

# The Scriptures Inspired

## The Authoritative Rule

The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testament, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct.

**(1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:21)**

*And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*

**(1 Thessalonians 2:13)**

*(15) and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (17) so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:15-17)*

*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21)*

How can I know which is the true religion? is an important question frequently asked. It is deserving of an answer, since one's eternal welfare is at stake. The real issue is the matter of authority.

There are three basic kinds of religious authority:

1. Human reason
2. The Church
3. God's Word

**Perhaps the most common today is human reason.** We will not dispute the obvious fact that human beings have mental equipment, which has produced an amazing array of breathtaking achievements, particularly in scientific fields. Nor will we brush aside the need for handling one's daily affairs in a logical fashion. The process of dealing with problems in a commonsense fashion is called rationality. It is no sin to function on this level. Rationality, however, must not be confused with rationalism. Rationalism is the belief that the highest authority is human reason. Given enough time, the rationalist contends, human genius will unlock all the secrets of the universe and lead to perfect life, peace, health, wealth, and continuing prosperity.

One form of rationalism is a scientism that believes science, with its modern methodologies and equipment, will eventually be able to analyze and solve all problems. However, such a view has severe limitations. It fails to recognize that science is not able to deal with some things. For example, it cannot work directly with the qualities of color and sound. It has to express them in quantitative terms. But qualities are not quantities.

For example, people who are born blind can understand all the science and mathematics of the wave lengths of light. That does not mean they have any idea of what a beautiful sunset, a red rose, or the exquisite coloring of a butterfly's wing looks like. Those born deaf can understand all the science and mathematics of sound waves. That does not mean they have any idea of what a symphony or a congregation of people praising God and glorifying Jesus in the Holy Spirit sound like. Science cannot deal with things that cannot be weighed or measured, such as the human soul. Neither can science deal with unique occurrences. Consequently, it cannot deal with miracles, since each one is a distinct and separate manifestation of the grace and power of God and not repeatable for lab analysis.

Actually, those who take rationalism as their authority usually end up making their own reason the final authority. But as Solomon observed, "*There is nothing new under the sun,*" for this same kind of arrogance displayed itself in ancient times. In Genesis 11 we read about those who attempted to defy God and make a name for themselves by building a city and a very high tower at Babel. Rationalists of all ages are much like that – putting their ultimate trust in their own reasoning ability. Again, repeatedly in the days of the Judges, "*everyone did as he saw fit*" (**Judges 17:6; 21:25**). The chaos and confusion resulting from trust in human reason as the ultimate authority are vividly portrayed in the tragic stories recorded in the Book of Judges.

**A second common belief is that the Church is the ultimate authority.** Some contend that Christ gave His authority to Peter and that Peter laid hands on the bishops he ordained, giving them authority to lay hands on their successors. By this "apostolic succession," authority was transmitted from Christ through the twelve apostles and so down through the centuries. On this ground, certain churches hold themselves aloft [over the congregation] as the only authorized representative of Christ, and hence its leaders are supposed to hold a special authority to judge truth.

Commonly associated with this view of apostolic succession is the assertion that the New Testament is a product of the Church, giving the Church a kind of priority over the Bible. It should be noted, however, that the theory of apostolic succession did not appear until near the end of the second century A.D. Furthermore, the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397 did not authorize the list of New Testament books that we today accept as **\*\*canonical**; it merely gave assent (agreement) to what was already generally recognized and used in the churches of the day.

**\*Canon** – The list of books accepted by the Church as Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit.

**\*\*Canonical** – Accepted as part of the canon of the Bible.

The death of Christ put the new covenant into effect (Hebrews 9:15-17).

*(15) For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

*(16) In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, (17) because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. (Hebrews 9:15-17)*

After His resurrection, Christ and the Holy Spirit brought the Church into being. Then, the Holy Spirit inspired the writers who gave us the New Testament books. Today, since there are disputes and quarrels among ecclesiastical bodies, the questioning heart yearns for an authority higher than an earthly church organization.

**The third alternative is to trust implicitly in the authority of the Word of God.** This view is based squarely on the conviction that God by nature is self-disclosing. The key difference between other religions and Christianity is that other religions see humanity in the dark seeking for something within themselves or beyond themselves. Christianity reveals God bringing light into the darkness as He comes down into the stream of human life and history and reaches out in love for fallen human beings.

God is a speaking God; He wishes to communicate with His creatures. Hebrews 1:1-2 indicates this characteristic in God:

*(1) In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)*

God has spoken. His fullest and final declaration, as Hebrews 1:1-2 indicates, is in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. We call this manner of speaking the Incarnation, the clothing of the divine with human flesh. It is the fullest measure by which God can communicate with us, for it is person-to-person communication. Jesus Christ, as the first chapter of John’s Gospel reminds us, is “the Word,” the messenger and the message of God. Now, just as Christ is the Living Word, so the Bible is the written Word. In the absence of the personal presence of Jesus from the time of His ascension until His Second Coming, the Bible is the authoritative speaking of God, which the Holy Spirit is pleased to use to direct people to Christ. The apostle Paul, in Romans 10:8-15, dramatically points out that without the proclamation of the Good News – the message of the Bible – people do not find God.

