

A HARMONIZATION OF MATT 8:5-13 AND LUKE 7:1-10

Jack Russell Shaffer*

A strict harmonization of Matt 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 has been considered impossible by many recent biblical scholars because of seeming discrepancies between the two accounts. Matthew locates the encounter between Jesus and the centurion almost immediately after the Sermon on the Mount; Luke puts it soon after the Sermon on the Plain. The illness that had come to the centurion's servant—not his son—was some type of lameness that kept the centurion from bringing or sending him to Jesus. Various authors have proposed three options for solving the problem of harmonizing the two accounts. The first says that Matthew and Luke adapted a common source called Q, but a lack of verbal agreement and an impugning of biblical inspiration rule this option out. The second option holds that Matthew used literary rhetoric to describe the encounter, but Matthew plainly supports the personal coming of the centurion—not his servants in his place as the view holds—to Jesus. The third option states that Matthew and Luke faithfully recorded the events and dialogue of the encounter. This option is feasible as an alignment of the texts according to a strict harmonization shows, and is the best option because it acknowledges the integrity of the human authors and the integrity of the Holy Spirit who inspired the accounts.

* * * * *

Introduction

For approximately seventeen hundred years—after the last drop of ink had dried and the canon of Scripture had closed—there was little debate to speak of within Christianity regarding the accuracy of Scripture. Though the Bible, particularly in the parallel Gospel accounts, had apparent discrepancies, these were almost always explained through the process of strict harmonization.¹ Not until the Enlightenment period did the question of the integrity of Scripture come to have

*Jack Shaffer, an M.Div. graduate of The Master's Seminary and a current Th.M. candidate at TMS, is Associate Pastor of Roosevelt Community Church near Lancaster, California.

¹Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell, eds., *The Jesus Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 66. For the purposes of this article, the term "harmonization" refers to the process of taking parallel accounts in Scripture and reconciling the apparent discrepancies under the assumption that each account is historically accurate, having been faithfully recorded by each author as moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:19-21). This precludes the accommodation of form, source, redaction, or any other literary-critical theories as valid explanations of the product of any of the authors of Scripture.

prominence in academic circles.² The underlying disbelief in the supernatural led liberal scholars to attack the inspiration, and thus, the veracity of the Bible. Scripture began to be analyzed as any other classic piece of literature—devoid of any divine oversight. The skepticism of the times was the seedbed for what is now called the “Synoptic Problem.”³ For about the past two hundred years, a reversal has taken place in how those apparent discrepancies in the Synoptic Gospels are reconciled. Today, except in a pejorative sense, harmonization is rarely mentioned as a means for resolving the most difficult passages. Such is to be expected from liberal theologians who hold a low view of Scripture. However, the philosophical roots of the so-called Synoptic Problem have made major inroads into evangelical scholarship. Rare is the contemporary evangelical who does not in some way impugn the integrity of the authors of Scripture or of the Word of God itself in attempts to explain difficult passages.⁴

The goal of this article is to produce a strict harmonization of two seemingly irreconcilable records of the miraculous healing of the centurion’s servant recorded in Matt 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10.⁵ The present writer believes such a harmonization to be possible without impugning the integrity of Holy Writ or of the authors who penned it, and at the same time, without resorting to a theory which “strains credulity,” as one author put it.⁶ What is at stake in such a discussion is nothing less than the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture.⁷

The Problem of Apparent Discrepancy

While reading through the Gospels in linear fashion, one might not perceive any discrepancy between Matthew and Luke in the recounting of Jesus’ healing of the centurion’s servant. However, when the two accounts are placed side-by-side (Table 1), the difficulty in reconciling them becomes obvious.⁸

²Ibid., 86.

³The phrase given to the so-called problem of agreements and apparent discrepancies in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

⁴As is evidenced in the number of scholars researched for this project who attempt a strict harmonization of the accounts in question: in commentaries, two; in journal articles, one (and these only as recently as 1951 and 1964, respectively). Zane Hodges’ article, “The Centurion’s Faith in Matthew and Luke” (*Bibliotheca Sacra* 121/484 [Oct 1964]:321-32) is important and is the latest attempt at strict harmonization this writer could locate. The present article may be considered an update and advancement upon his excellent work.

⁵This writer holds that John’s account of Jesus’ healing a royal official’s son in 4:46-54 is a wholly different incident in the life and ministry of Jesus. The setting in Cana, the title of the man (official in Herod’s kingdom), his desire for Jesus to come and heal his son, and other significant differences make it unlikely that these are the same. See Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 439; and W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991) 2:17. At the same time, believing that the pericope of the Syro-Phoenician woman is related is also without a basis (contra Rudolph Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh [Oxford: Basil Blackford, 1963] 38-39).

⁶I. H. Marshall, “Historical Criticism,” *New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 133.

⁷Hodges, “The Centurion’s Faith” 322.

⁸Ibid.

Table 1. Passages paralleled in English⁹

Matthew 8:5-13	Luke 7:1-10
5 And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him,	1 When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum.
6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented."	2 And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.
7 Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."	3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.
8 But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.	4 When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him;
9 "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."	5 for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue."
10 Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.	6 Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof;
11 "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven;	7 for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.
12 but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."	8 "For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."
13 And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment.	9 Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith."
	10 When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

For readers of the original Greek or of the English translation, the most obvious difficulty lies in the fact that Matthew records the event as though the centurion came directly to Jesus while Luke records two sets of intermediaries coming to Jesus on behalf of the centurion. In addition, in Luke 7:7 the centurion

⁹All Scripture references in English are from the New American Standard Bible Update.

states (through his friends) that he is not worthy to come to Jesus, seemingly ruling out the possibility of a personal exchange between the Lord and the officer.

