**Which Bible 9**

2013-2018

### Answering Questions

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. So far, we have covered five of the following questions. We hope to discover principles that help us find a new set of text criticism rules.

“Some suggestions about where the rules should be headed. A few of the subjects we should explore include:

* What is an accurate definition of Autographa and where are they located?
* How were Autographa historically accessed and how do we access them today?
* Are the Autographa a single collection of unchanging documents, or can they be changed? Are there possibly multiple Autographa?
* What is Inspiration?
* What is Inscripturation and how does it relate to Transcription?
* What is Canonization and who has authority to Canonize? Is Canonization fundamentally: an act of God, an act of the Jews, an act of the Church, or an act of man?
* How shall evidence be handled?
* How do we focus on real translatable differences, and not on meaningless trivia, or on mere document counting?
* What Bible(s) can we recommend to the Church?”

Question 6. What is Canonization and who has authority to Canonize? Is Canonization fundamentally: an act of God, an act of the Jews, an act of the Church, or an act of man?

### What is Canonization?

Canonization is that last official act that establishes a written document as law.

In the case of the United States Constitution, it was signed by its framers and archived as an official document. It is the official archiving, as well as the signing that makes the Constitution canonical: signing designates the authority that publishes the document; archiving declares it to be a matter of public record. Of course, unsigned documents have no canonical authority. On the other hand, documents that are not officially posted in the place of record have no legal authority either. A document must be officially received by the Canonizing authority to be made canonical. Both signing and archiving acts are necessary.

A person may claim ownership of a property, but until all the correctly executed documents of ownership are filed at the county seat, they have no authority whatsoever. Indeed, another person may obtain all the correct documents, race to the place of record, file for ownership ahead of you, and legally steal your property away. The burden of proof is now on you to show that the other party committed fraud, or otherwise obtained the correct papers in an unjust way. Both authorization and archiving are essential to legality.

Under Roberts Rules, motions enacted by a body are not canonical until the clerk has entered them into the official minute book, they are read, approved, and declared approved by the body president. The minutes are not only placed into the official minute book by the clerk, but they are received into the official minute book by the body itself as finally shown by the president’s proclamation of the body’s approval. If the body rejects parts of the minutes, they must be corrected or expunged. The clerk is merely acting on the authority of the whole constituting body, he is incapable of canonizing documents on his own. The body authorizes the document by its voting and archives it by its approval of minutes.

It is commonly thought that a meeting, such as that at Jamnia[[1]](#endnote-1) made the Hebrew/block-Aramaic language Old Testament canonical. Even though this idea has fallen in disfavor, the point that Judaism retains some magical[[2]](#endnote-2) canonizing authority, somehow, unbelievably, tenaciously, contrary to all that is reasonable and good: that idea remains.[[3]](#endnote-3) Much later, the Masoretes worked to establish the Old Testament text. As Orlinsky[[4]](#endnote-4) points out, there never was and can never be a single standard Masoretic text. Our printed “standard” texts are characterized by their paucity of text variant notation. Because these text variants are absent it is commonly believed that they do not exist. Therefore, what we have in printed form is erroneously believed to be accurate with split micron precision, and is therefore, highly authoritative, as the Word of God: this is simply not true.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Not only do these printed standard Hebrew texts fail to achieve such accuracy, but they also are commonly supposed to have canonical authority among both Jews and Christians: this we intend to disprove. We will show that Judaism has no canonical authority at all.[[6]](#endnote-6) The issue of their accuracy we leave to specialists: if they are not canonical at all, their accuracy need not concern us overly much at this point.

### Who Has Authority to Canonize?

It is commonly believed that mere men have the authority to canonize Scripture. If we thought about this for a while, we would soon realize that this makes the Bible into the word of man, not into what it truly is, the Word of God.

What is the biblical act of canonization? Who votes? Who receives? Who decides?

When we review all that was discovered in “Which Bible 1-8”, especially in all the Scriptures that were examined, we remember that the Scriptures were laid-up in the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, the Oracle, that special room in the tabernacle and temple where God’s Glory dwelled for roughly eight hundred twenty years, from the call to Moses at the burning bush (circa 1406 BC) unto God’s rejection of Judah[[7]](#endnote-7) (circa 586 BC); but, not in the second temple (circa 516 BC). It is precisely this act of laying-up in the presence of the Glory that makes Scripture canonical.

