

BIBLE STUDY ADDENDUM FOR FURTHER STUDY

SILVER

The silver imagery in Psalm 12:6 emphasizes absolute purity. The psalmist compares God's words to silver refined through seven cycles of purification—not ordinary silver, but metal stripped of all impurities through repeated smelting. Since seven symbolizes perfection in biblical symbolism, this conveys that God's words contain “not even a trace of dross.”¹

The comparison works because silver held tremendous value in the ancient world and required intense heat—over 1,760 degrees Fahrenheit—to separate it from baser metals like copper and lead.² Early Christian interpreters understood the metaphor this way: just as fire purifies silver of all defilement, God's commands emerge “sincere and unaffected by falsehood.”³

Critically, the analogy focuses on the end product rather than implying God's words were originally impure and required refinement.⁴ The contrast is deliberate—God's truthful speech stands against the wicked who speak “with flattering lips and with a double heart.”² The psalmist uses the plural “words” to emphasize not just the general message but its details, suggesting that every component of God's communication carries this absolute purity.²

The silver metaphor thus functions as a claim about the trustworthiness of Scripture itself. God's assurance to the faithful ultimately rests on his promises—his words, which are flawless, refined through a sevenfold purification process.⁵

1

Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya; Grand Rapids, MI: WordAlive Publishers; Zondervan, 2006), 623.

2

Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology: Revelation and God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 1:378.

3

Craig A. Blaising and Carmen S. Hardin, eds., *Psalms 1–50, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 102.

4

C. Hassell Bullock, *Psalms 1–72*, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, *Teach the Text Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 1:82.

5

Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms* (Revised Edition), ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 168.

The Westminster Confession of Faith emerged in the 1640s from an assembly of 151 theologians—primarily Presbyterians and Puritans—gathered at Westminster Abbey¹. The assembly convened in 1643 and deliberated for three years before Parliament approved it in December 1646, with the final authorized version published in April 1647².

The document presents a systematic exposition of Calvinism from a Puritan perspective, addressing core doctrines including the Trinity, Christ’s sacrificial death and resurrection, sola scriptura, and sola fide¹. Comprising thirty-three chapters, it represents a major codification of Reformed theology originating from Zwingli and Calvin³. Notably, it was the first confessional statement to fully expound federal theology, and it marked a significant shift by concentrating substantially on personal salvation and the order of salvation rather than focusing primarily on doctrinal controversies³.

The Confession’s significance lies in its enduring institutional and theological influence. It became the official doctrinal statement of the Church of Scotland in 1690, a position it retains². Baptists and Congregationalists adapted it as a basis for their own doctrinal statements¹, and nearly every Presbyterian church worldwide has adopted it as a principal subordinate standard, including the original North American Synod in 1729³. Despite disagreements among its framers, the divines produced a monumental document that has instructed and influenced Presbyterian churches globally, shaping Presbyterianism even more profoundly than Calvin’s Institutes⁴. Many consider it the finest statement of

systematic theology ever formulated by the Christian church, and it remains a prime doctrinal standard for Protestants and evangelicals¹.

1

Got Questions Ministries, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2014–2021). [See [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#).]

2

Gerald Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation* (James Clarke & Co, 2019), 438.

3

A. T. B. McGowan, “Westminster Confession and Standards,” in *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, ed. Martin Davie et al. (London; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; InterVarsity Press, 2016), 957.

4

Joel R. Beeke, *Living for God’s Glory: An Introduction to Calvinism* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), 27.

CONFESSIONS

The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (also called the Second London Confession)¹ stands as the primary Baptist confession, and it maintains substantial theological alignment with the Westminster Confession while asserting distinctive Baptist convictions.

