**Bibliology 10, Which Bible?**

### Saturday, January 5, 2019

### The Source of the Discussion

This discussion was once sourced in a Lutheran search for the “right” standard English Bible. It, in a meandering sort of way, explores differences between the ELCA, LCMS, WELS and me. Today, these issues have more far reaching implications, reaching to all denominations. These differences are merely observations, and in no way, relate to, or intend to, cause any fresh, new controversy. That being conceded, there is every reason for all of us to avoid extreme views[[1]](#endnote-1): while we affirm inerrancy under some strictly limited conditions, the excessive claims of the ultraconservative Chicago Statement on Inerrancy are just as troubling as the lethal uber-liberal Documentary Hypotheses proponents. Maximalism and minimalism are both dangerous ditches to avoid.

### Are The Autographa Inerrant?

LCMS, WELS, and some Protestants say, “Yes.” Frequently, this works itself out in some sort of verbal plenary inspiration of an Autographa.[[2]](#endnote-2) Generally, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox link this with some view of historic Christian Tradition.

Many others: including apostates, heretics, humanists, liberals, modernists, say, “No.”

I believe in the Divine custodial protection of the Scripture within The Church, which is part of 2 Timothy 2:2.

(see *Forward in Christ*, March 2013, pages 28-29, and May 2013, pages 28-29, John A. Braun, “Which Bible?”

Are the Autographa inerrant? Well, yes, of course they are, by definition.[[3]](#endnote-3) This is a nice thing to say, but the devil is in the details. What on earth does this mean? Yes, the Autographa are most certainly inerrant. However, contrary to most, I have the audacity to claim firm knowledge of their whereabouts, and will produce Scripture to prove it.

Most authorities claim that the Autographa are lost. This makes the point moot. Under this claim, there is little or no evidence for the existence of any Autographa, and I simply refuse to accept blindly, any theory for which there is no evidence. Saint Thomas the Apostle deserves his day in court. If there are Autographa, show me, and I will believe. This theory of a lost Autographa is utter nonsense. Forgive me, I do not wish to offend. Nevertheless, if we have no hope of ever recovering these Autographa, we have no confidence of having any Bible. More than inerrancy is lost with this theory: all of Scripture is lost.

I claim that the Autographa are not lost. I have an excellent idea where they are located and now offer proof from Scripture itself. There can be little doubt that the Autographa are located in heaven, beside the ark of the covenant, beside the throne of God, in the temple of God. However, this does not resolve the entire problem either.

“And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, ‘Take this book of the law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you.’ ” — Deuteronomy 31:25-26

“I saw in the right hand of Him Who sat on the throne a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals. I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the book, and break its seals?’ No man in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or even to look at it. I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and read the book, or even to look at it. One of the elders said to me, ‘Weep not. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and break its seven seals.’ I beheld, and, look! on the throne and amid the four beasts, and among the elders, stood a Lamb as He had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him Who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four beasts and twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. They sang a new song, saying, ‘You are worthy to take the book, and break its seals: for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation....’ ‘Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing.’ ” — Revelation 5:1-12

### Where is the Temple of God Today?

In the Old Testament, between 1406 and 586 BC, the Shəkinah Glory of God resided in the most holy place, and guaranteed the sanctity of the Autographa. In 586, the Glory abandoned the temple, all sanctity of the the Autographa was forever lost: it was destroyed by the Babylonians, along with Solomon’s Temple and its contents. Evidently, only a few treasured objects were carried to Babylon.

When the Glory returned in 6/4 BC, He was not pleased to re-sanctify either a new Autographa or the temple. Instead, He preached and wrote in a new language, Greek; a language that Jews steadfastly maintained was unfit for inspired writing. Please note that Lutherans are fond of saying that Jesus fulfills the Scripture; but they frequently overlook the fact that He is its Author. He is both Author and fulfillment, Priest and sacrifice.

### What is the Bible Today?

This Greek Bible, commonly called the Septuagint (LXX), was maintained, and handed down in The Church for centuries. It remained the uncontested Scripture of The Church, the Koiné Greek New Testament being added to it, until Jerome translated the Scripture into Latin. I say uncontested in The Church, the Jews always contested it in favor of a proto-MT, once the LXX became popular among Christians.[[4]](#endnote-4) But, before that Christian popular use, the LXX was commonly employed by the Jews: and we rather doubt that many Jews had the linguistic skills to cope with an Aramaic/Hebrew text. Eventually, Latin dominated in the West; while Greek remained in force in the East. Other translations were made from the Greek Bible, but the Greek Bible was always dominant. At the Reformation, the reformers became enamored of the MT. Today, we have three different churches, with three different Bibles, and three somewhat different views of God’s plan of salvation: namely, Orthodox (Greek), Protestants (Hebrew), and Romanists (Latin).

### We Are the Temple of God Today?

Where is the temple of God today? We are the temple of God today, and the book of the Autographa is? Among us?? How can that be??? The evidence consists of a daunting assortment of variant documents, most of which are fragments. The unraveling of this assortment has never been accomplished: and probably never will be. This is what we have. This is our evidence. This is what we can lay our hands on and prove: this scrambled and daunting assortment of variant documents, most of which are fragments.

It is this idea that we are the temple of God, which brings us to the conviction that the best preservation of any copy of the Autographa is that which is handed down within The Church, the idea of a Textus Receptus. By this, we do not mean a slavish loyalty to the text of Stephanus (1550), although that is a most excellent document.