Only God has the authority to make Scripture canonical. The act of laying-up demonstrates that God Himself endorses the Scripture by receiving it and keeping it adjacent to His throne. This is a clear and unmistakable statement that God intends to rule in accordance with the covenant stipulations of this book, of which stipulations, He is the primary author. That the king will have a copy of this book, under which stipulations he shall also reign, clearly shows that the kingdom is to be ruled by God’s Law-Word, which the people are already committed to obey by covenantal agreement.[[8]](#endnote-8) That The Autograph is seen in the hand of the Worthy Lamb shows us clearly that Jesus Christ, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, is now officially enthroned as what He eternally is, was, and ever will be.[[9]](#endnote-9)

Since God is the only one with authority to canonize Scripture we now draw further conclusions and questions.

* Jesus Christ possesses the totality of that canonical authority and speaks from the heavenly Oracle.[[10]](#endnote-10)
* The Holy Spirit has the exclusive executive power to publish whatever Christ canonizes.
* Jesus Christ delegates authority to His Apostles; and from His Apostles to their successors. Thus, the lawful successors to Christ and His Apostles have sole custodial authority over this canonized body of literature under the direction of the Spirit.[[11]](#endnote-11)
* Thus, The Christian Church has the only present authority to certify that any document is canonical. We cannot presently say how this authority is to be exercised. However, this nullifies all the work of the Masoretes (they have no authority). Westcott-Hort, Nestle-Aland, and many others worked to no effect. Tischendorf labored in vain. None of them are in a place to speak for Christ or for His Church.
* So, unless The Church says it is canonical, it is not canonical.
* Unfortunately, Satan has chopped The Church into thirty thousand or more dust particles: so, we may have trouble locating that rightful custodial authority.
* Fortunately, Satan has no power against God: God has assured us on numerous occasions and in countless ways that His Spirit is in control of things on earth, until Christ returns.
* The Scripture, by itself, albeit Holy, has no such power and authority.[[12]](#endnote-12)

Thus our search for the best Archetype has transitioned from a discussion of Autographa, Inspiration, Inscripturation, Transcription, Canonization, and other essential technical matters, to include a quest for The True Church in the modern world, roughly thirty thousand voices contending for the honor.

### How Shall Evidence Be Handled?

Nothing worthwhile can be determined without evidence: the field is already littered with assorted worthless opinions, which have no basis whatsoever.

The eclectic methods of Westcott-Hort, Nestle-Aland, and many others are all highly questionable. The eclectic method examines manuscripts, dices such an examination into pieces, then a panel of “experts” votes to determine the outcome for the best text. Imagine this method applied to a family picture album: the pictures are examined, dissected, and voted on, all by a panel of “experts”. The panel selects the best eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and other features and declares that the outcome is the best and valid possible representation of grandma; never mind that the eyes were actually cut from Bob’s and Bill’s photo, the nose is actually Norm’s, Sue’s ears were used, as were Ellen’s lips. The only feature that actually came from an historic picture of grandma was her chin. The next edition will publish a new and different composite. This method of shredding evidence must be rejected.

This is why Ehrman’s Rule of text criticism, which states that “preservation requires perfection: that is, no textual corruptions may exist in at least one of three cases: either in all manuscripts, a set of manuscripts, or a single manuscript,” grabs our attention. If that single manuscript happened to be the only autograph, the eclectic method just destroyed it. We protest such abuse of evidence. Ehrman’s Rule is right: we have exactly three ways, and only three ways to get this right. Except for select passages, “all manuscripts” cannot possibly be true; nevertheless, “all manuscripts” may provide us with a considerable working skeleton. If “a set of manuscripts”; which set: there are several such sets. If “a single manuscript”; which one: this is like looking for a needle in a needle stack. There are several contenders: finding the one perfect contender, or perfect contender set, may prove difficult.

Ehrman’s Rule is better than its predecessors; yet, it is still less than ideal. Outside of Revelation 5: how are we to know that a perfect manuscript ever existed; was ever in our possession; or that we sinful people could possibly recognize it if we saw it.

As far as providential preservation is concerned: the sun still shines on the just and the unjust.[[13]](#endnote-13) Providence does not guarantee a life free of pain, mortality, sickness, suffering, or tribulation; if anything, providence guarantees that our lives will be filled with these things.[[14]](#endnote-14) Neither does Providence guarantee the existence of a perfect Archetype. Providence extends the hope of a future heavenly and perfect kingdom; as well as a scant possibility that biblical perfection might survive our earthly tampering, that we might be barely able, blindly lucky enough to find.

