

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Email: [Jrob1517@aol.com](mailto:Jrob1517@aol.com)

Website: [www.trinityfoundation.org](http://www.trinityfoundation.org)

Telephone: 423.743.0199

Fax: 423.743.2005

## Is the Bible a Textbook?

John W. Robbins

"In Adam's fall we sinned all" was the first line of the first textbook printed in North America, the Puritans' *New England Primer*. Russell Kirk, writing in *The Roots of American Order* (Open Court, 1974), remarked on the position of the Bible in early America:

In colonial America, everyone with the rudiments of schooling knew one book thoroughly: the Bible. And the Old Testament mattered as much as the New, for the American colonies were founded in a time of renewed Hebrew scholarship, and the Calvinistic character of Christian faith in early America emphasized the legacy of Israel (45–46).

Daniel Boorstin, in *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (Random House, 1958), pointed out that "For answers to their problems, they [the early Americans] drew as readily on *Exodus*, *Kings*, or *Romans*, [sic] as on the less narrative portions of the Bible" (19).

The Bible was *the* textbook of early America, as it has been for Christians throughout the centuries. Today, however, it is fashionable and sophisticated to assert that the Bible is not a textbook of biology, or of politics, or of economics, or of whatever discipline the sophisticate happens to be considering. Perhaps, implies the sophisticate, in the ignorant days gone by, the Bible was sufficient for learning, but in our advanced technological age we must turn to other books in order to supplement the

Bible. "The Bible is not a textbook of..." is now a cliché that is usually uttered with an air of finality and profundity. The unspoken implication is: Who would be so ignorant or so foolish as to believe that the Bible is a textbook of anything, except, perhaps, of personal piety?

The textbook cliché tells us nothing about the Bible, but it does tell us a good deal about the person who repeats the cliché. It indicates that he is thoughtless enough to parrot a line devised by those who wish to deprecate the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. There is no reason to deny that the Bible is a textbook unless one wishes to affirm that some other book *is* a textbook. If one is speaking of biology, then perhaps it is Darwin or, more recently, Wilson that has written a textbook. If one is speaking of politics, then perhaps it is Rousseau or Aristotle or Herbert Marcuse who has authored a textbook. If economics, it might be Marx or Mises. Whatever the case, the only possible reason one can have for saying that "the Bible is not a textbook of..." is to preserve some area of thought for non-Scriptural, *i.e.*, non-Christian ideas. The cliché is a result of refusing to acknowledge the authority of Scripture in every area of thought (faith) and life (practice). Christians ought to recognize the cliché for what it is: a cliché of humanism.

Perhaps it may make this point clearer if we define "textbook," and for that we turn to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which is universally recognized as the best authority on English usage. The *O. E. D.* lists four definitions of "textbook" and several more

of "text," many of which, however, can be immediately dismissed as not relevant to the matter at hand. The first definition of "textbook" is listed simply as "(See quot.) *Obs.*" There follows a quotation in which "textbook" is used to refer to a book containing a student's handwritten copy of a master's writings—handwritten with wide margins to allow notations referring to specific points in the "text," the master's writings. The fourth definition of "textbook" is, "A book containing the libretto of a musical play or opera." These two can be ignored, for they obviously are not what the people of the cliché mean when they say that the Bible is not a textbook.

The second definition of "textbook" brings us closer to our mark, and it is reproduced here in full:

2. A book used as a standard work for the study of a particular subject, now usually one written specially for this purpose; a manual of instruction in any science or branch of study, esp. a work recognized as an authority.

In denying that the Bible is a textbook, the people of the cliché are affirming that the Bible is *not* a standard work for the study of that subject (whatever subject they are referring to), that it is *not* a manual of instruction in that subject, and that it is *not* an authority in that subject. *That* is what the textbook cliché means.

Now, someone may object that some people who use the cliché do not mean those things at all; they simply mean to say that the Bible is not *exclusively* about a certain subject, that it was not written, in the words of the *O. E. D.*, "specially for the study of a particular subject." Perhaps there are some people of the cliché who mean that, but I have never heard or read of any. That meaning is obvious—too obvious. Everyone knows that the Bible is not exclusively about politics or economics or biology. That is not the point at issue. To use the cliché with that meaning is pointless, for no one has ever thought of stating that the Bible is exclusively about any single discipline. No, the cliché is used by professed Christians against those Christians who would uphold the authority of the Scripture in every

area of thought and life. *It is used precisely for the purpose of denying Scriptural authority, and those who use it know quite well what they are doing.* They are saying that the Bible can be safely ignored whenever one moves beyond personal piety to academic disciplines. The Bible, they mean to say, is like a devotional guide; it contains nice little stories about kind people, but no one with any sense would look in a devotional for hard answers to important questions. Making an unscriptural distinction between the heart and the head, they make the Bible a book for the heart, but not for the head.

The cliché—thus understood as a denial of Biblical authority—is more ironic, for when one reads the third definition offered by the *O. E. D.*, he learns that a "textbook" is "a book containing a selection of Scriptural texts, arranged for daily use or easy reference." Scanning all the *O. E. D.* entries for "text" and "textbook," one is made conscious of the fact that the words originally referred to Scripture: The *textus* was the Bible. The Bible was the text, and one of the earliest—if not the earliest—textbooks. Reading the *O. E. D.* entries vividly shows how far modern professed Christians have departed from the faith when they deny that the Bible is a textbook.

What does this mean for us today? The answer is quite simple: If we are to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and [to] take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 *Corinthians* 10:4, 5), the Bible must once again become our textbook for every discipline. No other book will do, for to what other book shall we go? The Bible has the words of life. God has made the wisdom of this world foolishness.

The Bible itself claims to be a textbook: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 *Timothy* 3:16, 17). Notice that the Bible claims to be *sufficient*: By the study of all Scripture, the man of God may be *thoroughly* equipped for *every* good work. He is not partly equipped for every good work and in need of other textbooks, nor is he thoroughly equipped for some

good work. The Scripture is sufficient thoroughly to equip one for every good work, including the good work of politics, economics, biology, and philosophy.

Moreover, the Scripture claims to be *necessary*, for in Christ are hidden "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Notice the *all*. Scripture does not claim to be a book that needs to be supplemented by other books: *All* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge belong to Christ, and Christ has revealed some of them to us in the Scripture for our edification, for our education. Among the four items Paul lists in *2 Timothy 3:16, 17*—teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training—teaching appears first. The Scriptures are primarily a textbook. Through teaching the Scriptures to his students, a teacher can rebuke them for errors in thinking and behaving, correct erroneous and false beliefs, and train them in every good work.

*2 Timothy 3:16, 17* are only two of the hundred-plus verses in the Bible that command us to teach the Bible to each other, to our children, and to ourselves. In *Leviticus 10:11* the Lord instructs Aaron to "teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses." And of course, there is *Matthew 28:20*: "... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

The Bible most definitely regards itself as a textbook. Have we any right to do otherwise? Should we not heed this warning that Paul gives Timothy almost immediately after he has declared the authority of all Scripture? "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers [and textbooks] to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (*2 Timothy 4:3, 4*).

The Bible *is* a textbook—or rather, the Bible is *the* textbook. Let all other books conform. And let us, as Christians, reject the sophistry of those who devalue the Scriptures by making them inadequate for all our intellectual needs.

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Email: [Jrob1517@aol.com](mailto:Jrob1517@aol.com)

Website: [www.trinityfoundation.org](http://www.trinityfoundation.org)

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Fax: 423.743.2005

## Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism

Gordon H. Clark

The problem of New Testament textual criticism is very difficult, and therefore hard to explain to the general public. For a more definite reason it is also hard to explain to ministers, seminary students, and even to the professors themselves. Yet its importance and ramifications are such that the ordinary worshiper as he sits in church on Sunday mornings, or as he reads his Bible at home, cannot escape its effects.

Most Christians in this country know no Greek, but nearly all recognize that there are competing translations of the Bible. There is the *King James Version* of noble ancestry; there is the *American* and now the *New American Standard Version*; the *New International Version*; several versions that are more paraphrases than translations (all bad); the Roman Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*; and translations of all or parts of the Bible by individuals rather than by committees. Surely these different translations confuse the ordinary reader at several places. Can he find a basis for making an intelligent choice? Without guaranteeing infallibility, I think he can, sometimes.

But congregations, not to insist on individuals, during the second half of this century, have been perplexed, pummeled, plagued, and sometimes pleased by the plethora of new proposals. The session of one church banished the *King James* and ordered the pastor to use only the *New International Version* in the pulpit. A year later they discarded the *New International Version* and made the *New*

*American Standard* their official Bible. Advertisers of the several versions castigate the *King James* for its archaic terminology. True, it contains some antiquated words, though their number is usually exaggerated. The one or two new versions that merely replace an obsolete word with its contemporary counterpart are to be commended. But most of the new versions change the familiar terms simply for the sake of change. The result may be neither better nor worse: It is merely different.

### *Examples from the Old Testament*

Here are some examples. *Psalms* 3:1 reads, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me" (*KJV*). The *New American Standard* reads as, "O Lord, how my adversaries have increased." The *Revised Standard Version* puts it, "O Lord, how many are my foes." Aside from the fact that the *Revised Standard Version* omits the verb, the translations are equally accurate. The Hebrew word means both *troubles* and *adversaries*. But *troubles* is an easier and more familiar word than *adversaries*. Hence the new translation can neither claim to have replaced an obsolete word, nor even to have substituted an easier one.

*Psalms* 91:4 is another example of change for the sake of change. The new word is even less familiar to contemporary Americans than the *King James* word. The *King James* has, "He shall cover thee with his feathers." The Hebrew word means *feathers* or *wings*. The *Revised Standard Version*

and the *New American Standard* change *feathers* to *pinions*. Of course, *pinions* is a perfectly good English word, but it is less popularly used than *feathers* or *wings*. Nor is it a more accurate translation. Hence this seems to be change for the mere sake of change.

The first verse of the well known *Isaiah 53* begins with, "Who hath believed our report?" The Hebrew of the last word means *announcement, doctrine, news, report, rumor, or tidings*. The *Revised Standard Version* changes the single word to the phrase "what we have heard." This seems to make it a reference to what Isaiah heard, rather than to what he preached. The *New American Standard* makes better sense: "our message." Now, the words *message* and *report* are both common English words, so that any claim to clearer English or to the removal of archaic expressions has no basis.

To be sure, no one can legitimately forbid new translations, especially the present writer; for I have deliberately made some very harsh translations in my commentaries. The reason was to imitate Greek constructions and to shake sleepy readers out of their inattentive perusal of a printed page. Legitimate though they may be, they are not attempts to replace the *King James*, nor would they be suitable for the formal reading of the Scripture in the Sunday morning service.

## *New Testament Examples*

*Matthew 5:18*, "Till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (*KJV*). The *Revised Standard Version* has, "Till Heaven and Earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." Worse is the *New English Bible*, "So long as Heaven and Earth endure, not a letter, not a stroke will disappear from the Law until all that must happen has happened." The *New International Version* has, "Until Heaven and Earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

The English word *jot* seems to have been derived from the Greek word *iota*, which is the name of the

letter *i*. On this point, the *Revised Standard Version* is the best of the quoted translations, for modern speech hardly recognizes *jot* as *iota*. But there is no good reason for changing *tittle* into *dot*, nor into *stroke*, and "not the least stroke of a pen" is an inexcusable paraphrase.

The word *tittle* is, to be sure, an unusual word in English. But there is none much better. It means a point or small sign used as a diacritical, punctuation, or similar mark, the dot over an *i* or *j*, a vowel point in Hebrew. The verb that the King James translates fulfilled is literally "has become." *Fulfill* and *accomplish* are both proper, though the latter is no real improvement over the former. Totally unacceptable is the phrase "until all that must happen has happened."

*Luke 1:1*: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us..." (*KJV*). "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us..." (*RSV*). "The author to Theophilus: Many writers have undertaken to draw up an account of the events that have happened among us" (*NEB*). Forasmuch as this study aims generally to support the *King James Version* as being better or at least as good English as the new versions, it is only just to point out a deficiency now and then. The phrase "most surely believed among us" receives no support either from the critical texts or from the majority (Byzantine) manuscripts. The wording "have been accomplished" is quite satisfactory. But "compile a narrative" is distinctly inferior to "taken in hand," both from the standpoint of easily understood English and of correct translation. The word for *hand* (*cheir*) is the root embedded in the verb. Even the phrase "to set forth in order" is a fair translation of the infinitive there. *Anatasso* means to arrange in a row, to draw up in order. The *New English Bible's* transposition of *Theophilus* from the end of verse 3 to the beginning of verse 1 is merely mildly amusing.

