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Page | 1

Bibliology

Radical, Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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Page | 2

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Contents

The Nature of Inspiration	6
The Problem	6
Alternative Proposals in the Church	7
Intuition Theory	8
Illumination Theory	8
Conceptual Inspiration	9
Mechanical Dictation	9
Degree Inspiration	10
Partial Inspiration	10
Early Christianity	10
The Reformers	12
Roman Catholic Church	13
Karl Barth	14
Biblical Teaching	14
Pentateuch	14
Historical Books	15
Poetry and Wisdom	16
The Prophets	18
Synoptic Gospels	19
Acts	20
Pauline Corpus	21
Johannine Corpus	24
Other New Testament Writings	25
Systematic Formulation	26
Apologetic Interaction	31
Relevance to Life and Ministry	36
Footnotes	37
Introduction to Biblical Languages	38
Hebrew	38
Aramaic	40
Greek	41
Footnotes	44
A Brief History of the English Bible	45

Conclusion 50

How We Got Our Bible..... 50

Footnotes 56

Defending the Inerrancy and Canon of Scripture 57

Inerrancy 57

The Canon..... 58

Footnotes 61

Bible Translations: Has the Word of God Been Changed?..... 61

Terminology 62

What Constitutes the Word of God? 64

Why Are There Differences Among Translations? 64

Does the Majority Win? 67

The Byzantine Text Was Once in the Minority 67

Evidence Against the Authenticity of the Byzantine Text as the..... 70

Original Text..... 70

From Whose Perspective? 73

Common Objections to the Critical Text as Offered by Byzantine Text Advocates
..... 73

The Critical Text is a Non-Existent Text 73

The Critical Text is Shorter Than the Byzantine Text, and Thus, Takes Away
 From the Word of God..... 75

The Critical Text is Derived From the Corrupted Manuscripts of the Early
 Heretics 76

Conclusion 78

Footnotes 79

Bibliology

The Nature of Inspiration

Page | 6

The Problem - Alternative Proposals in the Church - Biblical Teaching -
Systematic Formulation - Apologetic Interaction - Relevance to Life and Ministry

The Problem

The Bible has been loved and followed by devout men and women throughout the last three and a half millennia, being viewed as the Word of Jehovah. There has been much attention given to the weight of authority the sixty-six books of our modern Bible possess, especially in the last few centuries. Most discussions have centered around the meaning and extent of inspiration. Questions raised under this banner, have included whether any or all the Bible is inspired, or if only certain topics or sections are inspired. Other questions include whether inspiration only pertains to the general message of Scripture, or to the very words and grammar of the writings themselves. These types of questions are usually discussed under the idea of Biblical inerrancy; i.e., determining if the Bible does, or can contain error, or if it is absolutely without human error.

What this course attempts to address, is the manner in which inspiration took place. In what way, or ways, were the writers of Scripture inspired? More specifically, what part did the divine element play, and what part did the human element play in the element of Scripture? If the Bible is a divine book, how are the human imprints on its many pages explained? If the Bible is a human book, how are the divine claims explained? Did the authors of Scripture realize they were being inspired by God and that their writings would be read by believers down through the centuries or did they write the literature, poetry, and letters in the same fashion as they did other non-Biblical

writings?

There are two extreme ways of viewing the nature of the inspiration of the Biblical writers, and many variations of degrees falling in between. The extreme liberal side emphasizes the human element of the Scriptures to such an extent, that the role of the Holy Spirit is extremely minimized, if not even excluded from the finished product. The more conservative side emphasizes the divine element to such an extent, that the role of the human authors who penned the original autographs is severely minimized, if not altogether excluded from the finished product.

Most scholars, but not all, recognize and confess both, the human and divine contribution in the writing of the Scripture. The debate revolves around the level of interaction between God and men, in this endeavor. To what extent, and in what manner, did God inspire the writers of Scripture? The view one takes on this position can heavily influence his view on the extent of Biblical inspiration and other related topics.

The problem to be addressed in this course is related to verbal, plenary inspiration, and the issue of inerrancy, but is not centrally hinged to either of these issues. Though not central, neither is it unrelated. Most assuredly, one's view of the extent and meaning of inspiration will inform and influence one's understanding of the way in which inspiration took place, but it does not necessarily dictate it. Also, one's understanding of the manner in which the writers of Scripture were inspired, will affect their understanding of inspiration and inerrancy. It is for this reason, that this topic, though often neglected, is so important to our Bibliology.

Alternative Proposals in the Church

This issue of the nature of inspiration has been discussed throughout the history of the Church. We now turn our attention to these various theories and to some of the believers, who subscribed to them.

Intuition Theory

This theory of inspiration denies any divine influence or superintendence over the writers of Scripture. Instead, the authors had a high degree of Spiritual insight into divine things. It was no temporary endowment, but a permanent possession. The writers of Scripture are seen as religious geniuses, with an intuitive insight into the ideas of religion. Their writings proceeded from their own wills, just like any other writer of literature.

The Deists of early American history held a view similar to this. The way in which they differed, was that they did not necessarily believe, that the writers were always “inspired,” but that there were certain times in which their literary talents were “elevated during moments of special creativity.”

Illumination Theory

This view maintains, that the writers of Scripture, were influenced by the Spirit of God, in that, He heightened their Spiritual awareness, but not in the sense of communicating any special revelation, or guiding their writing, but a mere increased sensitivity/perception, to Spiritual matters. The difference between the authors of Scripture and the writers of other believers is one of degree and not one of kind.

Regarding this view, Charles Ryrie writes:

This viewpoint goes a step farther than natural inspiration [intuition theory], for it conceives of the writers as more than natural geniuses, in that, they were also Spirit-filled and guided. “The inspiration of the books of the Bible does not imply for us the view that they were produced or written in any manner, generically different, from that of the writing of other great Christian books....There is a wide range of Christian literature, from the fifth to the twentieth century, which can with propriety, be described as inspired by the Holy Spirit, in precisely the same formal sense as were the books of the

Bible” (Alan Richardson, *Christian Apologetics* New York: Harper, 1948, p. 207).

There is a line of delineation made between the inspiration of the author, and the inspiration of the autograph. Inspiration only extends to the writer himself, not to that which is written.

Conceptual Inspiration

This theory is synergistic, in that, it confesses that the human and divine elements worked together in the inspiration of the Bible. The writers of Scripture were not inspired in the sense of a heightened awareness, or from a strong motivation during some creative moments as the term is commonly used in our modern English vernacular, but were divinely moved upon by the Holy Spirit, in a special way, so as to communicate divine truth. The Spirit did not over-rule the human element, however. The two worked in harmony.

The way in which the two worked, was that the Spirit inspired the thoughts and concepts, but the writers clothed the concepts with their own choice of words and expressions. The choice of words, is purely human. When reading the Word of God, then, to receive the divine revelation, one need not focus on the wording and grammar, but on the concepts conveyed, by the wording and grammar. For it is there, wherein, lies the inspiration of God.

Mechanical Dictation

The mechanical dictation view, also known as divine dictation, states that every word in the original autograph was determined by God. The inspiration extends beyond the direction of the authors’ thoughts and concepts, to the very words employed to dress those concepts. There was no active contribution from the men who physically penned the writings, to the resultant manuscripts, other than the physical process itself. They were passive in the whole process, while God was actively telling them to write every word, with its unique tense and grammatical structure.

Degree Inspiration

This particular view of inspiration embraces the idea, that although all of the Bible is inspired, and therefore God's Word, certain parts, are more inspired than others. There are degrees of inspiration that are not alike in every passage, or in every book. In this view, although both the human and divine elements are always present, one aspect will show through more, in some places, than in others. This view is similar to the conceptual theory, in that, it gives great amounts of room for human contribution to the final product, but it differs in that there is no static guidance from the Holy Spirit on the writers, to keep what they write, to be the Words of God. Some concepts, as found in the Scripture, are "watered down" more with human thought, than are others. Other concepts, or passages of the Bible, are more "concentrated" with God's actual Word.

Partial Inspiration

This theory maintains, that only certain parts of the Bible are truly inspired. Those specifically inspired, are the ones pertaining to salvation. Matters, such as history, science chronology, and other non-salvific matters are written by man without inspiration from the Spirit of God and can contain error. Although all of the Bible is not inspired, the inspiration contained therein is sufficient to lead one to salvation.

Early Christianity

The Greek Apologists seemed to have held a view close to that of mechanical dictation, if not mechanical dictation itself. Writings, from this time period, speak of God, as a plectrum, and man, as the lyre. The imagery is of God plucking the strings of a harp.

Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology*, said, "But when you hear the utterances of the prophets, spoken as it were personally, you must not suppose that they are spoken by the inspired themselves, but by the Divine Word, who moves them." Justin declared this to be so, because of the nature of prophecy (futuristic, and therefore, unknowable,

apart from revelation). Although advocating the divine origin of the prophecies, he also relegated the first-person point of view, from which, the authors spoke to be something of a phenomenistic sort, that is not meant to be taken literally. It appears to the reader, that the writings of the prophet were written by the prophets, but this is only to be understood figuratively.

The Fathers held a similar view, to that of the Apologists. Origen believed, that inspiration extended to every letter of the Scripture. This does not mean, that Origen was not aware of the human contribution to Scripture. He even commented, that some of the Greeks employed in the New Testament, was not the best Greek. He believed that even this bad Greek, however, was used by God, to communicate to His audience.

Bruce Vawter claims that Justin, Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose, Athenagoras, and Tertullian all held to the basic views of mechanical dictation.

Although the imagery and wording employed by the Apologists and Fathers seem to suggest mechanical dictation, there are some who believe, that the Fathers have been misunderstood in their terminologies. Robert Preus, for example, comments: "They are not suggesting that the human authors of Scripture are unthinking, unwilling instruments, divested of consciousness or personality.... On the contrary, they, at times, affirm a condescension...of the Spirit, whereby, He condescends or accommodates himself to the style and personalities of the Biblical writers." Even their understanding of condescension, however, could only indicate that they viewed God, as using the vocabulary and style that was known to the individual authors, but all the while, dictating exactly which words to be used within these limits.

Commenting further, Preus said:

"And so for the fathers...total control of the Spirit, over the penman, was perfectly harmonious with the conscious and willing use of their unique endowments and styles of

writing. The flute-lyre-instrument terminology was employed only to stress the instrumentality of human authors and the monergism of the divine inspiration. One might say, that contributively, the Biblical writers, were passive-the Spirit alone, supplied to them, *what* they were to write, the very form and content; but subjectively or psychologically.....the Biblical writers were active, in full and conscious possession of their faculties. Nowhere do the Fathers try to bridge this paradox.”

The Reformers

Martin Luther held to a verbal inspirational view of the Scripture. Every word and even the word order was inspired. Luther wrote, “The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, written and (I might say) lettered and formed in letters, just as Christ is the eternal Word of God, veiled in the human nature.” That which is contained in Scripture did not come from the mind of the writers, but the writers wrote what they heard from God.

Even the different ordering of events in the Gospels, Luther believed, was determined by the Holy Spirit. This means that every phrase in the Bible, is there because God told the writers to write it, even such statements, as Paul telling Timothy to bring his books, parchments, and cloak (2 Timothy 4:13). It seems that Luther went beyond providence, almost to the point of mechanical dictation, as had the Apologists and Fathers before him.

Calvin never wrote a major treatise on Scripture, since it was not a major issue, in his day. He spent much of his time fighting the theology of the Catholic Church, which accepted the full authority and inspiration of the Bible, but Calvin did comment on the manner of inspiration saying, “...the Apostles, ...were to expound the ancient Scripture and to show that what is taught there, has been fulfilled in Christ. Yet, they were not to do this except from the Lord, that is, with Christ’s Spirit going before them and in a sense, dictating their words... [They] were sure and genuine penmen of the Holy Spirit; and their writings, are therefore, to be considered oracles of God.” This seems to imply, mechanical dictation. Calvin so revered every Word of the Bible that he even said in

his comments on 2 Timothy 3:16, "...the law and the prophecies are not teaching delivered by the will of men, but dictated by the Holy Ghost.... Moses and the prophets did not utter, at random, what we have from their hand, but, since they spoke by a divine impulse, they confidently...testified...that it was the mouth of the Lord, that spoke... We owe, to the Scripture, the same reverence which we owe to God because it has proceeded from Him alone."

Calvin, generally speaking, held similar views of the manner of inspiration, as did Luther. The human authorship of the Bible is never denied, but it is placed so far behind God's inspiration, that it virtually, disappeared.

Roman Catholic Church

At the Council of Trent, on April 8, 1546, the Roman Catholic Church made this pronouncement, concerning the Scripture:

Keeping this always in view, that, errors being removed, the purity itself of the Gospel, be preserved in the Church; which (Gospel), before promised through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by His Apostles to every creature, as the fountain of all, both saving truth, and moral discipline; and seeing clearly, that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles, themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were, from hand to hand.

The Catholic Church sees the authority of Scripture, as passing down from the Words of our Lord Jesus, while on this earth, to the message of the commissioned Apostles, to the committing of their words on paper. They have recognized both, the divine and human contribution, to Scripture, and used a word, common throughout Church history, to describe the manner of inspiration, *dictation*. This process of dictation is never

elaborated upon, but the imagery of transmission, being from “hand to hand,” seems to indicate, a near-mechanical view of inspiration.

Karl Barth

Karl Barth advocated, that the composition of the Scriptural material was no different than the composition of any other human work. There was no supernatural supervision in the writing of the books, contained in our Bible, but they are the work of men, who witnessed God’s revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. The Bible only becomes revelation to the individual who is reading or hearing it, as the Spirit inspires it to one’s mind, so as to reveal Jesus Christ.

Biblical Teaching

In order to determine which of the above views is closest to understanding the way in which inspiration occurred, we will examine the Biblical data in its progressive revelation.

It must be understood before delving into the solution to the problem just posed, that we are dealing with a topic which the Bible does not specifically address. It simply affirms, that God is the author of the Words of Scripture, and that humans were employed in this process. The exact relationship between the two, can only be deduced, by looking at the general tenor of Scripture, and certain Biblical statements, that give implication, to one view or another. When examining the Biblical teaching, then, we have to examine what the Scripture says about itself, concerning authorship; i.e., the divine and human elements.