English Particular Baptists produced this confession in 1677 by closely mirroring the Westminster Confession and following the 1658 Congregational revision known as the Savoy Declaration.¹ The Baptists wrote this confession to identify themselves publicly with their Reformed and Puritan brothers while asserting their distinctive Congregationalist and Baptist theology.¹ Published in 1689 with signatures from prominent Baptist leaders like William Kiffin and Benjamin Keach, it was later adopted by American Baptists meeting in Philadelphia in 1742, becoming known as the Philadelphia Confession.¹

The theological overlap is substantial. Adapted from the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration, the confession seeks to expound Reformed doctrine yet offers significant modification regarding the doctrine of the church and the sacraments, especially baptism.² The 1689 confession represents evidence that the earliest Baptists were indebted to the classic Christology they inherited from the Reformers and earlier theologians.³ On core doctrines—the Trinity, Christology, salvation—the confessions speak with remarkable unity.

The major differences between the Westminster Confession and the Baptist Confession of 1689 are on the subjects of baptism, the Lord's Supper and church government.⁴ Rather than wholesale rejection of Presbyterian theology, Baptists refined specific ecclesiological practices while maintaining Reformed orthodoxy. This confession was able to express the common faith Particular Baptists shared with others having a Reformed heritage and also articulate their distinctive doctrines.⁵

1

Paul M. Smalley, "Reformed, Puritan, and Baptist: A Comparison of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith to the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith," *Puritan Reformed Journal* Volume 2, ed. Joel R. Beeke (2010), 2:2:121–122.

2

Nate Pickowicz, *Christ & Creed: The Early Church Creeds & Their Value for Today* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2023), 96.

3

R. Lucas Stamps, "Baptists, Classic Christology, and the Christian Tradition," in *Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Toward an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity*, ed. Matthew Y. Emerson, Christopher W. Morgan, and R. Lucas Stamps (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020). [See here.]

4

Ernest C. Reisinger and D. Matthew Allen, *A Quiet Revolution: A Chronicle of Beginnings of Reformation in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2000), 97.

5

Stan Reeves, *Confessing the Faith: The 1689 Baptist Confession for the 21st Century* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2012), 8–9.

The three confessions diverge significantly on baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and church governance—areas where Baptist ecclesiology departed from Presbyterian structures.

Baptism represents the most fundamental difference. The Baptist Confession restricts baptism to “those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ”¹, whereas Westminster allowed infant baptism based on covenant continuity. Baptists changed “sacrament” to “ordinance” and omitted references to “regeneration” and “the covenant of grace”—terminology Presbyterians used to justify infant baptism by linking baptism to circumcision¹. Additionally, the Baptist Confession declares that “immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance”¹, while Westminster permitted sprinkling or pouring.

The Lord’s Supper shows similar but less dramatic divergence. The Baptist Confession follows Westminster closely except for substituting “ordinance” for “sacrament” throughout, and it omits Westminster’s condemnation of “private masses,” probably because some Baptists believed administering communion to the homebound was legitimate¹. The shift from “sacrament” to “ordinance” reflects Baptist resistance to sacramental theology.

Church government reveals the deepest structural difference. The Baptist Confession omits Westminster’s chapters on church censures and synods and councils². Instead, when churches face doctrinal disputes, messengers may meet for advice, but these assembled messengers possess no church power or jurisdiction to impose determinations on churches or officers². This reflects Baptist congregationalism—each local church retains autonomy—against Presbyterian hierarchical structures where higher assemblies exercised binding authority.

1

Paul M. Smalley, “Reformed, Puritan, and Baptist: A Comparison of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith to the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* Volume 2, ed. Joel R. Beeke (2010), 2:2:138–139.

2

Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882), 740–741.

The Old Testament contains 39 books organized into four categories: law, history, poetry, and prophets.¹ More specifically:

Law: 5 books — Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy¹

History: 12 books — Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther¹

Poetry: 5 books — Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs¹

Prophets: 17 books — Divided into 5 Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel) and 12 Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)¹

The New Testament comprises 27 books in four sections: Gospels, history, epistles (letters), and apocalyptic/prophecy.¹ The breakdown is:

Gospels: 4 books — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John¹

History: 1 book — Acts¹

Epistles: 21 books — 13 Pauline letters (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon) and 8 General letters (Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude)¹

BIBLE STRUCTURE

Apocalyptic/Prophecy: 1 book — Revelation¹

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Apocalyptic/Prophecy: 1 book — Revelation¹

1

Todd Hampson, *The Non-Prophet's Guide to the Bible: A Visual Journey Through God's Story...and Where You Fit In* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2022), 19–20.