The well-known words of *John 14:18* are, "I will not leave you comfortless." The last word in Greek is *orphans*. The *New English Bible* has *bereft*; the *Revised Standard Version* has *desolate*. I can

approve the *New International Version* when it says *orphans*, because it is a more accurate translation; but *bereft* and *desolate* are neither better translations than *comfortless*, nor are they a simpler English that avoids an alleged archaism. They seem to indicate a desire to be merely different.

*Acts 7:54* describes the effect of Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin: "they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth" (*KJV*). The *Revised Standard Version* has, "they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him." "They were furious" is the *New International Version's* translation. The inimitable—who would want to imitate it?—*New English Bible* has, "This touched them on the raw and they ground their teeth with fury." Now, the Greek text has the word "hearts." Since this is no strange word, a translator should not change it. The verb means "to cut to the quick." It also occurs in *Acts 5:33* without the word *heart*. Perhaps *gnashed* is an uncommon word these days and hence the *Revised Standard Version's* "ground their teeth" can be considered an improvement. But the *Revised Standard Version's* *enraged* and the *New International Version's* *furious* are neither more accurate translations, rather less accurate, nor simpler English.

In *Romans 4:3* the *King James* translates *elogisthe* as *counted*, though in the next verse it uses *reckoned*. The *Revised Standard Version* and the *New American Standard* use *reckoned* in both verses. The *New International Version* uses *credited* twice. One can fault the *King James* for using two words and not the same word twice, but there is no more than a microscopic improvement in the latter versions. Liddell and Scott give both words, as well as *calculate*, *conclude by reasoning*; and Arndt and Gingrich have *consider*, *ponder*, *propose*, *think*, *believe*, as well as *reckon* and *count*. The English of the later versions is no better or clearer than that of the *King James*.

One should not conclude from this that all the modern changes are bad. In some, even in many places, the *Revised Standard Version* is better in English and more accurate in translation than the *King James*. *1 Corinthians 6:16* is a good example. But the *Revised Standard Version* changes the

meaning of the passage by punctuating with an interrogation point. The *Jerusalem Bible* and the *New American Bible* have a similar change in meaning. Without a comment on the change in meaning, one may say that the *King James* can be improved. A committee attempted this, and, in 1979, trying to preserve the great good and correct the few deficiencies, published the *New King James Version* (Thomas Nelson, Nashville). As an exercise, the reader is invited to dig into this passage on his own.

The *King James* at *Ephesians 6:11, 14* reads, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil ... having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." The *Revised Standard Version* is very nearly the same. The *New American Standard* gives us, "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil ... having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness." As usual, the *New English Bible* deviates considerably: "Put on all the armour which God provides so that you may be able to stand firm against the devices of the devil.... Buckle on the belt of truth, for coat of mail put on integrity." In the *New International Version* we have, "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes....with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place."

Perhaps someone can argue that *loins* and *wiles* are archaic, though the *Revised Standard Version* has both words, while the *New American Standard* keeps *loins* but drops *wiles*. The *New English Bible* and the *New International Version* go their own merry ways. I must acknowledge that sometimes the best-acquainted soldiers in antiquity wore something like a coat of mail, and they indeed used the term *thorax*. Liddell and Scott give this meaning, though strangely Arndt and Gingrich do not. However, the present question is not one of translation, but to what extent does the English of the *King James* need modernization.

The epistle to the *Hebrews*, being the best literary Greek in the New Testament, can hardly fail to

furnish several fanciful flourishes. The *King James* begins, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets...." The *New American Standard* destroys the Greek emphasis on "sundry times and diverse manners" by putting the phrase at the end of the verse instead of at the beginning. So does the *New International Version*. The *New English Bible*, as usual, lives up, or down, to its reputation. The *Jerusalem Bible* is even better than the *King James*, because it puts the word *God* after "various times...and in various different ways," thus preserving the Greek emphasis. The *New American Bible* is slightly poorer. Verse 5 is an even better example of inadmissible change. In fact, the *New International Version* obviously mistranslates it as, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." In 2:3 it changes *neglect* to *ignore*. Not only does this fail to improve the English, it is also a poorer translation of *amelesantes*. Nor is *pioneer* in (in the *RSV*) 2:10 any better than *captain*. Indeed it is worse (compare Rienecker's *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Volume II, or better, Liddell and Scott). The *Jerusalem Bible's* *leader* is fair, though not preferable. So also The *New American Bible*. I do not understand why The *New King James* Version substituted *author*. The figure of speech is military, not literary.

In *Hebrews* 11:11, the *King James* has, "through faith Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because *she* judged *him* faithful who had promised." To one's utter astonishment, the *New International Version* has "by faith Abraham [!] even though *he* was past age—and Sara herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he...." I do not know of a single manuscript that has this reading. The *New International Version* has made an incredible and utterly unjustifiable blunder.

These examples should be sufficient to cast doubt on the claim that the new versions are better English. Sometimes they are more accurate, but usually they are not. Several of the examples are instances of paraphrase rather than of translation. Such are ordinarily controlled by an individual's or the committee's unorthodox theology, or, which in

effect is equally bad, one man's aesthetic preferences.

## *Logical and Textual Criticism*

Unfortunately for the communicant members, even for the pastor, and for most of those who have recently graduated from seminary, something far more difficult and complicated hides beneath the English versions. Not only should a translation be accurate, as many are not, but even more important, the Greek text to be translated should be accurate, or as accurate as possible. Toward the end of the last century, Westcott and Hort substituted a different Greek text, and this development has carried over to the present date. Nearly all the modern versions are based on a text that differs in a thousand ways from the Greek underlying the *King James*. This new development must be carefully considered.

Because of the vexations and innumerable complexities of the problem—did I say 1000 discrepancies? make it 3000 in the Gospels alone—textual criticism is a very difficult and delicate procedure, quite unsuited to the purposes of the present study and admittedly beyond the competence of the present writer. The scholar's material includes five thousand New Testament manuscripts, several ancient versions, and hundreds of quotations in the early church fathers. Such a mass of complications, requiring knowledge of a half dozen or more ancient languages, is no playground for the ordinary church member—nor for the pastors, who are supposed to know both Greek and Hebrew. But even the church member, since the text of the Bible is so important, ought to know at least a little bit about the sources of the many Bibles now being published.

Because of such intricacies, because of their importance, and because of the probability of great misunderstandings, the exact scope, purpose, and limitations of the present study need to be clearly stated. The professional textual critics will expect too much and make a negative judgment. The others will not know what to expect and should therefore

be favored with the clearest possible statement of purpose.

Although the present writer is not a textual critic, he will be bold enough to make some small claim to acquaintance with logic. He taught the stuff for a good fifty years in college. If someone argues, "All insects are quadrupeds, and all quadrupeds are edible, therefore all edibles are insects," the writer can with some degree of assurance declare the syllogism invalid, even though he may not know whether or not a bumblebee is an insect. Or, if someone says, "All the heroes of Homer's *Iliad* died young; Alexander was a hero of Homer's *Iliad*; therefore Alexander died young," he knows that the syllogism is valid, even if he thinks that the *Iliad* was written by Virgil. Similarly, if a textual critic asserts that manuscript *B* has the correct reading for *Luke* 5:33, and that therefore *B* has the correct reading for *Jude* 22, we must suggest a course in logic for the critic, even though we might think that *B* was discovered in 1624 and represents the Byzantine text.

These, of course, are ludicrous examples; but the aim here is to show that much of textual criticism is not noticeably better. If Aland or Metzger says that *B* gives a certain reading, I shall not question it. I have never seen manuscript *B*. But the methodology of textual criticism cannot claim immunity from logical analysis.

If the critics are not interested in the validity of their methodology, but nonetheless make use of manuscript evidence, I would like to recommend some studies of their professional resources. A small, interesting, and powerful brochure, *The Ancient Text of the New Testament*, by Jakob Van Bruggen (Premier Printing, Ltd; 1976, 1979, 40 pages) devastates the liberal criticism. The footnotes provide a good bibliography. An earlier work, *The King James Version Defended*, by Edward Hills, while valuable, suffers from some deficiencies, one of which is an excursion into the philosophy of science which—even if it were without other errors—would be irrelevant anyway. Zane Hodges wrote at least three papers between 1961 and 1975. More recently, with Arthur L. Farstad (and some consulting editors), Hodges

edited a critical edition of *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text* (Thomas Nelson Publishers)—a major work that required incredible patience. It contains a bibliography of about 150 entries.

Perhaps the best production for immediate reading is Wilbur N. Pickering's *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Thomas Nelson, 1977). Further references to this excellent book will be made as we proceed. In particular, he contrasts the painstaking procedure of the usually despised Burgon with the sloppy methodology of his detractors. Even the least academic member of the ghetto congregation in East Podunk, Missovania, ought to read some of Pickering's book.

But it may be that the people of Podunk are not only turned off from reading Pickering, they may also doubt that logical analysis can be at all interesting. Interesting or not, it is far more important than Homer, Alexander, and Virgil. For that reason, I shall partly repeat and more fully extend some of these introductory inducements.

## *The Greek Text*

Enemies of the Bible occasionally try to destroy the faith of believers by emphasizing the impossibility of discovering what the apostles actually wrote. The four or five thousand Greek manuscripts differ in many places. Once when I quoted a verse from John's Gospel to a modernist, she quickly replied, "But how do you know that he actually said that?" By the grace of God, I was able immediately to shoot back, "How do you know Jesus said anything?" The other faculty members at the lunch table gave vocal evidence of a point scored. The modernist woman professor and missionary to India wanted to use some verses, but not others. But she saw then that if she insisted on her verses, she could not object to mine. At any rate the attempt to destroy Christian faith by an appeal to the difficulties of textual criticism has been based on considerable exaggeration. Someone has calculated that there is a textual variant for one word in seven, but only one in a thousand makes any difference in the sense. Still, since the New Testament contains about 200,000 words, it would mean 200



theological errors in the book as a whole. This is too many for comfort. Examples of both the nocuous and the innocuous will be given.

## *Variant Readings*

In *Mark* 14:52, a few manuscripts have "naked he fled"; a few others have "he fled naked"; and a large number have "he fled naked from them." Perhaps only three have "he fled from them naked." Another example is *2 Corinthians* 11:32. A few manuscripts read "to seize me"; many more have "wishing to seize me," where *me* in the accusative is still the object to be seized. And there are thousands of such insignificant alternative readings. However, there are many variants that are substantial. In both these categories the overwhelming majority of even mature Christians have no resources to judge which Greek manuscript preserves the words of the original author. But they can understand some of the methods textual critics use. In fact, they ought to. If they do, they will not be so overawed by the revisers.

When we come to examine the passages chosen, the particular textual method used in each case will be analyzed in detail. In order that the reader may not be completely discombobulated by their strangeness, a few of the more general rules can serve as a preparation.

First, the number of manuscripts of the type underlying the *King James Version* far exceeds all other types combined. This would seem to be conclusive for the Byzantine text. The critics, however, propose a rule that number is less important than weight. A dozen or a hundred manuscripts all copied from a single original ancestor count only as one, and therefore a lone manuscript of a different type equals the other hundred in weight.

This argument, which seems so plausible at first, is not so weighty a criterion as the critics seem to believe. There is another factor involved, which, if they have mentioned it, I have missed the mention. It is this. If a score or two score manuscripts have a single ancestor, it implies that a score or two score

copyists believed that ancestor to be faithful to the autographs. But if a manuscript has not a numerous progeny, as is the case with *B*'s ancestor, one may suspect that the early scribes doubted its value. Possibly the early orthodox church knew that *B* was corrupt, while the later heretics were less interested in wasting time copying their own altered text.

Furthermore, the argument that pits weights against number, if it were to have much force, would require a far more extensive knowledge of manuscript genealogies than anyone now has. Even in the case of the Byzantine text alone, while the manuscripts are basically similar, a true genealogy has never been completed. The western text of *D* is somewhat like Melchizedek, without ancestors or descendants. Attempts by Westcott and Hort, and others, to establish Syrian, Alexandrine, Neutral, Caesarean, Antiochan, and Western families—running into insuperable difficulties—have produced competing results in the last seventy-five years.

