

IS THE KING JAMES BIBLE INSPIRED?

By David C. Bennett, D. Min.

CHAPTER ONE

2Timothy 3:16 *“All scripture is given by inspiration (θεόπνευστος) of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”.*

As a missionary I have attended and preached in a lot of Baptist churches which hold different views on diverse theological subjects. For instance some churches hold to a stricter ecclesiastical separation than others do. Some use the King James Bible without any particular conviction as to why and without any real thought to the underlying Texts. Others use the King James because they believe it is the best English translation based on the original preserved Words supported by the majority of manuscript evidence. Then there are those who use the King James Bible but go to the Critical Greek Text originally produced by Westcott and Hort in the 1800's as the best Greek text. This Text then is used to criticize or correct the King James Bible.

Then there are those who believe the King James Bible is inspired because it is translated from those original inspired Words. This view is defined as derived inspiration. Then there are those that believe the King James Bible was inspired in 1611 in the same way the originals were. Some holding this view believe there is no need to go back and study the underlying Greek Text and some even say the King James corrects the Greek. It is to the Critical Greek Text camp, the derived inspiration camp and the inspired King James camp which this paper will seek to answer.

The following subjects will be considered in this paper:

1. CHAPTER ONE - INSPIRATION

2. CHAPTER TWO - CORRUPTION

3. CHAPTER THREE - PRESERVATION

4. CHAPTER FOUR - TRANSLATION

The first subject considered in this paper is that of the INSPIRATION of the Scriptures. Note, the word “inspiration” (theopneustos) is used only in this one text, 2 Timothy 3: 16, in the whole of Scripture. Strong’s on-line Concordance gives the following;

“theopneustos: God-breathed, i.e. inspired by God
Original Word: θεόπνευστος, ον
Part of Speech: Adjective
Transliteration: theopneustos
Phonetic Spelling: (theh-op'-nyoo-stos)
Short Definition: God-breathed, inspired by God
Definition: God-breathed, inspired by God, due to the inspiration of God.”¹

Strong’s on-line Exhaustive Concordance states;

“given by inspiration of God.

From [theos](#) and a presumed derivative of [pneo](#); divinely breathed in -- given by inspiration of God.”²

The Bible is a unique Book and a believer cannot approach the Bible like any other book. Dr. Jack Moorman says “Three kinds of books have been written on this subject. The first is from a totally naturalistic viewpoint, with the author denying that there was anything supernatural about the Bible's production and transmission. The second affirms the Bible's inspiration but takes a basically naturalistic position regarding its transmission.”³

Brother Moorman continues by stating that “it is not really possible to be neutral about the Bible. If you try to be neutral, if you ignore the divine inspiration and the providential preservation of the Bible and treat it like an ordinary human book, then you are ignoring the very factors that make the Bible what it is.”⁴

Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones in WHICH VERSION page five wrote that “Within our diverse denominational backgrounds are found various confessions of faith. These statements of faith concerning the Holy Scriptures, particularly within conservative evangelical backgrounds, always say something to the effect that we believe that God gave the original Scriptures inerrant. We profess to believe in the originals, that they were divinely inspired by God – God breathed.”

Dr. Jones later states that “Today, most conservative Protestant clergymen have been brainwashed as mere youths in their late teens or early twenties at the various denominational Bible colleges and seminaries concerning the doctrine of inerrancy of Scripture. As a result, when most of these pastors etc., declare that they believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration and/or inerrancy (or some other similar declaration of faith in the Scriptures) what they really mean is that only the original autographa were inerrant.”⁵

Dr. Jeffery Koo in his booklet KEPT PURE IN ALL AGES writes on page 22 that “The words ‘given by inspiration of God’ in 2 Tim 3:16 come from one Greek word *theopneustos* which literally means ‘God breathed.’ It is thus not ‘manspiration,’ but ‘Godspiration.’ God used human writers to pen His words. These men were specially chosen by God, and perfectly guided by the Spirit to put on paper the very words of God, and to do so without any error (2 Pet 1:21).”

¹ <http://concordances.org/greek/2315.htm>

² <http://concordances.org/greek/2315.htm>

³ Jack Moorman, FOREVER SETTLED, pdf, page 1.

⁴ Jack Moorman, FOREVER SETTLED, pdf, page 34.

