

Continuity and Integration of the New Testament Scriptures

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INTRODUCTION

In a nutshell, this article seeks to determine the internal consistency or unity that underlies the New Testament scriptures; and in addition, establish the textual integrity of this selfsame biblical corpus. Literature relating to the consistency of the scriptures is both prolific and voluminous, and as well, dates back in history to the time of the early Church. For right from the days of the Church Fathers in the second century, Saint Justin Martyr (c. 100 – 165 AD) , a Christian philosopher, apologist, and writer, had professed that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible was "completely free of errors".¹

The Bible – The Old Testament and the New Testament scriptures

From a Protestant (Conservative or Evangelical) viewpoint, the Christian Biblical canon is made up of two distinct parts, the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) and the New Testament (Greek Scriptures). These corpora, customarily called the Bible, consists of 66 books, altogether, which are assumed to have divine origin; and as a result, are considered by many Christian believers to be *inerrant* and *infallible* “in matters essential to salvation”, and as well, authentic, inspired, sufficient and authoritative for the purposes of theological

¹ Hengel M. (1992). The Septuagint as a collection of writings claimed by christians: Justin and the church fathers before Origen. In Dunn, James D.G. *Jews and christians*. Page 69. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

studies and faith: “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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Unity and Continuity of the Old Testament and the New Testament

Since the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12) and its associated scriptures are all derived from the OT, and to a great extent, are also, dependent on the background, foundation and contents of the Old Covenant or Testament, one cannot truly talk of a continuity and integration of the New Testament writings without first making reference to, or establishing the fact that they are seamlessly linked (or are in close harmony) with, the Old. More so, it has to be ascertained that within the Old Testament body of writings that there is an underlying coherence.

The Scripture itself affords us much light by testifying with regards to both the continuation and the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New as the following passage reveals: “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Both testaments, therefore, have a single topos; and that traditional theme is “God”.

While H. W. Wolff suggested that “the total meaning of the Old Testament” is “revealed in the New Testament.”² it was the opinion of F.V. Filson that the unity of the Bible as a whole stems from the fact that it is concerned “throughout with God and with His dealings with mankind”;³ for both Testaments

² H. W. Wolff. *The hermeneutics of the Old Testament*. Page 181. EOTH.

³ F. V. Filson. (1971). The Unity between the Testaments. *The interpreter's one-volume commentary on the bible*. Page 992.

relate to the same triune God and His scheme of Redemption as it unfolds in history – from the history of Adam through Abraham to ancient Israel, and then, to the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Spirit-led life and witness of the New Testament church while waiting for the “the Second Advent” or the “Blessed Hope”, that is, “the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), and even more, culminating in the expectation of the “final” or the “last things”. All these, therefore, are consistent with the ultimate goal of Redemption [or Salvation (Romans 8:29-30)] which is to bring many sons unto glory (Hebrews 2:10).

Furthermore on this subject is the excellent view of Professor Mac Lynn, a Curriculum Developer and the Chancellor of Nations University, who stated that: “The Old Testament flows into the New, which is the climax of the Old. Theologians have spoken of this relationship as *promise* (Old Testament) and *fulfillment* (New Testament).”⁴

The simplest way of proving that there is an internal unity and continuity within the Old Testament corpus is to acknowledge the very words of Jesus Christ stated in the gospel account of Luke. Most theologians believe that there is an organic spiritual unity that exists between the Old Testament and the New; and in addition, many more will agree that the Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus Christ and His early followers, not only because the scriptures contained in it testify [give evidence or bear witness] of Him (John 5:39), but also because these scriptures are about [concern or relate to] Him, and as a consequence, lead to Him: “And beginning *at Moses and all the Prophets*, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things *concerning Himself*” (Luke 24:27). Also, “Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled

⁴ Mac Lynn. (2017). Biblical Theology. *Lecture notes*. Page 7.

which were written *in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me*” (Luke 24: 44).

THE PROBLEMS

That there are problems or errors associated with the Biblical text may be surprising to many Christians. Some extremists amongst believers may even deny this and argue that the biblical text is, or ought to be, letter-perfect, inerrant and infallible. There are others who claim that God is the Author of the Bible, giving as their reason the fact that the Bible is called the “Word of God”; however, while these ardent believers claim these views, they may not be in a position to defend them. It is the opinion of this researcher that the aforementioned “passionate” opinions may be attributed to one of the following three major causes (1) wrong indoctrination (2) false or inaccurate interpretation of either the facts of the matter or the definitions and delimitations of the terms “inerrancy”, “inspiration” and “infallibility” (3) “the rightness of the customary,”⁵ a term A.W. Tozer owed to someone, and which supposes that a thing is assumed to be right when it has become the practice or the tradition. And to all such ardent bigots, a few testimonies of the Scripture may be put forward here under for their contemplation:

“How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'? Look, *the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood*” (Jeremiah 8:8).

