



The Battle for the Bible

- Has God Preserved His Word?

by

Terry Arnold

Scriptures are rendered from an Interlinear
Greek-English (KJV) Bible.

Scripture is shown in ***bold*** and '*italicised print...*'

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At the root of the falling away (apostasy) of the church is how church leaders and Christians view the Bible. The once high views of inspiration, inerrancy and preservation which were held down the running centuries are today under attack. With the rise of ‘textual criticism’ some now say that the Scriptures only ‘contain’ the word of God.

Inspiration

‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness’ (2Tim.3:16). The phrase ***‘inspiration of God’*** here is the Greek *‘theópneustos’* from *‘Theós’* - God, and *‘pnéo’* - to breathe or blow, meaning to breath out.

Inspiration is the *means* by which revelation is given. Inspiration is not revelation. Revelation is the content; Inspiration is the *vehicle* or method. The doctrine of Inspiration is that God breathed out a ***‘more sure word’***, not of ***‘any private interpretation’*** or ***‘by the will of men’*** but ***‘holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost’*** (2Pet.1:19-21).

Inspiration is divine not human. We do not fully understand how God inspired humans to write the words. It takes *faith* to believe in the doctrine of inspiration. The carnal mind will not grasp it. What fallible man would write a book about such illogical and unfathomable topics such as the trinity, election or predestination? Who would write a book that damns the entire human race and has a Hell with eternal punishment?

The object of inspiration extends not to the writers but the *words*. Inspiration is verbal (‘plenary’) inspiration - it extends to the very words of scripture. God told Moses and Joshua exactly what to write and the prophets had *words* put into their mouths to speak. ***‘... I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall say’*** (Ex.4:10-12). Forty years later, Moses warned Israel, ***‘You shall not add unto the word I command you, neither shall you diminish anything from it’*** (Deut.4:2). God gave *words* for Balaam to speak despite Balaam’s reluctance (Nu.22). Saul spoke *words* given by God (1Sam.10:10; 19:20-24). David said ***‘The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His***

word was in my tongue' (2Sam.23:1,2). God said to Jeremiah *'I have put my word in your mouth'* (Jer.1:6-9). Caiaphas prophesied and *'spoke he not of himself'* (Jn.11:49-52). The disciples were promised that the Spirit would give them *words* to speak (Matt.10:19,20). On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4-11) the disciples spoke *'as the Spirit gave them utterance'*. Did not this inspiration include the *exact words* that God wanted spoken?

Jesus spoke much about 'words'. He said *'He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day'* (Jn.12:48). Did Jesus mean *words* when He said *'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled'* (Matt.5:18)? The '*jot*' is the 'yod', the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet; the '*tittle*' is the 'horn', a small projection in some letters, not easily noticed by any unaccustomed to Hebrew writing. Yet Christ speaks of these items, which are smaller than any 'word'!

This does not mean the writers who wrote the Word of God were like robots in any dictation. Inspiration simply means God guided their minds to write what He wanted. And He moulded His thoughts through various personalities as is seen in the different styles of writing.

This verbal inspiration extends to all the autographs - the original copies of the scriptures in Hebrew and Greek. This was once the standard Protestant view. The great Puritan, John Owen, wrote much about *Verbal Plenary Inspiration* and *Verbal Plenary Preservation* in the original languages. He not only believed in full inspiration and preservation of the autographa (originals) but also in the apographa (copies) of the Hebrew and Greek texts. *'It is true, we have not the autographa of Moses and the prophets, of the apostles and the evangelists; but the apographa or 'copies' which we have contain every iota that was in them'*. (1) If the autographs are not pure then how can the apographs be trusted? The Reformers had no time for rationalistic textual wranglings that disputed as to whether the apographs were not accurate to the autographs. Owen rebuked those who would demand that we prove inspiration and preservation: *'By saying that the scripture is the word of God, and then commanding us to prove it so to be, they render themselves obnoxious unto every testimony that we produce from it that so it is, and that it is to be*

received on its own testimony'.(2) Many other church leaders and Confessions of Faith down the running centuries could be quoted in the same fashion. Yet such views which were once common have now been largely eroded.

