

October 5, 2016  
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# The Teachings

## From the Hewer of Wood

### 1.4

#### *The Integrity of Scripture*

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Count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters [the end of the age]. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. (2 Pet 3:15–16)

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4.

*As they do the other Scriptures*—Christians have assumed for centuries that the Bible is the Word of God. The assumption has the Roman Church treating the Bible as if it were an idol; had the Church of England placing a copy of the Great Bible in every church. So there isn't any real debate about whether the Bible is the Word of God. It is the Word of God because everyone agrees it is.

But assumptions are notorious for being false. And John begins his Gospel with these words (literal translation), “In primacy [*arche*] was the Word [*ó Logos*], and the Word was of [*pros*] the God [*ton Theon*], and God [*Theos*] was the Word” (John 1:1) ... the Word [*ó Logos*] of the God was Himself God, a declarative statement that negates the Bible being the Word of God. Christ Jesus was the Word of the God. So why do Christians say that the Bible is the Word of God? Is it because they simply don't know better? Or is it because Christians, like ancient Israelites, need a physical deity that they can worship albeit in a more intellectually sophisticated form than a statue of Molech or images of bulls?

How, though, I have translated John 1:1 isn't how the translator of your Bible translated this verse—your English translation will read, *In the beginning was the Word* ... .

But in Greek, definite nouns require a definite article, with the link between noun and article so solid that the article alone can be used as a pronoun. And in John 1:1, <*arche*> translated as “beginning” because of the imbedded concept of “firstness” in the linguistic icon, lacks an article; hence <*arche*> here functions as a modifier, not a definite noun. And <the beginning> is a definite location in space-time, and when *arche* is use for “the beginning” it will be written as <*é arche*> as in Revelation 22:13.

Even in English, “the beginning” is a definite location in space-time and as such requires the definite article “the,” which translators have added to the text of John's Gospel. Without the definite article, the passage from John could be read, *In firstness was the Word*, but *firstness* in what. And for that we need to go to an epistle of Paul, which Peter has identified as Scripture:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in *Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:5–8 emphasis added)

The Word [*ó Logos*] had equality with *ton Theon* [the God — masculine singular, objective case]; therefore, the concept of “firstness” as applied to the Word would best be rendered as *<primacy>* as in Augustus Caesar being the first citizen of Rome, the first citizen being the Emperor. So before readers get through the first clause of John’s Gospel, the integrity of Scripture has been compromised. God has not protected the integrity of John’s Gospel.

My brother Ben and others I know say that they trust God to have protected the integrity of His Word, the Bible, throughout the many centuries since the First Apostles lived. But again, is the Bible truly the Word of God, or is the Bible a book assembled in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE (200 and 300 years after Calvary) from the best of Christendom’s literary writings? And as will be seen, canonization of Scripture is not a matter of spiritual inspiration, but a matter of political appointments and majority rule

No definite article for *<arche>* in John 1:1 when translated as “the beginning” is a small problem compared to other integrity issues ... who is the God who created all things physical; who is the Creator?

John’s Gospel continues: “This one [*ó Logos*] was in *primacy* with the God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:2–3).

According to John’s Gospel, the God—God the Father—was not the Creator of all things physical; was not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To say that He was is always wrong, and the Apostle Paul would not have made this mistake. And hold this thought. I will come back to it shortly.

The descendants of Abraham, the Lord’s chosen cultivar [cultivated variety of humankind], journeyed to Egypt from where, decades earlier, Abraham had been thrown out by Pharaoh. But when Jacob’s sons went to Egypt to buy grain for there was a severe regional drought, already in Egypt was Jacob’s missing son, Joseph, with Joseph being second in all the land.

Egyptians looked down on the Hebrews and would not eat with them. Why isn’t certain, but the Hebrews adopted a “being second” (not first) mentality that permitted a crafty Pharaoh to enslave the nation of Israel that was as many in number as the Egyptians (Ex 5:5, in Hebrew), and enslave Israel without even a fight, or so the story goes as received in Scripture. Unfortunately, archeological evidence doesn’t support “many Hebrews” being in Egypt in the 13<sup>th</sup>-Century BCE, when Scripture would place the Exodus: “And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children” (Ex 12:37). The city of Rameses was built by Ramses II.