*(8) But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: (9) That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (11) As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (12) For*

*there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, (13) for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (14) How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (15) And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:8-15)*

It also provides the grounds from which with the belief of the heart we confess “*Jesus is Lord,*” bringing salvation (Romans 10:9).

### **The Revelation of God to Humankind**

If one grants that God does speak, is the Bible the only medium of His speaking? God also makes Himself known, to an extent, to all people (1) through creation and (2) through conscience. This manner of God’s speaking is usually called general, or natural, revelation. Romans 1 and 2 outline this kind of utterance God has employed. Romans 1:20 speaks of the knowledge of God that all people everywhere can gather from their acquaintance with nature: “*Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*” In other words, people should have known, and should know, that some little tin god could not have made the universe. Nor could the many pagan gods, represented as always fighting each other have created the consistency, order, and beauty we find in nature. Who can deny the inspired expression of Psalm 19: “*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*”

The Bible says God speaks through the individual’s conscience: (14) *(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, (15) since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them) (Romans 2:14-15).* The very fact that people everywhere have a conscience, an idea of right and wrong that is in line with the Bible, shows that there is authority beyond the individual and the circumstances. Even people who have rejected the Bible retain a conscience, though it will operate on the basis of what they have come to believe is the right thing for them to do.

God has spoken externally in the universe He created, and internally in the conscience of every individual. However, the tragedy recorded in Romans 1 and 2 is that mankind, given the glimmering of light available in the universe, has cursed God and rebelled against Him. Even so, there is sufficient light so that none can claim that God has been unjust. The result is that people by their own willful rejection of the light of natural revelation consign themselves to eternal punishment. It is not God who sends people to hell. It is people who demand that God leave them alone so they may go their own way and attempt to fulfill their own desires who send themselves to hell. When God sadly,

reluctantly, leaves them to their own devices, perversion and destruction and hell are the grim, inevitable prospect. Therefore, natural revelation is inadequate by itself if fallen human beings are to be helped.

A special revelation, a message carried only in the Bible, is the wonderful news that God has invaded the human situation, acted to redeem us, and offered a way by which we can enter into that redemption. Nature and conscience do not disclose this. The Old Testament points ahead to the coming Redeemer; the New Testament tells of His coming and interprets its meaning.

### **The Verbally Inspired Word of God**

The Greek word most nearly equivalent to our word “inspiration” is found in 2 Timothy 3:16. It is *theopneustos*. It means, literally, “God-breathed.” By divine breath and power the Holy Spirit moved the (human) authors of the Bible with such precision that the product accurately reflects the intention of God Himself. As God spoke through prophets and apostles, the original documents they produced bear the special marks of divine inspiration. This means that the sixty-six books in the **\*canon**, which make up the Bible, in their original expression are entirely trustworthy as the voice of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Peter 1:17-21).

*(17) For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (18) We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. (19) And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (20) Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. (21) For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:17-21)*

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Several points should be kept in mind regarding the manner of inspiration. Mechanical dictation holds that God spoke through human beings to the extent that their individual personalities were suppressed. Such a view is erroneous. Personalities and particular vocabularies of the various writers are obviously distinguishable; of the forty-plus writers of Scripture, a variety of walks of life are clearly observable – shepherds, statesmen, priests, fishermen, the well educated and the relatively unlearned. The writers were not, robot-like, manipulated while in trances; God did not pick them at random and tell them to write.

For example, God set Jeremiah apart to be a prophet and began preparing him while he was still in his mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5).

*"Before I (the Lord) formed you (Jeremiah) in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."  
(Jeremiah 1:5)*

God took all the writers of Scripture through experiences, preparing them in such a way that He could use them to bring out the truth in exactly the way He wanted. In this way, the integrity of the writers as individual personalities was carefully preserved by the special acts of inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the fruit of their writing is unmistakably the Word of God. The Holy Spirit "prompted the original thought in the mind of the writers (Amos 3:8).

*The lion has roared – who will not fear? The Sovereign Lord has spoken – who can but prophesy? (Hosea 3:8)*

He then guided their choice of words to express such thoughts (Exodus 4:12, 15):

*"Now go; I (the Lord) will help you speak and will teach you what to say."  
(Exodus 4:12)*

*"You (Moses) shall speak to him (Aaron) and put words in his mouth; I (the Lord) will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do." (Exodus 4:15)*

And, lastly, He illumines the mind of the reader of such words in a way that the reader potentially may comprehend the same truth as was originally in the mind of the writer (1 Corinthians 2:12; Ephesians 1:17-18). Thus, both thoughts and language are revelatory and inspired.