The critics use other criteria also. When several manuscripts differ at a given place, they prefer the reading that is harder to understand rather than the easier reading. They justify this principle by assuming that the scribe is likely to think that the harder reading was a mistake, with the result that he guesses his easy interpretation is the original. No one can prove that this never happened. But it is also possible, for a number of reasons—fatigue, brilliance, the mispronunciation of a reader—that he changed an easy reading into something more difficult.

Similarly, the critics often assume that the shorter reading is correct and the longer one corrupt. The underlying idea is that the copyist has several manuscripts before him, and he wishes to preserve all their readings in his copy. But could not some scribe, if he had different manuscripts before him and was not listening, with a room full of copyists, to a reader—could he not have been sufficiently devout to remember the Scriptural injunction neither to add nor to subtract? Examples of how these and other criteria are used and misused will now constitute a list that could be much further extended.

## Textual Criticism of Matthew

*Matthew* 1:16: "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom [feminine singular] was born Jesus." This first example is indeed a case of textual criticism, but it is much more importantly a case of dishonesty on the part of the *Revised Standard Version's* translators. Before they completed their work on the Old Testament, they published the New Testament alone in 1946. It was well advertised and made quite a stir. People who picked it up would probably look at the first page and then leaf through. On the first page they would see nothing suspicious. There was the genealogy of Christ, and that was not very fascinating.

When the entire Bible first appeared, those interested might look at the first page of *Genesis* and then leaf through. It was unlikely that anyone would pay attention to the first page of the New Testament. But the first page of *Matthew* in 1952 was not the same as its first page in 1946. A footnote had been added. It would have generated widespread criticism in 1946, but it would be generally overlooked when hidden by the preceding Old Testament pages.

The footnote reads: "Other ancient authorities read: Joseph, to whom was betrothed the virgin Mary, was the father of Jesus who is called Christ."

First of all, note the word *authorities*. What is an authority? No doubt Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, or its parts, are authorities. Is Jerome's *Vulgate* an authority? Are Scriptural quotations or references found in Christian writers of the next few centuries, authorities? Well, maybe; but as one goes beyond the Greek manuscripts, the authorities become less and less authoritative. Now, second, note that the word *authorities* in the *Revised Standard Version* note is plural. That means six or seven, or at least two. But the fact is that the *Revised Standard Version* had only one "authority," a Syriac version. The translators deliberately deceived the public by using a plural noun instead of a singular. Even the liberal Metzger in his *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, 1971) acknowledges,

"There is no evidence that reading (3) ever existed in a Greek manuscript of the first Gospel" (7).

This *Revised Standard Version* attempt to discredit Matthew's account of the virgin birth soon produced protests from knowledgeable conservatives, and the *Revised Standard Version* was compelled to delete its deception from later editions.

What has not been done, so far as I know, is some similar change in the Old Testament where the *Revised Standard Version* alters the radicals—not just the Massoretic points—without even a footnote calling attention to their unsupported changes.

*Matthew* 7:13 says, "for wide is the gate and broad is the road leading to destruction." The Aland text gives the word *gate* only a "C" rating. *Aleph's* first hand omits it; *Aleph's* second corrector inserted it. No other Greek manuscript omits it, and it is attested by a long list of uncials and plenty of minuscules. Is it not most reasonable to suppose that *Aleph*, itself corrected by a second hand, made a mistake and that all the rest give the words of the autograph? Surely *gate* deserves a "B" rating, or why not an "A"?

*Matthew* 8:12 warns that "the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out." Again the Aland text gives a "C" rating to a word that is almost certainly correct. "Shall go out" is the reading of *Aleph* and an unimportant eighth century uncial. "Shall be cast out" is in the first corrector of *Aleph* plus ten other major uncials and about fifteen other manuscripts. In itself the item is trivial, but it is evidence of pervasive subjectivity in textual criticism.

*Matthew* 9:4: "And Jesus knowing their thoughts...." Again the word disputed here is distressingly unimportant. It is included merely to inform students and laymen that though there are a thousand or so variant readings, the New Testament is not utterly corrupt. Someone has estimated that there are variations for one word in every seven; but only one case in a thousand make much difference. The present case does not make much difference.

The word in question is *knowing*. The *Textus Receptus* has *idon, seeing*; the first edition of Aland

has *eidos*, *knowing*; and Metzger's note says that his Committee preferred *idon*. Their reason is that *seeing* is less appropriate than *knowing*, and that therefore *seeing* must be original while *knowing* must be a correction. Naturally one cannot expect the original author to have used the more appropriate word, can one? It is the logic of the reasoning that I am contesting, not the genuineness of *idon*. The defense of *idon* is in its superior textual evidence.

The manuscript evidence for *knowing* is *B*, *Pi*, and several minuscules. The evidence for *seeing* is *Aleph*, ten other uncials, and about fifteen minuscules. Though the Committee's reasoning in support of *idon* is faulty, this is the word with the better manuscript support. One also wonders how, if the Committee preferred *idon*, the printed text has *eidos*. Who changed the wording after the Committee adjourned?

*Matthew* 18:7 warns, "Woe to the world because of offences [scandals]; for it needs must be that offences come; but woe to the man by whom the offence cometh."

This verse presents a very insignificant textual problem. However it is solved, the meaning remains the same. Nor is there the least theological difficulty. Nevertheless, for these very reasons, it is a pure and excellent example of textual criticism. The question is, Did Matthew write "the man" or "that man"? *The man* is *to anthropo*; *that man* is *to anthropo ekeino*. Did Matthew write the extra word or did he not? This is so difficult to decide that the Aland-Black-Metzger-Wikgren text gives the shorter text a "C" rating.

There are relatively few manuscripts that omit the *that*. Many more include it. The two manuscripts which most present-day critics think are the best divide: *Aleph* has only the article; *B* adds the demonstrative pronoun. Metzger's *Commentary* explains: "Except for the possibility of accidental oversight, there seems to be no reason why a copyist should have omitted *ekeino*. On the other hand, since the context seems to call for such a demonstrative, it is altogether probable that the

word was added by more than one transcriber, either before *ouai* or after *anthropo*."

Metzger's reasoning is peculiar. He admits the possibility of accidental oversight. Not many people copy Greek manuscripts these days. But typists, following handwritten manuscripts, often make peculiar mistakes. In fact, when I myself type my own handwritten material, I sometimes omit a word. Hence the pronoun may very well be genuine, as the large majority of the copies testify. Therefore a modern critical text should have very good reasons for omitting it. But Metzger's reason is very bad: Since the context seems to require the pronoun, Matthew could not possibly have written it—it just must have been added by a copyist! Stunning logic!

*Matthew* 21:44: Although textual criticism is legitimate and necessary, and although textual critics have done much good work—particularly in collating manuscripts—there are surprising exceptions. This verse is one of the latter. After giving the Pharisees the parable of the wicked husbandmen—a parable of profound theological meaning—Jesus adds, "And he who falls on this stone shall be smashed to pieces; on whom it falls shall be crushed to powder."

The Aland text brackets this sentence. Brackets indicate a passage which is regarded as a later insertion, but which nevertheless is evidently ancient and important. Metzger's note is, "Many modern scholars regard the verse as an early interpolation (from *Luke* 20:18) into most manuscripts of *Matthew*. On the other hand, however, the words are not the same, and a more appropriate place for its insertion would have been after ver. 42. Its omission can perhaps be accounted for when the eye of the copyist passed from *outes* (ver. 43) to *auton*. While considering the verse to be an accretion to the text, yet because of the antiquity of the reading and its importance in the textual tradition, the Committee decided to retain it in the text, enclosed within double square brackets."

But the textual apparatus acknowledges only one uncial (a sixth-century uncial of dubious lineage) and one ninth-century miniscule without the verse; while there is a long list of uncials, including the

critics' favorite *Aleph* and *B*, plus about twenty minuscules that have the verse. How then can one logically infer that the verse is an interpolation, early or late?

*Matthew* 24:6: Here is another textual note. The critical edition reads, "for it must happen." This reading is supported by five uncials, a couple of minuscules, and a few versions. Yet the Aland text gives it a "B" rating. The other readings say either "all must happen," or "all these things must happen." These other readings are numerous, many more than those cited by the textual critics for the shorter reading. But the critics are wedded to the idea that the shorter readings must nearly always be the originals. Having suffered at the hands or fingers of various typists, I cannot accept this criterion. They more often omit word sand phrases than make additions. The critics will reply: The typist copies only one manuscript; those who copied manuscripts have several copies in front of them. Did they? Maybe sometimes. Maybe not. Who knows? In this case the preponderance of evidence favors a longer reading, even if we cannot be sure of the order of the words *all* and *these*.

*Matthew* 28:9: "And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them saying, All hail" (*KJV*). "And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them" (*NASB*). Its marginal note has "saying hello."

The Aland text favors the shorter reading and gives it a "B" rating. It is supported by *Aleph*, *B*, *D*, *K*, *W*, *Theta*, family 13 (about a dozen manuscripts of lesser importance), and several minuscules. The longer reading occurs in *A*, *C*, *K*, *L*, *Delta*, *Pi*, family 1, and about ten minuscules. The modern critics put great emphasis on the combination of *Aleph* and *B*. Their argument, in my opinion, is not convincing. Metzger is kind enough to suggest that the shorter reading was the result of a *homoeoteleuton*: *i.e.*, the copyist looked at his text and wrote down a phrase in his copy; then he looked at his text again and his eye struck the same last word occurring a line or two below, thus omitting a certain amount from his copy. Such mistakes occur, but these two verses do not make a very obvious *homoeoteleuton*. Metzger concludes that the longer reading is a copyist's unwarranted

expansion of the preceding verse. So far as I can see, no firm conclusion can be drawn. Either reading could be chosen and rated "C," or even "D"; but neither merits a "B".

The examples from *Mark* and *Luke*, now to follow, will prove tedious, trivial, and boring to many communicant members, though perhaps not to all seminary students. Those who wish may therefore skip to the discussion on *John* 7:53-8:11. It should interest everyone. However, the examples from *Mark* and *Luke* are included to show that the flaws in the revised text are not incidental and unintentional lapses. They are the result of a pervasive and controlling methodology. This, I believe, is more convincingly shown by trivialities than by major theological confrontation.

## *Mark*

*Mark* 1:1: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God." This is also a case of ratings. Devout laymen of ordinary intelligence and seminary students who have paid little or no attention to the actualities of textual criticism are probably inclined to rate ratings "D" in importance. Nevertheless, these examples are given because seminary students really should have more than vague ideas on the subject. Even the laymen, who know no Greek, can by these examples perceive a measure of subjectivity in the work of the liberal critics.

The question in the opening verse of Mark's Gospel is whether the two words "Son of God" should be included or omitted. The Aland text encloses them in brackets and gives them a "C" rating. Metzger thinks that their absence could be due to an oversight in copying, since *Christ*, *Son*, and *God* all end in the same two letters, *ou*. But he prefers to think that copyists like to expand what they were copying, especially in titles. However, since support for the words "is extremely strong," they decided to put the words in brackets. Apparently "extremely strong support" barely balances three manuscripts plus conjectures about scribal insertion.

The evidence is as follows. "Son of God" occurs in the first corrector of *Aleph*, *B*, *D*, *L*, *W*, *A*, *K*, *Delta*,

*Pi*, family 1, family 13, and about twenty numbered manuscripts, and some versions and quotations. The two words are absent from the original *Aleph*, *Theta*, and not much else. It therefore seems to me that there is no objective justification for giving the two words less than a "B" rating. In fact, the only important evidence for the omission is *Aleph* before it was corrected. The *New American Standard* surely exaggerates when in its margin it says that "many Mss. omit, *the Son of God*."

*Mark* 1:34: "because they knew him." If these examples seem always to charge the critics with underrating, here is a possible overrating. They give it "A". Incidentally, the *Textus Receptus* also has the reading. The rejected reading is "because they knew him to be the Christ." Admittedly, the shorter reading has excellent attestation: the original *Aleph*, *A*, possibly *D*, *K*, *Delta*, *Pi*, and about eight numbered minuscules. The longer reading has the third corrector of *Aleph*, *B*, *C*, *L*, *W*, *Theta*, families 1 and 13, and a half dozen numbered manuscripts.

Aside from the recorded evidence, Metzger argues, "It is clear [?] that Mark terminated the sentence with *auton* [him] and that copyists made various additions.... If anyone of the longer readings [all using the same words but indifferent orders as is possible in Greek] had been original in Mark, there is no reason why it should have been altered or eliminated entirely." No good reason, certainly; but copyists sometimes make mistakes. Pardon the personalism, but writing a manuscript in longhand, I sometimes think a word but neglect to write it on the paper. The shorter reading here is probably correct, but a "B" rating seems sufficient.

