

Textual Criticism Fact and Fiction

A fresh look at Bible Inspiration Preservation And Translation by Dr. Thomas Cassidy (Protomsv@aol.com)
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Preface

Why another book about the controversy surrounding the Inspiration of the Bible, it's Preservation, and it's Translation? There has been much discussion in recent years, much of it of such a mean spirited nature that much more heat than light has been thrown on the very important subject of our Bible. However, all of the discussion has done very little to answer the questions most often asked by the average Christian in the pew on Sunday morning: Is my Bible inspired? Is it without error? Can I have full assurance in my Bible as the Word of God, or do only the "Scholars" know for sure what really is the Word of God, and what isn't? Hopefully and prayerfully this book will help shed a little light on the subject.

Introduction

In dealing with the doctrines of inspiration, preservation, and translation of the scriptures, I do not intend this book to be an exhaustive examination of these great doctrines, but rather to start from the position that most of my readers will already hold, namely, believing in an inspired and inerrant Scripture. These arguments regarding the inspiration of Scripture are not new, but have raged in Christendom for the past one hundred years, coming to a boil about fifty years ago with the great Fundamentalist/Modernist controversy, bringing about a breakup in most of the large denominations. I intend only to touch upon the high points of the historical arguments concerning inspiration, then deal more thoroughly with what the Bible teaches, an area where many fundamental Baptists seem to be guilty of fuzzy thinking, accepting without serious question the opinions of men who may be called conservative, but may not be fundamental in all their doctrines and practices. My background was along such lines of conservative orthodoxy, being saved in a church that had been part of the old Northern Baptist Convention, but had left the convention in the 1940's when the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy became a matter of great contention. My education started along similar lines, attending Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota, a school originally founded by the late great W. B. Riley (as Northwestern Baptist Seminary), and continued by a former Northern Baptist pastor, Dr. Richard V. Clearwaters, who was one of the first to come out of the old convention and establish an independent church. W. B. Riley stated in his book "The Menace of Modernism" (New York: Christian Alliance, 1917), the Modernist believes the Bible's "inspiration exists only in its ability to inspire...its interpretation is a matter of mental conscience." Dr. Riley goes on to say there were a group of men whom he describes as the "old conception," who believed the Authorized Version or King James Bible (hereafter AV) was inerrant. He states on page 11, "On this point we are inclined to think that, even unto comparatively recent years, such a theory has been entertained." He then ascribes this belief to ignorance, and says, "I think it would be accepted without fear of successful controversy that such fogies in Biblical knowledge are few, and their funerals are nigh at hand." Actually there are quite a few of us, and I for one am feeling just fine, thank you. Dr. Riley then erroneously states the AV inerrancy position by saying on page 13, "To claim, therefore, inerrancy for the King James Version...is to claim inerrancy for men who never professed it for themselves..." No one, that I am aware of, is claiming inerrancy for men, but only for the words of God. This position is, I believe, a straw man, attempting to ascribe to us something we do not believe, and then condemn us for believing what they claim we believe. I believe the AV is

vested with derivative inspiration, due to its having been carefully translated from the inspired words of the original language texts contained in the Traditional Masoretic (Bomberg's Second Rabbinic Bible, as edited by Rabbi Abraham Ben Chayyim), and the Traditional Greek (Byzantine or TR) text. I consider the Stuttgartensia and Alexandrian (WH) texts, from which all modern bibles are translated, to be corrupt. This is, I believe, easily demonstrated by the egregious errors contained in the versions translated from them. If we believe the AV has derivative inspiration, we must remember, where inspiration (even derivative inspiration) goes, inerrancy (also derivative) must, of logical necessity, follow. If inerrancy does not follow inspiration, we produce the absurdity of an "inspired" error! I believe the AV is inspired and inerrant because the preserved original language manuscripts from which it is derived are both inspired and inerrant, when correctly copied, which virtually all of the textual evidence suggests is assuredly the case. The charge of errors in the AV is an unfounded charge. The so-called errors are usually the result of an insufficient knowledge of the etymology of the English words used by the translators. Just a little knowledge of the English language clears up a great number of these so-called errors. There are only about 268 words in the A.V. (out of 773,692, a rate of only .00035) that are not currently used in English (wot, wist, etc), or have changed meaning (Easter referred to the vernal equinox in 1611, the time of the Jewish Passover, but now refers either to Resurrection Sunday, or a secular holiday involving an egg laying rabbit(?)). I believe it is easier (and safer) to educate God's people as to the changes in English than to tamper with the Bible.

