

This is poetry; this is a figurative way of speaking and anyone who tries to make it into something else is foolish. Does God's message come to us through these poetic words? Yes. The writers' messages are clear even though no literal or mechanical interpretation can be made of the verses.

Now in a similar fashion, there are those who believe the Bible to be truly the word of God and yet are not bothered by a case of mistaken authorship. Let us take Calvin as an example. In his commentary on 2 Timothy 3:16 he says that the Bible has come from the hand of God and "*has nothing belonging to man mixed with it.*" It would be difficult to find a stronger statement of the Bible's "inerrancy." Yet—and notice this carefully—when Calvin wrote his commentary on Matthew 27:9 he said:

How the name of *Jeremiah* crept in, I confess that I do not know, nor do I give myself much trouble to inquire. The passage itself plainly shows that the name of *Jeremiah* has been put down by mistake, instead of *Zechariah*, . . . for in *Jeremiah* we find nothing of this sort, nor any thing that even approaches to it.<sup>4</sup>

Having said that there is a mistake here, Calvin goes on to explain the meaning of the verse; that is what was important to him, not how Jeremiah came to be in the text instead of Zechariah. Calvin does not try to explain that we do not have the original text and that the quotation would probably be correct in the original, nor does he say that Matthew had access to some secret document written by Jeremiah. Inerrancy or perfection to him apparently had nothing to do with this kind of thing. He was concerned with the clear, true, and saving message of God which is presented in the Scriptures.

We do the Bible as much of an injustice when we try to force it into our views of scientific accuracy as we would do in trying to interpret poetry in the same way as we interpret our chemistry book.

If the Scriptures are not sufficient or perfect in these matters, in what areas are they adequate? The answer found in The Westminster Confession of Faith is that the Bible is "to be the rule of faith and life" (I: II). The Scriptures were written that we might believe in Jesus Christ and live the new life in him. In matters of faith and life (not grammar, science, or even ancient history), the Scriptures are our guide. They can instruct us for salvation, though they do not promise to make us scientists or historians.

But how do we know this? Why are we so sure the Bible is God's word to us?