*Mark* 1:41: "feeling compassion" versus "being enraged." Here is an example where there is a sharp difference in meaning. In favor of "feeling compassion" are *Aleph*, *A*, *B*, and on and on. The only Greek manuscript that has "enraged" is the peculiar *D*. *D* is so often and so badly mistaken that the rating should at least be "B" instead of only "C". Note also that while the Aland text gives it "C," Metzger in his *Textual Commentary* reduces it to "D". This is indefensible.

*Mark* 5:1: "And they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the G...."

The problem here has as little to do with theology as is possible. For this reason, it is a pure example of method. Cases where there are clear theological inferences might raise doubts as to the writer's objectivity. The last word of the verse is *Gadarenes* in *A*, *C*, *K*, *Pi*, family 13, and about thirteen numbered manuscripts. *Gerasenes* occurs in the original *Aleph*, *B*, and apparently no other Greek manuscript. *Gergesenes* has the support of a third corrector of *Aleph*, *L*, *Delta*, *Theta*, family 1, and less than ten numbered manuscripts.

It should be noted that the parallel passage in *Matthew* 8:28 gives slim support to *Gadarenes*—though the critics give it a "B" rating—abundant support to *Gergesenes*, and no Greek support for *Gerasenes*. In *Luke* 8:26, *Gergesenes* has some support; *Gerasenes* has *papyrus* 75, *B*, and *D*; while *Gadarenes* has a long list of supporters. *Luke* 8:37 has moderate support for *Gergesenes*, not much for *Gerasenes*, and strong support for *Gadarenes*.

By this evidence one could conclude that Matthew wrote *Gergesenes*, Mark wrote *Gadarenes*, and that Luke wrote *Gadarenes*. The critical text has *Gadarenes* in *Matthew*, *Gerasenes* in *Mark*, and *Gergesenes* in *Luke* both times.

To establish these critical conclusions, Metzger in his *Commentary* argues, "Of the several variant readings a majority of the Committee preferred *Gerasenon* on the basis of (a) superior external evidence (early representatives of both the Alexandrian and Western type of text), and (b) the probability that *Gadarenon* is a scribal assimilation to the prevailing text of *Matthew* [8:28], and that *Gergesenon* is a correction, perhaps originally proposed by Origen.... The reading of *W* (*Gergustenon*) reflects a scribal idiosyncrasy."

In reply one may insist first that the "superior external evidence" favors *Gadarenes* in *Mark*. Then second, one may question the alleged "scribal assimilation" to *Matthew*, for *Gadarenes* in *Mark* could not have been copied from *Gergesenes* in *Matthew*. Indeed, there is no evidence that any

copyist assimilated anything to anything. The critics' argument is mainly unsupported speculation.

*Mark* 8:38: "For if anyone be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man shall also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." This verse contains two textual problems that form a strange contrast. "Words" near the beginning of the verse has almost unanimous support. Only *papyrus* 45 seems to omit it, and *W* is the only other Greek omission. The Aland text rates it an "A". Toward the end of the long verse the preposition *with* has the same attestation, and its deletion—with *and* replacing it—has essentially the same few supporters. But Aland rates it only "B". Here are two cases where the evidence in Greek is identical, and the slightest of differences in the non-Greek sources; yet they are rated differently. Metzger is at least consistent, but in my opinion wrong, by giving them both "B". With greater probability, and justifiably I would say, Metzger in *Mark* 9:49 gives a "B" rating to what is rated "A" in the Aland text.

Those readers who know more than most may expect a discussion of Mark's final paragraph. Unfortunately, it is too complicated for the present purpose. But before swallowing all the liberal critics say, those interested should read John W. Burgon's *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to Mark*, reprinted in 1959 by The Sovereign Grace Book Club. I am well aware how greatly the modern critics despise him, but he seems to me to do a more thorough job than the critics usually do. The latter, to put it a little loosely, think that the combination of *Aleph* and *B* virtually outweighs all the other manuscripts together. This assumption permits a modicum of doubt, and it seems that Westcott and Hort are beginning to lose some of their hold on contemporary scholars.

## *Luke*

*Luke* 9:59: "He said to another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, allow me to go first and bury my father."

The critical text puts *Lord* or *Sir* in brackets and gives it a "C" rating. Metzger's explanation is: "The

omission of *kurie* from ... is puzzling; what motive would have prompted copyists to delete it? On the other hand, the word might well have been added, either from ver. 61 or from the parallel in *Matthew* 8:21. Since, however, the absence of *kurie* may have been due to a transcriptional blunder ... it was thought safer to retain the word in the text, but to enclose it within square brackets indicating doubt that it has a right to stand there."

Note that the critics find the omission puzzling. Had they held *B* in less esteem, they would hardly have been puzzled at all. Before the evidence is cited, note that a person in declining an invitation to be a disciple, unless he were very antagonistic (but then Jesus would not have invited him), would have been rather polite. Possibly also, unlike Americans, but in the tradition the Europeans have inherited from antiquity, the people of that day would almost automatically have used the polite form of address. But of course this is speculation.

The textual evidence against the word *Sir* or *Lord* is the original *B*, *D*, and apparently only two numbered manuscripts. The evidence in favor of the word is *papyrus* 45, *papyrus* 75, *Aleph*, *A*, *B*'s third corrector, *C*, *K*, *L*, *W*, *Delta*, *Theta*, *Xi*, *Pi*, *Psi*, family 1, family 13, and twenty numbered manuscripts. The critics could not ignore this overwhelming weight of evidence, but such was their prejudice in favor of *B* that they put the word in brackets and gave it a "C" rating. Indefensible.

*Luke* 10:15: "shalt be cast down into Hades." This verse presents a most peculiar confusion. Greek has two verbs for "cast down." There is a shorter and more common verb, and there is a longer, rarer verb. The meaning of both is the same.

Now, the Aland text has the longer verb. Yet Metzger's *Commentary* says, "A majority of the Committee, impressed by the superior external testimony of *papyrus* 75, *B*, *D*, *al*, adopted [the shorter verb]." But the printed text has the longer verb. Furthermore, the "superior external testimony" is anything but. In contrast with the shorter form, the longer form has the support of *papyrus* 45, *Aleph*, *A*, *C*, *K*, *L*, *W*, *X*, *Delta*, *Theta*, *Xi*, *Pi*, *Psi*, family 1, family 13, plus about twenty

numbered manuscripts. How can one place much reliance on the critics when such confusions as this occur?

*Luke 11:2*: "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name" (*KJV*). "Father, hallowed" (*NASB*). The marginal note in the *New American Standard* is "some mss. insert phrases from *Matt. 6:9-13* to make the two passages closely similar." This is, of course, an accusation of willful dishonesty.

The Aland text gives the simple *pater* an "A" rating on the basis of *papyrus 75*, *Aleph*, *B*, and not much else. It rejects "Our ... which art in Heaven," as found in *A, C, D, K, P, W, X, Delta, Theta, Pi, Psi*, and a dozen or more cursives. Yet in the next line, they give a "B" rating to "Thy kingdom come," which is supported by essentially the same evidence they rejected in the preceding line. Similarly, in *Luke 11:4*, the Aland text omits "Deliver us from evil," and ends the verse with the word *temptation*. The critics' favorite combination of *Aleph* and *B* support the omission, plus *papyrus 75*, but *Aleph* was corrected to include it, plus ten other uncials and many cursives.

In connection with nearly every item in the preceding discussions, something should be said about the critics' favorite combination of *Aleph* and *B*. They are both fourth-century uncials. That means they were written, let us guess, about A.D. 350. They are supposed to have marked similarities which distinguished them from other uncials, not to mention cursives, such as *A, C, K*, etc. This leads to the supposition that they were both copied from an earlier, now lost, manuscript. Frederick G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (56), says, "If Tischendorf's opinion as to the identity of the corrector of *Aleph* and the scribe of *B* be true, it is more than probable that the two manuscripts were written in the same place; and in any case [regardless of Tischendorf] the similarity of text suggests at least the possibility of a community of origin." On the next page, Kenyon reports that Tischendorf's edition of the New Testament after his discovery of *Aleph* differed from his previous edition in more than 3000 places. He adds, "it is primarily, though not by any means

entirely, to their influence that the textual differences between our Authorized and Revised Versions are due." I would delete from his statement the three words "by any means."

For such reasons, the critics regularly minimize the importance of the very numerous Byzantine copies. That the numerical superiority of the Byzantine text might have been due to its early widespread acceptance of that type as being closest to the autographs does not seem to impress them. Furthermore, while it is reasonable to treat all descendant so f one source as one, there is more difficulty in tracing the heredity of manuscripts, their "families," than the critics like to admit. And again, it is not true that the earliest manuscripts must be the best. Since Christianity was plagued with heretics and enemies right from the start, one of them could have deliberately altered his copy of the autograph. The result could be that *Aleph* and *B* are excellent copies of a deliberately altered ancestor. Indeed, deliberate alteration seems more likely to have occurred early, rather than later when the number of manuscripts increased. Why could not *Aleph* and *B* have come from an earlier proto-Arian text or a Marcionite deception?

*Luke 13:27*: "And he will say, saying to you." However queer this sounds in English, or even in Greek, it is a very common Hebrew construction. That Luke, though a Gentile, was widely cognizant of Hebrew customs, may be verified by the opening chapters of his Gospel. The whole atmosphere is genuinely Jewish. *Aleph* and four minuscules omit the *saying*. All others, including one papyrus, ten lettered uncials, families 1 and 13, plus ten numbered minuscules have the Old Testament construction. *Saying* deserves a better rating than "C".

*Luke 16:14*: "all these things." To disabuse the uninstructed Christian of the notion that the doctrines of the New Testament are widely distorted by a multitude of textual errors, this reference is included because of its triviality. "These all" has the favor of the critics' favored combination of *Aleph* and *B*, plus *papyrus 75*, plus (with the addition of *and*) a great number of others. "All these and," "all and," and "these" alone have some support. None of

this makes any difference to the sense of the passage, and there are many similar examples.

More serious is *Luke 16:21*: "desiring to be fed from the fallen [things] from the table." The *Textus Receptus* reads, "desiring to be fed from the crumbs which were fallen from the table." The shorter form, which the critics rate as "B", seems to have only four Greek manuscripts as evidence. The word *crumb* occurs in all the others, including twenty minuscules and the two families 1 and 13. Metzger pontifically disposes of the problem in one sentence: "The more picturesque expression 'of the crumbs' [in Greek] was introduced by copyists from *Matthew 15:27*." No evidence supports this conjecture.

*Luke 19:25* is another instance of the critics' prejudice against the evidence. Because *D*, *W*, and three minuscules omit the verse, they give it a "D" rating in spite of the fact that it is found in *Aleph*, *A*, *B*, *K*, *L*, *Delta*, *Theta*, *Pi*, *Psi*, and a long list of others. It seems as if the critics doubt their own favorite combination of *Aleph* and *B* when even these support the Byzantine text.

*Luke 21:36*: The uninitiated should be warned that the Aland text and the Metzger Commentary do not indicate all their alterations of the *Textus Receptus*. This verse is an example. The *King James* reads, "Watch ... that ye maybe accounted worthy to escape...." The *New American Standard* and the *Revised Standard Version* have, "that you may have strength to escape...." The latter is the reading of *Aleph* and *B*; *A*, *C*, and the majority have *be accounted worthy*. In addition, the sense of the passage favors *count worthy*. The critical text makes the escape depend on an individual's physical strength. But the context has just condemned carousing and drunkenness. Without doubt these are physical effects, but they begin with an infraction of morality. Furthermore the text adds, "the cares of this life." This phrase does not indicate dissipation, but rather indifference to spiritual values. Hence *be accounted worthy*, which better fits the context, seems the preferable reading.

*Luke 24:3*: "[The women] entering [the tomb] did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." The critical

text brackets the *Lord*, though the article *the* is retained. The supposedly conflated Byzantine cursives, according to modern textual critics, use many "devotional phrases" or "liturgical additions." On this assumption, subjective modern preferences omit *kuriou*. *Iesou* alone seems to correct them. Yet *papyrus 76*, *Aleph*, *A*, *B*, plus other uncials and scads of cursives have *kuriou*. Very few, only one uncial and two twelfth-century cursives, omit it. One may therefore suspect that "liturgical additions" are not liturgical additions after all.