Pentateuch

The Pentateuch records the first written revelation from God known to man. The Ten Commandments are said to be inscribed by the “finger of God,” thus being the writings

of God (Exodus 31:18; 32:16). In this particular instance, God was completely monergistic in the writing of His Word; there was no medium of man. These commandments were then written down by Moses in the Book of Exodus. This is probably the best example of verbal inspiration in the Bible. This was most definitely a dictation of the words inscribed on the mountain tablets.

In Exodus 34:27, God told Moses to write down His Words, because His Covenant with Israel consisted of those Words. Deuteronomy 31:9, notes that Moses wrote down God's Law and gave it to the priests to teach the Words to the people. Moses was accustomed to speaking directly to God, and therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the words written by Moses were exactly, or near-exact, to the Words uttered by God. (Exodus 19:6-7).

Historical Books

In many of the historical books, the phrase "as it is unto this day," or some close derivative appears. For example, 2 Samuel 18:18, speaks of Absalom's pillar, which he named, "Absalom's Place." The author notes that it was still called by that name in his day. The author of Kings mentions, that the poles that bore the Ark could be seen from the Holy Place due to their great length, and could still be seen in his day (1 Kings 8:8). Similar expressions abound throughout the historical books. These types of statements have nothing to do with retelling the history of Israel but serve as bits of information for the original audience. It is a running commentary if you will. They are small interjections, made by the authors to inform the reader of the effects of the history that could still be witnessed in their day. This seems to be an authorial interjection into the running historical account, which gives evidence to the contribution of the human author.

Chronicles mentions the Law of God, given at Sinai, describing it as the "Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses," (2 Chronicles 34:14). It literally reads, the "Book of the Law of the LORD by the hand of Moses," demonstrating their acknowledgment of

the dual authorship of the Pentateuch. It was the Law of Jehovah, but it came through the hand of the man, Moses.

Yet, still another demonstration of the human element, found in the historical books, is their frequent use of literary works, not found in the Canon of the Old Testament. They used these works, and referenced them for historical purposes, demonstrating that the information presented in their writings, was not all received by direct revelation from God. Other historical accounts were incorporated into the Biblical narrative. Most assuredly, given the Hebrews' emphasis on oral tradition, some of the material contained in the historical books was received from elders who were handed down the stories from their elders.

Poetry and Wisdom

This section of the Scripture gives great attestation to the human element of the Scriptures, especially the poetic portions. Although God is surely able to write poetry, poetry is the mark of human ingenuity. Biblical poetry is not some special form of poetry unique to the Bible, but is the common form of poetry, written in those days. In the Psalms, we find a wide range of human emotions expressed. They are full of poems of man, speaking to God; not of God speaking to man. Although, most assuredly, God can use this poetry to speak to people today, the fact that they were composed to God, shows the human initiative in the endeavor.

Psalms, such as the imprecatory Psalms, demonstrate the humanness of the poetry in a dramatic fashion. David, for example, cries out, "And of Thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I *am* Thy servant" (Psalm 143:12). If the Psalms were dictated, by God, to the authors, all such intensity of human emotion would not make sense, unless one resorts to believing, that God also dictated the emotions to the writers, as they penned God's Words. Even the fact that the Psalms were written to God from man's point of view, would not make sense, under a divine dictation theory. These authors were freely thinking, and freely expressing,

their emotions to God, whether it be in praise or lament.

The Book of Proverbs, were not written entirely, by Solomon. Agur, the son of Jakeh, authored Proverbs 30, and king Lemuel, authored Proverbs 31, writing what his mother had taught him. A question we might ask, is when Proverbs 31 was inspired? Was it when king Lemuel's mother spoke it to Lemuel, or when he wrote it down, or when the compiler(s) of Proverbs added it to Solomon's Proverbs? Whenever it was inspired, we still cannot determine if it was through mechanical dictation, or some other method, but it is interesting to note, that it was compiled together with Solomon's writings, after his death, as part of an inspired book, though it was clearly human in its approach and content.

The Book of Proverbs was edited by men, after Solomon's death. King Hezekiah's men collected more of Solomon's Proverbs and added them to those that were already collected (Proverbs 25:1). Had Solomon written them under dictation from the Spirit of God, or had he been aware that they were inspired by God, it would seem that he would have collected them together with the rest of his Proverbs, but instead, it was not until Hezekiah's day, that they were collected and considered inspired. It could be, that God showed the compiler(s), that these other Proverbs were inspired, but the fact, that Solomon did not include them, seems to indicate, that inspiration could occur in subtle ways through which the author was not even aware that he was being inspired.

Ecclesiastes presents a world-view that is very human. The phrase "under the sun" occurs twenty-seven times, as Solomon explains the way things appear to man. It is written from the human perspective, and often paints a glum picture of life, though what is said, is absolutely true. For example, Solomon said, "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better" (Ecclesiastes 7:3). Again, Solomon said, "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of Spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can man do that cometh after the king? Even that

which hath been already done. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness” (Ecclesiastes 2:11-13).

What should be noticed, is that much of what was written was experienced by the author. God did not just pick a man to write these words, without having experienced what was written, but God used a man, who experienced these things, to write them. The author was writing from personal experience, warning and instructing others.

The Prophets

Of all the portions of the Scripture that seem to purport a divine dictation of verbal inspiration, it would be that of the prophets. Isaiah was told to write certain prophecies down on a scroll (Isaiah 8:1). Jeremiah, when he was called, protested that he did not have the ability to speak, seeing that he was, but a child. Jehovah answered him saying, that He would give him what to speak (Jeremiah 1:4-7). It is said, that the Word of the Lord came to him, and then he spoke (Jeremiah 35:12). The prophecies spoken by Jeremiah were often spoken as though he were Jehovah Himself (Jeremiah 22:1-23:40; 28:2-4; 35:13-19). It seems that Jeremiah spoke the very same words that God first spoke to him. Some twenty years later, God spoke to Jeremiah and commanded him to write down all of the prophecies that were given to him against Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 36:1-3). Jeremiah dictated “all the Words of the LORD, which He [God] had spoken to him [Jeremiah],” to Baruch, son of Neriah (Jeremiah 36:4). It is possible, that what Jeremiah wrote was not word-for-word what God had originally spoken unless God superintended Jeremiah’s memory so that he could remember everything he had prophesied over the last twenty years, word-for-word. This writing was burned by King Jehoiakim of Judah, so Jeremiah was commanded to write the words again. Jeremiah repeated the process through Baruch and added many other sayings to it (Jeremiah 36:28-32). Whether or not the two scrolls matched word-for-word in the material that was repeated, cannot be ascertained. Nothing is said about the nature of the transmission, except that all the Words of Jehovah, were written down.

God commanded Habakkuk to write down a vision he had been shown on a slab for all to see. The vision would eventually come to pass and everyone would have the writing as a witness against them (Habakkuk 2:2-3). The inscribing of this vision onto the slab was faithful to God's vision to Habakkuk, so that it could be considered the Word of God, that would "speak and not lie" (v. 3). This, again, seems to suggest, that the writings of the prophets are word-for-word, from Jehovah, having written exactly what they heard Jehovah say, or are so close, that the written prophecies can be considered, the truth of God, and can testify to mankind.

Synoptic Gospels

Matthew records Jesus' statement when He said, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise, pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (5:18). This verse is very important for our understanding of the nature of inspiration. The inspiration behind the Old Testament Scriptures had to occur in such a way, that the very words employed by the authors were either, determined, desired, or accepted by God. Jesus upheld the Words of the OT, to such an extent, that He said not one jot (the Hebrew letter, *yod* which looks like the English apostrophe) or one tittle (a little protuberance on the Hebrew letter, *dalet*, that distinguishes it from the letter, *res*) of the OT, would fail to come to pass. If the authors of Scripture were only guided in their thoughts (conceptual inspiration), and not in the very words which they spoke, how could Jesus make such a statement?

When Jesus was arguing with the Sadducees over the doctrine of the resurrection, He quoted Exodus 3:6, to prove the validity of the resurrection, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). Jesus' entire argument centered around one word, and the tense of the word, at that. If the understanding of the nature of inspiration was that of illumination or conceptual inspiration, this one word and its tense, would not have carried much, if any, force in Jesus' argument. The Sadducees would have completely dismissed Jesus' quote as unworthy evidence. Jesus seems to make a

clear case, that in some way, even the tenses of the Words of the OT are inspired by God, and thus, authoritative and true.

The nature of inspiration may be alluded to, in Mark 12:36: "...David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: "The Lord, said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet" (NIV). "By the Holy Spirit," is a dative of means, indicating that it was by means of the Spirit, that David said what he said. Jesus was quoting Psalm 110:1. Although we know it to be a Messianic Psalm, looking back in retrospect, David nowhere claimed that it was prophetic. It is simply, a Psalm of David, yet, it is said, that he spoke by means of the Holy Spirit. Even though the writing appeared to be a mere Psalm of David, it was in fact, written by the Spirit of God. God used David to accomplish this writing, though David may not have even been aware of its significance.

The beginning of Luke's Gospel offers some tremendous insight into the nature of inspiration (Luke 1:1-4). Luke claims, that many had undertaken the project of writing an account of the things believed by the Church, as they were told by the eyewitnesses, to the life and events surrounding Jesus Christ. He declared, that he had investigated the history, from the beginning, and having gained a perfect understanding of the matter, set out to give an orderly account of Jesus' life and Words. He used other's work in preparation, for compiling his own.

If inspiration was mechanical dictation, we might have trouble understanding Luke's use of other materials from which he did studies into the historical matter on which he was about to write. Luke even gave a human purpose for his writing; i.e., to assure Theophilus of the things he had already been taught. Whatever the nature of inspiration, it must include the human author's personal knowledge of the material, and the human purposes for writing.

Acts

The Apostles declared a similar statement to that of Jesus, in Matthew 22:43, saying, “[God] Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?” (Acts 4:25). David’s mouth was the instrument through which God spoke Psalm 2:1-2 (*dia* followed by the genitive). Although it was a human author who penned Psalm two, the Words are attributed to God instead, even though there is no trace of divine authorship in Psalm two, only that of David. Paul made a similar statement to that of the Apostles, in Acts 28:25, when he said, God spoke through Isaiah.

Pauline Corpus

It is in the Pauline Corpus, where we find one of the foundational texts, for Biblical inspiration. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul said, “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” “Inspiration” comes from *qeo*neustoj, literally meaning, “God-spirated,” or “God out-breathed.” It is not the writer who is “God-spirated,” according to this text, but the writings themselves. This being so, Scripture is verbal inspiration by its very nature, because

God’s inspiration pertained to the written documents, which consist of words. Verbal inspiration simply means, that every Word of the Bible is the Word of God, and is true. Although verbal inspiration does not deal with the mode of inspiration, it does refer to the extent of inspiration, which will affect our view of the mode.

Some very interesting human elements shine through Paul’s Epistles. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:12-17, Paul is arguing against the factions that had developed in the Church when certain people declared that they were followers of Peter, others of Paul, or Christ. To show the ridiculousness of these factions, Paul asked if they had been baptized into *His* name. They had obviously been baptized into the name of Christ because they are His disciples. To demonstrate that he was not trying to draw disciples to himself, he made the point that he did not even do much baptizing: “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I baptized in

mine own name” (vs. 14-15). This completes Paul’s thought. Here, he clearly stated, that he only baptized these two individuals. Then, in the next verse, he said, “And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other” (v. 16). Here, Paul seemingly remembered that there was one more person he had baptized. As a disclaimer for any more that he might have forgotten, Paul stated, that he did not personally remember any more.

If every Word of the Bible was given by inspiration of God, what do we make of such phenomenon? Are we to believe, that this is a divinely intended slip-of-the-mind? Did God inspire Paul, to momentarily forget, who he baptized. Why did God’s inspiration not bring to Paul’s memory, all that he had baptized when Paul made his first statement?

Paul did attest to a verbal revelation from God. In comparing the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of God, Paul said, that he spoke of the things freely given to us by God, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth;” (1 Corinthians 2:13). The Holy Spirit teaches through words. Most would not dispute this fact. The question centers around the extent of the Words God uses. God uses language (Words) to communicate His truth, but when communicating that truth through men, is every Word directly given by God to the medium, or does God only give enough Words to communicate the basic truth, to which His prophets clothe with other Words?

In 1 Corinthians 7, there are even more baffling statements. On three occasions, Paul said that what he was writing was not the commandment of the Lord, but his own commandment or judgment (1 Corinthians 7:10, 12, 25). If Paul believed he was being inspired to write this Epistle, why would he have stated that these were not the commandment of the Lord, for, in fact, they would be inspired by Him, and thus authoritative? If God dictated these Words, through Paul, then how are we to account for God saying that these commandments or judgments were not from Him? It seems that Paul was not aware of the fact that he was writing inspired Words from God. If he

was, he did not communicate such in the Epistle; which if he would have, it would have added weight to his argument.

Paul told the Church, at Thessalonica, that he thanked God, because of the way in which they had received the words spoken by Silas, Timothy, and himself. Paul said, that they did not receive them as the words of men, but as they truly were, the Words of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Part of Paul's proof was that the words worked effectually, in them (v. 13). It is very unlikely, that Paul was claiming verbal inspiration, when he preached to the Thessalonians, in the same sense, that he believed the OT, to be inspired. Instead, he was pointing out, that his message was God's message, and was truth. It was not a message coming from the mind of mankind, but a message coming from the mind of God.

Paul's meaning, here, is no different than the way in which we speak today. When it is said, that a preacher is preaching the Word of God, we do not assume, that he was speaking inspired revelation from God, but that his message is consistent with God's message. Paul spoke the same revelation, given to him by Jesus Christ, but his speech itself was not inspired simply because of his office, as some have tried to claim, based off of this verse.

In a very personal letter to Timothy, Paul asked Timothy to bring to him his cloak, books, and parchments, when he would come to visit Paul (2 Timothy 4:13). This is just one of the many personal remarks that Paul makes. This too, gives evidence to the humanness of Scripture. Concerning the awareness of the authors, when being inspired, if Paul would have realized that what he was writing was divine Scripture, it may be wondered if such statements like these would be made. These statements give great weight to the argument, that the authors of Scripture, did not always realize that they were being inspired by God to write Scripture. Other personal letters, such as 1 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon also indicate a passive understanding of the significance of what was being written. If the authors did not realize they were writing Scripture, how

did God ensure that every Word written was as He willed it? We might even wonder, if God willed, that every Word of His be dictated Word-for-Word, or if God even spoke to all of the authors, through Words.

