

Can Verbal Plenary Inspiration Do Without Verbal Plenary Preservation?: The Achilles' Heel of Princeton Bibliology

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Issue

The old Princeton theology has often been regarded as the scholarly orthodoxy that should characterise evangelical theology in the face of challenges posed by liberalism or modernism. Alexander, Hodge and Warfield are household names in evangelical-theological scholarship. They have become reference points of theological orthodoxy. Despite their noble attempts to articulate the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith, it is increasingly discovered that Princeton in its efforts to defend theological orthodoxy and gain a certain level of acceptability and respectability in the scholarly world had compromised the supreme and absolute authority of the Scriptures by adopting the textual critical methods of rationalistic scholasticism.

Textual criticism introduced by Princeton Seminary is the Trojan horse in Reformed, evangelical, and fundamentalist Bibliology today. No Reformed, evangelical or fundamentalist “scholar,” without wanting to look stupid or foolish, would dare affirm without equivocation that the Bible in our hands today is infallible and inerrant, without any mistake. This is the tragedy of compromise.

This paper seeks to expose the fallacy of the Princeton theology especially as regards its Bibliology, and warn of the dangers that it presents to God’s people as they face the incessant salvos against Christ and His Word by Postmodernism, Ecumenism, Neo-Evangelicalism, Neo-Fundamentalism, Open Theism and Neo-Deism today.

Archibald Alexander

The theology of Princeton was shaped by Archibald Alexander (1772-1851), the first professor of theology at Princeton, and by his successors, Charles Hodge and B B Warfield.¹ These men remain highly respected by reformed and evangelical scholars today. But before we decide to bow to their scholarship, we need to examine what they believed about the Scriptures.

Archibald Alexander promoted the Westminster Standards to be the orthodox expression of faith. He also upheld the power of human reason. What of the Bible in his hands? Well he believed that the Bible was indeed preserved “by God’s singular care and providence” as spelled out in the Westminster Confession of Faith quoting Matthew 5:18, but his human mind could not accept the idea that the apographs (ie, copies of the originals) could be infallible and inerrant. It ought to be noted that Alexander’s preserved text manifested no less than 60,000 scribal errors, but in his opinion, these did not

affect doctrine in any way.² In his inaugural sermon at his installation as Princeton's first professor of theology, he spoke positively of textual criticism, and posited the theory of conceptual preservation: "For though the serious mind is at first astonished and confounded, upon being informed of the multitude of various readings . . . yet it is relieved, when on careful examination, it appears that not more than one of a hundred of these, makes the slightest variation in the sense, and that the whole of them do not materially affect one important fact or doctrine."³

Alexander saw no contradiction between his opinion of scribal errors in the texts that he had in his hands and the Westminster Confession's affirmation of the providential preservation of Scripture because he considered the perfection of the autographs and the purity of the apographs to concern merely doctrine and not words. In other words, these scribal errors do not affect any vital doctrine of the Christian faith, and there is no trouble even in seeing that God could have "inspired" these scribal errors in the lost autographs and that these same scribal errors could have been "preserved" in the apographs the church now has in her hands. It appears that Alexander had no qualms admitting that the autographs were not inerrant for he wrote, "it is even possible that some of the autographs, if we had them, might not be altogether free from such errors as arise from the slip of the pen, as the apostles [had] amanuens[es] who were not inspired."⁴

The case of Alexander shows that a rejection of verbal preservation in favour of conceptual preservation could lead ultimately to a denial of verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. This was clearly what happened to Bart Ehrman (PhD, Princeton Theological Seminary) who had Bruce Metzger—Princeton's George L Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Emeritus, but known also as "Bible Butcher"⁵—for his mentor. In his book *Misquoting Jesus*, Ehrman testified how a Bible filled with scribal errors today became a problem for him:

If one wants to insist that God inspired the very words of scripture, what would be the point if we don't have the very words of scripture? . . . It's a bit hard to know what the words of the Bible mean if we don't even know what the words are!

This became a problem for my view of inspiration, for I came to realize that it would have been no more difficult for God to preserve the words of scripture than it would have been for him to inspire them in the first place. If he wanted his people to have his words, surely he would have given to them (and possibly even given them the words in a language they could understand, rather than Greek and Hebrew). The fact that we don't have the words surely must show, I reasoned, that he did not preserve them for us. And if he didn't perform that miracle, there seemed to be no reason to think that he performed the earlier miracle of inspiring those words.⁶

It is significant to note that Ehrman began as a fundamentalist in Moody Bible Institute, but eventually succumbed to the "dark side" when he went to Princeton where he came under the mentorship of textual-critical Vader—Bruce Metzger—whom he calls his "Doctor-Father."⁷

Edward F Hills had long warned that a denial or even a low view of the special providential preservation of the Scriptures would logically and ultimately lead one to a denial of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the same Scriptures.