So then, it seems clear to me that Dr. Riley believed there were still a few of the "old conception" men in his day that still believed in an inerrant AV, that they were mostly old men, and were soon to pass away. If these men were old men when Riley wrote his book, they must have dated to at least the latter part of the 19th century. Over one hundred years ago, a group of "old conception" men existed who still believed in the inerrancy of the AV. This appears to indicate the "King James Only" position is not of recent origin. Thus we can see, in Riley's day, a group of men still existed who believed, "(1) the Bible was finished in heaven and handed down, (2) the King James Version was absolutely inerrant, and (3) its literal acceptance was alone correct." (Page nine of Riley's book as quoted by Dr. George W. Dollar in his book "History of Fundamentalism in America", Page 114) We can easily see that W. B. Riley (1861 - 1947), understood this group of men to believe exactly as the "King James Only" crowd does today, and believed it long before any of the contemporary antagonists were born! The challenge of one scoffer to "Name one person who believed in the inspiration or inerrancy of the King James Version prior to 1950 and I'll send you \$1000", has just been answered (please send the money to me at the address in the front of this book!). Unfortunately Riley himself did not hold this position, and his successor, Richard V. Clearwaters, went on to study at the University of Chicago Divinity School (Masters in Greek Literature) under Goodspeed. In 1923 Dr. Edgar J. Goodspeed published his "New Testament: An American Translation," based on the corrupt Critical (Wescott and Hort) Text. Goodspeed convinced Clearwaters that the Critical Text as published by Wescott and Hort was superior to the Textus Receptus that Clearwaters had been originally willing to accept, and that others believed had been "handed down" from heaven. This accounted for the fact that while I was a student at Central, Dr. Roland McCune (now president of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary) taught Old Testament from the New American Standard Bible, and more recently, the new president, Dr. Ernest Pickering, often preached from the New International Version. Most recently, Dr. Larry Pettegrew, Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology, wrote a paper entitled "The King James Only Religion", in which he states that those who hold the King James Only position are in fact (1) not fundamentalists, (2) doctrinally deviant, (3) of a "new view that was not held by the prominent Bible teachers, pastors, and leaders of early historic fundamentalism" (in spite of the fact that the founder of the very seminary that now supports him believed these men pre-dated him!). He goes on (and on and on) to say "...there are some poor translations in the King James Version. When the Anglicans translated the

Greek word, 'baptizo,' for example, they were afraid to translate it as 'immerse.' So they simply transliterated it as 'baptize.' Most Bible-believing Baptists would consider that a mistake." It never ceases to amaze me that so called scholars, who obviously consider themselves to be well educated, can spout such nonsense. Any person who knows how to read can look up the word "baptize" in the Oxford English Dictionary (any good college library will have one) and see that the word "baptize" did not enter the English language in 1611 via a transliteration of the Greek word "baptizo", but rather, had been in common usage in England for over five hundred years, having come into the English language via the French "baptiste", at the time of the Norman invasion under William the Conqueror in 1066 A.D.! A look at the word "immerse" in that same dictionary will reveal that at the time the King James translators were working, the word immerse did not mean the same as it does now, to submerge in, but at that time meant "to fill and co-mingle with" as a sponge soaks up water. No intelligent person would suggest today such a meaning for baptism, yet these so-called scholars are constantly assaulting our ears and intellects with such nonsense! If a student of mine handed in a paper full of such errors in simple research I would give him an "F", and make him start over. Too bad Central doesn't have such a standard for its faculty.