Johannine Corpus

John does not say much concerning inspiration, and there is not much material to even make assumptions from. One area in which we can see the humanness of his Gospel is in John 20-31, where he stated his purpose for writing the Gospel; i.e., so that his audience might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, and have eternal life. This was *John's* purpose. Although it could also have been, and most assuredly, was the purpose of the Holy Ghost, John recognizes it as his own. He was not forced to write the way he did, but chose to write as he did, in order to accomplish his, and God's purpose; i.e., that man might believe and be saved.

John records many statements that portray Jesus' relationship to the Father. Jesus' many statements concerning the origin of His doctrine and Words, sheds some relevant light on our topic. According to Jesus, the content of His message was directly from the Father (John 8:26, 28, 38, 40). Even His words were from God. Jesus said, that His Words would judge the unbeliever on the last day because He did not speak of His own accord, but the Father told Him what He should say, and He spoke, accordingly (John 12:48-50). Jesus was not the author of divine revelation, but rather the recipient. The very words He spoke, were taught to Him before He ever taught them to others, yet, even during this transmission from the Father to Jesus, what the man Jesus Christ said, was considered to be, the very Words of the Father.

Jesus, then declared, that He had given the Apostles the Words that He had been given by the Father, and prayed for those who would believe on Jesus, through the words of the Apostles (John 17:8, 20). Jesus considered the words of the Apostles to be faithful to His own Words, which in turn, were faithful to the Words of the Father. If such transmission of the Father's doctrine could be made and could still be considered

to be the same divine revelation from the Father and the Father's Words, surely God could direct the Apostles to write down His Words, and it still to be considered God's Word, too. Jesus seems to have mentioned this process, when He said, that the Holy Ghost would teach the Apostles all things and bring all of Jesus' sayings back to remembrance (John 14:26, see also John 16:13).

The second and third Epistles of John are personal Epistles written to a certain lady and her children, and Gaius respectively. The very fact that they are personal letters, attests to the human intention behind them. God did not inspire the letters for just the individuals to whom they were written, but John makes no indication, that a wider reading, is ever intended. They seem to be letters written to friends in the faith, just as you or I might write today. Could it be, that John did not realize, that he was being inspired?

The Book of Revelation, is quite different, from John's other writings. From the very beginning, John declared that what was about to follow, was a direct revelation from God, the testimony of Christ, the Word of God (Revelation 1:1-3). John heard words and saw visions, while in the Spirit, and penned them accordingly (Revelation 1:10, 19). John wrote what he saw, while in the Spirit. There could be no better example of divine guidance, in writing, than that of this Book. John ends the Book, by commanding, that no words be added to it, nor taken away, lest there be serious consequences (Revelation 22:18-19). This gives credence to a verbal inspiration of that which was written.

Other New Testament Writings

Peter's main contribution to the nature of inspiration is found in 2 Peter 1:20-21. He noted, that the Scripture was written by man, but the content of what they wrote, was not from any personal interpretation, nor did it proceed from their will, but rather, from the Spirit of God. The ideas did not originate with them. The way in which the authors spoke, was by being *moved* by the Holy Ghost. "Moved," is *feromenoi*, a Greek passive

participle, meaning, “to be carried, be borne along.” This same word was used by Luke, describing the ship being carried along by the wind in its sail in (Acts 27:15, 17). In some way, God carried the author in the Spirit, so that the author would not inject any of his own personal ideas and biases, but would speak faithfully, the Word of God.

The initiative is assigned to the Holy Spirit, and by bearing them along in the Holy Ghost, the product can be said to be, the divine work and Words of God Himself. Keathley comments:

This teaches us that both, God and man, were involved in the production of the Bible, but in such a way, that God was the ultimate source (though man’s will was involved, Scripture was never the product of human will). God, both directed the writing and guaranteed the accuracy of the product. The human authors, actively spoke God’s Word, and they were more than dictation machines, but to ensure the accuracy of what was spoken, the human authors were moved and carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The author of Hebrews testified, that God has spoken at different times and diverse ways, through the prophets (Hebrews 1:1). This would indicate, that not all revelation or inspiration, came in the same way. As far as the author’s view of Scripture, on three occasions, he attributed the sayings of David or Jeremiah to the Holy Spirit (3:7-11; 10-15-16; 10:17). There is not even a mention of the human author.

Systematic Formulation

After having examined the major historical views and the relevant Biblical data, we now turn our attention to the summarization of the matter. So far, all we have done is examine what the Biblical writers said or implied about the Scripture and its dual authorship. Now, we turn to forming a working hypothesis on how to account for all the Biblical data.

How is the finite and the infinite related to one another? In what way can we

integrate the divine and human elements of Scripture? We can confess and believe, that the truth of God, can come through *both*, human and divine elements in the same way that we believe, God is the Creator and Sustainer of this world, and at the same time, believe in cause/effect relationships. We know that God is active in His Creation, and yet, we can also confess “natural laws,” that God uses, to govern the world. To believe in one is not to deny the other. We must confess both. What we find difficult, if not nearly impossible to do, is to define what part God plays in the events of this world; i.e., divine causation and natural causation. We do not try to distinguish one from the other, even though we may not understand how they fit together.

Drawing from the above analogy, I. Howard Marshall concludes that:

On a human level, we can describe its [the Scripture] composition, in terms of the various oral and literary processes, that lay behind it - the collection of information from witnesses, the use of written sources, the writing up and editing of such information, the composition of spontaneous letters, the committing to writing the prophetic messages, the collecting of the various documents, together, and so on. At the same time, however, on the divine level, we can assert, that the Spirit, who moved on the face of the waters at Creation (Genesis 1:2), was active in the whole process, so that the Bible can be regarded as both, the words of men and the Word of God.

As has already been demonstrated, there were different ways in which the authors of Scripture, were inspired.

It is not possible to assign one way of inspiration to every writer. Moses and the prophets received their words in some sort of audible or visionary way, and apparently, spoke and wrote the words, near-verbatim. This seems quite different from the evidence found in the poetic literature or Epistles. Although we cannot ascertain one universal way by which God inspired human authors to write His Word, some general observations can narrow down the possibilities. We may not know exactly how inspiration occurred, but we can know something of it, by discovering how it could not

have occurred.

It could not have happened by complete divine dictation. When one reads the original Hebrew and Greek texts, they will quickly become aware of the differing styles, vocabularies, and grammar employed by the various authors. Some books reflect a higher use of language than others. For example, Isaiah's wording is much more beautiful than Amos'. Paul's Greek is much different than that of John. If God divinely dictated every Word, we would expect to see a uniform use of grammar, and level of vocabulary, but we do not. This gives more evidence than almost any other phenomena found in the Bible, to the fact, that the authors contributed, in some way, to the finished product.

Paul giving his own commands (1 Corinthians 7:10, 12), specifically saying, they were not from the Lord, makes one doubt if Paul knew he was being inspired. As far as he was concerned, he was speaking from the wisdom of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 7:40). His apparent forgetfulness over who he baptized (1 Corinthians 12:17), and his personal request to Timothy to bring his personal belongings (2 Timothy 4:13), all denote a tone other than divine dictation. There was such a liberty in the way Paul spoke, that one must question Paul's awareness of being inspired.

It would seem, that the only way to overcome any error and to communicate God's Word faithfully, would be to dictate the message to the writers. If there was not a divine dictation of the words, and the authors were allowed freedom to write under God's guidance (perhaps conceptual inspiration), seemingly not even knowing, at times, that they were writing revelation under the inspiration of the Spirit, how then can the Bible be considered to be the Word of God? This is especially perplexing, when certain portions of Scripture, are cited to prove a particular doctrine, and the entire argument hinges on a letter, punctuation mark, or the tense of a word. Jesus' use of the present tense, "am" in Exodus 3:6, shows that even the grammar was considered inspired. Paul made a big deal of the fact, that Genesis 17:8, uses the singular "seed," demonstrating the man, Christ Jesus, was in view. Jesus used the plural of "gods" in Psalm 82:6, to put down

the Pharisees' complaint, that Jesus called Himself the Son of God (John 10:35).

Conceptual inspiration cannot be entirely correct if every word, syllable, and punctuation are considered inspired by God, because man, by "putting meat" on the concepts given them by God, could not produce inspired words, that held authority in their smallest detail, because the revelation would not be found in the words, but in the concepts behind the words. At best, only the whole collection of words put together would hold authority, and this still would only be because they portray the revealed and inspired concept.

There must be a way in which we can confess the Spirit's total control over the writing process, and yet, at the same time, make room for the human purposes, as stated by the authors, expressions of communication, differing writing styles, differing grammar, and differing levels of vocabulary. Some have tried to deny the contribution of man, but it is not "necessary that the particular style and method of the writer should be abandoned. God may have wise purposes to answer in preserving this, while He secures, through His agency, an infallible declaration of His will. So that style, manner, etc., may be of the author's own choice, ...stated and taught under an immediate divine influence, without the possibility of error." The human characteristics present in the Scripture are not an embarrassment to God. He is well aware of them. It might be compared to the divine accommodation, that God made when He added humanity to His existence. God was not ashamed of His humanness, and neither is He ashamed of the human distinctives, found in His Divine Word.

In order to ensure that the words written were exactly as God would have them, and yet, avoid using the human author as a mere medium, God would only have had to have been directing the thoughts of the authors. By guiding their thoughts, and using their own personal ways of expression and level of vocabulary, God would still be able to have the words used, which would best portray the revelation He desired to communicate. "Inspiration involved God's directing the thoughts of the writers so that they were precisely the thoughts that He wished expressed." This takes into account,

even the specificity, or lack of specificity, in which God wanted His revelation to be recorded.

The authors of the Bible followed the initiative of the Holy Spirit, and His guidance, although they continually retained their normal psychological and physical capacities. “The divine direction and control under which the Biblical authors wrote, was not a physical or psychological force, and it did not detract from, but rather heightened the freedom, spontaneity, and creativeness of their writing.” The Spirit’s work with the human authors is not to be thought of, as a mechanical relationship between a divine master and an unknowing or unwilling subject, but rather, like a worthy, personal relationship, in which, one individual moves on another and influences them, guiding them in a joint-effort, to reach a certain goal.

Part of the solution lies in understanding what inspiration applies to. The inspiration of God must be assigned to the end product, of the actual writings. When the Bible says, that men were “borne along by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21, *feromenoi*), this does not indicate, mechanical dictation at the time of writing, of which, information was unknown to the author before being inspired to write it. There was a preparation period before the writing. The prophets and other authors had experiences that they brought to the writing. The fact that the authors brought their experiences and prior understanding of God’s revelation to their task of writing Scripture, does not lessen the impact of God’s work of inspiration. These experiences themselves can be said, to be from God.

For example, Paul told the Corinthians, that when he experienced tribulation, it was God preparing him to be able to comfort others, who would go through the same. When Paul was comforted by God, it was so that he could comfort others also (2 Corinthians 1:4-6). God prepared Paul for the end result before the result came to pass. Likewise, God was preparing the authors of Scripture, so that when it came time to write His Word, they were already prepared mentally and experientially, for the process. God knew the authors of Scripture, from before their birth and was providentially preparing

their conceptual frameworks, experiences, emphasis, and personalities for the task of writing His divine truth. God controlled the process of research and recall so that what was written, was intended to be written, by God Himself. They penned the words from their mind, as they were providentially led by the Spirit of God, to recount the things they had learned, by experience or revelation, from God previously. It is in this divine leading, that we find the most likely meaning of *feromenoi*.

No better summary can be given than that of the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia:

We seem safe only in inferring this much: that the gift of Scripture through its human authors took place by a process much more intimate than can be expressed by the term, "dictation," and that it took place in a process in which the control of the Holy Spirit was too complete and pervasive to permit the product, as the Word of God. The Scriptures...are conceived by the writers of the New Testament, as through and through God's Book, in every part expressive of His mind, given through men, after a fashion, which does no violence to their nature as men, and constitutes the Book, also men's book as well as God's in every part expressive of the mind of its human authors.

Apologetic Interaction

For those in favor of the mechanical dictation theory, it is argued, that the information needing to be conveyed to mankind, was too important, to allow humans to have any contribution to it. It was very important for God to communicate His Word accurately to mankind, but using diverse humans with diverse contributions to the process, need not color, nor pollute, the revelation. If the subject matter is being handled by believers, who were taught by the Lord Himself, and in whom, the Spirit is at work, then we can be assured that they were under the guidance of the Spirit, and therefore, their writings will display the very Word of God. Being human does not demand error. Inspiration was of

such a nature, that the authors were kept from error.

Others claim, that God could not use words to express His revelation, because language is finite, and God is infinite. Any attempt to put God's revelation of Himself into words would automatically distort the revelation. Instead of verbal inspiration, all inspiration must be by insight or by concept only. This objection fails to recognize any possibility for God to condescend to the level of man and work within the realm of mankind, so as to reveal Himself to them. Although we can never understand God's true nature because of the chasm between His infiniteness and our finiteness, there is much that can be communicated to us. Besides, if the issue is God not being able to reveal Himself through words because of their inadequacy and finiteness, then God could not reveal Himself in any fashion, even by insight or concept, because these too, are finite. Those who hold to concept inspiration, believe that this allows them to bypass the problem of the human distinctive in Scripture, by claiming that God's revelation does not come in words, but it creates another problem by ignoring the portions which give evidence of a verbal, plenary view of Scripture (Matthew 5:18; Galatians 3:16).

If God uses concepts to communicate His Word, the concepts have to be expressed in some way. How are they to be expressed accurately? Concepts, in order to be transferred from one mind to another, must be encoded with various words. The more specific the words employed, the more accurately the transmission of the concept will be. Without words, however, there can be no communication of concepts. For God to communicate and accommodate His concepts to man, He must use our words.

A particular concept or thought cannot be expressed by every word in any given language. There are a limited amount of words that can be used. Depending on the specificity of the concept, sometimes there may only be one word that can be used, to faithfully express a given concept. The Spirit directed the thoughts of the writer of Scripture, giving him precise concepts or in some cases, precise words, and the writers correspondingly followed the divine initiative. "By creating the thought and stimulating

the understanding of the Scripture writer, the Spirit will lead him, in effect, to use one particular word, rather than another.”

