

The Doctrinal Views of DR KURT ALAND, Textual Critic

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Dr Kurt Aland is perhaps the most renowned Biblical textual critic of the 20th century. Born in Berlin in 1915, he died in Münster/Westphalia in 1994. The most famous modern English versions of the New Testament—the Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard Version, the New International Version, and the English Standard Version—are all grounded on, and, for the most part, translated from, Dr Aland's work. These translations utilise as their principal text (with its critical apparatus and alternate readings) the United Bible Societies version of the Greek New Testament, a version over which Dr Aland was a principal editor. Indeed, the UBS version third edition (1983) is virtually the same as Aland's own twenty-sixth edition of the Nestle-Aland text: such was his influence over the UBS text.¹

The Nestle-Aland Greek 26th edition and the UBS 1966 and 1983 Greek texts differ widely from the common Received Text



which was used by all the great translations of the Reformation, including the Authorised Version in the English language (also known in some parts of the world as the 'King James Version'). Thus, the versions

translated from this new 'critical' text differ significantly from our Authorised Version as well.

At present, the NIV and the ESV are sweeping evangelical churches in the

United States and Britain. Thus, modern churchgoers are being profoundly influenced by Aland's Greek Text, and so also by his peculiar views of the text. This is because the very verses that modern churchgoers are reading in their Bibles reflect the theological and textual views of Dr Aland, which underlie his choices for readings and variant readings for every verse in the original Greek, from which these new versions are translated.

However, very few churchgoers even know the name of Dr Kurt Aland. Many ministers do—the Nestle-Aland text is the one that they buy when in theological seminary (as is required for students

in Westminster Theological Seminary). They have heard in their text-critical classes of Dr Aland's prowess as a scholar. Yet very few ministers know what Dr Aland's theological views are concerning the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture.

We come then to the point of this paper, namely, to show concerned readers **what Kurt Aland's theological views are concerning Biblical inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility.**

But first, we must lay down some fundamental premises. This paper is the review of a Bible-believer, and unashamedly so. Accordingly, we are not backward to affirm that, if we are to understand the text of the Old and New Testaments, we must know what the Bible says of itself. And so, we affirm that:

*We must believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, because the Bible itself says so.

*We must believe that God preserves His Word, by His Holy Spirit, in the line of His true Church—again, because the Bible says so.

We must believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, because the Bible says so.

*2 Timothy 3.16–17 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'

*Proverbs 30.5 'Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.'

How much of Scripture is inspired, inspired indeed by God? 'All Scripture.' 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.' The original Greek word for 'inspired'

means 'breathed out by God'. All Scripture is breathed out by God—every word of it. Accordingly, all Scripture is as pure as God Himself. No abiding corruption can enter into it. Though mistakes have entered some copies of the original language texts, though heretics have even mutilated some copies, yet, in the good Providence of God, by the Holy Spirit, the true Church has been enabled always to recover the true reading from the copies.

Because Scripture is breathed out by God, the man of God is 'perfect', or 'complete'. He is complete in that he has need of no other reference. Obviously, he is not sinlessly perfect: '...there is no man that sinneth not' (1 Kings 8.46). But he is 'perfect' in this sense: he is perfectly furnished with all that he should ever need to know, on this side of eternity, to equip him for his ministry in this world—so that, as we have said, he has need of no other reference. Indeed, the only other references he may want to consider would be good commentaries on the Scripture itself, to help him understand the Scripture better. But even these commentaries the man of God would read as **subordinate** to the inspired Scripture itself. Oh, the man of God is complete in his being thoroughly furnished, by the fully-inspired words of God!

The very thing that makes the man of God complete and thoroughly furnished unto all good works is the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture. If the Scripture ceases to be inspired, and fully inspired in its every Word, then it is no longer reliable or profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. The very attribute of Scripture that makes it reliable and profitable for these things is its plenary inspiration, its purity, its being 'breathed out by God'.

Accordingly, the Scripture, indeed **all** Scripture, is breathed out and inspired by God **still**. The Scripture, every word of it, is **still** profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: hence, it is also inspired still. Despite its being copied by men, despite mistakes and errors having been introduced into some of the copies, yet, in the good Providence of God by the Holy Spirit, the true Church has always been able to recover the original readings, so that we still have the inspired Word of God, infallible and inerrant.

There may be spelling or stylistic differences in some of the words or their forms in the present manuscripts, but the essential words, in all their meanings, are still there—the inspired, inerrant words of God. The Holy Spirit, in the Church, has helped the true Church always to recover and maintain the true reading (Isaiah 59.21).

And how pure are the Words of God? Totally pure. '**Every** word of God is pure,' says Proverbs 30.5. 'Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him'. Every word of God is pure. It is pure still. It is pure, by the good Providence of God, preserving the inspired Word of God, for the man of God, so that he need not have recourse to any other work—so that by it, he may be made profitable to **every** good work. The good Providence of God has kept **every** word of God pure.

'He is a shield unto them that put their trust in him,' says Proverbs 30.5. Why? Because 'every word of God is pure'. Take away the purity of every word, and God is no longer a shield to the saints.

We must not doubt the purity of God's Word, nor doubt His covenant faithfulness to preserve it. He Who cannot lie

promises to preserve His Word; He promises to do so in that very Word. 'All Scripture is breathed out by God.' 'Every word of God is pure.' As Isaiah 59.21 tells us, God's inspired words, all of them, shall be preserved in the line of the true Church, **for ever**.

We must believe that God preserves His Word, by His Spirit, in the line of the true Church.

*Isaiah 59.20–21 'And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.'

The Lord says, 'this is my covenant with them'. With whom? With those that 'turn from transgression in Jacob'. These would be those who know 'repentance unto life'—that saving work of the blessed Holy Ghost—by the Holy Spirit, convincing them of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and savingly illuminating their minds with the knowledge of the blessed Redeemer who has come for them. With these, and these **alone**, God makes His covenant. He sends the Redeemer to Zion, for them, and for them alone.

And what is this covenant with them? The covenant is, that the spirit that is upon them, **and the words that are in their mouth, shall not depart out of their mouth, nor out of the mouth of their seed, nor their seed's seed.** For how long? 'For ever.'

The Lord makes a covenant with His Zion, with those that turn from transgression in Jacob. His Spirit shall not depart from them; neither will His Words. God will preserve **all** His words for them; 'every word of God *is* pure'. Why? So that He may be a shield to His saints, even by His Word. God will keep all His Word, the Scriptures of our salvation, inspired. Why? So that the man of God may be perfect, so that he may be complete, so that he may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

Indeed, this very promise is because of the Redeemer, spoken of in Isaiah 59.20, Who is Christ Jesus our Lord, the Desire of all nations, that One who comes to Zion. Because of Him, God makes this wonderful covenant. Indeed, we see in Hebrews 9.19 that Moses sprinkled not only all the articles of the tabernacle and the people, but yes, even the very book of the Law, the Word of God, with the blood. Hebrews 9.19 says, 'For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, **and sprinkled both the book**, and all the people.'

Moses sprinkled both the book and the people. Why? Because this foreshadowed how that the blood of Christ would be sprinkled on both the people of God and upon the very words of God that God would use to keep them. In other words, **Christ purchased both His people and the words of God by His precious blood**. When the blood of Christ ceases to be efficacious, then the people of God can be lost. When the blood of Christ is no longer living and warm, then the purity of God's words will be lost.