In addition to the difficulty which is plain in English, several issues surface when one reads the accounts in the Greek text. Those must also be addressed so as to resolve all issues with regard to harmonization. Items such as the relationship of the one healed, the nature of his illness, and some syntactical constructions which bear on the problem must be handled. Others, such as questions about the centurion—whether he is a Roman soldier or a Gentile of some other nationality in the employ of Herod Anitpas, his exact meaning when saying that he is a man under authority, and whether Jesus' response in Matthew 8:7 is a statement or a question—are interesting and perhaps helpful to exposition but not pertinent to the topic at hand and are therefore not treated here.

All this presents a challenging problem for the biblical interpreter. The crux of the issue for one who believes in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures then is to answer the question, "How can these two accounts be reconciled without impugning the verbal inspiration of Scripture?" Did the centurion interact directly with Jesus, or did he not? Or, is this proof positive that the Bible should not be elevated above other literature in terms of its historical accuracy?

The present writer in no way claims that this is an easily resolved problem. It is not. Much research, study, and meditation on the text has been necessary to reach a viable solution—one that upholds the integrity of the authors and that is within the bounds of reason. Too often the hypotheses for resolving apparent conflicts in Scripture are so contrived that they are harder to believe than to accept non-historical reporting in the Scripture.¹⁰ However, one needs only to show the plausibility of harmonization in order to cast doubt upon other less orthodox methods of reconciling the accounts.

Exegetical Considerations

Background and Context of the Pericope

Before resolving the lexical and syntactical difficulties, understanding the setting of the story will be helpful. A look at any harmony of the Gospels will show that chronologically this event followed the Sermon on the Mount.¹¹

For Matthew, the Sermon has set the backdrop for this section of his Gospel. One of the main characteristics of that sermon was that Jesus' preaching was authoritative.¹² In the present section, Matthew presents that authority in action. Chapters eight and nine consist of three distinct groupings of ten miracles performed, called "miracle narratives,"¹³ which demonstrated His authority over disease,

¹⁰Marshall, "Historical Criticism" 133.

¹¹E.g., Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Chicago: Moody, 1978; reprint, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991) 71; Ernest De Witt Burton and Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, *A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels in Greek* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1920) 43. That holds true whether one takes Luke's Sermon on the Plain to be one and the same with Matthew's Sermon on the Mount.

¹²As evidenced by His manifold statements, "You have heard that it was said . . . but I say to you," and the final verses of chapter 7, "When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes."

¹³William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 387.

demonic powers, and nature. The healing of the centurion's slave appears in the middle of the first group of miracles. Here Matthew emphasizes that the reach of Jesus' ministry extended to the outcasts of Jewish society—lepers, Gentiles, and women—who were excluded from full participation in Jewish religious life (Matt 8:1-17).¹⁴

Every commentator consulted agreed that Matthew has not presented these stories in a strictly chronological order. Again, a look at any harmony will reveal this.¹⁵ Also concord prevails among those who offer divergent solutions to the harmonization problem with regard to the Gospel writers' selecting which material they would include in their document and which they would omit. This form of editing ("redaction," if it pleases, although the term has negative connotations with regard to plenary inspiration) is alluded to at least indirectly in the Scriptures themselves (John 20:30-31; 21:25) and is not in question. Matthew, then, is not chronological but topical in his description of the facts of the healing.¹⁶

Luke, on the other hand, presents the events in a more chronological fashion. In v. 1, he has a temporal marker (ἐπειδή, *epeidē*, "when") to show that Jesus' going to Capernaum followed not too long after the conclusion of the Sermon on the Plain. Verse 11 also has a temporal clause (καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἕξῃς, *kai egeneto en tō exēs*, "and it came to pass soon afterwards") which follows the pericope and connects the next event to the present one.¹⁷ The healing of the leper is excluded since it was not in chronological sequence and did not fit the emphasis Luke wished to maintain. According to Liefeld, this event marks a pivotal point in the progress of the word of the Lord from its original Jewish context to the Gentile world. A theme important to Luke and to his audience is to show the compatibility of early Christianity with Judaism and to justify the prominence of Gentiles in the church.¹⁸ At the end of Luke 6, Jesus taught that unwavering faith in Him was required of a Kingdom citizen. On the heels of such teaching, Luke exhibited a prize example of such faith on display, and that found in no less than a Gentile.¹⁹

Within the story itself, Matthew has three major emphases: the faith of the centurion, the authority of Jesus to heal, and the eschatological plan of God that includes believing Gentiles in His kingdom and excludes unbelieving Jews from it. Luke, on the other hand, focuses on the humility and faith of the centurion, as well as the fact that he is a Gentile well-esteemed by Jewish leaders and commended by Jesus.

¹⁴Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, in *Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1993) 90

¹⁵Thomas & Gundry, *Harmony* 50-53, Burton & Goodspeed, *Harmony* 30-37, A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (New York: Harper & Row, 1922) 55-56. All place the stories of the healings of the leper (Matt 8:2-4) and of Peter's mother-in-law (vv. 14-17) prior to the Sermon on the Mount.