Conservative scholars . . . say that they believe in the special, providential preservation of the New Testament text. Most of them really don't though, because, as soon as they say this, they immediately reduce this special providential preservation to the vanishing point in order to make room for the naturalistic theories of Westcott and Hort. As we have seen, some say that the providential preservation of the New Testament means merely that the same "substance of doctrine" is found in all the New Testament documents. Others say that it means that the true reading is always present in at least one of the thousands of extant New Testament manuscripts. And still other scholars say that to them the special, providential preservation of the Scriptures means that the true New Testament text was providentially discovered in the mid-19th century by Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort after having been lost for 1,500 years.

If you adopt one of these false views of the providential preservation of Scriptures, then you are logically on

your way toward the denial of the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures. For if God has preserved the Scriptures so carelessly, why would he have infallibly inspired them in the first place? It is not sufficient therefore merely to say that you believe in the doctrine of the special, providential preservation of holy Scriptures. You must really believe this doctrine and allow it to guide your thinking. You must begin with Christ and the Gospel and proceed according to the logic of faith. This will lead you to the Traditional text, the Textus Receptus, and the King James Version, in other words, to the common faith.⁸

Taking Alexander's lead, Princeton began on a wrong footing as regards the verbal and plenary preservation of the Holy Scriptures which eventually saw its rejection of the Textus Receptus in favour of the Westcott-Hort Text. Alexander had laid the foundation for Charles Hodge (1797-1878) and B B Warfield (1851-1921) to pursue rationalistic textual criticism that was growing out of German scholasticism.

Charles Hodge and His Son C. W. Hodge

Charles Hodge was exposed to textual criticism when he studied in Germany from 1826 to 1828. Despite his studies in textual criticism and his knowledge of textual variants among the manuscripts, Hodge was careful not to engage in any form of conjectural emendation of the Biblical text which he considered to be wholly illegitimate. He urged rightly, "it would be exceedingly injurious as every critic would think himself authorized to make alterations and thus certainty and authority of S.S. [sacred Scripture] would be destroyed."⁹ Despite the textual critical theories he learned in Germany which sought to dethrone the Textus Receptus at that time, Hodge stuck to it and recognised its authenticity.¹⁰

Although Charles Hodge upheld the Textus Receptus, he did not defend it vigorously enough, and did not warn against the rationalistic textual critical views that were emerging out of Germany. He was contented with an essentially infallible but not totally inerrant Scripture for he admits that "the Scriptures do contain, in a few instances, discrepancies which with our present means of knowledge, we are unable satisfactorily to explain."

It was left to Hodge's son, C W Hodge, to pave the way for German-style textual criticism in Princeton Seminary. C W Hodge found no point addressing the inspiration of Scripture if the extant manuscripts were full of textual variations and scribal errors. He asked, "What are we to say of verbal inspiration when the Church cannot agree as to the words of the text?" He had accumulated no less than 120,000 textual variants (double that of Alexander) and even dismissed the Trinitarian text of 1 John 5:7 to be unworthy of Scripture. His rejection of 1 John 5:7 was due to Griesbach's dictum that "all readings favouring *orthodoxy* were to be immediately regarded as suspect."¹¹ (As noted above, this is also the textual critical mindset and method of Bart Ehrman.) Agreeing with Westcott and Hort, Hodge also rejected the authenticity of the last 12 verses of Mark (Mark 16:9-20) and the *pericope de adultera* (John 7:53-8:11).

B. B. Warfield

The Reformation cry of *Sola Scriptura* as the supreme and final authority of the Christian faith and life has always been understood to mean the infallible and inerrant Scriptures believers had in their possession. The Scripture that the Reformers accepted as infallible and inerrant were not the autographs but the apographs, and the preserved apographs had all the very words and passages (last 12 verses of Mark, *pericope de adultera*, Johannine comma, etc) which textual critical scholars today, following Griesbach, Westcott and Hort, say are not Scripture at all.¹²

Francis Turretin (1623-1687), pastor and theologian of the Church and Academy of Geneva, made it quite clear that the Reformers never thought of the infallible and inerrant Scriptures in terms of the non-existent autographs but always the available and accessible apographs. Turretin wrote,

By original texts, we do not mean the autographs written by the hand of Moses, of the prophets and the apostles, which certainly do not now exist. *We mean their apographs which are so called because they set*

*forth to us the word of God in the very words of those who wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.*¹³

Now, B B Warfield came into the scene two centuries later and changed all that by introducing his new theory of *Sola Autographa*, that the inerrancy of the Scriptures resides only in the autographs, the very first scripts written by the original authors themselves.¹⁴ By so doing, he could saddle himself quite comfortably between the liberal and conservative camps. He would have had no qualms agreeing with the liberals who pounded on self-claimed “evidence” and “reason” that the Bible was indeed erroneous with many mistakes whether intentional or unintentional, divine or human. At the same time, he would have had no problems affirming with the conservatives that the Bible was truly inerrant because he thought of the Bible’s inerrancy only in terms of its autographs which of course no longer exist, and thus the inerrancy of autographs was really a matter of Faith and not Reason, end of discussion!