Other Views of Inspiration

Roman Catholicism added traditions to the word of God and taught that the Bible is interpreted by the church, not by the Holy Spirit to the individual believer's mind. Their Bible also added extra books other than what the Jews originally set down as the 'canon' of scripture in the second century. The authority of Scripture was not tested in Protestant circles until 'Rationalism' and German 'Higher Criticism' swept Europe in the 18th. Century and *reason* became more the arbitrator of truth. Three new views of 'inspiration' were developed, other than Plenary Verbal Inspiration.

1. The Neo-orthodox view
2. The Dictation method
3. Limited inspiration

The *neo-orthodox* view of inspiration says the way we know God is through His 'revelation' to us. This view denies that the Bible is the Word of God, but rather says it is a 'witness' to the Word of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit it becomes revelation to us. God can use the words in the Bible to speak to individuals, but they are still fallible words by fallible men. However, this view is no inspiration at all and we might as well get 'revelation' from God from any other writing. The neo-orthodox Karl Barth (1886-1968) was typical of the doublespeak of such a view. Barth would state that the Bible was 'inspired' and even the 'word of God', yet he would also insist the Bible was full of 'contradictions' and fallible. *'Nowhere do we find a rule...and evade the contradictions as such. We are led now one way, now another, whoever is the author, we are always confronted with the question of faith...they are all vulnerable and therefore capable of error even in respect of religion and theology...'* (3) *'The Bible must from time to time become His Word to us'*. (4) However,

this view leaves us in uncertainty or to pick and choose what we want. It is simply devastating to faith.

The '*Dictation*' method says God is the author of Scripture and individuals wrote the words like secretaries taking dictation. Although God did sometimes say '*write...all the words*' (Jer.30:2), not all Scripture was written this way.

'*Limited Inspiration*' sees Scripture as the work of man with 'limited' inspiration from God. This is similar to '*partial inspiration*' which says that only the spiritual and moral parts are inspired, not the scientific or other parts.

'*Dynamic Inspiration*' similarly says doctrinally the Bible is inspired but historically it is not.

These various 'limited' views tolerate that there may be factual and historical errors in the Bible, yet the Holy Spirit might have guided the authors so that no doctrinal errors resulted from their works. But how can one trust the Bible in doctrinal concerns if it could have historical or scientific errors? This is especially so when doctrine is often written as interwoven within the history of the times.

Contrary to the above views, *Plenary Verbal Inspiration* declares that every word in the original Greek and Hebrew scriptures is 'God-breathed' (2Pet.1:21; 2Tim.3:16).

Proofs of Inspiration

Many of the above views allow for possible errors which destroy the Bible's infallibility and authority. When the Bible says '*all scripture*' is '*inspired*', it means '*all*', not '*parts*'! In Acts 15:23-29, James says '*for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things*'. *The real writer here was shown to be the Holy Spirit who used James as His instrument. That inspiration extends to every word is also shown in 1 Corinthians 2:13 where Paul says 'Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual'. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul says: '...when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God'.*

Over 1,600 years 40 writers wrote 66 books that make up the ‘canon’ of scripture we call the Bible. They came from different parts of the earth and wrote at different times yet they agreed without any contradictions. After 2,000 years no expert has ever disproved the Bible. The very unity of its doctrine and the completeness of all its parts show its divine origin. Compare this book with other books of other faiths and I would argue for its *uniqueness*!

The Bible itself has several ‘proofs’ which point to its inspiration. Many times the prophets wrote ‘*thus saith the Lord*’ and this or its equivalents are used over 2,000 times. Jesus simply said ‘*it is written*’. He confirmed Genesis and other Old Testament books, quoting from them over 100 times as inspired words from God.

The new views of partial inspiration have proved embarrassing for some. If God cannot be trusted in science, history and creation, then why trust Him in spiritual matters? The Bible stated the stars in the heavens could not be numbered except by God (Jer.33:22; Ps.147:4), contrary to early Scientists who thought they already had the stars counted. The Bible stated the earth was a sphere long before men discovered this (Is.40:22; Pr.8:27). The Bible stated there were fountains and springs beneath the sea (Job 38:16; Pr.8:28); that light is parted into the spectrum of the colours of the rainbow (Job 38:24); and that the wind travels in circuits (Ecc.1:6) - all long before men discovered these things!