¹⁶Hendriksen, *Matthew* 387

¹⁷Matthew's use of genitive-absolute clauses (8:1, 5) is more indefinite than Luke's choice of temporal conjunctions. Luke allows room for a time lag between the Sermon on the Plain and the expression of the centurion's faith, but not much.

¹⁸Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 8:897

¹⁹William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) 374

A Son or a Servant?

In the original language, a question arises regarding the relationship to the centurion of the one whom Jesus heals. Is the one healed a son or a servant? Matthew uses the term *παῖς* (*pais*) to describe him (vv. 6, 8, 13), but Luke uses the term *δοῦλος* (*doulos*, vv. 2, 3, and 10). The former term can mean “servant” or “son,” while the latter means only “servant” or “slave.”

In favor of “son” is the argument that the centurion would not have had the kind of concern for a mere slave that he would have had for his own son.²⁰ Luke indicates that he was “highly regarded” by him (v. 2). Another argument is based upon the so-called parallel passage in John 4:46-54, where the one healed is clearly the son of the royal official.²¹ There *παῖς* (*pais*) is also used (v. 51) along with *υἱός* (*huios*, “son”), a definite reference to one’s male offspring.

The first argument is rather spurious, not based on any fact. All centurions mentioned in the NT appear to be upstanding men (and some very religious as here and in Acts 10). This man appears to be exceptionally compassionate as he is said to “love” the Jewish nation and to have built their synagogue at his own expense (Luke 7:5). Assuming that he would not have had some emotional attachment is unfounded, particularly if this was his only servant.²²

The second argument cannot prevail, for it assumes that a common story existed which was taken and adapted by the authors to accommodate their own *Sitz im Leben*. This theory, however, must compromise the integrity of Scripture to be valid. If the John 4 passage is parallel, the many discrepancies between the accounts require that one or two authors must have altered the story.²³

Several reasons show why the term should be understood as “servant.” First, the term *παῖς* is ambiguous and can mean either. Second, it occurs twenty-four times in the NT and in only one verse does it obviously mean “son” (John 4:51);²⁴ in eight other cases, it means “child,” though without implying any relationship to the speaker or to a character in the narrative. Four times it means the “servant” of a man, and eight times a “servant” of God. Thus, if *παῖς* in Matt 8:6, 8, 13 means the centurion’s “son,” it would be agreeing only with the one use of the word by John against all the other NT uses, all of which are in Matthew and Luke-Acts.²⁵

Finally, the term *παῖς* occurs in Luke 7:7 to describe the same person, who is clearly referred to as a slave (*δοῦλος*). So no redaction theory is required and Luke and Matthew do not contradict each other. The centurion is concerned for his

²⁰Randolph O. Yeager, *Matthew 8–18*, The Renaissance New Testament (Gretna, La.: Pelican, 1998) 2:9.

²¹Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 33A of Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1998) 204.

²²Meyer reasons that the use of the term *δοῦλος* in the discourse of Matthew 8:9 and Luke 7:8 refers to this individual and that the singular indicates that the centurion had only one servant—the one who was near death. See Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Peter Christie, vol. 1 in *Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament* (n.p.: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884; reprint, Winona Lake, Ind.: Alpha, 1979) 179.

²³See n. 5 above.

²⁴Here the context makes it clear—the term *υἱός* is used in reference to the same person in vv. 46, 47, and 50.

²⁵R. T. France, “Exegesis in Practice: Two Samples,” in *New Testament Interpretation* 256.

slave who is probably a young man—too young to die.

The Nature of the Servant's Illness

Luke indicates that the servant had an illness and was about to die. Matthew indicates that he was lying paralyzed and fearfully tormented.²⁶ The apparent conflict is in the way one thinks of paralysis. In Luke, it sounds as though a disease is overtaking the young man. Yet contemporary understanding of paralysis does not seem to fit that description.²⁷ In addition, one usually associates lack of feeling with paralysis, not “grievous torment.”²⁸ The text, however, indicates that he was tormented greatly.

The difficulty is easily resolved. The term translated “paralyzed” means simply “lame.”²⁹ The servant has been laid in the house lame—incapacitated due to severe illness, and that is the condition in which he remains when Jesus hears of it. Plumptre suggests perhaps a form of rheumatic fever or tetanus.³⁰ The term βασανίζω (*basanizō*) means to “vex with grievous pains.”³¹ This affliction is magnified by the use of δεινῶς (*deipnōs*, “severely, vehemently”), which signifies an extreme point on a scale, underlining the disease’s severity and also to magnifying the healing miracle.³² That is why he had not been brought to Jesus.³³

Simply put, Luke is giving his own description and does not elaborate on the illness, choosing rather to focus upon the character of the centurion. Matthew, on the other hand, is recording the direct speech of the centurion, who elaborates on the condition of the servant.

At this point, all further difficulties are on a macro level, specifically the issues related to reconciling the two accounts.