*Luke 24:9*: "Returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven." The modern textual critics give only a "D" rating to the words "from the tomb." Yet *papyrus 75*, eleven uncials including *Aleph* and *B*, plus plenty of cursives have these words. Only *D* omits it. Surely this deserves an "A" rating, and it is hard to see why the critics did not give it at least a "B."

*Luke 24:12*: "Peter, rising, ran to the tomb" on to the end. The critics bracket the whole verse and give it a "D" rating. The evidence in favor of the verse is similar to that of *Luke 24:9*: *papyrus 75*, eleven uncials, including *Aleph*, *A*, and *B*, plus plenty of cursives. The only Greek manuscript that omits it is the inexplicable *D*.

The same is true for *Luke 24:40*. The critics rate it "D"; and the *New American Standard* omits it from its text, demoting it to a marginal note. It says, "Some mss. add verse 40." The *New American Standard* should have said, "Nearly all."

## *John*

*John 7:53-8:11*: This is the passage concerning Jesus' judgment of the woman whom the Pharisees caught in the very act of adultery. It is the longest and probably the most peculiar textual problem in all the New Testament; and though the liberal critics would not say so, the conservative scholars must admit that it is the most difficult also. Therefore, though not strictly necessary, some general background should be permitted.

First, no one should hold that the *King James Version* is the infallible autograph. For example (even if it is in the Old Testament), *2 Samuel 6:23*



says, "Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death." But *2 Samuel* 21:8 refers to "the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul." For once the *Revised Standard Version* can be complimented for removing the contradiction. In my earlier years I had heard that some people believed the *King James* to be infallible, but I was 70 years old before I ever met one such. The liberals surely have exaggerated their number, but at least one minister was of that opinion.

More important is the question whether the *Textus Receptus* is the original text. But such a belief would be as foolish as the former. Since the present study is not addressed to professional scholars, but to students and ordinary church members, it is permissible to say something about the *Textus Receptus*, the Greek text which underlines the *King James* translation.

The *Textus Receptus* derives from the work of Erasmus, a Dutch scholar (1466-1536). His first edition of the Greek text appeared in 1516. It is full of mistakes, though most are merely typographical. The story is that Erasmus was anxious to have the honor of being the first to publish the Greek New Testament, and to do so he had to rush through his work before Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneras could publish his so-called *Complutensian Polyglot*. The Cardinal seems to have had no such eagerness, and though his edition was set up in type possibly as early as 1514, the actual publication date was 1522. Erasmus' sloppy work doesn't hold a candle to it.

Deficiencies other than typographical are not all Erasmus' fault, or only partly so. He had the use of less than twenty manuscripts and used mainly only two or three. His only manuscript of Revelation lacked its last page, so Erasmus himself translated the Latin *Vulgate* back into Greek for the last six verses. He did this in some other places where his manuscripts were defective. Presumably this was unavoidable. Then to his credit, he omitted *1 John* 5:7-8. This shocked the Roman Church. He replied that if they would produce even one Greek manuscript that had those two verses, he would include them. So the obliging papacy quickly got an Irish priest to make such a manuscript, and Erasmus inserted the verses.

Robert Etienne (Stephanus) of Paris printed a third edition of Erasmus' translation. In it he used the *Codex Bezae* (that maverick western text *D*), parts of the *Complutensian* edition, all typographically corrected. This is the *Textus Receptus*.

Now, the *Textus Receptus* and the *King James Version* have *John* 7:53-8:11. These verses are not found in *papyri* 86 and 75, seemingly omitted in *A* and *C*, omitted in *L, N, T, W, X, Y, Delta, Theta, Psi*, two numbered uncials, and about ten minuscules. Containing the passage are *D, G, H, K, U, Gamma*, and about as many minuscules. Some of those that include the passage indicate it is doubtful. One unimportant manuscript puts it after *Luke* 21:38.

On the basis of this evidence, it is doubtful that the original contained the verses because it is unlikely that so many scribes would have deleted it. On the other hand, if it was not in the original, how can one explain so many manuscripts that include it? Now, if the liberal critics dogmatically assert that this copyist did this and that copyist did that, perhaps someone else can modestly suggest a different possible explanation. No doubt the liberal critics will hoot at the suggestion, but surely it will be at least a possibility. Just perchance the Apostle John himself wrote a second edition of his Gospel, adding the paragraph. I can point to a book on *Ethics*, whose second edition differs from the first by only the addition of an extra chapter halfway through. Could not John have done similarly?

However, Hodges and Farstad propose a more scholarly and much less speculative solution. In their Introduction (xxiii-xxxii) to *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text*, Hodges' and Farstad's first argument in favor of the authenticity of the passage is the linguistic style. "Among the marks of Johannine style which it exhibits, none is clearer than the phrase in 8:6, *touto de elegonpeirazontes* (they said this, tempting him). The same introductory phrase occurs also in 6:6, 7:39, 11:5, 12:6, 33, and 21:19." Let us grant that John frequently uses this phrase. We all know people who have favorite phrases. They sometimes annoy us. But usually the phrase itself is innocuous. Other people also use it, but not so frequently.

Therefore the fact that this is one of John's favorite introductory phrases is far from proving that someone else could not have used it occasionally—or even often, for it is very Hebraic. The most that can be concluded here is that the phrase does not destroy authenticity.

The authors also add three other, less striking items. At least the second is less striking. It is the argument that the passage fits nicely in its place. This can hardly be contested, though their evidences for fitting are slightly too many. But if the authors have not demonstrated authenticity, their argument is quite satisfactory in undermining any counterclaim. There is also a third argument, a very complex genealogical argument, too difficult to reproduce here. The data are important, but the whole requires further investigation.

## *Acts*

*Acts* 5:37: "Judas of Galilee rose up ... and drew people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were scattered." The Aland-Metzger text gives the word *all* a "C" rating in spite of its being supported by *papyrus* 74, *Aleph*, *A*, *B*, *C*, *E*, *P*, *Psi*, and plenty of cursives. Note that the famous combination of *Aleph-B* has it too. Only *papyrus* 45 and *D* omit it. *Papyrus* 45 of the third century carries some weight, but *D* is often obviously incorrect. Metzger in his *Commentary on Acts* 13:27-29 properly states, "Here and there the text of the *codex Bezae* is obviously corrupt and ungrammatical." These ratings therefore must have been decided by tossing a coin rather than by manuscript evidence. Metzger's explanation, in his *Textual Commentary on the New Testament*, is, "Although it is possible that *pantes* [all, masculine plural] was added to a growing text [note that he believes the text grew by continual additions to nobody knows what], a majority of the Committee was inclined to regard the absence of the word from *papyrus* 45, *D*, ... as due to accidental oversight." Well, the Committee was right about *D*, but quite stingy in its rating.

*Acts* 8:37: This is the supposed confession of faith by the Ethiopian eunuch to Philip. The *Textus Receptus* has it, and therefore the *King James*. In

reacting to the inconsistencies of the modern critics, one should not assume that the *Textus Receptus* is without mistakes. While Stephanus did better than Erasmus, neither of them had very many manuscripts. Indeed Erasmus seems to have seen this verse only in the margin of one late manuscript. Apparently only one uncial has the verse, plus a very few minuscules. Erasmus should not have trusted a mere marginal note. One should also note that Hodges and Farstad omit the verse, showing their attention to the evidence, thus correcting the *Textus Receptus* where it needs correction.

It should be noted, for the benefit of students who wish to do more in textual criticism than read a few easy examples, that *Acts* contains several extremely complex and difficult problems. Those in which *D* is used as important evidence can be alleviated by ignoring *D*. Others, such as 15:20, 29, plus 21:25, are not so easily explained. Some of these difficulties are exegetical rather than textual. For such, consult J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (Macmillan, 1921, 87-98). Whereas Metzger's *Textual Commentary* usually gives six to twelve lines, roughly, to an item, here are five full pages. About as puzzling, but not nearly so important, is the three-page discussion of 16:12. Again, the troubles with 16:35-40 would vanish if *D* were ignored. In fact, *D* is almost as bad as some American translations. *Acts* would do much better without it, and them.

## *Romans*

*Romans* 1:5: "to those in Rome." This deserves an "A" rating rather than a "B" because only one Greek manuscript, the ninth-century *G*, omits it. No doubt some who have patiently read this far and survived the boredom may wonder why so much attention should be paid to ratings. The answer is that these low ratings give the impression that the text is throughout much more in doubt than it really is. Another reason is that the consideration of this material will go far to enhancing the reputation of *The New King James Version* in comparison with the *Revised Standard Version* and others that accept the results of Aland, Metzger, and their associates.

*Romans* 5:1 is of some theological importance. The choice is between an omicron and an omega—an indicative and a subjunctive verb. The Aland text and footnote agree with the indicative of the *Textus Receptus*, but Metzger claims "far better external support" for the subjunctive. Since the short *o* in speech is hardly distinguishable from the long *o*, a scribe receiving dictation could use either vowel without thinking. If he were copying a text, he would likely get it right. But clearly the sense requires the indicative. As even Metzger acknowledges, "Paul is not exhorting, but stating facts.... only the indicative is consonant with the apostle's argument." The evidence does not justify Metzger's claim that the subjunctive has far better support. The evidence is rather evenly balanced.

*Romans* 6:16: "whether of sin unto death." This is another example of the critics' curious grading system. The words "unto death" are found in thirty manuscripts listed in the Aland footnotes. Only two omit the words. Therefore "a majority of the Committee was disposed to regard the omission as an unintentional oversight." But they gave "unto death" only a "C" rating. If the omission was unintentional, and if, as is the case, the sense requires that "unto righteousness" be balanced by "unto death," the rating should be a "B" or even an "A". Just above they gave a "B" rating to the words "in Christ Jesus" (verse 11), even though there are twenty-four—not just two—variant manuscripts. The critics' defense of their violations of their own criteria is that textual criticism is not a science but an art. If you enjoy Rembrandt, it is Byzantine and bad: If you enjoy cubism, you are a great scholar. Aesthetics is decisive.

In *Romans* 8:23 adoption rates only a "C", even though only one papyrus and three Greek manuscripts omit it. The Aland footnote lists twenty-eight with it. Its inclusion may seem to contradict 8:15, as Metzger notes; but this is a theological, not a textual, problem. The evidence overwhelmingly supports its inclusion. In contrast, "and he who believes" in *Romans* 9:33 has a "B" rating with seven manuscripts, while "and everyone who believes" is supported by about two dozen. Of course the argument is that *papyrus* 46, *Aleph*, *A*, and *B* overpower all other combinations.

But consider *I Corinthians* 1:13. The choice is between "Is Christ divided," and, "Christ is not divided." Taking the phrase as a question, without the "not," we have a long list of supporting manuscripts. If the phrase is a statement with the "not," there are one papyrus and two numbered manuscripts, yet they give the question only a "C" rating. There may be rhyme to all this, but there is no reason.

## *Revelation*

The book of *Hebrews* was briefly considered near the beginning of this essay where the subject was English translations rather than Greek variants. Overcome with fatigue, the patient reader will be overjoyed to learn that *Revelation* now ends this study.

*Revelation* 13:1 "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having" (*KJV*). The *Revised Standard Version* has, "And he stood on the sand of the sea [12:17]. And I saw a beast rising." The *New English Bible* is similar. Then the *New International Version* makes it, "And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming."

The Aland text has *estathe* (*he stood*). This makes very little sense. It is a very awkward conclusion for chapter 12, and does not fit chapter 13 at all, as the critics admit by adding it to 12:17 or making it 12:18 and then beginning chapter 13 in the middle of what used to be 13:1.

The manuscript evidence is as follows. "He stood" receives the support of *papyrus* 47, *Aleph*, *A*, *C*, and about 25 minuscules. "I stood" (*estathen*) has in its favor some numbered uncials and a great many cursives. Metzger dismisses them by arbitrarily asserting that these latter "have arisen when copyists accommodated *estathe* to the first person of the following *eidon*." This is simply unsupported speculation.

*Revelation* 13:18: "Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred three score and six."

The various difficulties in *Revelation* are so numerous and so enormous that an elementary study such as this could be immediately excused from considering any one of them. However, with unbecoming boldness and the help of others, I venture upon one such. First, notice that the apostle John expects that some of his addressees can figure out the meaning. Indeed, it would be easier for them to do so than for us because their knowledge of such numbers was greater and more usual than our own. At any rate 666 designates a man, and the verse virtually implies that John's first century readers know that man.