The Partial Inspiration view falls short on both, exegetical and philosophical, grounds. The argument against the Bible, being the inerrant Word of God, without any mistakes, is that since men wrote the Bible, and men make mistakes, the Bible can and does contain errors. This is a suicide argument, because if men are so prone to mistakes, who is to say that the person arguing for this view, is not mistaken in his argument? Just because we know that men can commit error, does not mean that they always do, or must commit error.

We also need to ask ourselves whether or not God ever tries to do something, but is not quite successful, or if God is always successful, in that which He does? This aspect of the problem at hand concerns God's knowledge and ability. We may try to do something and fail because we do not have the ability, but this is not so with God. If the Partial Inspiration view is correct, then we are led to believe, that God tried to communicate His Word to man, but was not quite successful, because the human personalities would not allow His Word to be transcribed accurately, in certain areas. It may be objected, that God preserved the salvific portions of Scripture without error, because of their extreme importance, but not matters of history and science. My question to this, would be why, if God had the ability to ensure that truth would be proclaimed in the salvific portions of Scripture, would He not ensure that every area of truth be recorded accurately?

God did not try to communicate His Word to men; He did communicate His Word to men. God is capable of taking humans, who are prone to error, and ensuring that they do not commit any error in the copying of His Word. Although God did not dictate His Word to the writers of Scripture, He was carefully overseeing the final product, so that it would truly be an expression of His pure Word.

Karl Barth's charge, that the Bible is no different than any other Book in its formation,

and that it only becomes inspired, or the Word of God when the reader is inspired by it, and it reveals to them, Jesus Christ, is weak in the fact, that while Barth emphasizes the need for *illumination now*, he denies the idea that it was *inspired then*, when originally written. He admits that there is inspiration, but not in the original autograph, and it's not inherent in the text itself, but in the experience with the text, on an individual basis. Such an argument ignores the relevant Biblical data, and only pushes the idea of inspiration, one step past the original writings.

A special word needs to be spoken, concerning the tendency of some, to define inspiration in a cut-and-dry manner, allowing for no mystery. In our attempt to secure the truthfulness of Scripture against attacks of liberalism, we may ignore some of the relevant facts about the transmission of Scripture, in order to make it fit our model of inspiration and inerrancy. Although our motives may be good, or integrity, in such an approach, is lacking. Many attempts to tightly define the nature of inspiration and inerrancy, are the result of a pre-commitment to a particular view of Scripture, and not to the evidence. Daniel Wallace observed that many times, "Christians are more in pursuit of certainty than they are with truth." He said, "it would be better for us to have some doubts in an honest pursuit of truth than it would be for us to be certain about something that was not true." With these words, I concur.

There are some things in the transmission of the text, for which, a narrow view of inspiration and inerrancy cannot account for. This is especially true of the OT, seeing that it was written over a much longer period of time, than the NT, and in a much different fashion. We must reckon with the fact, that there is an older grammar of the Hebrew language, which existed in Moses' day, that is different from the grammar of the later Books of the OT. This older grammar was revised around 1350 B.C. We know that the Pentateuch had to have had its grammar revised to fit the new form, because the grammar of the OT is more or less, uniform throughout. The Pentateuch, if it had not been edited to match the new grammar, would be different than that of the OT, but it is not. Later, scribes updated the text to reflect the newer grammar, of their day. A cut-and-dry understanding of inspiration and inerrancy does not easily allow, for such

changes.

We must even question the necessity of neatly defining a theory of inspiration and inerrancy. Christianity does not stand or fall, based on such theories. Whether it was conceptual inspiration or mechanical dictation, does not change the fact, that Christianity is true. Even if we found errors in the Bible, it would not prove that the message of the Bible, is not true. It would not prove, that Jesus never existed, or that His miracles are not real, or that He did not resurrect from the dead.

We must beware, lest we come to think, that the Christian faith depends on one's view of the Bible. This type of reasoning is ignorant of the historical fact, that the early Church did not have an inerrant copy of the Scriptures. The majority of the people would never possess a copy of the Bible. Of those who did, the copies would contain many errors, scattered throughout. It must be remembered that we are living in the days of the printing press when every book is printed alike. We seldom find errors in books. This is not the case in the days when each book was copied, by hand.

The Apostles did not even rely on a Bible for their preaching. Paul did not go to Corinth with a Bible in hand and preach an exegetical message on Isaiah 58. Paul went to Corinth and gave them what he had; i.e., the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He did not offer them a Bible. He offered them Jesus! He did not tell them to believe that the Hebrew Bible was inerrant, in order for them to come to faith in Jesus. He told them the story of Jesus, the things He said and did, of His death and resurrection, and noted that it was foretold, in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Gentiles took Paul's testimony, mixed it with faith, and had a salvation-experience with Jesus Christ. Christianity is not dependent on an error-free Bible, for its truthfulness. Only Jesus must be true for Christianity to exist. Although the topic of inspiration and inerrancy is important, the Christian faith is not at stake, no matter which side the ball falls on.

Relevance to Life and Ministry

How does such a view of the nature and manner of inspiration affect our lives and ministry today? There does not seem to be any life-changing relevance to our lives, as it pertains to any immediate behavior, but there are some subtle ways in which we are affected, especially in the life of the mind.

Page | 36

The main difference this course brings to the Christian is his/her outlook on the Bible. Instead of being a Book of divinely, dictated, truths with no human input, or a Book of mere concepts or Spiritual insights with little traces of the divine, it is viewed as a divine-human Book, that faithfully communicates God's every Word, through human words. Such a view may cause many of us to re-evaluate our understanding of what inspiration means. The main area in which this view affects our lives is in our understanding of inspiration, which affects our view of the Bible and its authority. It is a change of thinking, or a clarification of the way, in which, we think of the Bible.

When we understand, that God used the individual writers' personal backgrounds and ways of expressing themselves literarily, in order to communicate His divine truth, we learn that no matter how much we are in the will of God, and being used by God, our human element will always shine through. God uses *our* minds, styles, and emphasis to perform His desires. God works with us, to accomplish His goals, and is assured that our abilities, led and guided by His providence, will prove to be fruitful. God works with man to bring about His purposes. Just as He could inspire the authors of Scripture to be above error, by leading them and guiding them through His providence, He can lead us and guide us into that which He wills, and see to it that the outcome will work out for the furtherance of His Kingdom, and our good. Each individual has something to offer the Kingdom of God, and it is our individual distinctiveness that makes us useful to God. He uses our own uniqueness to communicate His message to the world, and He is not limited by it, nor is He ashamed of it.

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ISBE, "Inspiration."

Introduction to Biblical Languages

Hebrew - Aramaic - Greek

Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Semitic family which includes: Arabic, Ethiopic, Akkadian, Aramaic, Syriac, and Canaanite (which itself, is made up of: Hebrew, Phoenician, Ugaritic, and Moabite). The Hebrew language was much simpler than Greek or English, and thus, lacked the precision that these languages have. The syntax and grammar of Hebrew is very simple, but translating it can be difficult, at times, because of this lack of precision. This is why you can have such variety in the various translations of the Old Testament. Sometimes, the translation is more precise than the Hebrew actually is. Hebrew is, however, a vivid and pictorial language. It often uses word pictures to convey abstract ideas, for which, it does not have words. Hebrew, is also written, from right to left. When you open a Hebrew Bible, you start from what we would consider the “back” of the book.

The alphabet consists of 22 consonants and no vowels. The vowels were simply understood and supplied where they were needed. This is similar to the way we use personalized license plates or even some of our abbreviations (bldg). Our minds can simply supply the vowels because we are familiar with the words. At some point in history, the Jews quit pronouncing the name of God, and instead, substituted the title, “Adonai” (Lord), for fear of using God’s name, in vain. Therefore, the original pronunciation of the vowels is lost. However, from what we know of names, which contain part of the divine name (Isaiah, Elijah), scholars believe that the most probable pronunciation was, “Jehovah,” or “Yahweh.”

After the demise of the nation of Israel and the dispersion of the Jewish people (around 150 A.D.), Hebrew was fast becoming a dead language. Later on, (about the 5th century A.D.), the Masoretes devised a system of dots and dashes, to preserve the

vowel pronunciation, and also, to help children learn Hebrew. These marks were placed above and below the letters, so as not to alter the length of the scrolls. Today, a text which contains these features is referred to as, “pointed” and one without the vowel markings is called, “un-pointed.” Since Hebrew had basically ceased being used, except when reading the Scriptures, modern Hebrew is then a “resurrection” of this once dead language.

Hebrew connects as one word, what we would separate, into several words in most Western languages (such as, English). Often, prepositions, the definite article (the) and the conjunction “and” are attached as a prefix to the verb. And even a pronoun, when used as a direct object or possessive, may be attached, as a suffix. Therefore, one Hebrew word can be a complete sentence with a subject (implied), verb, and direct object. For instance, the sentence, “He killed him,” would be written as one word, in Hebrew.

Nouns are either, masculine or feminine, and are almost always, derived from their cognate verbs. Masculine words form their plural, by adding --im (for instance, the words cherubim, seraphim, and Elohim, are all plural) and feminine words become plural, by adding --oth. Since plurality can also designate a multiplicity of attributes, the words God, face, heaven, and water are often found in the plural, even when they refer to something singular. Hebrew nouns have no case, as does Greek. Instead, Hebrew uses prepositions, the genitive construct, and the sign of the direct object, “eth” to represent different cases. (In English, we have cases, only with pronouns: I [subjective], my [possessive], and me [objective]).

The verb, stem, is usually made up of three consonants. In English, we use tenses primarily, to designate the time of the action. Hebrew tenses, on the other hand, describe the kind of action. In fact, it has only two tenses, perfect and imperfect (which represent complete and incomplete action, respectively). Both of these tenses can be past, present, or future, depending on the context. Greek, on the other hand, has six tenses, which can describe both, the time and kind of action.

Larry Walker comments on adjectives and abstract terms in Hebrew:

Hebrew is deficient in adjectives. “A double heart” is indicated in the original Hebrew by “a heart and a heart” (Ps. 12:2) and “two differing weights” is actually “a stone and a stone” (Deut. 25:13); “the whole royal family” is “the seed of the kingdom” (2 Kings 11:1).

Adjectives that do exist in Hebrew have no comparative or superlative forms. Relationship is indicated by the preposition “from.” “Better than you” is expressed literally in Hebrew “good from you.” “The serpent was more subtle than any other beast” is literally “the serpent was subtle from every beast” (Gen. 3:1). The superlative is expressed by several different constructions. The idea “very deep” is literally “deep, deep” (Eccl. 7:24); the “best song” is literally “song of songs” (compare “king of kings”); “holiest” is literally “holy, holy, holy” (Isa. 6:3).

Abstract terms are alien to the character of Hebrew; for example, Biblical Hebrew has no specific words for “theology,” “philosophy,” or “religion.” Intellectual or theological concepts are expressed by concrete terms. The abstract idea of sin is represented by such words as, “to miss the mark” or “crooked” or “rebellion” or “trespass” (“to cross over”). Mind or intellect is expressed by “heart” or “kidney,” emotion or compassion by “bowels” (see Isa. 63:15 KJV). Other concrete terms in Hebrew are “horn” for strength or vigor, “bones” for self, and “seed” for descendants. A mental quality is often depicted by part of the body thought of as its most appropriate embodiment. Strength can be represented by “arm” or “hand,” anger by “nostril,” displeasure by “falling face,” acceptance by “shining face,” “thinking by “say.”

Aramaic

The vast majority of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. However, there are

some portions which were written in Aramaic. These are: Daniel 2:4b-7:28 and Ezra 4:8-6:18, 7:12-26, as well as, a few phrases in Genesis 31:47 and Jeremiah 10:11. It was probably the language Jesus and the disciples actually spoke on a day to day basis, but we cannot be sure. Aramaic was a close cousin to Hebrew, even sharing the same alphabet. In fact, the script used in modern Hebrew Bibles today is Aramaic. Hebrew and Aramaic were a little bit closer than, say, modern Spanish is to English. Aramaic was also becoming somewhat of a universal language towards the end of the Old Testament. In fact, since many of the Jews understood Aramaic better than Hebrew, some of the Hebrew Scriptures were paraphrased into Aramaic (Targums). Aramaic probably has the longest linguistic history of any language and is still spoken by a few people today.

Greek

In comparison with Hebrew, Greek is much more complex and precise. It is capable of expressing fine nuances and various shades of meaning, as well as philosophy and abstract ideas. The conquests of Alexander the Great spread the Greek language and culture to all the lands that he conquered (which was most of the then known world) and by New Testament times, it had become the *lingua franca* (universal language) of the Mediterranean region and beyond. You might say, that English is soon becoming the *lingua franca* today. It is often the language of international trade. Greek is part of the Indo-European family, which also contains such languages as Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, English, and German.

The Greek of the New Testament (Koine) was somewhat different from classical and literary Greek. It was the language of the common people, spoken in everyday language. We have learned much more about this form, since the discovery of the papyri in Egypt, about 150 years ago. Tens of thousands of manuscripts, consisting of common writings that contained everything from grocery lists to personal letters to receipts, were discovered, at this time. Because of the extremely dry climate in Egypt, they were preserved and they have proven to be invaluable. It is hard to underestimate

what these discoveries have contributed to our knowledge of New Testament Greek today, which was not known merely 150 years ago. For this reason, commentaries and lexicons written before this time were written with a lesser understanding of the language and we should keep this in mind when using them.

Wallace gives these stages in the development of the Greek language:

- I. Pre-Homeric (up to 1000 B.C.)
- II. Classical Era (1000 B.C. -330 B.C.)
- III. Koine Greek (330 B.C. -330 A.D.)
- IV. Byzantine (or Medieval) Greek (330 A.D. -1453 A.D.)
- V. Modern Greek (1453 A.D. to present.)

And these interesting facts about Hellenistic Greek ("Hellenistic" Greek usually refers to Koine, as a second language, which would apply to most of the New Testament).

1. The Golden Age of Greek literature effectively died with Aristotle (322 B.C.)
2. The Koine was born with Alexander the Great's conquests.
3. Hellenistic Greek began with Alexander's troops who came from all the regions of Greece. The troops, then, produced a *leveling* influence.
4. It was developed further, as a second language of conquered peoples, when new Greek colonies sprang up, due to Alexander's victories. The conquests, then, gave Greek its *universal* nature.

5. Koine Greek grew largely from Attic Greek (which, if you recall, was the dialect of the “Golden Age” of Greece), as this was Alexander’s dialect, but was also influenced by the other dialects of Alexander’s soldiers. “Hellenistic Greek is a compromise between the rights of the stronger minority (i.e., Attic) and the weaker majority (other dialects).”