Proposed Solutions

Upon surveying the landscape, one discovers that three options exist for resolving the problem of harmonizing the two accounts. A popular position among both evangelicals and non-evangelicals is that a common document, usually the

²⁶βέβληται . . . παραλυτικός and δεινῶς βασανιζόμενος, respectively

²⁷Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 21

²⁸E H Plumptre, “The Gospel According to Matthew,” in *Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, ed Charles J Ellicott (reprint, Grand Rapids Zondervan, 1970) 6 45

²⁹Walter Bauer, William Arndt, F Wilbur Gingrich, “παραλυτικός, ἢ, ὄν,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed, rev and ed Frederick W Danker (Chicago University of Chicago, 2000) 620, Johannes P Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, “23 171 παραλυτικός, ἢ, ὄν,” *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2d ed, 2 vols (New York United Bible Societies, 1989) 1 272

³⁰Plumptre, *Gospel According to Matthew* 45

³¹Joseph Henry Thayer, *The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, Mass Hendrickson, 1979), 96 Though used in the NT for the tormenting of demons (Matt 8 29, Mark 5 7), it is used for human physical suffering by strain (Mark 6 48), by demons (Rev 9 5), or through birth pangs (Rev 12 2 [metaphor])

³²Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 21

³³A B Bruce, “The Synoptic Gospels,” in *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, 5 vols, ed W Robertson Nicoll (n p, reprint, Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1976) 1 138

elusive Q-document, was the source from which Matthew and Luke (and John if one believes the healing of the royal official's son is parallel) drew. A second position, which is also popular among evangelicals and is a variation of the first, is that Luke records what actually happened and Matthew abbreviates it without impugning his own integrity or the integrity of Scripture. A last position, one which is rare and not widely held, is that each of the two accounts faithfully records what happened and can be strictly harmonized with the other without compromising either the divine Author or His human counterparts.

Matthew and Luke Adapted a Common Source

This view embraces the notion that Matthew and Luke drew from a common written document, which most identify as Q. Thus, no attempt to harmonize the accounts is needed. Once the premise is accepted, the only need is to "discover" the method each used to arrive at his final product.³⁴ Conspicuously, Q has yet to be discovered, but that stops few from referring to it as a likely source. Modern scholarship has no lack of supporters for this view.³⁵

The purpose of this study is not to develop all the arguments for or against the use of Historical Criticism in analyzing the Gospels. As Hodges boldly stated,

It would scarcely be worth-while [*sic*] in the present discussion to become mired in the ever shifting morass of theories which occupy present-day source criticism. New Testament studies are not advanced by an infatuation with processes we did not witness and with documents we do not, and cannot, possess³⁶

However, problems with the "Common Source" view are serious. First, comparing the two accounts in Greek leads to two significant observations.

First, in Table 2, the words common to both accounts are underlined.³⁷ Such a comparison reveals that out of 353 words, only 126 (36%) are common to both. That is not a mark of common source. Also, a high percentage of words common to both occurs in sections of direct or indirect discourse. Those facts combined indicate a scenario which would fit a theory of independence—each author formulating the narrative account in his own way, but more accurately citing those whom he quotes directly or indirectly—rather than their dependence upon a tertiary source.

³⁴Rudolf Bultmann, who holds an extreme form of this view, simply relegates the stories as fiction of the church, a view not entertained in this article. While he is able to discern that these are mythical variants of the Syro-Phoenician woman pericope, 1,900 years after the fact, Bultmann states "Further, hardly anybody will support the historicity of telepathic healing" (*History* 39). To which Hodges smugly notes, "We, for our part, will hardly support telepathic criticism!" ("The Centurion's Faith" 323)

³⁵E.g., Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouch, in *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 8–9; Werner Stenger, *Introduction to New Testament Exegesis*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 99; Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 17; Hagner, *Matthew* 202; Darrell Bock, *Luke* 1:1–9:50, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 632, 641, 643

³⁶"The Centurion's Faith" 323

³⁷The statistics were obtained from an unpublished copy of Thomas, "Microsoft Word - #45 BG doc," *Thomas Synoptic Gospel Comparison Study*, The Master's Seminary [CD-ROM] (April 28, 2005). The study uses Burton and Goodspeed's *Harmony* as a base.

Table 2. Harmony of Matt 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10³⁸

