

BIBLIOLOGY

- I. Introduction.
 - A. This study is designed to address the issues that are raised by the existence of the Christian Bible, which is comprised of the 66 books of the Old Testament and New Testament.
 - B. One question that arises is the question of uniqueness; is the Bible a unique collection of writings that are inspired by God for the purpose of revealing Himself and His plan, or just one among other religious writings like the Koran, The Book of Mormon, the Hindu Vedas, etc?
 - C. Any discussion of the process of inspiration must begin with the matter of revelation, which must be distinguished from inspiration and illumination.
 - D. One fundamental supposition, which must be acknowledged before one can proceed, is the fact that God exists. Heb. 11:6
 - E. A secondary supposition is that since God exists, He must choose to reveal Himself in order for man to apprehend His nature and character. ICor. 2:11
 - F. The third supposition is that God has sufficient intelligence, power, and ability to reveal Himself to intelligent, moral creatures. Gen. 35:7; Isa. 22:14
 - G. If one does not accept these three suppositions regarding revelation, which are confirmed within the Bible itself, further dialogue on the matter of the inspiration of the Bible is not possible.
 - H. However, accepting these three suppositions is not simply a matter of faith, since the existence of God and His abilities can be documented by other logical means.
 1. **The cosmological** (derived from the Greek word κόσμος (kosmos—world)) which deals with the area of metaphysics relating to the orderly nature of the material world; it includes the concept of cause and effect, by which one can arrive at the original cause. *Aristotle referred to God as the Unmoved Mover.* Isa. 48:12-13
 2. **The ontological** (derived from the Greek verb εἶμι--eimi--to be) which argues for the existence of God based on being or reality. God is the most perfect being, the most perfect being must exist, and therefore God must exist. The soul, which is created in the image of God, develops the concept of the ideal soul or being. Deut. 32:4
 3. **The anthropological** (derived from the Greek ἄνθρωπος--anthropos--man), which deals with the fact that man is a moral creature with standards of right and wrong. The existence of the conscience bears witness to these precepts of right and wrong, which must have a moral source. Rom. 2:12-15
 4. **The teleological** (derived from the Greek τέλος--telos--the end, termination or limit) argues that the physical world and all things in it are not the product of chance, are not haphazard in nature, but have a purpose. There is a design evident in the physical creation that demands a designer with clear purpose. If this is true of physical, inanimate objects is it not more obviously true about man? Isa. 46:10; Rev. 21:6
 - I. With the belief that God exists, one may then move to the question of revelation; has God revealed Himself in any meaningful way to the human race?

- J. Orthodox theologians acknowledge that God has revealed Himself in two specific ways, the second of which relates to the concept of inspiration.

II. General revelation and special revelation.

A. General revelation.

1. General revelation is defined as the manner in which God has revealed Himself to mankind through His creation; in that regard, it is sometimes referred to as **natural revelation**.
2. One accurate definition of general revelation is provided by Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis, who state that it is *“the disclosure of God in nature, in providential history, and in the moral law within the heart, whereby all persons at all times and places gain a rudimentary understanding of the Creator and his moral demands. General revelation, mediated through nature, conscience, and the providential ordering of history, traditionally has been understood as a universal witness to God’s existence and character.”*
3. General revelation is the method by which God continuously makes Himself known to all men; through His creation, His power and divinity are manifested to the human race in an ongoing basis.
4. General revelation is communicated through the media of natural phenomena, occurring in the course of nature, human nature, or human history.
5. General revelation is one that is addressed ordinarily to all intelligent creatures, and is therefore accessible to all men at all times.
6. General revelation includes the following.
 - a. The physical creation, which argues for an intelligent designer, and which demonstrates the power, Divine nature, and goodness of God. Ps. 19:1ff, 50:6; Acts 14:17; Matt. 5:45; Rom. 1:20
 - b. The moral nature of mankind, particularly the existence of the conscience, demonstrates the existence of a righteous, moral Creator. Rom. 1:19, 2:14-15
 - c. The third method in which God reveals Himself to mankind is through human history; when history is rightly perceived, it bears the imprint of God's activity and thus has a theological character. Primarily, God is revealed in history through the rise and fall of peoples and nations. Deut. 32:8; Job 12:23; Dan. 2:20-21, 4:17; Acts 17:26-27
7. Although general revelation is evident in nature, in human conscience, and in human history, it is often misinterpreted because sinful and finite humans are trying to understand a perfect and infinite God.
8. While some theologians have attempted to incorporate modern science as a part of general revelation, such an approach is not consistent with the very principle that it is general revelation and not specialized knowledge.
 - a. Knowledge of general revelation should be common to all people; it is not something they must seek to discover, it is information that is commonly available to all, and is impossible for mankind to avoid.
 - b. Modern science is not general revelation, since most scientific knowledge is of recent origin, and only comprehensible to those with advanced training in the various scientific disciplines.
 - c. The subject of general revelation is God Himself, and not the physical world with its attendant scientific processes, which are open to subjective analysis, investigation, thesis, synthesis, etc.

- d. General revelation is viewed as an objective fact, which is not subject to the shifting nature of science.
- 9. General revelation leads to the following observations.
 - a. Religious belief is a nearly universal human phenomenon.
 - b. Such religious belief is originated and implanted by God.
 - c. All people ought to acknowledge God on the basis of what they have observed and learned from the world around them.
 - d. All people know that God exists, even if they do not admit it.
 - e. The response of the human race to general revelation has been invariably negative. Rom. 1:21-23
- 10. It is important to note that the limitation of general revelation is that it does not provide the knowledge necessary for obtaining salvation.
- 11. Although it reveals God's power, goodness, and righteousness, it does not reveal the means to a relationship with God.
- 12. While general revelation provides the means to recognizing the existence of God, it is insufficient for personally introducing people to God; several theologians have noted that the end result of general revelation is condemnation.
- 13. The information regarding salvation is contained in what we refer to as special revelation, which is necessary to instruct people on the issue of establishing and maintaining a relationship with the Eternal God.
- B. Special revelation.
 - 1. Special revelation is contrasted to general revelation, which refers to the knowledge of God and spiritual matters which can be discovered through natural means, such as observation of nature, philosophy and reasoning, or conscience.
 - 2. Special revelation differs from general revelation in that it is revelation that is given on a limited basis, at a particular time, and to a more limited audience.
 - 3. Special revelation is God's manifestation or revelation of Himself via three major categories, which often contains information with respect to the issue of salvation; in that regard, it is sometimes referred to as **supernatural revelation**.
 - 4. It has been communicated by God's direct revelation of Himself, either through direct speech, or by God's direct actions.
 - 5. Three major categories of special revelation include miraculous events, divine speech, and visible manifestations. Heb. 1:1
 - a. Theophanies are visible manifestations of God, particularly of God the Son (The Angel of the Lord) prior to the Incarnation. Gen. 18:1; Ex. 24:9-11; Num. 12:8
 - b. God audibly and inaudibly communicating, without manifesting a bodily presence. Gen. 21:17; Ex. 3:4; Dan. 5:5
 - c. Miracles, manifestations of divine power, such as the 10 Egyptian Plagues. Ex. 9:14; II Kings 6:6; Isa. 38:8
 - d. The appearance of angels, supernatural creations far greater than man. Dan. 8:16, 9:20-21; Luke 1:11,26; Rev. 1:1
 - e. Dreams (Gen. 20:3,6, 31:11), visions (Isa. 1:1, 21:2, and trances. Acts 10:10, 22:17
 - f. God has revealed Himself through prophets, whom He inspired. Judges 6:8; ISam. 3:20, 10:5
 - g. The Urim and Thummim. Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21; ISam. 28:6

