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The
Institute
for
Renaissance and Reformation
Biblical Studies

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Friends,

What follows is the good effort on the part of some to enlighten dull minds on two different discussion lists.

What follows is a great piece forwarded to me underscoring where all our problems stem from...

Theodore P. Letis

Brothers,

You really should consider what I'm trying to point out here. I mean you really should follow this reasoning through to its end. This whole view that says that the Bible is "INERRANT ONLY IN THE ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS" leaves the church without an authoritative text. On the surface it sounds good and may even have a good intention of scholarly pursuits. It does however, bypass several technical issues with the transmission of the various textual traditions of the New Testament. After all, such a view cannot be examined further as we do not have the original autographs. It is a view that is based upon non-existent texts. To say that ONLY THE AUTOGRAPHS are inerrant, to say that ONLY THE AUTOGRAPHS are the real final authority, to say that ONLY THE AUTOGRAPHS are the perfect Word of God ignorantly borders heresy. We as the Church do not have the original autographs!

You really should ponder the issue of terminology here brothers - the difference between "inerrant autographs" and "infallible apographs" as mentioned before. For you see, the Church has always had a trustworthy authoritative text sanctioned by and used in the

Church. The copies (apographs) were considered infallible and trustworthy scripture. Well, uh, that is until about 200 years or so ago when some textual scholarship started advocating a view that says the early Church intentionally corrupted the text of the New Testament to have a convenient text to support their own theological views. And hence the modern quest to RECONSTRUCT the text of the New Testament before such a corruption (which is still underway to this day in the efforts of the Critical Text - the text from which most modern translations are based). More specifically, in this forum, this is the textual tradition underlying the NIV and the NASB.

I realize that not a lot of you brothers would say that you are all in the same group of people by using or preaching from the NIV or NASB as people who are seeking to RECONSTRUCT the lost text of the New Testament. Nevertheless, you can no longer use these translations being ignorant of this fact now and must make a decision to research this issue further and see if what I am saying is true or not. Hear me clearly now, the teaching that says ONLY THE AUTOGRAPHS have the perfect, inerrant, authority is preposterous. What are we the Church to look to then for our final authority? Huh? The best that modern scholarship has to offer? The closest we can get to the best guess at what God might have said? Well, you have every right to believe that if you want. If this is, in fact, a view that a majority holds - so be it. I am but one person expressing my honest view in this area. If all of the leaders in every college hold to such a view that strips the Church of an authoritative text and separates it from a final perfect authority which we can never possess, they can hold it. I have no idea what ALL of the leaders of our denomination hold. But if it is as you say and they all do hold that particular view of inerrancy (a view similar to Warfield - inerrant ONLY IN THE AUTOGRAPHS) then it is a most unfortunate and sad day for Free Will Baptists. The FWB Churches need to know this.

I can tell you that a lot of lay people do not hold such a view of God's Word. I can tell you that many an ordination board member do not promote such a view of God's Word. I can tell you that many people reading these comments posted here in this forum do not subscribe to such a view of the Bible. They may not be posting comments, but in their hearts know that such a view (INERRANT ONLY IN THE ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS) is wrong and deserves exposure. I sincerely and firmly take my stand against such a view and maintain that it will continue to damage the Church and continue to promote a degradation of God's Word with each new attempt to provide the latest in textual research with the latest in translation methodology. I believe that we as the Church are not getting closer to what God said, but further away from it as the mass of modern translations continues to increase in propagation.

You know, I must question in looking our treatise of faith and practice over in this area of God's Word and wonder, if we are to be true to Free Will Baptist doctrine, what are we to consult as a final authority? If the Bible is the Word of God and a sufficient and infallible rule and guide to salvation and all Christian worship and service, how can we consult it if it only existed in the ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS? Where is this Word of God that is without error in all matters upon which it speaks, whether history, geography, science, or any other subject if this Bible only existed in the AUTOGRAPHS? If we

really do, as Free Will Baptists, believe in "plenary verbal inspiration" and that all parts of the Bible are inspired, the full and complete Bible in every subject, and inspired to the very words (not just to the thoughts) then where do we turn? The autographs are long since gone and NEVER to return. We will NEVER possess these "inerrant original autographs" that are long since gone. What do we consult for all matters of faith and practice if the only perfect source for our final authority is located in ONLY IN THE ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS?