“If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error” (Job 4:18). If this becomes the position of those angels whom God created as “the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (Ezekiel 28:12), do the writers, authors or translators of the biblical canon have a better chance or advantage over the angels of being “inerrant” or “infallible” with respect to the scriptures? But the “original”

⁵ Harry Verploegh. (1993). Compilation. In A.W. Tozer, *The warfare of the Spirit*. Page 163. Nigeria. Evangel Publication.

authors of the Bible (whose “initial” manuscripts are currently extinct) were men, and though “holy men of God...moved by the Holy Ghost”, they were still men all the same; whom after all, were made by God to be “a little lower than the angels” (Psalms 8:5) both in estate (excellence) and in might.

Inconsistencies, Contradictions, Errors or Discontinuities in the NT canon

Most Bible scholars and critics do, therefore, admit that there are several problematic questions-turned-into- arguments and contentions that arise as a result of the inconsistencies and contradictions related to both the issues of faith and the narrative, text or the composition of the New Testament sacred canon. Perhaps, this may be one of the reasons Jude, the brother of Jesus Christ, exhorted the early Christian Church brethren when he wrote: “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you *to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jude 1:3).

No one except a bigoted Christian who hasn't found time to study thoroughly and pensively the books of the Bible will argue that the texts of the scriptures are letter-perfect. For while James D.G. Dunn considered the New Testament writings as having a great diversity with an underlying unity; Baruch de Spinoza, a Dutch philosopher of Portuguese Sephardi origin, was very extreme in his opinions when he asserted that the Bible is “a book rich in contradictions.”⁶

Significance of the Problems

The problems of inconsistencies, contradictions, errors or discontinuities associated with the NT canon pose a strong

⁶ Strauss L. (1997). *Jewish philosophy and the crisis of modernity: Essays and lectures in modern Jewish thought*. Page 206. SUNY Press.

challenge to the Church of Christ. Here under are some of the major challenges these problems may cause:

1. Contradictions and inconsistencies within the NT writings will undercut, considerably, the truth-value of Scripture.
2. Given that Scripture is assumed by many believers to have a divine origin, a lack of internal consistency in the NT writings could weaken faith, or belief in truth, on account of the fact that the truth-values of scriptural texts have been hugely undermined.
3. The weakening of the truth-value of Scripture is tantamount to a lack of standards or standardization, where anything may go. Or as it was in the days when Israel had no king, “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). This is possibly the greater cause of sectarianism in Christian churches today. This weakening of the truth-value of Scripture is an omen and a sign that may possibly lead to the notion of seeing the Biblical writings as *inferior* or *substandard*. And this should remind the Church of at least 2 things: (a) Marcion and his approach towards the OT canon in the second century, as well as, so many other men who followed afterwards reflecting the Marcionite strain, such as, Von Harnack, Emmanuel Hirsch, Friedrich Delitzsch and R. Bultmann; (b) the proverb which has it that “all we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history”.
4. The proliferation of a multitude of denominations in Christianity equally raises the question of the value of the NT canon. The NT canon, therefore, may soon be in the danger of losing both its appeal and its authority.
5. In addition, if a house is divided against itself, through splintering, that house cannot stand (Mark

3:25); and this is a woeful prophetic sign and a harbinger of the end-time Church given by the Lord Himself.

Examples of these Problems

Any scholar conversant with the Bible is aware of the diversities, discontinuities and antitheses that exist either within or between the Testaments that make up the Bible. Within the New Testament corpus, specifically, the Gospels represent a multiplicity of narratives expressing the various perspectives of four disparate writers. And while the four evangelists wrote under divine inspiration, each did articulate his uniqueness in ways that revealed his qualification, world view or essential attributes. The scholar-critic may also notice that there is a difference in Soteriology between the books of Hebrews and Romans, or that the portrait of Christ depicted in the Synoptics is at variance with that of the Fourth gospel, or he may be unnerved to find that there is a divergence of opinions in eschatological expectations when the epistles of 1 Thessalonians and 2 Peter are placed side by side. Apostle John in his apocalyptic epistle appeared initially in the first three chapters of his discourse to be addressing a particular set of people (the seven churches in Asia Minor) on subjects that may have been very immediate and occasional; but then veered off in the fourth chapter to speak of “things which must take place [there] after” (Revelation 4:1).