- h. The casting of lots. Num. 26:55; Josh. 7:14; Prov. 16:33
 - i. Direct revelation. Gen. 1:1ff; Gal. 1:12, 2:2; IITim. 3:16
 - j. Divine dictation. Ex. 17:14; Deut. 9:9-10; Isa. 8:1
 - k. The guidance or leadership of the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:19, 13:2, 16:6
 - l. The Incarnation. Jn. 1:14,18; Heb. 1:1-3
6. Special revelation is also progressive in nature; for instance, the coming of Messiah begins with the promise to Adam and Eve, and culminates in the appearance of Jesus Christ in human history. Gen. 3:15; Jn. 1:14
 7. In that regard, special revelation provides the content necessary for one to establish and maintain a relationship with God.
 8. The Bible claims to be divinely inspired, providing the truth of God in a form that has been made available to all mankind. IITim. 3:16; IIPet. 1:20
 9. Although general and special revelation differ from each other in character and in scope, they cannot contradict each other, because they were given by the same self-consistent God of truth.

III. Definition and description of terms.

- A. Revelation concerns the origin and giving of the truth by God. ICor. 2:10
- B. Inspiration relates to the reception and recording of that truth in the written form; specifically, it deals with the Bible. ICor. 2:13; IJn. 1:3-4
- C. Illumination focuses on the human apprehension and understanding of the truth that has been revealed by God.
- D. Illumination is dependent on the following items, if one is going to fully apprehend the truth of God.
 1. Positive volition; one must be a seeker of truth to find truth. Lk. 11:10
 2. The ministry of the Holy Spirit, and not human intelligence. I Cor. 2:4
 3. Diligence; the casual student will not be fully rewarded with maximum illumination. IITim. 2:15; IPet. 1:10
 4. Prayer; one must ask God for His truth. James. 1:5; Jude 1:20
 5. Intellectual honesty. Lk. 8:15; IICor. 2:17, 4:2
 6. Humility; the arrogant believer will never apprehend the full truth. James 1:21
 7. In that regard, any Church Age believer that rejects the inspiration of the Bible, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the local church, the authority and function of the pastor-teacher, and fastidious attendance in Bible class, will not and cannot arrive at a full knowledge of the truth. ITim. 2:4, 3:15; IITim. 4:2-4; Heb. 10:25
- E. The working definition of inspiration is that mysterious and supernatural process, by which divine causality worked through human authors, without destroying or negating their individual personality, experiences, or style to produce God's complete, coherent, and totally accurate message to mankind in the original autographs of Scripture.

IV. Theories of inspiration.¹

A. Natural inspiration.

1. Among extreme liberal interpreters of Scripture the Bible is regarded as a purely natural book written by human authors endowed with no special gifts or supernatural ability, who wrote using their normal and natural intelligence.
2. From this point of view the Bible is regarded as no different than any other book; while it may be unusual, it is viewed as a merely human product.
3. In effect, this view denies completely any inspiration of the Scripture; it removes any supernatural element such as would be required in direct revelation of God of any facts of the past, present, and future which are not normally open to the discovery of man.
4. If this theory is correct, the Bible has no more authority than any other book; therefore, this view is held by many unbelievers.

B. Mystical or dynamic inspiration.

1. This view is one step removed from a purely natural origination of the Bible and views the author of Scripture as being especially empowered for his task by God.
2. Under this theory, the human authors were enabled to do their very best work, and possessed some measure of divine power in achieving their task.
3. Adherents of this view are not all agreed as to the extent of this divine enablement, whether it is supernatural, or whether it determined the actual text of Scripture.
4. The Scriptures produced according to this view are no more authoritative than a well-delivered sermon, and the resultant text of Scripture falls short of bearing the imprint of divine authority or infallibility.

C. Concept theory.

1. In an effort to avoid the difficulties of claiming actual inspiration of the very words of Scripture, some have resorted to the concept theory.
2. Specifically, that God gave to the writers of Scripture the ideas, some of them being of supernatural origin, which would otherwise have been unknown to human intelligence.
3. The authors incorporated these ideas in their own words.
4. The resulting Scripture, however, is no more than a record of their experience of this divine revelation; although the ideas are inspired, the words are not.
5. Therefore, this understanding of the inspiration of the Scriptures falls short of verbal infallibility, and the appeal to particular words and expressions as being the precise revelation of God is not justified.
6. In the end, the Bible is still a fallible book according to this theory.

D. Degrees of inspiration.

1. Some have attempted to explain the inspiration of the Bible as being subject to degrees; therefore, certain portions of the Bible, particularly moral areas, are derived from supreme revelation.
2. However, other passages dealing with history, creation, and prophecy have only relative inspiration.
3. Under this theory, portions of Scripture that have to do with our relationship to God are authoritative, but other portions may not be.