*We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. (1 Corinthians 2:12)*

*(17) I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.  
(18) I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. (Ephesians 1:17-18)*

Another widely-held view of inspiration is known as dynamic inspiration. This view conceives of the Bible as not being intended to convey **\*"propositional truth"** about God Himself; advocates of this idea say this because they have concluded that God is unknowable. They say God is infinitely different from human beings and therefore unknowable.

**\*propositional truth** – means real, objective, rational information.

This is also termed functional interpretation of inspiration since it says the Bible can reveal nothing about what God is, but can reveal only His work. It is at the heart of many of the modernistic, or theologically liberal systems that deny the supernatural. It lends itself to the idea that the Bible is basically folklore, but insofar as it talks about how to live rightly, it speaks meaningfully to people. In this view, ethics supplants doctrine. It opens the door to **\*relativism**, since objective standards of truth are largely washed away. People then interpret on their own what they think is proper to accept and what they wish to reject as merely folklore (compare with Judges 17:6).

*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. (Judges 17:6)*

**\*Relativism** – Teaches that any concept, meaning, or truth changes when the situation changes, or changes from one group of people to another. Often denies that there is any absolute truth.

A variation of this view is the emphasis on salvation history. In this view, there is a clear acknowledgment that God has acted in history in saving ways. This view accepts the Bible as a record of such divine activity, but claims it is a merely human record: open to the errors of human judgment, limited by the experience and the worldview of the (human) writers, and subject to (unaided) human interpretation of divine activity. The one big point where this view is on the right track is when it accepts the Bible as a record of supernatural events in which God acts in history to redeem people. Its major failure is in not seeing that even the interpretation of such events is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

**What does the Bible itself teach about the true manner of inspiration?** It emphasizes the actual inspiration of the writers. In some cases God spoke to them in an audible voice. In some cases He gave them revelation in dreams and visions. Sometimes He spoke to their hearts and minds in a way that they knew it was God. Amos 3:8 emphasized this: *“The lion has roared – who will not fear? The Sovereign Lord has spoken – who can but prophesy?”* Jeremiah at one point decided he would quit prophesying; it seemed no one was listening. God’s word in his heart, however, became like a burning fire shut up in his bones, and he could not stop (Jeremiah 20:9).

*But if I say, “I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,” his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. (Jeremiah 20:9)*

No wonder statements such as *“this is what the Lord says”* occur 3,308 times in the Old Testament alone. Second Peter 1:20-21 shows us that no writer of Scripture ever depended on his own reasoning or imagination in the writing process: **(20)** *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. (21) For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* The words “carried along” might sound as if they were in the midst of the stream of the Holy Spirit and were carried

along. But an examination of the Scriptures shows that God taught them and led them along (refer back to Exodus 4:15).

*“You (Moses) shall speak to him (Aaron) and put words in his mouth; I (the Lord) will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do.” (Exodus 4:15)*

And going back to 2 Timothy 3:16, one can clearly see that the inspiration of Scripture also extends to the words and to the entirety of the text of the original documents, or autographs, of these men.

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16)*

Jesus accepted the full inspiration of the entire Old Testament with His sweeping declaration, “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35; see also Matthew 5:18).

*“If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came – and the Scripture cannot be broken.” (John 10:35)*

*“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:18)*

This view we call plenary (full), verbal (extending even to the words) inspiration. Romans 3:2 is in accord with this view when it cites the Old Testament as “the very words of God.”

*Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. (Romans 3:2)*

So is Hebrews 3:7-11 when it quotes Psalm 95:7-11, not giving a human author, but introducing the quotation with “as the Holy Spirit says...”

*(7) So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, (9) where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. (10) That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, “Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.” (11) So I declared on oath in my anger, “They shall never enter my rest.” (Hebrews 3:7-11)*

*(7) for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah in the desert, (9) where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. (10) For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.”*



*(10) So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest." (Psalm 95:7-11)*

**One may ask, that is very well for the Old Testament, but what about the New Testament?** Jesus went from village-to-village teaching. Undoubtedly, He repeated many things as He went from place to place. Consequently, He left a body of teaching, promising His disciples, "*the Holy Spirit...will remind you of everything I have said to you*" (**John 14:26**). This body of teaching was passed along to the Church by the apostles (Acts 2:42).

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)*

From it also the Holy Spirit directed the writers of the Gospels to select material that would be beneficial to those they wrote to. For example, Luke tells us that he "*carefully investigated everything*" (**Luke 1:3**); we can be sure he was moved by the Holy Spirit to do this. Thus, in the Apostolic Age a process of revelation was going on. Christ was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Necessary for the generations to come was the record of His virgin birth, His teachings, His death and resurrection (recorded in the Gospels); the account of the institution of the Church with patterns normative for the whole Church Age (recorded in the Book of Acts); an explanation of the meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, with practical help for the churches (recorded in the Epistles); and a glimpse into the consummation of the age (recorded in the Book of Revelation).

