

# THE FOUNDATION OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

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# THE WITNESS OF THE BIBLE TO ITS OWN INERRANCY

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## THE WITNESS OF THE BIBLE TO ITS OWN INERRANCY

**D**OES THE Bible actually assert its own inerrancy as the revealed Word of God? Does it really lay claim to freedom from error in all that it affirms, whether in matters of theology, history, or science? Are proponents of this view truly justified in their insistence on this high degree of perfection in Scripture, or are they actually going beyond what it affirms concerning its own authority? These questions have been raised by those who advocate a lower concept of biblical authority, and it is important for us to settle them as we seek to come to terms with the Bible's own witness.

Before we launch into an examination of specific passages in Scripture that bear upon this question, it would be well to define as clearly as possible the basic issues involved. Otherwise we may lose sight of the objectives of this type of investigation.

### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Inerrancy is attributed only to the original manuscripts of the various books of the Bible; it is not asserted of any specific copies of those books that have been preserved to us. Some early portions of the New Testament have been discovered by archaeology (such as the Rylands Papyrus 457 fragment of John 18, and the Magdalen fragment of Matthew 26), dating from the second century A.D., within a century of the original composition of those Gospels. The

earliest complete copy of an Old Testament book is still the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), dating from the mid-second century B.C. There are some Qumran fragments of the Pentateuch that are even earlier, coming from the third or fourth century. All these tend to support the received text of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures as preserved in the standard scholarly editions (Nestle and Kittel). There is far more textual support for the text of Holy Scripture than there is for any other book handed down to us from ancient times, whether the works of Homer, the Attic tragedians, Plato, Cicero, or Caesar. Nevertheless, these are not the original manuscripts, and minor errors have crept into the text of even these earliest and best copies of the books of the Bible. There are occasional discrepancies in the spelling of names, in the numbers cited in the statistical records, and similar matters. It is the special task of textual criticism to analyze these errors and choose the best of the variant readings according to the standard rules (or "canons") of this science.

Yet there is an important qualification to be made in regard to the range or degree of error that has crept into our received text of Scripture. That is to say, the extent of deviation from the exact wording of the original manuscripts of the Bible must somehow have been kept within definite limits, so as not to pervert the sense or the teaching of the passage in which it occurs. Otherwise it could not serve as a trustworthy record of God's redeeming love for mankind or of his will for our salvation. Since the Bible repeatedly affirms that it sets forth the revealed Word of God ("Thus saith the Lord"), rather than the mere conjectures or traditions of men, it must have been preserved in a sufficiently accurate form to achieve its salvific purpose for the benefit of the human race. God is present in Scripture as the omnipotent Lord of history, and as such he could not have allowed his redemptive plan to be thwarted by a seriously defective transmission.

What confirmation do we have that God has in fact maintained that kind of control over the preservation of the manuscripts? The answer is in the critical apparatus appearing in the scholarly editions of the Old and New Testament. Many hundreds of ancient manuscripts have been carefully consulted in drawing up this apparatus, both in the original languages themselves and in the languages into which they were translated (from the third century B.C. to the fifth century A.D.). Yet a meticulous examination of all the variant readings appearing in the apparatus shows

that no decently attested variant would make the slightest difference in the doctrinal teaching of Scripture if it were substituted for the wording of the approved text. (By "decently attested variant" we, of course, exclude all merely conjectural emendations, with which the apparatus of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* is needlessly encumbered. We refer only to deviations indicated by actual Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or Syriac manuscripts as over against the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible, or the Nestle edition of the New Testament.)

The same finding can hardly be sustained for any other ancient document preserved to us in multiple copies, whether the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the Behistun Rock inscription of Darius I, or the Middle Kingdom novel known as *The Tale of Sinuhe*. These all present differences in wording that affect the actual message or teaching of the document. Only of the Bible is it true that such a degree of deviation is not found. How may this be accounted for? It is best accounted for by the supposition that God the Holy Spirit has exercised a restraining influence on the preservation of the original text, keeping it from serious or misleading error of any kind.

