

A Computer Test of Theomatics

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In 1977, two Christian authors, Jerry Lucas and Del Washburn, published a book titled *Theomatics: God's Best Kept Secret Revealed*. The authors claimed that **Theomatics** (God's mathematics) would scientifically prove that "a Mind— far beyond human capabilities and understanding— planned, constructed, and formed every word in the Bible." (book jacket)

Within the Bible there is a mathematical design, which reveals God's divine origin of authorship in such a way that the faith of Christians can be built up and strengthened in a brand-new way. This mathematical design we call 'theomatics,' and it means the 'mathematics, or numbers, of God' (p. 21).

The specific structure of **Theomatics** is as follows:

Number Codes

The letters of the Greek alphabet were also used by the ancients to express numbers. Each letter had its own number value. From this it follows that each word in our New Testament Greek Bible (**Theomatics** uses the Nestlé text, Marshall, 1958) has a number value which can be obtained by adding up the letter values in the word. In turn, each phrase or sentence of Greek text would have a numerical value which could be obtained by adding the word values.

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The basic claim of **Theomatics** is that there is an identifiable relationship between the theological **meaning** of Scripture passages and phrases and their corresponding numerical values.

For instance, the famous Bible number 666 has to do with the antichrist. Lucas and Washburn claim that Scripture words, phrases and passages having to do with the antichrist will have a greater than chance tendency to be divisible by 666. They don't claim that every antichrist passage will divide by 666, but that more of them will than would be expected by chance. Other numbers used in Theomatics include:

- 888 - a number derived from the Greek for **Jesus**.
- 111 - a number derived from 888 and related to **Jesus**.
- 153 - a number having to do with **fish** (John 21:11).
- 100 - a number derived from the Greek for **sight**.
- 276 - a number derived from the Greek for **Satan**.

Complications and Qualifications

Two complicating aspects of Theomatics are presented in the book. The first has to do with what the authors call "clustering." In calculating the division of phrase totals by key numbers, the authors included not only direct "hits" (i.e., exact multiples), but also those that were one or two numbers off. Thus, if the key number is 100 (a passage dealing with light), then a passage total of 1000 would be a direct hit ($100 \times 10 = 1000$). But 998, 999, 1001 and 1002 were also counted as hits. The authors claim that an unexpectedly high percentage of hits are "direct hits" rather than one or

two numbers off. This I shall refer to as the “clustering hypothesis.”

The second complicating factor has to do with the treatment of the Greek articles “a” and “the” in the Scripture passages examined. Lucas and Washburn argue that since they are redundant in Greek (“the dog” translates the same as “dog” because the article is inherent in the way the Greek forms the word “dog”), they can be included or excluded in calculating for theomatic hits. Thus, the phrase “the dog chased the cat” would have four possible numeric values instead of only one:

The	dog	chased	the	cat.
	dog	chased	the	cat.
The	dog	chased		cat.
	dog	chased		cat.

This controversial feature, of course, vastly increases the possible number of theomatic values to be tested. For example, a phrase having seven articles would yield 128 numeric values. The problem is, therefore, far beyond the means of an individual calculating and searching for hits by hand. For this reason the present author prepared a computer program that would allow thousands of theomatic calculations to be conducted in a short period of time. In this way it was possible to test the claims of Theomatics and see if they work out the way Jerry Lucas and Del Washburn believe.

The results of these calculations show clearly that Theomatics **does not work**. The pattern of results, after thousands of calculations on all key numbers and aspects of the theomatic hypothesis, is clearly random. I believe that this author’s research refutes Theomatics in all its aspects.

I wish to emphasize, however, that on the basis of my research, I do not believe that the authors of **Theomatics** were consciously fraudulent in their claims. The work by the authors of **Theomatics** was done by hand and not with benefit of high speed computer. It is only when the procedure is computerized that the calculations can be performed objectively and in sufficient number to see that it doesn't work out.¹

Research Results

Independent tests of the Theomatic hypothesis

A total of 25 Bible verses relating to Judas and antichrist were selected using *Cruden's Complete Concordance*. The verses are as follows:

Matt. 10:4	Luke 6:16	Acts 1:25
Matt. 24:24	Luke 22:3	II Thess. 2:3-4
Matt. 26:14	Luke 22:47	II Thess. 2:8
Matt. 26:47	John 6:71	I John 2:18
Matt. 27:3	John 13:2	I John 2:22
Mark 3:19	John 13:26	I John 4:3
Mark 13:22	John 17:12	II John 7
Mark 14:10	John 18:5	
Mark 14:43	Acts 1:16	