One difficulty that we moderns face, and which the early Christians did not, is the date of the book. If John wrote the *Apocalypse* about A.D. 90, as many believe, he could not have been referring to someone who had lived about A.D. 60. There is one piece of evidence that seems to date John's writing in the nineties. Though this remains as a possible refutation of what is about to be concluded, it can hardly be regarded as an unquestionable factor. The exegesis of the verse may prove enough to discount it.

An important bit of evidence is the fact that one manuscript gives the number as 616. Obviously this is an incorrect reading, but it raises the question as to why one copyist changed 666 to 616. The most plausible answer is that the copyist knew John's meaning and knew also, in his manner of counting, that the person's number was 616. He then "corrected" his "incorrect" source.

Who then can fit the two numbers 666 and 616? The answer is easy. The evil emperor's name was spelled in two ways: Nero or Neron. The letter *n* meant 50. If the copyist was familiar with only the form Nero, he could by dropping the *n* obtain 616. It is most difficult to think of any other reason for 616. Aland gives 666 a "B" rating, which is par for their course.

*Revelation* 17:9 provides some corroboration in that the city in which the evil king dwells is a city built on seven hills. No one can miss the point.

This explanation bears on the general interpretation of the book of *Revelation* as a whole. We cannot

suppose that the letters to the seven churches describe conditions that were to arise between A.D. 100 and A.D. 2000 or so. We must vigorously object to Scofield's view that chapters two and three describe "the spiritual history of the church from, say, A.D. 96 to the end" (*Scofield Bible*, footnote 3 on Revelation 1:20). He believed that "it is incredible that ... there should be no such foreview." He further asserts that "these messages do present an exact foreview of the *spiritual* history of the church, and in this precise order." Then, note carefully, a few lines below, "Sardis is the Protestant Reformation." Now, the revealing angel directed John to write to Sardis, "I know that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." A verse below exhorts repentance and threatens disaster. Only a few names have not been defiled. Is Scofield right in condemning the Protestant Reformation and asserting that only a few names of those Reformers have not been defiled?

On the contrary, the chapter refers only to the actual churches of the first century. It is not "incredible" that Revelation omits a description of 2000 years of church history. From chapter four to eleven, John describes the Jewish persecution of the Christians; from twelve to eighteen he predicts the Roman persecution; and nineteen to twenty-two describe history's final scenes.

Awaiting them we conclude that the type of criticism underlying the *Revised Standard Version*, the *New American Standard*, and other versions is inconsistent with its own stated criteria, inconsistent in its results, and inconsistent with the objective evidence. Its method is that of unsupported aesthetic speculation. If we want to get closer to the very words of God, we must pay attention to Hodges, Farstad, Pickering, and The *New King James Version*.

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Email: [Jrob1517@aol.com](mailto:Jrob1517@aol.com)

Website: [www.trinityfoundation.org](http://www.trinityfoundation.org)

Telephone: 423.743.0199

Fax: 423.743.2005

## An Introduction to the Bible

Gordon H. Clark

Pick up any book. You see its title. It may be *American History*, or *The Vegetation of Hawaii*, or *How to Fix Plumbing*. The title tells you the subject matter, and usually the next thing you want to know is the name of the author. A book on *England* written by Adolph Hitler would probably not be so good as one written by Winston Churchill. Nor would I trust Stalin even though he had written *The History of Russia*.

The book we are now about to study is called the Bible. The word *Bible* means *The Book*. A book that can bear simply the title of *The Book* must be a very important book. It is better called *The Holy Scriptures*. At any rate, everybody knows that the subject is God and religion. Therefore we want to know who wrote it. Was it written by someone like Hitler and Stalin, whom nobody should believe? Was it written by a popular and competent author like Churchill? Was it written by an expert researcher, even more competent? Who is it that claims to know enough about God and religion to write a volume of, say, 1,300 pages of double columns?

One should also ask, what method was used in collecting all this information in 1,300 pages of double columns? We can easily see the names of most of the writers: Moses, David, Isaiah, John, and Paul. But what, if anything, made them more competent than Pharaoh, Absalom, Sargon, Herod, and Nero?

The answer to this last question is found with great clarity in two verses, the first of which states the general principle, while the second gives a particular example. *2 Peter* 1:21 states, "For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The second verse is *Acts* 1:16, "This scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spoke by the mouth of David."

The first of these two verses shows that the prophets did not initiate the writing of the Bible. It was not as if they had been searching for God and trying to manufacture a religion, and then wrote down the results of their search and ingenuity. Peter says quite clearly that their prophecies did not come by their own volition. The original Greek is even stronger than the English translation. It says, "Prophecy *never* came by man's will." There are some theologians who put great stress on man's will. Now, undoubtedly man's will operates in a certain area; but there are some things a man cannot voluntarily do. One of these is to initiate a message from God. Man may invent a message and claim that it came from God. So too there are some religions that can properly be said to result from man's search for God. But not Christianity. The Hebrew prophets and the New Testament apostles spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Ghost.

The second of the two verses quoted shows that although in a sense the prophets actually spoke – if you had been in the streets of Jerusalem, you could have heard Jeremiah – nevertheless this is only half the truth. The more important half is that the Holy Ghost spoke. He not only "carried along" the prophets; he spoke through their mouths. Of course, the verse mentions only David, and not Moses or Jeremiah. But other verses, now to be given, will show that the other prophets, as well as David, spoke the words of God. For the author of the Bible is God.

Consider therefore and try to summarize the following verses.

*Numbers* 22:38: "Have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."

*Numbers* 23:5, 12, 16: "The Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth.... Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth?... The Lord met Balaam and put a word in his mouth."

*Deuteronomy* 18:18: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

*2 Samuel* 23:2: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."

*Isaiah* 1:20; 40:5; 55:14: "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

*Isaiah* 59:21: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

*Jeremiah* 1:9: "Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."

*Jeremiah* 13:15: "Hear ye, and give ear: be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken."

*Jeremiah* 30:4: "And these are the words

that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah."

*Jeremiah* 50:1: "The word that the Lord spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet."

*Ezekiel* 3:1, 4, 11: "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat what thou findest; eat this scroll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.... And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."

*Mark* 12:36: "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, the Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."

*Luke* 1: 70: "As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."

In the light of these verses, nearly twenty of them, we cannot mistake the fact that the Bible claims to be the words of God. Today some people who call themselves Christian speak of the Bible as the Word of God, but deny that the Bible is the words of God. They want to make the words the products of human invention, while paying lip service to the notion that the Bible contains in some vague sense a sort of divine odor. Thus the Bible is reduced to the level of a purely human book. Moses, of course, wrote words on some parchment or other, as did David and Paul; but the words they wrote were the words of God. This truth is picturesquely stated in one of the best-known verses on the authorship of the Bible.

*2 Timothy* 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable..." for a number of things. Such is the *King James* translation. The meaning could be made still clearer by translating it, "Every word is breathed out by God..." Scripture, of course, means the written words; and the word for inspired is not *breathed into*, as if God breathed into the Bible, but *breathed out*. God breathed out the words of the Bible. Thus the author of the Bible is God.

From the fact that God is the author of the Bible, a most important implication may be drawn. If these words are the words of God, what they say is true. If the Bible is God's book, it is true.

*Deuteronomy* 32:4: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

*John* 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

*John* 1:17: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

*John* 3:33: "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."

*John* 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him. I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

*John* 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

*Hebrews* 6:18: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." In his first epistle John uses figurative language to say the same thing.

*1 John* 1:5: "God is light and in him is no darkness at all."

It would be possible to quote many other verses that express the same idea. In negative form the Bible denounces lies and hypocrisy; affirmatively, it exalts truth.

In the latter quarter of the nineteenth century two men, who may be designated by their initials G and W, made a violent attack on the Bible. They assumed that what the Bible says must be false unless other evidence proved it true. By this principle they concluded that the Hittite nation never existed. For years the students of G and W kept asserting that there never were any Hittites, and that the Bible was myth and fairy tale. They

also said that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, that Abraham did not fight the battle of *Genesis* 14, and that seven-stemmed lamps were never made until late Persian times. Today the disciples of G and W do not dare make such statements. They still attack the Bible; they still deny its truth; they still twist Hebrew history out of shape. But they do not dare deny the existence of the Hittites; and seven-stemmed lamps are known to have been made long before Moses mentioned them in the book of Exodus.

In the twentieth century John Dewey, paying little attention to Biblical history and the details of Christian theology, attacked the very notion of truth as fixed and unchanging. For Dewey what is true today will be false tomorrow and what is false today will be true tomorrow. In history, for example, Dewey might say that it was false in 1880 that the Hittites existed, but in 1950 it is true. I wonder whether in the year 2000 the Hittites shall have existed?

Dewey applies his theory of changing truth most vigorously to morality. For his morality is merely social custom. Not only does moral truth change from time to time, but also from place to place at the same time.

What is right in the United States is wrong in the Congo; and cannibalism is right in the Congo because that is what people do there. It is like driving on the right hand side of the road in America and on the left in England.

The notion that truth changes is supported even by science. Nineteenth-century theories have been replaced by different views. It used to be thought that light was a wave motion in the ether. Physicists now deny the ether and say that light is a stream of corpuscles.

If the changing laws of science support the idea that truth changes, all the more does common opinion. Common opinions are like styles in dress. One style is popular for a few years, and then a new style takes its place. Tomatoes were once thought poisonous. I once heard an M.D. say that apples should never be eaten raw. Much to the dismay of American opinion the French eat snails but won't

eat corn. The result of reducing morality to the level of eating habits, traffic regulations, or styles in clothes is seen today in the crime, violence, sex orgies, and drug addiction so prevalent in the public schools. These things used to be considered wrong. Now hundreds of thousands of students can gather to indulge themselves publicly. Owing largely to the influence of John Dewey, the public schools indoctrinate their pupils to believe that it is a fixed, unchanging, absolute truth that there is no fixed, unchanging, absolute truth.

Of course these people do not believe in God. If there were no God, maybe they would be right. But then "right" would be only a changing common opinion. Right conduct would only be custom. Moral principles would be like the principles of language, as Dewey explicitly said; and as grammar changes from century to century, so would all other opinions or customs. But no one can fit the words of God into this shifting, unstable scheme.

The stability of God's truth, and especially the truth of his promises, is emphasized in different ways. Here are some examples:

*Psalms* 19:7: "The testimony of the Lord is sure."

*Psalms* 93:5: "Thy testimonies are very sure."

*Isaiah* 28:16: "Behold I lay in Zion a sure foundation."

Note that a foundation could not be sure unless the truth that it is sure is unchangeable.

*2 Timothy* 2:18-19: "Who, concerning the truth, have erred.... Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure."

The Ten Commandments were not merely true and good for the age of Moses; the Atonement was not effective merely during the lifetimes of Christ and the apostles; justification by faith alone was not essential only for Luther and Calvin. They remain true, good, applicable, and essential in the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century also.

Unfortunately, truth is not always very useful. Take for example a formula concerning the momentum of

$$2 \pi \int_0^R r^2 dr = \frac{2}{3} \pi R^3.$$

a rotating sphere: Let this equation be as true as you like, it is probably of no use to any reader of this essay, for these readers probably do not know what it means. Or, suppose you take a sentence from Martin Heidegger: "When *Dasein* is resolute, it takes over authentically in its existence the fact that it *is* the null basis of its own nullity." This is probably false; but if it were true, it would be of little use to most people. Now, for the advancement of learning as well as for scientific discoveries, there must be brilliant scholars who understand technical affairs. But if the Bible were as unintelligible as the examples just given, Paul would have been foolish to address his epistle to the Romans. The Roman Christians were largely slaves and lower class people. Many could neither read nor write. They had never gone to high school, let alone college. But Paul wrote:

*Romans* 1:7: "to all that be in Rome, beloved by God, called to be saints."

The prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah are not addressed to certain people in the direct manner of a Pauline epistle. But they are unmistakably addressed to the people.

*Isaiah* 15, 7, 10: "Why should ye be stricken any more...? Your country is desolate.... give ear to the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."

Isaiah was not literally addressing Sodom and Gomorrah: He was accusing the Israelites of sins as bad as those of the ancient wicked cities. The people were the people of Judah. Similarly Jeremiah addresses the people, not in the opening words of a letter, but throughout the book. The following verses are only some of many.

*Jeremiah* 6:1: "O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem."

*Ezekiel* 2:3-4: "I send thee to the children of Israel.... I do send thee unto them, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God."

