

Outline On Biblical Authority

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II Timothy 3:16-7a was written in the first century C.E., in Greek. The Greek words written at that time can be translated

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for [doctrine], for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete” (ESV|KJV, NKJV|ASV).

The Greek word translated “complete” is ἄριστος and means “perfectly fit” (Friberg et al, 76) and “entirely suited; complete” (in Perschbacher, 54). This means that the Greek New Testament Scriptures of that time, the first century C.E. and period of the New Testament church, was among those Scriptures which were entirely sufficient to build proper doctrine upon. This means that the Greek New Testament is a proper foundation and standard for all things doctrinal.

What does the word “Scripture mean? The Greek word translated “Scriptures” is γραφή (Strong, *Concordance* 1176, *Greek Dictionary* 20; Young, *Analytical* 844), means “what has been written” (Richards, 544), and refers to the text of written documents (Strong, *Greek Dictionary* 20; Vine et al, 552). The text on manuscripts and copies of Scripture, and not the manuscripts and copies themselves, are Scripture.

II Timothy 3:15, immediately before the previous passage, made a statement about the Scriptures, that they are

“the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (ASV).

Hence, the Scriptures are directly related to salvation; the Scriptures can empower us with the knowledge of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Palestinian Jews’ Old Testament was among those Scriptures that were being described at II Timothy 3:15-7. At Psalm 138:2b God wrote to Himself what can be translated

“You have exalted Your name, Your word, above all” (JPS 1985)

This passage indicates that God’s Word stands with God’s own name as the highest authority in all matters.

Related to the doctrine of God giving us the Scriptures is God’s promise to preserve them in such passages as in Psalm 12, which can be translated as:

“The words of the LORD are pure words, silver purged in an earthen crucible, refined sevenfold. You O LORD, will keep them, guarding each from this age evermore” (12:7-8 JPS 1985).

This passage teaches that the Word of God will always exist in some form. This means that the text that He provided will always exist in some form. The passage does not tell us how.

At Psalm 89:34 God informs us that He will not change His Word.

“no olvidaré mi pacto ni | cambiaré | mi palabra” (RVR 1995|LBLA|VP) = *“not will-I-forget my pact neither will-I-change my word.”*

In all aspects, including the process of preserving His Word, God is not going to change it. Note also that He refers to His Word in the singular; there is only one Word of God.

As the church spread, so did the languages within it. Translations were made of the Bible into other languages, such as Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and eventually German, Spanish, and English. Many teach that a translation can have just as much authority or even more than the text given by God up to the first century C.E.. Scripture, however, never authorizes a teaching that anything can have more authority than the original text given by God. Furthermore, the original text of the Greek New Testament, as given by God, declared at II Timothy 3:16-7 that this text is an entirely sufficient foundation upon which to base doctrine upon; any religious dogmatic teaching which is not drawn from this text contradicts that passage.

That a translation can have more authority than the original text is also refuted by Acts 10:34, which states regarding matters of salvation

“Dios no hace diferencia entre una persona y otra” (VP) = “God does not make difference between one person and another.”

Of course, this is translated directly from the original Greek New Testament text as given by God in the New Testament church period. Since God does not distinguish among His people after Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry regarding matters of salvation, and the Scriptures are a matter of salvation according to II Timothy 3:15, when God blesses multiple cultural groups of Christians with a Bible translation in their languages, He is not going to bless one more than another.

We now examine multiple language traditional Bible translations. Specifically, we will look at the English King James Bible, the Spanish Reina-Valera Bible tradition, and the German Luther Bible as revised by the initial Protestant Reformer Martin Luther himself in 1545.

