

How We Got the Bible

Inspiration, Transmission, Selection, Canonization



Introduction:

The Bible did not drop out of heaven as a finished product. It did not originate in King James English. It was not written by God's own finger, yet for centuries people have recognized within its words a word from God. The history of the text is long and convoluted, but it starts with events of divine revelation, their transmission, preservation, and recounting. After a survey of some of these aspects, we will look at our concepts of inspiration to see how to better understand God's hand in this process.¹

Tradition and Oral Transmission:

Since God used human beings to pass His message to humanity, it is necessary to understand something of the process through which the Bible came to be in its current form. It is good for the reader to know something about the authors and the processes of redaction of the Biblical text, in order to understand better the transmitted message.¹ The Old Testament writers, up to the event of the Exodus, offer interpretations of the events described, not having lived through the events themselves.² The Bible comes to its present form through a rich history of preservation and transmission, including both written and oral forms of composition. (Certainly oral traditions were preserved for long periods before being entrusted predominantly to written form.)³

This does not at all mean that these oral traditions should be considered untrustworthy. A people accustomed to oral tradition utilizes various resources to maintain the integrity of that tradition. This is nothing like the "gossip" game, in which each participant whispers to the next what was received as a whisper. The game has as its objective to show how an original message can be distorted when care is not taken to guard the transmission. Oral traditions, on the other hand, are zealously guarded using various linguistic means to protect their integrity.

An oral tradition people guards her traditions to keep them faithful, often having official storytellers, whose primary function is to maintain the narratives of the people. These narrative traditions offer norms for the people's history, religion, and its basic perspectives on the world in which they live. It is not about badly overheard conversation, nor questions that lack importance to the people, but narratives heard over and over again and imbued with great import. Without having a culture of oral tradition, North American soldiers imprisoned during wars in the 20th century attested to being able to reconstruct the major part of the gospels from their fallible memories, without the use of any written text, because they had heard the stories many times and deemed them important.

¹ The bulk of this study is drawn from, *Narrative Theology and Homiletics*, available at <http://www.theotrek.org/resources/theology.shtml>. An 8-page edition is available as http://www.theotrek.org/resources/th/2007_How_We_Got_the_Bible-brief.pdf
http://www.theotrek.org/resources/th/2007_How_We_Got_the_Bible.pdf © Copyright 2006 Christopher B. Harbin page 1 of 19

Even an uneducated but practicing Arab will easily know the Koran off by heart, and before the Nazi extermination of the Jews[†] in Eastern Europe it was easy to find people, often in menial occupations, who knew by heart not only the whole of the Old Testament but a large part of the Talmud!⁴

At some point, oral traditions were put into written form. Even if the redactional forms of the oral traditions have a much later date than their historical origin (some would point to the final form of Hebrew text being formalized as late as the second century),⁵ this does not imply that they are not trustworthy—especially as their preservation and transmission used both oral and written forms for preservation and transmission. It is doubtful that Biblical literature could have survived the catastrophes undergone by the Jews[†] in 587 BC and 70 AD,⁶ if it were not for their having been entrusted both to written forms and memory. This double form of transmission (oral and written) made possible its transmission until the present day. “...It had been zealously kept in the minds of those responsible for it, even if the material thus passed through a complex process of redaction,”⁷ until achieving the form we know today.

Authorship:

For many centuries it was almost uniformly affirmed that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, though there were voices of dissention. As early as the second century, Irineus, one of the noted fathers of the Church, began to question the avowals of such authorship. The majority of tradition continued affirming mosaic authorship, though various Church fathers continued Irineus’ line of questioning, including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, and Jerome (the translator of the Latin version of the Bible, called the Vulgate).⁸ The question as to designating specific human authorship of many books of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, has been growing stronger since the 1600’s.

The difficulty with determining human authorship originates in the fact that for the Hebrews[†] (as for other peoples of the period) specific authorship of a literary work did not have the same importance that it has today. “In the ancient Near East, an ‘author’ was basically a preserver of the past, limiting himself to the use of traditional materials and methods. ‘Literature’ was more community than private property,”⁹ especially in reference to the type of material found in the Old Testament.

Ancient Near Eastern peoples often attributed authorship of commissioned or dedicated works to their kings. This may also have been the case of some of the Psalms being attributed to David and the book of Proverbs being attributed to Solomon. The attributions in the titles of the Psalms are not part of the Biblical text per se, being editorial additions that reflect ecclesiastical traditions.¹⁰ In these cases, the written text is generally proclaimed to be “of” one person, not due to that individual having written the text, but because they are an important figure to it, whether in commissioning, theme, or as principle character. Centuries after the writing of the majority of the books of the Old Testament, some concern arose with identifying the human sources behind these books. This concern, however, has not always existed.

Traditionally, mosaic authorship has been attributed to the Pentateuch and many today insist on this affirmation. The bases for this attribution, however, are not the most trustworthy. The problem lies with the original lack of concern to identify the human sources and with the oral transmission history of the narratives. I should point out that much more important than making a specific authorial designation

is identifying the action and the Word of God within and behind the text. “For it matters not with what pen the King writes his letter, if it be true that he writ it.”¹¹

While certain traditions affirm that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, the great majority of scholars deny such affirmation. “The notion that Moses is the chief author of the Pentateuch is supported only by tradition, not by the Old Testament itself.”¹² One should note that the New Testament indicates at least a strong connection between Moses and the Pentateuch, but it is more difficult to define with precision the specifics of that connection. Without a doubt, the Pentateuch has a strong connection to the person of Moses. The existing doubts fall upon Moses' direct authorship of these books.

The search to identify human authorship of the books of the Bible took apologists the route of looking for ancient documentation of authorship. The earliest known statement of mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is in the Talmud. Initially, this statement was accepted as reliable for reflecting ancient tradition. In this Talmudic reference, Baba Bathra answers his own question regarding authorship of the Biblical books:

*Moses wrote his book and the section of Balaam (Num. xxiii. f.) and Job. Joshua wrote his book and the last eight verses of Deuteronomy (narrating the death of Moses). Samuel wrote his book, Judges and Ruth. David wrote the Psalms with the collaboration of ten elders, viz. Adam (Ps. cxxxix), Melchizedek (cx), Abraham (lxxxix), Moses (xc-c), Heman (lxxxviii), Jeduthun (xxxix, lxii, lxxvii), Asaph (l., lxxxvii f.). Jeremiah wrote his book, Kings, and Lamentations. Hezekiah and his associates wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. The men of the Great Assembly wrote Ezekiel, the Twelve, Daniel, and Esther. Ezra wrote his book and the genealogy of Chronicles down to himself and Nehemiah completed it.*¹³

Though the Talmudic reference is ancient, there is reason to question this defense for mosaic authorship, whatever its sources may have been. There is other literature from the period of the Talmud that claimed authorship of prophets that were already deceased.