Archeological evidence will support a significant population of foreigners from the Levant being located in and around Avaris and then disappearing in the 15<sup>th</sup>-Century BCE, in a period between kingdoms, this being some two centuries before Ramses lived.

These foreigners from the Levant were, most likely, Hebrews, and this will have the Exodus occurring about 1450 BCE instead of 1250 BCE, the timeframe when scholars place the Exodus. And archeological evidence will now support the Exodus.

So why does the author of Exodus chapter 12, allegedly Moses, have the people of Israel beginning their exit from Egypt by journeying *from Rameses to Succoth*? And the most reasonable explanation is that Moses didn't write what we have received as authorized Scripture, attributed to him. For Moses would not have known the name of Ramses, and no city of Rameses existed when archeological evidence supports the exodus of a people from the Levant.

The city of Rameses was constructed partially over the ruins of Avaris. A reader of the Torah in the 6<sup>th</sup>-Century BCE is unlikely to know where Avaris had been located in the 15<sup>th</sup>-Century BCE, but this reader is likely to know where the more modern city of Rameses was located. So by the change of names, the beginning point for the Exodus doesn't change geographically, but does change in chronology: by changing the name of what was essentially the capital of Egypt, more than a simple tampering with the text occurred. The offending scribe changed Scripture by changing the timeframe for when the Exodus occurred.

Again, most Christians trust God to have protected the integrity of Scripture—the Book received from generations of Christians has to be important enough to God that He would prevent tampering with its text[s]. But Moses didn't leave Egypt from Rameses.

In 396 CE, more than three and a half centuries after Calvary, Augustine addressed the subject of Scripture in *On Christian Doctrine* (OCD):

In the matter of canonical Scriptures, he [the student of Scripture] should follow the authority of the greater number of catholic Churches, among which are those which have deserved to have apostolic seats and to receive epistles. He will observe this rule concerning canonical Scriptures, that he will prefer those accepted by all catholic Churches to those which some do not accept; among those which are not accepted by all, he should prefer those which are accepted by the largest number of important Churches to those held by a few minor Churches of less authority. If he discovers that some are maintained by the larger number of Churches, others by the Churches of weightiest authority, although this condition is not likely, he should hold them to be of equal value. (OCD. Bk II. section VIII. par 12. Robertson trans.)

Scripture is, according to Augustine, what the majority of the Christian Churches in the 4<sup>th</sup>-Century said it was: majority ruled. So what the majority wanted, it received. And where was God in the selection of canonical texts to be included?

The whole canon of the Scriptures on which we say that this consideration of the step of knowledge should depend is contained in the following books: the five books of Moses, that is Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; one book of Josue, one of Judges, one short book called Ruth which seems rather to pertain to the beginning of Kings; then the four books of Kings and two of Paralipomenon, not in sequence, but as if side by side and running at the same time. These make up the history and are arranged to the sequence of time and the order of things; there are others arranged in a different order which neither follow this order nor connect among themselves, like Job, Tobias, Esther, Judith,