That the apostles recognized the propriety of a new covenant, or testament, is borne out by such passages as 2 Peter 3:15-16:

*(15) Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. (16) He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."*  
**(2 Peter 3:15-16)**

Notice the expression, "the other Scriptures." Here is clear testimony to the belief of Peter in the seventh decade of the first century that Paul was writing material that was on a plane with the Old Testament Scripture. Paul also declares in some places that he has a word of the Lord, that is, a saying of Jesus, to back up what he writes. (See 1 Corinthians 11:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2, 15).

*For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. (1 Corinthians 11:23)*

*(1) Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this*

*more and more. (2) For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. (15) According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2, 15)*

But even though Paul does not always say this that does not mean that what he writes is any less inspired of the Holy Spirit (Compare with 1 Corinthians 7:12).

*To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. (1 Corinthians 7:12)*

Paul is not merely giving his own opinion here; rather he says that he does not have a saying of Jesus to confirm what he is about to write. However, he writes as one who has apostolic authority and is under divine inspiration.

The Bible teaches us regarding itself that the Holy Spirit so moved upon prophets and apostles that even the words themselves in the original documents are fully authoritative. If the words were not inspired, then people would be free to change them to fit their own ideas. Therefore, inspiration of the words was necessary to protect the truth. Jesus indicated the importance of every word by saying: *"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter [in Hebrew, the yod], not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished"* (**Matthew 5:18**).

### **The Infallible Rule**

The divine source and authority of the Scripture assure us that the Bible is also infallible, that is, incapable of error and therefore not capable of misleading, deceiving, or disappointing us. Some writers make a distinction between inerrancy ("exempt from error") and infallibility, but they are very near synonyms. "If there is any difference in the shade of meaning between the two terms, inerrancy emphasizes the truthfulness of Scripture, while infallibility emphasizes the trustworthiness of Scripture. Such inerrancy and infallibility apply to all of Scripture and include both revelational inerrancy and factual inerrancy. It is truth (2 Samuel 7:28; Psalm 119:43, 160; John 17:17, 19; Colossians 1:5)."

*O Sovereign Lord, you are God! Your words are trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant. (2 Samuel 7:28)*

*Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in your laws. (Psalm 119:43)*

*All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal. (Psalm 119:160)*

*"Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth." (John 17:17)*

*“For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.” (John 17:19)*

*The faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel.  
(Colossians 1:5)*

Humanistic unbelief is the real source of objections to the authority and infallibility of the Bible. Its arguments are not new. Ancient writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Augustine had to combat some of them and in doing so declared their own confidence in the Scriptures. The reformers Zwingli, Calvin, and Luther also accepted the full authority of Scripture. Over the years unbelieving critics have made extensive lists of what they called discrepancies of the Bible, and some have claimed the Bible was indisputably in error. In 1874 J. W. Haley did a thorough study that is still worth reading. [John W. Haley, *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988).

**John W. Haley classified these alleged discrepancies and found they arose from several causes:**

1. A failure to read exactly what the Bible says.
2. False interpretations of the Bible, especially those which fail to take into account ancient customs and modes of speech.
3. Wrong ideas of the Bible as a whole and a failure to recognize that the Bible on occasion records the words of Satan and of evil people. For example, God told Job’s friends, *“You have not spoken of me what is right” (Job 42:8).* But the Bible gives a true record of what they said, even though they were wrong.
4. A failure to recognize that some accounts are condensations (making something shorter) of what was said or done.
5. Chronological difficulties due to the fact that Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans all used different systems of measuring time or dating. Even Israel and Judah (Northern and Southern kingdoms of Israel) sometimes differed in their methods of counting kings’ reigns.
6. Apparent discrepancies in numbers due to the fact that some passages use round numbers, others give more exact figures, depending on the purpose of the writer.
7. In some places copyists’ errors crept into certain ancient manuscripts. A comparison of manuscripts has corrected most of these errors. (In fact, most scholars agree on what was the original reading in the vast majority of the cases. Furthermore, those cases where we cannot be sure do not affect the teachings of the Bible in any way).
8. Finally, some so-called discrepancies were just a matter of a Hebrew or Greek word having more than one meaning, just as some of our English words do (for example, compare “lead” in “lead weight” and “lead the blind”).

One after another, alleged mistakes and discrepancies have been proved false. Again and again new discoveries by archeologists and other scholars and scientist have shown that the so-called errors were errors of the critics due to their unbelief and insufficient knowledge.

Some who deny the infallibility of Scripture nevertheless believe the Bible has value. That is, they say it does not matter whether the history and science of the Bible are true. They say that a sinner can be saved without knowing the whole Bible or its claims to inspiration. It is true that the sinner does not need to know about the Virgin Birth, divine healing, sanctification, and the Second Coming of Christ in order to be saved. But once a person becomes a believer, such teachings will become the means of becoming mature in the faith (compare with Hebrews 5:11 to 6:2).