Price mentions various peculiarities in the Talmudic citation, such as the death of Samuel as registered in 1st Samuel 25, with the remaining chapters and the following volume yet to be written.¹⁴ The Talmudic declaration does not appear very solid with reference to authorship. Critics have added another set of concerns with mosaic authorship on the basis of looking at textual problems in the Pentateuch with reference to Mosaic authorship, including the following verses: Genesis 12:6; 14:14; 23:3; 34:5-6; 35:4; 36:31-39; Exodus 16:35; Numbers 12:3; Deuteronomy 1:1; 2:12; 3:14; and 31:9.¹⁵ There are also concerns with the physical constraints on the preservation and carrying of texts most likely inscribed on clay tablets.¹⁶

Beyond Talmudic reference to mosaic authorship, some have pointed to New Testament citations linking Moses with the Pentateuch. These verses do not necessarily reference authorship, but they do trace a relationship between Moses and the instruction presented in the Pentateuch. These highlight the fact that Pentateuchal material stems largely from Moses, without regard to the exact manner in which it was transmitted. Saying that Moses said thus and so would be a simple way to reference a mosaic origin behind the account by another writer, for this writer preserved for the present generation God's revelation given through Moses.

It is customary to read the title of books that use the name of a prophet as a specific attribution of authorship, but this really does “not imply that they contain just the words of Amos and Hosea, but also

words about, and in the tradition of, the prophet.”¹⁷ In identifying the Pentateuch with Moses, the New Testament “seems to suggest that in Genesis there is a relationship of resemblance between the substantive content and the external final form”¹⁸ of the Pentateuch.¹⁹ This would mean that the final form did not come directly from the hand of Moses, but that the transmission is coherent with what Moses had transmitted in his time. In other words, one affirms “that the participation of Moses in the production of the Pentateuch was highly formative, even though it is not probable that he wrote the Pentateuch in the final form in which it now exists.”²⁰

The Genesis text, for example, came into its current form through a long and rich process of transmission extending back long before the time of Moses,²¹ the known textual form possibly having been scripted in or after the time of Solomon. Even if the transmission took centuries before being committed to writing, the essence transmitted is coherent with the testimony of Moses, although it would have suffered editorial modifications throughout the centuries. “Since Genesis and the Pentateuch are anonymous, we cannot prove Mosaic authorship as a whole, especially for Genesis, which describes events that antedate the time of the lawgiver. Nevertheless, it is defensible from both internal and external evidence that the Pentateuch is Mosaic.”²²

The information and witness transmitted reliably declares the activity of God as related in the narratives. One could say that these ancient traditions “are clearer and more complete than any others in the ancient world.”²³ Thus, as Kidner mentions, Genesis 36:31 can speak of kings in Israel, even though there was no thought of a king in the time of Moses, and Genesis 14.14 can reference the borders of tribes far before the divisions had been made,²⁴ for the final form of the text inserts explanations into the transmitted material in order to preserve better understanding on the part of the hearers of the new period.

Many theories have been formulated to define the manner of human participation in the origin of these texts. One should not overvalue authorial traditions, especially when the very texts give no emphasis to the human aspect of their origins. In final analysis, it is not the human instrument that is essentially important in the narratives. In general, the very author or human actors in the accounts are also not of great importance. The Biblical message concerns the action and identity of God, not of humanity.²⁵ The very people did not credit much importance to identifying authorship, such that the first known definitions were made centuries after the text had been written.

Predominant theories among scholars of late regarding authorship questions deal with sources or oral traditions behind the current form of the text. The basic character of these sources or traditions is that of liturgical expression,²⁶ following special emphases among them. These sources are referenced as “J” (Yahwistic source or line of tradition that uses predominantly the personal name of God—*YHWH* (יהוה)—in the text); “P” (source/tradition that follows a priestly line of thought); “E” (source/tradition that like P uses with predominance the term *Elohim* for God); and “D” (source/tradition related especially to the transmission of the book of Deuteronomy).²⁷

No attempt is being made here to withdraw the connection between the content and Old Testament characters such as Moses,²⁸ but rather to help the reader gain a broader understanding of the multiform manner in which this witness to God was passed throughout generations until it came into its present form. It has a rich transmission and preservation history to be valued, going back beyond Moses. “The Pentateuch was not written by one person in a specific decade,” but was produced by a “community of

faithful” through the centuries.²⁹ The text was written by the people of YHWH, not by isolated individuals.

Knowing something of the traditions behind the text helps with some aspects of its comprehension, but it is not the main concern. **The main task is to give prominence to the final form of the text as preserved and transmitted.** It is the canonized text that matters—the current textual form. This is a complete literary work, demanding to be read as a whole.³⁰

The canonization of the current form should warn the reader to focus attention on the final text. “Whatever may have been the process of its transmission and development or the date in which it received its present form, the final creation has supreme importance.”³¹ The search for details in the transmission history behind the text is only of worth as it explains the importance of the canonized text. This effort will never identify with precision the human author, especially as there is no longer access to the original source material. In human terms, it is simply an anonymous work³² revealing the Word of God.

History:

As Calvin attempted to do in all his exegetical work, it is necessary to seek to rescue the intent of the authors in our study of the Bible.³³ Defining the intent of a Biblical passage depends upon the purpose of the inspired author. The essential purpose of the Biblical text is theological.³⁴ It is worth mentioning as well that its purpose is not to point to all the details of the historical events, but to YHWH (יהוה) who is behind these events. “The Old Testament is not a textbook of history, it was never designed to be. History is merely incidental to the writer’s real purpose.”³⁵

As Francisco has highlighted, the character of Biblical history is very different from current styles of historiography. In place of a chronicle of facts devoid of interpretation, the Biblical accounts are more precisely theological interpretations of narrated events. “Although they were reporting on actual events, their chief interest concerned the significance of these facts to the individual and the race. Present historians report; Old Testament historians exhorted.”³⁶

The history of the people of God is the framework for the Biblical narratives, not their central concern. They point to God—God’s identity, purpose, and action—not to people and events. The primary interest of the text is to bring attention to God’s dealings with humanity. God is the principle protagonist throughout.³⁷ At the same time, one must remember that history is always an interpretation of events.³⁸ Current historiographers are recognizing this aspect of interpretation in history writing, though on a popular level history is dealt with as an objective description of events.

Some Biblical texts are more clearly retouches of historical events as opposed to precise chronicles. Among these, Exodus 15.1-18 and Luke 1:46-55 stand out as recastings of speech, perceptible in the literary detail of the poetry. Instead of spontaneous expressions of rejoicing by Moses and the people, and the spontaneous exclamation of Mary (a youth of about fourteen years of age³⁹), we encounter polished literary works.