- ◆ At James 2:18 the 1545 Luther Bible has "mit deinen werken" = "with your works" from ἐκ τῶν ἔργων σου (Berry, 588) where the 1611 KJV has "||without thy workes" from χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων σου (Green, 698) with margin note "||Some copies reade, *by thy workes*."
- ◆ At II Timothy 1:18 the KJV and Latin Vulgate agree with a few Greek manuscripts' διηκόνησε μοι (Farstad, Hodges, et al, 735) for "ministered vnto mee" (KJV 1611) = "ministered unto me" (DRV); most Greek manuscripts go διηκόνησε without μοι = "me" (Farstad, Hodges, et al, 735 --variant NKJVMg), and the 1569 Reina Bible, 1602 Valera Bible, RVR 1862, 1865, 1909, 1960, and 1995 all follow this with "nos ayudó" = "us he-helped."
- ◆ At Matthew 27:41:

<u>Traditional Reina-Valera 1909</u>	<u>1602 Valera Bible</u>	<u>Translated Into English</u>
"De esta manera también los príncipes de los sacerdotes, escarneciendo con los escribas y los Fariseos y los ancianos, decían"	"Dešte manera tambien los principes de los Sacerdotes ešcarneciendo, con los Ešcribas, y los Pharišeos, y los Ancianos, dezian"	Of-this manner also the principals of the Priests mocking, with the Scribes, and the Pharisees, and the Elders, they-were-saying

"Fariseos" appear also in the Revisiónes of 1862, 1865, 1960, 1977, and 1995. According to the margin notes of the NKJV, the Greek word translated “Pharisees” appears in the majority of Greek manuscripts.

These Bible translations are different. They do not even follow the same Greek New Testament texts. However, God stated at Psalm 89:34 that His Word as a whole will not be changed. If one of these translations is perfect, then the others are not. However, II Timothy 3:15 + Acts 10:34 indicate that God is not going to bless one cultural group of His people more than another, so if one is perfect then the others must be. They are all different, but Psalm 89:34 indicates that God will not change His Word, so the differences plus II Timothy 3:15 + Acts 10:34 indicate that none of the translations can be perfect.

Furthermore, we take note of a difference conceded by the translators of the English translation between the original Greek New Testament text and the English translation. At I Corinthians 14:33a the KJV 1611 has "For God is not the author of †confusion" with margin note "†Gr. tumult, or vnquietnesse" = “Greek tumult, or unquietness” ≠confusion. Again, we will recall II Timothy 3:16-7

which indicates that the Greek New Testament is among those Scriptures completely sufficient to be a standard to measure all things doctrinal. This disagreement between the source Greek text and the KJV means that we must make a choice between which to ultimately believe: are we going to believe the original Greek text as given by God, or this particular translation thereof? First, the Scriptures never authorize a teaching that anything can have more authority than the original text given by God. Second, the original text of the Greek New Testament, as given by God, declared at II Timothy 3:16-7 that this text is an entirely sufficient foundation upon which to base doctrine upon; any religious dogmatic teaching which is not drawn from this text contradicts that passage, so any statement that the translation can have more authority than the Greek New Testament text given by God contradicts this passage. Third, Psalm 89:34 indicates that God is not going to change His Word, and II Timothy 3:16-7 in the Greek written during the first century C.E. shows that the Greek of I Corinthians 14:33 was given by God, Word, so the differing translation cannot be an act of God; therefore, the original Greek of I Corinthians 14:33 must have more authority than the KJV.

Having established that the Bible as given by God in its original languages must be the highest authority, and turning to the Greek New Testament, we look around at differing manuscripts. They fall into three forms of text: the so-called "Alexandrian," the Byzantine, and the Western. We will skip the issues of manuscript evidence and go straight to the Scriptures. At Luke 24:51 the Western text omits "and was carried up to heaven" (Comfort, Early, 103); this is an omission of the Western text alone. However, Acts 1:1-2 says "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up" (RSV I, ESV). The "first book" refers to the Gospel of Luke, so Acts 1:1-2 plainly indicates that the Gospel of Luke originally contained the ascension of Jesus; even Western text Codex Bezae has ἀνελημφθη (Nestle, Aland, et al, 320) meaning "He was taken up" (in Douglas, 409) like the other text-types at Acts 1:2. Hence, Scripture shows that the Western text does not match the original New Testament text.