two books of Machabees, and two books of Edras. The last two seem to follow the ordered history after the end of Kings or Paralipomenon. Then there are the Prophets, among which are one book of the Psalms of David, and three books of Solomon: Proverbs, the Canticle of Canticles, and Ecclesiastes. For those two books, one of which is called Wisdom and the other Ecclesiasticus, are said to be Solomon's through a certain similitude, since it is consistently said that they were written by Jesus son of Sirach. Nevertheless, since they have merited being received as authoritative, they are numbered among the prophetic books. The remainder are those books called Prophets in a strict sense, containing twelve single books of Prophets joined together. Since they have never been separated, they are thought of as one. The names of the Prophets are Osee, Joel, Amos, Abdias, Jonas, Micheas, Nahum, Habacue, Sophonias, Aggeus, Zacharias, and Malachias. Then there are four books of the four major Prophets: Isaias, Jeremias, Daniel; Ezekiel. The authority of the Old Testament ends with these forty-four books. The New Testament contains the four evangelical books, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the fourteen epistles of Paul the Apostle, to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, two to the Thessalonians, to the Colossians, two to Timothy, to Titus, to Philemon, to the Hebrews; two Epistles of Peter, three of John, one of Jude, and one of James; a book of the Acts of the Apostles, and a book of the Apocalypse of John. (*OCD*. Bk II. section VIII. par 13)

There are four texts of *Esther* in circulation. All of them were composed in Greek. None of them were composed in either Hebrew or Aramaic, with (eastern) Aramaic being the shared language between Israel and the Chaldeans ... based upon the history available, *Esther* is a purely fictional work, its composition occurring after Alexander defeated the Persians. For in Israel's returned zealotry to "get right" and "stay right" with God, a young Hebrew woman would not have married a Persian prince or king; so the premise undergirding the story is a Greek fabrication.

I read a mediocre structural analysis of the Book of Ester in which the analysis' author worked with three of the four texts in common circulation. What this author showed was the "Greek thought" imbedded in the texts. I have no doubts about Ester being a work of fiction, but I have questions about why the Masoretic text chose to use the only one of the four texts that left God out; to use a text without its literary frame in which Mordecai prays to God. Perhaps in accepting Ester as a text, learned Jews recognized the literary frame for what it was, an artifice of fictional works. And the authority for observing Purim is dependant upon accepting Ester as genuine history.

Augustine says of Canticles that "it is consistently said that [it was] written by Jesus son of Sirach." Whether true or not, Canticles is a three-part play similar to Greek plays from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE. If it were of Solomon, then Solomon would be the father of Greek drama—and that would be a claim for which there is no support anywhere outside of Canticles itself.

How are we doing so far? Exodus has Israel leaving Egypt from Rameses two plus centuries after Moses actually led the firstborn son of the Lord (Ex 4:22) out from Egypt. And then there is the Hagar account: compare Genesis chapter 16 with Genesis chapter 21 easier done here than having you, the reader, look up the two accounts.

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her. The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." And the angel of the Lord said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lords listened to your affliction. He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." ... Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Gen 16:1–16)

Abram was 86 years old when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael—when Abram was 99 years old, thirteen years later, the Lord gave to Abram the circumcision covenant:

Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. (Gen 17:24–26)

At thirteen, Ishmael would have been a young man ... Isaac was born to Sarah a year later; so Ishmael would have been fourteen. And male children stayed in the women's quarters until they were weaned,. And they were weaned not earlier than two years old, and usually when they were five years old. So Ishmael would have been between sixteen and nineteen years old when his mother carried him on her shoulder:

Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." And the thing

was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." So *Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away.* And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. *When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, "Let me not look on the death of the child."* And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! *Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.*" Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And *she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.* And God was with the boy, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. (Gen 21:5–20 emphasis added)

How old is Ishmael that Abraham put Ishmael on Hagar's shoulder? He had to be at least sixteen. But could Hagar even lift Ishmael when he was sixteen? And why would she have to get water for him when he would logically be getting water for her?

The narrative is screwed-up; for what is recorded didn't happen as it is recorded. Something happened, but happened when Ishmael was a year or so old; happened not long after the events recorded in Genesis chapter sixteen.

These two accounts are from two source texts, not from a common source text. And because scribes were afraid to heavily edit Genesis, both accounts made it into Scripture. Again, how is the integrity of Scripture faring?

It is the Book of Acts I really want to challenge; for Acts is a classic Second Sophist novel from the late 1<sup>st</sup>-Century or early 2<sup>nd</sup>-Century CE ... Acts is probably the only Greek novel most Christians have read or will ever read. And Acts had its ending torn away for in the last scene [last motif] of Second Sophist novels, the heroine (usually the central protagonist) is reunited with the hero after the heroine has undergone numerous trials, a court scene, imprisonment, and often a ship wreck.