In addition, the scholar may at first or initial reading be alarmed by Paul’s use of the term “justification by faith” as opposed to James’ “justification by works”. Such student of the Bible may even be stunned to read Jude’s expression of “Enoch, the seventh from Adam” (Jude 1:14) when already he must have read in so many other biblical passages that Enoch was the sixth from Adam, that is, that there were only 5 of the fathers/ancestors between Adam and Enoch (1 Chronicles 1:1-3). This scholar may even have observed as he carefully studied to show himself approved, that in his studies of the

Pauline epistle to the Corinthians, that Paul made use of the phrase “and in one day twenty-three thousand fell” (1 Corinthians 10:8) which is in sharp contradiction to Moses’ testimony that “those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand” (Numbers 25:9). Or he may even discover that it would take more than rocket science to fix the two distinct, opposing, divergent and contrasting genealogies of Jesus Christ presented in Luke’s account (Luke 3:23-38) and in Matthew’s narrative (Matthew 1:1-16).

THE SOLUTION

Maya Angelou, once said, “in diversity there is beauty and there is strength”; and Thomas Berry equally affirmed that “the greater the diversity, the greater the perfection”. Yet, the following was a popular slogan for Mahatma Gandhi: “[that] our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization”. A Christian theologian could have penned Gandhi’s thoughts more accurately to reflect “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” by stating that: “our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our *spirituality*”.

By the time Ellen G White died in the year 1915, she had so much to say to the Christian community from the troves of manuscripts and letters she left in the custody of some trustees in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For amongst the writings she left behind was this gem for the Church; and thus it read: “The vine has many branches, but though all the branches are different, they do not quarrel. *In diversity there is unity ...*”.⁷

The evidence of an underlying unity or coherence within the New Testament corpus will be discussed below within the

⁷ Ellen G. White. (1993). Unity in Diversity. *Manuscript Releases, volume twenty-one [Nos. 1501-1598]*. Page 276. Retrieved from <http://www.temcat.com/012-Ad-found/UNITY%20IN%20DIVERSITY.pdf>

narrow limits of this paper. We hope, therefore, to divide our evidence under two broad headings: (a) The Popularity of the Bible and (b) The Justification of the truth-value of the NT writings.

The Popularity of the Bible

Whereas we have considered some of the problems connected with textual errors and inconsistencies within the NT corpus, the Christian Bible scholar should not give up or feel discomfited in his pursuit to discover the inner unity and beauty that characterize the biblical canons, for there appears to be some present indications that attest to the fact that the biblical literature is both internally consistent and coherent. For how can the Bible – a book already translated into about 683 of the world languages⁸ from the biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Koine Greek; a compendium estimated to have more than 5 billion copies in print today,⁹ have such a compelling and over-staggering popular statistic if its literature *did not make sense* to the everyday user?

Or how do we reconcile the fact that a book considered to be the best-selling book of non-fiction, with an estimate of over 100 million copies sold every year, could be bought by commonplace readers if the writings that form its corpus were not thought to be both *consistent* and *coherent*? Similarly, it is for this reason above that the Bible is usually kept out from book bestsellers lists on account of the fact that it would always rank topmost. And in addition, why would the average American Christian own nine Bibles¹⁰ and still desire to acquire more if the texts of the various writings that make up this book are reckoned not to be *congruent*?

⁸ Bible Translation. In *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia* online. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_translations

⁹ Best-selling book of non-fiction. In *Guinness World Records* online. Retrieved from <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/best-selling-book-of-non-fiction/>

¹⁰ 29 Good Bible Sales Statistics. In *Brandon Gaille's Blog* online. Retrieved from <https://brandongaille.com/27-good-bible-sales-statistics/>

The Justification of Belief

David L. Wolfe in his classic philosophical treatise titled, *Epistemology: The Justification of Belief*, postulated that there are four **Criteria for Truth** which he listed as, “consistency”, “coherence”, “comprehensiveness” and “congruity”, by which the validity or rationality of a system or a body of (literary) work such as the Bible or some parts of it, can be measured, tested or evaluated.¹¹

Given that we have already assumed the NT scriptures to be authoritative and inspired (2 Timothy 3:16-17), it will be required of us at this juncture to prove, within the narrow limits of this thesis, that the canon fulfills such criteria that characterize a body of truth. And here under, the patterns of unity that we seek to explore are those having either an historical or a theological outlook.

