¹⁴ Yet open theists do not see this as necessarily a problem. According to Jason Nicholls, “simply because it might have been theoretically possible for a biblical writer to err as he wrote under the Spirit’s inspiration does not mean that he necessarily had to err—or that any writer in fact did.”¹⁵

However, that still leaves the issue of prophecy. If the future is open, how can such prophecies be correct? The doctrine of inspiration seems to entail inerrancy: because the Bible is God’s inspired word, and because God doesn’t lie, Scripture must tell the truth, including the truth about the future. Yet if the future cannot be foreknown, how can God guarantee that such statements about the future are true?

Openness proponents respond by stating that there are various types of prophecy: there are conditional prophecies, prophecies based on current trends, and prophecies about what God will freely do in the future.¹⁶ Yet it is not clear that all prophecies in the Bible can be neatly assigned to those three categories. Nor does such a distinction between prophecies rule out error. Free creatures could act in surprising and unpredictable ways that God could not foresee. How then can God’s inspired word be inerrant?

At least one open theist has proposed a solution to this potential problem. Nicholls believes that “as a general rule, humans exercise libertarian freedom.”¹⁷ However, he concedes that “there are times when God overrules obstinate free wills.” Nicholls calls this “select determinism.”¹⁸ Such determinism is “relatively infrequent and almost always temporary.”¹⁹

¹⁴ This point is made by Stephen J. Wellum, “Divine Sovereignty-Omniscience, Inerrancy, and Open Theism: An Evaluation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 2 (June 2002): 267, 269. See also Bruce A. Ware, *God’s Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 91.

¹⁵ Nicholls, “Openness and Inerrancy,” 637.

¹⁶ William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 194–5.

¹⁷ Nicholls, “Openness and Inerrancy,” 631.

¹⁸ Nicholls, “Openness and Inerrancy,” 643.

¹⁹ Nicholls, “Openness and Inerrancy,” 644.

Nicholls seems to suggest that God overruled the wills of individuals to ensure that prophecies about the future would be true.²⁰ According to him, “even in the openness view, God still retains both the ability and the prerogative to intervene in human affairs in those instances when, in his perfect wisdom, he deems it absolutely necessary. This was a prerogative that God had when he initially inspired human authors to compose an inerrant text.”²¹

The next model of providence I will examine is theological determinism. On this view, all that will ever happen in the world is the result of God’s eternal decree. God can therefore be understood as the ultimate cause of all that comes to pass.²² Theological determinists often stress that God has control over every aspect of his creation.²³

Though God is the primary cause of all things, he often operates through secondary causes, his creatures. According to Herman Bavinck, “God so preserves things and so works in them that they themselves work along with him as secondary causes.”²⁴ Though “secondary causes are strictly subordinated to God as the primary cause,” and “though they are totally dependent on the primary cause, [they] are at the same time also true and essential causes.”²⁵

This view of providence maintains that humans have compatibilistic freedom: Though humans will do what God has decreed, they are free in the sense that their actions are the result of their desires, they are not coerced against their will by some outward event or circumstance, and it is logically possible that they could have chosen otherwise.²⁶ God, in ways that are

²⁰ For example, overriding the will of Cyrus so that he would fulfill prophecies contained in Isaiah 44:28ff.

²¹ Nicholls, “Openness and Inerrancy,” 649.

²² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:604.

²³ Helm, *The Providence of God*, 20, 22, 104.

²⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:609–10.

²⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:613–4.

²⁶ Stephen J. Wellum, “The Importance of the Nature of Divine Sovereignty for Our View of Scripture,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 77.

mysterious and perhaps impossible for us to discern, causes humans to freely choose to do what he—and they—desire.