Much that I learned at Central was the product of the old Northern Baptist thinking, as modified by the more liberal mind set of the University of Chicago Divinity School, including the uncritical acceptance of the conservative orthodox position on inspiration. Many of my professors had been educated, not in independent Baptist schools, but in colleges and seminaries that can best be described as either conservative protestant, or former Northern Baptists who left the convention but brought much of the furniture and baggage with them when they came out. Their teaching, of course, reflected the conservative protestant, or, at best, the conservative Northern Baptist position. This problem of college and seminary professors continues today. When the Independent Baptist movement began here in the United States, much of the leadership of the new movement decided to start their own colleges and seminaries. As these new schools grew and the leadership began to look for additional faculty members they soon realized the only men who were academically qualified were educated in the old denominational schools, and were thus infected with the menace of modernism. In response to this new menace, these school leaders stepped out of the traditional Baptist educational circle and sought faculty from the conservative protestant schools such as Dallas Seminary (Presbyterian), Grace Seminary (Brethren), Westminster (also Presbyterian), and Bob Jones University (Methodist). By using faculty members from these non-Baptist, protestant schools, the leadership created a weak Baptist, pro-protestant, mind-set in their students, who, of course, were the next generation of Pastors, Missionaries, Evangelists, and college and seminary Professors, thus perpetuating, in Independent Baptist schools, the very modernist influence they had established these schools to avoid! When I left seminary (with this weak-Baptist, pro-protestant mind-set) and went into the pastorate, I found myself confronted with many questions that had never even been asked, let alone answered, during my seminary days. These questions forced me into a period of self study concerning Bible inspiration, reading those materials that had been written by fundamental Baptists, rather than by conservative protestants. My new found understanding of inspiration led me in turn to a period of self study in the area of Bible preservation, where I found an even greater discrepancy between what I had been taught, and what the Bible actually had to say. My gradually growing understanding of preservation led me into a thorough study of Bible translation which has increased my confidence in the English Bible as the authoritative Word of God.

As I continued to study the phenomenon of American fundamentalism, I had the added blessing of knowing the pre-eminent expert alive today in the area of Fundamentalist History, Dr. George W. Dollar, of Haines City, Florida. Dr. Dollar was dean of Central Baptist Seminary during my last two years there, and had tried valiantly to swing the school back to a solid position on Biblical inerrancy. He left Central in 1980, after a long and tiring battle with the internal politics of Central, and the Minnesota Baptist Association. While at

Central, Dr. Dollar was a breath of fresh air in the dry and dusty halls of academia. On the occasion of his first opportunity to preach in chapel, with all of the students assembled, all of the faculty present, with many of the supporting pastors from the area, Dr. Dollar took his Bible, opened it, and said, "Take your King James Bibles and turn to (and gave the chapter and verse reference), if you have anything other than a King James Bible, SIT ON IT!" I turned to a fellow student sitting next to me and remarked "I think this place just got a whole lot more interesting!" It was my privilege to sit under his teaching and preaching ministry while at Central, and to renew that fellowship via telephone and letter after his "retirement" (he still preaches every Sunday, and is now teaching at Florida Seminary in Lakeland!). It became obvious to me through my reading and my discussions with Dr. Dollar, that all fundamentalists are not the same. I have come to the conclusion that there are four different positions held by fundamental Baptists today. I want every reader to understand, that none of the comments to follow constitutes an attack on any man, or upon his work. I have no axes to grind, nor am I mad at anyone. These are observations of facts as I see them and are not meant to be a denunciation of any one man or his work, and I hope and pray that those reading these words, if they seem to apply, will take them in the spirit of love in which they are offered. The truth ought never offend any child of God. If these words are not truth, then they do not apply to you, and they ought not offend. If they are true, and you do feel offended, perhaps a careful examination of your position and ministry might be in order. I know how difficult it is to bring about change in the lives of Christians. When I took my present pastorate ten years ago the church had only been separated from the American Baptist Convention for about five years, and continued to practice much of the American Baptist methods of government, worship, and work. When I attempted to initiate change, the charge was made that I was repudiating all that had been done before. If what was being done required change, then they must have been doing it wrong all those years. The church had been started by the late husbands of many of our widows, and by the parents of many of our middle aged members, and they felt that if we changed our practices we would dishonor the memories of their dear departed loved ones. My intent, of course, was not to dishonor any person, but to honor God. It took a long time for many of our people to understand this, and forgive me for changing the long held practices of their church. We must remember, if we can see farther than our forebears, it is because we have the advantage of standing upon that which they have built, giving us a higher vantage point so that we can see beyond their horizons. The following are the works of our spiritual forbears upon which we have built.

Position number one is those who separated from the old Northern Baptist Convention over the doctrine of inerrancy and the encroachment of liberalism, starting in about 1920. These separatists today usually hold to a view of inerrancy that accepts the views of the orthodox writers of the last century such as Augustus Strong, and writers from the first half of this century such as Henry Thiessen and others. These men, and the churches and schools they control, usually accept and use the critical Greek text, and later (1937) BHK (Biblia Hebraica Kittel) Hebrew text in their classrooms. Their schools are often organized apart from the local church, usually owned and governed by a "state association," or a "state fellowship," or they are governed by a "board" of pastors and businessmen. Their financial base is often the high tuition fees that they charge. Their churches generally take a good stand on baptism, eternal security, dispensational premillennialism, and have good music standards, but they sometimes have a slight tendency towards formalism in their services. They often use the old Northern Baptist form of government by committee, have a "board" of deacons acting as an executive committee, often also having a "board of trustees" to oversee the "business" matters of the church, and to act as an advisory committee to advise the Pastor and others in areas both spiritual and temporal. These churches generally have "business" meetings fairly often, such meetings sometimes chaired by a "moderator" instead of the pastor. These churches are often less inclined to emphasize areas of personal holiness such as dress standards and modesty, sometimes characterizing those who do as "legalists."