Princeton’s less than perfect view of the verbal and plenary preservation of the Scriptures came full circle when Warfield accepted without question the textual critical theory and method of Westcott and Hort. Warfield promoted the critical text of Westcott and Hort soon after it appeared in 1881.¹⁵ Princeton historian David Calhoun was correct to note that Warfield’s “positive attitude toward textual criticism influenced many to appreciate the science and to value the new translations of the Bible based upon its work.”¹⁶

Letis commented that it was Warfield’s employment of German higher criticism and Westcott-Hort’s lower (textual) criticism that led him to reject the authenticity of age-old Bible passages like Mark 16:9-20.¹⁷ Like Westcott and Hort, Warfield accepted the “conjectural emendation” (ie, speculative correction) of the Scriptures.¹⁸ Warfield and all the higher and lower critics were thus advocating that the Bible the Church had been using throughout the centuries contained non-inspired and extra-scriptural material which God never gave and never intended His people to read! Did the Church Fathers and the Reformers all misquote Jesus, reading from the wrong Bible? God forbid!

It is thus no surprise that Warfield, given his sympathy to the liberal method, did not think that the doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures was indispensable. He wrote,

Let it not be said that thus we found the whole Christian system upon the doctrine of plenary inspiration. ... Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. ... ‘without any inspiration we could have had Christianity; yea, and men could still have heard the truth and through it been awakened, and justified, and sanctified, and glorified ... even had we no Bible; ...’¹⁹

But what does the Bible say about itself and its relation to faith and salvation? It is written, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul” (Ps 19:7). “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Ps 119:9). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Does not Warfield realise that without the Scripture, there could be no Gospel? For did not the Apostle write, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day *according to the scriptures*” (1 Cor 15:1-4). “According to the scriptures ... according to the scriptures” our faith must be, or else it is blind faith or no faith at all!

Warfield’s erroneous thinking concerning the indispensable doctrinal and practical importance of the absolute inspiration, authority and sufficiency of the Bible is surely refuted by the Bible itself, for it stands written, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Bible as a whole and in all its parts to the last iota is precisely what we need, and all that we need, to know the living and true God, even Jesus Christ, the only way of salvation from sin and death, has been offered to mankind. We cannot separate Christ from His words. No Bible,

no Christianity!

Warfield's dichotomy of Faith and Reason became the philosophical noose that slowly but surely strangled and finally shook and scandalised the very foundations of Christianity which are Christ's full deity and the Bible's absolute authority.²⁰ Such a naturalistic and compromised approach to the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Faith introduced by Warfield has left believers utterly vulnerable and practically defenceless to 20th and 21st century assaults on their Lord and His Word by the Modern Versions, *The DaVinci Code* and the Gnostic Gospels.²¹

Can Doctrines Do Without Words?

Is Princeton's "Plenary Inspiration" enough or is there a need to affirm "Verbal Plenary Inspiration?" In other words, does it really matter if we do not have all the inspired words of Scriptures but just the fundamental doctrines of Christianity? Ryrie commented in his *Basic Theology* why there is a need to be very precise and strict in defining "Verbal Plenary Inspiration:"

While many theological viewpoints would be willing to say the Bible is inspired, one finds little uniformity as to what is meant by inspiration. Some focus it on the writers; others, on the writings; still others, on the readers. Some relate it to the general message of the Bible; others, to the thoughts; still others, to the words. Some include inerrancy; many don't.