In addition, in Genesis 9.16 we find an interruption of the account of God's covenant, which appears to be a hearer response of claiming God's promise for the worshipping community.⁴⁰ Among many other details, these make the accounts much more than mere chronicles of events in history. These texts are interpretations of real events, but dealt with from a perspective of intense theological reflection and inspiration in later times. In historical-scientific terms, we actually have little precise historical records regarding ancient Israel external to the Biblical documents. This is due mainly to Israel playing a very small part in relation to the neighboring peoples.⁴¹ In the first eleven chapters of Genesis, from the perspective of a historiographer, there is virtually no precise historical information. The mention of a group of ancient peoples (chapters 10-11) is the only precise identification of historical particularity for a historiographer.⁴² The Biblical witness does not appear to have much interest in precision of details. Even Calvin argued thus in his commentary on Acts, demonstrating that the message of the text is not compromised by a simple distortion of historical details.⁴³ These facts may be of certain import, but they are not indispensable to the message of the text. They also do not alter the fact that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

There is essentially nothing to impede acceptance of the historicity of narrated events such as the Exodus—in relation to historical verifiability, the event is plausible. At the same time, there is currently no way to prove or historically confirm any aspect of the Exodus event apart from Biblical witness.⁴⁴ There is simply no external confirmation of the events recorded in the Biblical record. This is in part due to the fact that the overall purpose of the Biblical narratives is not the presentation of history. The Biblical narratives seek to preserve a series of liturgical traditions to encourage confidence in God.⁴⁵ As the Bible remembers events in history, it presents their revelational character, whereby *YHWH* communicated more clearly with the people, thus revealing His presence.⁴⁶ It is much more valuable to appreciate the narratives as theological literature that present their teaching in the shape of history.⁴⁷ The historical information is trustworthy, but it is accidental to the theological purpose of the narratives.

In ancient Mesopotamia, it was common for kings (actually, their scribes) to embellish their historical records in order to present events more positively than realistically. They raved about their victories and ignored their defeats. Something very different happens with the Hebrew narratives. These records are different. They have religious essence to them, but in reference to history, there appears to be special interest in pointing specifically to their own failings and weaknesses, even to a grievous degree. For these and other reasons, the Hebrew records appear trustworthier than the arrogance of their neighbors writing about Israel.⁴⁸

Consequently, the narratives of the Old Testament relate their themes in historical parameters, but history is not their interest. Reading the Bible with undue emphasis on history, therefore, is to lose its significance as the inspired Word of God.⁴⁹ Theological concerns related to the historical events are of much greater importance than the specific details of the events recorded.⁵⁰ It is with an eye to these theological concerns that purpose of the narratives should be understood and interpreted.

Purpose of the Narratives:

The Biblical narratives were transmitted according to defined purposes, but not in accordance with the aims of historiography. The point of the narratives did not include furnishing complete details of the events narrated, nor answering the current reader's doubts and curiosities regarding the past. The

fundamental purpose of the narratives is to highlight how the people found themselves within the plans of God, revealing God's identity and humanity's responsibility before the Creator.

It is this intent of the author, the purpose in writing, which gives the narrative a specific interpretative identity. If one's interpretation of the text does not closely follow the control of rescuing the intentional purpose of God acting through the inspired writing of the text, one's interpretation has no solid basis, becoming an imposition upon the text.⁵¹ **The concern of the Biblical interpreter, therefore, must be to rescue the intentional purpose of the Biblical narratives, for this is the only appropriate control for interpretation.**⁵²

When the narratives deal with history, their purpose is to achieve another end. "By no means is [the narrative] the product of free-ranging fantasy, ... [even though] it does not feel bound by the modern demand for exactness."⁵³ The narrative is concerned with relating the action of God within the history of the people. Though the narrative normally relates historical facts,⁵⁴ it concentrates on accentuating the identity of the God behind these facts.⁵⁵

Israel did not leave a simple chronicle of the events of her history in these texts. She also did not leave a biased history to show the positive aspects of her origins, as was the practice of her neighbors. Her narratives go much beyond history, looking to the reasons and causes behind her context within the events of her past, ascertaining Divine intervention in her History. In her presentation, Israel chose among many known events, recording only those events and people important for the purpose at hand.⁵⁶

While the interest of the narratives is theological, there are not many doctrinal propositions declared in the Old Testament in terms of lists or systematic treatments. These principles are generally expressed through narratives that reveal the character of *YHWH* (יהוה), often in contrast with human character. They are narratives with cosmic consequences, and yet they are narratives.⁵⁷ "Israelite belief is not so much interested in definitions as in history,⁵⁸ and it is therefore, in history, that is in action, that Israel gained its religious experience. God is not therefore defined in formulae of a catechetical kind, but is confessed for what he has done."⁵⁹ In respect, God is the principle actor in the narratives—the only true hero of Israel.⁶⁰ In terms of the New Testament, the same is true, just as described by Luke in Acts 1:1-2.⁶¹

There were heroes among the people, but "it is not their exploits that are sung as much as it is the praises of Yahweh, who enabled them to win the victory. In Israel the primary concern is always the glorification of God."⁶² Even these heroes appear as weak, faulty, and imperfect instruments that become great only through the intervention and grace of *YHWH*. After all, the narratives concern *YHWH*, and not *YHWH*'s human instruments.

This action of *YHWH* within the history of the people highlights God's initiative for rescuing fallen humanity.⁶³ The narrators are not interested in human action and history, but divine saving initiative.⁶⁴ The Biblical narrative proposes to narrate the history of God, although it may use events involving the Hebrews[†]. Our interpretational emphasis, therefore, must, "fall on the grace of God in helping Israel, the redemptive attitude which spontaneously prompts Him to come to Israel's need."⁶⁵ The narrative is an invitation to an encounter with *YHWH*, God, the Creator of the Universe. This same God seeks after humanity, calling for people to turn from their paths of sin, to life lives of righteousness in fellowship with their Creator.

YHWH called the patriarchs, men who would have been insignificant in the ancient world, giving such value to them as to bless the nations through their lives and offspring.⁶⁶ The narratives do not simply present Israel as being the special people of YHWH, but YHWH as “the living and ever-active God of Israel, visible in history as its Savior and Redeemer as well as its Judge.”⁶⁷ The narratives seek, therefore to present this actor, revealing the identity and special interest of YHWH in creating a people for Himself.⁶⁸

Inspiration:

The concept of inspiration is rather complex, demanding various angles and stages of analysis. One generally deals with the idea of inspiration in a manner limited to the textual redaction of the Bible. I will work with a definition that encompasses revelational events, transmission and retransmission of their accounting, alterations in the accounts, selection of oral and written records for exclusion or inclusion in retransmission efforts, along with the acceptance, protection, and retransmission of the inspired material expressing its revelational quality. “The entire process must be seen in light of the creative work of God among his people.”⁶⁹

One sees in the narratives divine inspiration in the call of YHWH (יהוה) for the people to encounter the God of Israel. “This capacity for discerning the divine plan within history beyond events is what distinguishes a ‘sacred’ author in the Old Testament from any other kind of writer....”⁷⁰ “Israel and, later, the Christian Church valued these books collectively as a holy and divine book.... In the words of this ‘Word,’ the voice of God was heard.”⁷¹ It is possible, therefore, to see how the narratives contained in this book “have been transformed by the Biblical narrators into testimonies to the redeeming work of God.”⁷²

The writers claimed... that they felt themselves under divine imperative. They had a holy obligation to speak that which many times was contrary to their own interests and desires, ... but they had to speak. ...They claimed to be in direct succession of those earlier words, as well as being contributors to the additional development and expanded promise for the future!⁷³

In these accounts one finds that the process of textual inspiration encompasses the divine impulse upon the author, as well as the process whereby the people ignored other accounts that did not reveal the intentions and actions of God as clearly as did the narratives preserved.⁷⁴ “In fact, there are twenty-four books quoted and referred to by name in the Old Testament which are unknown today.”⁷⁵ In relation to the New Testament, we have record of more than 40 gospels written in the first two centuries, yet only four were included in the Biblical canon.