*Hosea* 4:1: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel."



*Micah 1:2*: "Hear, all ye people."

The point of all verses like these is that God sent his message to all the people, and therefore today all people should study the Bible. When the Roman Catholic Church ruled the world, it was a crime to own or read a Bible. Bibles printed in Holland and exported to England were seized by the government and burned. The people who read them were burned too.

Another verse that completely contradicts the Roman Catholic position is Jesus' command:

*John 5:39*: "Search the Scriptures."

This command was in the first instance given to a group of unbelieving Jews: by implication it extends to all who may be interested in Christ's life and works. Never is there any suggestion that the Bible should be prohibited to the people.

One reason for taking the Bible away from the people and even for burning those who read it was the idea that the Bible is too hard to understand. The further idea arose that God had entrusted his message to the priests, and no one else was ever to read it. But this contradicts what the Bible says.

Now, it is true that some parts of the Bible are hard to understand. It is also true that scholars who study it for long hours and long years know it better than someone who reads it only fifteen minutes a week. But even the hard parts were addressed to all the people, and all of it is profitable.

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*: "All Scripture...is profitable for doctrine, for reproof...that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The conclusion here is that the words are true, understandable, and useful. They are not written only for mathematical scientists, like that equation given above; not for philosophers only, like Heidegger's unintelligible ravings; but for all Christians primarily, and secondarily for everybody else.

Something now needs to be said about the purpose for which the Bible was written. This purpose can be expressed in several ways, depending on how

much detail one wants to include. There are no single verses that state an all-inclusive purpose in so many words. The Gospel of John, however, has a single verse that pointedly states the purpose of that Gospel.

*John 20:30-31*: "Many other signs freely did Jesus...which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing he might have life through his name."

Of those distant events, we know only what has been committed to writing, and the purpose of John's writing and of Moses' and David's as well – was that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and believing that, enjoy eternal life.

## The Horror File

One of our good friends and supporters, Jeff Schneiter, called our attention to the following passages from pages 230 and 231 of *Love Is a Choice: Recovery for Codependent Relationships* by Robert Hernfelt, Frank Minirth, and Paul Meier (Nelson, 1989). They illustrate quite vividly that Clark was not attacking straw men when he discussed modern thought. My editorial comments are enclosed in brackets.

"Typically Bessie married into a codependent relationship. She lived thirty-three years with a miser of a husband who allowed her ten dollars a week spending money and considered himself generous. He died leaving her with a huge bank account and a powerful desire to commit suicide. It was therapy or death [Hobson's choice]. She crossed her arms and her eyes were blazing. 'Maybe someday I can forget. No way I can forgive.'

"Only when Bessie puts her logic behind her will she be able to break out of the place where she is stuck and take this final all-important step to healing.

"Lest you protest, 'I can't do that any more than Bessie can,' recall that utter dependence upon logic as such is a relatively recent mindset. Oh, sure, the

Greeks developed logic, including the logical mathematics that form the foundation of our scientific society. But it remained pretty much the realm of the intellectuals. The Arabic scientists carried it to new levels in math and astronomy, as did the Mayas and Aztecs in the New World. The general public in these societies, though, did not depend on pure logic. [Nor did the intellectuals, of course. The societies were superstitious and idolatrous from top to bottom.] Neither did Europeans then, even during her Renaissance when true scientific thought came into flower. Only in the last few hundred years, since the French Revolution, have reasoning and logic come to dominate the mindset of mainstream Western civilization.

[This attempt at intellectual history is pathetic. Except for Hegel, the nineteenth century was the century of the irrationalists: Kierkegaard, Marx, Darwin, Nietzsche. The twentieth century has been even worse: Freud, Dewey, James, Heidegger, Sartre, Skinner, Camus. The heyday of rationalism was the seventeenth century, with Spinoza, Leibniz, and Descartes. The heyday of Christianity was also the seventeenth century when the Westminster Confession was written. Furthermore, the authors seem to be laboring under the misconception that it was logic and reasoning that drove the French Revolution. They should consult James Billington's book, *Fire in the Minds of Men*, in which he argues that it was romanticism, irrationalism, not rationalism, that was responsible for the bloodshed then and since. To say that during the last two centuries reasoning and logic have dominated the mindset of Western civilization is to have lost touch with reality.]

"If such be so, what did logic supplant? Emotional responses. The 'thoughts' of the heart. In our society, 'In my heart of hearts I believe...' is poo-hooped as childish nonsense. We are taught to carefully avoid the messages of the heart and espouse only the messages of the head. Consider bereavement. If a new widow maintains a stiff upper lip and departs herself with dignity, her friends support her. If during her bereavement she consistently falls apart – actually the appropriate cleansing response to her tragedy – [so the

"appropriate cleansing response" is to "consistently fall apart"] her friends counsel, 'Now, now – you're being too emotional. You must be brave.' Or, uncomfortable, they simply back away from her completely.

"Two hundred years ago a bereavement called for a highly emotional response, and if the widow or widower maintained a brave or stoic front, the depth of the love came into serious question. [This statement lacks historical support.] Our [the possessive adjective cannot refer to the authors] utter dependence on reason and cool logic is a recent cultural phenomenon, and it is likely to get in the way of your recovery if you let it. [Why not just let out a Primal Scream?]

"In Bessie's case, her cause for unforgiveness was, on the surface, logical. In fact, it would seem illogical to forgive deliberate hurt. Conversely, if the persons who caused her grief were innocent of malicious intent, it would be logical for her to look past the ignorance and forgive.

"Bessie has two hurdles to leap. *First, she must sideline her reasoning mind and work from the heart.* [Emphasis in the original.]

"'I don't know how,' she says. 'I'm fifty-two years old, so I pretty much missed the women's lib thing where you aren't allowed to be emotional, but think of all the stuff you hear growing up. "Be reasonable." "That's not logical." "Don't let your heart rule your head or you'll marry badly." [Sounds like an open and shut case of child abuse.] How do I turn it off now?"

"'You mentioned to us before that you believe in God. Do you believe in the Bible?"

"'Sure.'

"'According to God's Word, cold, calculating reason isn't His way.'

"A thousand years before Christ, God instructed, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.' Jesus Himself adjured, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven.' How heavily does logic weigh in a little

child's thoughts?" [The authors are as competent at exegesis as they are at psychology.]

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Email: [Jrob1517@aol.com](mailto:Jrob1517@aol.com)

Website: [www.trinityfoundation.org](http://www.trinityfoundation.org)

Telephone: 423.743.0199

Fax: 423.743.2005

## Luther and Calvin on the Authority of the Bible

Edited by John W. Robbins

All acquainted with the sixteenth century Reformation know that the watchword was *Sola Scriptura*—"Scripture alone." This assertion was made against the pope, the church "fathers," and church councils. Luther and Calvin's "Scripture alone" meant at least four things:

1. the necessity of Scripture;
2. the authority of Scripture;
3. the sufficiency of Scripture; and
4. the perspicuity of Scripture.

### *The Necessity of Scripture*

Negatively, Scripture is necessary because, first, man is a creature, and second, man is a sinner. The blindness and darkness of the human heart, the hold that Satan has over his miserable subjects, and the inability of men to desire truth on their own part make an objective revelation most necessary. Scripture is necessary for the preservation of God's Word for mankind in an objective and self-attesting form. Luther said that among God's people the rule is not to be a smart aleck or a know-it-all, "but to hear, believe and persevere in the Word of God, through which alone we obtain whatever knowledge we have of God and divine things. We are not to

determine out of ourselves what we must believe about him, but to hear and learn it from him."

The Bible is a necessity. *Sola Scriptura* must be seen as both a denial and an affirmation. It is a denial of man's ability to know God as he ought apart from Scripture, and it affirms that the Bible is the only place where definite knowledge of God is to be discovered. Man is wholly bankrupt of that knowledge which is able to save him. If he is desirous of salvation, he must turn to the written Word of Scripture.

Calvin takes great pains to stress that under both the old and new dispensation God committed his Word to writing in order to ensure a correct knowledge of himself apart from any priestly interpretation. When the Reformer speaks of the apostles being authorized to teach what Christ commanded, he says: "Let this be a firm principle: No other word is to be held as the Word of God and given place as such in the Church than what is contained first in the Law and the Prophets, then in the writings of the apostles; and the only authorized way of teaching in the church is by the prescription and standard of his Word." Calvin makes it clear that Christ limited the mission of the apostles "when he ordered them to go and teach not what they had thoughtlessly fabricated, but all that he had commanded them." Without the Bible we have no revelation from God which is able to save us from sin and death. *Sola Scriptura* means the *necessity* of Scripture.

## *The Authority of Scripture*

The authority of the Bible is implicit in its necessity. The Scriptures are necessary because an authoritative self-revelation of God is necessary for men. However, we need to distinguish between authority and necessity. Martin Luther's contemporaries admitted the necessity of the Bible, but it was his insistence upon its authority which brought them into serious conflict with the Reformer. Luther's *sola Scriptura* was revolutionary because it attributed to the Bible *absolute authority*—over pope, "fathers," and councils. The offensive concept was *sola Scriptura*—Scripture *alone*. Luther was not content with belief in the relative necessity of Scripture. For him the Bible was the only authority:

In the empire of the church the ruler is God's Word.

We must judge according to the Word of God.

We must judge and consider all wonders and miracles in the light of God's Word, to ascertain whether they are in accordance and agreement with it.

Whether in opposition to Rome or the enthusiasts, Luther never tired of asserting Scripture *alone*.

Likewise, Calvin would not tolerate the subjection of the Word to human authorities. The mark of the church—indeed the *sine qua non* of the true church—was the rule of the Word. Calvin declares: "Since the church is Christ's Kingdom, and he reigns by his Word alone, will it not be clear to any man that those are lying words by which the Kingdom of Christ is imagined to exist apart from his sceptre (that is, his most holy Word)?"

Both Reformers were all too aware that sinful man seeks to be autonomous. He seeks to set himself up as a judge over that which presents itself to him as revelation. The Word of God does not come to man in such a way as to recognize his self-claimed autonomy. Rather, it comes challenging his authority and overthrowing his conceited attempt to have the final word. Calvin saw as blasphemous impiety the attempt to maintain the precedence and priority of the church over the Word. As Paul

declares, the church is founded on the doctrine of the apostles and prophets. We must not speak as though the mother owed her birth to the daughter. Calvin understood that to reject the rule of the Word was to reject the very rule of Christ himself.

Modern views on authority do not echo the sentiments of Luther and Calvin. Yet interestingly enough, many of these views are anticipated in the defense of truth made by these two sons of Paul. As previously stated, some today wish to speak of Christ being the final authority while they reject the authority of the Word. However, Calvin sees the authoritative reign of Christ in and through, not apart from, the Word. So also with those who would claim direct governance by the Spirit. Governance by the Spirit without or instead of the Word would be too vague and unstable. Christ has joined the Spirit to the Word to avoid such a vague, unstable government. Word and Spirit belong together—inseparably together.

Those who wish to propound a multiple source concept of authority would do well to hearken to the *sola* of Luther. He, like Calvin, repudiated the notion that the Scriptures are created by the church and not vice versa:

The Church is built on the word of the Gospel which is the Word of God's wisdom and virtue.

The Word of God preserves the Church of God.

Indeed, the church owes her existence to the Word and is maintained by the same means. Nor would Luther be patient with the argument by the sophists, who deduced the superiority of the church over the Word because of the supposed creation of the canon by the church. The inimitable response of Luther cannot go unquoted:

What a splendid argument! I approve Scripture. Therefore I am superior to Scripture. John the Baptist acknowledges and confesses Christ. He points to him with his finger. Therefore he is superior to Christ. The church approves Christian

faith and doctrine. Therefore the church is superior to them.

Surely no more needs to be added. For Luther and Calvin, *sola Scriptura* meant the absolute authority of the Bible. Their position is but the reflection of Paul's and ought, therefore, to be ours.

### *The Sufficiency of Scripture*

We come now to the sufficiency of Scripture. Once again, this attribute is involved inextricably with the previous two. The notions of man are not partly but wholly bankrupt. There is need for no additional ideas from man to supplement the divine revelation. The necessity of the Bible has reference to all men; the authority of the Bible has particular reference to the autonomous pretensions of Rome and the fanatics; and the sufficiency of the Word challenged the attempted supplements of the philosophers and Romanists.

