

DEFENDING THE BIBLE'S CREDIBILITY
"Part III: Answering Opposition To The Bible's Full Divine Inspiration"
(Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) There has been a long slide away from conservative Christians adhering to the Bible as God's inspired Word! Many Gospel-preaching groups deny its *autograph* manuscripts are *faultless*:

(a) In a 1970s poll of **Protestant** clergymen, a poll conducted by the Western Reserve University, 7,442 ministers responded to the following question: "Do you believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God?" (Boice, Does Inerrancy Matter?, p. 9) This is how those ministers answered this question: 82% of the Methodists, 89% of the Episcopalians, 81% of the United Presbyterians, 57% of the Baptists and 57% of the Lutherans answered "Yes"! All the **rest** said "**NO**", that the Bible was **NOT** the inspired Word of God! **Well, the ORIGINAL Protestant movement had at its core the belief of "sola scriptura", that Scripture ALONE was man's SURE rule of faith and practice. NOW, many PROTESTANT ministers DENY its divine authority!**

(b) Harold Lindsell's book, The Battle for the Bible traces how Fuller Seminary has slid on this very issue in just one generation. Once its statement of faith held that the Bible's autograph manuscripts were "inerrant", or without **mistakes**. Now, with some of its professors having been trained in liberal theology seminaries, the seminary's statement of faith **omits** the "inerrancy" stand. (Lindsell, *Ibid.*, p. 106-121) In time, one of the professors at Fuller, Dr. Paul Jewett, has come to the position the Apostle Paul **intentionally** wrote **error against** his better *conscience*, *Ibid.*, Lindsell, p. 120!

(c) As Lindsell further details, the inerrancy debate has split the Southern Baptist Convention into "Moderates" who believe the Bible contains errors, and "Conservatives" (like Charles Stanley) who hold to Biblical inerrancy. Lindsell details how the same struggle has occurred in other Evangelical groups within the **formerly** Conservative Protestant camp.

Well, WERE there MISTAKES made in the Bible's autograph manuscripts so that the Bible DOESN'T ALWAYS tell God's truth? How do we KNOW?!

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "*Some EVANGELICALS claim that THOUGH the 66-Bible is the Bible God condones, MISTAKES were nonetheless included in its AUTOGRAPH manuscripts! Well, IS this so, does it make any DIFFERENCE, and HOW must I react to this allegation?*"

I. To understand the issues, here is a PRIMER on Bible inspiration:

- A. Paul writes that *all* Scripture is "God-breathed", that it **permanently** and thus **currently** carries the authority of God's *speaking* through it:
 1. The NIV term, "God-breathed" in 2 Tim. 3:16 is from a **compound** term, *theopneustos* [*theos* + *pneo* + *stos* = God + breath + edness] (UBS Grk. N.T., p. 736; A. & G., Hendriksen, 1-2 Tim., p. 302)
 2. Its "-stos" suffix signals a **perfect passive** verbal adjective, meaning the Bible is the **perpetually permanent** (perfect tense) **product** (passive voice) of **God** so that it **always** carries His **full** authority, *Ibid.*, Hendriksen; A. T. Robertson, A Gram. of Gr. N.T., p. 1095.
 3. Thus, **ALL** of the **66**-book Bible (the established canon according to our sermon series) **perpetually carries** God's **set authority!**
- B. Also, our sermon series has noted that God's inspiration includes the **precision** of the autograph manuscripts' word letters ("jot") and parts of word letters that affect a word's meaning ("tittle"), Mtt. 5:18.
- C. This does **not** mean that God **dictated** Scripture, for the Bible's books are varied in style and vocabulary. Rather, God "carried along" the authors so that, without impeding their personal expressions, what they wrote was **exactly** what God **wanted** written, 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
- D. God's inspiration covers true figures of speech: Jesus called Herod a "fox" in Lk. 13:32, a term **critics** charge is "literally" **inaccurate**: however, this figure, an **eleutheria**, is a bold term used to convey a **frank but accurate** reality (E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, p. 932). All who heard Jesus knew He did **not** mean Herod was a **literal** fox, but that Herod was a cunning, destructive king! It is an effective way of **accurately** communicating **truth** through the **normal** -- thus **including figurative** -- use of language!