These differences call for precision in stating the biblical doctrine. Formerly all that was necessary to affirm one's belief in full inspiration was the statement, "I believe in the *inspiration* of the Bible." But when some did not extend inspiration to the words of the text it became necessary to say, "I believe in the *verbal inspiration* of the Bible." To counter the teaching that not all parts of the Bible were inspired, one had to say, "I believe in the *verbal, plenary inspiration* of the Bible." Then because some did not want to ascribe total accuracy to the Bible, it was necessary to say, "I believe in the *verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration* of the Bible." But then "infallible" and "inerrant" began to be limited to matters of faith only rather than also embracing all that the Bible records (including historical facts, genealogies, accounts of Creation, etc.), so it became necessary to add the concept of "*unlimited inerrancy.*" ***Each addition to the basic statement arose because of an erroneous teaching.***²²

It must be noted that the old Princeton theology did affirm that the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures must necessarily extend to the words (ie, verbal inspiration). Charles Hodge made it clear that it is not just the thoughts, concepts, or doctrines in the Scriptures that are inspired but their very words. He taught that doctrines of the Scriptures are to be sought in the words, the two are inseparable. He wrote,

If the words—priest, sacrifice, ransom, expiation, propitiation, purification by blood, and the like—have no divine authority, then the doctrine which they embody has no such authority.

... Christ and his Apostles argue from the very words of Scripture. Our Lord says that David by the Spirit called the Messiah Lord, i.e., David used that word. It was in the use of a particular word, that Christ said (John x. 35), that the Scriptures cannot be broken. "If he call [sic] them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken," etc. The use of that word, therefore, according to Christ's view of the Scripture, was determined by the Spirit of God. Paul, in Gal. iii.16, lays stress on the fact, that in the promise made by Abraham, a word used is singular and not plural, "seed," "as of one," and not "seeds as of many." Constantly it is the very words of Scriptures which are quoted as of divine authority.

... All these, and similar modes of expression with which the Scriptures abound, imply that the words uttered were the words of God. ... The words of the prophet were the words of God, or he could not be God's spokesman and mouth. It has also been shown that in the most formally didactic passage in the whole Bible on this subject (1 Cor. ii. 10-13), the Apostle expressly asserts that the truths revealed by the Spirit, he communicated

in words taught by the Spirit.²³

Following the old but inadequate Princeton tradition, Presbyterian denominations and organisations have by and large affirmed merely the Scripture's "plenary inspiration" but not its "verbal and plenary inspiration." This is not to deny that some do indeed believe in verbal inspiration even without affirming the same. Nevertheless, the modernist/neo-evangelical versus fundamentalist battle for the Bible has so well developed the doctrine of the Bible that "verbal inspiration" has become an indispensable term for Biblical inerrancy in 20th century conservative evangelical and fundamental theology. ²⁴As such the doctrinal constitution or statements of faith of certain Bible-believing and Bible-defending churches or councils might require a much needed updating for the sake of clarity and precision in stating this Biblical truth.

Can Verbal Inspiration Do Without Verbal Preservation?

The Bibliological crisis that stems from Princeton theology has now led to the question of not just the Scripture's verbal inspiration but also its verbal preservation. The modern opinion among reformed, evangelical and fundamental circles is that although the Scriptures are verbally and plenary inspired, they are not verbally and plenary preserved. As such the Church may be absolutely certain of the verbal plenary perfection of the Scriptures only in the past, that is in the autographs, but it may not be absolutely certain of the verbal plenary perfection of the Scriptures today, that is in the apographs.

One would think that the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture would naturally and automatically lead a person to believe in its verbal and plenary preservation, but sadly such logic is not so simple and obvious for such adherents who say,

We know for sure that the first Bible is perfect, but we cannot be so sure that the Bible in our hands today have no mistakes at all; and even if there is such an errorless Bible today, we cannot know where it is because there are just too many different kinds of Bibles out there, and we just cannot tell which Bible is true and which is false.

Although we do not know where the perfect Bible is, we are dead against those who insist that they have in their hands a Bible that is 100% perfect without any mistake because of their belief that God has not only inspired His words 100% but also preserved His words 100% in the original languages to the last iota (Matt 5:18).

Pastors Charles Seet and Colin Wong, and others, in their paper, "Preserving Our Godly Path," opposed the Verbal Plenary Preservation of the Holy Scriptures by quoting Rowland Ward, a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, who argued against verbal preservation and denounced the Textus Receptus as the best exemplar of the preserved text.²⁵ Ward believes that the Bible is infallible and inerrant to the "jot and tittle" only in the autographs, but denies that it is so infallible and inerrant in the apographs. Despite the Westminster Confession's quotation of Matthew 5:18, Ward simplistically and illogically dismisses the special providential—"jot and tittle"—preservation of the Holy Scriptures supposing that

Matthew 5:18 (the jot and tittle passage) is not referring to the transmission of the text of Scripture but to the authority of God's claims upon us. The transmission of Scripture is not such that the sources have been preserved with exactness in any particular manuscript but, as Owen noted, in all the manuscripts. And we cannot say that providence has preserved only some manuscripts since providence extends to all events and thus to the preservation of all the manuscripts. Nor can we say that providence tells us which manuscripts are the best ones: only manuscript comparison and analysis can do that. In short, "pure" does not mean "without any transcriptional errors" but it means something like "without loss of doctrines and with the text preserved in the variety of manuscripts."²⁶