⁵ Floyd Nolen Jones, WHICH VERSION IS THE BIBLE?, KingsWord Press, Five Milan Hwy., Humboldt, TN 38343, p. 184

Southern Baptist Basil Manly, Jr. believed “an uninspired Bible would ‘furnish no infallible standard of truth,’ and would leave us open to the mistakes and errors in judgment of the human authors. ‘It would furnish no principle of accurate discrimination between the true and false, the divine and the human.’”⁶

Manly believed in plenary (full, complete) inspiration and wrote “The doctrine which we hold is that commonly styled Plenary Inspiration or Full Inspiration. It is that the Bible as a whole is the Word of God, so that in every part of Scripture there is both infallible truth and divine authority.”⁷

The Dean Burgon Society (DBS) which I am a member of states “As the Bible uses it, the term “inspiration” refers to the **writings**, not the **writers** (2 Timothy 3:16-17); the **writers** are spoken of as being “holy men of God” who were “moved,” “carried” or “borne” along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21) in such a definite way that their **writings** were supernaturally, plenary, and verbally inspired, free from any error, infallible, and inerrant, as no other **writings** have ever been or ever will be inspired.”⁸

The Dean Burgon Society is named after Anglican John Burgon who wrote “The Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme.”⁹

Therefore it is agreed by Bible believing Christians that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments are the very God breathed Words and they were breathed into His chosen men who penned these Words down. The materials upon which these God breathed out Words are written are known as the originals.

It is to be understood that conservative Baptists agree inspiration applies to the original autographs but as Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones states “It may surprise many to learn that there are no original manuscripts of the Bible available today. The Old Testament scribes destroyed the scrolls upon which Scripture was written as they became worn, and ‘dog eared’ from so much handling. When they copied out a new one, they destroyed the old so that the earliest Old Testament manuscript now in existence is dated about 900 A.D. This is called the Hebrew Masoretic Text. It was the earliest witness to the text of the O.T. that we possessed until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls which contain some parts of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah. Likewise, we possess no ‘original’ New Testament manuscripts – none of the ‘autographs’ which the apostles wrote have been preserved.”¹⁰ Does this leave the churches in a dilemma?

The General Association of Regular Baptists in their Baptist Bulletin of June, 2011 says “none of these manuscripts exists today. The Greek and Hebrew manuscripts that we have are various copies produced by scribes through the ages.”¹¹ So we had original documents with the God breathed Words written down by men in whom God breathed those Words; but those original documents are no longer available. Because the writers of the original manuscripts only wrote what God breathed into them once, these originals had to be copied and spread among the churches. These copies were copied and those copies were copied. As the copies were used over and over they too had to be copied. So did God by His providence preserve His Words via

⁶ L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, BAPTISTS AND THE BIBLE, Moody Press, Chicago, 1980, page 212.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/DBS_Society/articles.htm

⁹ Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo, A THEOLOGY FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN, Far Eastern Bible College Press Singapore, 1998, pdf, page 19.

¹⁰ Floyd Nolen Jones, WHICH VERSION IS THE BIBLE?, KingsWord Press, Five Milan Hwy., Humboldt, TN 38343, pp. 5, 6

¹¹ <http://baptistbulletin.org/?p=16799>

those copies produced from those original written God breathed Words? Good question and therefore it is justifiable to ask the question, where are those Words today?

So here is a brief review. The original Old Testament manuscripts and the original New Testament manuscripts were God's breathed Words. It was these God breathed Words those holy men of God penned via their own personality onto various writing materials in use at the time. However, as has been said earlier, those original documents containing the God breathed Words were used and used until they were probably worn out through continuous use and are therefore no longer available. At the same time because the originals could only be in one place at any given time, those documents containing those God breathed Words were copied and recopied.

When Paul wrote 2 Timothy 3: 16 "...no reference is being made with regard to the 'ORIGINAL' Scriptures. Look at verse 15. Paul says to Timothy, 'from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation'. Paul is obviously not speaking of the 'ORIGINAL' New Testament Scripture. Second Timothy was penned about A.D. 65. Further, Timothy was old enough to join Paul and Silas c.53 A.D. (Acts 16:1-4). Thus, when Timothy was a child, there was no New Testament collection of Scripture anywhere. Nor was Paul speaking of the "ORIGINALS" of the Old Testament for there was not an original Old Testament piece of paper or vellum extant at that time. Wrestle with this! Come to grips with it! These are the verses upon which many of us base our faith and say we believe in the 'ORIGINALS'. Yet these very verses are not speaking of the original manuscripts!