Matt 8:5-13	Luke 7:1-10
<p>Εἰσελθόντος δὲ αὐτοῦ <u>εἰς Καφαρναοῦμ</u> <u>προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ ἑκατόνταρχος</u></p>	<p>¹ Ἐπειδὴ ἐπλήρωσεν πάντα τὰ ῥήματα αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς ἀκοὰς τοῦ λαοῦ, εἰσῆλθεν <u>εἰς Καφαρναοῦμ.</u></p>
<p>παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν ⁶ καὶ λέγων· κύριε, ὁ παῖς μου βέβληται ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ παραλυτικός, δεινῶς βασανιζόμενος</p>	<p>² Ἐκατοντάρχου δὲ τινος δούλος κακῶς ἔχων ἤμελλεν τελευτᾶν, ὃς ἦν αὐτῷ ἔντιμος. ³ ἀκούσας δὲ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτὸν πρεσβυτέρους τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐρωτῶν αὐτὸν ὅπως ἐλθῶν διασώσῃ τὸν δούλον αὐτοῦ.</p>
<p>⁷ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· ἐγὼ ἐλθὼν θεραπεύσω αὐτόν.</p>	<p>⁴ οἱ δὲ παραγενόμενοι πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν σπουδαίως λέγοντες ὅτι ἄξιός ἐστιν ᾧ παρέξῃ τούτο·</p>
<p>⁸ καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἑκατόνταρχος ἔφη· κύριε, οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανός· <u>ἵνα μου ὑπὸ τὴν στέγην εἰσέλθῃς,</u></p>	<p>⁵ ἀγαπᾷ γὰρ τὸ ἔθνος ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν συναγωγὴν αὐτὸς ᾠκοδόμησεν ἡμῖν ⁶ ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐπορεύετο σὺν αὐτοῖς. ἤδη δὲ αὐτοῦ οὐ μακρὰν ἀπέχοντος ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκίας ἐπεμψεν φίλους ὁ ἑκατοντάρχης λέγων αὐτῷ· κύριε, μὴ σκύλλου, οὐ γὰρ ἰκανός εἰμι· <u>ἵνα ὑπὸ τὴν στέγην μου εἰσέλθῃς·</u></p>
<p><u>ἀλλὰ μόνον εἶπε λόγῳ,</u> <u>καὶ ἰαθῆσεται ὁ παῖς μου.</u></p>	<p>⁷ διὸ οὐδὲ ἑμαυτὸν ἤξιωσα πρὸς σὲ ἐλθεῖν· ἀλλὰ εἶπε λόγῳ, <u>καὶ ἰαθῆτω ὁ παῖς μου.</u></p>
<p>⁹ καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπός εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν, ἔχων ὑπ' ἑμαυτὸν στρατιώτας, καὶ λέγω τούτῳ· <u>πορεύθητι,</u> <u>καὶ πορεύεται,</u> <u>καὶ ἄλλῳ· ἔρχου, καὶ ἔρχεται,</u> <u>καὶ τῷ δούλῳ μου·</u> <u>ποιήσον τούτο, καὶ ποιεῖ.</u></p>	<p>⁸ καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπός εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν τασσόμενος ἔχων ὑπ' ἑμαυτὸν στρατιώτας, καὶ λέγω τούτῳ· <u>πορεύθητι,</u> <u>καὶ πορεύεται,</u> <u>καὶ ἄλλῳ· ἔρχου, καὶ ἔρχεται,</u> <u>καὶ τῷ δούλῳ μου·</u> <u>ποιήσον τούτο, καὶ ποιεῖ.</u></p>

³⁸Text arranged as in Burton and Goodspeed, *Harmony* 68-71.

<p>¹⁰ ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐθαύμασεν καὶ εἶπεν τοῖς ἀκολουθοῦσιν· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, παρ' οὐδενὶ τοσαύτην πίστιν ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ εὗρον. ¹¹ λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ δυσμῶν ἤξουσιν καὶ ἀνακλιθήσονται μετὰ Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαάκ καὶ Ἰακώβ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν, ¹² οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας ἐκβληθήσονται εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. ¹³ καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ ἑκατοντάρχη· ὑπάγε, ὡς ἐπίστευσας γεννηθήτω σοι. καὶ ἰάθη ὁ παῖς [αὐτοῦ] ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐκείνῃ.</p>	<p>⁹ ἀκούσας δὲ ταῦτα ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐθαύμασεν αὐτὸν καὶ στραφείς τῷ ἀκολουθοῦντι αὐτῷ ὄγλῳ εἶπεν· λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐδὲ ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ τοσαύτην πίστιν εὗρον. [At this point, Burton and Goodspeed insert Luke 13:28-29 (in a small font) because its language is similar to Matt 8:11-13. A common explanation of why Matthew has the text here and Luke does not is that Matthew took it from Q and placed it here and Luke put it in his chapter 13. See Davies and Allison, <i>Matthew 26</i>, for an elaborate redactional scheme. To keep the focus on the issue at hand, the present discussion excludes the section from this exhibit.] ¹⁰ Καὶ ὑποστρέψαντες εἰς τὸν οἶκον οἱ πεμφθέντες εὗρον τὸν δοῦλον ὕγιανοντα.</p>
--	---

Second, and more important, if either of the authors simply borrowed from a common source and made changes as he saw fit, then the trustworthiness of the Scriptures is in jeopardy and the author's meaning is anyone's guess. Anyone with an elementary education who reads Matthew and Luke together can see that Matthew records the event *as if the centurion came and spoke directly to Jesus* and that Luke makes no mention of his coming. If the centurion did not actually come, then Matthew has misrepresented the account. That this was inspired mis-representation does not assuage the fact that it would be a lie.

Therefore, anyone who in honesty holds to an inspired, inerrant Scripture cannot retain this view.

Matthew Used Literary Rhetoric to Express the Account

Those who have not pursued a strict harmonization or who desire to hold to Literary Criticism and an inspired text seem to use this as a default position. The idea is as old as Augustine who wrote, "*qui facit per alium facit per se.*"³⁹ Others have attempted variations on the same theme. Stein uses the following example:

If a conversation between the President of the United States and the Premier of Russia [*sic*], were reported, it could be described in at least two ways. First, the President says in English to his interpreter, "A." The interpreter then says in Russian to the premier, "A." The premier says in Russian to his interpreter, "B," and the interpreter says in English to the President, "B." Second, the president says to the premier, "A," [*sic*] The premier responds, "B."

Both descriptions are correct! The last account, which every newspaper report follows, chooses to omit for brevity's sake the role of the interpreter. The other account

³⁹Translated, "He who acts by another acts himself" (cited in D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelen [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984] 8:200).

includes it.⁴⁰

Another variation is, when the President of the United States says something through his press secretary and it is reported by the press that he said it, no one accuses the press of an inaccuracy.⁴¹

In earnest, these are often valid explanations of Scripture when direct agency is implied—the most notable being Pilate’s scourging of Jesus (John 19:1). However, that kind of superficial explanation will not do here.⁴²

First, as stated before, Matthew does not leave open the possibility of whether or not the centurion came—v. 5 expressly states that he did. Throughout Matthew’s account, he uses the singular to indicate that the centurion’s dialogue was from an individual and Jesus’ dialogue was to an individual.⁴³ One could argue that Luke’s account uses the singular for a plurality of emissaries who speak on behalf of the centurion (vv. 3, 6-8) and that Matthew simply did the same but did not mention the envoys. Yet in Luke 7:2 and 7:6, the centurion is the subject. Therefore, the corresponding verbs must also be singular. The context is clear that Luke reports what the centurion told them to say as indirect speech.⁴⁴ Not so in Matthew.