So far as the text of the New Testament is concerned, the testimony of Frederick Kenyon is quite conclusive:

Repeated mention of divergent manuscripts and families of texts may perhaps give the impression that the text of the New Testament is abnormally uncertain. Such an impression can best be corrected by an attempt to envisage the early history of the text and its present condition. So far from the New Testament text being in an abnormally unsatisfactory state, it is far better attested than that of any other work of ancient literature. Its problems and difficulties arise not from a deficiency of evidence but from an excess of it. In the case of no work of Greek or Latin literature do we possess manuscripts so plentiful in number or so near the date of composition. Apart from Virgil, of whom we have manuscripts written some three or four hundred years after the poet's death, the normal position with regard to the great works of classical literature is that our knowledge of their text depends upon a few (or at most a few dozen) manuscripts, of which the earliest may be of the ninth or tenth or eleventh century, but most of the fifteenth. In these conditions it generally happens that scientific criticism has selected one manuscript (usually but not necessarily the oldest) as principal authority, and has based our printed texts on **this**, with some assistance from conjecture. . . . In the case of the New Testament . . . the vellum manuscripts are far earlier and far more

numerous; the gap between the earliest of them and the date of composition of the books is smaller; and a larger number of papyri have (especially since the discovery of the Chester Beatty papyri) given us better means of bridging that gap. We are far better equipped to observe the early stages of textual history in the manuscript period in the case of the New Testament than of any other work of ancient literature.<sup>1</sup>

### THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS

The question naturally arises in this connection: If we do not now possess the inerrant original manuscripts, what is the point of arguing that they must have been free from all error? Why do we not simply accept the fact that textual errors have crept into the wording of the Bible as we now have it and try to make the best of it in its imperfect form? Is it not enough for us to maintain that even in that form it can present us with an "infallible rule of faith and practice" (to use the standard phrase of the Westminster Confession of Faith)?

In answer to this, it should be pointed out, first of all, that there is a great difference between a document that was corrupted with error at the start and a document that was free from mistake at its original composition. If the original author was confused, mistaken, or deceitful, then there is little to be gained by employing textual critical methods to get back to an approximation of the original form. The errors and misinformation inhere in the archetype itself and serve only to the disadvantage and hurt of the reader. Only if the original was correct and trustworthy is any useful purpose served by elimination of copyists' errors. The pursuit of textual criticism itself implies a trustworthy original, the original wording of which has decisive importance.

Second, it should be observed that the controlling influence of an inerrant model is part of our daily experience today, even though none of us has access to that model. In the Bureau of Standards in Washington, D.C., there is preserved a perfect pound, a perfect foot, a perfect quart—all the basic measures of weight, length, and volume, in relation to which all other pound-weights, rulers, quart bottles, and other measures are judged. Very few Americans have ever seen these standard models in Washington with their own eyes. Yet none would contend that we may completely disregard them on the ground that all we ever see are approximate measuring devices.

Third, if mistakes at any level characterized the original manu-

scripts of the Bible, the effort to discover in them a truly "infallible rule of faith and practice" becomes an exercise in futility. Most of the doctrinal teaching contained in Holy Scripture comes to us in a framework of history and science. For example, the opening statement of the Apostles' Creed affirms that God the Father Almighty was the creator of the universe, and this certainly involves an unqualified rejection of the theory of mechanistic evolution, which so dominates the thinking of non-Christian scientists today. The subsequent affirmation of the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ likewise has a definite bearing on scientific theory today, for it is commonly thought that no events can take place in nature that do not constantly recur so as to be subject to scientific observation and analysis. Again, the bodily resurrection of Christ is both a scientific and a historical event, along with its theological importance for the salvation of sinners. Christ's sufferings and death on the cross under the authority of Pontius Pilate are likewise events in history. Therefore, if the Bible may have erred in its statements concerning history and science (interpreted, of course, in the way the original author intended them) the doctrinal or theological affirmations for which they form the framework must also be subject to error.

#### AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament shows no awareness whatever of any supposed line of distinction between theological doctrine and miraculous events. This is true of the accounts of Moses' time, concerning both history and science. Psalm 105, composed four or five centuries after the Exodus, heartily reaffirms the historicity of the ten plagues on Egypt as recorded in Exodus 7-12, and renders thanks to the Lord for this display of his power in redeeming Israel from her bondage. Psalm 106 likewise exalts the name of Yahweh for the miraculous parting of the waters of the Red Sea and for the sudden destruction of Dathan and Abiram as they sought to set aside Moses and his revelation. These saving acts of God are referred to as factual episodes in the history of redemption. And so are the battle of Gibeon (which features the prolongation of the day and the destruction of the enemy by a catastrophic hailstorm) and the fall of the walls of Jericho at the sound of a trumpet blast (see Isa. 28:21; 1 Kings 16:34).