Position number two is those who separated from the conservative protestant churches over the doctrine of inerrancy at about the same time, but have retained at least some of the characteristics of their former denominations. These characteristics may include, but are not limited to: a tendency toward formalism expressed in the wearing of "clerical" garb such as robes, etc. in the pulpit; an unbiblical or unstated position on baptism; an unbiblical or unstated position on eternal security; an unbiblical or unstated position on eschatology manifesting itself lately in a definite swing towards the covenant position, holding to a mid/post/ or prewrath rapture position. Much more alarming, many are now denying the necessity of the blood of Christ for salvation, saying the blood is merely the symbol of His death. There is a large segment of this group who are now dividing the Biblical role of pastor into "ruling elders" and "teaching elders." These men also often hold an unbiblical or unstated position on the primacy of the local church; an adherence to the somewhat liberal position of their former denominations in the area of inspiration and preservation of the Scriptures, using the critical Greek text, and later (1937) BHK Hebrew text in their classrooms. These separatist Protestants often have an incomplete understanding of Biblical standards and personal separation, while practicing what they call "secondary separation" which they often interpret to mean anyone who is not part of their group, fellowship, school, or organization (don't misunderstand what I am saying, I believe in separation, both from the lost and from the unruly saved. However, I don't believe any separation is "secondary", all separation is "primary", meaning it is a requirement for obedience, consecration, and holiness). Their schools are seldom, if ever, organized under the authority of a local church, and they often hold "church" services in the school auditorium, said "churches" not being congregationally governed, and if this "convenience church" has a "pastor", he is either the school leader, or works for the school leader, thus denying, in practice, the primacy and autonomy of the local church. These schools are generally organized as "para-church" organizations, a term borrowed from the New Evangelicals, and without Biblical support. These schools and organizations are usually run by one man, but are sometimes governed by a "board" made up of pastors, politicians, and business men. Their financial base comes from the high tuition fees they charge, or occasionally from income associated with other aspects of their "ministry", rather than from the tithes and offerings of God's people given through their local church.

Position number three is held by those who separated from the Southern Baptist Convention, beginning in the mid 1940's, over standards, convictions, separation, etc., before the doctrine of inspiration was called into question in the convention. These men and their churches are generally characterized by strong stands on Baptism, eternal security, the local church, pastoral leadership, and an inspired, infallible, inerrant, preserved scripture. About half of the schools controlled by these men are under the authority of their local churches and are sometimes, but not always tuition free. These schools generally use the traditional Masoretic Hebrew text (BHK 1906 - 1912), and the Received Greek text in their classrooms, never having fallen under the influence of the modernistic German rationalists of the last century. These men and their churches generally have a strong position on personal separation, expressed as good standards in the areas of music and dress.

The fourth position is held by those who are unaffiliated with any of the conventions, associations, fellowships, and never have been! This group tends toward the historic "Landmark" position, believing in the local church only, Baptist perpetuity, and a faithful Bride identified as the church of the New Testament, and educates their preachers in local church centered Bible schools.

Because of the above differences in background and training, it is no great wonder that there exists a tremendous diversity of opinion among those calling themselves fundamentalists. It is with this great diversity in mind that I endeavored to put on paper a concise, well reasoned statement of the controversial subject of Bible inspiration, preservation, and translation.

Section One - Inspiration

Inspiration is defined as that work of the Holy Spirit of God upon the minds, souls, and bodies of the Scripture writers which makes their writings the record of a progressive divine revelation. When God determined to give to His creation the Self-revelation that we today call the Bible, He selected the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Apostles of the New Testament, and through the agency of His indwelling Holy Spirit so overcame the sin nature of these men that the words which He selected from the reservoir of the culture, education, experience, and personality of the man were His chosen words, and no others. This process of inspiration was two fold: Verbal, the very words that God selected were the very words that best revealed the mind and will of God to His creation. Thus, every word so inspired was in fact, the Word of God. Plenary, the collection of words that we call the Bible is, in its whole, the complete Word of God, without error or contradiction. The entire Bible, regardless of subject matter, is the infallible, unfailing, Revelation of God.

