

Sunday, November 22, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 9: Understanding Basic Terminology: Preservation, Part 2

Statement Regarding Future Questions—when considering a subject as complex and vast as the one we are endeavoring to study, questions are bound to come up. That is fine and a natural part of the process. In fact, if our studies together were not raising questions in your thinking, it would make me wonder whether or not you were paying attention.

That being said, as with any other course of study there is a particular order in which material should be covered so as to assure understating of the content. For example, addition and subtraction are foundational skills for multiplication and division which are, in turn, elemental for algebra and geometry. So it is with our current study. Some of your questions, while insightful and natural, are going beyond our current ability to fully address at this point on account of the fact that we are lacking a sufficient grounding in basic concepts.

Consequently, moving forward, with my knowledge of where we are now and where we are going in the study; I reserve the right to forebear answering until the appropriate time. I am not doing this to deflect, obfuscate, or avoid answering hard questions or challenges to my position. Rather, I am endeavoring to ensure that the course unfolds in an orderly systematic manner so as to accommodate even the most basic student among us. Consequently, if I refrain from answering a given question at present, it should not be assumed that I do not have an answer or am avoiding the question. Rather it should be understood that the particular question will be covered in a future lesson.

Introduction

- Last week in Lesson 8 we considered the doctrine of preservation as the fourth and final of our four basic terms: revelation, inspiration, illumination, and preservation.
- In doing so I gave the following definition of preservation, “**the process** whereby the words of Scripture, given by inspiration, are passed on from generation to generation.” (Lesson 8) In addition, we noted from the pen of Dr. R.B. Ouellette that whereas “inspiration was completed in the past, preservation began in the past and carries through today.” (Ouellette, 34)
- After looking at ten passages that clearly establish the doctrine of preservation we noted that preservation in our day is either ignored outright or explained away by many leading voices within Christian academia.
- Last week’s lesson proved Dr. Ouellette’s point regarding the hotly debated nature of preservation in our day.
 - **Preservation is highly debated today because ultimately, the preservation issue will decide the translation issue—and preservation is completely a matter of faith in God’s power.**” (Ouellette, 33)
- After quoting Wilbur Pickering and Dr. Edward F. Hills regarding preservation, I stated the following in Lesson 8.
 - “Preservation does not assure the “exact sameness” or “verbatim wording” across every manuscript copy ever made. Rather preservation secures that God will not allow his “revelation to disappear or undergo any alteration of its fundamental character.” (Hills, 2)

. . . In order to accomplish preservation of “exact sameness” God would have had to supernaturally overtake the pen of every scribe, copyist, typesetter, and printer who ever handled the text to ensure that no differences of any kind ever entered the text. That God

did not choose to accomplish preservation in this manner is apparent because there are slight differences even in the manuscripts comprising the Byzantine Text Type not to mention the various editions of the *TR*.

This is where we must recognize the difference between: 1) different ways of saying the same thing and 2) substantive differences in meaning. The manuscripts of the Byzantine Text Type as well as the various editions of the *TR* contain **an agreement as to the doctrinal content of the readings**. Conversely, when the *TR* is compared with the Critical Text there **are substantive differences in meaning as to the doctrinal content of the readings**.

Psalms 12:6-7—what the doctrine of preservation assures is exactly what verse six states, namely the preservation of a **Pure Text i.e., a text that does not report information about God, His nature or character, His doctrine, His dispensational dealings with mankind, history, archeology, or science that is FALSE. In short, God’s promise to preserve His word assures the existence of a text that has not been altered in its “fundamental character” despite not being preserved in a state of “exact sameness.”**

If “exact sameness” were the issue with God in preservation then why did He not just preserve the originals and remove all doubt? The main reason is that God, at every turn, is testing the believer to see if he or she is going to walk by faith in what God said (I Cor. 1:27-29, 2:5; Heb. 11:6).

I believe that God preserved his word for the same reason I believe that God inspired it. Preservation is the Bible’s claim for itself. **The doctrine of preservation impacts how one ought to look at the textual and translational issues and ensures that we have more than just a shell of the “original Bible” as the Originals Only position maintains.**” (Lesson 8)

- In this lesson, I would like to take some time to clarify my thinking on some of the issues raised in Lesson 8.

Clarifications

- In Section I would like to clarify my thinking with respect to the following three points:
 - The importance of understanding the issue of “exact sameness”
 - Use of the terminology “providential preservation”
 - The difference between the Dynamic View of inspiration and the Dynamic philosophy of translation.