No, this can never be! Whatever the blood of Christ touches, it **purchases**.

The blood of Christ has purchased the purity of all the words of God in all ages, for you, for me, if we will but believe it.

Now, with whom is this promise made? With those that turn from transgression in Jacob, and with their seed, and their seed's seed, even for ever. The Spirit will continue with them. The efficacy of the blood of Christ will continue with them. By the covenant of this blood, and the workings of the Holy Spirit, this true Church will be able to discern the words of God in all ages; and by the good Providence of God all His words will remain with them.

And thus, we should be looking to the original language texts that have been used by the historic true Church.

What we must look for in a textual critic

When we would evaluate the work of a textual critic—one who would compile a text of the original languages for the Bible—we must look for a man who believes the things which we have just discussed. He must believe that the Bible is the Word of God, because 'every word of God *is* pure'. He must believe that God has promised to preserve that Word pure, in every age. He must also believe that God will do this in the line of the true Church.

An examination of Dr Kurt Aland's views on the inspiration of the Bible

It can be rather difficult to find anything that openly displays Dr Aland's views concerning the inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures. However, there are three little-known works of his

that are most revealing, two relatively early works, written in 1961 and 1962, and one later work, in 1985.

We address first the two earlier works. One is entitled 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries', written in 1961.² In that booklet, Dr Aland denies the apostolic authorship of the Four Gospels, the Catholic Epistles, the Pastoral Epistles, and Hebrews. The other work is entitled *The Problem of the New Testament Canon*, written in 1962.³ In this work, Dr Aland expresses his doubts as to the canonicity of several New Testament books.

Now, we must interject the following. With respect to the apostolic authorship of the Four Gospels, these books in their titles begin 'The Gospel according to Matthew' or 'The Gospel according to Mark', and so on. Though some may question whether the titles are inspired per se, yet we cannot deny that the titles of all the complete Greek manuscripts of the New Testament books, going back to the earliest of times, attribute the authorship of the Gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as did all the Church Fathers going back to the earliest ages of the Church. (For more detail on the variations that exist in the headings, and yet how they all attribute authorship to the men, the author refers the reader to F.H.A. Scrivener's excellent work *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 1.65–71.)⁴ Thus, there really is no manuscript or patristic evidence whatever, other than mere conjecture, that could merit Aland's questioning who authored them. But unquestionably, a man who doubts the canonicity of several books of the Bible—specifically, 2 Peter, James, 1 and 2 John, and Jude—cannot at all believe in Bible inerrancy. How can the Bible be infallible, if it has

several books in it that do not belong there?

It may be asked, "But *The Problem of the New Testament Canon* was written in 1962. Did Dr Aland ever renounce these views? And similarly with 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity'. That was written in 1961. Did Aland renounce its views?"

No, he did not. Indeed, he had ample opportunity to renounce these views in his much later book entitled *A History of Christianity*, published in German in 1980 and in English in 1985.⁵ In this book, Aland discusses his theories concerning the origins and the evolution of the New Testament text, including the settling of the Canon and the apostolic authorship of the Gospels, the Catholic Epistles, and Hebrews. Yet he says nothing in that work to renounce his former views. To the contrary, he cautiously confirms them, even adding shockingly disdainful, higher critical views of the Catholic Epistles—James, Jude, 1 and 2 Peter, and 1, 2, and 3 John. We will discuss what he says in *A History of Christianity* toward the end of this paper.

Denying the canonicity of certain books of the Bible is certainly the more blatant of his errors. For that indeed is a denial of the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture itself. For that reason, we shall begin by addressing Dr Aland's work concerning the Canon. After that, we shall address what he says in 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries'. Next, we shall address what he says in *A History of Christianity*. Finally, at the end of this paper, we shall evaluate the validity of Dr Aland's work, in the light of Scripture, specifically, Isaiah 59.20–21.

We proceed now to examine *The Problem of the New Testament Canon*.

The Problem of the New Testament Canon

At the beginning of this work, Kurt Aland writes the following: 'This brochure embodies the text of a lecture written for the Second International Congress on New Testament Studies which met at Christ Church, Oxford, in September 1961.⁶ The pamphlet, then, is a lecture that Dr Aland delivered to a worldwide convention of New Testament scholars.

Just the title of the work is enough to raise eyebrows. *The Problem of the New Testament Canon? What 'problem'?*

For the reader not acquainted with the term, 'Canon' means the listing of books that should be included in the New Testament. Dr Aland is in this pamphlet raising a question of whether new books not included in the Bible ought to be included, and also of whether books now included should be excluded. In the conclusion of his booklet, he does not advocate the inclusion of any new books, but he seriously advocates that we consider dropping 2 Peter, Hebrews, Revelation, Jude, and 2 and 3 John.

Says Dr Aland, pages 24–25:

In spite of all the imperfections and uncertainties which surround the formation of the Canon, we must express our belief that the decision of the early Church cannot be bettered by any extension. It cannot be said of a single writing preserved to us from the early period of the Church outside the New Testament that it could properly be added to-day to the Canon: **a revision of the New Testament Canon would be possible only by the suppression of what was then pronounced canonical, not by extending the Canon in any**

direction of our choosing.

[emphasis added]

In other words, he poses himself a conservative by saying somewhat 'cautiously' that we ought not to adopt any new books. However, says he, we may well consider **rejecting** some books. He later expresses his view that the Epistles of Ignatius surpass 2 and 3 John, Jude, and even 2 Peter, thus implying, on pages 26–27, that 2 and 3 John, Jude, and 2 Peter are candidates for being dropped. He says:

The only group among the Apostolic Fathers which, by their content and spiritual authority, tower far above the average, are the Epistles of Ignatius. Certainly they cannot bear comparison with the Pauline Epistles, nor even with 1 Peter and 1 John. But Jude, 2 and 3 John, for example, even 2 Peter, **are clearly surpassed by them.** [emphasis added]

He elsewhere expresses his doubts as to the real canonicity of Hebrews and Revelation (pages 10–13) because of their relatively late acceptance—the Eastern Church accepting Hebrews, and the Western Church accepting Revelation—though Athanasius accepted both. Says Dr Aland:

The fifth stage of development lasts right through the third and into the beginning of the fourth centuries. . . with respect to Hebrews and the Apocalypse, the East and the West go separate ways: **the Eastern Church recognizes Hebrews, and rejects the Apocalypse**, while **the Western does the exact reverse** and, indeed, each area with astonishing unanimity. [p. 10]

Dr Aland then, on page 30, refers to

Luther's sad questioning of the books of Hebrews, James, and Revelation, thus implying that a review ought to be made by modern ecumenical councils as to whether these books ought not to be scrapped, too.

Before we continue further, we must consider for a moment, **'What is the orthodox view of the Canon?'**

The orthodox view of the formulation of the Canon

The orthodox view of the formulation of the Canon is wonderfully summarised in Dr Edward Freer Hills's famous book, *The King James Version Defended*. Says Dr Hills:

After the New Testament books had been written, the next step in the divine program for the New Testament Scriptures was the gathering of these individual books into one New Testament Canon that they might take their place beside the books of the Old Testament Canon as the concluding portion of God's holy Word. Let us now consider how this was accomplished **under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.**⁷ [emphasis added]

Dr Hills then goes on to explain how all the books of the New Testament were gathered and accepted by AD 200, except for 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Hebrews and Revelation. But then he shows how that, by the 4th century, also these books were universally accepted and questioned by very few; **and thus the Canon was established, settled, and recognised, once for all.**

Notice, too, that Hills specifically mentions the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding the Church infallibly, over time, to these conclusions.