In the case of Acts, Paul serves as "heroine" while Christ Jesus is "hero." In order for Paul to be united with Christ, Paul will have to die in Rome and then ascend into heaven to be with the Lord ...

Someone in early Christendom knew that having Paul ascended into heaven to be with the Lord would mess up the whole of Christian theology; for Paul will not precede in glory the remainder of the saints (1 Thess 4:15–17). Someone ripped off the last pages of the novel and then passed it off as genuine history. But let us look closely at chapter 17, realizing of course that the Word [*ó Logos*] was the one who created all things physical:

Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I

found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' *What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring.' Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."* Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." So Paul went out from their midst. (Acts 17:21–33 emphasis added)

God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, but God the Father did not create the world and everything in it, nor did He create humankind. The Greek novelist's "Paul" mixed up his gods—and the genuine Paul would not have made that mistake.

Plus, Paul has something different to say about *the times of ignorance*—

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. *So they are without excuse.* (Rom 1:18–20 emphasis added)

Plus, Jerusalem in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century was a sleepy town of about 25,000, that would swell in population during the three seasons a year when all Israel males were to appear before the Lord (see Deut 16:16). The temple and its courts were not large enough to accommodate as many as who came during these three seasons. And Roman rule was always concerned that the political situation would get out of hand; for there was never a time when the Jews were comfortable being ruled by Rome. Therefore, if there was suddenly a movement that attracted 3,000 adherents one day and another 5,000 over a period of weeks, Roman authorities would have been genuinely concerned and a flurry of correspondence between Jerusalem and Rome would have occurred ... Rome was very good at keeping records, and no Roman correspondence mentioning Christ Jesus exists from the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century. There are only two letters that briefly mention Christ preserved in Roman correspondence of the early 2<sup>nd</sup>-Century. And the two secular mentions of Christ by Josephus have always been suspect. So what seems true is that the mass conversion of Jews to the Jesus Movement as recorded in Acts is fictional.

A Christian doesn't need to park his or her brain in the church's parking lot; for the reality of the Jesus Movement will withstand intellectual scrutiny. However, what greater Christianity believes will not.

A language, any language, will change over time—and the example I have used in the past to illustrate how a language changes are lines from the Middle English romance, *Havelok the Dane*:

Harknet to me, godemen,  
Wiues, maydnes, and alle men,  
Of a tale þat ich you wile telle,  
Wo-so it wile here and þ-to duelle.  
þe tale is of Hauelok imaked;  
Wil he was litel, he yede ful naked.  
Hauelok was a ful god gome:  
He was ful god in eueri trome;  
He was þe wicteste man at nede  
þat þurte riden on ani stede.

The above passage is the opening lines of the famous (but probably unfamiliar) early English romance, written in end rhyme (rhyming couplets) in Middle English, not Old English, and is from eight centuries ago, less time than between Moses and Ezra. The passage can be read by modern English speakers if words are pronounced phonetically. Most words are familiar. And reading these introductory lines of *Havelok the Dane*, a person takes from them that when Havelok was little, he went about naked. He was a fully good man, fully good in every company or situation in which he found himself (even from his youth). He was the noblest man in duty or honor that might ride any steed or horse. Havelok's nakedness now suggests that he needed no covering for sin, even from when he was little. And the romance goes on from here.

Since the invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup>-Century, and the introduction of dictionaries for common words in the 18<sup>th</sup>-Century, word spellings have been regularized and the drift of word meanings slowed. But time and culture subtract meaning from all texts, and language users removed by centuries from when a text was produced, even when linked through the consistent usage of a unifying text such the King James translation of the Bible, will lose meanings. The 17<sup>th</sup> century usage of "conversation" meant all of one's conduct, and was not limited to a verbal exchange: if a wife were to win her husband over to Christ by her *conversation* (1 Pet 3:1), she would win him to Christ by her conduct, not by her arguments.