Unity in the diversity of narratives or perspectives

The very writers of the NT scriptures understood full well that there were “diversities of gifts”, “differences of ministries” and “diversities of activities” by the same Lord, God or Spirit working all through all men (1 Corinthians 12:4-6); therefore, though divine thoughts were given to each inspired writer [God speaking to each one of them in various ways and at sundry times (Hebrews 1:1)], these men in both human language and a demonstration of their peculiar individualities expressed these divine thoughts as narratives in diverse perspectives. The foregoing, therefore, is the reason why we have the different views and styles of the Synoptic gospels as well as the Fourth gospel. Their perspectives also differed on account of the fact that each wrote for a distinct or different audience. Each also did adopt a particular portrait of Jesus that he wanted to convey to his audience. Yet, having four different portraits of the historical Jesus, these evangelists

¹¹ David L. Wolfe (1982). *Epistemology: The justification of belief*. Pages 50 – 55. Illinois USA. Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship Press

could converge in the theme of salvation by all declaring in one accord the deity, incarnation, the life and miracles, the crucifixion and death, as well as, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In as much as the portraits of the gospels majorly depicted the “historical Jesus” or the history of Jesus Christ before His ascension, the writings of Paul, as well as Luke’s narrative in Acts, portrayed the “exalted Christ” high and lifted up in glory. All portrayals therefore were unified in the one and same Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind.

Any observant scholar is familiar with the two perspectives of justification presented in both the Pauline epistle to the Romans (Romans 3:28) and in the general (or catholic) epistle written by James (James 2:24). Here, we find no contradictions but an underlying unity though the perspective of each apostolic writer appears different. Both are saying exactly the same thing in diverse ways: that “true” or “living” or “saving” faith must of necessity precede work. Or put in another way, both writers do not speak of the same works: for Paul seems to be addressing works prior to faith, while James is speaking of works subsequent to faith.

Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace amongst the apostolic writers

All the writers of the NT canon evinced that they first had the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3) even before having the unity of the faith (Ephesians 4:13). For both their teachings and their writings were in harmony with their lives and were in keeping with the example of Jesus Christ as declared by one of them: “of all that Jesus began both to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). These men were always in one accord, endeavoring to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by having the mind of Christ.

If we establish that the apostles were united in their manner of life, would that not be the necessary proof that their teachings or writings had an underlying harmony? For who can give what he does not have? Quite unlike the case of the Apostle Judas who was not fit for the fold on account of the fact that he was the son of perdition, a devil and a thief; we do not find in the NT canon any record of disunity amongst the apostolic writers save for the incident of some false apostles or “those who say they are apostles and are not” (Revelation 2:2). For even when these brothers had contentions and quarreled (Acts 15:39), they still made up (2 Timothy 4:11; Colossians 4:10). And though one could withstand, resist or oppose his brother to his face (Galatians 2:11, 14), say, for an oversight or an omission; the one who offended would humbly swallow his pride, take the rebuke and as a follow up even acknowledge the wisdom and insight of the “beloved brother” who censured him (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Unity of structure and reciprocal dependence of the books of the NT

The structuring and arrangement of the NT books play a significant role in their integration. Although the books are not presented in the order of their times of publication or their sizes; in a near-perfect sense they are chronological in relation to some major events or themes. The drift is fascinating; and it begins with God (Jesus Christ) and ends with God (Jesus Christ) just in line with the “Ordo Salutis” [The Order of Salvation (Romans 8:29-30)]. It, thus, begins with the genealogy (or the beginning of the gospel) of Jesus Christ and ends with the words “come, Lord Jesus”!

The plot or layout is something like this: the incarnation, the life (as well as His teachings/miracles), the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Great Commission just before His ascension, the Spirit-led life and witness (with an account of both the challenges and encouragements) of the

New Testament church while waiting for the “the Second Advent” or the appearing of Jesus Christ”.

The four gospels are placed first giving a historical background of the life of Jesus Christ. Luke perhaps should have come last amongst the four gospels so as to produce a seamless flow from the gospels to Acts. However, it appears the Bible translators preferred to place the synoptic gospels together, thereby, making John, the Fourth gospel to come last. But does it really matter which gospel book comes first given that each has its unique perspective and is intended for a particular audience? Acts follows the gospels perfectly forming a bridge between the gospels and the epistles.

The epistles appear to be arranged not purely in the order of their sizes but are grouped together according to their authors. The Pauline epistles are placed first followed by the epistles of the other apostles (James, Peter, John and then Jude). The Pauline epistles which begin with Romans and end with Philemon are arranged roughly in the order of their sizes. The author of Hebrews is not known, though some attribute the work to Paul. However, Hebrews is grouped with the general (or catholic) epistles. The last book of the NT canon which follows the epistles, the general epistles in particular, is the apocalyptic book of Revelation by John which concerns the expectations of the Church for the Lord.