The hope in Hebrews 6:18–19 operates as a stabilizing force grounded in God's immutable character and Christ's completed work. This hope is described as “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,” entering into the place behind the veil—a radical reorientation of what hope means in Christian experience.

The Nature of This Hope

Unlike worldly hope, which is mere wishing with no anchor, Christian hope in Christ goes before us into heaven, where it is anchored in God's unchanging character and his sworn oath¹. Hope itself involves a paradox: what is seen is not hope, but when we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (Rom 8:24–25). This distinguishes biblical hope from mere optimism—it concerns realities not yet visible but divinely guaranteed.

The Anchor Metaphor

The anchor image carries profound weight. Unlike ordinary anchors that descend into the sea, this anchor ascends into heaven, going to a place unseen yet visible by faith¹. In ancient harbors, a “forerunner” vessel carried the ship's anchor into the harbor and

dropped it, securing the larger ship from storms while it awaited the tide—the entrance of the forerunner was the pledge that the ship would safely enter¹. Christ, our forerunner, has entered heaven itself, tearing asunder everything separating sinners from God’s presence, pledging that we too shall enter God’s dwelling place¹.

Security and Assurance

The anchor rests firmly in the holy of holies, God’s very presence, making believers’ hope of salvation secured by an anchor already in God’s presence—this makes assurance of final salvation certain². As our High Priest, Jesus serves as the anchor of our souls, forever keeping us from drifting away from God³. Jesus blazed a trail through sin’s barrier by his perfect life and atoning death, then ascended to reign as a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek—never to be replaced, never to fail, never to die¹.

The hope here transcends personal desire; it embodies the objective reality of Christ’s accomplished redemption and God’s unbreakable promises.

1

Richard D. Phillips, Hebrews, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 216–217.

2

Robert A. Peterson, Our Secure Salvation: Preservation and Apostasy, ed. Robert A. Peterson, Explorations in Biblical Theology (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 87.

3

John MacArthur Jr., Saved without a Doubt, MacArthur Study Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 18.

LIES

A lie fundamentally serves deception—it aims to create false belief in another person’s mind. A lie is a statement not in accordance with the mind of the speaker, made with the intention of deceiving.¹ Beyond this basic function, lies operate within broader human motivations: self-protection, personal gain, avoiding consequences, or—in some ethical frameworks—attempting to prevent harm.

From a Christian theological standpoint, lying has no legitimate purpose. It is the loveless misuse of language and the means for communicating the thoughts of the heart, with the design of deceiving one’s neighbor. It injures love, therefore one’s own heart, and one’s neighbor; it injures fellowship and truth.² Lying is explicitly stated to be the devil’s work.³

Importantly, the search results reveal historical theological debate about whether lies might serve protective purposes in emergencies. Some church fathers, including Origen, Hilary of Poitiers, Jerome, and Chrysostom, held that a lie may be lawful in order to save an innocent man from death.¹ However, Augustine emphasizes that lying is always sinful because it perverts the nature of human speech, which is meant to express man’s thought, not to disguise it.¹

The Christian tradition ultimately rejects the notion that lying serves any genuinely good purpose. While people may intend lies to accomplish protective or beneficial ends, the act itself corrupts both the speaker and the community’s capacity for trust and truthfulness.

1

Kevin L. Flannery SJ, “Lying,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Andrew Louth (Oxford, United Kingdom; New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 1179.

2

John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 173.

3

Joseph Möller and Waldemar Molinski, “Truth,” in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. Adolf Darlap (New York; London: Burns & Oates; Herder and Herder, 1968–1970), 6:315.

