

had the quality of "inspiredness" because of the Holy Spirit's unique act of inspiration; the copies had the quality of "inspiredness" because they were derived from the autographs. In spite of the fact that the inscripturated revelation was transmitted across centuries, copied, translated, and marred by copyists' errors, its truths were preserved in such a way that Peter could tell his readers to pay the closest attention to that prophetic word which was available to them.

Implications of This Proposal

It is well to consider carefully the implications of a proposal before hurrying to adopt it. In connection with this proposal I would suggest two implications.

The most obvious is that the term "inspiration" represents an absolute concept, whereas "inspiredness" represents a relative concept. To the degree that copies, versions, translations and paraphrases diverge from the text of the autographs, to that degree is "inspiredness" diminished. Someone will say, "But we do not have the text of the autographs." This valid objection establishes a warrant for the exacting task of textual (or lower) criticism, in which we attempt to discern which words of Scripture are attested by the best textual evidence. Having undertaken this task (which must be renewed from time to time), the question may then be asked, "Can apographs move so far from the best attested text that they no longer retain the quality of 'inspiredness'?" This could happen, particularly at specific points where apographs have deliberately emended the text, or have selected a dubious reading in order to support a theological bias. However, unless the apograph as a whole has corrupted the content of the best attested text so badly that the text is no longer recognizable, some degree of "inspiredness" would probably remain in the apograph. Nevertheless, a distinction would need to be made between an essentially trustworthy copy of Scripture, and an essentially untrustworthy one; the difference being that an essentially trustworthy copy would be one which, with confidence, one could commend almost indiscriminately; and an essentially untrustworthy copy would be one which one could not commend at all, or about which one would have great reservations.

A second implication of this proposal is that we can have not only a tremendous confidence in the fact that we possess copies of Scripture which are as provably close in accuracy to the originals as those copies of