“Exact Sameness”

- It is my personal private subjective opinion that the issue of what I am calling “exact sameness” or “verbatim wording” is the key to accurately unraveling the Bible version controversy. These are not ideas that you will encounter in other written works but are my own conclusions after studying the relevant issues.

- Until the summer of 2011, I would have and did demand “exact sameness” as the standard when discussing the preservation and translation of the Bible. On Sunday, February 7, 2010, as part of a six part series of studies titled *Final Authority: Locating God’s Word in English*, I taught the following to the saints of Grace Life Bible Church in a sermon titled “The Place of Preservation, Part 2:”
 - “First principles are the foundation of knowledge. Without them nothing could be known. First principles undeniably apply to reality. The very denial that first principles apply to reality used first principles in the denial.

The Principle of Noncontradiction: Being Is Not Nonbeing. Being cannot be nonbeing, for they are direct opposites. And opposites cannot be the same.

The Principle of Excluded Middle: Either Being or Nonbeing. Since being and nonbeing are opposites (i.e. contradictory), and opposites cannot be the same, nothing can hide in the cracks between being and nonbeing.

Illustration using the shirts. How many differences do these shirts need to have before they are not the same? One.

How many differences do we need to demonstrate in English Bibles before we can conclude that they are not the same? One.

How many mistakes do we need to demonstrate in a so called Bible before we conclude that it is not inerrant? One. Can we rightly call a Bible with a mistake in it the word of God? No. (Ross, 4)

- At the time, my standard for judging what was or was not God’s word was the standard of “exact sameness” even though I did not explicitly use that terminology. Please note that **I did not** make a distinction between 1) different ways of saying the same thing and 2) substantive differences in meaning in February 2010. Rather, any difference, of any kind, constituted a situation where one would be forced to choose which Bible was or was not God’s word.
- Up until May 2011, I believed that the only differences between a 1611 and 1769 edition of the King James Bible were updates in punctuation and spelling and I was perfectly content to function with that understanding. It was during a visit to my home in May 2011, that Brother Craig first began to challenge this understanding based upon the findings of David Norton in his 2004 book [*A Textual History of the King James Bible*](#).
- At first, I was not very open or receptive to what Craig had to say, much to his frustration. I did however; agree to read a PDF copy of Norton’s book. It was not long after I began reading Norton’s work that I started to see Craig’s point. The FACTS presented by Norton were contrary to what I had been led to believe. There are more differences between the various editions of the King James than simply the updating of spelling and punctuation.
- In Appendix 8 of his book David Norton spends 155 pages chronicling 952 verses where differences in wording exist between 1611 and 1769 editions of the King James Bible. Does everyone see the problem I was faced with, based upon my teaching from February 2010? If

preservation and inerrancy demand “exact sameness” than one is forced to determine which edition of the King James text is inerrant and which one is not.

- It was then in the summer of 2011 while preparing to teach a seminar for the Grace School of the Bible Summer Family Bible Conference in Chicago, that I came to understand that the nature of the differences is what matters in seeking to identify God’s word. It was then that I came to realize that there is a difference between 1) different ways of saying the same thing and 2) substantive differences in meaning.
- Since 2011, I have come to believe that the breakthrough regarding “exact sameness” has many and far reaching implications for the rest of the Bible version debate.
- The reason why Warfield and Hodge limited inspiration and inerrancy to the original autographs in the late 19th century was because they were responding to their critics who were pointing out variant readings in the manuscript witnesses supporting the New Testament. Warfield and Hodge dealt with this lack of “exact sameness” by confining inspiration and inerrancy to the original writings only thereby alleviating the problem pointed out by their critics.
- If you pay close attention to the statements made by modern Evangelical scholars, one can see that it is precisely this lack of “exact sameness” in terms of textual transmission that forces them to limit inspiration and inerrancy to the original autographs only. Please reconsider the following case in point from Greg L. Bahsen’s essay “The Inerrancy of the Autographa” found in Geisler’s book *Inerrancy*:
 - “God has not promised in His Word that the Scriptures would receive perfect transmission, and thus we have no ground to claim it a priori. Moreover, the inspired Word of God in the Scriptures has a uniqueness that must be guarded from distortion. Consequently, we cannot be theologically blind to the significance of transmissional errors, nor can we theologically assume the absence of such errors. We are therefore theologically required to restrict inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy to the autographa.” (Bahsen in Geisler, 175)
- Retreating to the originals only is one way of dealing with the differences that exist within the extant manuscripts. On the other end of the spectrum, the King James Inspired position believes that God reinspired his word between 1604 and 1611 in response to the originals only position on “exact sameness.” Even if they do not say it this way or would not admit it, the extreme King James position is seeking to address the same problem of “exact sameness.” On this view the problem is overcome by arguing that God reinspired (double inspiration) His word in English between 1604 and 1611.
- The brilliance of limiting inspiration, infallibly, and inerrancy to the originals only is that it alleviated the need for scholars to explain the variant readings in the extant manuscripts. They could simply call everything good because what God originally did in inspiring His word was perfect and without error. No one disputes this.
- There are multiple problems with this view. First, it ignores what the Bible teaches about itself with respect to preservation. Second, it is unscientific and unfalsifiable because it judges all the surviving data based upon a standard that not only does not exist but that no one has ever seen. It

