

THE WORD OF GOD

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Authority of Scriptures

The inspired Word of God is a book different from all others. It is a very unique book. It is unique in the fact that it was: written over a 1500 year span; written by over 40 authors from every walk of life, including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc., written on three continents and written in three languages. The Bible is unique in its circulation (over 87,000,000 Bibles as of 1966) and its survival. However, the one factor that separates the Bible from all other books is this fact that the Bible is God's Word.

“When we speak of the Bible as holy, we speak of it as being a Book set apart from all other books, a Book that is pure and perfect and free from error. We have every reason to accept it as the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired and trustworthy. The Bible is not only better and more accurate than other books; but the Bible is a different Book, a unique Book. It not only contains the Word of God, it is the Word of God throughout.”¹

The Bible gives many verses concerning itself:

- Psalm 119:89 “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”
- Psalm 119:140 “Thy word *is* very pure...”
- Psalm 119:162 “I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.”
- Psalm 138:2 “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”
- Proverbs 30:5 “Every word of God *is* pure...”
- Isa. 40:8 “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God shall stand forever.”
- Matt. 5:18 “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.”
- Matt. 24:35 “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

The Bible is the final authority. As the Divine Revelation from God, it has authority over all authorities on this earth. It has authority over the church and its traditions. This is the crux of the differences between fundamental Bible-believing churches and the Catholic church. We believe the Word of God has the final authority. Hence, we reject the concept of the Pope and his ‘infallibility.’

¹ Our Infallible Bible, p.6-7

The Word of God also has authority over scholars and teachers. Here we will notice a difference between fundamentalists and modernists. Modernists look down upon the Bible as they 'critique' it. Fundamentalists elevate the Scriptures to a place of authority and humbly submit to it as the final authority.

It also has authority over experience. Here we notice the difference between the fundamentalists and the Pentecostal movement. We believe the Bible has authority over tradition, pastors, educated (sinners), and experiences.

The Baptist theologian J.B. Jeter says, "Let us then, reverently receive the Scriptures as an authentic and perfect revelation from God, interpret them by the laws which common sense and careful study supply, and live according to their directions, and we shall not fail to secure a blessed morality."²

The Bible is our source for doctrine. 2 Timothy 3:16 specifically states that one of the great purposes of the Scriptures is that it is profitable for doctrine.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

2 Timothy 3:16 states that the Scripture is also for reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. These are all evidenced in the life of a believer.

The Word of God works within the life of a Christian.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

On May 2, 1507, Martin Luther, a Catholic priest, was prepared to offer his first mass. He took his place before the altar and began to recite the introductory portion of the mass until he came to the words, "We offer unto thee, the living, the true, the eternal God." Later he said, "At these words I was utterly stupefied and terror-stricken. I thought to myself, 'With what tongue shall I address such Majesty, seeing that all men ought to tremble in the presence of even an earthly prince? Who am I, that I should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to the divine Majesty? The angels surround him. At his nod the earth trembles. And shall I, a miserable pygmy, say I want this, I ask for that? For I am dust and ashes and full of sin and I am speaking to the living, eternal and the true God.'"

² Inspiration of Scriptures, p.3

Luther struggled with sin and its guilt. He once spent twenty consecutive hours on his knees confessing his sins, and upon arising was still no less insecure in his relationship to Christ. Once he was climbing Pilate's stairs on hands and knees repeating a Pater Noster for each one and kissing each step for good measure in the hope of delivering a soul from purgatory. The stairs were climbed, the Pater Nosters were repeated, the steps were kissed. At the top Luther raised himself and exclaimed, "Who knows whether it is so."

Shortly thereafter, Luther trusted Christ as his Savior as he read the great Bible text, "The just shall live by faith." He believed the Bible over tradition; over the church; over his teachers. The Bible had begun a work in the life of this Catholic priest. As he studied the Word of God, Luther declared: "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen, Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise."

