

We notice that the quotation from Calvin's Commentary on Matt. 27:9 begins with the words: "How the name of Jeremiah crept in I confess that I do not know." Calvin does not say, "How Matthew came to say that Jeremiah had said these words," but rather, "How the name of Jeremiah crept in." Surely this wording implies that the name of Jeremiah is not a part of what Matthew originally wrote, but crept in later. It is possible, of course, that Matthew wrote the word "Zechariah," and that a sleepy scribe, making one of the earliest copies of the manuscript, wrote the name Jeremiah by mistake. Anyone who has done much copying will find himself occasionally making such mistakes. A copyist can even think the name of one prophet and write a different name. This will not seem strange to anyone who has spent much time preparing manuscripts or reading proof. It is equally possible that Matthew did not actually name any prophet, but merely said, "which was spoken by the prophet," and that a copyist later inserted the word Jeremiah by mistake. Such an assumption would be quite in line with Matthew's practice in four other cases (cf. Matt. 1:22; 2:5, 15; 21:4).

Calvin's next sentence is equally revealing: "The passage itself plainly shows that the name of Jeremiah has been put down by mistake, instead of Zechariah." Calvin does not say, "Matthew has wrongly attributed the quotation to Jeremiah," but, "the name of Jeremiah has been put down by mistake." In both sentences Calvin's terminology infers that he is referring to a mistake by a later scribe, and carefully avoids any suggestion that Matthew was in error in writing the original copy. There is nothing in what Calvin said that in the slightest way contradicts the strong statement quoted just above, where Calvin declared that the Bible comes from the hand of God, and "has nothing belonging to man mixed with it."

Two sentences further down McCarter asserts: "Calvin does not try to explain that we do not have the original text and that the quotation would probably be correct in the original." Does the fact that Calvin does not feel it necessary to mention these facts here prove that Calvin does not believe them? Surely it could be easily seen from other writings of Calvin that he was familiar with these matters. Calvin never says that Matthew made an error here or anywhere else. He simply recognizes an error in the copying. He does not feel it necessary in every such case to give a full explanation of how the error came in, or as he says, even to give himself much trouble to inquire. He is interested in knowing the precise meaning that God has in mind. He simply points out that it is perfectly clear that this quotation is from Zechariah and not from Jeremiah. It is quite illogical to conclude, as McCarter does, that "Inerrancy or perfection to him apparently had nothing to do with this kind of thing."

Both of these books are equally inspired. Since the quotation is therefore a true statement of God, free from error, what great difference does it make that this obvious error crept into the manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel in the course of copying. Calvin believes that the Bible, as originally written, is entirely free from error, but his major interest is to determine what it means, rather than to try to track down how a particular error may have come into later copies. For McCarter to use this as an evidence that Calvin did not believe in Biblical inerrancy (and that right after quoting a passage in which Calvin strongly asserts that he does) is to throw all logic to the winds.