But are the copies inspired? The Bible itself clearly teaches that faithful copies of the originals are also inspired.¹ The word "Scripture" in II Timothy 3:16-17 is translated from the Greek word 'graphé' (γραφή). Graphé occurs 51 times in the Greek New Testament and at every occurrence it means "Scripture" – in fact, it usually refers to the Old Testament text.

A perusal of the N.T. reveals that the Lord Jesus read from the 'graphé' in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luk.4:21) as did Paul in the synagogue at Thessalonica (Acts 17:2). The Ethiopian eunuch, returning home from worshipping at Jerusalem, was riding in his chariot and reading a passage of graphé (Acts 8:32-33). These were not the autographs that they were reading; they were copies – moreover, copies of copies! Yet the Word of God calls them graphé – and every graphé is "given by inspiration of God" (II Tim.3:16). Thus, the Holy Writ has testified and that testimony is that faithful copies of the originals are themselves inspired. Selah!"¹²

Now it MUST BE UNDERSTOOD AND EMPHASIZED that Dr. Jones is saying these copies were copies of the ORIGINAL WORDS written in Hebrew, some Aramaic and Greek and were **NOT TRANSLATIONS** but copies of the ORIGINAL WORDS! **INSPIRATION OF THOSE ORIGINAL WORDS ONLY OCCURRED ONCE!** **However, accurate copies of those original God breathed Words carry the same authority!** This is what some of the brethren have forgotten.

So where does that put the churches today? Do the churches have access to those original Words in any extant Greek copy? There are over five thousand manuscripts of the New Testament in existence today and the manuscript evidence supporting the Greek Text underlying the King James Bible is supported by the majority of those manuscripts! It is that majority of manuscript evidence that is represented in Dr. Frederick H. A. Scrivener's Greek New Testament. The Dean Burgon Society says "We believe that Scrivener's Greek text which underlies our King James Bible is the closest to the original New Testament."¹³

¹² Floyd Nolen Jones, WHICH VERSION IS THE BIBLE?, KingsWord Press, Five Milan Hwy., Humboldt, TN 38343, pp. 7, 8

¹³ Scrivener's Annotated Greek New Testament, Dean Burgon Society Press, Box 354, Collingswood, NJ, 08108, Dec., 1999, Publisher's Preface.

It might interest some that “Dr. Scrivener chose to begin his task with Beza’s 1598 Greek edition. This slightly reduced the number of required changes (compared to starting with other Greek editions of Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, or Elzevir). He also reasoned that ‘between 1598 and 1611 no important edition appeared; so that Beza’s fifth and last text of 1598 was more than likely than any other to be in the hands of the King James’s revisers, and to be accepted by them as the best standard within their reach.’

Where the English of the *KJV* differed from Beza’s 1598 Greek edition, Dr. Scrivener (in about 162 places) used readings from previous Greek editions of the Received Text. He kept Beza’s 1598 readings in about 59 places where the *KJV* had only Latin support. He listed these c. 221 deviations from Beza’s 1598 Greek edition in his ‘Appendix’ (pages 648 – 656).”¹⁴

So the churches do have a copy of those original Words and they may praise the Lord for this wonderful fact! However, as Dr. Floyd Jones has aptly written “...it is not merely a question of ‘inspiration’. The crux is that of **preservation**.”¹⁵ Inspiration without preservation can only lead to hopefully one day there will be the RESTORATION of the original Words of the Scriptures.

This writer does not believe in RESTORATION but in the PRESERVATION of the Scriptures and this important subject will be discussed in Chapter Three. But before looking at **PRESERVATION** a consideration of the **CORRUPTION** that occurred in the manuscripts not long after the originals were written must be considered.

As John Burgon wrote “THUS IT APPEARS THAT ERRORS CREPT IN AT THE VERY FIRST COMMENCEMENT OF THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. This is a matter so interesting and so important in the history of corruption, that I must venture to place it again before our readers.”¹⁶ THEREFORE IT IS TO THIS **CORRUPTION OF THE ORIGINAL WORDS OF GOD** THAT WILL OCCUPY US IN CHAPTER TWO.

¹⁴ D. A. Waite, Jr., *The Doctored New Testament*, The Bible For Today Press, 900 Park Av., Collingswood, NJ, 08108, p. Viii.

¹⁵ Floyd Nolen Jones, *WHICH VERSION IS THE BIBLE?*, KingsWord Press, Five Milan Hwy.,

Humboldt, TN 38343, page 1
¹⁶ John William Burgon, *THE CAUSES OF THE CORRUPTION OF THE TRADITIONAL TEXT OF THE HOLY GOSPELS*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, pdf. Page 12.