The power of man's books soon wanes and disappears. With but few exceptions the productions of the human intellect enjoy a very brief existence. As a general rule the writings of man within fifty years of their first public appearance lie untouched on the top shelves of our libraries. Man's writings are like himself – dying creatures. Man comes on to the stage of this world, plays his part in the drama of life, influences the audience while he is acting, but is soon forgotten as soon as the curtain falls upon his brief career; so it is with his writings. While they are fresh and new they amuse, interest or instruct, as the case may be, and then they die a natural death. Even the few exceptions to this rule only exert a very limited influence, their power is circumscribed; they are unread by the great majority, yea, are unknown to the largest portion of our race.

But how different with God's Book! The written Word, like the Living Word is "The same yesterday, today and forever." Unlike any other book, it has made its way into all countries and speaks with equal clearness, directness and force to all men in their mother tongue. The Bible never becomes antiquated, its vitality never diminishes and its influence is more irresistible and universal today than it was two thousand years ago.

Such facts as these declare with no uncertain voice that the Bible is endued with the same Divine life and energy as its Author, for in no other way can we account for its marvelous influence through the centuries and its mighty power upon the world.

Inspiration of Scriptures

Inspiration is the 'From God to paper' process so that the end result is the inspired Word of God. It is the direct divine influence, which secures an accurate transference of truth in language which others may understand. It is that controlling influence which God – sovereignly and miraculously – exerted over human authors. The Bible includes dual authorship (human and Divine).

Here are some definitions that one must understand:

Verbal Inspiration – In the original writings, the Holy Spirit guided in the choice of the words used. However, the human authorship was respected to the extent that the writers' characteristics are preserved and their style and vocabulary are employed, but without the intrusion of error.

Plenary – The accuracy which the verbal inspiration secures, is extended to every portion of the Bible so that it is in all its parts both infallible as to truth and final as to its divine authority. Thus, the Scriptures are full and equal in all their parts.

Inerrant – There are no errors in its facts, whether those facts be in history, science or any other field.

Infallible – There are no errors in the principles that it teaches.

'Solo Scriptura' – The Bible is our only authority.

Dr. E. Schuyler English states, "The Scriptures are the result of the Holy Spirit's acting on the minds of certain chosen men so that what they wrote was the Word of God. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ is wholly God and wholly man, the living Word, so the written Word is perfectly Divine and perfectly human. It is Divine that it may be our faultless Guide; it is perfectly human that we may understand it. Though the Holy Spirit was the inspiration, He allowed the writers to use their various styles."

There are two passages of Scripture that specifically tell us of the method of inspiration.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2 Peter 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. ¹⁸ And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. ¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: ²⁰ Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. ²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as *they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

Paul tells us literally that the Scripture is *God-breathed*. Hence, God breathed through the writers. Peter tells us that all the Scripture is ‘a more sure word of prophecy’ than the very voice of God. It is as reliable as the very voice of God telling us something. The Bible is His Voice in Written Form. Thus, the Scriptures are inspired by God.

Peter states that the writers were ‘moved’ or literally ‘borne along’ (carried). God did not follow the human writers to correct any of their mistakes, or intervene if necessary – rather, the writers were consciously, willingly, carried along. As God gave the words, they wrote. The same word for ‘moved’ is used in Acts 27:17 and is translated *driven*, where the ship was totally controlled by the wind, at the mercy of the storm. Thus, the inspiration of the Bible is a supernatural miracle.

There are some heretical views on inspiration. Sometimes it would seem a waste of time to give these views consideration, but there are some modernists and liberals who believe this and we must be aware of what they are teaching.

Conceptual Inspiration – The ideas and concepts are inspired, but the words are not. They would follow the logic that ‘God has inspired the thoughts of God.’

Natural Inspiration – This view would state that men who wrote the Bible were genius’ and did not need divine help in writing the Bible.

Mystical Inspiration – This view holds that the writers were more than natural genius’. They were so Spirit guided that they did not need divine help.

Partial Inspiration – Some of the writings are inspired and some are not.