Using the procedures specified in **Theomatics**, a total of 568 separate Judas and antichrist verses were selected and divided by the key antichrist number 666. By chance alone one would expect 4.26 of these calculations to be "hits." This is obtained by dividing 5 (the range of allowed hit

numbers, i.e., direct hit plus or minus one and two) by 666 which is the key number. This yields the probability of a hit on any given phrase. This value is then multiplied by the number of combinations to yield the expected number of hits. Thus:

$$\left(\frac{\text{Hit Range}}{\text{Key Number}} \right) \times \left(\text{Number of Combinations} \right) = \text{Expected Number of Hits}$$

OR in the present case:

$$\left(\frac{5}{666} \right) \times \left(568 \right) = 4.26$$

The actual number of hits was five. As an additional test these 568 Judas and antichrist passages were divided by the key numbers for Satan (276) and Jesus (111). The expected number of hits by chance alone for 276 would be 10.29. The obtained number was six. For 111, on the other hand, the expected number of hits would be 25.59 and the obtained number was 34! Thus, for antichrist and Judas verses, the Satan and antichrist numbers show up at near or below the chance level while the Theomatics number for Jesus turns up slightly more often than expected. Theomatics fails this test.

As another test, 40 verses dealing with Satan were select-

ed from the *Cruden's Complete Concordance*. The verses are as follows:

Matt. 4:1	Mark 4:15	II Cor. 12:7
Matt. 4:8	Mark 5:15	II Cor. 11:14
Matt. 4:10	Mark 5:16	Eph. 4:27
Matt. 4:11	Mark 5:18	I Thess. 2:18
Matt. 9:32	Mark 7:29	II Thess. 2:9
Matt. 12:22	Luke 4:2	I Tim. 3:7
Matt. 12:26	Luke 8:12	II Tim. 2:26
Matt. 13:39	Luke 10:18	Heb. 2:14
Matt. 16:23	Luke 22:31	I Peter 5:8
Matt. 17:18	John 13:2	I John 3:8
Matt. 25:41	John 13:27	I John 3:10
Mark 1:13	I Cor. 5:5	Jude 9
Mark 3:23	I Cor. 7:5	
Mark 3:26	II Cor. 2:11	

Using standard Theomatic procedures, a total of 180 Satan and Devil phrases were selected and divided by the key number for Satan (276). The expected number of hits on these 180 phrases would be:

$$\left(\frac{5}{276} \right) \times (180) = 3.26$$

The obtained number of hits was 2. Theomatics fails this test.

As another test of the Theomatics hypothesis, 36 key

verses regarding our Lord Jesus Christ were selected. The verses selected are as follows:

Matt. 1:21	Luke 2:40	John 18:37
Matt. 1:23	Luke 2:52	John 19:3
Matt. 1:25	John 1:1	John 19:19
Matt. 2:2	John 1:14	Acts 1:9
Matt. 2:23	John 1:29	Acts 9:5
Matt. 3:17	John 1:34	I John 2:1
Luke 2:11	Heb. 1:5	I John 2:2
Luke 2:16	Gal. 1:3	Rev. 1:8
Luke 2:21	Rom. 1:4	Rev. 1:17
Luke 2:30	John 14:6	Rev. 1:18
Luke 2:31	John 15:1	Rev. 14:1
Luke 2:34	John 16:28	Rev. 22:16

From these verses a total of 646 phrases concerning Jesus were selected and divided by the key number 111. The expected number of hits would be 29.10. The obtained number of hits was 28. Theomatics simply doesn't work.

The failure of Theomatics applies also to the "clustering hypothesis." Lucas and Washburn claimed that the "hits" tended to be direct rather than off by one or two even though these near misses were still counted and have been included here. As an example of this failure, consider the present data regarding the 646 Jesus phrases. The expected number of direct hits would be 5.6.

$$\left(\frac{1}{111} \right) \times (646) = 5.6$$

The expected number of plus or minus one hits would be 11.2.

$$\left(\frac{2}{111} \right) \times (646) = 11.2$$

The expected number of plus or minus two hits would be the same 11.2. The obtained number of direct hits was 6. The obtained number of one-off and two-off hits respectively were 10 and 12. The clustering hypothesis is simply not supported by the data.

Examination of Data Presented in Theomatics

The question that remains in examining the Theomatic hypothesis is how one is to account for the impressive data reported in the book *Theomatics*. There is even endorsement by a well credentialed mathematician, Dr. LaVerne W. Stanton, Associate Professor and Chairman of the Department of Quantitative Methods at California State University, Fullerton. The answer is that there is nothing wrong with the mathematics in **Theomatics**. The problem lies in the way the verses were selected. The calculating and searching for hits were done by hand rather than with a computer.² The result is that the investigator can easily lose track of the number of phrases examined in order to find the hits. When a computer is used, all phrases must be precisely identified in advance. Then when probabilities are calculated, the expected number by chance alone can be accurately known. This is the only proper way to test the idea. The problem with **Theomatics** is that the number of com-

binations is vastly greater than that reported in the text (although I believe through no intentional misleading by the authors).