proves nothing to argue that the truthfulness of the surviving manuscripts can only be determined by the original autographs which no one, by their own admission, possesses.

- The doctrine of preservation mandates that we have more than just a shell of the nebulous “original Bible.” Preservation is the process whereby God secured the transference of His word from one generation to the next. My point in Lesson 8 was that God did not need to preserve His word in a state of “exact sameness” in order to fulfill His fundamental promise of preservation. This is obvious because there are slight differences even in the manuscripts comprising the Byzantine Text Type not to mention the various editions of the *TR*.
- This is where we must recognize the difference between: 1) different ways of saying the same thing and 2) substantive differences in meaning. The manuscripts of the Byzantine Text Type as well as the various editions of the *TR* contain **an agreement as to the doctrinal content of the readings**. Conversely, when the *TR* is compared with the Critical Text there **are substantive differences in meaning as to the doctrinal content of the readings** (more on this below).
- On this point I agree with Dr. R.B. Ouellete, “**Preservation is highly debated today because ultimately, the preservation issue will decide the translation issue—and preservation is completely a matter of faith in God’s power.**” (Ouellette, 33)
- I cannot agree with the originals only position for the following primary reasons.
 - First, from the standpoint of logic, it is both unscientific and unfalsifiable and thereby fails to meet its own standard.
 - Second, and more importantly, God promised to preserve the words that He inspired forever. Either God did this or He did not. If God did not do what he promised, that would make God out be a liar and we know that God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19, Titus 1:2).
 - Third, that God did not see fit to accomplish preservation by preserving the original autographs is evident or else we would have them today.
- Determining exactly how God accomplished the preservation of His word without preserving the original autographs will be part of the goal of the duration of this course of study.

Providential Preservation

- Second, with respect to the terminology “providential preservation” utilized by Dr. Hills and others, **I am not necessarily ascribing the term “providential” to my view or understanding of preservation.** “Providential” is a loaded term that means different things to different people. For many, there is no difference in their understanding between the terms miraculous and providential. Meanwhile, as Brother Craig pointed out last week, if, by providential, one means to refer to the process that God established to accomplish the preservation of His word via Bible believing members of the body of Christ, that would certainly be an entirely different meaning of the term. Consequently, until further notice, you will always hear me speak of just preservation when seeking to articulate my own position, not “providential preservation.”
- That being said, I need to be able to honestly handle the source material that I am quoting or referencing in class. Therefore, any use of the terminology “providential preservation” by quoted

sources should not automatically be equated with my endorsement of the term providential as an adequate descriptor for how preservation was accomplished.

Dynamic Inspiration & Translation

- Thirdly, since it has come up multiple times already, we need to clarify the difference between the Dynamic or Concept View of inspiration and the Dynamic Philosophy of translation.
- As we will see in our next lesson, the Dynamic or Concept View of inspiration maintains that God inspired the ideas or concepts and left the human authors to express those ideas in their own words. In other words, this is a Dynamic view of the Bible's origin that holds that God did not inspire the very words of Scriptures themselves but merely the concepts.
- In contrast, the Dynamic Philosophy of translation practices the belief that what matters most when translating the Bible out of the donor language (Hebrew and Greek) and into the receptor language (English) is the expression of the thoughts and not the words themselves. Meanwhile, the Literal Philosophy of translation differs from the Dynamic in that it seeks to translate every word found in the donor language into the receptor language (to the best of their ability). The King James Bible is the product of a Literal Philosophy of translation whereas the New International Version (NIV), for example, stands out as a representative of the Dynamic Philosophy of translation.
- Lastly, it is important to note that one can reject the Dynamic View of inspiration in favor of a Verbal View (the words not the thoughts are inspired) yet at the same time accept and utilize a Dynamic Philosophy of translation. These are different things and ought not to be confused.

Works Cited

Geisler, Norman L. *Inerrancy*. Zondervan, 1980.

Ouellette, R.B. *A More Sure Word: Which Bible Can you Trust?* Lancaster, CA: Striving Together Publications, 2008.