Some of you have mocked my apparent minority view of standing with the Received Text TEXTUAL TRADITION and a reliable translation from it in the Authorized Version. Some of you have questioned my rejection of the Critical Text TEXTUAL TRADITION and translations based on it (regardless of the translation methodology). You have the right to do so and the freedom to continue using such translations (as the NIV and NASB) based upon this ever changing and updating faulty textual tradition. But understand, that in doing so, it is my view that you ultimately damage the Church and promote a view of God's Word that in EFFECT, in the end, damages God's Word.

It is most difficult to say such things in a way that doesn't cause anger and resentment to build up in you, my brothers in the Lord. But in the end, did God do as He said he would in preserving His very words or not? The Providential Preservation of Scripture (as held by many throughout Church history) seems to be a doctrine that is not held by "modern" scholarship or "modern" products of "modern" seminaries. I myself am glad that I partially researched this issue BEFORE going to seminary, else I would probably have graduated thinking that we can not really be sure of the text of the New Testament. Modern scholarship says: "Close? Yes! But absolutely sure? We're still working on it." If you are a pastor and this is your view (INERRANT ONLY IN THE AUTOGRAPHS), I would certainly hope that your Church knows that this is your view. Please tell them that you are holding in your hands what you "hope" to be a good translation of what is "probably" the "best text" of what God "might" have "meant" and don't stand before them saying this is the Word of God. Don't say "this is what God says." What God says may change in the next edition with more research and scholarship.

Chuck Louviere

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I think the point is that Calvin and Whitaker never use the term inerrancy and they never appeal to a "non existent" text for their authority nor do they seek those texts rejected by the orthodox church thru the ages (as you would agree with).

The term inerrancy, while I admit I like to cling to, is NOT required as a test of orthodoxy if one holds to the classical reformed position of infallibility. This is clearly what Turretin had in mind in his Institutes when he was defending the authority of scripture as infallible and IN HAND. This is where the Warfieldian Inerrancy people get goofy because they place a level of perfection (with the term "inerrancy") on a non-existent text that must be reached thru, guess what, the neutral higher critical approach that finds the isolated texts that were rejected by the early orthodox church as being non-canonical.

So the Providentially preserved infallible text (as so clearly spelled out in the Westminster Confession) has been traded by Warfield (and all other conservative/Reformed theologians) for the non-existent "so-called" original that ALONE has that level of perfection that doesn't exist. The term inerrancy seems to ALWAYS point to that "original" but lost text that must be recovered by higher critical methods. Dr. Letis is fighting a needed but lonely battle in trying to warn the Protestant churches of this. Just some thoughts.

Thanks for the kind words about Dr. Letis
Take care,
Paul Moore

The Numbers Trap by Paul Proctor

It's becoming increasingly clear that the world and its Wal-Mart ways of quantity over quality have all but taken over the 21st century church. Even seemingly faithful fellowships that still claim the authority of scripture and resist affiliation with church growth institutions like Willow Creek and Saddleback are themselves being compromised into corruption by a covetous mentality that permeates the Body of Christ through the ongoing efforts of various authors, editors, televangelists, preachers, pastors, ministers, elders, deacons, teachers and laypersons who have all been instructed or influenced in some way by the CGM (Church Growth Movement) and its many ecumenical, interfaith, parachurch and church management organizations.