Rahab’s lie presents one of Scripture’s most compelling tensions regarding deception. When the king of Jericho demanded she produce the Israelite spies, Rahab claimed the men had departed at nightfall while she concealed them on her roof beneath flax stalks (Josh 2:1–7)—a direct falsehood told to protect innocent lives.

Yet Scripture treats Rahab’s action with remarkable approval. Hebrews 11:31 commends her by faith, noting she “perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.” More strikingly, James 2:25 declares she was “justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way.” Her lie is never condemned; instead, her faith and protective action are celebrated.

This creates genuine interpretive complexity. Scripture elsewhere unambiguously condemns lying—Proverbs 12:22 declares “lying lips are abomination to the LORD,” and a lying tongue appears among things the Lord hates (Prov 6:16–19). Yet Rahab’s deception receives commendation rather than rebuke.

CIRCULAR REASONING

The charge of circular reasoning deserves a serious response rather than dismissal. Arguments about final authority in any sphere cannot logically avoid circularity if they’re to remain coherent¹—this isn’t a flaw unique to Scripture but a structural feature of all ultimate truth claims.

The key insight is that when basic worldviews are defended, circularity becomes unavoidable because our foundational beliefs are employed even as we defend them, and this applies equally to Christians and non-Christians². Consider the skeptic’s position: if someone rejects biblical authority by appealing to reason, empirical evidence, or historical analysis, they’re actually placing that standard as their ultimate authority. Every argument about chief authorities must be “circular” in some sense—an unbeliever judges evidence by standards he assumes are authoritative, making himself the ultimate judge³.

The Christian response isn't to deny circularity but to reframe it. All reasoning is circular reasoning; people move from their basic presuppositions through interpreted facts and back to their presuppositions again⁴. The circularity of appealing to Scripture is only formal—an appeal to Scripture is fundamentally an appeal to God himself, since Scripture commends itself as God's written word¹.

The crucial distinction is between which circle you're reasoning within. Starting with the Bible as self-authoritative and self-attesting is not a lesser form of argument—it's a choice between God's revelation and man's reason as the ultimate reference point³. For the Christian, the Bible as ultimate authority is self-attesting and needs no higher validation; appealing to something else to justify Scripture actually forfeits biblical authority by replacing it with another standard².

Rather than a weakness, this framework reveals that the real question isn't whether reasoning is circular, but whose authority anchors the circle.

The resolution likely centers on what Rahab prioritized: her primary act was receiving and protecting the spies—an expression of faith in Israel's God. The lie functioned as a secondary means to accomplish that protective purpose. The biblical texts emphasize her faith and her sheltering action, not her deception. This suggests Scripture distinguishes between the sin of lying and the righteousness of faith-driven protection, even when the two become entangled.

Rahab's story doesn't justify lying generally; rather, it illustrates that God's grace can work through imperfect human choices when faith and protection of the innocent motivate them. Her lie remains morally problematic, yet her faith and courage overshadow that failure in Scripture's assessment.

Concurrence

he passages you've cited illustrate concurrence, but they depict God and Satan in fundamentally asymmetrical roles rather than as equal primary and secondary agents.

In Genesis 50:20, Joseph acknowledges that while his brothers intended harm, God directed the same events toward good—establishing a model where human malice and divine purpose operate simultaneously on the same deed, yet with opposite moral intentions. In Job 1, Satan appears before God and receives permission to afflict Job, with God explicitly setting boundaries on Satan's actions.

The theological framework here reveals a crucial distinction: concurrence describes God's operation with created things, causing them to act through their properties¹, but this doesn't make all agents equal participants. God functions as the primary cause while creatures serve as secondary causes². Satan, in the Job narrative, operates entirely within divinely-imposed constraints—God permits Satan access to Job's possessions but restricts him from harming Job's person (Job 1:6–12).