¹ John Walvoord, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol 116 #461 -- Jan 1959
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4. The weakness of this point of view, of course, is its subjective character; it certainly leaves open the possibility that no two interpreters will be of one mind on the degree of the inspiration of any particular passage.
 5. The ultimate judgment is transferred from the statement of Scripture to the decision of the reader.
 6. A variation of this point of view is the moral or partial-inspiration theory which holds that parts of the Bible are inspired, but others are not.
 7. Scripture from this point of view is considered authoritative in matters of morals, but not in scientific matters.
 8. Again, the interpreter is faced with the impossible task of distinguishing what portions of Scripture are inspired and what are not, and the ultimate authority rests in the opinion of the reader and not in the Scripture itself.
- E. The mechanical or dictation theory.
1. The most extreme of the conservative theological views of inspiration is the theory that all parts of the Bible were dictated by God and that the human authors were no more than stenographers.
 2. This view was held by some in the early church, is said to be the view of some of the Protestant Reformers, and is commonly represented by liberal opponents of inspiration as the view held today by orthodox and conservative Biblical interpreters.
 3. Floyd Filson for instance in analyzing the conservative point of view contends that, "*only two possible views of inspiration can be held, that the Bible is either the subject of absolute divine dictation or is a human product.*"
 4. He further holds that the human origin makes inevitable that the Bible contains many errors.
 5. Some of the confusion on the proper theory of inspiration stems from the strong language used by the Reformers in claiming inspiration for the Bible.
 6. John Calvin, for instance, flatly affirmed the dictation of the Scripture; some cite Calvin's statement that "*the Holy Spirit dictated to the prophets and apostles*" and Calvin's description of writers of Scripture as "*clerks*" and "*penmen*" as supporting this idea.
 7. In his other writings, Calvin freely admits the human element; what Calvin was actually affirming was infallibility rather than dictation in the absolute sense.
 8. It is obvious from Scripture that certain portions of the Bible claim to be dictated (Ex. 20:1-17); on the other hand, most of the Bible could not have been dictated according to the record itself, since it embodies the prayers, feelings, fears, and hopes of the individual who wrote that portion of Scripture.
 9. Such passages as Paul's expression of his sorrow for Israel (Rom. 9:1-3) or David's prayer of confession in Psalm 51 would lose most, if not all, their meaning if they were dictated by another.
 10. Many of the psalms are obviously the heartfelt cry of a psalmist in distress, in joy, or sorrow, in fear, or hope.
 11. Because of these obvious human factors in the Bible, even among orthodox Christians there is little support for the mechanical or dictation theory today.
 12. While theological liberals may misrepresent the situation, the most accurate description of the conservative, orthodox theory of inspiration is contained in the words verbal and plenary inspiration.

- F. Inspiration as the experience of the reader rather than the writer.
1. One of the outstanding developments of the twentieth century is the rise of crisis and neo-orthodox theology which emphasize the experiential nature of divine revelation.
 2. For this point of view the question of the inspiration of the Bible itself is beside the point, and is in fact rejected.
 3. The human authors may or may not have been inspired, and their writings may or may not be the voice of God.
 4. The important point is not what the writers of Scripture wrote, but the impression received or the experience of divine revelation which comes to the reader as he examines the Scriptures.
 5. Karl Barth refers to the “threefold form” of God’s Word, namely, “the preached Word,” the “written Word,” and the “revealed Word”; all forms are legitimately the Word of God even if the written Word is primary.
 6. Filson expresses this viewpoint carried to its logical conclusion: *“Even the Bible proves to be the Word of God only when the Holy Spirit working within us attests the truth and divine authority of what the Scripture says.”*
 7. Nor is the voice of God limited to the Scripture as Filson says earlier: *“It is God who speaks to man. But He does not do so only through the Bible.”*
 8. The viewpoint of the modern neo-orthodox scholar is not far removed from some in the early church who claimed to have direct inspiration and whose claim was promptly denied and labeled heresy by the early church.
 9. That God spoke directly by divine revelation in many portions of the Old and New Testament is not denied, but such experiences ceased with completion of the written Scripture.
 10. God is now revealed through the written Word. Such forms of divine revelation as are claimed as coming directly from God in our day have no standard to test them, no rational or theological criteria; therefore, they are completely subjective.
 11. Unless revelation is tested by the written Word of God, it has no more authority than an opinion of the one who claims that he has heard the voice of God.
- G. The verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture, the correct, orthodox view.
1. Those who uphold the infallible inspiration of the entire Scriptures as they were originally written by the human authors contend that nothing other than verbal inspiration--that is, divine guidance in the very choice of the words used--is essential to a complete and Biblical view.
 2. A formal definition indicates that God so supernaturally directed the writers of Scripture that without excluding their human intelligence, their individuality, their literary style, their personal feelings, or any other human factor, His own complete and coherent message to man was recorded in perfect accuracy, the very words of Scripture bearing the authority of divine authorship.
 3. Though human authors are recognized in the Scripture itself and their human characteristics, vocabulary, and modes of thought are often traced, the supernatural process of the inspiration of the Bible is deemed sufficiently operative so that the human author in every case uses the precise words that God intended him to choose, and the resulting product therefore contains the accuracy and infallibility of Scripture just as if God wrote it Himself.

4. Usually added to the description of this theory of inspiration is the word plenary, meaning full; this term means that the inspiration extends equally to every portion of Scripture and that all parts therefore are equally infallible and equally authoritative within the limitations of the context.
5. This point of view does not regard the human element in Scripture as introducing human fallibility.
6. Any tendency to error was overruled, and the human mind was influenced so that even in its human experiences there was divine preparation and sovereign arrangement to produce the desired Scripture.
7. Much of the difficulty expressed in opposition to the inspiration of the words of Scripture is caused by the fact that inspiration as a supernatural work of God is not subject to rational analysis.
8. The Bible does not attempt to explain inspiration, but merely states the fact that, on the one hand, God or the Holy Spirit is said to be the author and, on the other hand, frequently refers to the human author by such expressions as “Isaiah said” or “Moses said.”
9. Lewis Sperry Chafer cites a number of instances where dual authorship, that is, both human and divine, is recognized in Scripture. Matt. 15:4; Mark 7:10
10. Certain passages, and there are many, combine a reference to both authors in the one passage: Acts 1:16; Acts 4:25; Matt. 1:22, 2:15
11. It is clear from many Scriptures that the Bible itself claims the words of Scripture to be inspired. IITim. 3:16; IIPet. 1:20

V. The process of revelation.

- A. The process of revelation is comprised of three constituent elements.
 1. Divine causality; God originates the entire process by choosing to reveal Himself.
 2. Prophetic agency; God used prepared men to convey His perfect will by revealing His message to them.
 3. Scriptural authority; these men so wrote under the ministry of the Holy Spirit as to record all that God revealed in language that men could understand.
- B. The two most prominent New Testament passages that provide key information for the discussion of inspiration are found in the writings of Paul and Peter.
 1. Paul states very clearly, as he writes to Timothy, that **every Scripture is God-breathed**. IITimothy 3:16
 - a. The emphasis of the adjective πᾶς (pas—all, each, every), when used with an anarthrous substantive, is on every individual portion of Scripture.
 - b. The Greek adjective θεόπνευστος (theopneustos—God breathed) appears to have been coined by Paul; there is no usage of the term that predates IITimothy.
 - c. The process involves both the inhale and exhale of the divine viewpoint on the part of the human author, who must receive God’s revelation (inhale) and applying himself under the ministry of the Holy Spirit to write it down (exhale).
 - d. This passage focuses only on God’s role in inspiration, as He controlled both the perception of the revelation as well as its inscription.