The scientist Galileo was sent to a dungeon and publicly flogged because he believed the earth moved around the sun. This view contradicted 1,500 years of *science*. On the 22nd of June, 1633, Galileo was obliged to fall on his knees to escape the cruel death ordered by the Pope. He signed with his own hand the following retraction: ‘*I abjure, curse, and detest, the error and heresy of the motion of the earth...*’ A decree against the motion of the earth was signed by the ‘infallible’ Pope, Urban the VIII, and his Cardinals.

But Galileo’s science was eventually to prove how the Pope and his infallible church were in error. Yet the Bible already stated what Galileo discovered (Is.40:22; Ps.19:4).

Matthew Maury was reading Psalm 8:8 and that there were ‘*paths of the seas*’. This lead him to produce maps of sea lanes and currents.

A statue of him exists in Virginia with charts of the sea in one hand and a Bible in the other.

For centuries men scoffed at Jonah being swallowed by a whale (the Hebrew has '*large fish*'). But new species of fish and whales capable of swallowing a man were later found. In February 1891 the whaling ship Star of the East was near the Falkland Islands, where they sighted a large sperm whale. Two boats were sent out after the whale. One boat harpooned the whale but the other boat was turned over. One man drowned and another disappeared without a trace. When the whale was killed and cut open two days later, James Bartley was found unconscious and doubled up inside the whale. He had lost his senses through fright and his skin was bleached white from the stomach acids of the whale, but he fully recovered.

In 1912, the 'Piltdown Man' was 'discovered' which supposedly proved the link between man and apes, being over '500,000 years old'. Scientists used this as evidence against the Bible. However, in 1953, a new dating process proved this to be less than 50 years old and also to be a deliberate fraud.

Numerous Bible prophecies have also been fulfilled to the minutest detail. There are many Messianic prophecies: The Messiah born of a virgin (Is.7:13,14) and born in Bethlehem (Mic.5:2); He would be rejected by Jews (Is.53:3); be silent when accused (Is.53:7,8); would be buried with the rich (Is.53:9); betrayed by a friend (Ps.41:9); sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech.11:12); and would have His hands and feet pierced (Ps.22:16-18).

Numerous prophecies concerning Jerusalem have and are being fulfilled exactly. Writers predicted Israel would become a great nation (Gen.12:1-3); would split into two groups of ten tribes and two tribes (1Kgs.11:31); would be taken captive in Babylon (Jer.25:11-14); and would reject and kill her Messiah, (Is.53:3; Dan.9:26). The destruction of Tyre was foretold in Ezekiel 26. In Daniel chapter 2, four kingdoms are described in the interpretation of the dream of king Nebuchadnezzar (Dan.2:39-43). These four kingdoms came into being just as prophesied.

Archaeology has also more than once proved Bible 'critics' wrong. It has consistently supported the history recorded in Scripture.

An interesting discovery found in the Bible that may well show its divine nature is the studies done on the numerical order found within the words. One man, a former atheist, Dr. Ivan Panin, was the first to discover this in depth and spent 50 years dedicated to this work. Every Greek and Hebrew letter carries a numerical value (letters are used for figures) and the result is a set pattern running through the Bible in the Greek and Hebrew texts. The pattern of the number 7 was significant. Whole words, words beginning with a vowel or a consonant, the numbers of letters in a vocabulary, male and female names and many more aspects, were divisible by 7. Every book of the Bible has the same features. The chance of this occurring has been estimated to be 1 in billions. The patterns discovered were not found in other books or in the seven apocryphal books added to the Bible by the Roman Catholic religion. Many believe this numerical pattern discovered by Panin shows the divine authorship and divine order of the 66 books of the Bible.

The ‘inerrancy’ of the Bible follows if the Bible is ‘inspired’. The Bible itself claims to be perfect. *‘The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times’* (Ps.12:6); *‘The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple’* (Ps.19:7); *‘Every word of God is pure’* (Pr.30:5). Are these not clear and absolute statements? Where do these scriptures speak of any *partial* inspiration or *partial* inerrancy?