It is not difficult to see how this model of providence applies to the inspiration of Scripture. As the primary cause, God is the ultimate author of Scripture. Yet the human authors are truly authors; they are real, secondary, proximate causes. Such theology easily explains the concursive writing of Scripture.²⁷

Finally, let us consider Molinism. On Molinism, God’s knowledge occurs in four logical (though not temporal) moments. First, God knows all necessary truths (natural knowledge). Second, God knows the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom: what a person would do freely if she were placed in a specific set of circumstances (middle knowledge). Third, God chooses to create a feasible world. Fourth, God then knows “all the contingent truths under his control” (free knowledge).²⁸ In this manner, God knows all that will happen, he has control of all that happens, and his creatures have libertarian freedom.

How does this apply to the inspiration of Scripture? William Lane Craig considers the example of Paul: God knew that if Paul were in certain circumstances, he would write certain letters. These circumstances “included not only Paul’s background, personality, environment, and so forth, but also any promptings or gifts of the Holy Spirit to which God knew Paul would freely respond.”²⁹ Since God knew what Paul would write in such circumstances, and since God weakly actualized the world so that those circumstances would obtain, we can say that God “weakly actualized the writing of the Pauline corpus.”³⁰

²⁷ J. I. Packer, *“Fundamentalism” and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 80.

²⁸ Thomas P. Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account*, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 43.

²⁹ William Lane Craig, “‘Men Moved by the Holy Spirit Spoke from God’ (2 Peter 1:21): A Middle Knowledge Perspective on Biblical Inspiration,” *Philosophia Christi* 1, no. 1 (1999): 72.

³⁰ Craig, “‘Men Moved by the Holy Spirit’,” 73.

It is not clear what role Craig believes the Holy Spirit played in the inspiration of Scripture. While he acknowledges the Holy Spirit's work, he also believes that "it is a mistake to equate inspiration with this movement, so as to imply that because Scripture is verbally inspired therefore the authors were moved immediately by the Holy Spirit to write that or this particular word."³¹ Craig thinks that inspiration, or the property of being God-breathed, is one that belongs not to the authors of Scripture, nor to the process of writing Scripture, but to the text itself. On his view, it was possible for God "to produce a book of Scripture by means of His providence alone without His acting as a primary cause influencing the writing itself."³² Craig is not making an historical claim; rather, he believes that this is a logical possibility.³³

Another Molinist, John Laing, believes that the Holy Spirit played a supervisory role in the writing of Scripture.³⁴ Performing something of an exercise in speculation, Laing writes,

suppose that ninety-nine percent of the words were freely chosen by the human authors and one percent of the word choice required direct divine intervention. ... Why could God not intervene here or there to prevent the human author from writing the wrong word? Why couldn't the proponent of middle knowledge appeal to compatibilist freedom as a possible option for the occasional word (if needed)?³⁵

Evaluating the Models

How well do these possible *explanantia* account for the *explananda* of inspiration?

Open theism can explain propositions (2), (4), and (5). However, it is hard to see how it can explain propositions (1) and (3). As for (1), open theists believe that the Holy Spirit

³¹ Craig, "Men Moved by the Holy Spirit," 80.

³² Craig, "Men Moved by the Holy Spirit," 81.

³³ Consider these statements that Craig makes in "Men Moved by the Holy Spirit": "[A] providentially produced piece of discourse can be inspired, in the proper sense of that term, even in the absence of any special moving of the Spirit of God upon the human author" (76n113). "Even if some book of Scripture were written without any special promptings or assistance of the Holy Spirit, it is Scripture, not in virtue of its inerrancy, but because God in His providence prepared such a book to be His Word to us" (82).

³⁴ John D. Laing, *Middle Knowledge: Human Freedom and Divine Sovereignty* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 243.

³⁵ Laing, *Middle Knowledge*, 245.

influenced the human authors of Scripture. Yet 2 Peter 1:21 speaks of more than mere influence or persuasion. In that verse, the Greek verb translated as “carried along,” φέρειν, often is used to refer to wind that propelled ships, as in Acts 27:15, 17.³⁶ Sailboats do not move unless they are impelled by wind, and Scripture is not written unless the Holy Spirit moves humans to write it.³⁷ Thus, Richard Bauckham translates 2 Peter 1:21 in the following way: “prophecy never came by the impulse of man, but men impelled by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”³⁸ If open theism is true, then the Spirit’s influence was resistible (assuming there is no select determinism in play), but it just so happened that none of the Bible’s authors resisted that influence.³⁹ Of course, God could not foreknow such a thing. He could only forecast their reaction to the Spirit’s influence based on past and present trends.