2. The second passage in Peter describes God's role in this process as well as man's role. IIPeter 1:21
 - a. Peter believed that the understanding of this process was critical to his readers, as he introduces his subject with the phrase **knowing this to be first/foremost**.
 - b. In context, Peter is using the subject of the inspiration of the Scriptures to reassure his readers that their faith rested on the Word of God and not human inventiveness. IIPet. 1:16
 - c. While Peter acknowledges both the human and divine element to the utterances of Scripture, the use of the participle φέρω (phero—moved, carried along) means to be conducted or carried along, and focuses specifically on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 - d. God the Holy Spirit directed their thought processes so as to determine subject matter, and to ensure accuracy in the finished autographs.
 - e. Thus, He secured a product that was free of human error, using fallible men, and not removing human personality, vocabulary, or style.
- C. The process of inspiration is further defined by the following facts.
 1. Properly speaking, the writings are inspired, not the writers. IITim. 3:16
 2. The inspiration extends to the very words of Scripture and not simply the ideas. Ex. 4:12; Jer. 1:9
 3. The original autographs are inspired not copies, translations, or interpretations.
 4. Textual criticism handles the problem of the lost, inspired autographs.
 5. While the original manuscripts were actually the inspired texts, good copies of the text are virtually inspired.
 6. This means that no doctrine of the faith has been lost or affected; further, the Bible asserts that the Word of God would be preserved, even apart from the original manuscripts. Ps. 12:6-7a, 119:160; Isa. 40:8; Matt. 5:18; Lk. 21:33
- D. In conclusion, inspiration is a divine process, which falls into the category of a theological mystery.
 1. How can Scripture be both divine and human in origin and still be error free?
 2. The fact that God used finite and fallible men to record His infallible word, all the while retaining their individuality in every way, is fully beyond human reason.
 3. One should avoid the extremes of mechanical divine dictation and human error.

VI. Scriptural claims for inspiration.

- A. Some have stated that if one begins with the claims in the Bible that support inspiration, then he is engaging in circular logic.
 1. However, there is nothing inherently wrong with using the claims of the Bible as a starting point for a discussion of the subject of inspiration.
 2. Logic dictates that since a man can testify on his own behalf, the Scriptures can also testify on their own behalf.
 3. While we recognize that the scriptural claim of inspiration does not prove inspiration, it certainly can serve as a point of departure to study the subject.
- B. For the intellectually honest reader, it is quite evident that the Bible makes claims about the nature of inspiration.

1. Inspiration is verbal, it extends to the very words of Scripture. Ex. 24:4; Jere. 26:2; Matt. 5:18; Rom. 3:2
2. The revelation is unbreakable or infallible. Jn. 10:35
3. It is irrevocable. Lk. 16:17, 24:44
4. The Scripture has final authority; Jesus claimed that the written revelation was the final authority in matters of faith and practice. Matt. 4:4,7, 21:42; Mk. 11:17
5. It is plenary; it extends to every part, as well as the whole. IITim. 3:16
6. Logic demands that the utterances of God have the same character as God Himself; they must be perfect and without error. Ps. 19:7-9

VII. The character and extent of inspiration.

A. The character of inspiration.

1. The nature of inspiration is such that it does not exclude the following phenomena.
 - a. The use of a variety of expressions and recollections in parallel passages. Matt. 16:16; Mk. 8:29; Lk. 9:20
 - b. The use of individual style and personality.
 - c. The use of uninspired documents. Lk. 1:1-4; Jude 14
 - d. The use of non-scientific terminology. Gen. 15:12,17
 - e. The use of phenomenal language. Lk. 11:31 “ends of the earth”; Mk. 8:36
2. The Bible uses a variety of literary devices; mankind is not limited in the way it expresses itself, and neither is the Bible.
 - a. Metaphor. Jn. 15:5
 - b. Simile. Mk. 1:10
 - c. Poetry. Psalms
 - d. Acrostics. Ps. 119; Prov. 31:10-31
 - e. Parables. Matt. 13:18,24,31
 - f. Allegory. Gal. 4:24
 - g. Other figures of speech. Jn. 10:6
 - h. Hyperbole. Jn. 21:25; ICor. 13:1-3
 - i. Satire or sarcasm. Matt. 23:24
 - j. Anthropopathism and anthropomorphism. Gen. 6:6,8

B. The extent of inspiration.

1. Although the Bible records the sins of individuals, it is not sanctifying these activities; however, it does record them accurately. Gen. 3:4; IISam. 11:4
2. Inspiration also includes language of accommodation in its illustrations; God is not an unjust judge. Lk. 18:1-8
3. Inspiration does mandate inerrancy in all matters of an historical or factual nature.
 - a. Archaeology has confirmed much of the history recorded in the Bible, such as Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem.
 - b. There is no discernable difference in the narratives that have been confirmed and those that have not.
 - c. It is impossible to eliminate all historical references without compromising the doctrinal message contained in the Bible.
 - d. Some of the disputable passages were confirmed by Jesus Christ Himself; to reject these is to reject the view of Christ Himself. Matt. 12:40, 19:4; Lk. 11:51, 17:26,28

4. Inspiration does not include accommodation to error.
 - a. Words have objective meaning; if one cannot rely on the meaning of words, he cannot rely on any written document.
 - b. If the Bible is full of myths and other untrue stories, the truth becomes subject to the whim of the interpreter.
 - c. This is not to be confused with progressive revelation, which expands on previously revealed truths; however, it does not mean the previous truths were in error, they were simply less complete.
 - d. Accommodation to error opens the door to agnosticism; if one cannot trust the historical accounts in the Bible, how can he trust the moral and doctrinal assertions?
 - e. This view is consistent with the attitude that Jesus manifested toward Jewish traditions, which were in conflict with the Word of God. Matt. 15:1-3