At what is now I Timothy 5:18 God wrote through Paul "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire" (ASV). The first quote of "the scripture" in I Timothy 5:18 is from Deuteronomy 25:4, and the second is from Luke 10:7 (in Criswell, 1843). What is of note is that the Byzantine text has one Greek reading for Luke 10:7 and the Alexandrian and Western texts have another Greek reading. Alexandrian-type Codex Vaticanus has ἄξιός γάρ ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ (Maius, 133) and Western-type Codex Bezae has the same text (Scrivener, Bezae, 204). The source text for the KJV adds ἐστὶ at the end of the sentence (in Green, 218) as do the majority of manuscripts (Hodges, Farstad, 275) and the Greek text traditionally approved and used by the Eastern and Greek Orthodox churches (Zodhiates, 235); these represent Luke 10:7 in the Byzantine text. Literal English renderings of each Greek reading are as follows:

Alexandrian/Western: "for worthy the workman of the pay of him" (Marshall, 202)

Byzantine: "for worthy the workman of his hire is" (in Berry, 186); ἐστὶ = "is" (Farstad, Hodges, et al, 250).

The Byzantine text clarifies the sentence with an additional word: ἐστὶ = "is."

I Timothy 5:18 has Ἄξιός ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ (in Douglas, 246, 733), and this matches the source text for the KJV (in Green, 645), the text used by the Eastern and Greek Orthodox churches (in Zodhiates, 695), and the majority of manuscripts (Hodges, Farstad, 631) and the 1881 Westcott-Hort text (Westcott, Hort, 488). This is an exact match for Luke 10:7 minus γάρ = "for" (in Douglas, 246, 733), which is understandable because "for" connects the clause into another sentence at Luke 10:7, while at I Timothy 5:18 the clause was intended to stand by itself. What is to be noticed is that the quotation of Luke 10:7 at I Timothy 5:18 does not have the Byzantine text's ἐστὶ, leaving the "is" implied, as in the Alexandrian and Western texts for Luke 10:7. If the Byzantine text was both original and available to Paul, it is not likely that he would have chosen the opposing less-clear version of the clause; the less-clear

version must have been what Paul had to quote from. Therefore, when Paul quoted the Gospel of Luke in the 060's C.E., the text that he used was not Byzantine in nature.

The significance of this should not be overlooked. God ultimately wrote I Timothy through Paul. God did not use a Byzantine-type text to write this passage of Scripture, and because writing the New Testament was part of establishing the church, this means that God did not use a Byzantine-type text to establish the church. The Byzantine text was not the text of the New Testament church.

We recall that the quotation of Luke 10:7 at I Timothy 5:18 was of a non-Byzantine reading of Luke 10:7, and we recall that Acts 1:1-2 indicates that Luke originally contained the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ: the non-Western texts of Luke 24:51 record the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, so therefore Acts 1:1-2 testifies against the Western text. It seems as if God anticipated the formation of three text classes, and so in His Word He gave us clues to identify the original text form -- those clues tell us that this text form is the so-called "Alexandrian" text.

Referring to the question of copies and translations of the Word of God, we note that before the New Testament was written, the Lord Jesus Christ is recorded at John 10:35 saying "a Escritura não pode falhar" (DA ERA) = "the Scripture no/not <=> it-can fail"; it cannot fail to be accurate, and is also translated more directly "as Escrituras Sagradas sempre dizem a verdade" (NTLH) = "the Scriptures Sacred always they-say the truth." Jesus was referring to what is now the Jewish Old Testament, which was written in Hebrew and Aramaic. As the first five books of the Old Testament were written over 1000 years before Christ, Jesus could only have been referring to the text of the copies.

God wrote, in Greek, at II Timothy 3:16 "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (ESV). The word translated "Scripture" is γραφή (Strong, *Concordance*, 1176, *Greek Dictionary*, 20; Young, *Analytical*, 844), and it means the very text of written documents (Strong, *Greek Dictionary*, 20; Vine et al, 552). This passage states that the text written by God is Scripture, so the text of the original manuscripts is Scripture. Any copy of this text is still Scripture.