The NT books are so internally coherent that they have reciprocal dependence on one another. By that it is implied that the canon can be read from one end to the other and vice versa; either from “front to back” or from “back to front”; or even from the middle to either of the 2 ends. After all, this is in keeping with the way most scholars read the whole Bible on account of the reciprocity of the two testaments, either from the NT to the OT or from the OT to the NT. What appears to be most important for easy comprehension of the NT canons is to read one book at a time.

Unity of Theme/Topos

Due to the nature of this study, there might not be enough space to go into a detailed discussion of the traditional themes that connect the various writings of the NT canon. Here under we will make 3 broad categorizations that will only outline some of the significant topoi observable in the NT canon.

1. Within the gospel books, the followings themes are predominant and they form the foundation upon which other writings of the NT draw their theologies: salvation, the deity of Christ, the incarnation, the historical Jesus, the teachings of Jesus, the miracles of Jesus, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the Great Commission, faith and repentance, exhortations, the kingdom of God, sin, judgment, obedience, eternal life and eschatological matters.
2. Within the Pauline epistles, the following themes or theologies are predominant: salvation, the exalted Christ, the doctrines of Christ, the Spirit-led life, newness of life, regeneration, adoption, justification, sanctification, faith, hope, love, grace, the “In Him” theology, “the crucified life” theology, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the Second Advent, apostolic teachings, sin, judgment, obedience, eternal life and exhortations.
3. Within the General epistles, the following themes or theologies are predominant: salvation, faith (steadfastness and living faith), hope (suffering and patience), love (sincere love), Second Advent, regeneration (being born again or of God), sanctification, doctrines of Christ, apostolic teachings, sin, judgment, obedience, eternal life and exhortations.

Unity in the simplicity of vocabulary and language of the NT books

Unlike the OT canon which was written in three basic languages [here the Greek version LXX. or the Septuagint which is the translation of the Hebrew Bible has been included as one of the basic languages], the NT canon was written in one language, the Koine Greek, which unifies the entire corpus. And in as much as both the diction and the vocabulary of the work are simple and easy to read, they are not simplistic. Part of the language of the NT, such as scriptural quotations, references to names, persons and institutions are familiar, being derived from the OT canon.

Although, some of Saint Paul's letters were considered by some as "weighty and powerful" (2 Corinthians 10:10); one could note the way Apostle Peter, an uneducated common man (Acts 4:13) explained Paul's epistles: "as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 2:15-16). From where it is evinced that though there may be some difficult things in the Scriptures, such divine truths or revelations are difficult because they can only be discerned spiritually; thus, they cannot be grasped by the natural man (ignorant or untaught) and the faithless man (unstable).

Apart from the book of Revelation which is apocalyptic in design, and as a result, is full of symbols; a critic perhaps may even consider the NT epistles as easy to read as a letter, and the four gospels as interesting to read as he would savor a novel or a biography. The ease to read and connect the narratives of the NT books reveals the internal unity that exists between the writings that make up that corpus. If it takes Howard Stephen Berg, the world's fastest reader, a minute to read 25,000 words; it then means he would finish the NT canon in a little less than 10 minutes; and the whole Bible in about 40 minutes! It will take the average College student, therefore, about 20 hours to finish the NT canon. The

world should be indebted to the authors who have made this possible!

RECONCILING SOME NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

In this section of our investigation, we will examine two examples of problematic (i.e. supposed contradictory) texts with a view of determining whether such texts when interpreted correctly could give an evidence of correlation or an underlying internal unity with some other texts of scripture.

Supposed Contradictions or Inconsistencies (*italicized and underlined*)

Example 1: “Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, *and in one day twenty-three thousand fell*” (1 Corinthians 10:8).

Example 2: “Now *Enoch, the seventh from Adam,* prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints” (Jude 1:14).

Correct Interpretation or Internal Consistencies

Example 1: “Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, *and in one day twenty-three thousand fell*” (1 Corinthians 10:8).

By placing our text in Example 1 side by side with the following passage, “And those who died in the plague were *twenty-four thousand*” (Numbers 25:9); we will quickly detect the conflicting figures of “twenty-three thousand” used in the one case, and then, “twenty-four thousand” used in the second. How do we reconcile these contrasting numbers?