VIII. Evidences for the inspiration of the Bible.

- A. Internal claims for inspiration abound in both the Old Testament and the New Testament writings.
- B. Supporting claims for the inspiration of Old Testament books.
 1. The majority of the Old Testament books contain an explicit declaration that the book is inspired. Ex. 20:1, 32:16; Lev. 1:1
 2. However, there are books in the Old Testament with no explicit claim of inspiration. I & II Kings; Ezra; Nehemiah
 3. Those books that lack a claim of inspiration are all still found in the three-fold division of the Old Testament, which includes the Law, Prophets, and the Writings.
 4. The phrase **“thus says the Lord”**, or its equivalent is used over 400 times in the Old Testament.
 5. Certain prophets bore witness to the inspired nature of earlier prophets and their writings. IIChron. 36:22; Ezra 1:1; Dan. 9:2
 6. New Testament references, which cite Old Testament passages and reference their authority. Matt. 19:4-5 quotes Genesis; James 4:6 quotes Proverbs 3:34.
 7. The Old Testament is referred to as the Word of God or Oracles of God. Jn. 10:35; Rom. 3:2
- C. Specific claims for the inspiration of New Testament books.
 1. Jesus promised that the New Testament writers would be instructed by the Holy Spirit. Jn. 14:26, 16:13
 2. Paul confirmed that the Holy Spirit had revealed the truth of God to him and other inspired authors, who recorded that truth using specific words. ICor. 2:13
 3. John is classed with the Old Testament prophets, and the book of Revelation is classed as a prophecy, inspired words of God. Rev. 22:9,18-19
 4. Peter recognized Paul’s writings as Scripture. IIPet. 3:16
 5. Verbal inspiration was accepted by the early church fathers, which acceptance largely continued until the rise of deism, rationalism, and higher criticism during the 17th-19th centuries AD.
 6. In fact, it is estimated that the seven leading church fathers cited the New Testament as authoritative some 36,000 times.

- D. External evidences for the inspiration of the Bible.
 - 1. Fulfilled prophecy.
 - 2. Confirmation of the text by archaeology.
 - 3. Preservation and restoration of the Biblical text; there is not a writing in ancient literature that enjoys such a wealth of textual attestation as the New Testament does.
 - 4. The Bible was written over a span of 1500 years, by men from every walk of life, living in different parts of the world, and yet has a completely consistent message.
 - 5. Believers that testify to the life-changing power of the Bible.

IX. Textual criticism.

- A. The orthodox view of the Bible asserts that only the original autographs of Scripture are inspired; however, we must acknowledge that none of these Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic autographs still exist.
- B. There are some good reasons why God has not chosen to preserve the original texts of the Bible, which include:
 - 1. The tendency of the human race (the maladjusted) to worship religious relics.
 - 2. Serving to mitigate the practice of numerology and other trivial pursuits, rather than focusing on the message of the Bible
 - 3. Avoiding the inevitable arrogance and exclusivity that would arise in those that possessed the originals.
 - 4. Further, like any literary work, the texts likely just wore out from repeated use.
- C. Textual criticism, sometimes referred to as lower criticism, addresses the issue of the missing, original autographs.
- D. Simply stated, textual criticism is the method used to determine what the original manuscripts of the Bible actually said.
- E. If all scribes produced exact copies of the original document, there would be no need for the science and art of textual criticism.
- F. However, errors are a fact of human experience; it is evident that two types of errors are responsible for the corruption of the original text: inadvertent errors and intentional changes to the text.
- G. Inadvertent errors include errors based on sight, errors based on hearing, when a text was being dictated, errors based on faulty memory, and errors based on judgment.
 - 1. Parablepsis: literally "looking by the side." This refers to mistakes made by a scribe when his eye "jumps" to the wrong place in a text and he either leaves out text or repeats it.
 - 2. Haplography occurs when a scribe's eye mistakenly jumps from one letter or series of letters in a text to a similar letter or combination of letters that follow. When this happens the scribe fails to write down the material in between and he/she leaves out text.
 - 3. Dittography is the same as haplography; in this case, the eye jumps to previous material. Thus, instead of being left out, text is repeated.
 - 4. Homoioteleuton is a term that means "identical ending." This is parablepsis when the eye skips to another word with same ending.
 - 5. Homoioarcton means "identical beginning." This is parablepsis when the eye skips to another word with the same beginning.
- H. As difficult as unintentional errors make the task of textual criticism, the fact is that intentional errors were also introduced by over-zealous scribes.

- I. Odd as it may seem, scribes who “thought” were more dangerous than those who wished merely to be faithful in copying what lay before them.
- J. Many of the alterations which may be classified as intentional were no doubt introduced in good faith by copyists, who believed that they were correcting an error of language, which had previously crept into the sacred text and needed to be rectified.
- K. Sometimes, a later scribe would even re-introduce an erroneous reading that had been previously corrected.
- L. Some types of intentional changes to the text involved:
 - 1. Spelling and grammar, when a scribe encountered a solecism (a breach of syntax; any apparent absurdity, impropriety, or incongruity), which is something that is extremely common in the book of Revelation.
 - 2. Harmonistic corrections occurred when a scribe attempted to harmonize a passage with another passage with which he was familiar. For instance, this might involve expanding a quote from the Old Testament to a fuller form.
 - 3. Addition of natural complements occurred when a scribe sought to amplify or round off some phrase or sentence. Examples include adding **Pharisees** when one sees the term Scribes, or adding **Christ** when one sees the term Jesus.
 - 4. Clearing up historical or geographical difficulties, such as apparently quoting the wrong author (Matt. 27:9), or giving the wrong time. Jn. 19:14
 - 5. Conflation occurred when a scribe had two or more manuscripts available, which differed from one another. Rather than make a choice between the two texts, some scribes incorporated both readings in the new copy which they were transcribing.
 - 6. Alterations made because of doctrinal considerations, which involved the elimination or alteration of what was regarded as doctrinally unacceptable or inconvenient. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Eusebius, and many other Church Fathers accused the heretics of corrupting the Scriptures in order to have support for their peculiar views. An example of this is adding the word **yet** to the text of John 7:8, in order to protect Jesus from a charge of lying, when He went to the feast later. Jn. 7:10
- M. Old Testament textual criticism.
 - 1. Since the Old Testament was written over a period of 1000 years, it is evident that hand copying of the text occurred for many centuries in order to ensure the preservation of the text.
 - 2. This process of hand copying of the text continued from the closing of the Old Testament canon (c. 400 B.C.) until the invention of the printing press in the 15th century A.D.
 - 3. This indicates that the oldest portions of the Old Testament were transmitted by hand copying for nearly 3000 years before they were first put into printed form.
 - 4. This tradition is responsible for the Masoretic Text (MT), the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, which was the work of the Masoretes (scribes and Bible scholars from the 7-11th centuries A.D.).
 - 5. The earliest of these texts dates from about the 10th century A.D.; prior to that, very few texts exist.
 - 6. The presence of a text-type among the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS; c. 200 B.C. to 100 A.D.) identical with the one preserved by the Masoretes (whose earliest extant MS dates to c. 900 A.D.) witnesses to the faithful preservation of the text over almost 1000 years.