Preservation

Liberal theologians and many modern ‘textual critics’ make much of the fact that because we do not have the originals they say we no longer have an accurate Word of God. However, what little faith would we have if we think the creator of the universe cannot manage to keep faithful Hebrew and Greek copies of the originals! Similarly, would we consider God to be imperfect because we no longer have His incarnate self (Jesus Christ) amongst us? *How can we believe in the resurrection by faith and not believe in the inspiration and preservation of the Word of God by the same faith?*

I do not denounce scholarship. I love the study of Greek and the exacting science of exegeting texts, but that study must be predicated on *faith in the fully inspired and inerrant and preserved Word of God*. To question God on whether He has inspired and preserved His word is to question the very author of the writings and His ability to preserve His own word! Did He ever say it was lost or evolving, or did He say it was ‘*once delivered unto the saints*’ (Jude 3)?

Can God inspire His words and yet not preserve them? If the revelation is to be preserved precisely as originally received, the same supernatural power is required in the one case as in the other! It is irrational and arguably hypocritical to believe that God inspired His words and yet could fail in His ability to preserve those same words.

The testimony of the successive copying of the originals is one of a meticulousness not found in any other literature. The Hebrew scholar, Lightfoot, speaks of the faithfulness of tiny ‘yods’ (‘jots’) in the Hebrew language being faithfully copied many times over many years.

Copies of the Bible dating to the 14th century A.D. are nearly identical in content to copies from the 3rd century A.D. Earlier manuscripts were sometimes also checked with later copies for accuracy. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, many scholars were surprised to find that although they were older copies, they were very similar to more recent copies of the Old Testament. There is no major doctrine of the Bible that is questionable as a result of the *minor* differences that exist between the *majority* of manuscripts used for nearly 1,800 years. Textually only 1 part in 1,000 passages in the Bible has any textual ‘variation’ in the copies. Almost 99% of the copies of the texts are the same. There are as many as 5,700 manuscripts and plenty enough to ensure that the Bible is consistent and accurate. This quantity, quality and preservation is not found in any other secular works.

Most scholars agree that the ‘variant readings’ in the New Testament manuscripts do not affect the faith and practise of the Christian faith. Most of these are variants in spellings or slips of the pen. The copying errors are actually astonishingly minor, being mostly found in numbers, spelling and some punctuation. At a very generous estimate the variants could amount to less than 8% of the New Testament text.

This fact is rarely highlighted by textual critics who do not believe in verbal inspiration or preservation.

We have every assurance and evidence that a good translation is a faithful rendition of the original manuscripts.

Bible Versions and Texts

There are two main texts which form the basis of most Bible versions - the 'Byzantine' *Text* (sometimes called the majority text) and a more recent '*Westcott and Hort Text*'. From the Byzantine text came a Greek Text called the '*Textus Receptus*' ('*TR*'). The various King James version translations (KJV, KJV21, KJV2000, etc) and arguably the early translations of the New King James (NKJV) were translated from this '*TR*'. There are also a variety of other versions (e.g. J.P. Green's Translations) taken from these 'majority texts'.

The more recent '*Westcott and Hort Text*' is based on a much *smaller* number of older manuscripts and underlies most of the modern versions such as NIV, NASB, RSV, etc. (There are also other versions springing from this above Greek Text such as the *Living, Good News* and *The Message* which sadly have been accepted as 'translations' when they too often are barely poor 'paraphrases').

I personally prefer to use interlinears and translations based on the majority texts as used by the early church for many centuries. For the New Testament I prefer a combination of a *Greek interlinear* (based on the 'Majority' texts) (5) in conjunction with a translation derived from such. I favour the 'Majority Text' as a foundation because I have become convinced that they contain a *large amount of manuscripts* with a *high level of consistency* and agreement. These Hebrew and Greek texts derived from the majority texts were the accepted source of the Word of God for much of the church age. Are we to say that for 1,800 years Christians did not have the full inspired and preserved word of God and that in the last 200 years with the discovery of new texts and the resultant textual or 'higher criticism', that the former received texts are now inferior?

Many so called 'contradictions' or textual 'errors' or 'additions' have been cited by modern critics. One textual critic defined 'textual errors' as '*where the readings found in the translation is not in*

agreement with that of the autographs' (Combs: '*Errors in the KJV*', P.154). But how can this make sense when we do not have the original autographs? Many of these critics *assume* that there has to be copyist errors.

Many times I have had people bring to me a so called 'difficulty' or 'contradiction' with which they desire for me to 'please explain'. Without boasting, in every instance after investigation, the difficulty has been explained, particularly with help from the original languages.