Ancient Israel was as sure of the reality of the Red Sea crossing as the apostolic church was of Christ's death on Calvary. So no



matter how rationalists and antisupernaturalists scoff at these episodes as fabulous and nonhistorical, the Hebrew Scriptures themselves affirm them without qualification as actually having taken place on the plane of history.

Much more could be said concerning the testimony of Holy Scripture to its own plenary inspiration. One of the best discussions concerning these matters is to be found in chapter 2 of L. Gausson's *Theopneustia: The Bible, Its Divine Origin and Inspiration*,<sup>2</sup> where he points to innumerable passages in the Old Testament that assert unequivocally that the words of the prophets were the words of God. Not only in the Pentateuch (Exod. 4:30; Deut. 18:21, 22, and the numberless instances in Leviticus) but also throughout the prophets we meet with such affirmations as "The LORD has spoken [the following words]," "The mouth of the LORD has spoken," "The word of the LORD came to \_\_\_\_\_ saying" (Josh. 24:2; Isa. 8:11; Jer 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 26:1; 27:1; 30:1, 4; 50:1; 51:12; Amos 3:1; *passim*).

Hosea begins, "The word of the LORD that came to Hosea. . . ." This fullness of inspiration is asserted of the Psalms as well: "Sovereign Lord, . . . who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say . . ." (Acts 4:24-26, quoting Ps. 2:1, 2). So also Peter says of David in connection with Psalm 16:10: "Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption" (Acts. 2:30, 31). Very clearly, then, God is here said to have spoken by the mouth of David, even though the actual speech and inscripturation were done by David himself. Second Peter 1:20 speaks of the Old Testament in general as the "prophecy of Scripture" (*prophēteia graphēs*) and clearly affirms that it did not come by the will of man (as if invented or thought up by the human author on his own initiative) but only as the human author was moved by the Holy Spirit and thus produced in his own human words exactly what God intended him to say. These inspired writings were truly the words of God (even though conveyed through the human instrumentality of the prophet) and contained a full and complete magisterial authority.

This authority is constantly recognized by the Gospel writers, who often remarked: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the Prophet" (Matt. 1:22; cf. 2:5, 15, 23; 13:35;

21:4; 27:9, *passim*). As Gausson points out, "Nowhere shall we find a single passage that permits us to detach one single part of it as less divine than all the rest."<sup>3</sup> That is, the distinction between the doctrinal-theological and the historical-scientific drawn by some modern writers on this subject is completely foreign to the attitude of the New Testament authors toward the Old.

#### CHRIST'S UNQUALIFIED ACCEPTANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Jesus of Nazareth clearly assumed the errorlessness of the Old Testament in all its statements and affirmations, even in the realms of history and science. In Matthew 19:4, 5 he affirmed that God himself spoke the words of Genesis 2:24, with reference to the literal, historical Adam and Eve, as he established the ordinance of marriage. In Matthew 23:35 he put the historicity of Abel's murder by Cain on the same plane of historical factuality as the murder of Zechariah the son of Barachiah. In Matthew 24:38, 39 Jesus clearly accepted the historicity of the universal flood and Noah's ark: "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away. . . ." This record, bearing upon both history and science, has been scornfully rejected by those who trust in the infallible accuracy of modern scientific empiricism.

The same is true of the account of the prophet Jonah's preservation from drowning through the agency of a great fish that three days later spewed him forth on the shore. Yet Jesus put his crucifixion and resurrection on the same historical plane, saying, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). In the same way, Christ goes on in the very next verse to confirm that the heathen population of Nineveh really did repent at the preaching of Jonah, just as recorded in Jonah 3:7-9. Even though this account has been treated with skepticism by modern scholarship, the New Testament indicates that Jesus regarded it as sober fact.

In the light of these passages, it seems clear that Jesus regarded the Hebrew Bible as completely trustworthy and reliable in all that it affirms in matters of theology, history, and science.