Several fallacious claims have been posited by Ward in his statement above. First, Ward claims that Matthew 5:18 concerns the authority and not the transmission of Scripture. This is a logical fallacy. The authority of Scripture is inextricably bound to its transmission and preservation by *providentia extraordinaria* or supernatural providence. The promise of the divine preservation of the inspired words of God to its last jot and tittle is true (unless one cares to spiritualise or explain away the

Biblical text which is often the convenient route of escape by many who do not wish to face the truths of God's Word plainly and literally due to certain preconceived ideas or views). Equally significant is the Westminster Confession's employment of Matthew 5:18 as proof text for its statement on the special providential preservation of the Scriptures, highlighting in particular the Bible's *authenticity* and not merely its authority: "The Old Testament in Hebrew ... and the New Testament in Greek ... being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore *authentical*."²⁷ On the meaning of the word "authentical," J S Candlish rightly commented,

It is obvious that, as the question here is as to the text of Scripture, the word authentic is used, not in the modern sense in which it has been employed by many ... as meaning historically true, but in its more *literal* sense, attested as a correct *copy* of the author's work.²⁸

William Orr likewise noted,

Now this affirms that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New which was known to the Westminster divines was immediately inspired by God because it was *identical* with the first text that God had kept pure in all ages. *The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the Textus Receptus of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith.*²⁹

Surely the 100% authenticity (or infallibility and inerrancy) of the Scriptures in the apographs or copies is the very reason why the Bible is 100% authoritative on every matter of faith and practice. How can the non-existent and intangible *autographa* or imperfect and corrupted *apographa* serve as the supreme and final authority of the Christian Faith? Surely they cannot!

Second, Ward errs when he says that preservation must be in "all the manuscripts" without distinction or discrimination. The fact is *not all* manuscripts are pure or uncorrupted. There exist manuscripts that show a corrupt hand. Dean J W Burgon had proven without doubt the corruptions that abound in the Alexandrian manuscripts of Westcott and Hort which he summarily dismissed as the "most scandalously corrupt copies extant."³⁰ Thankfully, by God's special providence, these corruptions or corrupted manuscripts are in the minority. The majority of Greek manuscripts belonging to the Byzantine Text and the Textus Receptus display essentially the same readings.

Third, Ward holds to a rather uncertain or agnostic view of divine providence which allows for the preservation of only the doctrines of the Christian Faith but not the very words of Holy Scripture that God had originally breathed out (*theopneustos*, 2 Tim 3:16). In other words, he denies verbal preservation in favour of conceptual preservation. But this is again not only biblically but also logically untenable, for how can there be doctrines or concepts without the words to explain or express them. Ward cited Owen, but for sure the distinguished puritan theologian did not advocate conceptual preservation over against verbal preservation as Ward would have us believe. Owen clearly believed in the preservation of the *words* of Scripture (ie, verbal preservation), not just the doctrines (ie, conceptual preservation), for he wrote, "Nor is it enough to satisfy us, that the *doctrines* mentioned are *preserved entire; every tittle and iota* in the Word of God must come under our care and consideration, as being, as such, from God."³¹

How easily "\$1000" becomes "\$7000" just by adding one stroke to the number "1," and a "tie" becomes a "lie" when the stroke of the "t" is removed. Instead of "Blest be the *tie* that binds," shall we now sing "Blest be the *lie* that binds?" Indeed, the tie that binds modernists, neo-evangelicals, and neo-fundamentalists is the lie that the Bible is imperfectly preserved with missing jots and tittles, denying Jesus' clear and precise promise of the infallible preservation of His words in Matthew 5:18. Meanings and figures change when we add to or subtract from God's Word, even though it may just be a little bit. Did God allow His words to be changed, corrupted, or lost? Never! God by His infinite power and wisdom has ensured that every corruption to His Word is rejected, and every copying or printing mistake corrected! God is His own infallible Textual Critic, and we trust in His special providential work of preserving and restoring every jot and tittle of His words especially in the days of the Great Protestant Reformation and the age of the Printed Text so that His Word as a whole and in its parts right down to the last iota remains infallible and inerrant, and supremely authoritative in the faith and life of the Chu

Faithful Resolutions

In the 21st century Reformation movement, the Lord has raised a number of Christ-honouring institutions to take a declared position on the Biblical doctrine of the Verbal Plenary Preservation of Scriptures and to promote the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus underlying the Authorised or King James Bible.