As an example, consider the three verses—Luke 1:31, 32 and 33 (actual work, of course, used the Greek text):

1:31 - And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

1:32 - He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

1:33 - And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Taking this passage as a whole and applying the specified Theomatics procedure, this author identified 248 phrases related to our Lord. Dividing each of these 248 phrase totals by the key number for Jesus (111), one would expect 11.17 hits by chance alone. The actual number obtained was 11. Lucas and Washburn (pages 267 and 312), however, identify only 20 phrases from this passage! First of all, Luke 1:32 is left out entirely. Then Luke 1:31 and 1:33 are dealt with separately. Luke 1:33 generates four phrases, none of which is a hit. Lucas and Washburn present Luke 1:33 as one of the rare Jesus verses that has no hits (page 312). Luke 1:31, however, yields 16 phrases, one of which is a hit. This is slightly above the expected value of 0.7 (page 267). This, of course, is a minimal positive effect, but if one continues to select verses with this slight, though quite possibly unin-

tentional bias, the effect begins to look very significant in a statistical sense. This author knows from experience gained in calculating Theomatic values, prior to completion of the computer program, that this is a very easy trap to fall in. On the basis of studying the book and calculating by hand, this author was persuaded that Theomatics was very possibly true. It was only when forced to specify and keep track of all the phrases in advance for rapid computer calculation, that this author became painfully aware of the failure of the claims of Theomatics. It is this personal experience that causes me to readily accept the honesty and integrity of Lucas and Washburn.

As a final example of the selection bias difficulty in Theomatics, consider Matthew 1:21:

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Using the rules of Theomatics, this author identified 67 phrases in the Greek text. The expected number of hits for these 67 phrases for the key number 111 is three. The actual number obtained was one.

Lucas and Washburn also deal with this verse (page 264), but only with the first half of it. The phrase “for he shall save his people from their sins” is omitted. The remaining part yields 12 combinations with one hit. The expected value would be only 0.54, so once again, the part reported contributes to an overall impression of statistical significance.

Impossible Hits

One other problem with Theomatics that was discovered

in the process of this research was the occurrence of hits that seemed theologically impossible and even blasphemous. For example, this author ran the 646 Jesus phrases listed above on the key numbers for Satan (276) and antichrist (666) and obtained the following hits:

“He shall be called a Nazarene” - Hits on Satan (276)

“Thy salvation” - Hits on Satan (276)

“Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be spoken against” - Hits on antichrist (666)

“And she will bear a son and thou shalt call the name of him Jesus” - Hits on Satan (276)

“The Son of God” - Hits on Satan (276)

“The true vine” - Hits on Satan (276)

On the other hand, when the Satan and antichrist verses were run on the key number for Jesus, the following hits occurred:

“Satan” - Hits on Jesus (111)

“From the beginning the devil sins” - Hits on Jesus (111)

“This is the antichrist, the one denying the father and the son” - Hits on Jesus (111)

“This is the antichrist” - Hits on Jesus (111)

Probably the best way for an individual to check out for himself the validity of Theomatics without recourse to the expensive and time-consuming computerized procedures used in this report, would be to search the verses reported in Theomatics for “impossible hits.” You will find they are as easily found as the appropriate ones.

Conclusion

This author has examined the claims of **Theomatics** painstakingly and in detail. He set out enthusiastically and optimistically to prove Theomatics true and to perfect procedures for using it in defense of the faith. He tried every way he could think of to “make it work.” The result was clear. Theomatics does not work! Theomatics is not true!

References

Lucas, Jerry, and Washburn, Del, *Theomatics: God's Best Kept Secret Revealed*, New York: Stein and Day, 1977.

Marshall, Rev. Alfred, *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958.

Footnotes

1. Interested parties may obtain a copy of the computer program by writing the author: Dr. Paul Ackerman, Department of Psychology, Box 34, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas 67208.

2. There is nothing magic about a computer. It is just a tool for rapid calculations of problems that a programmer has already figured out precisely how to solve. A complex problem is solved and then broken down into hundreds of little steps by the programmer. Then the computer is used to solve future cases of the same problem by going through the specified steps at incredible speeds. If a computer can beat a man at chess, it is only because some other man has worked out some excellent "solutions" to the game of chess and programmed them into the computer. In this sense it is not quite accurate to say the computer beat the man at chess. It would be more accurate to say the programmer beat the man by using the high speed capabilities of the computer to rapidly perform the mathematical solutions worked out earlier.