*(5:11) We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. (5:12) In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! (5:13) Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. (5:14) But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (6:1) Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, (6:2) instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (Hebrews 5:11-6:2)*

For those who are troubled by what they consider the imprecision of the Bible in describing natural phenomena, they should realize that scientific languages and terminology have developed only in modern times. Moreover, each science develops its own vocabulary. For example, the word “nucleus” means one thing to the biologist and quite another thing to the astrophysicist. Even ordinary words can be given new meanings by scientists. To the botanist, for example, the word “transpire” means “to give off moisture through pores (stomata).” Consequently, the Bible uses nontechnical, everyday language; we can expect its use of terms such as “sunrise” and “sunset” to be just like ours, even though we now know that it is the movement of the earth that is taking place, not that of the sun. Nevertheless, when the Bible does make an authoritative, propositional statement, such as “God created the heavens and the earth,” we can be sure the Bible is infallible.

The Bible will not lead us astray. It is a wonderful revelation of God as our Creator and Redeemer; a personal God who loves us and is concerned about us; a God who has a plan, who sent His Son to die for us (1 Corinthians 15:3), and who will continue to do His work until Satan is crushed, death destroyed, and a new heavens and earth established. The whole Bible shows that God is reliable, dependable, trustworthy, and that His very nature guarantees the authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of His Word.

### **The Canon and later translations**

Although it is asserted that the original books of the Old Testament and New Testament were inspired by God, we no longer have them. They were probably worn out by frequent use and repeated copying. So how, then, can we trust the text we have in our

modern Bibles? The trustworthiness of our Bibles today is tied into canon history and the transmission and translation of the books of the Bible.

**The word “canon” means “a rule, a standard, a measuring rod.” Therefore, a book considered canonical is a book that has met certain criteria, or standards.** By the time of Jesus and the apostles the thirty-nine Old Testament books were solidly accepted by Judaism as inspired by God. Jesus repeatedly referred to the Old Testament, recognizing that God Himself was speaking (for example, Matthew 19:4; 22:29).

*“Haven’t you read,” he [Jesus] replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ (Matthew 19:4)*

*Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. (Matthew 22:29)*

To attest the confidence the writers of the New Testament had in the Old Testament, one need but consider that in the hundreds of quotations of Old Testament passages scattered throughout the New Testament, there is only one place where possibly an apocryphal (spurious or doubtful) Old Testament book is quoted. That single reference is in Jude 14-15, where there appears to be a similarity to the Book of Enoch 1:9, and even this is not difficult to attribute to a common oral tradition available both to the writer of the Book of Enoch and to Jude.

*(14) Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones (15) to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” (Jude 14, 15)*

**What of the New Testament canon?** This is a fascinating story all its own, but let us move to the conclusion of the story, into the fourth century. In A.D. 367, the most orthodox (traditional beliefs) theologian of the time, the great champion of biblical truth, Athanasius, sifted through all the books being circulated in the Mediterranean world purporting to be apostolic documents. His examination disclosed twenty-seven books, the ones we have today, to be God’s Word. [Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982)]. Thirty years later, quite independently of Athanasius, a church council met in Carthage to discuss the problem of what books were genuinely Scripture. [Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982)].

**They applied four tests to the documents considered:**

- (1) **Apostolicity:** Was the book the product of an apostle or a close associate of an apostle?
- (2) **Universality:** Was the book widely accepted and used in the churches?

(3) **Contents:** Did the subject matter of the book appear to be on a plane with known Scripture?

(4) **Inspiration:** Did the book bear the special quality that speaks of divine inspiration?

Note that three of the four tests (1-3) to which the books were subjected were objective, a matter of factual evidence. Only the fourth, the matter of inspiration, could be considered subjective, a matter of personal judgment. The Council of Carthage, after considering the facts, concluded that the twenty-seven books we now have in our New Testament were the only books in circulation at that time that measured up to the criteria established. For all practical purposes, the question of canon was closed until the advent of modern rationalism.

The other question remaining about the trustworthiness of the Bible is the accuracy of the transmission of the text. Inspiration extends only to the autograph (original documents); no case is made for the inspiration of any particular translation (version) of the Bible.

**You may ask, just how nearly does my Bible version conform to the original documents inspired by God?**

Let us look first at the New Testament, which is nearer to us in time than the Old Testament test. Most remarkable is that there are over 5,300 ancient hand-written copies (manuscripts) of the New Testament in the original Greek. Some come from the third and fourth centuries. One fragment of the Gospel of John comes from about A.D. 125, within 30 years of the time it was written. This is in contrast to other ancient writings. The oldest manuscript we have of Virgil comes from about 350 years after his death. The oldest Horace is from 900 years after his death. Most of the manuscripts of Plato come from 1,300 years after his death. [Sir Frederic Kenyon, *The Story of the Bible*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans, Pub. Co. 1964)].

Sir Frederic Kenyon, noted biblical scholar, speaking of modern discoveries in biblical archaeology, said, “They have established, with a wealth of evidence which no other work of ancient literature can even approach, the substantial authenticity and integrity of the text of the Bible as we now possess it.”