The critical difference emerges in agency and authority. God and man hold different ends in concurrence: God's purpose is often gracious while man's may be base and unworthy³. Satan's role in Job exemplifies this subordination: God concurred with Satan in Job's affliction for the purpose of clearing Job's integrity, while Satan aimed only at provoking Job to curse God³. Satan operates as an instrument within God's sovereign design, not as a co-equal agent.

Rather than "primary and secondary," the relationship is better understood as sovereign and subordinate. Satan's purposes and those of other agents fit within God's plan, yet God bears no responsibility for their evil—everyone acts according to their own desires while working under God's governance⁴.

1

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 220.

2

Louis Berkhof, Summary of Christian Doctrine (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans publishing co., 1938), 60.

3

Stephen Charnock, The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: James Nichol; James Nisbet and Co.; W. Robertson; G. Herbert, 1864–1866), 2:234.

4

R.C. Sproul, Before the Face of God: Book 2: A Daily Guide for Living from the Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; Ligonier Ministries, 1993). [See here.]

NUMBER DIFFERENCES

The numerical discrepancies you’ve identified—Jehoiachin’s age (8 vs. 18), Solomon’s stalls (4,000 vs. 40,000), the molten sea (2,000 vs. 3,000), and similar variations—are best explained through transcriptional error rather than a single unified cause.

These discrepancies almost certainly stem from copyist errors that developed early in the manuscript tradition¹. When comparing parallel accounts in Samuel-Kings with Chronicles, examples include 1 Chronicles 19:18 reporting David killed “7,000 charioteers” while 2 Samuel 10:18 says “700,” and 2 Chronicles 9:25 claiming Solomon had “4,000 stalls” whereas 1 Kings 4:26 states “40,000 stalls”¹. Similarly, 2 Chronicles 36:9 says Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king, while 2 Kings 24:8 declares he was eighteen¹.

The pattern suggests mechanical copying errors—particularly confusion of similar Hebrew numerals or scribal mishearing during dictation—rather than deliberate alterations or theological disagreements between authors. J. Barton Payne found that among eleven cases of numerical disagreement between Chronicles and

Samuel/Kings due to copyist errors, Chronicles was correct in only five instances, with one remaining uncertain¹.

Some scholars propose alternative explanations. The Hebrew word ‘elph, meaning “thousand,” can also mean “clan” or tribal unit, so some large numbers might represent units rather than literal thousands¹. However, this solution has limitations. One passage may be exact while another represents an approximation, and figures are often not meant to be precise but taken as generalized statements².

The most straightforward explanation remains that these are unintentional copying errors introduced during manuscript transmission, not contradictions inherent to the original biblical texts.

1

Walter C. Kaiser Jr, Recovering the Unity of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 44–45.

2

Donald G. Bloesch, Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 110.

what about Ahaziah's age, the census of Israel, the famine in 2sam24.13 and 1chr21.12, and the molten sea 1kings7.26 and 2chr4.5?

The specific discrepancies you’ve identified reveal a consistent pattern: across 629 recorded numbers in Chronicles, only 20 diverge from the Samuel–Kings version¹, suggesting these are isolated transmission issues rather than systemic problems.

Ahaziah’s age presents a clear case. 2 Kings 8:26 states Ahaziah was twenty-two when he began to reign, while 2 Chronicles 22:2 reports he was forty-two. This appears to be a copyist error, likely involving confusion of similar Hebrew numerals.

The census figures show more complexity. 2 Samuel 24:9 reports 800,000 in Israel and 500,000 in Judah, whereas 1 Chronicles 21:5 gives 1.1 million for Israel and 470,000 for Judah². The difference in Israel's total may be accounted for by assuming the 800,000 figure did not include the 300,000 listed in 1 Chronicles 27, which if added would agree with the 1.1 million total².

The famine duration offers the clearest resolution. 2 Samuel 24:13 offers seven years of famine while 1 Chronicles 21:12 offers three years, and the Septuagint translation says three years in both places, so likely the figure in 2 Samuel is a scribal error². Though copies were very carefully made, errors inevitably crept in, but this is not an error in the original—that was inerrant when it was written².