Now let's look at some of the various theories of inspiration that have been common in historic Christendom.

The Intuition or Natural Theory is held by the typical Modernist today, who believes that inspiration is merely a higher development of that natural insight into truth which all men possess to some degree. In other words, the Bible is merely a book by men with highly religious motivation, and is similar to a book about science written by men with highly scientific motivation. This theory, holding as it does that natural insight is the only source of religious truth, involves a serious self-contradiction; if the theory is true, then one man is inspired to utter that which another man is inspired to condemn. The Koran and the Bible cannot both be inspired Truth, as they contradict each other. This theory reduces moral and religious truth to the subjective - a matter of private opinion - having no objective reality apart from the opinions of men. The Illumination or Mystical Theory regards inspiration as merely an intensifying and elevating of the religious perceptions of the believer, the same in kind, though greater in degree, as the illumination of every believer by the Holy Spirit. This position holds that the Bible is not the Word of God, but only contains the Word of God, and that not the writings, but only the writers were inspired. Of course, we must admit that there is an illumination of the mind of the believer by the Holy Spirit as we look into the Word of God, but this illumination only allows us to understand that which has already been written, and cannot impart new truth.

The Dictation or Mechanical Theory holds that inspiration consisted in such a possession of the minds and bodies of the Scripture writers by the Holy Spirit, that they became passive instruments, not participating in any way in the process of inspiration. This theory fails to explain the medical terms used by Luke, the military and sporting terms used by Paul, and the distinct differences between the books written by the various Old and New Testament writers. Of course, we must grant that there are instances when God's communications to mankind were in an audible voice, and took the form of spoken words, and that sometimes God commanded men to commit these words to writing for the edification of all men. However, the Dictation Theory would force this occasional event upon all of Scripture, quite apart from the evidence to the contrary.

The Dynamic or Conceptual Theory states that inspiration is not simply a natural, but also a supernatural fact, and that it is the immediate work of a personal God in the soul of man. This theory holds that the Scriptures contain a human as well as a divine element, so that while they present a body of divinely revealed truth, this truth is shaped in human molds and adapted to ordinary human intelligence, and is thus conceptual (the idea, or thought, or concept is inspired) rather than verbal (the very words are inspired) in its view of inspiration. This is the view held, unfortunately, by many fundamentalists today, and is the basis for the proliferation of the many English language translations of the Scriptures now on the market, each

one trying to put into different words the inspired thought, or idea, or concept of the original, while glossing over or even ignoring the words inspired by God.

The Verbal and Formal Inspiration position believes that first of all the Holy Spirit worked in the Prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New Testament in such a way that the very words of God were selected from the vocabulary of the man, taking into account his culture, education, and experience, and that not only the very words, but also the forms of the words, such as noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, singular, plural, etc., were written at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. This view is the only one that can give us a completely inspired, inerrant, infallible, preserved Bible, as well as account for such statements as Paul saying that the very form of a word was inspired by God for a specific purpose as in Galatians 3:16, and Christ saying in Matthew 5:18 that not only was each word inspired, but every letter of every word was inspired. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the perfect mirror of the Lord Jesus Christ, which reflects Him and leads us to Him. Authority resides in the Scriptures just as it does in Him. Just as all authority is given to Christ (Matthew 28:18), the living Word, all authority is bound up in the Scriptures, the reflection of Him, the written Word of God.

Now comes the problem we face in fundamental circles today. What exactly was it that God inspired. Was it men? Was it manuscripts? Was it languages? One of the greatest failings of fundamentalism today is this confusion concerning the doctrine of inspiration. If you were to ask every independent, fundamental Baptist Pastor what it was that God inspired, most would reply "the original manuscripts." However, you can search the scriptures forever, and never find a reference to the "original manuscripts." But you will find, over and over again references to the "words" that God has spoken. God did not inspire men or manuscripts, He inspired words! God did not concern Himself with parchment, vellum, papyrus, and ink, but with words! It was, and still is, the words of God that are inspired. It makes absolutely no difference if those inspired words are written by the hand of Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, or if they were carefully copied by a copyist in his own handwriting, or if they are scrawled on the rest room wall! If they are the same words, they are God's words, and if they are God's words, they are inspired words!