Dictational Inspiration - This view would follow along the same lines that we believe as fundamental Baptists. The end result of dictational inspiration and verbal plenary inspiration are both the same. Dictational inspiration states, “God

gave the prophets and the apostles the very words that they spoke and wrote. They were not just words guaranteed by God but they were the words of God. Even when God used their personal experiences and their life, he dictated through them the very words in describing these experiences.

There is a verse of Scripture that should settle our view of inspiration.

Psalm 119:89 LAMED. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

This verse implies that as God is eternal, so is His Word. So, the Psalmist tells us that however unsettled our hearts stagger at a promise through unbelief, yet, in heaven and there forever, as settled as heaven itself, yea, even more so, for 'heaven and earth shall pass away, but my (Jesus') words shall not pass.'

C.H. Spurgeon writes, "The turning point of the battle between those who hold 'the faith once delivered to the saints' and their opponents, lies in the true and real inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. This is the Thermopylae of Christendom. If we have in the Word of God no infallible standard of truth, we are at sea without a compass, and no danger from rough weather without can be equal to this loss within. 'If foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?' and this is a foundation loss of the worst kind. When a man falls into an error, but reverently conceives that he finds it in the Bible, he is on a very different footing from the man who says that he judges by his moral consciousness, or some other unreliable standard, and declares that if the Bible contradict him he will sooner renounce Scripture than change his opinions. We have a measure of fellowship with a mistaken friend who is willing to bow before the teaching of Scripture if he can be made to understand it; but we must part company altogether with the errorist, who overrides prophets and apostles, and practically regards his own inspiration as superior to theirs. We fear that such a man will before long prove himself to be an enemy of Christ, all the more dangerous because he will profess loyalty to the Lord whom he dishonors."

How important is inspiration. It is the method used for God to reveal Himself (revelation) to us in a preserved (preservation) Book that the Holy Spirit can speak (illumination) to our hearts through. It is the blessed Holy Spirit that has given us a God-breathed Book.

The Canon of Scriptures

One of the great questions for the early church was, "Which writings were genuine Scripture?" The process of *canonization* answered this question. The word *canon* comes from the Greek word 'kanon' and means a *rule*. It conveys the idea of a measure – a test, a straight-edge, a critical standard – and that which has been measured – a fixed amount, a defined limit.

When we speak of the Sacred Canon, we mean the 66 books which comprise the authentic, inspired, infallible Word of God. Canonicity is part of that which Psalms 12:6-7 states:

“The words of the LORD *are* pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. ⁷ Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.”

From this verse, we realize that canonicity is pre-determined by God and discovered by man – hence the end result is a canon given by the providence and preservation of God.

Some basic tests were used to determine canonicity.

The Writers

If Old Testament – was the author a prophet?

If New Testament – was the author an apostle or a prophet?

The Contents

Are the contents of the writings credible? Are they life-giving? Do they bear witness to the Christians as a whole?

Acceptance

Is there a universal acceptance of the writing by God’s people? Was it read, received and accepted?

Authority

Is there a ‘Thus saith the Lord.’? Does it have the stamp of divine authority? Is it factual and historically reliable?

There was a great need for a proper united canon of Scripture. Many writings were being circulated as authentic. Heretics like Macion were establishing false canons. Persecutions and destruction of Bibles made copies of the New Testament books rare. In 303 A.D. the emperor Diocletian issued an edict ordering the burning of the Christian Scriptures.

God did guide and preserve the proper canon early in church history. According to Eusebius, the apostle John began to collect the canonical books and recognized them by 95 A.D.. The Latin Bible, *Itala Bible* translated in 150 A.D. had every canonical book just as we have them today. Even the ecumenical Council of Nicea refers to ‘the canon’ (in 325 A.D.). Athanasius listed all twenty-seven books of the New Testament in 367 A.D. The Council of Hippo made an official list of all of the twenty-seven canonical books in 393 A.D. The

Synod of Carthage forbade reading anything but the New Testament in churches. The Council of Carthage (419 A.D.) re-affirmed the twenty-seven New Testament books.