As for (3), if God does not in some way control all that happens, he could not prepare the backgrounds of the human authors of Scripture. At best, he could select human authors that already had what he deemed to be appropriate backgrounds. Or, if God wanted an author to have the particular background he did, he could always employ select determinism.

If openness proponents are willing to embrace select determinism and apply it to the entire process of inspiration, perhaps then open theism can adequately explain inspiration. But such a move is an ad hoc adjustment of the openness model, and it violates an important principle articulated by Boyd: “The irrevocability of free will is important for all the same reasons as the uncontrollability of free will. If God had the power to revoke free will whenever

³⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 324.

³⁷ See John Feinberg’s explanation of the sailboat imagery in John S. Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place: The Doctrine of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 134.

³⁸ Richard J. Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1983), 228.

³⁹ Or, on Nicholls’s proposal, God’s selective determinism overruled such resistance. Of course, perhaps other people, potential writers of Scripture, resisted the Spirit, which is why they did not write Scripture.

he wished, we would once again have to conclude that when God does not revoke an agent's will once he sees that he is going to use it for evil purposes, it can only be because *he does not want to.*"⁴⁰ Since one of the perceived benefits of open theism is its answer to the problem of evil, it seems unlikely that open theists will want to apply select determinism at all, or to the extent that the inspiration of Scripture would require.

What about theological determinism? It easily explains propositions (1) and (3). There's no reason why it can't also account for proposition (2). The fact that God ordains and controls everything does not nullify the very human marks of Scripture. The diversity of genres and personal styles readily apparent in Scripture reflects the diversity of God's people and of human experience. If creation itself displays diversity, why wouldn't Scripture?⁴¹

Theological determinism can also explain (4). Though God ultimately controls everything, that does not mean we discern such control or sense the Holy Spirit's actions.⁴² That is why, in order to understand how God's providence works, we need God to reveal such information to us.

What of proposition (5)? Boyd believes that anything less than libertarian free will would reduce us to "puppets on [God's] hand."⁴³ Craig avers that such a strong view of providence amounts to "strict mechanical dictation, for man has been reduced to the level of a machine."⁴⁴ Of course, theological determinists do not believe that humans are puppets or robots. The Holy

⁴⁰ Boyd, "God Limits His Control," 192n18.

⁴¹ Laing (*Middle Knowledge*, 248) believes that the variegated nature of Scripture presents a problem for theological determinism, but there is no reason why God could not have ordained such diverse writing styles and authorial personalities.

⁴² Paul Helm repeatedly points out our inability to detect God's providence in our lives. For example, see Helm, *The Providence of God*, 89.

⁴³ Boyd, "God Limits His Control," 189.

⁴⁴ Craig, "'Men Moved by the Holy Spirit,'" 63.

Spirit moved men to write what he wanted them to write, but we have no indication that they wrote under coercion. They certainly did not write mechanical, robotic prose.

The movement of the Holy Spirit was decisive; we do not have examples of him being resisted by potential authors of Scripture. Yet the human authors of Scripture were not outwardly constrained; they indeed wrote freely. It seems that such freedom was compatible with God's will, and even compatible with the Spirit causing them to write what they did.

Can Molinism serve as an adequate *explanans*? Molinism does seem to be able to explain propositions (2)–(5). Its main problem is that some Molinists suggest that the Bible's authors could write Scripture apart from any direct involvement of the Holy Spirit. Yet the Bible states that all Scripture is the product of the Spirit carrying men along to write what he willed.