Moses had stated that twenty-four thousand died in the plaque, this being the overall number of people that lost their lives in the incident of Israel's unfaithfulness. However, Israel's unfaithfulness as they dwelt in Acacia Grove (or in Shittim) was twofold. One was that "the people began to commit harlotry [sexual immorality] with the women of Moab" (Numbers 25:1), and the other was that "Israel was joined to Baal of Peor" (Numbers 25:3, 5). The first category consisted of twenty-three thousand souls who died out of the plaque sent from the Lord Himself, revealing His fierce anger towards those who committed sexual immorality, while the second category comprised those one-thousand souls who died out of the executions carried out by Moses and his judges or assistants.

Paul names "twenty-three thousand" on account of this first category and in line with his theme of "sexual immorality" which he explored in 1 Corinthians 10:8. It is also possible that Paul's allusion to this significant figure was purposeful on account of the fact that this is the exact number of the tribe of Levi: "every male from a month old and above" (Numbers 26:62). We may also like to note that Paul's motif from 1 Corinthians 10:8, all through to 1 Corinthians 10:10, was to describe God's personal judgment of destruction unto death for all possible offenders. They were all judgments carried out by God alone without the involvement or interference of any human hand: "twenty-three thousand fell" in the plaque from Him, some were "destroyed by serpents", and then, those that complained or murmured "perished by the destroyer" sent by Him.

More so, Paul's use of "and in one day" implies that he must have been making reference to those who belonged to the first category, pointing his readers to the fact that those offenders all died in a single day from the plaque from the Lord; while those who belonged to the second category could possibly have died the following day on account of the fact that they were hung. The laws of God as expressed in Deuteronomy

21:22-23 had not been put in place at the time of Israel's wandering in the desert and plains of Acacia Grove; for at that material point in time, Israel had not yet occupied the land of promise. Furthermore, we may note that the book of Numbers, as well as the events contained therein, logically precedes the book of Deuteronomy where these laws were first instituted.

Paul's use of "twenty-three thousand" as opposed to "twenty-four thousand" was not inconsistent; rather it was occasioned both by the context and the motif for which he used it. There was an underlying correlation with some other texts of scripture. Neither was his goal to deceive, to tell a lie nor to exaggerate. Albert Barnes, a Bible commentator, succinctly summarized Paul's position on this subject matter in the following way: "At all events, Paul has not exceeded the truth. There were at least twenty-three thousand that fell, though there might have been more."¹²

Example 2: "Now *Enoch, the seventh from Adam*, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 1:14).

By placing our text in Example 2 side by side with the following passage, "Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch" (1 Chronicles 1:1-3), we cannot help but discover that in the second passage, Enoch is the sixth from Adam, and between both of them there are five fathers or ancestors listed. Albert Barnes has postulated that the expression "the seventh from Adam" can possibly or only mean "*the seventh in the direct line of descent from Adam*. The line of descent is Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahaleel, Jared, Enoch."¹³

¹² Albert Barnes. *Commentary on the new testament*. 1Cor.10:8.

¹³ Ibid. Jude 1:14.

Albert Barnes' interpretation appears plausible because the expression "the seventh from Adam" may have a fuller meaning, a connotation of "fullness" when the line of descent is counted straight on from Adam to Enoch, with Adam included in the numbering. We may recall that the gospel evangelist Matthew also employed the fullest meaning of the word "fulfilled" in the following expression, "that it might be *fulfilled* which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son" (Matthew 2:15), to apply directly to Jesus Christ a prophecy in Hosea 11:1 ("When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son") that appears to refer to Israel. If proper interpretative principles were not applied, what theologian would have an inkling that this prophecy in the book of Hosea pointed specifically to Jesus Christ!

Yet, there is a sense that Saint Jude could have preferred the use of the word "seventh" to "sixth" or any other number. For to the Jews, the number "seven" connotes "sacredness" as in the hallowing of the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:3), that last day of creation which represents the fullness of creation in spite of the fact that nothing was created on that selfsame day. "Seven", therefore, connotes "fullness" in its strictest sense, just as Albert Barnes may have implied. Or as can be seen in such an expression, "the seven Spirits" (Revelation 1:4), that denotes *perfect fullness*. In addition, the fullness or richness of the Spirit of God upon Jesus Christ can be seen from the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that rested on Him, which Spirit was fully poured out on Him and without measure (John 3:34). All these being made clear by the following scripture: "The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:2). Here again, one would notice that "the Spirit of the Lord" is included in the direct numbering of the seven Spirits.