Have you ever wondered why there's an increasing emphasis on "church leadership" these days and why so many congregations now sponsor and promote "leadership conferences"? Could it be because our egos aren't as easily persuaded into Christian service with Fellowship Conferences? After all, Jesus didn't say: "LEAD FOR ME ye fishers of men". That's the gospel of Peter F. Drucker and Bob Buford. No, the Lord told Simon and Andrew: "FOLLOW ME, and I will make you fishers of men". You see my

friends, the Christian life isn't about leading men but about following Christ. One requires pride, the other, humility.

And whether they know it or not, this proud and growing network of "leaders" that the Druckers, Bufords, Wagners, Hybels and Warrens of our world are assembling all around us are the United Nation's unofficial "change agents" and "facilitators" trained to "transform" those of us who might otherwise resist a coming one-world religion of tolerance, diversity and unity where faith is expressed through feelings and consensus, rather than knowledge and obedience. What do they offer the church today? They offer the power and glory of big numbers - the very things Satan offered Jesus in the wilderness. (Luke 4:5-7)

One need only read or hear a mega-church pastor's introduction today to recognize just how much the humility of ministry has been exchanged for the worldly pride of prominence. How often are we introduced to Pastor So and So from the Some-Odd THOUSAND-MEMBER Such and Such Church as if size was the measure of one's spirituality or faithfulness? And yet, in our wicked hearts we instinctively give these men idolatrous praise and applause forgetting that the Lord reveals HIS STRENGTH through OUR WEAKNESS that "no flesh should glory in his presence." (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

Unfortunately, we seem to have it in our super-sized heads these days that bigger is better and that the greater the number of brethren, buildings and budgets we accumulate, the greater the victory in Jesus. If this is the case why then did the Lord tell Gideon:

"The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." - Judges 5: 2

I would go so far as to say that the larger a church becomes the less the Lord can actually accomplish through it, just as the more popular and influential a pastor becomes the less the Lord can use him -- not BECAUSE of the church's size or the pastor's popularity, you understand but because of the inherent pride, vanity and self-sufficiency (ego) that almost always seems to accompany such increase. Look at the trouble King David got into numbering Israel before battle in 2nd Samuel chapter 24. There's no safety in numbers - only pride. And nothing is more dangerous than pride. I don't care what that church growth consultant tells you -the numbers DO lie.

The reason books like "The Purpose Driven Church" and "The Prayer of Jabez" are such huge sellers is because: "the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Proverbs 27:19) And in our re-invented religion of consumeranity we've become blessing chasers rather than blessing bearers. While carnal eyes competitively compare each other's tallies of baptisms, tithes, programs and ministries, the Lord quietly searches the heart of each and every individual that professes Him for signs of spiritual fruit. If it doesn't exist within a body of believers what difference does it make how big that body is? Nevertheless, many of us still look covetously at today's inch-deep and mile-wide mega-churches of

mediocrity that grow like cancers on the Body of Christ and say in our pathetic hearts: "There's where God is!"

Occasionally some pastor will write and chastise me for criticizing Bill Hybels, Rick Warren or one of the other CGM promoters saying in effect that they've probably led a lot more people to Christ than I have. Again, they appeal to the flesh. But just WHO IS their Christ? Though officially classified as "saved" by the CGM, it is seldom if ever questioned WHAT these world-loving seekers and creekers are actually being "saved" FROM and for that matter, being "saved" TO. Have they surrendered their hearts and lives to the Living Word of God or to the UN's church of tolerance, diversity and unity where Jesus is little more than a warm and fuzzy mascot?

I am tempted to ask one of these self-appointed scorekeepers when they write such nonsense; What about all the faithful servants the Lord sends out BEFORE the harvest - you know, the ones that daily do the tilling, planting and watering along life's way? Where do these unknowns fit in on the big CGM scoreboard? And answer me this; Who's a better prospect for the Kingdom of God - a down and out soul that's lost and KNOWS IT or some hand-clapping praise puppet who dances through life with a goofy grin on his face thinking he's saved because of his awesome attitude, great self-esteem, leadership skills and love of Christian rock? Does that sound like early church material to you?

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." - Matthew 7:22-23