Now, for the reason for introducing readers to Havelok: English is an Indo-European language, such as Greek and German. As such vowels are included in the construction of every word. Meaning must still be added by the reader [auditor] to the word, but the sound of the word only awaits the enunciation of the reader. But this is not true of Semitic languages, of which there are three major languages, Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic. These languages are written only in consonant clusters to which vowels must be added; therefore, the readers of these languages need to know what the text says before the appropriate vowels can be inserted between the consonants, which cannot be pronounced without vowels ... consonants tend toward silence, for a consonant is an interruption of the vowel stream. So words only written in consonants produces



“silence.” And it is for this reason we find in Exodus chapter 17, following Israel’s defeat of Amalek, “The Lord told Moses, ‘Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven’” (Ex 17:14). It was necessary for Moses to recite what he had written in a proto-Semitic script in order for Joshua to “hear” what vowels he should place between the consonants when he read the words of Moses in the future.

Hebrew, written in consonant clusters only, requires the reader to add a vowel stream to the consonants, and as a result, when one generation of readers doesn’t orally pass to the next generation of readers what vowels to place between the consonants, the meaning of the word is lost. An approximation of the original meaning can be retrieved by trying various vowels between the consonants until the text makes some semblance of sense, but that is the best that can be done. And this brings us to King Josiah:

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the Lord, saying, "Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, that he may count the money that has been brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people. And let it be given into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the Lord, and let them give it to the workmen who are at the house of the Lord, repairing the house (that is, to the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons), and let them use it for buying timber and quarried stone to repair the house. But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly."

Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.” And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the secretary came to the king [Josiah], and reported to the king ... “Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it before the king. When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. (2 Kings 22:1–11)

For how long the Book of the Law was lost in the temple isn’t clearly stated, and probably wasn’t known even in the 7<sup>th</sup>-Century BCE. But what comes to us is, after Josiah makes a theological housecleaning in Jerusalem followed by an excursion to Bethel is, “And the king commanded all the people, ‘Keep the Passover to the Lord, as it is written in this Book of the Law.’ For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah” (2 Kings 23:21–22).

If for four or more centuries no Passover had been kept as Moses commanded, why? Obviously, the Book of the Law was lost. But how was it the Book could be read? Any reading of the Book would have been controversial. Not to Josiah, but certainly to the priests whom Josiah put out of the temple. And from this period, rabbinical Judaism receives the oral Torah, now inscribed, which most likely retains the practices of priests deposed by Josiah, practices Josiah sought to end.

Since all languages change over eight centuries (1450 BCE to 650 BCE), in his zeal for God King Josiah should have ordered many copies of the Book of the Law made in the language of 7<sup>th</sup>-Century BCE Israel [in Imperial Hebrew] so that never again would the Book of the Law be lost in a dilapidated temple for centuries. Rather the Book of the Law was to be read in the language being used by the people. And what is evident by the text of Scripture that has come to us post Babylonian Deportation is that a redaction of Scripture occurred: *Avaris* becomes *Rameses*. A Hagar account from the Northern Kingdom of Samaria was added to a Hagar account from the southern Kingdom of Jerusalem, and a not-very-good scribe tried to reconcile these two accounts, both of which took place when Ishmael was either in Hagar's womb or when Ishmael was first born, not when Ishmael was a teenager — and if you were a descendant of Ishmael, you would be certain that the Jews have not faithfully preserved the words of Allah.

There was no mass production of books, scrolls, in the ancient world. Each book was written by hand, a copyist copying an existing book word for word—and when I attempt to copy citations from Scripture for use in my writings, I make mistakes, which are easily corrected with a computer. When I attempted to copy my own writings prior to getting a computer, I used a lot of whiteout to hide mistakes, and I threw many, many sheets of paper out when there was too much whiteout on the page.