The books preserved attest greater trustworthiness than those others in revealing God’s action, not in revealing increased historical or scientific information. We find narratives such as that of Cain, in which questions arise regarding his wife, but the text has no interest in the subject. It is necessary to accept that the Biblical narratives do not seek to preserve the details regarding the events they relate. They preserve that which helps one understand the action of God in the midst of humanity.

Some claim that Biblical inspiration is inseparably related to infallibility (often defined as exemption from any type of error), yet then go on to limit infallibility to the original manuscripts (called the autographs). Some claim that God could not have inspired these if they contained any kind of error.⁷⁶ This argument,

however, has a basis in human logic, not in any Biblical specification. The logic presents its own problems, for if it were necessary for the autographs to be completely absent of any error to be deemed inspired, then a copy would also need to obey the same criterion to correctly express the divinely inspired message. The logic also fails, as there are no extant autographs.

The drafting of the Biblical books was not as simple a process as that pointed to in recourse to the “autographs.” The book of Daniel, for instance, suffered various well-attested modifications as seen in varying versions in Greek, Syriac[†], Aramaic[†], and Hebrew. Two Greek versions contain passages not included in the Masoretic Hebrew text, but included in the apocryphal versions of the book. It is not possible at this point to determine whether the book’s original composition was in Aramaic[†], Hebrew, or a combination of the two. As the extant versions of the book are so distinct, to claim infallible authority of the original manuscript generates much more confusion than it solves. It would become necessary to define which edition of the text is being referenced and then seek its autograph, for the version that was canonized is not necessarily the original edition!⁷⁷ What matters most is that the accepted version was canonized, showing that the people of God recognized in these words the Word of God.

What some apparently overlook is that the type of “error” that such an ancient text presents has much more to do with concepts in conflict with modern science and not in the presentation of its theological message.⁷⁸ This in reality is no serious error in any sense, as the Biblical objective is neither scientific, not historical in character. On the other hand, the narratives reach their objectives independently of any need for millimetric precision. What one finds, therefore, is the type of “error” to which Calvin refers in his comments on Acts chapter seven (In Acts 7, Stephen misreads Genesis 46:27 in regard to how many individuals left Egypt.).⁷⁹

On the other hand, the church has a canon due to recognition that the books in the Bible are truly God’s Word, as opposed to history or science.⁸⁰ These books do not claim absence of scientific and historical errors, but present witness to the Word of God. This is what the people of God recognized and approved—the message of God to the people, transmitted through God’s spokespersons, the prophets. The people of God recognized the inspired word and transmitted these Scriptures after this recognition, the process being in part a community action of the people of God.⁸¹ This inspired word is theological, not scientific, nor historical. It is this theological center that exerts authority over the church.

Regardless, the conclusion will be the same regarding the authority of these inspired works. As Archer affirms, the Bible claims its own authority,⁸² but it does not claim infallibility, especially of scientific precision regarding every topic. Its writers were not worried with such concepts.⁸³ The Bible teaches about the reality of God, God’s identity, God’s grace, and will for humanity—it is the supreme authority for questions of theology. The matter of scientific knowledge does not interfere with the inspired authority of the Bible. Its purpose never was to teach science or history. Its purpose was always to reveal God’s action, identity, character, and purpose among the people and humanity in general. After all, current scientific thought will be considered bypassed and erroneous in a few years, for it depends on an accumulated year by year development, including casting off discarded concepts.⁸⁴

Many wish to hold to texts such as 2nd Timothy 3:16 to affirm not only the breathing of God in the Scriptures, but also to define inspiration as God’s pronouncing word for word what the Biblical authors should write. One should remember, however, that the sense of the Greek text of this verse does not lend to such a precise definition of the mode of inspiration. The Greek phrase does not contain any verb

to identify the form of inspiration, nor even a specific indication of the writings in question.⁸⁵ The term used here is not properly a term for “inspired,” but “Divinely breathed” (qeopneusto”).

One could translate this text [translates] as “All Scripture is divinely breathed and...”, as well as “All Scripture divinely breathed is...”, or yet “All Scripture divinely breathed and worthwhile for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for education in righteousness.” Another possibility would be to read the text in the sense of “All Scripture divinely breathed and divinely profitable for....” Beyond not knowing exactly how best to translate the verse, it is the only occurrence of the Greek term “divinely breathed” used in the Bible. Given the interpretational difficulties, one begins with an uncertain basis in this text from which to deal with the concept.

Another passage generally pointed to in discussions of inspiration also exhibits interpretational difficulties, specifically in terms of inspiration. 2nd Peter 1:20-21 clearly deals with prophecy as coming from God. “touto prwton ginwskonte" oti pasa profhteia grafh" idia" epilusew" ouj ginetai: ²¹ouj gar qelhmati aqrwpou hnerqh profhteia potev ajlla; upo; pneumato" abiou feromenoi ej alhsan apo; qeou aqrwpoi” (“this first knowing that all prophecy written of particular interpretation does not come. For not of human will was brought prophecy ever, but under the Breath of the Holy One being guided, spoke from God men”).⁸⁶ The text is very intelligible; its only interpretational difficulty is that it does not explain the form of inspiration to which it refers. The writer places the prophets in the role of spokespersons for the written prophecy, or that they were guided as a boat by the wind.⁸⁷

Grudem points to some other passages that go so far as referring to certain words as the very words of God,⁸⁸ but these passages are too restrictive to be taken as blanket definitions of the whole of Biblical inspiration. In general, the basis for the defense of a verbal inspiration is philosophical and rational, not essentially Biblical. Proponents appeal to logic and concepts of epistemology to make their defense, not to a Biblical foundation.