The molten sea involves a mathematical challenge. The laver's circumference is given as thirty cubits and the diameter as ten cubits, but circumference arrived at by multiplying diameter by pi yields more than the stated measurement, an apparent contradiction³. One resolution suggests that “in the culture of the day the measurement was not only accurate, but also ‘inerrant’”³—meaning ancient measurements used rounded rather than mathematically precise figures.

These differences are most likely due to transmission challenges or an intentional shift in writing style, and neither minimizes the authority of the summations in question¹.

¹ Adam B. Dooley, *Exalting Jesus in 1 and 2 Chronicles*, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary* (Brentwood, TN: Holman Reference, 2024), 12–13.

² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 111.

³ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *What You Should Know about Inerrancy* (Willow Grove, PA: Woodlawn Electronic Publishing, 1998), 88.

The census figures differ significantly between the two accounts: 2 Samuel reports 800,000 men in Israel and 500,000 in Judah, while 1 Chronicles records 1,100,000 in Israel and 470,000 in Judah.¹ The discrepancy stems from what groups were included in each count.

The 2 Samuel total excluded Israel's standing army of 288,000 and an additional 12,000 troops attached to Jerusalem; when these are added to the 800,000, the total reaches the 1,100,000 figure found in Chronicles.¹ Similarly, the 470,000 figure for Judah in Chronicles did not include 30,000 men from Judah's standing army, which the Chronicler explicitly notes by pointing out that Joab failed to complete the count of Judah's forces.¹ Both calculations are accurate based on which military units each report included or excluded.¹

Beyond the numerical differences, the accounts diverge on other details. 2 Samuel attributes the census to God's incitement, while 1 Chronicles credits Satan's provocation.² Rather than treating these as contradictory, both can be true simultaneously—David performed one action, but different agents may have had different motivations behind it.³ David's desire to assess his military strength reflected pride in his own power rather than reliance on God, a motivation Satan would have encouraged while God intended to correct.³

1

Norman L. Geisler and Thomas A. Howe, *When Critics Ask : A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1992), 178.

2

Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), 681.

3

John S. Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place: The Doctrine of Scripture*, ed. John S. Feinberg, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 300.

The theological framework of concurrence addresses precisely this question—how God and secondary agents (including Satan) can both be genuinely active without God becoming responsible for evil.

Christian theology teaches that secondary causes remain strictly subordinated to God as the primary cause while nevertheless remaining true causes.¹ This isn't a matter of God simply controlling everything like a puppet master. Rather, God makes every secondary cause possible and is present in it throughout, positioning it into action and accompanying it in its working while leading it to its effect.¹ Crucially, God's energizing activity in secondary causes is so powerful that it actually stirs those secondary causes into activity of their own.¹

The relationship between God and Satan's agency in David's census illustrates this principle. Satan and evildoers are not merely instruments of God that prevent them from acting in their own behalf; God works in an iniquitous agent as a thinking creature according to the nature God gave him, so that when God works in evildoers, that does not prevent them from working also in their own behalf.¹

However, theologians have debated whether God's concurrence extends equally to evil acts. Some argue that in an agent's determination to sin there is a suspension of divine efficacy along with a specific enabling permission of God, where God ontologically sustains the secondary cause and enables capacity for causation, but acts with rather than determining the secondary cause's action.² Others maintain that God concurs in producing the effect but not the defect—furnishing the power through which action could become good, while the application and direction of that power belongs to human freedom.³

In David's case, both God and Satan acted—Satan inciting rebellion, God permitting it to expose David's pride—without either negating the other's genuine agency.

1

Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, and John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 613–614.

2

Keith D. Stanglin et al., *Reconsidering Arminius: Beyond the Reformed and Wesleyan Divide* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2014). [See here.]

3

Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Verified from the Original Sources*, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Publication Society, 1889), 193.