7. While the Masoretic Text is the primary source text for the Old Testament, two other textual traditions came to exist, which included the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), and the Septuagint (LXX)--all three of which are corroborated by the DSS.
 8. Unless there is some major problem that renders the Masoretic Text untenable in a passage, it has to be seriously considered to have the original manuscript.
 9. The only major text with which one can compare it is the LXX, which was likely translated into Greek from the Masoretic tradition.
 10. The discovery in the caves at Qumran documented the fact that the text had not been substantially altered over a period of 1000 years; further, no doctrine is affected by scribal error.
 - a. A comparison of Isaiah 53 shows that only 17 letters differ from the Masoretic text.
 - b. Ten of these are mere differences in spelling (like our "honor and the English "honour") and produce no change in the meaning at all.
 - c. Four more are very minor differences, such as the presence of a conjunction (and), which are stylistic rather than substantive.
 - d. Out of 166 words in this chapter, only one word is really in question, and it does not at all change the meaning of the passage.
 - e. Serious biblical scholars have indicated that this is typical of the whole manuscript of Isaiah.
 11. In short, textual criticism is difficult for the Old Testament since there are not many documents that can even serve as a source with which one can compare the MT.
 12. This would tend to the conclusion that the MT is reliable and that God has preserved His Word, just as He said He would. Isa. 40:8
- N. New Testament textual criticism.
1. The New Testament differs from the Old Testament in that it was not written over an extended period of time; in fact, all the books of the New Testament were written in about a 50 year span.
 2. James appears to be the earliest book in the New Testament, likely being written between 45-53 A.D., with Galatians being a close second (c. 48-49 A.D.); the last book of the New Testament was the book of The Revelation, which was written in 95-100 A.D.
 3. Any serious student of the Greek text recognizes that there are numerous mistakes in the extant copies, which must be identified, and the correct reading ascertained, before any sound exegesis can take place.
 4. New Testament criticism involves three types of materials in order to determine the original text.
 - a. Greek manuscripts.
 - b. Ancient versions.
 - c. Citations by early church fathers.
 5. In comparison with other ancient documents, the New Testament boasts a wealth of manuscripts in Greek and Latin.
 6. There are about 5000 manuscripts, which contain all or part of the Greek New Testament; further, there are about 8000 manuscripts in Latin, and a thousand additional manuscripts in other ancient versions (Syriac and Coptic).
 7. The three major families of textual types are the Byzantine, the Alexandrian, and the Western text.

- a. The Alexandrian text (emerging from Alexandria, Egypt) is characterized by readings that are generally shortened, more difficult, and having refined grammatical corrections.
- b. The Western text (represented in the Latin and Syriac versions) is characterized by harmonistic tendencies and additions.
- c. The Byzantine text (preserved in the old Byzantine Empire, which is now Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, etc.), is represented by the vast majority of Greek manuscripts. It is considered by some to be the least valuable, since its readings are described as smooth and unobjectionable, with most difficult readings being alleviated.
8. This classification into families is based upon agreement of a group of manuscripts in a large number of variant readings.
9. For instance, if a group of manuscripts exhibits fifty or a hundred common readings that are not found elsewhere, it can be concluded that these variants stem from a common source.
10. Since the New Testament writings were ultimately given canonical status, and scribes had less freedom to emend the text, it appears that most variants arose before the end of the 3rd century A.D.
11. By the 7th century A.D. the use of Greek had all but disappeared, except in the Byzantine Empire; therefore, by the time the printing press was invented, the Byzantine text types were the dominant form of the Greek text.
12. Erasmus, a humanist scholar from Rotterdam, prepared his New Testament in 1516 A.D., which was the basis for the Textus Receptus, the text underlying the King James Version of 1611.
13. This was the main Greek text, which remained dominant until the publication of the Revised Version in 1881.
14. A significant number of ancient manuscripts of the New Testament were brought to light between the 16th and 19th centuries A.D., which were from a period earlier than those used by Erasmus.
15. Since they were older, many considered them to be closer to the original autographs; however, as these texts were studied, it became clear that they differed in numerous places from the previously used texts.
16. In 1881, two Cambridge scholars named B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort inaugurated a new era of textual criticism with the publication of their *New Testament in the Original Greek*.
 - a. Their text was derived from manuscripts that differed considerably from those used by Erasmus.
 - b. They argued that the Byzantine text (which they called the Syrian Text) had been officially edited by the church in the 4th century A.D., and that its readings were inferior to their Alexandrian manuscripts.
 - c. This left them with three text types: the Western, the Alexandrian, and a group closely akin to the Alexandrian, which they called the “Neutral Text”.
 - d. The Neutral text included Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus.
 - e. Since 1881, the majority of the English translations of the New Testament have used a text that was closer to Westcott and Hort than to the one published by Erasmus.
 - f. The New American Standard Bible, the New International Version, the Revised English Bible and the Revised Standard Version are some versions that are included.

- g. The major differences include the following:
 - 1.) the omission or addition of substantial passages. Matt. 16:2b-3; Mk. 16:9-20; Jn. 7:53-8:11
 - 2.) the omission or addition of shorter passages. Matt. 6:13, 17:21, 18:11
 - 3.) the substitution of a word or words for other words. 1Tim. 3:16 ὅς (hos) for θεός (theos)
 - 4.) the addition or omission of a word or group of words. Matt. 6:4,6 ἐν τῷ φανῆ ἐρωῶ (en to phanero) is completely omitted since it is absent from the Alexandrian, Western, and Egyptian types of texts.
- 17. When seeking to determine the true text, two types of principles are generally employed, which include external evidence and internal evidence.
- 18. Principles of external evidence include the following:
 - a. Prefer the reading attested in the oldest manuscripts.
 - b. Prefer the reading supported in widely separated geographical areas.
 - c. Prefer the reading supported by the greatest number of text types.
- 19. Principles of internal evidence include:
 - a. Prefer the shorter reading.
 - b. Prefer the more difficult reading.
 - c. Prefer the reading that accords best with the author's style and vocabulary.
 - d. Prefer the reading the best fits the context, and the author's theology.
 - e. Prefer the less harmonious reading in parallel passages.
 - f. Prefer the reading that reflects a lack of doctrinal bias.
- 20. The good news is that the average believer never has to deal with these issues; further, much of the work has been well done by men like Bruce Metzger, whose *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* has addressed all New Testament variants.