“Canonicity was recognized first in the hearts of individual Christians, then by local churches and finally by church councils.”³

Some of the books that were disputed were:

- *Hebrews* – Because of its anonymity.
- *James* – Because of its supposed conflict with the writings of Paul
- *II Peter* – Because of the different style from I Peter
- *II & III John* – Because of their private nature in writings
- *Jude* – Because it quotes the book of Enoch
- *Revelation* – Because of its pre-millennial teachings

In the end, God preserved His Word, and this includes the canon of Scripture.

Preservation of Scriptures

One of the devil’s tools is to doubt what God has said. This is done by adding to, taking away from, and just plain doubting what God said. An example of this is found in the garden of Eden:

God gave His Word in Gen 2:16-17:

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Doubt is cast upon what was commanded:

Gen. 3:1 “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Gen 3:4 “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die...”

³ Stringer, Phil *Inspiration of Scriptures* , p.46

The Word of God is Promised to be Preserved

Psalms 12:6-7 states:

“The words of the LORD *are* pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever”

These verses teach:

- The extent of preservation -- “words”
- The Agent of preservation -- “Thou” (the Lord)
- The period of preservation -- “for ever”.

Not only is this promise given in the book of Psalms, but Jesus made a telling statement as He said in Matthew 5:18, “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.” Jesus gave a greater stability to the Word of God than to the stability of heaven and earth.

The Word of God was inspired as God had holy men record word for word that which He wanted to have in His Word. God then oversaw this process called preservation. Preservation is found in the Bible as the Bible was copied.

Proverbs 25:1 tells us, “These *are* also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.”

This process of copying the Word of God is used to give us a preserved Bible. God oversaw this process. Regardless of whether we have knowledge of this process or are ignorant of it, we still can believe that we possess a preserved Word of God today, because God promised.

A shortened example of preservation is: The Holy Spirit inspired Solomon’s writing; Hezekiah’s men copied them; the scribes copied them in the Hebrew Masoretic text; the Textus Receptus contained this Hebrew text and was translated in English through Tyndale’s Bible and eventually into the King James Version.

Inspiration Demands Preservation

Inspiration demands preservation. How foolish would it be that God would inspire His Word and then allow man to pervert it, lose it or corrupt it over time. “There exists no reason for supposing that the Divine Agent, who in the first

instance thus gave to mankind the Scriptures of Truth, straightway abdicated His office; took no further care of His work; abandoned those precious writings to their fate.”⁴

Fallen, sinful man cannot be trusted. God cannot lie. “Therefore if man is the preserver of God’s Word, only failure can result. It is for man’s good that God did not leave the result of the preservation of His Word to man’s faithfulness, regardless of how the textualists might labor over the extant manuscripts, trying to determine through logical, rational, state-of-the-art philosophical and mathematical methods what is God’s preserved Word and what is not God’s preserved Word.”⁵

“It was only to have been anticipated that the Author of the Everlasting Gospel - that masterpiece of Divine Wisdom, that miracle of superhuman skill – would show Himself supremely careful for the protection and preservation of His own chiefest work.”⁶

Preservation is Based on Faith

The fact that God has preserved His Word is based upon faith. By faith we accept that God inspired the writers as they penned the Scriptures. By faith we believe that God oversaw the compiling of the canon with the sixty-six books of the Bible. By faith we believe God has preserved His Word to us - just as He promised to do.

“Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Truth never changes. Truth is absolute. Therefore, there is only one truth; only one Bible that is the Word of God. You cannot say that the King James Version is truth *and* that the American Standard Version is also truth. Truth is absolute. The definition of truth demands inspiration. The opposite of truth is a lie.

John 8:44 states: “Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

The devil is the author of that which is not truth.

We know that God promised to preserve His Word (Ps. 12:6-7). We know that His Word is truth (John 17:17). We know there is only one truth. Therefore, we know that the truth, the one preserved Word of God is out there; it is just a matter of finding it.