Second, even if one ceded the argument about Luke’s singular, two insurmountable problems remain with the text that simply will not permit the literary-rhetoric theory to hold. One is the use of the term ὑπάγε (*hypage*, “go”) by Jesus. Rationalizing that Jesus, standing with a group of the centurion’s friends would use the singular imperative to dismiss them, followed by the second-person singular indicative—indicating that the healing would take place as the centurion asked—will in no way hold. One writer states that this was, “a current term for saying: The matter is settled; do not let it be your concern any longer.”⁴⁵ Such language is not explainable unless the centurion was personally present.

Another is a syntactical issue related to the recording of direct speech. As Jesus was approaching his home, the centurion is cited, either directly (Matthew) or indirectly (Luke), as saying that he was not worthy for Jesus to come “under [his] roof.” There is a question as to the placement of the personal pronoun μου (*mou*, “my”). In Matt 8:8, it is forward for emphasis. In Luke 7:6, it follows the prepositional phrase. If one holds to an inerrant text, and if both are either direct or indirect quotations, one of the authors has changed the word order, precision is lost, and inspiration is impugned.

Given the difficulties with the common source and the literary-rhetoric proposals, only one choice is viable, and that is to harmonize the two accounts.

⁴⁰Robert L. Stein, *Difficult Passages in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990) 36.

⁴¹Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1987) 134.

⁴²Many well-known, conservative commentators opt for this view, e.g., Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 7th ed., 4 vols. (London: Rivingtons, 1868) 1:78-79; John A. Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990) 177; Carson, *Matthew* 200; Hendriksen, *Matthew* 395; R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of Saint Matthew’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1964) 332.

⁴³In v. 5, παρακαλῶν; v. 6, λέγων; v. 7, αὐτῷ; v.8, ἔφη; v. 13, ἑκατοντάρχη.

⁴⁴In v. 3, for example, the direct speech from the centurion to the elders would have been something like, “Go and ask Jesus to come that He might heal my servant.”

⁴⁵William Arndt, *Does the Bible Contradict Itself?* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955) 61.

Matthew and Luke Faithfully Recorded the Account

The best solution to handling the Scriptures is to take them at face value. If one author indicates a hesitancy for the centurion to come and another says that he did come, then one must strive to understand how they can both be true without denigrating the reliability of God's Word or resorting to intellectually unsatisfying proposals. The Scriptures are not given so that every aspect of every encounter must be present and accounted for and fit neatly together to form a comprehensive whole.⁴⁶ The emphasis of each author will dictate what material is included and what is omitted. If one divorces oneself from the sterile, unemotional environment of academia for a moment and delves into the realm of everyday life, harmonizing these accounts is no problem.

First, the following will explain the harmonization, then defend it. Table 3 displays visually a proposed harmony of these two passages. The table is coded as follows: the elders' words have underlining; the centurion's words are in italics; Jesus' words are in bold-face type.

Table 3. Proposed Harmony

<p>^{5a} Εἰσελθόντος δὲ αὐτοῦ εἰς Καφαρναοῦμ</p>	<p>¹ Ἐπειδὴ ἐπλήρωσεν πάντα τὰ ῥήματα αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς ἀκοὰς τοῦ λαοῦ, εἰσῆλθεν εἰς Καφαρναοῦμ.</p> <p>² Ἐκατοντάρχου δὲ τινος δούλος κακῶς ἔχων ἡμελλεν τελευτᾶν, ὃς ἦν αὐτῷ ἐντίμος.</p> <p>³ ἀκούσας δὲ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτὸν πρεσβυτέρους τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐρωτῶν αὐτὸν ὅπως ἐλθῶν διασώσῃ τὸν δούλον αὐτοῦ.</p> <p>⁴ οἱ δὲ παραγενόμενοι πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν σπουδαίως λέγοντες ὅτι <u>ἀξιός ἐστιν ὃ παρέξῃ τοῦτο</u>.</p> <p>⁵ <u>ἀγαπᾷ γὰρ τὸ ἔθνος ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν συναγωγὴν αὐτοῦ ὡκοδόμησεν ἡμῖν.</u></p> <p>⁶ ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐπορεύετο σὺν αὐτοῖς. ἤδη δὲ αὐτοῦ οὐ μακρὰν ἀπέχοντος ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκίας ἔπεμψεν φίλους ὁ ἑκατοντάρχης λέγων αὐτῷ <i>κύριε, μὴ σκύλλου, οὐ γὰρ ἰκανός εἰμι ἵνα ὑπὸ τὴν στέγην μου εἰσέλθῃς</i>.</p> <p>⁷ <i>διό οὐδὲ ἔμμαντόν ἡξίωσα πρὸς σὲ ἐλθεῖν· ἀλλὰ εἰπέ λόγῳ, καὶ ἰαθήτω ὁ παῖς μου.</i></p> <p>⁸ <i>καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπός εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν τασσόμενος ἔχων ὑπ' ἔμμαντόν στρατιώτας, καὶ λέγω τούτῳ· πορεύθητι, καὶ πορεύεται, καὶ ἄλλῳ· ἔρχου, καὶ ἔρχεται, καὶ τῷ δούλῳ μου· ποιήσον τοῦτο, καὶ ποιεῖ.</i></p>
--	---

⁴⁶One need only consider any 10-minute slice of time at the shopping mall or the sports arena to realize the number of variables that could be recounted in any given encounter

^{5b} προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ ἑκατόνταρχος
παρακαλῶν αὐτόν

⁶ καὶ λέγων· κύριε, ὁ παῖς μου
βέβληται ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ παραλυτικός,
δεινῶς βασανιζόμενος.