And so, the orthodox view is that the Canon of the New Testament was fully settled by the 4th century, never to be questioned again. Yes, there was a period of some flux, though most of the books were unanimously accepted by the end of the second century AD. To some degree, the Roman persecutions and the martyrdoms of many thousands of saints no doubt limited the Church's ability to review the books thoroughly, as well as limiting her ability to gather into ecumenical (i.e., 'universal orthodox') synods to come to a full, universal acceptance of the Canonical books. However, the Holy Spirit gradually worked in the true Church so that, by the fourth century AD, acceptance of our present Canon was universal, **not to be disputed again.**

Indeed, the Canon must have been settled. Why? Because, unless the books of the Bible are known, how can we even know what the Word of God is which we are to believe, and what words are indeed the infallible and inerrant words of God, which God intends to keep pure in all ages? And if we cannot discern finally what constitute the real books of the Bible, how then can God's covenant with His true Church be fulfilled (Isaiah 59.20–21)?

Conclusions to be drawn from Aland's comments thus far

Dr Aland does not agree with orthodox doctrine as to the New Testament Canon which is so plainly set forth in all the Church confessions of the Reformation, especially the Westminster Confession, chapter one, article eight. No, Dr Aland opines that there were numerous problems in the way that the Church gathered the books; that, in fact, the Church even gathered correct books, but for the

wrong reasons—reasons which are unscientific and therefore patently false. We shall discuss these opinions in greater detail in just a moment.

However, we may immediately come to a conclusion. Dr Aland does **not** believe in the inspiration or infallibility of Scripture. How so? Well, if one believes that there are whole books in the Bible that do not belong there, then the Bible must be full of uninspired words, inasmuch as there may be whole books in it that are uninspired, and which, in fact, should be deleted.

Moreover, if indeed the Bible has uninspired books in it, then the Holy Spirit must not have been the author of them, nor of the Bible as a whole; and therefore there could also be historical and doctrinal **errors** in the Bible. If in particular the Catholic Epistles were not written by the men who claim to be writing them, then the Bible **is** indeed full of historical errors. Yet this is precisely what Dr Aland will affirm, as we shall see, in 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity' and in *A History of Christianity*.

But the Bible itself confutes Dr Aland. Kurt Aland is not wiser than the Bible. The Bible says of itself that 'every word of God is pure'; that 'all Scripture is breathed out by God'; that God, in fact, would preserve it in every generation, for ever—that He would keep His blessed Holy Spirit and His words in the true Church, with those who turn from transgression in Jacob. 'My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever' (Isaiah 59.21). Therefore, the Holy Spirit with the true Church would enable **true believers**, and **not** heretics, to discern

the true words of God in every age, from amongst the multitude of copies which they possessed.

In short, Dr Aland does not believe the Bible to be the Word of God. Accordingly, the promise of keeping God's words is **not** with him. Why? Because he is not of the true Church; he is not one who 'turns from transgression in Jacob'. To the contrary, he is an unbelieving sceptic. Nor is Dr Aland a divinely-appointed steward or guardian of the holy Word of truth. We must rather fear that he is likely to be an agent of the devil to corrupt it. 'He that is not with me is against me' (Matthew 12.30).

Other grave errors in Aland's work **The Problem of the New Testament Canon**

We have mentioned already, in passing, how Dr Aland asserts in his pamphlet that, in some cases, the early Church Fathers came to choose the right books but on 'erroneous premises'.

Says Dr Aland:

It cannot be gainsaid that the external standards which the early Church applied in canonizing the New Testament Scriptures are, **when looked at from the viewpoint of modern scientific knowledge, insufficient and frequently even wrong.** The views accepted by the present-day New Testament critics on matters of **authorship** or **date** of the New Testament Scriptures are, in many cases, different from those held in the early Church... [p. 14, emphasis added]

[I]t is clear as the noonday that even in the previous age of the Church [the third century] the Church was **working with inade-**

quate standards of discrimination. In view of this, the actual result of the Canon can only astonish the observer again and again. It remains inexplicable if, behind the human activity and the questionable standards of men, one does not presuppose the control of the *providentia Dei*, the working of the Holy Spirit... [p. 14, emphasis added]

However, this is not an **infallible** working, according to Dr Aland, in that he believes that very possibly, several books should be deleted from the Canon!

Now, what are the 'grave scientific errors in external standards' which the early Church Fathers committed?

For one, says Dr Aland, **the Church Fathers were mistaken about the apostolic authorship of some of the books.**

Says he, the Epistles of Ignatius were not included in the Canon because they were not written by an apostle. But Jude and certain books were admitted into the Canon, because 'supposedly' they were written by an apostle, when, in fact, they really were not. And thus, he argues for considering deleting them.

Says Dr Aland:

... [S]imply because of this obvious lack of apostolicity no one even thought of accepting the Epistles of Ignatius into the Canon, whereas the Epistle of Jude (and others), because of the declaration of authorship which concealed the **real** situation, presupposed an apostolic author; hence, as its contents caused no scruples, it was allowed to make its way into the pale of the canonical books. [p. 27, emphasis added]

Obviously, with the words 'which concealed the real situation', Aland flatly

denies that the Apostle Jude is the real author of the book of Jude. With the words 'others,' he refers at least also to 2 and 3 John, and 2 Peter, which he had just said (in the same paragraph) 'were surpassed' by the Epistles of Ignatius. So, Dr Aland denies that 2 and 3 John, Jude, and 2 Peter were really written by those men.

Similarly, Dr Aland hints at his belief that the Four Gospels, noble as he considers them to be, were nonetheless not written by the Apostles to whom they were ascribed. He states that, in reality, those Gospels were compiled from a previous Gospel, and then, these four new versions were 'distinguished from each other by the names of authors,' hinting that the books were not really written by those men.

We now quote Dr Aland again.

It is certain that in many communities there were, besides one or more of the four Gospels, also apocryphal gospels in use, sometimes even in official use. **The starting point must, however, generally have lain with one Gospel, which was the Gospel; the use of several Gospels together (only now are they distinguished from each other by the names of authors, etc.) represents a later stage...** [p. 19, emphasis added]

So, Dr Aland posits, at first there existed within the Church the letters of Paul, and the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus (the 'very words' of Jesus Himself). After this evolved a single Gospel from which the Four Gospels and even the apocryphal gospels emerged. (And in the next work of his which we shall review, 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity,' we shall see that he flatly denies that the

Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written by those men, and he expresses his doubt that the Gospel of John was written by John.)

The titles aside, the Pauline and Catholic Epistles, and the Gospel of John, are quite specific as to who wrote them by the opening statements made within the Epistles themselves. Though there is some variation in the exact wording of the headings in the Synoptic Gospels, yet they all agree with all the Church Fathers as to who wrote them. (As we've mentioned, *Scrivener's Plain Introduction* explains some of these variations.) There really is no reason why we should doubt the authorship of the Synoptic Gospels; there is no manuscript or patristic evidence to the contrary. Much more is the case with the Catholic Epistles, the Epistles of Paul, and the Gospel of John. The internal evidence of the books themselves makes it beyond doubt who the authors are. If we can doubt who wrote the Gospel of John and the Catholic Epistles, when the books themselves tell us who wrote them, we may also doubt many of the facts and doctrines within those books!