One’s comprehension of the concept of inspiration should deal with issues such as Luke’s research in seeking ocular witnesses to serve as oral sources for the writing of his gospel. It needs to account for oral traditions and other possible antecedents to the current form of the Old Testament, especially with regard to events before the time of Moses. “In essence, a Biblical doctrine of inspiration worries more with the product than with the process; it does not deal with theories, whether psychological or of any other kind, as for example the manner in which inspiration occurred.”⁸⁹

In theological practice, one deals with levels of inspiration, as is apparent in the elaboration or recognition of the canon of Scripture. The very process of canonization reveals something of the differing levels of inspiration among the books. People debated the inclusion of the book of Esther until the second century.⁹⁰ This book almost did not make the list of canonized books, in part due to never referencing God. The narrative has a secular perspective and contains no mention of God, not even an indication that the people were the people of God. For the major reformers, certain New Testament epistles did not demand the same authority as others. Luther went so far, as to place James, Hebrews, Jude and Revelation in a position of secondary interest to the other books that “proclaimed Christ clearly.”⁹¹ Luther might be an extreme case, but the practice of many Christians is not much different from his. An adequate elaboration of the concept of the inspiration of Scripture should be broad enough to deal with these issues of levels of inspiration, at least in terms of human appreciation of the inspired message.⁹²

Traditions of the Hebrews[†] and Their Neighbors:

The inspiration of the Old Testament is in a sense related to the literature of the neighbors around the Hebrew[†] people. The Hebrews[†] held certain concepts in common with their neighbors, some of their narratives even being parallels, such as that of the flood. At the same time, however, they countered many of the religious ideas held by their neighbors.⁹³ These counterpoints are what mostly stand out in the comparison between the Genesis narratives and their parallels among the surrounding peoples.⁹⁴

To some extent, "...the most adequate way of attempting to describe the concept of inspiration in the Old Testament is probably that of asking: in what way does the Biblical narrative differ from the narratives of the same literary genre among neighboring peoples?"⁹⁵ The Hebrews[†] shared many ideas about the world with the peoples around them. Their narratives often deal with common motifs between themselves and their neighbors, but the Hebrew[†] treatment of these questions is different at many points.

There was a certain flux of ideas between the Hebrews[†] and neighboring peoples regarding the world and supernatural realities. These nations were not isolated, for in many respects their cultures participated of one context. Part of the exchange of ideas was a result of the ongoing conflicts among these nations. In many ways the Hebrews[†] strongly rejected external influence in theology, but not completely. As it is generally held that the Pentateuch received its final structure in the context of Babylonian exile, a response to Babylonian concepts was of extreme urgency for the people of God, even more so in this period.

Some have seen external influence not only as constant, but also as intense. There was enough influence to demand constant defense against the pressure to succumb to neighboring religions.⁹⁶ Some have seen this influence reflected in portions of the Scriptures (*i.e.* Exodus 15.11 speaking of the existence of other gods) reflecting practices and religious concepts closer to those of neighboring peoples than of Israel.⁹⁷ This influence is more significant, however in its differences than in its similarities. The Hebrew[†] reaction was to give ardent apology to these foreign concepts, even if many of them originated in a common past.⁹⁸

The substance and the demystified quality of the Old Testament narrative react in perceptible contrast to the accounts of neighboring people. The Hebrew[†] understanding of the action and identity of YHWH reacts severely to the positions presented by other peoples. One Egyptian mythological account serves to illustrate the magnitude of the divergence between the Hebrew[†] narratives and neighboring mythologies, in terms of descriptive content, thematic quality, and theological character:

From Egypt came the myth of Isis[†] and Osiris[†], according to which the god Seth[†] had killed and quartered Osiris[†], and afterwards had scattered his members over all Egypt. Isis[†], the wife of Osiris[†], had collected them and given new life to Osiris[†], but the genital organs of Osiris[†] had fallen in the Nile, and for this reason the Nile is the fountain of fertility for all Egypt.⁹⁹

There were theological influences from the other peoples behind certain accounts, whether directly or indirectly. In the context of the pagan religious plurality within which the Hebrew[†] lived, at times the inspired narrative even contains roots in the existing accounts that were then modified to express the true identity of YHWH. Thus in the creation account, the Hebrew[†] narrator took the concept regarding creation as the result of a cosmic battles between the gods and retold the story with a completely different focus and purpose.

Inspired by the Creator, the Hebrew[†] narrators abandoned pagan mythological elements that reflected polytheistic and other inadequate theological concepts and presented a narrative that centralized the action and identity of *YHWH*. The expression of the Hebrew[†] cosmological concept demystifies the created world in contrast to the pantheistic and polytheistic concepts of neighboring peoples.¹⁰⁰ The teaching of this narrative is expressly theological and not scientific. It reacts not against secularized scientific accounts of the origin of the world, but against the religious constructs of its own age.¹⁰¹

In these differences, the Hebrews[†] defined limits for external influences, thus retaining the essential principles of faith and revelation of God. As can be seen in the account of creation in Genesis 1:1-2:4a, the divergence introduces the concept of creation by an only God, [who is] distinct from creation and intentional in purpose. Some understanding of the perspectives of neighboring peoples is, therefore, helpful to aid comprehension of the theological principles that *YHWH*'s mouthpieces were highlighting.

A study of scientific, mythological, and theological perspectives of the Hebrews'[†] neighbors helps to clarify the intent of the inspired Biblical narrators. Since the Biblical interpreter has as primary objective to identify that which the author intended to transmit, one needs to understand the associations inherent in the writers' choice of wording.¹⁰² The associations made are correlated to certain external influences, and can offer definitions of terminology as well as aid in understanding and critiquing popular perspectives.

Thus, the narrator of Genesis chapter 3 can speak of the "tree of life" with no need to explain, for it was an accepted symbol that was already understood by the audience. The narrator of the flood does not need to mention that others saw the flood as the gods' answer to the overpopulation of the world, for the people already knew of that concept. The narrator of the Babel account did not need to explain the identification of the tower with the temple of Esagil in Babylon that purported to reach into heaven.¹⁰³ The people for whom the narratives were written knew these things. Today's reader, however, needs some explanation to understand the original polemical nature of the narratives.¹⁰⁴

Inspiration: Event or Process?

In light of the above discussion, inspiration becomes less of an event and more of a process. It is a process which includes not only the writing of the sacred text, but the very event of revelation and the preservation of the final text. Revelation and inspiration include all of those categories we described above: 1) events of revelation; 2) narrating the revelation; 3) preserving the narration; 4) recognizing revelation in the narration; 5) transmitting and redacting for future generations; 6) making judgments regarding inspiration and revelation; 7) selecting textual traditions for preservation.

In such a complex task, there is bound to be much material that is pushed aside to make room for that which is deemed of greater worth. Who made those selections, and how were they brought about?

Canonization:

The Bible did not drop out of the sky as a black, leather-bound book in King James English. The individual books that compose the Bible did not drop out of the sky, nor did any special list of books that should be preserved and honored as special above and beyond others. How did our list of 66 books come to be? Who determined which texts were worthy of adoption and which should be ignored?

If the process from revelation to final redaction of the individual books is complex, the process of developing a canon is no less. We will look at this process in stages, according to different classes of the literature that made it into the canon. As such, we will look at the Old and New Testaments separately.

