

“God Inspires Only In Hebrew”

Objection 1: “God speaks to His people only in the sacred language of the Jews namely Hebrew. Therefore, the disputed books cannot be inspired Scriptures because they were written in Greek.”

Answer: This objection suffers from a few inaccuracies. The first inaccuracy is that the assumption the entire Protestant and Jewish Old Testament were written in Hebrew. This is not completely true. There are several sections among the undisputed books of Scripture that contain portions of Aramaic such as Genesis 31:47; Daniel 2:4-7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26. Jeremiah 10:11 and the book of Ecclesiastes contains several idiomatic phrases indigenous to Aramaic, not Hebrew. Therefore, God can inspire texts that are not originally written in Hebrew. Otherwise, these passages from the undisputed books would not be inspired!

Also, not all of the Deuterocanon were written in Greek. Modern biblical scholarship has demonstrated that all of the Deuterocanon (with the exception of the Book of Wisdom and 2 Maccabees) were originally written in Hebrew.¹ The discovery of fragments of a Hebrew version of the books of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) and Tobit among the *Dead Sea Scrolls* of Qumran further supports this conclusion.² This means that even if one could demonstrate that all inspired texts must to be written in Hebrew, only two of the seven disputed would be rejected.

The objector must also be able to explain how it is that we have an inspired Greek New Testament! If God can only inspire texts in the Hebrew language, how is it that our Greek New Testament is inspired since it was composed in Koine Greek?³ If the Holy Spirit inspires the writing of the books of the New Testament in Greek, he could do the same prior to the coming of Christ.

Moreover, nothing in Scripture tells us that inspiration is limited only to Hebrew. On the contrary, there are several passages that suggest that God is quite comfortable in revealing Himself in other languages. This objection is also not historical. The early Christians did not believe that inspiration was restricted to a single language. In fact, several Church Fathers believed the Greek Septuagint (LXX) was inspired.⁴ Surely, such a belief could not be held if it was widely known that God could only inspire texts in Hebrew.

This objection may have provided Jewish apologists with a means to dismiss the New Testament, but it should have no place in Christian apologetics. Not only is it ill founded, but also it jeopardizes the inspired status of the whole of the New Testament and certain undisputed sections of the Old Testament as well.

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¹ While both these books were originally written in Greek, there were copies of these books that circulated in Hebrew and Aramaic. For example, Origen knew the Hebrew name for the Books of Maccabees (see Eusebius' Church History, 6.25 [3CF-74] and Moses ben Nahman (Nachmanides, c. 1194-1270) possessed an Aramaic copy of the Book of Wisdom (Sundberg, CBQ (1968). 30.152).

² A fragment of Sirach (2Q18 (2QSir) 2QBenSira^b) was found in Hebrew and five fragments of the Book of Tobit were found in Cave 4 (4Q196 – 4Q200). Of these five fragments of Tobit, four fragments were in Aramaic and one was in Hebrew. Also, the so-called *Ben Sira Scroll* dating from the first century before Christ was discovered in Masada in 1963 / 1964 containing Sirach 39:27 – 44:17 in Hebrew. Likewise, in a storage room (Hebrew genizah) in an ancient synagogue in Cairo, the Hebrew Sirach was discovered in four manuscripts (A, B, C and D).

³ Even granting the possibility that some texts of the New Testament show an Aramaic or Hebrew underlying sub-text, it cannot account for those books that were clearly composed in Greek.

⁴ e.g. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, et al.