And so, we find in Dr Aland a scepticism approaching that of Pontius Pilate, who said, 'What is truth?' He clearly doubts the Bible to be the Word of God.

Belief in the Bible's being the Word of God is an essential ingredient of saving faith. Some might say, 'But we are only required to believe that Jesus died for our sins, and that God raised Jesus from the dead.' But where does this belief come from? 'Faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' (Romans 10.17). Yes, if we confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus, and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we indeed shall be saved: but whence

cometh this faith? By hearing. By hearing what? The Word of God. Not only that: when we savingly hear the Word of God, we must know it to be the Word of God—thence, inspired and inerrant. 'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, **ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.**' Paul says of the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 2.13. We must not only hear the Word of God, we must receive it as being the Word of God, and not of men.

Accordingly, the Westminster Confession of Faith is most correct when it says, in Chapter XIV, Article II, the following words:

By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently, upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

The Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein. 'Yes, 'the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life', but also, the true Christian **must believe 'to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word'**. He must

receive the Word of God as it is: not the word of men, but the Word of God. It necessarily follows, then, that the true believer believes the Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God. Dr Aland, with his denials that certain books belong in the Bible, clearly does not believe this.

Dr Aland, with his unbelief and blasphemous accusations of errors in the Word of God, clearly manifests himself **not** to be of the line of the true Church, of those who 'turn from transgression in Jacob', of those who 'have the Spirit of God in their mouths', by drinking Him in with an upright faith in Christ the Redeemer. And so, such a man cannot, according to the Bible, have either the covenant of grace nor the grace in his soul to discern the Words of God.

Dr Aland's influence on the New International Version

Dr Aland's pernicious views of the unreliability of our Bibles in the original manuscripts is profoundly seen in the NIV Bible. The same hand that would excise whole books of the Bible from our Canon would also excise many, many texts.

For this reason, in the earlier editions of the NIV we find statements like this one which is printed at the beginning of John 8:

The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53–8:11.⁸

These words echo Dr Aland's words in his *magnus opus* entitled *The Text of the New Testament*, written in collaboration with his wife Barbara, and translated into English by Erroll F. Rhodes.⁹ In that work, page 232, we find the following explanation for the use of brackets in the footnotes of the UBS and Nestle-Aland Greek texts:

Words enclosed in single brackets [] have only a dubious claim to authenticity as part of the original New Testament writings. A text enclosed in double brackets [[]] is clearly **not** part of the original text; e.g., however early the tradition of the pericope of the Woman Taken in Adultery [**in John 7:53–8:11**] may be, **it is certain that these verses did not form a part of the original text of the gospel of John when it was first circulated in the Church.** [emphasis added]

How does Dr Aland come to this conclusion? We may see from his notes on John 7.53–8.11, found in the first edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek text (1966).¹⁰ In this text we find the following footnote on page 355:

12 **7:53-8:11 {A}** omit 7:53-8:11 (see p 413) ^{p^{66,75} & A^{vid} B^Cvid}...

To explain the above footnote briefly, what Dr Aland is saying is, 'The following early texts omit John 7.53–8.11, and we give those readings an **{A}** reading'. (He refuses even to consider evaluating the other reading, which he considers spurious.) The **{A}** means, 'We believe this to be the true reading, with virtually absolute certainty'. Aland then lists ^{p⁶⁶} and ^{p⁷⁵}, two early papyrus manuscripts found in upper Egypt by Martin Bodmer—in the same area where the infamous Gnostic library of the Nag Hammadi cave was discovered. (Upper Egypt was infested with Gnostics.) Aland then also lists [⋈] or Sinaiticus, a manuscript so called because it was discovered by Constantin von Tischendorf (a textual critic who also was a heretic) 'on a shelf', unused, in a monastery in Mount Sinai. Aland proceeds to list 'A', which is Codex Alexandrinus, a manuscript that Theodore Beza of the Reformation in

Geneva had, but which he rejected along with the rest of the Reformers, because of that manuscript's many historical and grammatical errors. Aland then also lists 'B', which is Codex Vaticanus, which was for centuries in the Vatican, and which was known of by Erasmus, the compiler of the first versions of Textus Receptus. Erasmus rejected Vaticanus out of hand as corrupt.¹¹ After 'B', Dr Aland lists 'C', which is Codex Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus, so called because it also contains a Greek translation of thirty-eight sermons by an early Church Father named Ephraem of Syria. This manuscript is similar to Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. After these, Aland lists a number of manuscripts that follow in the textual tradition of these aforesaid ones.

To summarise then: the texts on which Dr Aland relies were rejected by the historic Church because of their known poor quality (high number of spelling and historical errors), or their known parentage from texts that had been corrupted by heretics (as were the so-called Alexandrian texts, which came from upper Egypt, where the Gnostic errorists proliferated). These texts, rejected by the historic Church, are the ones that Dr Aland relies upon.

Also, Dr Aland himself admits that he systematically rejected all texts of the Byzantine tradition—the tradition from which Textus Receptus arose. On page xvii of the 'Introduction' to the UBS text of 1966, we find the following note:

The following minuscules, selected after a critical examination of more than one thousand manuscripts, have been cited systematically **because they exhibit a significant degree of independence from the so-called Byzantine manuscript tradition.** [emphasis added]

In other words, all minuscule (small-letter) Greek manuscripts that had any marks of being in the Byzantine tradition were **intentionally omitted from consideration.** And yet, **all these manuscripts, which comprise the overwhelming majority of the Greek manuscripts in existence, contain John 7.53–8.11.**

A thorough examination of why the 'variant manuscripts' primarily taken from Egypt should be looked at askance—because of the known contamination they had from heretics of the time—exceeds the scope of this paper.

However, suffice it to say we should not find it surprising that a man who himself does not believe in the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture should himself choose manuscripts from areas where heretics were known to have the ascendancy, as his basis for excising passages from the Bible that were long recognised by the true historic Church. John 7.53–8.11 was **indeed** recognised by the historic Church for ages, it being included in the vast majority of the extant Greek manuscripts and being included also in the common Received Text which was used by the Reformers. The same hand that would delete inspired books from our New Testament Canon, will also delete Providentially Preserved texts!

We now proceed to examine Dr Aland's 1961 work entitled 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries'. This little article may be found in *The Authorship and Integrity of the New Testament: some recent studies by Kurt Aland, et al*, published by S.P.C.K. in 1965. (The article originally was published in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S., Vol. XII, Pt. I, April, 1961.)