6. This new dialect, however, should not be perceived to be inferior to Attic. It was not a continuation of the pure gold of classical Greek, but a more serviceable alloy for the masses.

7. It became the *lingua franca* of the whole Roman Empire, by the first century A.D.

8. When is Koine, Koine? Though Koine Greek had its birth in c. 330 A.D., this was its physical birth, not its linguistic. One should not suppose that all of a sudden, with the conclusion of Alexander’s final battle, everyone began speaking Koine Greek! (Remember, that Greece still retained its dialects, while Alexander was conquering the world). Just as a newborn baby, does not immediately speak, it took some time before Koine really took shape.

Unlike English, Greek is a highly inflected language. Inflection, is when the ending of a word is changed to indicate such things as case (subjective, possessive, indirect object, and direct object), number, gender, tense, voice, and mood. As mentioned before, English has kept the most inflection in its pronouns (I, my, me, you, your, he, his, him, she, her, it, and they are all examples of inflection), with a little in its plurals (adding “s” or “es”) and past tense (adding “ed”). Elsewhere, we add helping words (words, such as, “had been” and “will be”) where Greek would simply change the inflection. The old English of the King James Bible still retains some of the inflection, once present in our language, which has fallen out of use today. This is seen with its use of the -eth,-ist, and -est endings (all of which, are meant to indicate, a continuous action) as well as, distinguishing between second person, singular (thee, thou) and

second person, plural (you). Nouns, in Greek are masculine, feminine, or neuter, as well as nominative (subject), genitive (possession), dative (indirect object), and accusative (direct object), and they also, are singular or plural.

The verb system is very complex, with six different tenses which demonstrate, not only the time of action (past, present, or future) but with the past tense, it shows the kind of action, as well (durative {I was eating}, completed (I have eaten) and undefined (I ate). The verb, is also capable, of voice (active {I eat} or passive {I am eaten}) and mood (indicative {making a statement or asking a question}, subjunctive {giving a possibility - I may eat}, infinitive {bare verbal idea - to eat}, imperative {giving an order - You, eat!}, optative {wish - Oh, that I could eat}), as well as person (first, second, or third) and number (singular or plural). The verb can also function as a noun, when in the infinitive or when used, as a participle (eating).

The style of the Greek, found in the New Testament, also varies from author to author and sometimes, even from book to book. For instance, some of the New Testament reflects somewhat, of a Semitic style (Gospels, Revelation, and James) and some, a very polished Greek (Hebrews, Luke-Acts, and, to a lesser extent, Paul).

Footnotes

Larry Walker, "Biblical Languages," in *The Origin of the Bible*, Philip Comfort, Ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 217.

Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 14-16.

A Brief History of the English Bible

Inherent in Jesus' command to go into all nations, making disciples of all people, and teaching them to observe all that He said (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:44-53) is the necessity of translating His Words into the world's different languages. The inspired New Testament is evidence of this need, because most of Jesus' Words and teachings were spoken in Aramaic, but were translated into Greek by the Apostles and other disciples who penned the New Testament Scriptures. Even as early as the second century, the Scriptures were translated into Coptic for the Egyptians, Syriac for those who spoke Aramaic, Gothic for the Germans, and Latin for the Romans.

There is a long history of the English versions of the Bible. The English speakers were first introduced to the Scriptures, when the *Latin Vulgate* was brought to England in the sixth century, by a monk named, Caedmon. He translated parts of the Old and New Testaments of the Vulgate into English. Later, a churchman, by the name of Bede, translated the four Gospels into English. He was working on the Gospel of John on his death bed. King Alfred the Great, translated the Ten Commandments and the Psalms into English in his lifetime. All of these partial translations were based upon the Latin Vulgate, and not upon the original languages of the Bible (Hebrew and Greek).

Wycliffe was the first to translate the entire Latin Vulgate into English. He completed the New Testament (NT) around 1380 and the Old Testament (OT) in 1382. One of Wycliff's associates, John Purvey, produced a revision of his translation in 1388. In less than a century, Purvey's revision replaced Wycliffe's translation.

Although English speaking people had a complete English Bible, it was inadequate, in that it was based on a translation of the Biblical languages and not the languages themselves. William Tyndale was the first to

translate the entire Bible into English from the original languages. Tyndale studied Hebrew and Greek, at Oxford University in England, thus, he was well equipped and

well qualified for the task. Since England still had strong ties with the Catholic Church, King Henry VIII of England, would not support Tyndale's work. As a result, Tyndale moved to Germany. His translation of the New Testament was completed in 1525. Fifteen thousand copies of it were smuggled into England. Tyndale also translated the Pentateuch, Jonah, and other historical books. In 1535, he completed his revisions of the NT, but he could not complete his translation of the OT, because he was imprisoned for his work. While in prison, an associate of his, named Miles Coverdale, finished translating the OT. The complete translation, compiled by Coverdale, was complete by 1537. By this time, King Henry VIII had broken all ties with the Roman Catholic Church and was ready to receive an English translation of the Bible for the common people to have in their possession.

Although King Henry allowed Tyndale's Bible to be read in England, it was not the first to be authorized for public use. The translation to be authorized first was the *Great Bible*, translated by Thomas Matthew, a pseudonym for John Rogers. Rogers used Tyndale's unpublished translations and parts of Coverdale's translations for the Great Bible. This version continued to be used until the king banned all English versions from being read by the common people, in 1543.

After a few years, great persecution broke out against Protestants, by Mary, who wanted to restore Catholicism to England. As a result, many Protestants fled to Geneva for refuge. While there, they chose William Whittingham to make an English translation for them. Whittingham used Theodore Beza's Latin translation and consulted some Greek texts for the work. The resulting translation was called the *Geneva Bible*. Although it was popular among the common English people, it was not popular among leaders in the Church of England, because of its Calvinistic notes. It is understandable, that Calvin's teachings would be inserted into the notes of the Bible since John Calvin taught out of Geneva. The leaders in the Church of England revised the Geneva Bible, by 1568, and renamed it, the *Bishop's Bible*. This version was the Bible of England until superseded by the King James Version, completed in 1611.

The *King James Version* came about upon the ascension of James VI of Scotland to the throne of England, as James I. He was asked by a Puritan leader, John Reynolds, to authorize a new translation of the Bible. King James agreed to authorize a new version because the Bishop's Bible was not successful and the Geneva Bible was considered to be seditious. More than fifty scholars, trained in Hebrew and Greek, began work on this new translation, in 1607. They adhered to the reading of the Bishop's Bible, so long as it adhered to the original languages, and also consulted Tyndale's, Coverdale's, and Roger's versions. Even the Great Bible and Geneva Bible were used if their renderings of the original languages, proved to be accurate.

The translators of the King James Version used the Masoretic text of the Hebrew for the translation of the O.T., and Erasmus' Greek text, called the Textus Receptus, for the translation of the NT. Erasmus only used five or six manuscripts, dating from between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, for his text.

Unfortunately, at the time of the translation of the King James Version, there was not nearly as much knowledge of Hebrew grammar and meanings of words, as was to come over the next couple of centuries. This, along with the late date of the Greek texts, used in the Textus Receptus, occasioned the desire among Christians to produce an improved translation of the Hebrew text, and establish a more accurate Greek text.

Around 1700, John Mill produced an improved Textus Receptus. In the 1730's, Johannes Albert Bengel (father of modern textual criticism), published a text that deviated from the Textus Receptus altogether. His Greek text was based almost exclusively on earlier manuscripts, such as the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus. By the 1800's, certain scholars were completely abandoning the Textus Receptus. They were publishing their own Greek texts. The best came from two Englishmen named, Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort. They worked twenty-eight years to produce, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. This text, based primarily upon the Codex Vaticanus, was responsible for officially overthrowing the acceptance of the Textus Receptus, as the most reliable Greek text.

By the latter half of the 19th century, Christians had three good Greek texts: Tragelle's, Tischendorf's, and Westcott and Hort's. Because there was so much more knowledge, concerning the original languages after the writing of the King James Version, a new translation was deemed necessary. There were a few attempts made for new translations, but most failed. The first major effort began in 1870, by the Convocation of Canterbury, which sponsored a major revision of the King James Version. Their goal was to make the KJV reflect the new Greek texts, instead of the Textus Receptus. Thousands of changes were made to the NT alone so that the end result was a new translation, not just a revision. This revision, completed in 1885, was called the *Revised Version*. At first, the translation was received with great enthusiasm. Three million copies were sold in the first year of publication, but in the end, the people still preferred the KJV over the RV.

Several American scholars were invited to participate in the translating of the RV, but they were made to promise not to make an American translation for another fourteen years. To this, the Americans agreed. Sixteen years later, America did write their own translation. In 1901, some of the same scholars, who helped translate the English RV, also published the first American English Bible called, the *American Standard Version*.

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, there were some major discrepancies between them and the Masoretic text, upon which most translations of the OT were based. These findings resulted in departing from the Masoretic text as the standard Hebrew text, in favor of today's standard, the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. The current NT translations are based on the new standard Greek text, called the Nestle-Aland text.

At the start of the twentieth century, there was a desire to depart from Elizabethan English. The first translation in the modern vernacular was called *The Twentieth Century New Testament*. A year later, Richard Weymouth published *The New*

Testament in Modern Speech. James Moffat, a Scottish scholar, published a translation, in 1913, based off of Hermann von Soden's Greek New Testament, which all scholars know today, is defective. It was called, *The New Testament: A New Translation.*

The earliest American translation in modern speech, was Edgar J. Goodspeed's, *The New Testament: An American Translation.* The OT translation, soon followed, translated by J.M. Powis and three other scholars, to form *The Complete Bible: An American Translation.* Both testaments were completed by 1935.

Since the RV and ASV tried to translate every occurrence of the Greek and Hebrew words using a single English word, regardless of the context, a new translation was desired. The *Revised Standard Version*, was the result. The entire Bible was published, in 1952. It was based on the seventeenth edition of the Nestle-Aland text and the Masoretic text.

The Living Bible was written by Kenneth Taylor and promoted by Billy Graham. The Bible was written in segments, being published in its entirety, in 1971. The LB is a paraphrase version. It is not based on the original languages but is a paraphrase of the ASV.

The *Revised Standard Version* and the *New American Standard Bible* are both, revisions of the ASV, of 1901. The NASB was published in its entirety, in 1971. This translation tends to follow the Textus Receptus, rather than the minority text of the Nestle-Aland.

The *New International Version* is an international translation made by more than 100 scholars. It's considered an international version, because the scholars who translated the NIV, were from the major English-speaking countries: the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The translators sought to use vernacular, common to the major English-speaking nations of the world.

Conclusion

There are countless other more modern translations that could be discussed, but they are too numerous for the scope of this course. Although new English translations are still being printed, the modern trend is to revise already existing versions.

The Bible has been translated into English now, for about 1,500 years. The versions are numerous, and the differences between them vary. Throughout this time, the versions have become more accurate and more abundant in production. The English Bible has been the best-selling book for years. Because of the English Bible, we can observe all things that Jesus commanded His disciples. Thanks be to God, that we have His Word given to us, in our native tongue!

How We Got Our Bible

Most people are completely unaware of the origin of the Bible, or why various translations of the Bibles, differ from one another, in certain areas. Some people seem to have the notion, that the apostles and prophets wrote the Bible in English. Others have the concept, that the apostles compiled the first Bible, which is now sitting in a museum somewhere, and all we have to do is translate this one document, into the English language. Whenever the various English translations differ from one another, then, it is viewed that they are changing the Word of God. Such is not the case. There are many Hebrew manuscripts and thousands of Greek manuscripts, none of which, are the originals penned by the apostles and prophets, and most of which, date hundreds of years after the writing of the originals. There is not one uniform reading, among the manuscripts, but several different readings. The task of making any translation of the Bible into English does not begin with merely translating the Hebrew or Greek into English, but with deciding which of the various readings in the extant manuscripts, we possess today, contains the original reading as it was penned by the inspired authors. In this process, we must distinguish between Scripture (original documents penned by

the apostles), the transmission of Scripture (copies), and the translation of those copies, into the English language.

To begin this discussion, it needs to be clear, that there is no such thing as an inspired English translation of the Bible. The only inspired Bible is the original manuscripts, penned by the holy prophets and apostles. Neither the King James Version, the New International Version, nor any other English version, has the copyright on infallibility. All English translations are exactly that -- *translations*. A translation comes from copies of the inspired texts, but the receptor language's translations are never inspired.

The reason for the variations between the KJV/NKJV and most all other English translations from the Hebrew and Greek is twofold. The first reason has to do with the texts the translators chose to base their translation from. This is particularly true of the NT. There is no one book, that has existed from the days of the apostles, called, *The Holy Bible*. The Bible, in the form as we know it today, did not come to be, until the fifth-century A.D. All of the documents had been written by the death of the last apostle, but they were not collected into one "Bible" of 66 books, as we know it, until the fifth-century. The collection and formation of the OT and NT, differ significantly. Because the NT documents are more problematic, I will only focus on the text on the NT, here.

The NT letters and Gospels circulated in the early Church and were copied time and time again, by various scribes. We do not possess the original document of any OT or NT book. All we possess, are copies. Whenever a document is copied over and over again, mistakes will be made, no matter how careful one is. The copies of the original manuscripts of the Scriptures are no exception. It is only the originals that were inspired, not the copies produced, from the originals. Currently we possess 5,400 extant Greek manuscripts of the NT. Many of these manuscripts only contain portions of the NT or even portions of a particular book. Each of these documents differs from one another in some areas, no matter how small the variation may be (e.g. punctuation, spelling, addition of words, deletion of words). There is no one manuscript which

completely agrees with another. The two manuscripts that are closest in agreement to one another, differ in six to ten places, per chapter. The realization that the manuscripts from which our translations are derived differ among one another, allows one to see that many of the differences found in the English translations arise, not because of some conspiracy, but because different translators base their translation off of different Greek manuscripts. The Greek text, underlying the modern versions, is fairly uniform, differing less among themselves than from the Textus Receptus (from which the KJV is translated).