⁷ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· ἐγὼ ἔλθὼν
θεραπεύσω αὐτόν.

⁸ καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἑκατόνταρχος ἔφη·
κύριε, οὐκ εἰμι ἰκανὸς ἵνα μου ὑπὸ τῆν
στέγην εἰσέλθῃς, ἀλλὰ μόνον εἰπέ
λόγω, καὶ ἰαθήσεται ὁ παῖς μου.

⁹ καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος εἰμι ὑπὸ
ἐξουσίαν, ἔχων ὑπ' ἐμᾶν τὸν
στρατιώτην, καὶ λέγω τούτῳ·
πορεύθητι, καὶ πορεύεται, καὶ ἄλλω·
ἔρχου, καὶ ἔρχεται, καὶ τῷ δούλῳ μου·
ποιήσον τούτο, καὶ ποιῶ.

¹⁰ ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐθαύμασεν καὶ
εἶπεν τοῖς ἀκολουθοῦσιν·

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, παρ' οὐδενὶ
τοσαύτην πίστιν ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ εὔρον.

¹¹ λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ ἀπὸ
ἀνατολῶν καὶ δυσμῶν ἤξουσιν καὶ
ἀνακλιθήσονται μετὰ Ἀβραάμ καὶ
Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν
οὐρανῶν.

¹² οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας
ἐκβληθήσονται εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ
ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ
ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

¹³ καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ ἑκατοντάρχη·
ὑπάγε, ὡς ἐπίστευσας γενηθήτω σοι.

καὶ ἰάθη ὁ παῖς [αὐτοῦ] ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ
ἐκείνῃ.

⁹ ἀκούσας δὲ ταῦτα ὁ Ἰησοῦς
ἐθαύμασεν αὐτόν καὶ στραφεὶς τῷ
ἀκολουθοῦντι αὐτῷ ὄχλῳ εἶπεν·
λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐδὲ ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ
τοσαύτην πίστιν εὔρον.

¹⁰ Καὶ ὑποστρέψαντες εἰς τὸν οἶκον οἱ
πεμφθέντες
εὔρον τὸν δούλον ὑγιαίνοντα.

Harmonization Explained

The narratives of Matthew and Luke introducing the scenario present no difficulty. Each in its own style indicates that Jesus entered Capernaum. From this point Luke's narrative should be followed all the way through v. 8.⁴⁷ Emphasizing the character of the Gentile centurion, Luke contrasts the works-oriented focus of the Jews (he is deemed worthy, in part because he built their synagogue) with the centurion's amazing faith and his own humble assessment of himself.⁴⁸

The perceived difficulty is in Luke 7:7a where the centurion's friends cite

⁴⁷Hodges, "The Centurion's Faith" 328.

⁴⁸ibid.

him as saying that he did not consider himself worthy to come. However, no problem exists if one allows that he came anyway out of his great concern for his servant. Both facts are true. Luke does not mention the centurion's coming because it did not fit with his purpose—the contrast between the Jews' conception of the centurion and his own view of himself compared to Christ.

Matthew's account picks up with the faith of the centurion contrasted with that of Israel. His purpose is to show that even a Gentile recognized the authority of the King of the Jews while His own people rejected Him. As Morris says:

Perhaps we can discern something of the differing purposes of the Evangelists in their treatment of the messengers. Matthew was concerned primarily with the centurion's faith and nationality; to him the messengers were irrelevant, even a distraction. But Luke was interested in the man's character and specifically in his humility; to him the messengers were a vital part of the story.⁴⁹

Faith in Christ, not heritage, admits one into the kingdom of heaven. Thus, Matthew includes the additional statement in vv. 11-12.

Seeing Jesus near his home and having already sent the second delegation, the centurion came personally to meet Jesus and restates the problem in more detail,⁵⁰ to which Jesus responds that He will come and heal the servant. This elicits directly from the centurion a statement made earlier through the friends—"Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed" (Matt 8:8).

At a glance, it appears that Matthew 8:9 and Luke 7:8 should be taken as parallel. Except for the word *τασσομένως* (*tassomenos*, "placed under authority") in Luke, the verbiage is word-for-word in the two. However, it is possible for Luke to have learned what was said by the centurion to his friends and to have recorded it under the inspiration of the Spirit.⁵¹

Matthew 8:10a and Luke 7:9a should be taken as parallel. However, the remaining portion of each verse should be taken as consecutive. In other words, Jesus turned once to the crowd that was following Him, but made two distinct statements. The first is a broad statement about Israel as a nation. He had found such faith "not even" in Israel. His second statement is even stronger and more specific. He begins with the asseverative particle, *ἀμῆν* (*amēn*, "truly"), and adds the prepositional phrase, *παρ' οὐδενί* (*par' oudeni*, "with no one"), in place of *οὐδέ* (*oude*, "not even"), and forward for emphasis. He is saying first, "not in all of Israel," and second, "from not even one in all of Israel."