The Old Testament text has had a dramatic breakthrough in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, manuscripts of all or part of every Old Testament book except Esther have been uncovered. They come from as early as 250 B.C., taking us back 1,000 years earlier than the previous best manuscripts available in the Hebrew text. In fact, probably the most important contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls is the light cast on the text of the Old Testament books. The net result is that we are given massive reassurance of the accuracy of our Bibles. They make possible the comparison of a large number of texts that let us know the Old Testament “has remained virtually unchanged for the last two thousand years.” [Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 2d ed. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, Ltd.,

1975]. In fact, there is remarkable conformity of the Dead Sea documents to our present-known texts.

God's purpose in calling Abraham and choosing Israel as His servant (Isaiah 44:1) was to prepare the way to bring blessing to all the nations of the earth (Genesis 12:3; 22:18).

*But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. (Isaiah 44:1)*

*"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3)*

*And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me. (Genesis 22:18)*

It was important therefore that the Bible be put into the various languages of other nations. All nations need the Bible because it is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17); it is the only means of winning spiritual victories.

*Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)*

It is also God's hammer, His tool to break down opposition and to build God's building (Jeremiah 23:29).

*"Is not my word like fires?" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29)*

It is a lamp to light life's pathway (Psalm 119:105).

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105)*

Even when people are blinded by sin, and the Bible seems foolish to them, such "foolishness" still gives to preaching the wise and powerful content that the Holy Spirit uses to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21).

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)*

*For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)*

The Bible is also necessary for the continued growth of believers. Consequently, as soon as the Church began to spread into countries where they did not speak the original Hebrew and Greek of the Bible, Christians wanted the Bible translated into their own language.

The story of Bible versions (translations) is thrilling. It actually begins before the time of Jesus. As a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek became the language of trade, commerce, and education in the Middle East. The city of Alexandria in Egypt became the great center of Greek language, learning, and culture. Jews living there wanted the Old Testament in Greek. Over the period of 250 to 150 B.C. they gave the world the famous Septuagint Version. [Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981)]. Early Christians in preaching the gospel during the first generation after Pentecost often used this version. (This is indicated by New Testament usage). At the same time the Holy Spirit directed the writers of the New Testament to write their books, not in the classical Greek used several hundred years before by the great Greek philosophers, but in the everyday Greek spoken by the common people on the street and in the marketplace.

God has always wanted His Word to be preached in the language the people actually spoke. Moses wrote the Law not in the hieroglyphics used by the scholars of Egypt but in the Hebrew spoken in the tents of Israel. Jesus preached and taught with simplicity of language that made the common people listen to Him with delight (Mark 12:37). When the gospel spread, people naturally began to translate the Bible into their own languages. Four centuries after Christ, when neither Greek nor the old Latin was spoken any longer in the Western Roman Empire, Jerome made a new translation into the vulgar,” or “common,” Latin spoken in his day. This version became known as the Vulgate. [Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981)].

Unfortunately, the Vulgate was made the official version of Western Europe and England. Further attempts to translate the Bible were discouraged even though in time the common people did not speak Latin at all. When in A.D. 1380 Wycliffe translated the Vulgate into English, large numbers were converted to Christ. But after his death in 1384, persecution of his followers arose due to their rejection of some Roman Catholic doctrines. In 1415 a general council of the Roman Catholic Church condemned his teaching. Then in 1428 Bishop Richard Fleming had his bones dug up, burned and the ashes thrown into a stream. Most of the copies of his handwritten Bible were also burned. [Jack P. Lewis, *The English Bible / From KJV to NIV: A History and Evaluation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981)].

God, however, was working. The invention of printing made a difference. Between 1462 and 1522 at least seventeen versions and editions of the Bible appear in German. They helped prepare the way for the Reformation under Martin Luther, which brought to the people a scriptural understanding of salvation by grace through faith. Martin Luther himself then went to the Hebrew and Greek to make a new, better translation into German. As a result of Luther’s influence, William Tyndale made the first important printed translation of the New Testament into English in 1525. Many copies were burned but the printing presses kept pouring out floods of Bibles. Since they could not burn all the Bibles, they arrested Tyndale and burned him at the stake. Even so, other translations soon followed. After Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church, a translation



known as the Bishop's Bible became the authorized version of the English Church. It was not popular, however, and most people preferred the Geneva Bible, a version translated by English refugees that fled from Catholic persecution to Switzerland. It was this version that was brought to America by the Pilgrims and Puritans in 1620 and 1630. However, "John Alden's bible, preserved in Pilgrim Hall at Plymouth, Massachusetts, is a KJV." [Jack P. Lewis, *The English Bible / From KJV to NIV: A History and Evaluation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981)].