Without going into much detail here, it should be known, that there exist four textual “families” of Greek texts. Families are determined, by noticing that there is a pattern of identical variations in a group of texts. Variations found in one extant manuscript will commonly appear in many other manuscripts, as well, at the same places. These manuscripts are then grouped together, according to similar characteristics (in families). The four text-families are Alexandrian (a.k.a. Minority Text, Critical Text), Byzantine (a.k.a. Majority text), Western, and Caesarean. The Western text readings are not all that frequent, and many times read much different than the other family types. The Caesarean text seems to be a blended reading between the Alexandrian and Western texts. The Caesarean and Western texts are usually not given as much attention as are the Alexandrian and Byzantine because they are not seen to be as reliable.

The Alexandrian readings are among the earliest manuscripts found, while the Byzantine are much later. The earliest text which reads like the Byzantine is from the fourth century, but the readings do not begin to be common, until the ninth-century A.D. The Alexandrian readings are generally shorter than the Byzantine. The Byzantine commonly contains words, the Alexandrian does not, and changes personal pronouns to the referents for which they stand.

The Byzantine Text is often referred to, as the Majority Text, because the majority of all manuscripts contain that certain type of reading. The Alexandrian Text contains much fewer manuscripts, but this is primarily due to the fact, that they are older, written

primarily on fragile papyri, and thus, more susceptible to perishing. Because the Byzantine Text is a later text, and thus, closer to our time, it is only logical that we would possess more of these manuscripts. Because the Byzantine readings are found in much later manuscripts, this indicates, that at one time, the Byzantine Text was not in the majority, at all. It seems that the Alexandrian Text (Minority Text) was the predominant early text, which only became the Minority Text, as the Byzantine readings were copied over and over again, in later times, and spread throughout the Mediterranean. The battle of the manuscripts is not fought simply by determining which reading has the majority of manuscript evidence, nor by determining which reading has the earliest textual evidence. All of the evidence must be weighed equally, among all manuscripts.

To demonstrate the above, let us imagine that we have two documents (A & B), which have some discrepancies between them, but both were copied from one common document. Over a period of four days, document A is copied in a copier-machine 20 times; document B is copied 400 times over a period of two weeks. After twenty years, 6 documents of A are lost, and 49 documents of B are lost. Now we have 14 documents, which read like A, and 351, which read like B. When trying to establish the original reading, we do not say that 351 is greater than 14, so the reading of document B, must be correct. There are two readings based on two original copies, each of which, has been copied in various quantities during a certain period of time. The question is, which of these two types of readings, most likely reflects the original, not which reading has more manuscripts supporting it.

The KJV is based on a Greek text, compiled by Erasmus in the sixteenth-century, edited by Stephanus, and finally, by Theodore de Beze. Erasmus used a mere six Greek manuscripts to compile his text, all of which, reflected Byzantine readings. Of these six, not one of them contained the entire NT, so for determining the original text of each NT book, he usually did not have all six texts to work from. The earliest text he possessed was from the tenth-century, but he did not rely on this text, because he was suspicious of its readings. The text he produced (later known, as the Textus Receptus -

- “received text”) was an eclectic text (one which selects elements from a variety of sources). Erasmus, using the limited resources he had, performed textual criticism (critically examining the different texts to determine the original reading) to the

Greek texts he possessed, to come up with, what he thought, the original reading may have been.

What is important to note here, is that the Greek text the KJV is based on does not exist in any one document. It is an eclectic text from Erasmus’ different Greek copies. The NIV, and all other modern translations do the same, but now we possess ~5,400 manuscripts, which we can compare, in an attempt to determine the original reading, not a mere six. Many of these manuscripts are much older than the manuscripts used for the translation of the KJV. Old is not necessarily better, but the documents that the newer translations are based on, come from a time period that is closer to the actual writing of the original documents.

KJV Only advocates are not always unaware of the differing textual witnesses and variations. Many times, they are very aware of them. What is most interesting, is the way they handle these variations. Whatever texts disagree with, the translation of the KJV, they claim are corrupt. If corrupt means, having mistakes and differences, then all the Greek manuscripts are corrupt! If corrupt means, differing from the majority of witnesses, then the KJV will not always be correct, because the KJV was based on the Textus Receptus (TR), which is not identical to the Byzantine Text (Majority Text [MT]). According to Daniel Wallace, a Greek scholar, the MT disagrees with the TR, in over 1,838 places. Even the manuscripts used for the translation of the KJV did not agree with each other, in every place. Does this mean that the KJV is corrupt, then?

There is no doubt, that some manuscripts are more reliable than others, and that some manuscripts should be considered corrupt, but the fact remains, that all manuscripts contain some measure of error. The KJV Only advocates have labeled the

manuscripts, which disagree with the MT, TR, or KJV, as being corrupt. This is labeling, not proving. If the other side does the same, all we end up with are assertions, but no proof. Assertions do not determine truth; evidence determines truth.

In case the idea of discrepancies among the Greek texts we possess leads you to believe that the Bible we possess today is corrupt, or that we have no way of knowing what the Word of God is, let it be known, that there are nearly 300,000 variants between the 5,400 manuscripts, but they only occur in about 10,000 places. How do they impact the text? Westcott and Hort said, that only about 1/8 of the variants carried any weight. 98.33% of the Greek text is settled. Philip Schaff estimated that there were only 400 variants that affected the sense of the passage, and only 50 of these, were actually important. A.T. Robertson said, that the real concern regarding textual variants, amounted to but “a thousandth part of the entire text.” This must be understood before examining the different versions. Of all ancient documents, the Bible has been preserved best. No other ancient document can boast of such textual certainty, especially considering the vast amount of copies we possess. For with the greater amount of copying, there always arises more room for error, but the Bible has proven to be, for the most part, textually certain.

The second reason for the differences, among the versions, is an offshoot to the above fact. Different scholars have different theories as to how to ascertain the original reading of passage when they encounter a discrepancy among the manuscripts. There are two main theories for determining which readings hold more weight. Although I will not go into detail, the first theory (which stands behind the Byzantine Text), is that the reading of the majority of manuscripts will usually indicate which reading is correct. The second theory (which stands behind most all other English translations), believes that the earlier the copy of the text, the more likely the reading is to be true. The first theory believes that scribes had the tendency to leave out words, not add them to the text. The second theory believes that the scribal tendency was to add more text for clarification, because when text is deleted, it is usually self-evident, because the passage usually will not make sense. So, the reason for many of the differences

between the KJV and other translations, is due to the underlying text, that the translators believed was the original text, or as close to the original as they could get.

This course has only been introduction to the topic of how we got our Bible. Books could be written, and have been written, to examine the subject at length. Even these cannot do full justice to the topic. Although this course has been brief, it serves as an introduction to the topic, to demonstrate the problem scholars and translators are faced with, when making a translation of God's Word for us today. Hopefully, this course has also awakened, in you, an awareness of the reason the translations differ from one another, and as a result, you would not judge anyone particular translation to be *the only valid* translation, but would evaluate a translation's validity, upon the evidence at hand.

Footnotes

Daniel B. Wallace, "The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?"

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Defending the Inerrancy and Canon of Scripture

Inerrancy

It has always been common for non-believers to argue against the inerrancy of Scripture. More recently, however, some Christians have joined their ranks. In light of the attack that is being leveled against the reliability, inspiration, and truthfulness of Scripture from those both, outside and inside the ranks of Christianity, it is important that Christians be able to defend the inerrancy of Scripture against the attacks based on faulty reasoning. A common argument against the inerrancy of the Scripture goes something like this:

P1 The Biblical books were written by men.

P2 Men make mistakes.

C1 Therefore, there are mistakes in the Biblical books.

It is true, that men wrote the books of the Bible. They most assuredly did not write it themselves! The Bible openly confesses its human authorship, but it also claims divine authorship, thus teaching dual authorship of Scripture. Non-Christians err, in that, they ignore and/or deny divine authorship (while Christians often err in minimizing or ignoring the Bible's human elements). The relationship between the divine and human elements of Biblical authorship is debatable. Several theories have been made as to the exact nature of the relationship, but the Biblical evidence favors the notion, that God used particular men to write that which He desired to be written, utilizing each author's writing style, past research, and understanding in the process for His purposes.

It has already been established, that men wrote the Bible, and it goes without saying, that men make mistakes, but must we conclude, that the men who authored the Biblical books must have made errors in the process? No. Such a conclusion errs in two ways. First, it eliminates the very possibility of dual authorship (human *and* divine) of Scripture.

The assumption of a God-excluded authorship of Scripture cannot be proven, yet, it is a necessary assumption to the non-Christian's attack on Scripture, because only after having excluded the possibility of divine supervision in the writing process, can one logically conclude the inevitability of mistakes being made in the writing of the Biblical books. But, it would be very reasonable to conclude that error-prone men could avoid error if they were being supernaturally supervised in their writing. If God was inspiring and supervising the writing of Scripture, God has the power to make sure that the human authors will not make mistakes in their writings.

Secondly, even under the presupposition of human-only authorship, the argument mistakenly assumes, that because man *can* make mistakes, that he *must* always make mistakes. While all men make mistakes, not all men make mistakes in every area possible. It is entirely within reason to believe that men, even without being superintended by divine direction, could have written the Scripture without erring. I will admit that there is a high probability for error in a work of such magnitude, but probability does not spell certainty. A non-Christian must allow room for an inerrant Bible if he is to be true to both, reason, probability, and experience, all of which, speak to us of the possibility of that which is claimed to be impossible.

The Canon

Another argument made by non-believers against Scripture is directed toward the canon of Scripture. The canon is that which establishes which ancient literary documents contain the inspired Words of God, and thus, are authoritative in the life of the Christian believer. It is often argued, that men decided what to include in the canon, unjustly ruling out some books, while including others without just reason. The process is pictured as authoritarian and arbitrary. The goal of such argumentation is to cause Christians to doubt that they truly possess God's Word if such a Word truly exists at all.

It is true, that man-made a historical decision, as it pertains to which books would be included in the canon, but this fact does not mean that the decision was made by man

alone. Only if one presupposes, that God does not exist, could one rule out divine intervention, in the process. Such a presupposition is unfounded and not provable. It is entirely possible, that God could have led the ancient Church to know which of the many extant literary works, made in the name of Christ, truly contained His Word and which did not. This is, even more, telling, if we allow for the fact, that God was also responsible for the content of the books. If God could move on certain people to record His Words, certainly He can move on other people, to preserve His Word in a canon, dedicated to the presentation of His Word.

It should be understood, that the development of the canon, was not a one-time historical event. While it is not my goal to present the historical development of the canon, let it suffice to say, that the contents of the canon were not a decision made by one particular person or even a group of people on one particular day. The establishment of the canon was a process, that developed over time, and in many diverse geographical areas of the ancient Church.

What came to be accepted as the canon of Scripture, was not exactly what one would call, an announcement, either. What had been officially accepted, as the contents of the NT canon, was not much of a development over what the Church had held on an unofficial level for centuries. While there were a few books that had been disputed as to whether or not they were truly the inspired Word of God, most of the books in the present canon had been accepted by the Church, at large, by the end of the first century. In fact, it took so long for any formal canon to develop, because the Church saw little need for such a pronouncement because there was such widespread agreement on the issue.

Several factors led the Church towards making an official NT canon of Scripture. First, was the persecution by Emperor Decius, who killed Christians that would not turn their sacred writings over to the authorities to be burned. At such a point, it becomes very important to determine, once and for all, which books you are willing to die for and which you are not!

Secondly, heretics arose, such as Marcion, who denied the inspiration of many books contained in the traditionally accepted, yet, informal canon. The Church reacted because the Church had a long-time unofficial acceptance of the authority of those books. When one challenged this general acceptance, the Church saw the need to officially decide and set forth which books contained God's Words and which ones, were mere, man's words. The very fact, that the Church reacted to Marcion, demonstrates the traditional and widespread acceptance of the books, in today's canon. The Church reacted so violently to Marcion because he was rejecting the books they had traditionally believed to be God's inspired Words. This demonstrates the existence of a very early, informal canon, not an arbitrary decision made hundreds of years after the writings, to which many would have found objectionable.

Let's just assume, however, that the formation of the canon was a purely human work, God having no part in it, because He does not exist. If so, reason would cause us to confess that all books that belonged in the canon, are in the canon, because ultimately, the decision was a purely human decision. The Church could include and exclude whatever books it wanted to and nobody could fault them for such. One could not say, that they put the wrong books in there, or that there are lost books that should be in there. Such a notion presupposes a superior ideal to which the canon had to conform but failed to do so. But, such an ideal could only come from something higher than man - some higher purpose to which some of these writings were directed. If there is no God, none of the books, under consideration, had any more significance, than a grocery list. If there is no God, then there is no purpose or ideal, and thus, the Church could not have messed up on their selection for the canon. What was put in the canon belonged in the canon, and what was excluded, did not belong, because that is what those particular people decided, and they could do whatever they so desired to do. If we exclude God from the development of the canon, we cannot fault those who established it, claiming they failed in some way.

The argument of an error-laden canon will not work, if we assume the existence of

God, either. If God was involved in the formation of the canon, He would not have allowed the Church to decide for the wrong books. God does not try. He accomplishes, that which He purposes (at least, according to the Christian understanding of God's Person). If there was a God, who inspired individuals to record His Words for the benefit of others, then God possessed the motive, power, and ability to direct His people to include the books, He truly inspired and exclude those, He did not. If we reason that God does exist, it is most reasonable to conclude, that the books in the canon are there, because God wanted them there, because they are His true Words.

In conclusion, whether one views the Bible as a purely human work or as a divine work, the canon cannot be argued with. It is complete and perfect. If there is no God, then it is a complete and perfect collection of worthless thoughts of men. If there is a God, it is a complete and perfect collection of the Words He desired all of mankind to hear. The Christian can have every bit of confidence, that the canon contains the books God inspired, and excludes those, that He did not inspire. There are no missing books of the Bible, and there are no extra books. We have been given the Word of God, preserved for us, through divine inspiration and preservation.

Footnotes

Greg Koukl, "Does God Try?"

Greg Koukl, "No Lost Books of the Bible"

Bible Translations: Has the Word of God Been Changed?

In this course, I do not intend to defend any one translation of the Scripture or any one Greek text-type, but rather critically, evaluate the arguments being used, in favor of preferring the Byzantine Text and Textus Receptus/KJV, over the Critical Text/modern translations, demonstrating their weaknesses. Such an evaluation, is a prerequisite for

the formation of any well-informed position, on such an important issue as this.

Terminology

When delving into an issue, such as this, there are many technical terms to which most believers are not well acquainted. In order to avoid confusion, I will define these terms and describe how they are being used.