By the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC)

The ICCC is a worldwide fellowship of fundamental churches which are opposed to liberalism, ecumenism, charismaticism, and neo-evangelicalism. Led by Dr Carl McIntire, its founding President, the ICCC in its World Congress held in Jerusalem in the year 2000 declared,

Believing the Holy Scriptures on the originals to be fully inspired with its words and genders and being complete as God's revelation to man without error;

Believing that God not only inspired the Bible without errors in fact, doctrine and judgment but preserved the Scriptures in all ages for all eternity as the Westminster Confession of Faith standard says—"the O.T. in Hebrew and the N.T. in Greek ... being immediately inspired by God and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages are therefore authentical ... They are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come;"

Believing the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, gave us a supernatural gift, and both inspired and preserved it. By inspired we mean that the Holy Spirit moved in the hearts of its human authors that they recorded the very words that God wanted written in the Bible using the personality and background of its writers but without error. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." II Pet 1:21;

Believing God safeguarded the Bible in times past and will continue to do so in the future and all eternity. He preserved on Scripture, the Bible. "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away;" Matt 24:35;

Believing the O.T. has been preserved in the Masoretic text and the N.T. in the Textus Receptus, combined they gave us the complete Word of God. The King James Version in English has been faithfully translated from these God-preserved manuscripts. Other good Protestant versions have been translated around the world in many languages based on the Masoretic and Textus Receptus until 1881 when Drs. Westcott and Hort used a shorter text removing many words, phrases and sections by following the eclectic watered down polluted Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts;

These manuscripts differ widely among themselves and with others amount to less than 5% of the manuscript evidence. God preserved the Textus Receptus in the majority text with 95%. This is called the traditional, or majority text. It is also called Eastern Byzantine text and also the manuscripts that have the longer and fuller texts; ...

We the International Council of Christian Churches meeting in Jerusalem, 8-14 November 2000 strongly urge the churches in their pulpits and people at large, to continue to use the time honoured and faithful longer translations and not the new shorter versions that follow in too many places the short eclectic texts. These are very similar to the shorter Westcott and Hort texts that remove or cast doubt on so many passages and words. Furthermore we are not against new versions as such but believe all true and faithful versions must be based on the traditional longer texts that the Holy Spirit preserved through the early century versions, the early church fathers and the faithful Textus Receptus.³²

By the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS)

The TBS, in its latest position statement on the Bible as published in its *Quarterly Record*, April-June 2005, affirms in no uncertain terms the special providential preservation of the Scriptures, and specifically identifies the underlying texts of the KJV to be its definitive texts:

“The Trinitarian Bible Society Statement of Doctrine of the Holy Scripture” approved by the General Committee at its meeting held on 17th January 2005, and revised 25th February 2005 declares:

The Constitution of the Trinitarian Bible Society specifies the textual families to be employed in the translations it circulates. The Masoretic Hebrew and the Greek Received Texts are the texts that the Constitution of the Trinitarian Bible Society acknowledges to have been preserved by the special providence of God within Judaism and Christianity. Therefore these texts are definitive and the final point of reference in all the Society’s work.

These texts of Scripture reflect the qualities of God-breathed Scripture, including being authentic, holy, pure, true, infallible, trustworthy, excellent, self-authenticating, necessary, sufficient, perspicuous, self-interpreting, authoritative and inerrant (Psalm 19:7-9, Psalm 119). They are consequently to be received as the Word of God (Ezra 7:14; Nehemiah 8:8; Daniel 9:2; 2 Peter 1:19) and the correct reading at any point is to be sought within these texts.

The Society accepts as the best edition of the Hebrew Masoretic text the one prepared in 1524–25 by Jacob ben Chayyim and known, after David Bomberg the publisher, as the Bomberg text. This text underlies the Old Testament in the Authorised Version.

The Greek Received Text is the name given to a group of printed texts, the first of which was published by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516. The Society believes that the latest and best edition is the text reconstructed by F.H.A. Scrivener in 1894. This text was reconstructed from the Greek underlying the New Testament of the Authorised Version.³³

By the Dean Burgon Society (DBS)

The DBS was founded in the USA in 1978 to defend the Traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus underlying the King James Bible. Dr D A Waite and Dr David Otis Fuller were among the original founding members.

In its “Articles of Faith,” the DBS states:

We believe in the plenary, verbal, Divine inspiration of the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments (from Genesis to Revelation) in the original languages, and in their consequent infallibility and inerrancy in all matters of which they speak (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). The books known as the Apocrypha, however, are not the inspired Word of God in any sense whatsoever. 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.

We believe that the Texts which are the closest to the original autographs of the Bible are the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text for the Old Testament, and the traditional Greek Text for the New Testament underlying the King James Version (as found in “The Greek Text Underlying The English Authorized Version of 1611”).