This conclusion carries with it a corollary that renders indefensible the view that the inerrancy of Scripture extends only to its

doctrinal teaching. The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ is the incarnate God. For example, John 1:14 proclaims him the eternal Word who at the Incarnation became flesh and dwelt among men as Jesus of Nazareth. If, then, Jesus was mistaken in regarding the Old Testament as completely trustworthy, reliable, and inerrant in matters of doctrine, history, and science, it must follow that God himself was mistaken about the inerrancy of the Hebrew Scriptures. And the proposition that God was mistaken is surely a theological issue if there ever was one! It turns out, then, that errancy in matters of history and science leads inevitably to errancy in matters (and very important matters!) of theology as well. Once the dike has been breached, it is eventually washed away.

Some have suggested that Jesus was actually aware of the true authorship and date of composition of the various books of the Old Testament, and that he had personal knowledge of the historical and scientific mistakes embedded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Nevertheless, for the sake of more effective teaching in the area of theology or ethics he found it best to accommodate himself to the widely accepted views of his contemporaries. In other words, he pretended that Moses had personally written all the Pentateuch under inspiration, that Adam and Eve were actual historical persons, that Noah's flood took place exactly as described in Genesis 6-9, that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish and later expelled by it on the shore of the sea—even though he knew these events were not actually true. In order to avoid unimportant "side-issues" of authenticity and accuracy on these secondary levels, he simply went along with public opinion while presenting his doctrinal teaching. This interpretation of Jesus and his treatment of higher critical issues finds special favor in certain liberal Roman Catholic circles.

Yet when subjected to logical scrutiny, it must be recognized that this view is impossible to reconcile with the truthfulness and holiness of God. If Jesus of Nazareth knew that the story of Jonah's deliverance through the fish was altogether fictitious, he could never have used it as a historical type of the experience of burial and resurrection that he himself was shortly to undergo. This kind of accommodation would have bordered on the duplicity employed by unscrupulous politicians in the heat of an election campaign. But in contrast to this, Jesus made plain to his hearers that "he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I

have heard from him" (John 8:26). Again, "I speak of what I have seen with my Father" (John 8:38). The words of Jesus were the words of God, and the God who pronounced judgment on falsehood could not himself have resorted to falsehood in the proclamation of his saving truth.

There is a further serious objection to this theory of accommodation. The four Gospels make plain that Jesus refused to accommodate himself to certain mistaken views current in his own time. Take, for example, his repeated affirmation in the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old . . . But *I* say to you. . ." (Matt. 5). Or again, the remarkable statements in John 8:24 ("I told you that you would die in your sins, . . . you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he") and John 8:44 ("You are of your father the devil"). Nothing could be farther from accommodation to popular opinion than this. The same is true of his strict position concerning divorce (Matt. 19:9) and allegedly non-binding oaths (Matt. 23:16-22) and his downgrading of the importance of kosher restrictions concerning foods in favor of that which controls the motives and attitudes of the heart (Matt. 15:11-20). Jesus never stooped to accommodation in order to ingratiate himself with his public. As Peter affirmed of him, "He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips" (1 Peter 2:22).

#### INERRANCY ESSENTIAL FOR BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

We are faced with a basic choice in the matter of biblical authority. Either we receive the Scripture as completely reliable and trustworthy in every matter it records, affirms, or teaches, or else it comes to us as a collection of religious writings containing both truth and error.

If it does contain mistakes in the original manuscripts, then it ceases to be unconditionally authoritative. It must be validated and endorsed by our own human judgment before we can accept it as true. It is not sufficient to establish that a matter has been affirmed or taught in Scripture; it may nevertheless be mistaken and at variance with the truth. So human judges must pass on each item of teaching or information contained in the Bible and determine whether it is actually to be received as true. Such judgment presupposes a superior wisdom and spiritual insight competent to correct the errors of the Bible, and if those who would thus judge the veracity of the Bible lack the necessary

ingredient of personal inerrancy in judgment, they may come to a false and mistaken judgment—endorsing as true what is actually false, or else condemning as erroneous what is actually correct in Scripture. Thus the objective authority of the Bible is replaced by a subjective intuition or judicial faculty on the part of each believer, and it becomes a matter of mere personal preference how much of Scripture teaching he or she may adopt as binding.