X. Canonicity.

- A. While inspiration deals with the nature of the text, and textual criticism deals with determining the actual original text, canonicity deals with which books actually comprise the Christian Bible.
- B. The term canonicity is derived from the Greek κανών (kanon), which is derived from the Hebrew term for cane or reed that was often used for measuring something.
- C. The term came to be defined as a means to determine the quality of something, a rule, a standard. Gal. 6:16
- D. By the 2nd century A.D., the term came to mean the revealed body of truth; it was first used as a term for the authoritative books of the entire Bible in about 375 A.D.
- E. Some inadequate views of canonicity include:
 - 1. Age determines canonicity; this is refuted by the fact that many ancient books are not in the canon (Josh. 10:13; 1Sam. 1:18); secondly, Daniel cites Jeremiah as Scripture, and his writings were less than 100 years old at the time. Dan. 9:2
 - 2. Hebrew language determines Old Testament canonicity; there are many Hebrew books that are not in the canon, and some Old Testament books are not written entirely in Hebrew. Dan. 2:4b-7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18

3. Religious value determines canonicity; this is refuted by the fact that Paul wrote books that are not in the New Testament, which likely had religious value. ICor. 5:9; Col. 4:16
 4. Further, the truth about certain issues can be found in non-canonical books. IMacc. 1:1 *“Alexander of Macedon son of Philip had come from the land of Kittim and defeated Darius king of the Persians and Medes, whom he succeeded as ruler, at first of Hellas.”*
- F. A distinction must be made between God’s determination to communicate through a particular work, and the human recognition that said work was inspired by God.
1. Canonicity is determined by God, who chose to inspire a particular author.
 2. Authority is recognized by men of God; only believers can make that recognition.
 3. A book is valuable because it is inspired.
- G. The development and history of the Old Testament and New Testament canon involves three stages in the process of canonization.
1. Inspiration by God.
 2. Recognition by believers; however, one should be aware of the fact that immediate recognition did not ensure subsequent recognition—this is especially true with Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.
 3. Collection and preservation by the people of God.
- H. Principles of canonicity.
1. While we do not have any information on how the Old Testament was canonized, it is very likely that believers used the same principles that were used to determine New Testament canonicity.
 2. There were basically five questions that were asked when a work was being considered for canonicity.
 - a. The first deals with the authoritative nature of the writing. Does it contain authoritative expressions such as, **God spoke, or the Lord said?**
 - b. Did the work come from a recognized representative of God, such as a prophet or apostle?
 - c. The third deals with authenticity; does the book speak the truth and is it consistent with previous revelation?
 - d. The fourth deals with the question of whether or not the work was dynamic; does it manifest God’s power and authority?
 - e. Was the work received by the people of God; this would include both initial and final acceptance by Israel or the Church.
 3. These procedures were considered, along with the external witness of the Holy Spirit, whose job in this process is to confirm God’s word.
- I. The standard critical theory is that the Old Testament was canonized in three stages.
1. The Torah was canonized in about 400 B.C.
 2. The Prophets were canonized in about 200 B.C.
 3. The Writings were canonized in about 100 A.D.
- J. This view is untenable since a completed Old Testament canon (the 39 books recognized by orthodox theologians) was mentioned by Josephus before 100 A.D.
1. The Law of Moses (the Pentateuch) was recognized first; in fact it had to be recognized quite early on, since there is hardly an Old Testament book that does not reference Moses or his writings.
 2. The Prophets is a designation that was used to refer to the rest of the Old Testament. Matt. 7:12, 22:40

3. The Writings was a third classification that came into vogue because some of the prophets did not fit neatly into the continual sequence of the history of the prophets.
 4. This three-fold categorization of the Old Testament canon has an early history.
 - a. The prologue to the non-canonical book of Ecclesiasticus, which is also known as Sirach. c. 132 B.C.
 - b. Jesus Christ alluded to this division. Lk. 24:44
 - c. Philo referred to the Law, Prophets, and Hymns in 40 A.D.
- K. While we do not have much information as to how the Old Testament canon was determined, Josephus indicates that the canon that had been decided upon and closed for quite some time, as he states: *“For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from, and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for, during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them...Against Apion 1:38-42*
- L. What we do know is that the books that were rejected canonical status, which includes the Apocrypha and other pseudepigrapha, do not meet the tests for canonicity and must be rejected as Scripture.
1. Some of these books have unbiblical and heretical teachings, like prayers for the dead, salvation by works, and false views of creation.
 2. Some of the works contain fanciful stories (Bel and the Dragon), which others actually promote immoral practices.
 3. They contain historical and chronological errors.
 4. None of the apocryphal books claims to be inspired.
 5. They were never accepted by the people of God at large, as the canonical books were.
 6. None of the apocryphal books, which were largely composed during the intertestamental period, are quoted in the New Testament.
 7. The Jews rejected them, and destroyed them after 70 A.D.
 8. No canon or council of the Church accepted them during the first 400 years of the Church Age.
 9. However, while the Apocrypha is not to be considered as Scripture, and not used as a means of edifying believers, some records are accurate and have some historical value.
- M. The New Testament canon.
1. There were a number of reasons why believers wanted an authoritative collection of writings on the words and deeds of Jesus Christ and the apostles.
 - a. Local churches desired to have a definitive norm for faith and practice.
 - b. The existence of heretics and heretical teachings, as early as 140 A.D., stimulated the desire to know what was orthodox and what was not.