We, believe that the King James Version (or Authorized Version) of the English Bible is a true, faithful, and

accurate translation of these two providentially preserved Texts, which in our time has no equal among all of the other English Translations. The translators did such a fine job in their translation task that we can without apology hold up the Authorized Version of 1611 and say “This is the WORD OF GOD!” while at the same time realizing that, in some verses, we must go back to the underlying original language Texts for complete clarity, and also compare Scripture with Scripture.

We believe that all the verses in the King James Version belong in the Old and the New Testaments because they represent words we believe were in the original texts, although there might be other renderings from the original languages which could also be acceptable to us today. For an exhaustive study of any of the words or verses in the Bible, we urge the student to return directly to the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text and the Traditional Received Greek Text rather than to any other translation for help.³⁴

By the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC)

The Far Eastern Bible College, founded by the Rev Dr Timothy Tow in 1962, in its Constitution states without equivocation its faith in God’s forever infallible and inerrant words thusly:

We believe in the divine, Verbal Plenary Inspiration (Autographs) and Verbal Plenary Preservation (Apographs) of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and as the perfect Word of God, the Supreme and final authority in faith and life (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Ps 12:6-7; Matt 5:18, 24:35);

We believe the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament underlying the Authorised (King James) Version to be the very Word of God, infallible and inerrant;

We uphold the Authorised (King James) Version to be the Word of God -- the best, most faithful, most accurate, most beautiful translation of the Bible in the English language, and do employ it alone as our primary scriptural text in the public reading, preaching, and teaching of the English Bible.³⁵

May God’s people not adore and exalt seemingly great scholars or schools of the past and the present, and deem them infallible and inerrant, for only the inspired and preserved words of God in the Holy Scriptures are infallible and inerrant, pure and perfect in every way, and our sole and supreme authority of faith and life to the glory of God. Amen.

¹ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, sv “Alexander, Archibald,” “Hodge, Charles,” “Warfield, Benjamin Breckinridge,” by M A Noll.

² Theodore Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 2000), 6.

³ Quoted by David Cloud, *Faith Versus the Modern Bible Versions* (Port Huron: Way of Life, 2005), 309.

⁴ Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 6, quoting Lefferts A Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 228.

⁵ A title he earned for being the General Editor of the *Reader’s Digest Bible*.

⁶ Bart D Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 11.

⁷ Ibid, “Acknowledgments.” Ehrman dedicated his book to Metzger.

⁸ E F Hills, *Believing Bible Study* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1977), 216-20.

⁹ Quoted by Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 8.

¹⁰ Charles Hodge, “Law of Criticism of the New Testament,” as cited by Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 9.

¹¹ Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 11.

¹² See Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd enlarged ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 119-146; Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 3-35; J Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 78-95; Daniel Wallace, “Inspiration, Preservation, and New Testament,” in *New*

Testament Essays: In Honor of Homer A Kent Jr, ed Gary Meadors (Winona Lake: BMH, 1991), 69-102.

¹³ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992 reprint), 1:106, emphasis mine. See also Robert Barnett, "Francis Turretin on the Holy Scriptures," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Dean Burgon Society held at Calvary Baptist Church, Ontario, Canada, in 1995 (<http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/Preservation/barnett95.htm>, accessed on June 4, 2006).

¹⁴ See Theodore Letis, "B B Warfield, Common-Sense Philosophy and Biblical Criticism," in *Edward Freer Hills's Contribution to the Revival of the Ecclesiastical Text* (Philadelphia: Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1987), 62-89; Jeffrey Khoo, "Sola Autographa or Sola Apographa: A Case for the Present Perfection and Authority of the Holy Scriptures," *The Burning Bush* 11 (2005): 3-19; American Presbyterian Church, "B B Warfield and the Doctrine of Inspiration," in <http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/inspiration.htm>; and "B B Warfield and the Reformation Doctrine of the Providential Preservation of the Biblical Text," in <http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/preservation.htm>, accessed on June 1, 2006.

¹⁵ Warfield, in his review of the textual critical theory and text of Westcott and Hort, wrote, "We cannot doubt but that the leading principles of method which they have laid down will meet with speedy universal acceptance. They furnish us for the first time with a really scientific method." *Presbyterian Review* 3 (1882): 355. Letis has rightly judged that Warfield's glowing review of the Westcott-Hort Critical theory and text "would forever endear it to conservatives in the United States." *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 17.

¹⁶ David B Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony 1869-1929* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), 113-4.

¹⁷ Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 19. For a most excellent defence of the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20, read J W Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S Mark Vindicated against Recent Critical Objectors and Established* (Oxford: James Parker and Co, 1871), which has been reprinted by the Dean Burgon Society (www.deanburgonsociety.org).