'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries'

In this work, Dr Aland draws conclusions as to the original authorship of several New Testament books, based on his studies of certain early Egyptian papyri and upon his inferences which he draws from the genuine problems of the authorship of certain patristic and apocryphal works. (There were indeed many spurious works of that period that claimed to have been written by the apostles. However, Aland infers from this that also certain books of the New Testament were not written by the men whose names appear in the titles, but rather, they were written by men using pseudonyms.) But before we proceed to Dr Aland's views, let us look at the orthodox view of the authorship of the Four Gospels, from Edward Hills's famous book, *Believing Bible Study*, published by Christian Research Press in 1967. On page 34 of that book, Dr Hills correctly states:

When the time approached, in the plan of God, for the oral Gospel to be set down in writing, Matthew, an Apostle, and Mark and Luke, followers and companions of the Apostles, were inspired by the Holy Spirit to perform the task. The Gospel which these three evangelists wrote down was the same oral Gospel which had been preached everywhere, and was expressed in the same familiar words. This, we may well believe, is why the written Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree together so closely in wording and in subject matter. At the same time, however, there were differences. Matthew wrote down

the Gospel as he remembered it. Those other Apostles from whom Mark and Luke received their information remembered the Gospel in a somewhat different way. This is one reason why the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) differ from each other on a number of particulars. Another reason for these differences is that each of these inspired evangelists wrote from his own point of view and according to his own literary plan. But these differences are not contradictions. By faith we know that the Holy Spirit does not contradict Himself and that if at any point we are unable to harmonize the several Gospel narratives with each other it is because some fact has escaped us or has not been revealed.¹²

In addition to those deeds and words of Jesus which all the Apostles were able to remember and which formed the substance of the oral Gospel and of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the first three written Gospels, there were deeper elements in the teaching of our Lord which were retained mainly in the sensitive mind of John, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' For many years the Apostle John meditated privately on these sublime discourses of the Saviour. Finally, in his old age he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to add his Gospel to the other three...¹³

Dr Hills proceeds on page 35 to specify how likewise the Catholic Epistles, and all the epistles of Paul, were then written by the very apostles whose names appear in those inspired books.

We have seen how Dr Hills asserts (and rightly so) that the authors of the Four

Gospels were indeed those whose names appear in the titles of those inspired books. And what does Dr Hills say of those who say otherwise? Let us see how he addresses the notion that the Apostle John was not the author of the Gospel of John, from *The King James Version Defended*, pages 69–70 (again, published by Christian Research Press).

The most common hypothesis, however, among naturalistic critics is that the Gospel of John was written not by the Apostle John but by another John called the Elder John, who lived at Ephesus at the end of the first century A. D. and who also wrote the Epistles of John. **This would make the Gospel of John a forgery, since it claims to have been written by the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 21:24), that intimate follower who beheld Christ's glory (John 1:14), who leaned on his bosom (John 13:23), and who viewed with wondering eye the blood and water flowing down from his riven side (John 19:35).**¹⁴ [emphasis added]

In other words, anyone who would say that the Gospel of John was not written by the **Apostle** John, would make that inspired book a **forgery**, given the internal claims to the contrary.

And indeed it would be. If **this** author were to write this **present** work, and then subscribe with **Edward Hills's** name, would it not be a forgery? It would: a most dishonourable and unethical forgery at that!

We may not believe that the Holy Spirit is the author of lies. No, the Spirit of God is **emphatically** the Spirit of truth: John 14.17, John 15.26, John 16.13, and 1 John 4.6. Indeed, John 16.13 specifically tells

us, 'Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth'. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of truth, who only leads his disciples into the truth. This was especially so with the inspired apostles and evangelists who penned the books of the New Testament. The Spirit of God would **never** inspire a man to sign or inscribe a book with a pseudonym. Nor would the Spirit of God, who promised to remain with the true Church for ever, allow the Church to corrupt the words of God, so that **they** should ascribe a book to a false author. Rather, Isaiah 59.21 tells us that the Spirit of God, and God's words, would remain with His true Church, **for ever**. Accordingly, the true Church would not willingly contaminate the text; and any unintentional corruptions, by the Holy Spirit working in Christ's Church would also be found out and purged.

But what does Kurt Aland say on this matter? We proceed by examining 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries'.

Kurt Aland on the authorship of the Four Gospels

On page 5 of this work, Dr Aland says the following:

Let us start with anonymous literature. In my opinion, it is **beyond doubt** that all the gospels were published anonymously. Our present opinion about their authors dates from information which derives from the time of Papias or later. Not only the four canonical ones, but also the other gospels of the earlier period were not thought of as 'the gospel of *Mark*,' 'the gospel of *Matthew*,' and so on, but,

in their original home, as 'the gospel'. The more the individual gospels won common acknowledgement, and the more numerous they were in any one place, **the more it proved necessary to differentiate between them (or to combine them into, for instance, a Diatessaron, as did Tatian). All the titles and subscriptions in the gospel manuscripts are of a later period.** And it is no evidence against this that Papyrus Bodmer II (around 200) has the inscription: εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ καινὴν. It belongs to the time after Papias, when not only were the gospels fully distinguished, **but also certain traditions had achieved their developed form.** [emphasis added]

To summarise what Dr Aland has said, we may say:

1. He claims that all four 'gospels' [*sic*] were anonymous, and as such, their true authors can never be known.
2. He says that certain early manuscripts of the New Testament did not have the titles we have today in them, and that therefore, **none** of the manuscripts of those early times did.
3. He claims that 'certain traditions' arose in the Church later, and these were used, out of expediency, to differentiate each of the 'gospels' from one another, as, in time, they were spread out of their original localities.
4. It only follows from this line of thinking that Dr Aland believes that the historic Church **corrupted** the Four Gospels, by adding their titles to them. Even though the

titles vary in their wording, from manuscript to manuscript, yet they all attribute their authorship to the same men. Yet Aland says that these were **not** the men who wrote these works.

Let us now examine Dr Aland's claims. In the first place, we must take exception to his irreverence in referring to the Gospels as 'gospels', with a lower case g. But in the second place, we must scrutinise his claim that none of the early manuscripts had their titles in them.

On what ground does Aland base his claim? Well, prior to Papias, who lived in the second century AD and likely died before AD 150, 'there were no titles in the manuscripts of that period'. Keep in mind that Papias, according to church history, was an actual hearer of the Apostle John himself. Most accounts consider him to have been born **before** Polycarp, which would have been before AD 67, according to most accounts. This means Dr Aland is considering Scripture manuscripts that were written well before 200. Oh? How many manuscripts do we have **extant** from before AD 150?

Using Dr Aland's own listing of texts in UBS 1966, there may be **three** manuscripts extant from Papias's time: $\text{p}46$, $\text{p}66$ and $\text{p}67$. And even these manuscripts UBS 1966 dates at around AD 200, after Papias. Three manuscripts: do these represent a statistically significant sampling of the manuscripts of the period? (We must note that even $\text{p}66$ has for its title 'The Gospel according to John', as Aland has already admitted. $\text{p}66$ is the same manuscript as Bodmer Papyrus II.)

Suppose you were a heart patient. Would you want to take a newly patented heart medicine that had been tested using only three people? Or suppose you were a businessman. Would you want to pre-

dict marketing trends for your new product, based on a survey of three people? I think not. Then why should standards for research studies be **lower** for examining texts of the Holy Writ?

Also to be considered is this fact: all three of the above-mentioned manuscripts are from the same locale—upper Egypt, not far from the Nag Hammadi cavern—where a Gnostic library was uncovered. Certainly, we would not want to take a new heart medicine, if we were a heart patient, that had only been tested on **three members of the same family!**

Why, no! They may have dramatically different genetics than we have. We may suffer harmful side effects that they wouldn't because of their genetic makeup. So also with the three manuscripts under consideration. They all came from a certain 'family'. They all came from Upper Egypt, an area known to be heavily infested with Gnostics and Gnostic literature. And we know from the early Church Fathers that heretics of that period, especially the Gnostics, hewed and hacked the Scriptures. One only need read Irenaeus and Tertullian for confirmation of this.