As for the perfection of providential preservation: we already have it in Revelation 5; we’re just not qualified to reach it. Our search for the perfect archetype is further complicated by the possibility of multiple autographa.

Others, such as Pierpont and Robinson[[15]](#endnote-15) have labored strenuously to find such a single manuscript for us. The work of Pierpont and Robinson, as well as Farstad and Hodges[[16]](#endnote-16), and the publications of the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church are in very close agreement: so, we may be on the right track.

In any case, it is imperative that all evidence be treated with respect. Slicing and dicing cannot be tolerated.

### What Are Meaningful Differences?

One person’s meaningful difference is another person’s useless trivia. This issue of keeping “focus on real translatable differences” is more easily said than done. Still, it is encouraging, in our quest to know that most variations are minor, the quantity of significant translatable differences is relatively few.

If we refuse to tolerate slicing and dicing, counting of shards is made irrelevant. If we reject the Majority Text method because there is no evidence of its early existence, then, counting manuscripts is equally futile. The problem here is that there is no early evidence of the Majority Text whatsoever; if there was even as much as a single early fragment, we would have to revise our opinion drastically: alas, not even a crumb has been found. This flies in the face of that somewhat risky hypothesis, providential preservation: at best providence provides survival for us and Scripture, we still have to find it. That providence is revealed in Revelation 5, and published in Revelation 10: finding it is another matter. Matching the autographa of Christ in Revelation 5 to an archetype constructed from first through third century manuscripts will still prove difficult.

We may have to settle for an archetype of most common denominators, and leave the meaningful and unmeaningful differences open to debate. We cannot even recommend a specific Greek edition as an unfailing archetype. It certainly will not do, to grab any one we like; then proclaim to the world that this is the archetype: which is pretty much the boat your pastor is left in today.

### What Bible(s) Can We Recommend?

At this point we cannot recommend any English language translation as suitable to become the “new” standard English Bible, replacing the King James: this means that the English-speaking public is without a standard version. It is this lack of any standard version that causes us to insist that more and more laypeople must involve themselves in Greek studies.

While the work of Pierpont and Robinson is most excellent; we would like to see something different in a printed Greek text. Since the Orthodox Church seems to have custodial care of both the Alexandrian and the Byzantine text we look to them as a major source. We would like to see a printed Greek text with the following features:

* The basic text would be a faithful exact copy of the single most important Alexandrian manuscript, whichever manuscript that might turn out to be.
* A first footnote apparatus would explain all the variations found in other Alexandrian manuscripts.
* A second footnote would detail the differences between the single most important Byzantine manuscript and the Alexandrian manuscript selected for the basic text.
* A third footnote apparatus would explain all the variations found in other Byzantine manuscripts.
* A fourth footnote apparatus would explain all the variations found in other text types or sources.

In the meantime, we’ll have to content ourselves with Pierpont-Robinson and Rahlfs. Elpenor is an excellent online Septuagint resource.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Even if we could settle on a single Greek archetype; all the work of exegesis, interpretation, grammar, and lexicography would be left ahead of us. Thousands of opinions confront us. Not nearly enough qualified people are coming to the work.

Our recommendation is that we figure out how to labor together until we can produce our own free online standard English version: we might need two versions, one for Americans, and one for British. What do we have to do to become organized? What is necessary to coordinate our efforts? Where do we find The Church today?[[18]](#endnote-18)

We can easily show that the fundamental government of The Church in the Old Testament is patriarchal, neither hierarchical nor congregational.[[19]](#endnote-19) We also see that when Christ appoints Apostles and Seventy: He is refreshing, renewing, and replacing that patriarchal structure. When the Apostles appoint elders in every city, they are preserving that patriarchal tradition. We are not free to invent whatever sorts of Church government we wish.[[20]](#endnote-20) We probably will be unable to find The Church without some agreement on The Church’s government: without The Church’s government, we probably won’t become organized.

We know for a fact that the Holy Spirit is the Head of the Church on earth: He is our exclusive link to the Father and the Son. Yet, far too many human leaders see themselves as the controller of the Spirit, or as sole dispensers of His Grace.[[21]](#endnote-21)

### A Mile Stone or Two or More

The work of discovering the best possible copy of the Autographa remains incomplete. However, we may be equally sure that the work of Hort, Westcott, Nestle, Aland, et al are presuppositionally flawed and unusable. Burgon’s seven principles may have been pressed to offensive extreme, but they still carry much weight and incredible wisdom. We can understand some of Burgon’s frustration: we too are tired of being confronted by adversaries whose basic position is that they don’t care about the evidence; that opposing opinion continues unabated to cling to the idea that our fad is correct no matter what the facts declare: we will marginalize any and all who dare oppose us in our madness to insist that our fad is the right fad.