⁴ The Traditional Text, p.10

⁵ Critical Problems: Many in Biblical Scholarship, None in God’s Word, p.7

⁶ The Traditional Text, p.11

Truth never changes, therefore truth is absolute. Webster defines truth as: “exact accordance with that which is, or has been, or shall be.” Where can truth be found? It is found in the preserved KJV with the Holy Spirit bearing witness and guiding you into all truth. Jesus said in John 10:27, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me...” The KJV is the only translation solely translated from the Textus Receptus (Received Text). The Textus Receptus (TR) is named so because Christians have accepted it (received it) as the text which is the Word of God.

Holy Spirit Will Guide into all Truth

The Holy Spirit guided the original authors as they penned the Holy Scriptures. He guided the early church in regard to the proper canon of Scripture as they accepted the 66 books of the Bible as canonical. He guided the preservation of the very Word of God. He also guided Christians to accept the TR as the Word of God. “It is inconsistent to believe that God guided the church in regard to the New Testament canon but gave the church no guidance in regard to the New Testament text.” Just as He guided these Christians, even so today God will guide you into the proper version of the Bible if you let Him.

English Bible Preserved through the Textus Receptus

A Brief History of the Textus Receptus

In 1516, The New Testament was printed in the Greek language. It was disseminated throughout the whole of Western Europe during the Protestant Reformation. God used Erasmus to translate the New Testament into the Greek language. Erasmus was the giant intellect of the Reformation-eve. He bears the title, “Prince of the Humanists.”

“According to Wilkinson, Erasmus had access to, and received from him, *such variant readings as he wished*. And in 1533, a correspondent of Erasmus sent him, *a number of selected readings from Codex B as proof of its superiority to the Received Greek Text*. Erasmus, however, rejected these varying readings because he considered from the massive evidence of his day that the Received Text was correct.”⁷

Erasmus hastily translated and compiled this text in order to meet the deadline set by a printer. This first edition had several errors due to this haste. Later Erasmus had revisions of this text in 1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535.

⁷ Moorman, Jack *Forever Settled*, p.209-210

Later this same line of texts was used to produce the Stephanus Text (1546). The Stephanus Text had revisions in 1549, 1550, and 1551. The Stephanus Text of 1550 is the most common. Other Greek texts would be produced. The Beza Text was the next in line to use Erasmus' work. The Beza Text was done in 1565 with revisions in 1582, 1598, and 1604. The Elzevir Text was printed in 1624. It had revisions in 1633 and 1678.. These are all in full agreement to the Traditional Text (majority text) which has been providentially preserved in the vast majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts. This printed text is commonly called the *Textus Receptus*.

'Textus Receptus' is Greek for 'received text.' It is referred to as this received text because Christians received it as the preserved Word of God. The actual term 'Textus Receptus' did not come about until the second edition of the Elzevir brothers, published in 1633 A.D.. They used the term to synopsise their work.

It is the text which was used by the Protestant Reformers during the Reformation and by all Protestants everywhere for three hundred years thereafter.

Erasmus' Greek Text became the foundation for the following Bibles:

- Luther's German Bible 1522 A.D.
- Tyndale's English Bible 1525 A.D.
- Zurich (Swiss) Version 1529 A.D.
- LeFevre's (French) 1534 A.D.
- Olivetan's (French) 1535 A.D.
- Laurentius' (Swedish) 1541 A.D.
- Christian III (Danish) 1550 A.D.
- Biestken's (Dutch) 1558 A.D.
- DeReyna's (Spanish) 1569 A.D.
- Czech Version 1602 A.D.
- Diodati's (Italian) 1607 A.D.

Of course Tyndale's English Bible in 1522 A.D. was followed by *The Coverdale Bible*, *Matthew's Bible*, *The Great Bible*, *The Taverner Bible*, *The Geneva Bible*, and *The King James Version*. The King James Version is said to have been 85% word for word from the *Tyndale's English Bible*.

God in His providence had Erasmus on the scene for the great spreading of His Word into many languages. We are privileged to hold in our hands the very Word of God. May God find us faithful to it in our loving of it; our study of it; and our sharing of its unsearchable riches.

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