Moreover, there would unquestionably have been tens of **thousands** of manuscripts in the Christian world at the time, because, indeed, there were well over a million, or perhaps, millions, of Christians. It is not at all responsible to make conclusions from such a statistically insignificant sampling as three manuscripts out of tens of thousands.

Nor is it advisable to base our conclusions upon how certain very early Church Fathers may have referred to the Gospels. Again, we have very few writings of any Church Fathers from that early period: only three or four, in fact.

So Dr Aland's assertion that 'none of the early manuscripts of the period had the titles and subscriptions in them' is untenable. He cannot prove this. Three manuscripts and three or four early Church Fathers prove nothing, especially when one of the three earliest manuscripts, a copy of the Gospel of John, indeed has the title 'The Gospel according to John' in it.

Moreover, with respect to the earliest Church Fathers—the so called 'Apostolic Fathers'—*none* of them **deny** that the Four Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Rather, the writings we have of these simply don't reference the Four Gospels. Three of the early Fathers to which Aland refers are Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna. In the only written work we have of Polycarp, Polycarp liberally quotes from the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, but he does not cite the Four Gospels. Ignatius mainly appeals to the authority of the local bishops. Clement mainly appeals to the Old Testament and to natural reasoning. However, we only have a total of about eleven works from these men, plus two or three anonymous works like *The Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Epistle to Diognetus*.

Moreover, beginning with Papias, a little after AD 100, and especially with Irenaeus, at around AD 180 (*Adversus Haereses* III,1.1), we find **all** the early Fathers saying, to the man, that the Four Gospels were indeed written by the men whose names appear in the titles of those books.

Though the titles themselves vary in their words, particularly in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, yet they all unanimously agree as to whom the authors are. There is really no manuscript or patristic evidence that warrants Dr Aland's overturning the

longstanding, generally held view.

As we proved from Dr Hills, to claim that the Gospel of John was written by another would make that work a forgery. This is especially so with the Gospel of John, which supplies considerable internal evidence as to its author. Its author, as Hills notes, was one who was present with the Lord at the Last Supper, who was an eyewitness of the Lord's sufferings on the cross, and who was present when the Lord manifested himself to the apostles when they had been fishing, in John 21. Yet, as we shall see, Aland will later specifically claim in his *History of Christianity* that the Gospel of John was not written by the Apostle John.

But now we proceed to examine Dr Aland's claims that the Pastoral Epistles and the Catholic Epistles were written under 'pseudonyms'.

Dr Aland's claim that the Catholic and Pastoral Epistles were written by pseudonymous authors examined

On page 4 of 'Anonymity and Pseudonymity', Dr Aland says:

To the category of pseudonymous writings I would like to ascribe: the Pastorals, 1 and 2 Peter, James, Jude, possibly Hebrews, 2 and 3 John, possibly the gospel of John, the *Didache*, and the non-anonymous New Testament apocrypha. Whether or not we have to assign the epistles to the Colossians and to the Ephesians to this category is controversial.

(A 'pseudonymous' writing would be one that was written by an author who was using a false name, a name that was not

his own. Aland is here claiming that the authors of the Pastorals, 1 and 2 Peter, James, Jude, 2 and 3 John and possibly Hebrews, were not written by the apostles whose names appear in the titles of the books, nor by the men professing to have written them in the opening verses, but that these epistles were rather written by other men, who feigned being those other men.)

On page 6 he continues his discourse on pseudonymous writings. In this section, he explains his hypothesis as to why these writings came to be. He says that the writer, an anonymous writer, was 'under the power of the Spirit', and because of this, it could be said that it was not he, but Christ and the apostles preaching through him. Thus, Aland opines, it was actually **legitimate** for the man, a non-apostle, to subscribe an apostle's name to his work. He begins by explaining his theory for the origin of the *Didache*, a spurious work. He then applies that theory also to the Pastorals and 2 Peter, and even opines that this theory may also apply to the author of the 'gospel' of John.

Here are Dr Aland's words:

Let us now come to the group of pseudonymous writings. It will be suitable to begin with the most extreme example, the *Didache*, for it does not claim the authorship of one apostle, but of the whole assembly of apostles and of the Lord himself. . . Neither the locality nor the exact date (we take the date to be about 110) of the genesis of the *Didache* is important in this regard; not even the form of its text in detail or its possibly different forms. The heart of the matter is the claim of the writing and its acceptance in the Church as an

authoritative document... The only conceivable hypothesis is that the author of the writing introduced it [the *Didache*] first into his own congregation, probably by reading it in the service of worship. Indeed, the congregation knew that its address was written by its elder. But when he claimed his work to be the message of the Lord through the apostles, and when his own congregation, and the neighboring congregation acknowledged this to be valid, they did this only because it was but the written version of what hitherto had been orally delivered in any congregational meeting; a prophet got up and preached the word of the Lord. **Everyone knew the prophet and his human affairs. But when he spoke with inspired utterance it was not he that was heard but the Lord or the apostles or the Holy Spirit...** [emphasis added]

Now before we proceed, let us summarise what Aland is saying here. He is saying that the writer of the *Didache*, and others like him, were men known to all—but when they spoke as prophets, under divine inspiration, it was no longer they that spoke, but the Lord or the apostles through them. This then, in Aland's strange view, justified and vindicated their signing the document with the name of one of the apostles, or of all the apostles, or even of the Lord Himself.

Of course, this is not at all the doctrine of Scripture, because all acknowledge the epistles of Paul to Corinth, Galatia and Rome to have been epistles actually written by him. In each of those epistles, Paul specifically says that it is he, and not some other apostle, who is writing. Paul would never sign one of his epistles with

Peter's name, or with the name of any other apostle. No, he specifically **warned the disciples not to be deceived by epistles as though by him.**

In 2 Thessalonians 2.1–2, Paul specifically warns the disciples: 'Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, **nor by letter as from us**, as that the day of Christ is at hand'.

Again, Paul always certified **his own authorship of his epistles**, with remarks as these: 1 Corinthians 16.21 'The salutation of *me* Paul with mine own hand'; or, again, Colossians 4.18 'The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen'. It is commonly understood that Paul personally handwrote that salutation into the epistle, that its readers could then ascertain Paul's own personal handwriting. Of course, when the amanuensis of the epistle also personally carried the epistle to the congregation to whom it was written, he also would confirm that Paul indeed had written those words, and that Paul indeed had dictated the entire epistle.

In summary, then, Paul always certified that the letters he was sending were indeed by him, and by no forger. He did this by writing a personal handwritten salutation in the letters, in the presence of those eyewitnesses who would bring the letter to the church to which it was written. In all cases, eyewitnesses of Paul's writing the letter were the ones who delivered it.

Indeed, Paul's hearers would have been **looking** for such confirmations, given that Paul had specifically warned his hearers not to be deceived by 'letter as

from us' (2 Thessalonians 2.2)—Paul's salutation with his own hand was 'the token in every epistle' (3.17).