¹⁸ Warfield wrote, "It may be said here, again, that thus a wide door is opened for the entrance of deceitful dealing with the Word of Life. The danger is apparent and imminent. But we cannot arbitrarily close the door lest we incur the same charge." *Presbyterian Review* 3 (1882): 347-8, as cited in Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 19.

¹⁹ Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 210-1.

²⁰ The inconsistency of B B Warfield in separating Faith and Reason in his theological method was ably exposed by E F Hills, "A History of My Defence of the King James Bible," *The Burning Bush* 4 (1998): 99-105. For an excellent synopsis and analysis of modernism, rationalism, and naturalistic textual criticism, read Hills's, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1984), 62-86. This book is now available online without charge: go to <http://www.john3-16.connectfree.co.uk/efhills/efhills%20index.html>.

²¹ For a Bible-based and faith-based defence of the Christian Faith and Scripture against Dan Brown's attack on the Canon of Scripture through *The DaVinci Code*, and Princeton's assault on the traditional text and the Textus Receptus through the Critical Text of Bruce Metzger et al, and the promotion of the Gnostic Gospels by Elaine Pagels, see my papers, "The Blasphemy and Deception of *The DaVinci Code*" (co-authored with Suan-Yew Quek), *The Burning Bush* 12 (2006): 14-24; "The Judas Gospel: Bad News of Betrayal," *Faith and Freedom* (May 2006): 2, 11, 12. Both articles are available online at www.febc.edu.sg.

²² Charles C Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), 67.

²³ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986 reprint), 1:164-5.

²⁴ See Quek Suan Yew, "Biblical Polemics: A Critical Analysis of Four Major Modern Religious Movements Which Contribute to the Ultimate Formation of the One World Church in the Light of Historic Fundamentalist Theology," unpublished ThD dissertation, Far Eastern Bible College, 2005.

²⁵ Charles Seet and Colin Wong, et al, "Preserving Our Godly Path," a paper presented to the Sunday School of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church on December 1, 2002. See amended version published in <http://www.lifefebc.com/ourstand/godlypath.htm> (accessed on June 1, 2006) against believers who seek to preserve godly paths by affirming the divine preservation of all the godly words in the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek language Scriptures underlying the Reformation Bibles best represented by the Authorised or King James Version, and denounce the corrupt Alexandrian or Westcott-Hort text underlying the modern Bible versions.

²⁶ Rowland S Ward, "Recent Criticisms of the Westminster Confession of Faith," in <http://spindleworks.com/library/wcf/ward.htm#c>, accessed on June 1, 2006.

²⁷ The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1:8.

²⁸ J S Candlish, "The Doctrine of the Westminster Confession on Scripture," as quoted in Theodore Letis, *The Majority Text* (Philadelphia: Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1987), 174, emphasis mine.

²⁹ William F Orr, "The Authority of the Bible as Reflected in the Proposed Confession of 1967," as quoted in Letis, *The Majority Text*, 174, emphasis mine.

³⁰ J W Burgon, *The Revision Revised* (Collingswood: Dean Burgon Society, 1883), 16.

³¹ Quoted in Jeffrey Khoo, "John Owen on the Perfect Bible," *The Burning Bush* 10 (2004): 77.

³² Quoted in Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages: Recapturing the Authorised Version and the Doctrine of Providential Preservation* (Singapore: FEBC Press, 2001), 126-7. For a historical overview of Dr Carl McIntire's significant contribution to the defence of the historic Christian Faith, the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures, and the reliability of King James Bible in the Bible Presbyterian Church, read Mrs Frank Mood, "The Bible Presbyterian Church and Dr Carl McIntire," in *The McIntire Memorial* (Seoul: Truth & Freedom Publishing Co, 2005), 117-125.

³³ "Statement of Doctrine of Holy Scripture," 10-11. For the complete document, go to www.trinitarianbiblesociety.com/site/qr/qr571.pdf. See also the Society's online articles at <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/onlinearticles.asp>.

³⁴ Dean Burgon Society, "Articles of Faith, Operation & Organization," as adopted at the Organisational Meeting at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 3-4, 1978 (http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/DBS_Society/articles.htm, accessed on June 27, 2006). See also D A Waite, "The Dean Burgon Society Deserves Its Name: Ten Reasons Why," at http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/DBS_Society/deserves.htm, accessed on June 27, 2006.

³⁵ "Statement of Faith," *Far Eastern Bible College Prospectus* (2005-2009): 11. For FEBC's defence of the Verbal Plenary Preservation of the Holy Scriptures and the King James Bible, go to <http://www.febc.edu.sg/Doctrine%20of%20Perfect%20Preservation.htm>.