- c. The known existence of false epistles and other pseudepigrapha. II Thess. 2:2
 - d. Since Christianity had begun to spread to other nations, communicators desired to have a complete, authoritative text of the Bible.
 - e. The persecutions under the Emperor Diocletian prompted the Church to settle on the New Testament Scriptures, since he destroyed churches, burned Scriptures, and banned Christian assemblies.
2. The New Testament was progressively collected and believers sought to identify the authoritative books.
 - a. The primary test of canonicity was apostolic authorship. Was the book written by an apostle or a close associate, of whom the apostle approved?
 - b. A secondary test was the test of reading procedure. Was there any injunction within the book for it to be read aloud or to other churches? I Thess. 5:27; Rev. 1:3
 - c. A third test was circulating procedure. Were the recipients of the letter commanded to share its contents with other churches. Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:11
 - d. Another test of canonicity was whether or not the writings were regarded by other authorities as valid. II Pet. 3:15-16
 - e. Another test was whether or not the writing was quoted by others as being authoritative? II Pet. 3:2-3; Jude 17-18
 - 1.) By the middle of the 2nd century, every New Testament book had been referenced by at least one of the early Church Fathers.
 - 2.) The more notable of the 2nd century Fathers, like Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, demonstrated their acceptance of most of the New Testament canon.
 - f. Canonical lists and translations demonstrate that the New Testament was pretty well established by the middle of the 3rd century.
 - 1.) Baroccio canon (c. 206 A.D.) contained 64 of the 66 books of the Bible.
 - 2.) The Muratorian canon (c. 170 A.D.) contained all books except Hebrews, James, and I and II Peter.
 - g. Church councils confirmed what believers had already recognized with respect to the New Testament canon; Athanasius (367 A.D.) listed all 27 books, as did the councils at Hippo (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.)
 3. As with the Old Testament compositions, there were three categories of books: those that were accepted by all (20 of the 27 New Testament books), the disputed books, and those rejected by orthodox believers.
 4. Those that were questionable included:
 - a. Hebrews, based on the uncertainty of authorship.
 - b. James, which seemed to teach salvation by works.
 - c. II Peter, based on controversial nature and lack of similarity with I Peter.
 - d. II and III John, based on their private nature and limited circulation.
 - e. Jude, based on the fact that Old Testament pseudepigrapha is cited. Jude 14
 - f. Revelation, based on the doctrine of the Millennium.
 5. However, all were eventually recognized by the people of God, and the canon was well established by the 3-4th centuries A.D.

- XI. Bible translations, the link between exegesis and exposition.
- A. As one should recognize by now, there is no translation of the Bible that is actually inspired, since only the original autographs (which no longer exist) can make that claim.
 - B. However, through faithful transmission, the attending ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the discipline of textual criticism, we have virtually inspired copies in the original languages.
 - C. One problem emerges as one seeks to convert the text from its original language into the language of a given audience; in our case, conversion into English.
 - D. Many believers have asked about a literal translation from the original languages, which cannot actually exist in a form that would be very readable, based on such factors as word order, idiomatic phrases, changes in word meanings over time, and cultural considerations.
 1. English word order normally consists of subject, verb, and object; in biblical Hebrew, the word order was usually verb, subject, object.
 2. The phrase **good eye** refers to generosity, while the phrase **evil eye** refers to the stingy person. Matt. 6:22-23
 3. All languages are fluid, which means that terms come to be vested with new meanings; an example of this is the KJV of James 2:3 “**And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing**”
 - E. There are basically three methods of translation, each with its strengths and weaknesses.
 1. The literal translation seeks to literally translate every term into the target language; this is often referred to as **formal equivalence**.
 - a. The level of clarity can be low with this type of translation, since the word order and idioms are often difficult to understand in the target language.
 - b. The strong point is the high level of accuracy and acceptability by other translators.
 - c. However, the translation will not read naturally to the English reader.
 2. The second method of translating is referred to as **dynamic equivalence**, which is translating the text in a thought for thought method, as opposed to a word for word translation.
 - a. The meaning will be clearer in the target language, but sometimes the deeper or some ambiguous meanings may be lost.
 - b. This can have a high level of accuracy (depending on the translator and the passage), but the acceptability will likely be lower.
 - c. This can produce a translation that sounds very natural to the English reader.
 3. The third method of translating is that of paraphrasing the text into the target language; the purpose is to say as exactly as possible what the writers of the Scriptures **meant**, and to say it simply, expanding where necessary for a clear understanding by the modern reader
 - a. While the meaning may be generally clearer to the English reader, this method often sacrifices deeper or more ambiguous meaning.
 - b. The level of accuracy and acceptability varies, but is not generally acceptable to translators and other scholars.
 - c. The strongest point is that it can produce the most natural sounding text for the English reader.
 - d. This method takes the most liberties with the original languages; further, it is the most subjective and more susceptible to the whim of the translator.

- F. No single method of translation works best in all cases; therefore, the translator must not only know the original languages, he must be sensitive to cultural considerations (isagogics), subtleties in nuance, and idiomatic expressions.
- G. While there are many translations of the Bible, the major versions, which have been accepted by Bible students and scholars, are the King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, the New Jerusalem Bible, the New American Standard Version, the New International Version, and the New English Translation.
 - a. The King James Bible is simply outdated; language has changed so much since it was translated that it is not really a viable candidate for serious students of the Scriptures.
 - b. Further, the original version contained the Apocrypha, suggesting that these non-canonical books should be included in the Bible.
 - c. The Revised Standard Version is a direct descendent of the KJV, it is a very theologically liberal translation, and the English syntax is often clumsy; additionally, its liberal bias is seen in the attempt to use gender-inclusive language.
 - d. The New Jerusalem Bible is simply the work of Catholic Scholarship, who have created a Bible that is favorable to their theological grid, and can be clumsy in its translation; additionally, it also contains the Apocrypha.
 - e. The New American Standard, specifically, the updated version from 1995, is the most faithful to the text, and contains the most current English translation; it is by far the most accurate for serious students.
 - f. The New International Version, which is a dynamic equivalent version and not translated literally, has introduced numerous changes, additions, and omissions, which render it unacceptable as a primary translation.
 - g. The New English Translation is the most recent version, relying on literal translation, with sound scholarship; it has an extensive footnote section that explains the reasoning behind textual decisions and translations. One problem is that it is not widely known, and another is that it tends to be more expensive than other translations.
- H. In discussing Bible translations, we have not included such versions as J.B. Phillips, the Living Bible, Today's English Bible, or the Good News Bible, since they are all paraphrases and are not faithful to the original languages of the text.
- I. Therefore, I use, and encourage all believers to use the New American Standard Updated Version (1995) as the primary text, as it is the most readable, while remaining faithful to the original languages.
- J. Although no translation is perfect, I have found that one has to spend a minimal amount of time correcting the translation, and oftentimes it is merely a subtle nuance, or the fact that a particular word may communicate slightly better.