I do not propose to detail some of these so called contradictions in this article, as the subject I plead for is not to prove God, but to plead for *faith* in God as the One who inspires and preserves the Scriptures! One wonders where is the *faith* in God's desire and ability to preserve His word, when modern critics raise and even *search for* issues that question this? The intellectualism of some of the arguments from modern textual critics also smacks of an underlying bias to dishonour God's sovereignty and omnipotence. And if I be wrong in this, then what of the resultant apostasy in modern Christianity? We live in an age when the Bible is hardly esteemed as inerrant amongst scholars. Surely this must reflect on the Christian's view of the person of God? Is God not His own textual critic and does He not know how to keep His word as inspired and pure? Ultimately, the doctrine of preservation must be hedged by Scripture alone. Should I doubt these words?: ***'The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O Lord, You shall preserve them from this generation forever'*** (Ps.12:6,7).

Conclusion

The 20th Century saw Churches and many Bible colleges decimated by the battles fought for and against Bible inerrancy. Few of the major colleges in the west are now firm on the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy, much less preservation. The culture of the postmodern world has no doubt crippled the church and left it vulnerable to attack. How can we defend the church against attacks from the likes of Dan Brown (author of '*The DaVinci Code*') and Brian McLaren (Emergent Church) and other ecumenical and neo-evangelical leaders who diminish the word of God or take us closer to the Romish religion?

I lay the blame firmly at the feet of Bible colleges and seminaries who have wavered and shifted on these doctrines. They have dramatically influenced denominations. Yet the life and the faith of the church depends on these doctrines of Inspiration and Preservation.

If we discredit the writings of the Bible or diminish them in any way, we surely discredit the author! The issue is not does the Bible have errors, but can God allow errors into His word! *If God created the universe in a perfect order, is He not capable of inspiring and keeping a perfect word?* If the Bible contains errors and is not preserved inerrant, then God is not completely omnipotent and omniscient. Why would God say ***‘For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart’*** (Heb.4:12)? Why would He say this if that word is not perfect? Why would the Psalmist say ***‘Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven’*** (Ps.119:89)?

The Bible is not primarily inspired, inerrant and preserved because of any of the proofs detailed in this article. It is firstly inerrant because of *who God is and what He says*. And this is where *humanistic wranglings about the accuracy of the word of God, no matter how scholarly, must give way to faith*. Yet that faith is not blind; it is faith which comes from the mind of Christ in the believer who has had his heart effectually changed. The 66 books of the Bible have had more impact on changing lives than any other book or any other writings.

The danger of a low view of Inspiration and Preservation is in the effect it will have on the Christian mind, the heart and ultimately the level of faith. We cannot expect the word of God to ***‘divide asunder soul and spirit’*** and to ***‘discern [critique] the thoughts and intents of our hearts’*** (Heb.4:12) if we do not believe the Word of God is one hundred percent God breathed and accurate. The issue here is Sanctification! How can we be fully surrendered to the sanctifying work of the Spirit within when *that work is done by the word of God* (Jn.17:17) and yet we have diminished that very word in our minds and thus our hearts?

Many years ago after much study on this issue I settled on one premise - the Bible is fully the *Inspired, Inerrant and Preserved* word

of God. That word alone is all sufficient and everything that I need to believe God and to live a spiritual life. *I must receive every word as from Him and not judge it but be judged by it, because that is the very standard by which I will one day be judged!* ***‘He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day’*** (Jn.12:48).

(1) ‘*The Works of John Owen*’ Vol.16, P.387 *Ages Library*

(2) Ibid P.404

(3) Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, I/2:509-510

(4) Ibid P.123-124

(5) A helpful aid is the ‘*Greek English Interlinear New Testament*’ by translators Farstad, Hodges and others (published by Thomas Nelson). This is a unique and first ever translation using the Majority texts. It also shows the differences between the Majority, the TR, the Nestle, etc. texts.

About the Author and the Ministry

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational and non-profit faith ministry founded in 1989 when the book '*To Catholics Whom I Love*' was written by Terry Arnold. This book went through several re-prints and served as a fruitful outreach to Roman Catholics.

In 1996 the ministry became a full-time operation with the introduction of a free newsletter, later named '*Diakrisis (Australia)*'.

Diakrisis is published bi-monthly to *teach, inform* and *equip* the church of Biblical truths and to warn of false teaching. It has also been a valuable reference aid to hundreds of pastors/elders.