Even though we must now reject the Majority Text hypothesis for lack of early evidence, the Majority Text retains much value:

* It appears to be the oldest Bible commentary received by The Church.
* It is compiled by the most highly qualified text critics ever: people whose first language is Greek; people whose command of customs and idioms eclipses ours by many magnitudes; people who were first on the scene after the persecutions of the first three centuries to recover the remnants left by the wreckage. It would be fool hardy to examine the Alexandrian text family as candidates for the archetype, without considering the witness of the Byzantine text family: the twenty-first century offers nothing better in early technical experts.

On the other hand, we do not need to be bogged down with petty spelling variations, or minor differences in word order. To be sure, there are spelling and word order problems that constitute translatable differences. Nor do we need to keep on counting the quantities of variation and other almost worthless statistics, just to prove that one side or the other is right. No, we must identify real translatable differences even if we must go letter-by-letter, word-by-word, phrase-by-phrase, clause-by-clause, on our hands and knees to get there. There is nothing more important in Christianity than this. If we cannot agree on the fundamental Christian Bible, we cannot agree on anything else.

We have not yet fully addressed the LXX, Vulgata, MT [Masoretic] problem.[[22]](#endnote-22) Methods and presuppositions must be identical, and the Old Testament must mesh with the New. There is a lot of extremely difficult work before us. It would be nice to find several thousand bright young people, who are interested in, and able to approach this work with sobriety, and be able to fund them.

“But the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you.”[[23]](#endnote-23)

### Wrapping Up

Our world has conformed many churches to its own standards. Brothers and Sisters, these things ought not so to be. We are being overtaken by demons, and demonism; rather that conquering them. The job of The Church is to be that instrument in the hands of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and totally dependent on the grace of God the Father; that instrument, which conforms our world to Christ. We are failing in our assigned task. If we ever needed to be revived from our complacency, today is that day. Shame on us, we have denied our Savior. Shame on us, our hands are drenched in the blood of those who are perishing. Shame on us, we refuse to take this seriously.

### Conclusions

We cannot support any document either Old or New Testament as a legitimate archetypal contender for a first copy of the Autographa that is not Greek and is not handed down within The Church. Any other claimant is false. This is not a claim that we have such an Archetype, a perfect first copy of the Autographa in our hands, but it is certainly the “chalice” which we must seek.

We highly value translations, because the Scriptures must be read in the language of the people; but all such translations must be based on a legitimate Archetype a “first” copy of the Autographa, not on the opinions of various scholars. Developing a new standard English language translation is a worthwhile goal.

The problem is complex and compound; multifaceted and murky. It dominates and ranges across the theological realms of revelation, inspiration, preservation, and canonicity long before it ever arrives at such juggernauts as textual criticism, transmission, and translation. We have examined critically, and been forced to reject, at least in part, many if not most of the older theories of textual criticism in favor of the right of custodianship of The Church. This right of custodianship is not exactly the same as the hypothesis of providential preservation.

When the smoke clears away, we must yet face problems of interpretation, translation: grammar, lexicography, and syntax. Everybody has an opinion. How do we best discover Christ’s opinion? In disclosing Christ’s opinion, we will find a standard English translation. We have a long way to go, dear brothers and sisters.

Yours in Christ,

Augie-Herb

[[24]](#endnote-24)

1. Although the hypothesized Council of Jamnia has lost credibility the concept itself still illustrates the point we are making. Evidently, no such meeting at Jamnia ever took place.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Jamnia> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Magical, not mystical: for Judaism has no such authority. Repeatedly, the New Testament shows that Christ Himself stripped away all designated authority from Judaism and gave it to His Church. The only way for a Jew to reenter the canonical picture is to become a Christian. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The Reformation is clearly wrong on this point. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ginsburg, Christian D., *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* with Prolegomenon by Harry M. Orlinsky, The Masoretic Text: A Critical Evaluation (KTAV, New York, 1966: 1028 pages) – See pages xxxv-xxxvii. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. The Masoretes have no authority to publish; Christ removed that authority from them, and bestowed it upon the Apostles and The Church. The Masoretes have no means of archiving; their temple is gone. The new Temple, the Body of Christ, is The Church; which is the new Oracle, the official heavenly Archival place. This means that in Revelation 5, when Christ receives the Book of Books, that He does so in a mystical edifice made from living human stones (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5). It is no longer possible to have a physical earthly temple of any significance; the reality of the mystical Heavenly Temple is all that matters (Revelation 21).