In contrast to the view of the Bible as capable of error in matters of science, history, or doctrine (certainly such doctrine as is contained in a historical or scientific framework), we find that the attitude of Christ and the apostolic authors of the New Testament was one of unqualified acceptance. Christ may have illumined the basic intention of the Ten Commandments by setting forth their spiritual implications (“But *I* say to you . . .”), but never did he suggest that any affirmation or teaching in the Old Testament required validation by modern critical scholarship. He clearly presupposed that whatever the Old Testament taught was true because it was the infallible Word of God. It needed no further screening process by human wisdom in order to be verified. “For truly, I say to you,” said Jesus, “till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law [Old Testament] until all is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18). His statement in John 10:35, “The Scripture cannot be broken,” carries the same implication.

Those apostolic authors whom he taught or inspired proclaim the same full authority of all Scripture. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” In Hebrews 1:1, 2 we read, “God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.” This asserts the same infallibility for the writings of the Old Testament as for the words of Jesus himself. In 1 Peter 1:10, 11 the apostle states: “The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory.” This clearly implies that the Holy Spirit was within the Old Testament authors as they composed the books of the Hebrew Scriptures and that he guided them into words of infallible truth sure of fulfillment, even though the human authors themselves may not have fully understood all that these words predicted. Especially instructive is 2 Peter 1:20, 21: “First of all

you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." As they wrote down God's revelation, the Old Testament authors were supernaturally borne along (like sailing vessels impelled by the wind, *pheromenoi*) to record God's truth, which is not to be manipulated or perverted by one's own personal interpretation or preference. Despite all the imperfections of the human writers of Scripture, the Lord was able to carry them along into his infallible truth without distortion or mistake.

Both Christ and the apostles affirm, then, that what the Bible says, God says. All these passages add up to this: that accuracy inheres in every part of the Bible, so that it is to be received as infallible as to truth and final as to authority. When the Scripture speaks, it speaks as the living, operative Word of God (Heb. 4:12—*zōn* and *energēs*), which penetrates to man's innermost being and sits in judgment on all human philosophies and reasonings with an authority that is absolutely sovereign. This, then, is what the Scriptures teach concerning their own infallibility. Not only are they free from all error; they are also filled with all authority, and they sit in judgment on man and all his intentions and thoughts.

This objective authority of the Bible carries with it an important consequence as to its interpretation. Scripture must never be construed according to a man's personal preference or bias just to suit his own purposes. It must be carefully and reverently studied with a view to ascertaining what the human biblical author (guided by the divine Author) intended by the words he used. This makes historico-grammatical exegesis an absolute necessity. We fall into misinterpretation when we err in understanding the Hebrew or Greek words that compose the original Scripture itself, supposing them to mean something the ancient writer never intended, simply because the English words of our Bible translations might be so construed. We grievously err in our interpretation when we interpret figurative language literally; we likewise err when we interpret literal language figuratively.

The authority of Scripture requires that in whatever the author meant to say by the words he used, he presents us with the truth of God, without any admixture of error. As such it is binding on our minds and consciences, and we can reject or evade its teaching only at the peril of our souls.

## OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It has often been observed by careful students of the Bible that a certain number of the Old Testament passages quoted in the New are not quoted with literal exactness. Often this is accounted for by the fact that a completely literal translation of Hebrew does not make clear sense in Greek, and therefore some minor adjustments must be made for the sake of good communication. But there are a few instances where the rewording amounts to a sort of loose paraphrase. Particularly is this true in the case of quotations from the Septuagint (the translation into Greek of the entire Old Testament by Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, during the third and second centuries B.C.). For the most part, the Septuagint is quite faithful to the Hebrew wording in the Old Testament, but in a small number of instances there are noticeable deviations in the mode of expressing the thought, even though there may be no essential difference in the thought itself.

Some scholars have drawn the conclusion from such deviations that the New Testament authors could not have held to the theory of verbal inspiration; otherwise they would have gone back to the Hebrew text and done a meticulously exact translation of their own as they rendered that text into Greek. It has even been argued that the occasional use of an inexact Septuagint rendering in a New Testament quotation demonstrates a rejection of inerrancy on the part of the apostolic authors themselves. Their inclusion of the Septuagint quotations that contain elements of inexactitude would seem to indicate a cavalier attitude toward the whole matter of inerrancy. On the basis of inference from the phenomena of Scripture itself, it is therefore argued that the Bible makes no claim to inerrancy.