Where all of this goes is to the reality that a redaction of Scripture occurred, with the principle evidence of this redaction being in the transformation of the linguistic determinative *YHWH* into a naming noun, a repurposing of the linguistic determinative that retained the non-utterance [never pronounced] of the determinative.

Again, linguistic determinatives are leftovers from the earliest forms of inscription and were never pronounced; they are like stage directions written on a play script. They were read over without being uttered, and they were part of the Egyptian language, part of every language of the Levant, including Hittite, the only Indo-European language in the region (the bridge language between India and Europe).

If a person heard (with ears) an utterance, the person because of being present when the utterance was made, knew who said what, in what language, and where the utterance was made. But a person reading an inscription on a stele could read the declaration, but couldn't be certain if it was a king or a god who had made the utterance. Thus, determinatives were almost always used at the beginning of inscription for *god-speech*.

But what was common practice at the beginning of inscription had fallen out of favor centuries before Josiah's reforms were undertaken; hence, Josiah's scribes and those who came along in the Babylonian deportation apparently were not familiar with linguistic determinatives, didn't recognize them for what they were—didn't recognize the Tetragrammaton *YHWH* as a determinative—and reconstructed Scripture to give to the Lord's speech *Popeye-ish* qualities, *Do this, says me*. Well, the *says me* part of *Thus saith the LORD* passages retain the linguistic determinative *YHWH*, but retains the determinative as a naming noun, thereby creating truly awkward speech that no living entity would actually utter.

When Paul writes, by the hand of Tertius, “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?” (Rom 3:1–3).

What if those entrusted with the oracles of God were unfaithful, are still unfaithful, what can be said about their transmission of the oracles? That they were unfaithful in all they did and have done; that's what it says. And that is the contention of Islam. Unfortunately, the recording of Mohammad's visions has produced yet another form of unfaithfulness, one that will be addressed at a later time.

Christians have not been careful or close readers of their own scriptures. And in an example of Christian literary blindness that I have often used, what color was the robe in which Roman soldiers mocked Christ Jesus?

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head and arrayed Him in a purple robe. They came up to Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck Him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing Him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" (John 19:1–5)

And,

And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him." So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed Him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. And they began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they were striking His head with a reed and spitting on Him and kneeling down in homage to Him. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the purple cloak and put His own clothes on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him. (Mark 15:14–20)

These two accounts are not identical, but John was there and John Mark was not, but wrote a chronological narrative of Jesus' ministry by untangling the anecdotes Peter used in his preaching, John Mark serving as Peter's translator. But on one thing they agree: Jesus was mocked in purple garb, as would have been appropriate in mocking a royal pretender. And by the testimony of two or three, a thing is established: Jesus was mocked in a purple cloak or robe.

But Matthew's Gospel disagrees:

Then he [Pilate] released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before Him. And they stripped Him and *put a scarlet robe on Him*, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spit on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe and put His own clothes on Him and led Him away to crucify Him. (Matt 27:26–31 emphasis added)

The author of Matthew's Gospel wasn't colorblind, but was using Mark's Gospel as his source text; so this author made a deliberate color change which should signal the reader that there is a difference here, a "different" Jesus, not the man who was actually

crucified at Calvary, but—shortcutting a longish argument I have made many times—the indwelling Christ Jesus that is a life-giving spirit [*pneuma*] (from 1 Cor 15:45).

For the purpose of a discussion about the integrity of Scripture, it is enough to show that the Gospels do not agree with themselves: the *Harmony of the Gospels* is a myth that should never have been set in print, for how many women came to Jesus' grave on the morning of His resurrection? In John's Gospel, one, Mary Magdalene. In Matthew's Gospel, two, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. In Mark's Gospel, three, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome. In Luke's Gospel, many. So how many were really there. A Christian has no way of knowing for certain; for the integrity of Scripture is a quagmire of linguistic signifiers, with these signifiers having been often used to "prove" the falseness of Christianity, when God, Father and Son, are not false. It is the Book the Adversary helped assemble that has problems.

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