There are two terms used to refer to the Greek manuscripts, which reflect readings contained in the majority of all extant manuscripts: Byzantine Text, Majority Text. I will use the former term, in reference to the corpus of all individual manuscripts reflecting a majority of all readings (the corpus of which is referred to, as a 'family' or 'text-type'), and the latter term, when speaking of the published text reflecting an eclectic (choosing the most likely original readings from among all existing variants contained in the manuscripts), reading of all individual Byzantine text-type manuscripts.

This published text is called, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, published in 1982, by Thomas Nelson Publishers (Nashville). The text was edited by Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad, with the help of Wilbur Pickering. Until that time, there was no official published Greek text which contained the readings found in the majority of all manuscripts. This text is the only modern attempt to accumulate the majority of readings from all existing manuscripts, and collate them into one document.

There are also two terms used to refer to the Greek manuscripts, which reflect certain readings contained in a minority of all extant manuscripts: Critical Text, Minority Text. I will only use the former term, in reference to both the corpus of all individual manuscripts reflecting non-Byzantine readings and the two primary published texts, reflecting an eclectic and critical reading of all manuscripts. These two texts are United Bible Societies 4th edition (UBS) and Nestle-Aland 27th edition (NA).

There is a distinction between a "reading" and a "text/text-type." While the distinction

will be elaborated upon later, let it suffice to say here, that a text/text-type is a whole document (manuscript) or collection of documents (manuscripts), reflecting certain characteristics. A reading is a particular portion of a whole document.

One more issue needs to be noted for those readers who are somewhat familiar with the terminology employed in these kinds of discussions. The Byzantine Text is often referred to by others, as the “Majority Text,” the two terms being used virtually synonymously. Such an exchange of terminology can confuse the reader to believe that the “Majority Text” means, that all manuscripts classified by this name, always contain the majority of readings found among all existing Greek manuscripts. Such, is not the case. This is just one reason why I choose to refer to these same manuscripts by the term, “Byzantine Texts.”

The label of “Majority Text” can also be confused with the published text of Hodges/Farstad referred to as, the Majority Text. Because of the confusion that can result, it seems better to refer to the manuscript text-type as, “Byzantine,” and the published, eclectic text of this same corpus of manuscripts, as the “Majority Text.”

Now, with the above distinctions of text/reading, we can distinguish between an individual Byzantine manuscript, as a text-type, and the majority of all readings. The former, is a document, which most often contains readings found in the majority of all existing manuscripts, while the latter, is the way the majority of all manuscripts, record a particular section of Scripture. The Byzantine Text-type consists of readings that usually manifest conformity to the majority of all extant manuscripts. The fact remains, that every reading in each Byzantine manuscript does not always contain the reading found in the majority of all extant manuscripts, regardless of text-type. There are places in every individual manuscript of the “Majority Text-type,” wherein are contained readings found in the minority of all extant Greek manuscripts. So, each “Majority Text-type” manuscript (as it is referred to by others), does contain minority readings. The Majority Text, published by Hodges/Farstad, extracted the majority readings, found by comparison of all Greek manuscripts, and collated them into one Greek text.

What Constitutes the Word of God?

It is being noted today, that the new translations of the Bible do more than modernize the language of the KJV; they change other vital aspects, as well. The changes are often associated with Satan and his desire to pervert the Word of God. While it is true, that there are more differences in the translations than language style, to say that the differences have been a perversion or change to the Word of God, is a judgment call, based on certain presuppositions. To say that something has been changed, assumes a standard, by which, all else is to be judged for variation. It appears to have been assumed, that the KJV is the unperturbed Word of God, because it is based on the Byzantine Text-type, and therefore, is the standard, by which, all other versions are to be judged for accuracy.

The real question is, what constitutes the Word of God? The simple fact of the matter is that all translations, including the KJV, are based on Greek manuscripts discovered over the centuries, which are copies of the original autographs, penned by the apostles. It is those original autographs, that are the true Word of God. Any translation to be considered the Word of God must accurately reflect, the originals.

Why Are There Differences Among Translations?

The 5,400 manuscripts of the New Testament, which we currently possess, do differ in several places, as is to be expected with the written transmission of any historical document. This is not to say, that we have no certainty as to the original wording of the New Testament. Textual critics, have ascertained, the certainty of 98.33% of the text. Less than two percent of the text is subject to question, making the New Testament, the best-preserved ancient text, known to man. It is the remaining 1.67%, however, which affects the different translations of the New Testament, available today.

The two broadest categories/families of texts (although, there are more) are known

as, the Byzantine Text (a.k.a. Majority Text) and Critical Text (a.k.a. Minority Text). The smaller, less significant families of text are called, the Western Text and Caesarean Text. The Critical Text dates older than the Byzantine, but is also more limited, in count. The real issue is not which English translation is best per se, but rather, which Greek text underlying the various translations, most accurately reflects, the original autographs.

Byzantine vs. Critical?

The various discrepancies in the 5,400 Greek manuscripts are not always cut along Byzantine vs. Critical Text lines. Not all non-Byzantine Texts read one way, and all Majority Texts, another. To set up the issue as a Majority Text or Minority Text, is to ignore a very crucial fact: the variants in the manuscripts are not cut along text-family lines, and therefore, cannot be determined, merely on this basis. The readings found in the Byzantine or Critical Text are not uniform. Each text-family has variant readings within its own corpus of manuscripts. The Critical Text-type, for example, may have four or five different readings at the same juncture, among the various manuscripts. It is not a Byzantine vs. Critical issue. Each variant, must be examined individually, among all the manuscript evidence (both, Byzantine and Critical Texts, combined) to determine the original reading. If each text-family evidences variation even among itself, we must conclude,

that all existing manuscripts, whether they be of the Byzantine or Critical Text-family, corrupt the original words of the apostles in some places, and preserve them, in others. What must be determined, is which of the variant readings found in both, the Byzantine and Critical Texts, preserves the inspired text. It is a matter of *weighing* each variant, not *counting* manuscripts.

When it comes to translations, then, it is not a matter of one translation changing the Word of God. It is a matter of the different translation committees, making different

choices among all the variants as to the original wording of the text, and then, translating their choices as to the original wording into English. The newer translations are translating accurately from the manuscript copies of the Greek text, they believe, best preserve the original Word of God, penned by the apostles. Many of these manuscripts are much closer, in time, to the original autographs of the apostles, than those used by Erasmus, to formulate his Greek text (from which, the KJV was translated), and therefore, could be more accurate than the later texts. Whether or not they are more accurate, or more corrupt, is an entirely other question, which is too detailed to pursue, here.

Erasmus and the Textus Receptus

Erasmus compiled a text of the Greek New Testament in A.D., 1516, (which came to be known, as the Textus Receptus, or *Received Text*), which, after subsequent minor changes by two other men, was used as the basis for the translation of the 1611 KJV. Concerning whether or not the text, used by the KJV translators is the best choice as to the original wording, is open to question. Erasmus had a mere, six, Greek manuscripts at his disposal to form his version of the Greek New Testament, the earliest of which, dated back to the tenth-century. Determining the original reading, on such a small selection of manuscripts, so separated in time from the originals, should cause us to take a second look at this text.

It may be argued, that although Erasmus only had six Greek texts to base his text off of, at the time, the thousands of manuscripts discovered since then, confirm that his Greek version did reflect the Byzantine Text/majority of all readings. It should be pointed out, in response, that Erasmus' Greek text is not identical to the Byzantine Text. Although the two texts are more similar than are the Critical Text and the Textus Receptus (TR), the Byzantine Text differs from the TR, in over 1,838 places, thus, the reading of the KJV does not always reflect the reading of the Byzantine Text. In fact, there are some places in the TR, where Erasmus' rendition of the Greek, was not found

in any of his manuscripts, and which have yet, to be found in *any* Greek manuscript. One such example, is Acts 9:6, where it is said of Paul, “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will thou have me to do?” This reading was interpolated from the Latin Vulgate into Erasmus’ text, without any textual evidence, for its inclusion. Sadly, this reading made it into the KJV.

Does the Majority Win?

In the argument over the Byzantine/Critical Text, many assume, that the Critical Text is incorrect, simply because it is in the minority count of all existing manuscripts. Such a philosophy of evaluating the evidence assumes that, majority determines truth. This is not a logical evaluation of the evidence. If the majority determines truth, we must also conclude, that the doctrine of the Trinity, is truth. The majority of believers are Trinitarian, and the doctrine has been the prevailing teaching for the longest period of Christian history, but upon evaluation of the evidence, we as Oneness Pentecostals, have concluded, that the doctrine of the Trinity, is not the truth.

Likewise, determining the correct reading of the text, does not come by counting manuscripts, but by evaluating the different readings, to determine how they came to be, and work backwards, to determine the actual readings, from which, all the variant readings came from.

The Byzantine Text Was Once in the Minority

The labels of “Majority Text” and “Minority Text,” also need evaluation. These labels are modern labels, attached to the various textual families, based on the perspective of our own era. Looking at all 5,400 manuscripts, in our day, the majority of all readings reflect what we call, the Byzantine or Majority Text. But the readings found in the Critical Text, at one time, constituted the majority of all Greek texts. The readings found in the Critical Text-type, predominated the early centuries of the Church, while the readings of the Byzantine Text-type, were virtually, unknown. The earliest manuscript

reflecting the Byzantine Text-type readings comes from the late fourth century. In the thousands of Scripture quotations from the Church fathers before the fourth century, not one quote is distinctly of the Byzantine Text-type. The early translations also bear the same evidence. There are nearly 8,000 manuscript translations of the Scripture in the early Latin Vulgate, all of which, more clearly reflect, the Critical Text, rather than the Byzantine.

The readings of the Byzantine Text were, at one time, in the minority. They did not actually become the majority, until the tenth-century, when these readings finally began to multiply in copies. From that time, the readings found in the text-family, we now call, the Byzantine/Majority Text, began to predominate over the “Minority Text” readings. What is actually the minority and the majority, depends upon which century one is viewing the evidence from. A fourth-century believer would have concluded, that the “Majority Text” was indeed, the minority reading. At one time, the Byzantine Text-type, was in fact, the minority of all texts!

How did the minority of readings become the majority type? The readings of the Byzantine Text continued to be copied in the regions of Byzantium, long after the copying of the Greek manuscripts had practically ceased, in the West and South. In these regions, the spoken and written language shifted from Greek to Latin, and thus, the Scriptures, were predominately translated, into Latin and copied in Latin. It is not difficult to see how multiplication had much to do with the fact, that the readings of the Byzantine Text-type (which were the minority, until around the tenth-century), became the majority of all manuscripts.

To demonstrate how this could be, let us use the example of a penny. If one takes a penny and doubles it for thirty days, they would end up with \$10,737,418.24. If one takes another penny and doubles it for ten days, they would have a mere, \$10.24. There is a big difference in the final figures, because of the extra time the one penny was allowed to be copied, over the other. This does not prove, that the Byzantine Text does not contain the most accurate readings of the original autographs, but does argue

against the idea, that the majority of all readings *must* be the most accurate. If the text, which was copied over and over to form the majority of all manuscripts, during the Middle Ages, was not as accurate as earlier manuscripts, then all those texts which flowed from it, would also be inaccurate (The Byzantine Text). The task is not over number counting, but on reconstructing the most reasonable original reading, based on the variant readings we possess today. Determining this, has much to do with one's philosophy of textual criticism (the science of determining the original reading), not the number of the texts supporting such and such a reading.

To further demonstrate the above point, let us imagine that we have two documents, (A& B) which have some discrepancies between them, but both were copied from one common document. Over a period of four days, document A is copied in a copier-machine 20 times; document B is copied 400 times, over a period of two weeks. After twenty years, 6 documents of A are lost, and 49 documents of B, are lost. Now, we have 14 documents, which read like A, and 351, which read like B. When trying to establish the original reading, we do not say, that 351 is greater than 14, so the reading of document B, must be correct. There are two readings, based off of two original copies, each of which, has been copied in various quantities during a certain period of time. The question is, which of these two types of readings most likely reflects the original, not which reading has more manuscripts supporting it.

A second reason the Byzantine Text readings outweigh the Critical Text readings, is due to the age and places of the respective texts. The Critical Text readings of Greek manuscripts, are found mainly, in the West and in Egypt, and were only copied in Greek in early history (because of the language change from Greek to Latin).

The Byzantine Text readings are mainly found, in the Eastern regions of Byzantium, where the capital of the Roman Empire continued, as did the use of the Greek language. Because they continued to copy the manuscripts in Greek until the invention of the printing press, while the West ceased copying the manuscripts in Greek centuries before, it is to be expected, that fewer of the Western/Southern Greek manuscripts

(Critical Text manuscripts between 1,100-1,900 years old), would survive the journey of history, than would manuscripts copied in the East, some 400-1,000 years ago.

Evidence Against the Authenticity of the Byzantine Text as the Original Text

If the Byzantine Text is the best text, and most accurately reflects the original autographs, why do we have no evidence for its existence, as a distinct text-type before the fourth-century? For Paul's letters, we have no evidence of its existence before the ninth-century. This has serious consequences for the particular view of preservation of God's Word, that Byzantine Text advocates propose. Are we to believe, that in 800 years of Church history, the Orthodox were only able to preserve one true manuscript containing Paul's letters, but hundreds of corrupt manuscripts were allowed to remain in existence, and were preserved, nonetheless? This is quite a leap of faith. Would it not be easier to believe, that the Majority Text-type, for Paul's letters, did not exist until around the ninth-century?

If the Byzantine Text-type was the text used by the early Church, we would at least expect it to be the basis of one of the ancient translations, yet again, we find no evidence validating the Byzantine Text's existence before the fourth-century. The Old Latin (translated in the second-century) evidence Western text-type readings; the Coptic translations evidence Alexandrian text-type readings; the earliest Syriac versions evidence Western and Alexandrian text-type readings, none of these early translations evidence a Byzantine Text, as its basis. It is not until the Gothic versions of the late fourth-century, that we find evidence of the Byzantine text-type, for a translation.

The implications of this historical fact are extremely important for the subject at hand. Daniel Wallace notes the death-blow the early translations deal to the supremacy of the Majority Text view:

If the majority text view is right, then each one of these versions was based on

polluted Greek manuscripts -- a suggestion that does not argue well for God's providential care of the New Testament text, as that care is understood by the majority text view. But, if these versions were based on polluted manuscripts, one would expect them to have come from (and be used in) only one isolated region. This is not the case; the Coptic, Ethiopic, Latin, and Syriac versions came from all over the Mediterranean region. In none of these locales was the Byzantine text apparently used. This is strong evidence, that the Byzantine text simply did not exist, in the first three centuries -- anywhere.