Old Testament Canon:

The Old Testament does not contain all of the ancient Hebrew texts that Jews have used as Scripture throughout history. There are some 24 texts mentioned in the Old Testament to which we no longer have access. Other texts were used by some and rejected by others. The Septuagint (the major Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures, 250-150 B.C.E.) does not limit itself to the same list of books we accept, nor that the Jews accept today. For all practical purposes, we have adopted as Protestant Christians the Jewish canon of Hebrew Scriptures as our Old Testament canon. This follows the earliest Christian lists of Old Testament canon, such as that by Mellitus of Sardis around 160 C.E.¹⁰⁵

In Jesus' day, there were three groupings of sacred texts, looked upon as three levels of inspiration: law, prophets, and writings. Law referred to the Pentateuch, Prophets to the historical books as well as the Major and Minor Prophets, and writings referred to the poetic books. The Pentateuch and the Prophets were acclaimed by Jesus' day, probably achieving full acceptance between 180-132 B.C.E. The group called writings was somewhat under debate, especially Esther. Esther never mentions God, or refers to the Jews as the people of *Yahweh*. Of all the Old Testament books, it was the last one to gain acceptance within the canon.

The oldest complete copy of the Hebrew text dates from 1008 C.E. We do, however, have at least partial copies of all the Hebrew Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating from 200 to 70 B.C.E. Most of the textual differences are variances in spelling. The Apocrypha was included in the books translated in the Septuagint. This apparently was the result of attempts to preserve all writings relating to Jewish history, not with any specific designation that all were Scripture. While the Septuagint was in existence during Jesus' day and New Testament authors seem to quote mainly from this Greek-language source, there was yet no defined, closed canon of Hebrew Scriptures. The Jews made that definition standard at a council in Jamnia, around 90 C.E.

While the date of 90 C.E. gives us a fixed point to speak of a closed canon, it must be mentioned that there were still varying editions of the texts in circulation among various communities. The Samaritan community founded around 432 B.C.E. possessed its own version of the Pentateuch, whose archetype dates from about 722 B.C.E. There are some 6000 textual variants between this edition and the Masoretic Text we currently use. In about 1900 cases of these variants, the Samaritan Pentateuch agrees with the Greek Septuagint. The Septuagint also contains certain additions to Ezra, Esther, and Daniel which are included in the Apocrypha, along with the fully Apocryphal books.

Hidden in this process are the other books that were written but never accepted as Scripture. Some two dozen forgotten books are mentioned by name throughout the Old Testament, like the Book of Jashar in Joshua 10:13. Other books like Daniel passed through various revisions and what we now have is a received canonical edition.

Essentially, then, the Old Testament canon was defined in two stages. The Jewish rabbis established the content of the basic canon at Jamnia, around 90 C.E. Later, the Roman Catholic Church incorporated the Apocryphal books into its canon officially in 1546 at the Council of Trent. Prior to that time, they were viewed as something between a second canon and truly canonical from the period of 393 C.E. onward. The Reformers of the 1500's rejected these Apocryphal books, though the original King James Version included them in its translation.

New Testament Canon:

The history of the New Testament canon is more complex, mainly due to the fact that we have more information about the process. We also have a more limited scope of time in which these books were written. Though we still have little information about specific authorship for many New Testament books, the accepted books were written within about the first 100 years after Jesus' earthly ministry.

For Jesus and the disciples, the accepted Bible was the Old Testament, though the canon was not considered closed, *per se*. The books that were eventually canonized as the Hebrew Scriptures were being used as Scripture by Jesus and the other New Testament writers. The major groupings of these texts were known, even if the group of writings was a little fuzzy around the edges.

Along with the Hebrew Scriptures, the early church began handing down oral traditions of Jesus' sayings and actions. These traditions formed part of the basis for the writing of the gospels, though there were oral traditions that were never incorporated in the canonical gospels. Paul mentions oral traditions he had received regarding the Lord's Supper,¹⁰⁶ as well as the phrase "It is more blessed to give than to receive."¹⁰⁷ Luke writes of researching with diligence in preparation for writing his gospel, most likely making use of both written and oral sources for his work.¹⁰⁸

Pauline Corpus:

Paul's letters were the first portion of the New Testament to be written. They were also being collected during Paul's lifetime. 2nd Peter 3:16 mentions such a collection, and Clement of Rome knew of 1st Corinthians and Hebrews in 95 C.E. Other collections of letters circulated in the second century, some by heretical leaders like Marcion, who rejected the Old Testament and the gospels other than parts of Luke with no Old Testament references.¹⁰⁹

In response to Marcion, the Muratorian canon circulated in 170 C. E., including the four gospels, 13 letters of Paul, three letters of John, Jude, and Revelation. Marcion's group of 10 letters circulated before the Muratorian list of 13. As a group, however, they were known and circulated during the second century, the group of 13 taking the place of the group of 10.¹¹⁰

Gospel Corpus:

The second group of writings to circulate was composed of gospels. While the gospels we have were written by the end of the first century, the oral gospel traditions were preferred in large part until about the middle of the second century. Other gospels continued to be written and circulated alongside the four we now know in our Bibles. As no one gospel contained the whole message of Jesus, gospels tended to circulate as collected resources, though certain communities preferred one over the others. One attempt to weave Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John together with other elements of oral tradition circulated as the *Diatessaron* of Tatian (ca. 170).

Around the end of the second century, this collection of gospels was in circulation, though there was some distinction in order of the books. The four we know were in use in the Western Church, while in the Eastern Church the order was Matthew, John, Luke, Mark, and had a preference for the *Diatessaron*. By the middle of the third century, there was broad acceptance of the four gospels as we know them.

Catholic Corpus:

1st Peter and 1st John circulated well in the second and third centuries. The other general epistles (James, 2nd Peter, 2nd John, 3rd John, and Jude) were used in certain regions and ignored in others. They remained in a state of questionable use until the fourth century. As a corpus, they probably began circulating in the third century, though we have mention of them as a group of seven first from Eusebius at the turn of the fourth century.

Acts and Revelation:

Acts began to gain importance at the end of the second century. It was placed in various positions in the canon in different listings, but never before the gospels. Revelation's history was different between the Eastern and Western Churches. In the Western Church, it was widely acclaimed in the second century. Its full recognition did not come until the fourth century.

Other Writings:

The *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* were about as popular as Revelation in the second century. The *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Peter* were accepted by some as having equal authority with any of the other gospels. The letters of 1st Clement and *Barnabas* were often quoted as Scripture. The *Acts of Paul* and the *Didache* (Manual for Church Order) were also held in high esteem by many. Any of these might have been included in the canon, but for various reasons were not.

Canon Definitions:

The fourth century was the period in which serious attempts were made to evaluate early Christian writings as a whole in order to determine which ones should have authority in the church. Various lists like those of Marcion, and the Muratorian Canon circulated. Eusebius classed books in categories of acknowledged, disputed, and heretical. He did not have a firm list of the acknowledged, uncertain as to how to classify Revelation. Other lists included such books as *Barnabas*, *Acts of Paul*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *Apocalypse of Peter*. Listings varied from 22 to 30 accepted books.