What about translations of copies of this text? The Septuagint was a Jewish translation of the Hebrew Old Testament plus some other books written between the Old and New Testaments that had some religious value to at least some Jews. The Septuagint must have been a pre-Christian translation of the Old Testament, because fragments of the Septuagint from the last two centuries B.C.E. have survived among the Dead Sea Scrolls (Schiffman, 212-3). The Septuagint had to have been finished before the New Testament, as the apostles used the Septuagint (KJV 1611 preface *The Translators To The Reader*, 7th-8th pages) in composition of the New Testament. On the other hand, the translation of the Law (first five books) was done during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (Brenton, i), during the period of the Greek Empire, which began in the fourth century B.C.E.. Since the original manuscripts of the Law were written in the second millennium B.C.E., the Septuagint could only have been translated from copies of the Hebrew text.

Now we come to whether or not a translation can biblically be considered the Word of God. The KJV translators report that the Septuagint differed in many places from the Hebrew Old Testament, yet the apostles used it (KJV 1611 preface *The Translators To The Reader*, 7th-8th pages) in composing the New Testament. At Romans 10:11 God wrote "For the Scripture says, 'Whoever puts his trust in Him will not be put to shame'" (NBV). This is a verbal quote of Isaiah 28:16 from the Septuagint (in Douglas, 559), as the common Hebrew text has "He who trusts need not fear" (JPS 1985). God quoted a translation and called it "Scripture." From Scripture we see very clearly that a translation of copies can still be regarded as Scripture.

This takes us back to copies in the original languages. The Septuagint translated a Hebrew text attested to by 5% of the Dead Sea Scrolls from the first century C.E. and before, while proto-Masoretic type manuscripts composed 60% of the Bible manuscripts in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Schiffman, 172).

Masoretic texts are the bases for the King James Version and subsequent translations. The predominant Hebrew text form at the time of Jesus Christ was the proto-Masoretic text form, outnumbering the Septuagint text form 12 to 1. When God incarnated as Jesus Christ, He read and discussed Scripture among a Semitic population who predominantly made, had, and used copies of a proto-Masoretic text form. Furthermore, God, writing through Paul, quoted the Septuagint for Isaiah 28:16 at Romans 10:11 (in Douglas, 559), but at Romans 9:25-6a God quoted the proto-Masoretic Hebrew Old Testament for Hosea 2:23 "As He also says in Hosea: I will call 'Not-My-People,' 'My-People,' and she who is 'Unloved,' 'Beloved'" (HCSB); the Septuagint order is "will love her that was not loved, and will say to that which was not my people, Thou art my people" (Brenton, 1072). God used both Old Testament text forms as Scripture when writing the New Testament.

Applying this to the New Testament, we see that any copy of the text of Scripture can be regarded as the Word of God, even if its text differs in places from that of the original. We also realize that any faithful translation of any copy of the Word of God in the original languages, even if the copy differs from the original text in places, can still be regarded as the Word of God. This means that the Portuguese De Almeida Edição Revista e Atualizada (Edition Revised and Updated), based upon a predominantly Alexandrian-type Greek text, is the Word of God. This also means that the English King James Version and New King James Version, based upon a Byzantine-type Greek text, are both the Word of God, even though the Byzantine text class differs from the original text more than the so-called "Alexandrian" text class does. Finally, this also means that the Latin Vulgate, derived primarily from a Western-type Greek text, is also the Word of God.

The Bible is the Book that God wrote in Greek and Hebrew the moment He wrote it. The Scriptures show God writing in Hebrew, Aramaic (very short portions), and Greek. The King James Version is the Word of God in the sense of representing the Word of God. Any properly done translation attempts to accurately represent the source. If it does so, it becomes the equivalent of the source to the recipients of the translation. For example, when we read the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels and at Acts 20:35 in English, we consider these to be what Jesus said, although Jesus did not speak in English as it did not exist yet; the translations in English are still considered His oracles. When we read *Don Quixote*, a Spanish novel, in English, we consider the translation to be *Don Quixote*, although it is not exactly *Don Quixote*. The King James Version is a translation of the Hebrew and Greek Bible that God wrote. It is the Word of God in the sense that it represents the Word of God written by God Himself in Greek and Hebrew. However, we have established earlier that the highest Scriptural authority is the Bible as given by God in its original languages.

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