We are certainly compelled to reject out of hand the work of Westcott-Hort (1881) and Nestle-Aland (1898 and onward). It is inconceivable that scholars having Greek as their second language, should do a better job at Scripture analysis, textual criticism, and preservation, than those who had Greek as their first language and studied both Old and New Testaments in Greek from the first century and onward. It is inconceivable that a diligent student working faithfully today, should surpass such studies conducted in 325 AD by those who were magnitudes closer to the living reality: time has dulled our ability to grasp First Century situations. One need only compare the scholarship of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Century with prior work to realize that our ability to handle depth of thought is being eclipsed by reduced attention span, sound bites, computerized trivializations, plus the general loss of knowledge and ability to reason. Computers have left us less observant, even though we can process more data. Most people, even so called scholars, are content to let the computer do their thinking for them. The Fathers are profound. We have become dull witted and trite.

We must also reject the MT, and the Vulgate as primary documents.

This is not to say that we possess a flawless TR[[5]](#endnote-5), but it is certainly worth pursuing. So, even though imperfect, the Christian Standard Bible can and should be the TR[[6]](#endnote-6), and we should be expending our efforts to recover it in the best possible condition. We seek to know the Bible, as it existed in the hands of Jesus and His Apostles, between 26 and 90 AD. We are not looking for the oldest possible Greek LXX or Hebrew proto-MT: for neither of these has the use and approval of Christ. We purse a specific target: one that begins with Christ’s ministry and ends with the closing of the Apostolic Age.

However, considering the weight (profundity) of such a document… perhaps its principal authority rests in the fact that it may be written on our hearts.

Is this process inerrant? Not hardly. The issue of inerrancy is necessarily moot. But we are not discouraged by this, because our center of authority is God Himself. The Scripture we have, while less than perfect, is very good, and the study of Greek is readily available to all who wish to pursue it. The Scripture is inerrant only to the extent that it is faithfully transmitted by the Christian Church. Mechanical and theological approaches to inerrancy only lead astray. The Bible is the Bible because The Church says it is.

Now, if we could only put The Church back together....

### A Preliminary Summary

Consequently, since we have trouble determining, what ought to be translated; we are even more perplexed with the gaggle of English language translations. There simply is no substitute for the study of Greek. Neither is there any alternative to comparing Scripture with Scripture. Nor can Scripture be ultimately separated from Tradition: because it is history that provides the hope to sorting out the answers. If we abandon Tradition, we abandon much too much: namely, form of worship, and most hymnology, just for a start. Our final ability to sort out the text of Scripture may very well rest on its use and quotation by the Fathers.

Issues of Inerrancy, Inspiration, and Canonicity of Scripture must be approached from a different angle — from 2 Timothy 2:2.

The lay person, with no access to Greek cannot improve on a plan of reading through the English Bible, especially through the Psalms on a regular basis. Lay people should be made aware of the dangers related to Westcott-Hort (1881) and Nestle-Aland, as well as the pitfalls associated with a proto-MT or Vulgate. Lay people should be demanding a return to the TR[[7]](#endnote-7) and the pursuit of a Standard Bible for all Christians.[[8]](#endnote-8) Once a Standard Bible is near, we can dare to think of a Standard English Translation. Until that day, no translation is sufficiently free of bias to merit more than provisional approval: least of all, among Pr. Braun’s list, the ESV or NIV. To my knowledge, the only translation that even attempts these goals is the NKJV.[[9]](#endnote-9)

By similar lines of argument, theories such as the Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP – OT) and the Q Source (NT) are also condemned; likewise, any idea of an Aramaic original for Matthew. No evidence equals definitively no survival of hypothesis. Proponents of these views have yet to produce a single J document, E document, D document, P document, Q document, or Aramaic original for Matthew. These things are all the figments of overactive imaginations.

### Discussion Purpose

The author’s purpose is not to straighten out the rest of Christendom. People have every right to their own opinions. If the Holy Ghost is given to all, and He is given to all, then all have a right to be heard, all have a voice. It is imperative that this author disclose his opinions; especially those which some will find controversial, even strange: we cannot arrive at Christian unity by hiding our opinions under a rug.

[[10]](#endnote-10)

1. Views invariably lacking in any sort of credible evidence. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. These are fancy sounding words, which many throw around blindly, without considering what they truly mean. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. We draw a distinction here, between what God said, which is certainly inerrant, and what Moses wrote, which is not necessarily inerrant… this does not mean that what Moses wrote is not true. What Jesus, the Lamb holds in His spotless hands in Revelation 5 are necessarily the true Autographa: they are not necessarily identical to what Moses wrote. The autographa of Moses may very well be a trope of the true Autographa: One is inerrant by definition, the other, only by implication, and that not of necessity. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. But Judaism has no part or voice in The Church (Hebrews 12), and individual Jews participate only by conversion to Christianity. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. We mean, of course, the TR of the first century, not the TR of the Reformation. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. We mean, of course, the TR of the first century, not the TR of the Reformation. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. We mean, of course, the TR of the first century, not the TR of the Reformation. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Preferably one free of charge on the internet, and/or at minimal cost in printed form. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. The Orthodox Study Bible attempts a fresh translation of the Septuagint, while retaining NKJV in the New Testament; still, neither is close to perfect, too much archaic and incorrect translation work is retained. For example, the false future tenses translating Greek past tenses in the Lord’s Prayer: a past tense is a past tense, and should remain so in translation. This makes the Lord’s Prayer into a list of requests for things we need; rather than what it truly is, a litany of praises and thanksgivings for what the Father has already provided. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
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