Many English leaders recognized the need for a better translation, so King James I appointed several groups of scholars to revise the Bishop's Bible. It was an opportune time: The English language, under the influence of Shakespeare and other literary giants, was at a new height. All the best English was poured into this revision, which was completed in 1611 and "authorized" by King James to be read in the churches of England; it ultimately became known as the King James Version (KJV). It was not only beautiful English; it was the English of the day. In fact, the KJV translators took pains to make the Bible more understandable to the common people than the previous English translations were. For example, they took the Israelite expression "Let the king live!" and translated it by the corresponding phrase then used in England: "God save the King!" In the New Testament, the Greek phrase meaning "Let it not be!" or "Do not let it happen!" is very emphatic – more emphatic than a literal translation would make it, so the KJV translators substituted a phrase the people would understand: "God forbid!" They also translated the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning "assembly" (an assembly of free citizens), by the more common word "church," though they did translate it "assembly" in three passages (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).

**Translating from one language to another has its own set of problems.** There is, for example, no one Greek word for "miracle," but two words contain that idea (*dunamis* and *semeion*). So the KJV translators used "miracle" for both; but for variety, and to bring out other shades of meaning, they also translated them as "powers" (Hebrews 6:5, "mighty works" (Matthew 11:21-23), "might" (Ephesians 3:16), "virtue" (Luke 6:19; 8:46), "mighty deed" (2 Corinthians 12:12), "signs" (John 20:30), "wonders" (Revelation 13:13), and "token" (2 Thessalonians 3:17).

*And have tested the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.*  
(Hebrews 6:5)

*(21) Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. (22) But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. (23) And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. (Matthew 11:21-23)*

*That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner. (Ephesians 3:16)*

*And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all. (Luke 6:19)*

*And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. (Luke 8:46)*

*Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. (2 Corinthians 12:12)*

*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. (John 20:30)*

*And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13)*

*The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. (2 Thessalonians 3:17)*

Still another problem came from the fact that both Anglicans and Puritans practiced sprinkling for water baptism, and the Greek word *baptizo* means “plunge under,” “dip,” “immerse.” So the KJV translators did not translate the word. Instead, they transliterated the Greek word into English letters (thereby giving us the word “baptize”). In this way they avoided a controversy that might have kept some people from read this new version of the Bible. At other times they were over literal. For example, they took the Greek word *monogenes* apart, translating *mono* as “only” and *genes* as “begotten.” However, the word in New Testament times had come to mean simply “only,” in the sense of unique, special. Hebrews 11:17 uses it of Isaac as the special promised son, even though Abraham had another son, Ishmael. Though we become “sons” [children] of God through Christ, Jesus is God’s beloved Son in a special, unique sense that we can never be.

*By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. (Hebrews 11:17)*

The richness of the Greek also is difficult to put into English. The KJV translators used one English word for a number of different Greek words. For example, they translated nine different Greek words as “abide,” twelve different ones as “bear,” five as “cast out,” thirty-one as “come,” twelve as “deliver,” fifteen as “keep,” nine as “mind,” six as “power,” six as “preach,” twelve as “think.” In each case, each Greek word represents fine shades of meaning. However, in English a great number of words would have to be used to describe the shade of meaning. This is one of the reasons commentaries and expanded or amplified translations are helpful.

In many cases, however, the KJV translators tried to bring out whatever shade of meaning is being emphasized in a particular passage.

<b><u>Greek Word</u></b>	<b><u>Translation in the KJV</u></b>
<i>Ekballo</i>	“Cast out” (John 6:37); “bring forth” (Matthew 12:25); “send forth” (Matthew 9:38); “send out” (James 2:25); “leave out” (Revelation 11:2)
<i>Apolutrosis</i>	“redemption” (Ephesians 1:7); “deliverance” (Hebrews 11:25)
<i>Hilasterion</i>	“propitiation” (Romans 3:25); “mercy seat” (Hebrews 9:5)
<i>Hilaskomai</i>	“make reconciliation” (Hebrews 2:17); “be merciful” (Luke 18:13)
<i>Amen</i>	“amen” (Deuteronomy 27:15-26; Romans 1:25); “so be it” (Jeremiah 11:5); “truth” (Isaiah 65:16); “verily” (Matthew 5:18)
<i>Anomia</i>	“iniquity” (Matthew 7:23); “transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4); “unrighteousness” (2 Corinthians 6:14)
<i>Hikanos</i>	“meet” (1 Corinthians 15:9); “worthy” (Matthew 3:11); “sufficient” (2 Corinthians 2:16); “able” (2 Timothy 2:2); “good” (Acts 18:18); “great” (Mark 10:46)
<i>Apeitheo</i>	“disobedient” (Romans 1:21); “unbelieving” (Acts 14:2)
<i>Agape</i>	“love” (John 15:9-10, 13); “charity” (1 Corinthians 1-13); “feast of charity” (Jude 12); “dear” (Colossians 1:13)
<i>Aionon</i>	“ages” (Colossians 1:26); “the beginning of the world” (Ephesians 3:9)
<i>Chrisma</i>	“anointing” (1 John 2:27); “unction” (1 John 2:20)
<i>Sozo</i>	“Save” (Matthew 1:21); “heal” (Acts 14:9); “Whole” (Matthew 9:21); “make whole” (Matthew 9:22); “preserve” (2 Timothy 4:18)
<i>Elegcho</i>	“reprove” (John 16:8); “rebuke” (Revelation 3:19); “convict” (John 8:9); “convince” (John 8:46)
<i>Elpizo</i>	“hope” (1 Peter 1:13); “trust” (Matthew 12:21)
<i>Kairos</i>	“season” (Mark 12:2); “time” (Matthew 13:30); “opportunity” (Galatians 6:10)
<i>Makarios</i>	“blessed” (Matthew 5:3-11); “happy” (John 13:17)