Nor can we accept Aland's view that a man's being inspired by the Spirit would justify his signing another man's name to his inspired document; not at all. Paul did not do this, and he was certainly under the inspiration of the Spirit. The Spirit is a Spirit of truth, who guides Christian believers into the knowledge of the truth, including who wrote the epistle that they were reading. The Holy Spirit of God would **never** inspire a man to forge the signature of another to his own document; neither would he 'inspire' a man to feign being another famous man while writing a text.

Of course, it was the Church's discerning that the *Didache* had **not** been written by an apostle that caused them to reject it from the Canon.

But Aland does not acknowledge this, because he does not know 'the scriptures, neither the power of God' (Mark 12.24). He continues on page 8:

When the pseudonymous writings **of the New Testament** claimed the authorship of the most prominent apostles only, this was not a skillful trick of the so-called fakers, in order to guarantee the highest possible reputation and the widest possible circulation for their work, **but the logical conclusion of the presupposition that the Spirit himself was the author of the work.** [emphasis added]

Notice carefully the words 'when the pseudonymous writings **of the New Testament claimed the authorship of the most prominent apostles**'. What he is saying here is that there are books in our New Testament which were written by pseudonymous authors, writers forg-

ing the name of an apostle as being the author of the work. Aland proceeds to state openly that the Pastorals and 2 Peter were pseudonymous works.

So, he says on page 9:

It is much more difficult to answer some other questions which may be illustrated by the Pastorals and 2 Peter. Let us remember the hypothesis we proposed above: viz. a writer, being nothing but the tool of the Holy Spirit, **on this account claims the authorship of an apostle for his writings. Is it conceivable that such a writer extends the identification so far that he even furnishes data on the concrete situation as is done in the Pastorals, or that, like the writer of 2 Peter, he can casually use references from 1 Peter?... But the information about the sojourn of the various coworkers in the fourth chapter of 2 Timothy, the first trial of Paul, the instructions for the addresses, as well as the end of the epistle to Titus to evince such a thorough knowledge, such a stimulated perspective, and such a reconstruction of Paul's affairs, that we cannot avoid assuming an intended forgery** [*sic*]...[emphasis added]

So here we have it. Dr Aland declares that the Pastorals and 2 Peter are pseudonymous. Not only that, the writers went to extravagant lengths to supply details to make themselves appear actually to be Peter or Paul! And not only that: 'We cannot avoid assuming an intended forgery', he says.

In the rest of the document, Dr Aland nowhere negates these statements as to these epistles being intended forgeries, as not really being what he intended to

say! Quite to the contrary, he concludes the document by saying,

We must not forget that all of these pseudonymous writings—except perhaps the second and third epistles of John—obviously do not bear the name of an apostle without reason. The unknown men by whom they were composed, not only believed themselves to be under the sign of the Holy Spirit; **they really were.** [emphasis added]

In other words, it was the Spirit of God that inspired the unknown writers of the Pastorals and of 2 Peter to add factual details to heighten the illusion that it was really indeed Paul and Peter who had penned these works! And why? Because they believed themselves to be under the sign of the Spirit, and they were! This makes the **Holy** Spirit of God a **lying** Spirit. What a wicked blasphemy!

We see that Dr Aland not only denied the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of Scripture in his early works, he also held to very dangerous errors concerning the Holy Spirit and His work.

But now we proceed to examine Aland's later work, published in 1980 in German and in 1985 in English: *A History of Christianity*. Certainly if Dr Aland had come to a better mind, he should have done so by then.

A History of Christianity by Kurt Aland

This book was published in German within the last fourteen years of Dr Aland's life. It was published in English in 1985, just nine years before his decease. Although he modifies his grounds for his

views in maybe one or two minor points, yet we find him, overall, holding tenaciously to the views formerly expressed.

We shall discuss what he says in *A History of Christianity* with regard to two points in particular: 1) the canonicity of the Catholic Epistles, and 2) the apostolic authorship of the Four Gospels, the Pastoral and Catholic Epistles, and even some of the letters of Paul.

First, with respect to the canonicity of the Catholic Epistles, though, in this work Aland does not advocate outright considering their deletion from the Canon, as he openly did before in *The Problem of the New Testament Canon*, yet he more openly expresses his relative disdain for them.

Aland's contempt for the Catholic Epistles

Before we proceed directly to Aland's remarks on the Catholic Epistles, we lead into it with his comments on the apostolic authorship of New Testament books in general, and whether he even deems that relevant or not. He says:

We need only observe the course of church history during the last centuries where we will find with clarity the devastating consequences that result from using such inappropriate criteria. [p. 105]

Now before we proceed, we must ask what 'inappropriate criteria' are they to which Aland refers? Why, it's the apostolic authorship of the books of the New Testament! We see this in what follows in the next sentences, where he says:

It [using inappropriate criteria] began in the time of Orthodoxy, repeated itself in a new way in the nineteenth century, and continues

to our own day: **the 'genuineness' of the statements—the authority of the New Testament—had as its presupposition the fact that her apostles and eyewitnesses were speaking.** [p. 105, emphasis added]

Aland proceeds in the next sentences openly to sneer at such a suggestion:

As soon as critical scholarship **proved** that this or that New Testament writing **could not have been written by an apostle**, the authority of its author collapsed along with it; and with the authority of the author, the authority of the New Testament writing collapsed along with it; and with the authority of the New Testament writing collapsed the authority of the Church... Of course, **the genuine foundation of faith was not disturbed, but only a false foundation**—nevertheless, a false foundation which the Church had proposed as the genuine one... [emphasis added]

Aland goes on to assert what he sees as the folly of assuming the apostolic authorship of the New Testament writings by attempting to prove its absurdity from the Catholic Epistles. Says he:

If the catholic epistles were **really** written by the apostles whose names they bear and by people who were closest to Jesus (by James, the brother of the Lord; by Jude, James's brother; by the prince of the apostles, Peter; by John, the son of Zebedee; if the Gospel of John was really written by the beloved disciple of Jesus), then **the real question arises: was there really a Jesus? Can Jesus really have lived, if the writings of his**

closest companions are filled with so little of his reality? The catholic epistles, for example, have so little in them of the reality of the historical Jesus and his power, that it suffices for James, for example, to mention only Christ's name in passing...

When we observe this—assuming that the writings about which we are speaking really come from their alleged authors—it almost then appears as if Jesus were a mere phantom and that the real theological power lay not with him, but with the apostles and with the earthly church... [p. 106, emphasis added]

To the writer of this tract, the foolishness of these statements almost equals the wickedness of their blasphemies. The epistles of Peter paint Christ as a mere phantom? The life of Christ expressed in the precepts of James had to have been written by a man who really didn't know Christ at all? These statements are not only wicked; they are downright strange.

How can a man who holds the inspired Catholic Epistles in such contempt, making such derogatory statements as these, really believe that they are indeed the inspired, inerrant Word of God, that merit a place in the inspired Canon? He simply cannot. The Kurt Aland of 1985 is the same Kurt Aland of 1961 and 1962, only worse.

Certainly Aland's entirely **subjective** condemnation of the Catholic Epistles reveals him for what he is: a German higher critic. He is a higher critic who uses subjective reasoning to adduce, in his opinion, how the text was created and transmitted. Specifically, he makes subjective assessments of those Epistles, to adduce that they could not have been

written by the eyewitnesses of the Lord, because they demonstrate so little of the historic Christ and His power. Accordingly, he infers they were not written by those eyewitnesses, but by other men who forged the names of the apostles to their texts. Clearly, in *A History of Christianity* Aland still holds to his blasphemous notions which he expressed in his earlier work, 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity': that men, under the power of some 'spirit', forged the names of apostles to their works because they were speaking as the apostles did (though not in their original power and experimental knowledge).