If I were to attempt to paint Revelation 5 and 21, I would paint a human body, depicting Christ with the Book as the heart. Such a painting cannot possibly be made: for eye has not seen (1 Corinthians 2:9)... it's mystical... it's a mystery.... [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Proof:

Jesus replaces the patriarchal leadership of 12/13 with Apostolic leadership of 12/13: the descendants of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph = Manasseh + Ephraim, Benjamin (born out of due time) are replaced by James the Greater, James the Less, John, Jude (Judas Thaddaeus Lebbaeus), Judas, Peter, Philip, Matthew, Andrew, Bartholomew, Simon, Thomas, Paul (appointed out of due time). Matthew 10:2-4, etc.

Jesus replaces the 70 or 72 of Moses’ Sanhedrin with 70 of His own. Luke 10:1

Jesus curses the Fig Tree. Matthew 21:18-20; Mark 11:12-14, 20-21; Luke 13:6-9

Jesus predicts that the Kingdom of God will be taken away. Matthew 21:43

Jesus confronts the Pharisees on a regular basis and curses them. Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29

The Church rejects the tenets of Judaism. Acts 15

Paul shows that Judaism is cut off. Romans 2:24-29; 11:21-24

John shows that Judaism is antichrist; in their denial of Christ they become false Jews and synagogues of Satan: for the sincere Christian is the true Jew. 1 John 2:18, 22-23; 4:3; 2 John 1:17; Revelation 2:9; 3:9

The Keys of the Kingdom are given to The Church. Matthew 16:18

The Spirit is given exclusively to The Church; Jews may enter in only through conversion to Christianity. Acts 2, especially verse 38 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Not quite yet Judaism, YHWH was present until 586 BC: the language of the temple and people was paleo-Hebrew between 1000 and 586 BC. The Babylonian captivity brings about an epic transition; by 516 BC the new religion, a different kind of religion, Judaism is in its early stages of formation; the Bible is transcribed into block-Aramaic characters; YHWH, His books, His temple furniture never return. All of that will change between 6 and 4 BC, in Bethlehem: by then, the language had become Greek. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Deuteronomy 17:18-20 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Revelation 5 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Matthew 28:18; Revelation 5 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Revelation 10 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Isaiah 11:1-16, especially verse 9; Isaiah 55:11; and Habakkuk 2:1-20, especially verse 14, speak of Jesus as the Word, and the Spirit as His publisher, not of the Bible or other instruments which may very well all be in play. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Matthew 5:45 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Job 5:7; Matthew 10:34; Revelation 6:4; Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Robinson, Maurice A. and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek; Byzantine Textform 2005*, (Chilton Book Publishing, Southborough, MA, 2005: 587 pages) [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Farstad Arthur L. and Zane C. Hodges, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1982: 810 pages) [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Today this is about the only kind of starting place we may be able to find: at least it is a starting place.
<https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/default.asp> [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. The “pat” answer that we find The Church in invisible “spiritual” unity, whatever that is supposed to mean, brings little comfort. We read visible physical Bibles, receive visible physical baptisms and communions. We confront life and sin among visible physical people. We are commanded to unity, where are we? John 17:11, 22, 23: for example. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Consider Vsevolod, *We are All Brothers*, (Eastern Christian Publications, Fairfax, VA, 1999: three volumes – 352 pages, 342 pages, 326 pages respectively). Vsevolod collects a broad scope of evidence from extra-biblical sources, supporting the necessity of the patriarchal government of churches. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. This seems to nullify Calvin’s notions on the topic. We are not saying that Calvin did not strive to formulate a biblical church government; he did so strive. He seems to have fallen short of the mark, by giving insufficient attention to the Old Testament voices on the matter. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. The attitude that one cannot possibly partake of the Spirit’s blessings, except in our denomination, by our rules and methods. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. By this time, in other studies, we have eliminated both the Vulgate and Masoretic Text as contenders. Only the Septuagint family can possibly be the source of the true text. All of the evidence points in this direction. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. John 14:26; see Luke 12:12; John 16:13. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)