CONCLUSION

The editor of the Skeptic's Annotated Bible (SAB Book) had this snide, but insightful, remark to make on his "About the Contradictions" page found on his website:

How do I define inerrant? Well, I'd say something is inerrant if it has no errors... I should tell you, though, that I don't believe there are any inerrant books, although many come very close... There are a lot of books that come close to inerrancy, but the Bible is not one of them. And its errors are not confined to missing exponents or poor choice of words. Of all the books that I know of, the Bible is the most errant. It is by far the worst book I've ever read (with the possible exceptions of the Quran and the Book of Mormon).¹⁴

Simply put, even the professed skeptic believes there are no inerrant books. Authors aren't perfect men; therefore, one should not expect their works to be letter-perfect. Neither can one argue that Saint Paul was sinless because he was a chosen vessel who taught men the ways of God. For if he was sinlessly perfect, how then could he have died (died c. 67 AD)? On the other hand, the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)!

So we see that the Bible like any other work of literature, history or science book may have one or two errors on account of its authorship involving human elements. But that is not the full account as we will soon unravel.

In scientific research methods, such as in the fields of Physics, Project Management and Industrial Chemistry, scientists make use of certain tools in the postulation of their theories or hypotheses. One of such tools is the Scatter Diagram also known as the Scatter Plot or Correlation Chart. Usually, for two (2) variables having a strong correlation or relationship, a sloping (slanted) linear graph is obtained on the Cartesian

¹⁴ Steve Wells (1999). *The skeptic's annotated bible*. Retrieved from <https://skepticsannotatedbible.com/contra/intro.html>

coordinate based on some observed data plots. This correlation chart or line is then used to analyze or monitor the outcomes of the dependent variable as the values of the independent variable are adjusted. However, the correlation line of a Scatter Diagram *will hardly ever connect* with all the scattered data points given a large range of samples, or as the sample size increases to infinity. Here, therefore, though there is a strong correlation between the 2 variables, thereby producing a line graph, some of the plotted points are not directly on the correlation line, the reason why we speak of an “internal” correlation rather than an external one.

This exactly is the way the Bible is with its 66 books. The Bible being a Book of books has texts within its corpus that represent a large range of samples. Were the *truth-value* (Dependent Variable, Y) of each text, for instance, to be plotted against the *number of texts* (Independent Variable, X), we will most likely obtain a very strong correlation, with one or two errors (or contradiction points) being out of key with the correlation line. Therefore, a couple of errors in the NT canon should not warrant one to think that there is no “internal” unity or correlation within the corpus of that work.

The Scripture being inspired assumes that it is God-breathed, the reason why many believers *rightly* claim, or believe, that the Scripture is the “Word of God”. And in this sense, they do believe that its Author is God. I, also, personally believe same, that the Scripture has divine origin and that its Author is God in as much as men merely penned down the *original* words or revelations they heard from God. If by Silvanus the First Epistle of Peter was written (1 Peter 5:12), should the book’s authorship be attributed to Silvanus or to Peter? If we say, Peter, as most believers do admit that the epistle should be attributed to him, we kind of align our opinions with the affirmation of the Bible translators as well as the tradition of the early Church. If Peter is the author, then God must also be the Author of the Scriptures which He revealed or spoke to certain special men who wrote them down; or rather, the

Scriptures are revelations which certain men who “spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21, RSV) wrote down.

However, if the Christian believer argues that the Scripture being the *word of God* was authored by God, he faces the ridicule and contempt of both the skeptic and the atheist who would exclaim aloud that the Bible is full of contradictions and errors. But when the Christian believer is affirming the *infallibility* or *inerrancy* of the Scripture and God to be its Author, he supposes or has in mind certain notions that the skeptic fails to understand. So, all these boil down to definitions and perspectives. The Christian believer, therefore, only sees the Scriptures as *inerrant* when his views them from such perspectives of themes essential or related to Salvation. “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jonah 2:9) and will always belong to and be by and from the Lord, and it is a work that only He alone can perform, for it is a monergistic phenomenon or work of God. Man plays no role in such a work. For even the faith that man exercises so as to appropriate the gift of salvation is even made possible by the grace of God, for in a classical sense, faith is a gift of God (Ephesians.2:8). And why does God provide this *gift of faith*? That man should *bear fruit* (Romans 7:4, NKJV) or produce the *fruit of faith* (Galatians 5:22, KJV)]. Therefore, the Christian believer *only* views *inerrancy* in relation to “*matters essential to salvation*”,¹⁵ and not every matter that may be found in the Scriptures, given that the Scriptures equally contain such words that are from men and Satan or the demons.