Athanasius happened to be the first to circulate a list of our current canon. This listing was simply a note of which books were used as authoritative in the churches of Alexandria. It was only in the ecclesiastical councils of the late fourth and early fifth centuries that a resolution on the issue was reached. This listing was not a decree by a small group, however, so much as a reflection of the usage of texts among the believing communities. In fact, “no ecumenical council of the ancient church ever undertook to define the scope of the canon.”¹¹¹

Conclusion:

As was fact for the church’s use and acceptance of the gospels, the literature in the Bible was canonized as a range of viewpoints. In principle, the material accepted as the Bible is somewhat pluralistic. Rather than presenting one single viewpoint, the various documents work together to present a composite picture from varying perspectives. Unlike the *Diatessaron*, which chose to harmonize four gospel strands, the church chose to retain four gospel presentations to be held together in tension. Each one is a perspective and an interpretation of the gospel. Neither is complete in itself. They work together like the fabric of a cloth to weave a larger picture than any one can present on its own.

The Bible is a collection of writings in which people have heard the Word of God through the centuries. It is in this composite collection that God’s message has been heard and ratified.

New Testament writings were collected not by bishops and councils, but by individuals and groups who chose to preserve various letters or gospels in collections, sharing them with others. Church councils then looked at all the material being circulated and used, describing the listing of documents the believing community had determined spoke credibly for God. Other texts might have been included, yet these were deemed sufficient. Some texts were written off completely.

—*Christopher B. Harbin*

¹ KAISER, *TaET*, 210.

² DAVIDSON, A., 16.

³ CROSS 30n e 35.

⁴ SOGGIN, 61. The Talmud is basically a compendium of Jewish commentaries on the Old Testament (See DOUGLAS, 1162-1163).

⁵ DURHAM, xxi.

⁶ In 587 BC, the Jews were deported into exile and the temple destroyed. In 70 AD, the reconstructed temple was destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem under the Romans. See GONZÁLEZ, 58 for more details on the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

⁷ SOGGIN, 61.

⁸ ALLEN, 102.

⁹ LASOR, 9.

¹⁰ FEE, 182.

¹¹ C. A. BRIGGS, cited in ALLEN, 105.

¹² HOUTMAN in WOUDE, 186.

¹³ Baba Bathra 14b *et seq*, cited in COHEN, 142-143.

¹⁴ PRICE, 33.

¹⁵ HOUTMAN in WOUDE, 168. These verses use terminology and concepts originating in time periods much later than that of the events related and even of the time of Moses, whether they be later geographical place names or references to tribal demarcations of the borders of the settled tribes of Israel. There is also a distinction made with Moses’ speech to the people in the latter portion of Deuteronomy to distinguish the speech from the description and words of the narrator.

- ¹⁶ Clay tablets of the general period of Moses appear to have been mostly about a foot high. My Hebrew edition of the Pentateuch covers 353 pages. For Moses to have written the Pentateuch, the Hebrews would have had to transport a sufficient number of sun-baked clay tablets throughout their generation of wandering in the wilderness and later into the Promised Land until the text was later committed to more easily manipulated materials.
- ¹⁷ BONDT, 14 original emphasis.
- ¹⁸ KIDNER, 15.
- ¹⁹ One should remember that the Old Testament did not yet have a strictly closed canon in the time of Jesus, even though the Pentateuch itself already had an established form.
- ²⁰ LASOR, 10 emphasis as in the original.
- ²¹ Moses would have had to have received information about his ancestors from some source, for the entire Genesis text records events that would predate Moses.
- ²² MATTHEWS, 76-77.
- ²³ FRANCISCO in ALLEN, 57.
- ²⁴ KIDNER, 15.
- ²⁵ CROSS, 22.
- ²⁶ HARBIN, *TAT*, 11.
- ²⁷ KIDNER rejects the major portion of this line of source criticism, giving most of his emphasis to the extreme formulations of the positions, but deals with the basic positions (16-21). Von RAD deals more amply with the concepts, even if his perspective is not definitive (21-28). Gordon WENHAM deals with the discussion in much more detail, coming to the conclusion that the question must remain an open issue, due to new investigations under way in terms of analyzing the books as literary wholes. One should not necessarily discard the idea of sources being used in the background of the current compositional form as we know it, but it is also not possible to define with any precision which sources were utilized so as to reconstruct them (WENHAM, G., xxv-xlii). HAMILTON brings a good discussion of scholarly perspectives regarding sources, coming to the conclusion that the subject should be studied with caution and more serious attention be given to literary concerns than has been done to date (HAMILTON, 11-38). What much of the discussion has ignored is the fact that the sources were probably not written documents subjected to a "cut and paste" manipulation, but oral traditions, which should greatly modify directives in the search of the origins of the current text. The emphasis must fall on the final form of the text.
- ²⁸ In Hoff's book, the documentary hypotheses are discarded with the argument that the written material could not have appeared out of thin air in the time of Solomon (16-17). As he deals with the positions of higher criticism, he holds up the most extreme of positions of those who disregarded a connection between their studies of the Biblical text from questions of faith (245-247). Higher criticism does not suggest a disconnection between the text with mosaic transmission as he seems to suggest. Nor is every proponent of higher criticism an atheist and unbeliever. What these scholars suggest is that the current shape of the Old Testament text is the product of the redaction of various sources of tradition that made use of existing liturgical traditions, some with expressions of form more or less fixed in the time of Solomon. Hoff cites Gordon Wenham to defend a reconsideration of higher criticism, but Wenham does not simply discard these positions, even though he shows that there has not yet been made a final decision in terms of a fine separation between the references sources (WENHAM, G., xxv-xlii). One cannot simply discard the supposition of sources behind the present text, but neither can one be dogmatic about the specification of these sources.
- ²⁹ LASOR, 14.
- ³⁰ DURHAM, xxi and WENHAM, G., xxxvi.
- ³¹ LASOR, 14.
- ³² HAMILTON, 37.
- ³³ GEORGE, 187.
- ³⁴ FRANCISCO in ALLEN, 57.
- ³⁵ PRICE, 34.
- ³⁶ FRANCISCO, 39.
- ³⁷ FEE, 66.
- ³⁸ GEORGE, 17.
- ³⁹ Victor P. Hamilton in FREEDMAN, "Marriage: Old Testament and Near Eastern Civilization."
- ⁴⁰ God is speaking in verse 15. In verse 16, God is referenced in the third person, and then in verse 17 God continues to speak to Noah. Verse 16 appears to be a liturgical interruption in the account of the flood covenant. See the section on **Liturgy**.
- ⁴¹ MULDER in WOUDE, 4.
- ⁴² BRUEGGEMANN, 11.
- ⁴³ In regard to the discrepancy between Stephen's sermon and Genesis 46:27, George writes of Calvin's comments: "Stephen said that there were 75, but Genesis 46:27 shows only 70. After examining various possible solutions, Calvin concluded that the error probably came about by a copyist's mistake while reading the text of the Septuagint.... 'But', Calvin continued, 'this is not such an important matter over which Luke should confuse the gentiles, as they were used to the Greek text.... It is more appropriate that we ponder on this miracle entrusted by the Spirit than remain perturbed and anxious over a single letter, by which the number is altered'. ...Calvin showed impressive liberty in dealing with the text of the Scriptures, precisely because he trusted implicitly in their authority as inspired oracles of God as in their capacity to fulfill their purpose--'to manifest Christ'" (GEORGE, 195).
- ⁴⁴ DURHAM, xxv.
- ⁴⁵ HARBIN, *TATI*, 11.
- ⁴⁶ HESCHEL, 140.
- ⁴⁷ NELSON, 2.
- ⁴⁸ MULDER in WOUDE, 5.
- ⁴⁹ SCALISE, 78.
- ⁵⁰ DAVIDSON, A., 16.
- ⁵¹ FEE, 19 and 25.
- ⁵² HIRSCH in KAISER and SILVA, 41 and FEE, 25.
- ⁵³ von RAD, 32-33.
- ⁵⁴ A parable can at the same time be a narrative (*i.e.* The Prodigal Son), even though it may not deal with a specific historical event.
- ⁵⁵ NELSON, 13.
- ⁵⁶ SOGGIN, 38-39.
- ⁵⁷ WENHAM, G., 10.