Next, Matthew includes Jesus' statement in vv. 11-12 about who will enter the kingdom and who will be excluded. It is the faith of this Gentile centurion that provides the opportunity for this teaching. Matthew found it essential to his message. Luke did not.

Finally, in Matt 8:13 Jesus turns back to the centurion and tells him to go

⁴⁹Leon J. Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1974; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 151.

⁵⁰Hodges ("The Centurion's Faith" 328) indicates that this fits Matthew's Gospel since it is he who gives us the *ipsissima verba* of the centurion.

⁵¹The text contains no record of how the friends relayed it. Luke records what the centurion said (ἀέγων).

away,⁵² that the healing will take place in the manner in which he believed it would. Jesus will not come farther, but the servant will be healed. By harmonizing the accounts and realizing the actual presence of the centurion, the dilemma of how to explain ὑπαγε is resolved. Matthew further states only that the healing took place. Luke informs the reader that the delegation(s) returned to the house (not to the centurion) to find the servant healed.

Harmonization Defended

As stated earlier, only a *plausible* explanation of how the events can be reconciled should be necessary to satisfy any reasonable inquiry into the apparent discrepancies in these accounts. The objection to this harmonization might be predicated upon the expression of the centurion that he was unworthy to come to Jesus. But one must consider all of the human emotions that were involved.

Luke expressed that the servant was dear to the centurion. If παῖς were instead υἱός and the matter settled that it was his son, hardly any but the most hardened in heart would have any difficulty in seeing the man in a distraught emotional state. So is it so far a stretch to think that this man, away from home, might have established a close relationship with a young servant with whom he would have close contact on a daily basis? Any number of scenarios is possible that would lead to the development of this kind of relationship. Such is not vain imagining but recognition that Scripture records the real lives of real people.

At the same time, the centurion was apparently devout. Though not a proselyte, he presumably was a God-fearer, having built the Jewish synagogue at his own expense and being highly commended by the Jewish leaders. His exemplary faith is the capstone for his integrity and character. Yes, he is a soldier—battle-hardened, a leader. Yet, Scripture seems to shine a favorable light on the character of men in this position (Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47; Acts 10:22; 22:26; 27:43).

The scene could have unfolded as follows: The centurion had a dying servant who was dear to him. Having heard of Jesus' healing ministry (this was not His first entry into the city—Luke 4:31) and having believed in Him, he knew that the Master could heal the boy. Yet, the boy was paralyzed by illness and great agony and unable to be moved. The centurion, being a Gentile and understanding that Jesus was from God, could not see himself going directly to Jesus to ask on behalf of this servant nor having Jesus come to his home.⁵³ He could, however, summon some Jewish leaders of the synagogue which he built at his own expense, to go on his behalf. They did and Jesus began to return to the house with them.

As Jesus came near, the centurion was horrified that Jesus might actually come under his roof. So he sent some friends to explain the case. As they went and engaged Jesus, the centurion while watching could contain himself no longer. He overrode his conviction about not being worthy to go and went anyway.⁵⁴ When he reached Jesus, he stated directly the seriousness of the matter, perhaps to justify his coming against his conviction. Jesus, having heard once already that He need not be

⁵²This is typical of Jesus after a healing has taken place, per Davies and Allison (*Matthew*, 31) See Matt 8:4, 32, 9:6 (all addressed by Jesus to people he has healed)

⁵³Many commentators see the problem of a Jew going to a Gentile's home as the reason for him not being worthy for Jesus to come under his roof. This may or may not be accurate. The text is silent on the matter.

⁵⁴One need only refer to Luke 8:43-48 to find another individual who was apprehensive of going to Jesus. Yet, overriding her fear, she went.

present to heal the boy, elicited the response directly from the lips of the man himself. Now, having heard it twice, once indirectly and once directly, He turned to those who had been following Him and made the statement comparing the centurion's faith to any that He had seen thus far among the people of Israel—His people who should have recognized Him. He made it once and then emphatically restated it. The unabashed faith of this Gentile centurion prompted Jesus to teach about the nature of those who will enter the kingdom and those who will be left out. People of faith will be included, people who depend on heritage and works will be excluded.

Finally, He responded directly to the centurion that he could return home, assured that what he had requested had been accomplished, just as he believed it would. Whether or not he tarried or went home is not stated. But, his messengers did return to find that the boy had, in fact, been healed that very hour.

Conclusion

The story of the faith of the centurion is one that has puzzled theologians for centuries. Attempts to harmonize the two accounts have left many without an intellectually satisfying answer. Others have produced explanations that denigrate the integrity of the human authors and therefore the integrity of the Holy Spirit who inspired the text. Both such results are unacceptable. However, as the present writer hopes he has shown, a way to reconcile the two accounts does exist without jettisoning inspiration or doing linguistic calisthenics to make it work. The answer is to begin with the assumption that, regardless of how details may appear on the surface, both accounts were given by God to man and are true. One must proceed from there to think "outside of the box" of unemotional scholarship, and consider human behavior of the persons involved in the real-life accounts recorded for posterity in the pages of sacred Scripture. Only then can one fully appreciate the greatness of how God has delivered His Word and the teaching contained therein.