While Craig may be right to say that it is logically possible that God could have produced Scripture without any direct activity on the part of the Holy Spirit, that does not match the description of inspiration that we find in the Bible.⁴⁵ Furthermore, how could the human authors have the divine insight necessary to write about the Trinity or salvation unless they were immediately guided by the Spirit to do so? As for Laing's statements, I agree with Warfield's commentary: "The Spirit is not to be conceived as standing outside of the human powers employed for the effect in view, ready to supplement any inadequacies they may show and to

⁴⁵ The irony of the title of Craig's essay is stunning. The title features a quotation of 2 Peter 1:21, yet Craig seems to ignore Peter's words. He does at one point acknowledge this verse, but he thinks that "it is a mistake to equate inspiration with this movement" (Craig, "'Men Moved by the Holy Spirit,'" 80). Whether one wants to accept Craig's definition of inspiration is one issue; denying what Peter says—that no Scripture is produced by human will apart from the impelling work of the Holy Spirit—is another. However one defines inspiration, faithful Christians should not contradict what Scripture clearly states.

supply any defects they may manifest.”⁴⁶ Molinists should explain inspiration in some other way.⁴⁷

The Molinist position suggested by Craig and Laing seems to fit quite comfortably with Nicholas Wolterstorff’s claim that the Bible is “divinely appropriated human discourse.”⁴⁸ Some of that appropriated discourse, he says, will be divine discourse, the words delivered directly through the prophets. The rest of the Bible may be the product of “divine supervision— inspiration, let us say.” But this isn’t necessary. “All that is necessary for the whole to be God’s book is that all the human discourse it contains have been appropriated by God.”⁴⁹

Wolterstorff gives a number of examples of appropriated discourse, including someone selecting a birthday card, signing it, and mailing it.⁵⁰ The Molinist asks us to imagine that God’s position is analogous to a man looking at an incredibly large inventory of birthday cards, selecting one that he finds suitable (though he may have to add or correct a word here or there). Then, he appropriates the card’s message as his own. Are these words really his in any meaningful sense? This idea of appropriating words does not match the biblical data, and that is the real problem. Henri Blocher is correct when he observes, “The distance between Wolterstorff’s account of divine discourse and what biblical evidence compels us to accept is

⁴⁶ Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, “The Biblical Idea of Revelation,” in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 95.

⁴⁷ Molinists can affirm that the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary and deny that it is sufficient. They might say something like the following: While the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary, what is also needed to produce Scripture is cooperative human will. In principle, the inspiring movement of the Holy Spirit can be resisted. Perhaps there are logically possible worlds in which Bartholomew and Judas (not Iscariot) write Gospels, but these worlds are not feasible, because of the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom regarding Bartholomew and Judas. But there is at least one feasible world—the actual world—in which there were several humans who, in the right circumstances, would not resist the impelling work of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1995), 53. Of Wolterstorff’s view, Craig writes, “Such an understanding of Scripture is entirely consonant with the position defended in this paper” (“Men Moved by the Holy Spirit,” 76n113).

⁴⁹ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 54. Later, he claims that “a doctrine of inspiration really is a supplement” (187).

⁵⁰ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 41.

glaring.” As Blocher notes, “the prophets’ words *originated* with God and were uttered in utter dependence on God’s leading and protecting (from any extraneous interference) as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit.”⁵¹

Conclusion

The model of providence that best accounts for the biblical data regarding the inspiration of Scripture is theological determinism. Open theism, when held consistently, does not guarantee that God can produce an infallible, inerrant revelation. Molinistic explanations of inspiration do not reflect the activity of the Holy Spirit as described in the Bible. Interestingly, both Nicholls and Laing seem to admit that there are times when God must act in a deterministic fashion. Such concessions reveal weaknesses in their models of providence. Yet theological determinism’s notion of dual agency and compatibilistic freedom is exactly what we find in the Bible’s description of its own writing. The inspiration of Scripture seems to be a perfect example of compatibilistic freedom. This demonstrates that the notion of compatibilistic freedom is not only coherent, but that it is also biblical.

If the Bible is the story of providence, and if that story suggests that one model of providence best explains its inspiration, then Christians would do well to embrace that model.

⁵¹ Henri A. G. Blocher, “God and the Scripture Writers: The Question of Double Authorship,” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 521.

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