To this line of reasoning we make the following reply. The very reason for using the Septuagint was rooted in the missionary outreach of the evangelists and apostles of the early church. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament had already found its way into every city of the Roman Empire to which the Jews of the Dispersion had gone. This was virtually the only form of the Old Testament in the hands of Jewish believers outside Palestine, and it was certainly the only form available for gentile converts to the Jewish faith or Christianity. The apostles were propagating a Gospel that presented Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the messianic promises of the Old Testament. Their audiences throughout the Near East and the Mediterranean world were told that

they had only to consult the Old Testament to verify the truth of the apostolic claims that Jesus in his person and by his work had fulfilled the promises of God. Had the New Testament authors quoted these promises in any other form than the wording of the Septuagint, they would have engendered uncertainty and doubt in the minds of their hearers. For as they checked their Old Testament, the readers would have noticed the discrepancies at once—minor though they may have been—and they would with one voice have objected, “But that isn’t the way I read it in my Bible!” The apostles and their Jewish co-workers from Palestine may have been well-equipped to do their own original translation from the Hebrew original. But they would have been ill-advised to substitute their own more literal rendering for that form of the Old Testament that was already in the hands of their public. They really had little choice but to keep largely to the Septuagint in all their quotations of the Old Testament.

On the other hand, the special Hebrew-Christian audience to which the evangelist Matthew addressed himself—and even more notably the recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews—did not require such a constant adherence to the Septuagint as was necessary for a gentile readership. Hence Matthew and Hebrews often quote from the Old Testament in a non-Septuagintal form, normally in a form somewhat closer to the wording of the Hebrew original. And it should also be observed that in some cases, at least, these Greek renderings (whether Septuagintal or not) point to a variant reading in the original form of the text that is better than the one that has come down to us in the standard Hebrew Bible. It should be carefully noted that none of this yields any evidence whatever of carelessness or disregard on the part of the apostles in respect to the exact wording of the original Hebrew. Far from it. In some instances Christ himself based his teaching on a careful exegesis of the exact reading in the Torah. For example, he pointed out in Matthew 22:32 the implications of Exodus 3:6 (“*I am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”) on the basis of the present tense implied by the verbless clause in Hebrew. He declared that God would not have spoken of himself as the God of mere corpses moldering in the grave (“He is not God of the dead, but of the living”). Therefore Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must have been alive and well in the life beyond at the time when God addressed Moses at the burning bush four or five centuries after they had died. Similarly his



discussion with the Pharisees concerning the identity of the one referred to as "my lord" in Psalm 110:1 really turned upon the exact terms used in that clause or sentence. He therefore asked them, "If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. 22:45). In other words, the Messiah must not only be David's lineal descendant, but he must also be his divine Lord (*kyrios*)!

Returning, then, to the apostolic use of the Septuagint, we find that this line of reasoning (that inexact quotations imply a low view of the Bible) is really without foundation. All of us employ standard translations of the Bible in our teaching and preaching, even those of us who are thoroughly conversant with the Greek and Hebrew originals of Scripture. But our use of any translation in English, French, or any other modern language by no means implies that we have abandoned a belief in Scriptural inerrancy, even though some errors of translation appear in every one of those modern versions. We use these standard translations in order to teach our readership in terms they can verify from the Bibles they have in their own homes. But most of us are careful to point out to them that the only final authority as to the meaning of Scripture is the wording of the original languages themselves. There is no infallible translation. But this involves no surrender of the conviction that the original manuscripts of Scripture were free from all error. We must therefore conclude that the New Testament use of the Septuagint implies nothing against verbal inspiration or Scriptural inerrancy.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, we are left with no defensible middle ground. No reasonable alternative is left but to reduce the Bible to the status of a mixture of truth and error requiring the validation of its truth by human reason or else to take our stand with Jesus Christ and the apostles in a full acceptance of the infallible, inerrant authority of the original autographs.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Frederick G. Kenyon, *Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the Greek Bible* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 74-76.

<sup>2</sup>L. Gaussen, *Theopneustia: The Bible, Its Divine Origin and Inspiration*, trans. by David D. Scott (Cincinnati, Boston, and New York: Blanchard, 1859).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 67.