- ⁵⁸ The use of the term history here does not intend to designate historiographical science, but accounts or narratives regarding the forms in which *YHWH* acted in the midst of the people.
- ⁵⁹ SOGGIN, 39.
- ⁶⁰ CROSS, 27.
- ⁶¹ Acts 1.1-2 It is interesting that the title normally given to the book is Acts of the Apostles, yet Luke specifies that he writes about what Jesus continued to do through his disciples (“w|n h|rxato oJ j|hsou`n” poiei`n” “that Jesus began to do”).
- ⁶² BRONGERS in WOUDE, 115.
- ⁶³ SOGGIN, 44.
- ⁶⁴ ERICKSON, *ITS*, 165.
- ⁶⁵ ROBINSON, 31.
- ⁶⁶ WENHAM, G., 10.
- ⁶⁷ ROBINSON, 31.
- ⁶⁸ HARBIN, *NTH*, 28-37.
- ⁶⁹ FRANCISCO in ALLEN, 120.
- ⁷⁰ SOGGIN, 44.
- ⁷¹ MULDER in WOUDE, 3.
- ⁷² SOGGIN, 44.
- ⁷³ KAISER, *TdAT*, 26-27.
- ⁷⁴ SCALISE, 44-46.
- ⁷⁵ PRICE, 32.
- ⁷⁶ ARCHER, 18.
- ⁷⁷ GOLDINGAY, xxv, xxx-xxxii e xxxviii-xxxix. A similar textual scenario can be seen in reference to Revelation, which circulated in three major editions, the more complete of which was accepted into the New Testament (see discussion in AUNE, cxxii-cxxxiv).
- ⁷⁸ *i.e.* the order of creation in Genesis 1 places the plants as being created before the sun, the cosmological concept reflected in the text defends the existence of an ocean above the firmament and also beneath the earth, this latter being viewed as some kind of disk floating upon another sea, etc.
- ⁷⁹ GEORGE, 194-195.
- ⁸⁰ SCALISE, 50.
- ⁸¹ BARR in MAYS, 67.
- ⁸² ARCHER, 22.
- ⁸³ Paul, writing to the Corinthians, claims not to have baptized anyone in the church other than two brothers, then he remembers having baptized another household, then he adds that he does not remember if he baptized anyone else. He does not stop to analyze in detail whom he might have baptized. He basically states that as unimportant and goes ahead with his argument (1st Corinthians 1:14-15). The gospels record differing numbers of blind men being cured by Jesus at certain events. The importance of the accounts did not revolve around an exact description of the event, but an essential theological concept (Matthew 20:29-34 and Mark 10:46-52).
- In terms of the presentation of scientific concepts in the text, one should remember the church's treatment of Galileo Galilei who declared concordance with Copernicus that the earth revolved around the sun, while the Bible was understood to declare the opposite. Currently very few people would argue that science is wrong on this point, yet the Bible continues describing the universe in a contrary manner. If it is acceptable to agree that the Bible is “wrong” on this point, one should also accept that the Bible is not a text of science and that its scientific presentations can be ignored without invalidating its theological teaching.
- ⁸⁴ See SCALISE for a good treatment of differing positions adopted in regard to inspiration and revelation, as well as an alternate espoused by CHILDS for a new understanding of the process of canonical revelation.
- ⁸⁵ Though “writings” is obviously a reference to Jewish Scripture, there was not as yet a closed canon of the said writings.
- ⁸⁶ 2nd Peter 1:20-21.
- ⁸⁷ RIENECKER, 574.
- ⁸⁸ GRUDEM, 26-27.
- ⁸⁹ LASOR, 648.
- ⁹⁰ James A. Sanders in FREEDMAN, “Canon.”
- ⁹¹ GEORGE, 85.
- ⁹² HARBIN, *NTH*, 44-45.
- ⁹³ DAVIDSON, A., 30-32.
- ⁹⁴ LASOR, 23.
- ⁹⁵ SOGGIN, 43.
- ⁹⁶ KAPELRUD, 29.
- ⁹⁷ DAVIDSON, A., 63-64. This should not be understood in the sense that the Biblical text has been contaminated, for the norm of its narratives is to place themselves in counterpoint to the normative concepts held among neighboring peoples, as in the case of the creation and flood narratives that respond to popular conceptions. In other texts, popular ideas never come to be dealt with directly, even though a thematic incoherence may be raised, for the text does not intend to respond to every erroneous concept, such as the idolatry of Rebecca in Genesis 31:33-34. It would appear that idolatry was finally cured only in the exile (URETA, 56).
- ⁹⁸ KAPELRUD, 30. What is considered as external influence may also reflect common heritage from ages past.
- ⁹⁹ GONZALEZ, 27.
- ¹⁰⁰ LASOR, 24.
- ¹⁰¹ PRICE, 45.
- ¹⁰² KAPELRUD, 30.
- ¹⁰³ WENHAM, G., 239.
- ¹⁰⁴ HARBIN, *NTH*, 62-64.
- ¹⁰⁵ HARBIN, LB, *COT*, 2.
- ¹⁰⁶ 1st Corinthians 15:3-5.

¹⁰⁷ Acts 20:25.

¹⁰⁸ Luke 1:1-3.

¹⁰⁹ STUBBLEFIELD, 3.

¹¹⁰ FREEDMAN, Canon, NT.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*