It is, therefore, on this basis that every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is both infallible and inerrant, given that God cannot lie and that His words with regards to the salvation of mankind (or Redemption) are *absolute* truths, which have the same spiritual nature as God Himself (John 6:63). The Bible is *replete* with such absolute truths, but here,

¹⁵ Raymond F Collins (1989). Essay 65: Inspiration, 65:29–50. Pages 1029f. In Raymond Brown; Joseph Fitzmyer; Roland Murphy (eds.). *The new Jerome biblical commentary* (1st ed.). Pages 1023–1033. Pearson.

six will suffice as examples: “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel.18:4), “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19), “This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day” (John 6:39), “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5), “Surely I am coming quickly” (Revelation 22:20) and “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). These are universal truths or constants that are not relative. They are absolutely absolute.

The empirical “laws” [which describe some physical phenomena] and “theories” [which explain out the principles or laws that govern those phenomena] of scientists, with all the simplifying *assumptions* accompanying them, no doubt, may contain some elements of truth. However, these truths as we know are all relative. They are relative on account of the fact that the scope which they cover are not fully comprehensive or wide-ranging; for they do not incorporate the whole of reality or take account of all the experiences of man. The scientist is blind to the spiritual world; and while lost in his laboratory he is only concerned with things corporeal. Scientific truths only govern matter, the material or the physical world. For no scientist can put the soul or a spirit in a test tube, nor can he *observe* what he does not *see* or such things that are *unseen*! To the scientist, *seeing is believing*; but the believer knows better, for he *sees* through and much farther than the scientist, given that he also possesses the organ of faith: *for faith is the evidence of things not seen*.

In Newton’s law of gravitation, ***g***, which represents the *acceleration due to gravity*, is relative around the universe. On the Earth’s surface, it has a value 6 times that on the Moon; and in Space it is very small, the reason why we have the concept *Microgravity*. More so, in a vacuum, where there is no

air at all, its value becomes zero: the reason why in a vacuum, a feather and a hammer will fall at the same speed and hit a lower surface at the same time even though they have different masses. There is also another concept essential for understanding gravity and used by both Newton in his “law of gravity” as well as Einstein in his “general relativity”. This concept is known as the *universal gravitational constant* represented by the symbol, **G**. And in recent times, scientists have discovered variations “about a dozen times over the last 40 years” in the measurements of the *gravitational constant*.¹⁶ What piques the scientists the most is that **G** is not an intuitive concept; it therefore appears that there is a problem somewhere which could be related to calculations, measurements or some other undiscovered phenomena. However, scientists did not *blame it, that is, the problem with these variations, on the rain* but on some errors. Common sense tells us that when a constant begins to vary, with as so many oscillations or variations as thirteen, it ceases to be a constant but a *variable*. Yet, all these are taking place in less than 70 years that Albert Einstein passed on.

God’s truths endure from everlasting to everlasting. They do not change; neither do they vary; for they are like God “with Whom is no variableness”. His truths are eternal, absolute and will always remain the true universal constants. All through the Bible, these absolute truths of God concerning salvation are internally connected, starting from before the very foundation of the world when a Lamb was slain (1 Peter 1:19-20) to its winding up in the ultimate goal of Salvation, which is the glorification of the sons of God (Hebrews 2:10). No man who has not been called by God, who has not heard His voice like His sheep does, will ever be able to understand the underlying unity of the Scripture which matrix is woven around God and the concept of Salvation; for *Calling* lies in

¹⁶ Lisa Zyga (April 21, 2015). *Why do measurements of the gravitational constant vary so much?* Phys.org. Retrieved from <https://m.phys.org/news/2015-04-gravitational-constant-vary.html>

the very heart or path between *Foreknowledge* and *Glorification* in the *Ordo Salutis* (Romans 8:29-30).

The skeptic whose motivation is only to read the Bible and find contradictions does not search for the internal harmony that ties the books of the NT canon together; for therein lies the *essential message* of the canonic writings or the Scriptures, and which *essential message* is to make a man wise unto salvation: “*the Holy Scriptures*, which are able to make you *wise for salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). And being dubbed “Holy” or sacred, the Scriptures must need be approached with both reverence and awe. We, therefore, pray that the skeptic doesn’t get as foolish as the atheist who says in his heart, “There is no God” (Psalms 14:1); and I consider that we may have to pray even more fervently for this skeptic so that God will visit him, for it is probable that when he seeks to read and understand the scriptures, he finds himself unable to do so. Why? Because “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). But “by faith *we* understand” (Hebrews 11:3); yea, all *we* who are true Christian believers. May our God and His holy and matchless name be praised forever more! Amen!!

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