II. Now, critics from various camps fail to hold to these points:

- A. Liberal Theology advocates deny the **infallibility** of the Bible's autograph manuscripts -- asserting that they have **intentional** errors.
- B. Others deny the **plenary** inspiration of Scripture, the **totality** of its inspiration, saying that **parts** of the Bible are **not fully** authoritative.
- C. Some deny the **inerrancy** of the Bible, saying it contains **mistakes** in conveying its ideas (Fuller Seminary; Southern Baptist "Moderates")

- D. Neo-orthodox theologians deny the **objective** inspiration of Scripture's **written** words, saying that they **become** God's Word as one **reads** it.
 - E. Some assert that conservatives mean "literal" does not include figures of speech, and attack the Bible's bona fide figures of speech as "error".
- III. **Yet, witnesses abound re: the credibility of the Bible's manuscripts:**
- A. Millar Burrows of Yale University wrote: "Such evidence as archaeology has afforded thus far, especially by providing additional and older manuscripts of the books of the Bible, **strengthens** our **confidence** in the **accuracy** with which the text has been transmitted **through** the **centuries**." (What Mean These Stones? [New York: Meridian Books, 1956], p. 42, as cited in McDowell, *Ibid.*, p. 93)
 - B. [For this next quotation, recall that **Reformed** Judaism **denies** the **authority** of Scripture according to its 1885 Pittsburgh Platform, cf. April/May 1996 issue of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry's Israel My Glory, p. 15.] "**Reformed** Jewish scholar, Nelson Glueck, has affirmed: 'It is worth emphasizing that in **all** this work **NO** archaeological discovery has **EVER controverted** [disproved] a **single, properly understood** biblical statement.'" (John Montgomery, Christianity for the Tough Minded [Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1973], p. 6 as cited in McDowell, *Ibid.*, p. 93).
- IV. **Besides, to "fudge" on the divine inspiration of ANY written part of the Bible's autograph manuscripts is to subvert the Christian faith!**
- A. As we learned, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that **all** of the Bible's **autograph** manuscripts are God's **perpetually set production**.
 - B. Thus, if **any** erroneous expression exists in the Bible's **autograph** manuscripts, **GOD errs**, making **GOD** less than truthful as He says He is (Rom. 3:4a) and casting doubt on all that He is and says, especially in His claim to provide salvation through Christ, Jn. 3:16; Mtt. 17:5!
 - C. As John Wesley said, "If there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth." (*Ibid.*, Boice, p. 28)

Lesson Application: (1) *With Matthew 5:18 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17, we hold that the Bible's autograph manuscripts are without error in conveying the truth God wanted their human authors to write.* (2) *Thus, ANY humanly alleged "error" in the Bible's autograph manuscripts is only a human misunderstanding of the truth!* (3) *As a RESULT, we assert what the Bible teaches, that (a) one finds eternal life by faith alone in Christ alone (Jn. 3:16), and (b) that he lives a godly life by depending on what the Bible says (Ps. 1).*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

With two illustrations, we can show how charges that "error" exists in the Bible are merely human misunderstandings:

(1) Son of the late godly Charles Fuller, Daniel Fuller, who has been a Professor at Fuller Theological Seminary has often tried to show the Bible is **errant** by the "mustard seed" issue. Matt. 13:31-32 records Jesus as saying that the mustard seed is the "**smallest** of **all** seeds" the people in Palestine knew. However, though the people of Jesus day believed this, and Daniel Fuller claims that in a botanical sense, it is not the smallest Palestinian seed, Jesus **accommodated** his hearers even though He did not tell the **real TRUTH!** Thus, Daniel Fuller has often argued that the Bible is in error in that passage! (*Ibid.*, Lindsell, p. 169).

However, around 1975, Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, in a Bible lesson on a Wednesday evening Prayer Meeting delivery at Grace Bible Church in Dallas, Texas, argued opposite Daniel Fuller's view. Dr. Pentecost relayed to us that in a visit to the Holy Land, a guide showed him that what Daniel Fuller had thought was the **seed** was actually its **POD!** The guide took the tiny pod and burst it open to reveal little powdery **grains**, the individual **seeds** of the mustard! Tragically, Daniel Fuller had jumped to an errant conclusion on the Bible's credibility without having investigated all of the facts!

(2) In the Jan. 15, 1998 issue of the Voice, Kent Johnson wrote in criticism of Biblical inerrancy: "I am pointing out the idiocy of literal interpretation of Scripture. If Paul says Jesus is in his (Paul's) heart, does that mean we have to find the decayed chest cavity that was once Paul's to find Jesus? But that is the literal meaning of Scripture."

Well, if we apply Mr. Johnson's **own** argument to an expression in his article, **his own critique** deeply errs! He writes in the fourth paragraph: ". . . there has never been a shortage of Christians willing to shove their peculiar beliefs down others' throats." Using Mr. Johnson's reasoning, I would have to say that his statement is "idiotic" since no one can shove intangible beliefs down another's literal throat!

To use another figure of speech, give Paul a break! He was speaking figuratively as was Mr. Johnson to convey a realistic idea! If we read the Bible in its **normal** linguistic context as we **must** do to understand **Mr. Johnson's** article, the Bible is **inerrant!**

Let's use God's Word as it is -- as God's revealed TRUTH!