We have already seen that Aland doubts the apostolic authorship of the Gospel of John in the passage quoted above. He was so bold as to say: '(...**if the Gospel of John was really written by the beloved disciple of Jesus), then the real question arises: was there really a Jesus?**' It is astounding to this author that Dr Aland can even dare to state that the Gospel of John paints the historical Christ as a mere phantom, but he is bold and shameless to do so, is he not? But now, we briefly consider remarks proving his scepticism with regards to the apostolic authorship of **all** the Gospels.

In the passage below, Aland condemns two notions. He condemns the higher critical notion that the Four Gospels were written in the second century. But on the other hand, he condemns the notion that the Four Gospels were indeed written by the four evangelists whose names appear in the titles of those books. Says he:

Thus Mark's Gospel was written shortly before the year 70, and Matthew's Gospel not too long afterward. Luke's Gospel originated shortly before 80 (prudent scholarship will not allow us to date it very

much later), and John's Gospel belongs to the time around A.D. 90–95. The late dating of these Gospels far into the second century (which used to be considered up-to-date and by which people judged a theologian's 'scholarship,' **just as people on the other side measured a theologian's piety by whether he held the names ascribed to the individual's writings as really 'genuine' has become obsolete, and we hope will not return.** [p. 99, emphasis added])

So we see that Dr Aland rejects out-of-hand the authorship of the Four Gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, with even greater vehemence than he had in 1962.

Only in one respect does Aland seem to have mitigated his contempt for the Catholic Epistles. Previously, in *The Problem of the New Testament Canon*, he had said that the Epistles of Ignatius excelled them. However, in *A History of Christianity*, he revises his views to the following:

Despite all the lack of principles, despite all the arbitrariness, **despite all the errors**—what the church has received in the New Testament stands on an incomparably higher level than all the other early Christian literature. None of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers can even remotely compare with those of the New Testament. . . . [pp. 113–114, emphasis added]

So, even though in Dr Aland's opinion the Catholic Epistles are rather poor—they depict a phantom Christ and are obviously the work of men who did not know the reality and power of the historical Christ—yet their work still somehow

excels the Apostolic Fathers including Ignatius. Perhaps he thought that he might appease us by these comforting remarks.

Elsewhere in the work, Aland questions the Pauline authorship of Ephesians—but we defer further consideration of this work. It is abundantly clear Dr Aland was not of the true Church, nor in the line of the true Church. Hence, according to Isaiah 59.20–21, he is not one of those by whom the true words of God should be preserved.

Conclusions

Dr Aland has exercised a very powerful and dangerous influence upon the textual views of our modern Bible translators. He clearly does not believe the Bible to be the Word of God. Believing the Bible to be the Word of God is plainly the foundation of saving faith. Faith comes by hearing, Romans 10.17 tells us; but this hearing is by the Word of God. Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians 2.13 specifically tells us that those who believe did not receive the Word of God as if it were the word of men, but as the Word of God. 'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' By the phrase 'you that believe', Paul clearly shows that he means that all believers, along with the Thessalonians, are of such a mind. Accordingly, anyone who does not believe the Bible to be the Word of God is not a true believer.

Being as Dr Aland was not a true believer in any sense, we cannot deem him to be of the line of the true Church by which the

true readings of Scripture would be preserved.

We need to be grounded in a theology of the Scriptures which is grounded in the Scripture itself. And what saith the Scripture?

*2 Timothy 3.16-17 'All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'

*Proverbs 30.5 'Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.'

*Isaiah 59.20–21 'And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that *is* upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.'

We grant that there are good men and women who mistakenly have embraced the 'new scholarship' and the newer translations based upon Greek texts compiled by men like Dr Aland. (The textual critics of the modern Greek text who preceded Dr Aland were of a like bent, but reviewing all their doctrinal views is beyond the scope of this paper.) But to such good men and women, men and women who actually do believe in the inerrancy and infallibility of God's words, yet who have embraced the Nestle-Aland text, we would beseech them to consider their ways. Is it wise to put one's stock in such an important matter as to what really comprises the Word of God, into the hands of a serious errorist like Dr Aland?

Does not God's Word and its doctrine concerning its own inspiration and transmission in every jot and tittle, and that, through the true Church, that Church that 'turns from transgression', make it altogether unfitting for an unbeliever to edit its sacred texts? What saith the Scripture?

'And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto **them that turn from transgression** in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this *is* my covenant with them' (emphasis added). With whom is this gracious and glorious covenant? And what are its provisions?

The covenant is with them that 'turn from transgression'. It is with those who know saving repentance unto life. Granted, good men of the past appear at times to have cited a poor version of a text—if indeed their own works were copied correctly! But the true Church at large nonetheless recovered the better reading. To that Church, and to its Providentially Preserved text, we ought to, and indeed **must**, look.

We need to stay with the versions of the Bible translated from the historic texts of the true Church—the Textus Receptus in the Greek for the New Testament and the Hebrew Masoretic Text for the Old. The translators of our Authorised Version were Bible-believing men, under the covenant of God. Let us stay with the ancient landmarks, with the tried and faithful work of the translators of the Authorised Version.

*Jeremiah 6.16 'Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' ■

Endnotes

1. Michael Marlowe, 'Bibliography of Textual Criticism', www.bible-researcher.com/bib-a.html, accessed 27 February 2007.
2. Kurt Aland, 'The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two

Centuries', *The Authorship and Integrity of the New Testament: some recent studies* by Kurt Aland, et al. London, England: SPCK, 1965.

3. Kurt Aland, *The Problem of the New Testament Canon*. London, England: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1962.

4. F. H. A. Scrivener, *Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 2 vols. Eugene, OR, USA: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997.

5. Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity*, 2 vols. Philadelphia, PA, USA: Fortress Press, 1985.

6. Aland, *Problem of the New Testament Canon*, p. v.

7. Edward Freer Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines, IA, USA: The Christian Research Press, 1984), pp. 104–5.

8. *Holy Bible: New International Version* (East Brunswick, NJ, USA: International Bible Society, 1986), p. 83.

9. Kurt and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, Erroll F. Rhodes, trans., 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI, USA: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995.

10. *Greek New Testament*, 1st ed. Stuttgart, Germany: Wurttemberg Bible Societies, 1966. This footnote was retained in the second edition (1968), changed in the third (1975) to indicate that the passage should be included, and changed in the fourth (1993) to again indicate omission.

11. Erasmus no doubt was aware of the Vatican manuscript perhaps as early as 1521. His familiarity is more fully seen in his 1533 correspondence with Sepulveda regarding the differences between Vaticanus and Erasmus's Greek texts, and the prior's similarity to the text of the Latin Vulgate. Yet Erasmus chose not to correct his Greek text to reflect those differences. It is thought by many that Erasmus found Vaticanus to be inferior to the Greek manuscripts on which he built his texts—and perhaps a corruption of the Greek text—and thus chose not to use it.

12. Edward Hills, *Believing Bible Study* (Des Moines, IA, USA: The Christian Research Press, 1967), p. 34.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, pp. 69–70.