Not only are there no extant manuscripts or translations reflecting the Byzantine Text-type before the fourth-century, but the Church Fathers also do not evidence any knowledge or possession of a Byzantine Text-type. This is very important, because there are approximately 86,000 quotations of the NT, in the writings of the Fathers, and many of these writings antedate any Greek manuscript, reflecting the same corpus of verses in question. There are so many quotations from the Fathers that most of the NT could be constructed, from their quotations alone, without any Greek NT manuscripts. Arguably, our knowledge of the way in which the original autographs read is greatly expanded by these quotations which antedate many of the earliest extant Greek manuscripts.

If the Byzantine Text-type is the original Word of God and has been readily available to the Church for the past 1,900 years, we would expect the Church Fathers' quotations to reflect the Byzantine Text readings, not the readings of other text-families. The exact opposite is true. There are no distinctly Byzantine readings found in the Fathers before the fourth-century, and thus, no evidence for the existence of the Byzantine Text-type in the first three hundred years of the Church. The earliest witnesses as to the wording of the Scripture, which usually predates any existing Greek manuscript of the NT by decades or even hundreds of years, gives

witness against the existence of the Byzantine Text in the early Church, and no evidence for it. The first historical figure to utilize a clearly Byzantine Text, was

Asterius, a heretic from the fourth-century.

Some Majority Text/KJV advocates will object to the above because there are hundreds of quotations in the Fathers, which reflect a Byzantine reading. We must distinguish, however, between Byzantine readings quoted by the Fathers before the fourth-century, and the existence of the Byzantine Text-type before the fourth-century. There is evidence of Byzantine readings in the Fathers before the fourth-century, but no evidence of a distinctly Byzantine Text, from which, they were quoting. There is a vast difference between the two. An analogy, offered by Daniel Wallace, will be of great assistance, to demonstrate this distinction. The KJV is a “text,” as is the RSV. “In the beginning was the Word,” is a particular “reading.” The fact that this reading is found in both, the KJV text and the RSV text, does not mean that the RSV, as a text, existed in 1611. There are many readings from the KJV, which are also found in the RSV, but they are two entirely distinct texts, which came into existence at two entirely different times. If one was to read the passage, “In the beginning was the Word,” quoted in one of John Wesley’s writings, and declare that this is a quote from the RSV, others would quickly realize that this statement is absurd, seeing that the RSV did not exist during Wesley’s lifetime.

Although there are many readings of the Byzantine Text-types that appear in the Fathers before the fourth-century, none of these readings are distinctly Byzantine, and nearly every one of them can be found in other, earlier text-types. The simple fact of the matter is that the Fathers did not have, and did not quote, from any fully Byzantine Text manuscripts. They quoted readings, which are found in the later Byzantine manuscripts, but they also quoted from Alexandrian, Western, and Caesarean texts. If the Byzantine Text-type was the uncorrupted text-type, which was used by the Fathers, why do we find readings other than the Byzantine Text, and why would we find the “corrupted” readings of the non-Byzantine Text, in their writings? Were the Fathers not the same individuals, who were opposing the heretical tampering’s with the Scriptures, (as we shall see later)?

Considering the fact, that the Byzantine Text-type is not found in the writings of the Church Fathers, the early translations, or the Greek manuscript evidence, prior to the fourth-century, strongly argues against the notion, that the Byzantine Text is the Greek text, which has been available to the Church for the past 1,900 years, and strongly argues for the fact, that the Byzantine Text-type was non-existent, in the early Church.

From Whose Perspective?

If indeed, the Critical Text is the more accurate text (which is being assumed for the sake of argument), then all claims that the Critical Text adds to or takes away from the Word of God, become meaningless, because the Critical Text would be the original Word of God given to the apostles, and thus, would be the standard to judge the Byzantine Text. From this perspective, the Byzantine Text would be the text, that often adds to or takes away from, the Word of God. All claims, that the Critical Text tampers with the Word of God, are contingent upon being able to prove, that the Byzantine Text alone, preserves the original wording of the apostles -- a conclusion, which is not easy to demonstrate, because of the lack of evidence.

Common Objections to the Critical Text as Offered by Byzantine Text Advocates

The Critical Text is a Non-Existent Text

It is commonly asserted, that modern Bible scholars/translators manufacture a Greek text of the NT, which does not follow any ancient manuscript. While it is true, that Nestle-Aland's 27th Edition and UBS' 4th Edition Greek texts (the eclectic Greek texts, the modern Bibles commonly resort to, for their translation), are eclectic texts (selecting readings from a variety of manuscripts, as opposed to adopting the readings, contained

in one manuscript), it is equally true, that the TR and the published Majority Text are eclectic texts. For the production of the TR, Erasmus had to choose between the textual variants in the six Greek manuscripts, at his disposal, and the differences in the translations from which he worked.

Hodges and Farstad used an eclectic approach to the Byzantine manuscripts, when producing, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*. The readings found in the published Majority Text are not found in any one specific Greek manuscript, but rather, are derived from many different Byzantine manuscripts. The charge against the Critical Text, that it is not based on any one particular manuscript, is equally true of the TR, and the published Majority Text.

There are only three options when it comes to determining the original reading of the Greek text. The first is to take one particular Greek manuscript and make it be the original wording. There are a few problems with this approach, however. First, since every extant manuscript contains some element of error or discrepancy when compared to other manuscripts, upon what objective basis can we determine which of the thousands of manuscripts preserves the original words of the apostles and prophets, without error? Secondly, what would we do with all the readings of the other 5,400 manuscripts? Do we ignore them? It would be foolish to adopt one particular manuscript's reading to the disposal of the other 5,400 witnesses.

The second option is to adopt a particular historical compilation of various Greek manuscripts. If this approach is taken, we must decide which historical compilation is the original text. Is it the Textus Receptus, the Majority Text, Nestle-Aland's 27th edition, or UBS's 4th edition? To choose any of these as the original Greek text of the apostles and prophets, would require an objective basis and good supporting evidence. Even then, to adopt any of these published Greek texts is to support the eclectic approach to determining the original reading of the NT, because each of these texts were produced from an eclectic approach to the extant manuscripts.

If we do not adopt either of the above options, then we are only left with an eclectic approach to determining the original wording of the NT, and that by a comparison of all extant manuscripts, not just one textual family. The eclectic approach to determining the original reading is necessary because there are variants in each manuscript, and in all text-families. Each variant, must be weighed, to determine which one preserves the inspired words given to the NT authors. Even the Byzantine Texts differ among themselves in many places. It is not as though all of the Byzantine Text-type manuscripts read one way, while the Critical Text manuscripts read several ways. Both textual-families have discrepancies among them, thus, an eclectic approach must be taken, no matter which text-type one believes to have best preserved the words of the apostles. There are hundreds of cases in the Byzantine text-type, in which the variant readings are nearly split in count, and no clear majority emerges. How are we to handle these cases, when the Byzantine Text-type does not give us a majority reading? To condemn the eclectic approach to determining the original Greek text of the NT is to condemn every published Greek text (including the TR and Majority Text), and by extension, every translation available to us today, because each translation comes from an eclectic approach to the Greek text.

The Critical Text is Shorter Than the Byzantine Text, and Thus, Takes Away From the Word of God

It is commonly stated, that the Critical Text is always shorter than the Byzantine Text, and thus, the Critical Text, is taking away from the Word of God. But, a review of the evidence, does not support, such a conclusion. Comparing the Critical Text with Hodges/Farstad's Majority Text, there are 6,577 places of difference, 4,331, of which, do not change the length of the passage, and only 1,589, wherein, the Byzantine Text is longer than the Minority Text. That is less than 25% of the differences. In 657 places, the Byzantine Text, is actually shorter, than the Critical.

The Critical Text is Derived From the Corrupted Manuscripts of the Early Heretics

Byzantine Text advocates often assert, that many manuscript copies of the Scripture, were corrupted in the early centuries of the Church (pre-fourth-century), and these corrupted manuscripts are identified with the non-Byzantine Text-types, or particularly, the Alexandrian Text-family which usually stands behind the modern translations. The following quotes, from the Church Fathers, do confirm, that there were some heretical groups in the early Church, who did change and corrupt some manuscripts:

Page | 76

“But their chief and founder, Tatianus, having formed a certain body and collection of Gospels, I know not how, has given this the title Diatessaron, that is the gospel by the four, or the gospel formed of the four; which is in the possession of some, even now. It is also said, that he dared to alter, certain expressions of the Apostles, in order to correct the composition of the phrase.” [Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, Reprinted 1991), 166].

“...Theodotus, the leader, and father of this God-denying apostasy, as the first one that asserted, that Christ was a mere man. ...The sacred Scriptures...have been boldly perverted by them; the rule of the ancient faith they have set aside, Christ they have renounced, not inquiring what the Holy Scriptures declared, but zealously laboring what form of reasoning may be devised, to establish their impiety.” ... But, as to these men, who abuse the acts of the unbelievers, to their own heretical views, and who adulterate the simplicity of that faith contained in the Holy Scriptures,...For this purpose, they fearlessly lay their hands on the Holy Scriptures, saying that they have corrected them. And that I do not say this against them without foundation, whoever wishes may learn; for should anyone collect and compare their copies, one with another, he would find them greatly at variance among themselves. For the copies of Asclepiodotus will be found to differ from those of Theodotus. Copies of many, you may find in abundance, altered, by the eagerness of their disciples to insert each one, his own corrections, as they call them, i.e., their corruptions. Again the copies of Hermophilus do not agree with these, for those of Appollonius are not consistent with

themselves. For one may compare those which were prepared before, by them, with those which they afterwards, perverted for their own objects, and you will find them widely differing. ...For either, they do not believe that the Holy Scriptures were uttered by the Holy Spirit, and they are thus, infidels, or they deem themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and what alternative is there, but to pronounce them daemoniacs? For neither can they deny that they have been guilty of the daring act when the copies were written with their own hand, nor did they receive such Scriptures from those, by whom, they were instructed in the elements of the faith; not can they show copies from which they were transcribed." [Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History {(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, Reprinted 1991), 214-216].

Tertullian (second-century A.D.) spoke of Marcion's tampering with Luke's Gospel, saying, "For if the (Gospels) of the apostles have come down to us in their integrity, whilst Luke's, which is received amongst us, so far, accords with their rule, as to be on a par with them, in permanency of reception in the Churches, it clearly follows, that Luke's Gospel also has come down to us in like integrity, until the sacrilegious treatment of Marcion. In short, when Marcion laid hands on it, it then became diverse and hostile to the Gospels of the apostles. I will therefore, advise his followers, that they either change these Gospels, however, late to do so, into a conformity with their own, whereby they may seem to be in agreement with the Apostolic writings (for they are daily retouching their work, as daily they are convicted by us); or else that they blush for their master, who stands self-condemned either way - when once he hands on the truth of the Gospel, conscience smitten, or again subverts it by shameless tampering. Such are the summary arguments, which we use, when we take up arms against heretics, for the faith of the Gospel, maintaining both that order of periods, which rules that a late date is the mark of forgers, and that authority of Churches, which lends support to the tradition of the apostles; because, truth must needs, precede the forgery, and proceed straight from those, by whom, it has been handed on." [Tertullian, Book III, Ch. V].

The above quotations confirm that there were heretics in the early centuries of the

Church who attempted to change some manuscripts to fit their doctrinal persuasions, but the assumption being made by Byzantine Text proponents, as to the *identity* of the corrupted manuscripts, needs to be questioned. First of all, why would it be strange, to think that it was the Byzantine Texts which were the corrupted manuscripts? This would make sense, considering the fact, that there is no evidence for a Byzantine text, before the fourth-century. There would be little evidence for the Byzantine texts in the first centuries of the Church, because the Orthodox would have attempted to stamp out the heretical copies. Some could have survived, and subsequently been carried off to Byzantium to be copied, multiple times by Eastern scribes, which now makes up the Majority Text readings. I do not claim, that this conjecture is true, but it is just as equal of an option, and based on as much evidence as the declaration that the heretical copies are to be identified with the non-Byzantine Text-types. In all probability, the corrupted manuscripts were destroyed by the Orthodox or perished in time, and thus, are not represented in any extant manuscript today, or only a few. The point, which must be seen here, is that the identity of these corrupted manuscripts spoken of by the Fathers, is mere guess-work on the behalf of the Majority Text advocates.

Conclusion

Considering the debate over translations, it must be realized, that all translations can only be considered the Word of God, insofar as, they accurately determine the original wording of the texts penned by the apostles, and correctly translates the same into the English language. The KJV is not the standard to judge the accuracy of the newer translations, but is rather, one translation among many, which made a judgment call, as to the reading of the original autographs. The KJV, along with all other modern versions, must be evaluated in light of all the manuscript evidence available to us today, and not the evidence in light of the translation.

Too often, debates over translations degenerate into the complete discrediting of one, and unconditional acceptance of another, elevating the latter to a near-inspired

status. This is an uneducated and dishonest stance to take. All translations have their pros and their cons, and unique translational errors. No translation is without flaw, or should be accepted, without question. Every translation must be evaluated critically and individually, based on the available evidence. We should not canonize one particular version, because it is old and tested, or new and popular, but must evaluate the evidence behind the translation to see if the translation accurately reflects the Word of God, given to the apostles and prophets of old. With this sort of evaluation we may come to believe, that one particular translation is to be preferred over another, but we will not fall prey to blindly labeling some translations as, “tools of Satan” or ‘perversions of the Word of God’ without examining the critical issues of the Greek texts and translation theories behind each translation.

Although the issue of which textual tradition (Byzantine or Critical) best preserves the Word of God is extremely important (and which translation by extension), any conclusions we may come to is not going to change the message of the Gospel. The passages which are affected by variant readings do not affect any major doctrine, and do not change the Biblical message. We should focus on the amazing similarities between the texts, and their ability to communicate the Gospel, rather than focusing on their dissimilarities, which are often trivial.

Footnotes

James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), 39.

Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). 102.

Daniel B. Wallace, “Some Second Thoughts on the Majority Text.”

Daniel B. Wallace, "The Conspiracy Behind the New Bible Translations."

Daniel B. Wallace, "The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?"