<i>Marturia</i>	“witness” (John 1:7); “testimony” (John 3:32-33); “record” (John 1:19); “report” (1 Timothy 3:7)
<i>Homologeo</i>	“profess” (1 Timothy 6:12); “confess” (Matthew 10:32); “promise” (Matthew 14:7); “give thanks” (Hebrews 13:15)
<i>Paraklesis</i>	“consolation” (Romans 15:5); “exhortation” (Acts 13:15); “comfort” (Romans 15:4); “entreaty” (2 Corinthians 8:4)

Then because the Hebrew does not contain the word “have,” nor does it use many Common English words, such as helping verbs or “to be” as connectives, the KJV translators added them and many other words to make the translation understandable and smooth reading in English. For example, they added the word “art” in Nathan’s words to David, “Thou art the man” (2 Samuel 12:7). The result was an excellent translation in the language of the people who lived in England in 1611.

**At first the KJV, as a new version, was rejected by many. The clergy preached against it.** One Hugh Broughton went so far as to say, “that it was so poorly done that it would grieve him as long as he lived. He insisted that he would rather be tied between wild horses and torn apart than to let it go forth among the people.” For fifty years many continued to condemn it, but it gradually won favor because it was a superior translation. It was worthy of the place it came to have in the hearts of the people.

Unfortunately, all languages are constantly changing. We no longer speak Shakespearian English with its “thees” and “thous.” In fact, meanings of some words have changed considerably: “Let” in 1611 meant “hinder.” “Prevent” meant “precede.” “By and by” meant “immediately.” “Charger” meant “wooden platter.”

Missionaries want to get the Bible into the language the people actually speak. Believers everywhere are blessed when they read an easy-to-understand version in their own language. The world, including the English-speaking world, is a mission field today. This is the reality that has called forth new versions in modern English. Admittedly, none of them are final perfection, but all, except those put out by some of the cults, have enough truth in them for the Holy Spirit to use them to make the way of salvation clear.

Some modern versions, such as the New Berkeley Version, use a high English style that seems to be aimed at college professors instead of the average reader. In contrast, the New Century Version is aimed at a third-grade reading level. Some, such as The Good News Bible, The Living Bible, the Phillips translation, and the New English Bible, are paraphrases, which do more interpretation than strict translation. The Phillips translation seems to catch the spirit of the Greek, however, especially in Paul’s epistles. The Revised Standard Version is fairly good in the New Testament, but the Old Testament is too subjective in the way it changes the Hebrew vowels and divides Hebrew words, so it is not useful as a study Bible. The New Revised Standard Version is an improvement

over the earlier RSV. The New American Standard Bible is faithful to the original languages, but sometimes over literal and not very readable. In between is the New International Version (NIV), which is a good translation made by Bible believers and is also very readable. Whichever version you choose, it is important to seek out the full meaning of the original languages (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic) using concordances, commentaries, Bible dictionaries, as well as comparing them with other versions.

Reading a new translation may stimulate thinking. Comparing various translations also helps one to see the various shades of meaning that are in the Scripture. As one commentator points out, "The religious problems of the world are not caused by people reading different translations; the most serious problem is that many read no translation."

The KJV is still a good translation and worthy of respect. Its beauty, especially in the Psalms, will probably never be surpassed. But the important thing is to get people to read the Bible. As the people read, the Holy Spirit will illuminate their hearts and minds and make the truth of God's Word real to them. In the providence of God, the inspired words of prophets and apostles of old have been preserved for us in the most remarkable of all books, the Holy Bible.

The Bible is a miracle of God's care. The Holy Spirit acted at the time of the first writing. This we call inspiration. He has preserved for us the text. Now, today, the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writers helps the reader and the hearer. The unregenerate is not promised this assistance, being blind to the truth of God (1 Corinthians 2:14).

*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)*

But the believer is promised special assistance from the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-16; 1 Corinthians 2:10).

*(13) "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come. (14) He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. (15) All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. (16) In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." (John 16:13-16)*

*But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10)*

God wishes to speak to the reader – and His Spirit is pleased to shed light on the truth and its application to our lives.

**Amen!**