*Sola Scriptura* was the denial of any admixture of the word of man with the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is present in the revelation of the Word. Any teaching that does not agree with Scripture is to be rejected, Luther said, "even if it snows miracles every day." Luther did not despise the creeds of the church, but accepted them simply because they had Biblical content. Fidelity to the Word was the criterion for Luther, not only for the creeds of the church but for the theologians also. Though he, like Calvin, appealed time and again to the early theologians, he would not bow to them when their teachings conflicted with that of Scripture. Declared the Reformer: "I will not listen to the church or the fathers or the apostles unless they bring and teach the pure Word of God." The Scriptures are sufficient. In so far as theologians help us to understand those Scriptures, Luther was happy to appeal to them. However, he never had any notion that Scripture had to be supplemented.

A Council has no power to establish new articles of faith, even though the Holy Spirit is present. Even the apostolic council in Jerusalem introduced nothing new in matters of faith . . .

A council has the power—and is also duty-bound to exercise it—to suppress and condemn new articles of faith in accordance with Scripture and the ancient faith . . .

Calvin takes the same position when he speaks as follows:

Furthermore, those who, having forsaken Scripture, imagine some way or other of reaching God, ought to be thought of as not so much gripped by error as carried away by frenzy. For of late, certain giddy men have arisen who, with great haughtiness, exacting the teaching office of the Holy Spirit, despise all reading and laugh at the simplicity of those who, as they express it, still follow the dead and killing letter.

These fanatics, who appealed to the Spirit instead of the Word, showed contempt for that Word. They denied the all-sufficiency and perfection of the Word. However, the Spirit is recognized in his agreement with Scripture, for the Word and Spirit belong *inseparably* together.

Today many claim authority for charismatic experiences and others posit authority in some philosophy or psychology other than the Word. It needs to be stated again that the Word is sufficient. It needs no supplementation from popes, theologians, councils, or bureaucracies. It needs no supplementation by enthusiastic fanatics who entertain their own private revelations and visions. It needs no supplementation by scientists, psychologists, or philosophers. The Scripture is sufficient.

### *The Perspicuity of Scripture*

We have considered the necessity, authority, and sufficiency of Scripture. Now we come to the perspicuity, or the essential clarity, of the Bible. If necessity is aimed at rationalism, authority at Romanism and fanaticism, and sufficiency at eclecticism, then the perspicuity of the Scriptures is aimed at clericalism and professorialism. Rome confined the Word to ecclesiastical experts. Luther

and Calvin broke the chains that held the Bible to the scholars' bench and gave the Word of God to the humblest peasant. In his comment on *Psalm 37*, Luther said: "There is not on Earth a book more lucidly written than the Holy Scripture; compared with all other books it is as the sun compared with all other lights." Luther accused the papacy of beclouding the inherent radiance of the Word and keeping the people from its unambiguous truth. He objected: "they take from the Scripture its single, simple, and stable meaning; they blind our eyes, so that we stagger about and retain no reliable interpretation. We are like men bewitched or tricked while they play with us as gamblers with their dice."

Erasmus was no better. He erred greatly in Luther's eyes in asserting that, apart from "the precepts designed to regulate our existence," the Bible is, in many places, obscure and impenetrable. In his *Bondage of the Will*, Luther complains: "It is with such scarecrows that Satan has frightened away men from reading the Sacred Writings and has rendered the Holy Scriptures contemptible . . ."

It must not be thought that the perspicuity of Scripture is inconsistent with the Protestant emphasis of the diligent exposition of the Word. Notice these pertinent remarks of Calvin:

Since we ought to be satisfied with the Word of God alone, what purpose is served by hearing sermons every day, or even the office of pastors? Has not every person the opportunity of reading the Bible? But Paul assigns to teachers the duty of dividing or cutting, as if a father in giving food to his children, were dividing the bread and cutting it in small pieces.

The minister of the Word must strive to be a scholar. Declares Calvin: "None will ever be a good minister of the Word of God, unless he is first of all a scholar." It is as if Calvin were speaking of our day when he says: "how many [ministers] does one see who have only superficially glanced at Holy Scripture and are so pitifully poorly versed in it that with every new idea they change their views." Further, not only must the perspicuity of Scripture

not lead us into academic indifference, but it must not lead us to think that, unaided by the Spirit, we can fathom the true intent of God's Word. Finally, in reference to the perspicuity of Scripture, it must not be thought that the total clarity and comprehensibility of the Word are here being advocated. The perspicuity of Scripture refers to the basic or essential clarity. There are things in the Word that the best of God's children have not been able to fathom. However, by the gracious ministry of the Spirit, that which is necessary for salvation and godliness is clear.

### *The Reformers' Approach to the Bible*

Generally speaking, contemporary theology posits supreme authority in some sort of god and gives the Bible only a relative authority. Contemporary theology bluntly refuses to give absolute authority to the Bible, for it claims to fear that to do so is to rob God of his absolute authority. But we have seen that, for Luther and Calvin, *sola Scriptura* meant nothing less than the absolute authority of the Bible. Both Reformers saw the Scriptures as deserving the attribute of absolute authority—not in the place of God but as the expression of the very mind of God. Hence, Luther and Calvin call the modern church back to the absolute authority of the infallible Bible as the Word of God in the church and the world.

If contemporary theology posits supreme authority in a god to the detriment of the Bible, present day "evangelicalism" posits supreme authority in the experience of the worshiper to the detriment of the Word. Luther and Calvin constantly fought against Rome's pretensions to direct contact with the Spirit in and through the pope and church councils. Rome admitted that the Spirit spoke in and through the Bible, but claimed this was not the *final* locus of the Spirit's working. As pointed out earlier, Luther attacked the right of councils to establish new articles of faith. In addition, Luther and Calvin had to defend the absolute authority of the Bible against the fanatics, who boasted of immediacy of revelation by the Spirit.

Today, the miraculous, the unusual, the pragmatically "helpful" govern the approach of many to the Word so that what they find is only the confirmation of their experiences. The slogan, "The man with an experience is never at the mercy of the man with an argument," is highly dangerous and anti-Christian. A miracle, a "changed life," may be used as the final "proof" which closes all argument and brings down charges of resisting the Spirit upon those who wish to exercise reserve. But if a position is not in accordance with the Bible, it is wrong—irrespective of experience. Luther insisted that that which does not agree with Scripture is to be rejected "even if it snows miracles every day."

Luther and Calvin challenge both contemporary theology and "evangelicalism" in their practical demonstration of commitment to the authority of Scripture. Witness the truly prodigious labors of these Reformers in expounding the Word in preaching, teaching, and voluminous writings. This provides a stark contrast to most theology and preaching today. The Bible is shamefully neglected in modern theology and preaching. Consider so-called evangelical preaching. One may encounter pseudo-dramatism. He may hear the imperatives pulverizing the people of God. He may listen to sickeningly glib clichés rolling off the preacher's tongue with the greatest of ease. But where is that careful exegesis of the text? Where is that great concern to represent the message of the passage of Scripture? Ultimately, is not our view of the Word seen more in what we do with it than in what we say about it? Have we not separated the Spirit from the Word in our foolish notion that scholarship on the part of the minister of God is to be subordinated to emotional attachment, which we call "spirituality"? If we really believe that the Word and Spirit are inseparable, would this not be shown in a high quality of exegesis and exposition? The truly scholarly labors of both Luther and Calvin call the quality of all modern ministries into question. The Bible is absolutely necessary, the only authority, completely sufficient, and, under the ministry of the Spirit, essentially clear.



# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Email: Jrob1517@aol.com Website: <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/> Telephone: 423.743.0199 Fax: 423.743.2005

## Original Manuscripts, the Majority Text, and Translations

W. Gary Crampton

In the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:8) we read:

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of Old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.

According to the Westminster theologians, the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament were "immediately inspired by God." These inspired words were "kept pure in all ages." The Greek and Hebrew copies of the original manuscripts that we possess today are "authentic," and they are the Word of God.

A pseudo-problem, which the *Westminster Confession*, by its focus on words, not documents, avoids altogether, is that none of the original manuscripts (*autographa*) is extant. What we have are copies (*apographa*). But, as we will see, although we do not possess the original manuscripts (that is, the physical documents), it does not follow that we do not have the original words in the copies. The good copies which we have, as a whole, can, and do, contain the very words of God.

A Biblical view of Scripture makes no assertion that no errors have crept into any of the copies. God never claims to have infallibly inspired translators and copyists<sup>1</sup> (albeit He does promise to keep His Word pure throughout the ages; *Isaiah* 40:8). Mistakes in the original manuscripts would attribute error to God, but defects in the copies attribute error only to the copyists. It is only the original authors that were inspired by God to write without error (2 *Peter* 1:20-21; *Exodus* 32:15-16; 2 *Samuel* 23:2; *Jeremiah* 1:9), and copies are the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God only to the degree that they reflect the original words.

### Edward J. Young

E. J. Young wrote:

If the Scripture is "God-breathed," it naturally follows that only the original is "God-breathed." If holy men of God spoke from God as they were borne by the Holy Spirit, then only what they spoke under the Spirit's bearing is inspired. It would certainly be unwarrantable to maintain that copies of what they spoke were also inspired, since these copies were not made as men were borne of the Spirit. They were therefore not "God-breathed" as was the original.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is the mistake of some of those who hold to the "King James only" view, when they advocate that God inspired the translators of the 1611 *King James Version* of the Bible. This view of post-canonical inspiration of translators is not the position espoused by Biblical Christianity. See Frank Carmical (Secretary of the Majority Text Society), "What is the Difference Between the 'King James Only' and Majority Text Position?" ([www.majoritytext.org/archive.htm](http://www.majoritytext.org/archive.htm)).

<sup>2</sup> Edward J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth* (Eerdmans, 1957), 55-56.

## Francis Turretin

Francis Turretin was of the same opinion:

Although we give to the Scriptures absolute integrity, we do not therefore think that the copyists and printers were inspired (*theopneustos*), but only that the providence of God watched over the copying of the sacred books, so that although many errors might have crept in, it has not so happened (or they have not so crept into the manuscripts) but that they can be easily corrected by a collation of others (or with the Scriptures themselves). Therefore the foundation of the purity and integrity of the sources is not to be placed in the freedom from fault...of men, but in the providence of God, which (however men employed in transcribing the sacred books might possibly mingle various errors) always diligently took care to correct them, or that they might be corrected easily either from a comparison with Scripture itself or from more approved manuscripts. It was not necessary therefore to render all the scribes infallible, but only so to direct them that the true reading may always be found out. This book far surpasses all others in purity.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the autographs, copies may not be free from error. The branch of study known as textual criticism, which really had its beginning in the sixteenth century, undertakes the careful comparison and evaluation of the copies to determine, as far as it is humanly possible, the original readings. As one might imagine, textual criticism, as Gordon Clark commented, "is a very difficult and delicate procedure."<sup>4</sup>

Even though the Roman Catholic Church (wrongly) adds to the Old Testament parts of the Apocrypha, as far as the Christian church is concerned, there is really no controversy regarding the Old Testament. There is only one text, and that is the Masoretic Text, and it consists of 39 books.<sup>5</sup> Old Testament scholar Robert Dick Wilson stated that we are virtually "certain that we have

substantially the same text that was in the possession of Christ and the apostles."<sup>6</sup>

The real controversy concerns the New Testament (more will be said on this below). But, as we will see, this should not be. There are presently over 4,700 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament extant. There are also a number of translations of the early church, along with some 2,200 church lectionaries (that is, Bible study material or readings for the church's weekly worship services), which are based on portions of the New Testament. Then there are some 85 papyri which contain fragments of the New Testament texts. There is no other piece of literature in all of antiquity that is as well documented as the New Testament. John Warwick Montgomery wrote: "To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament."<sup>7</sup>

## Benjamin Warfield

As B. B. Warfield pointed out, we are not to understand the Westminster theologians as teaching that every copy is without error, but that the genuine text has been "kept pure" in the multitude of Hebrew and Greek copies. The pure text would not necessarily be perfectly reproduced in any one copy, but it has been preserved within the whole body of documents, due to God's providential watchcare over the transmission of His Word. The doctrine of inerrancy, then, applies in the strictest sense only to the *autographa*; it was "immediately" inspired. But it also applies to the *apographa* in a derivative sense, because we do have the words of the original manuscripts in the copies.<sup>8</sup> The doctrine of divine inspiration (2 *Timothy* 3:16-17), implies the preservation of the infallible, inerrant Word of God. Jesus confirmed this in *Matthew* 4:4, when He affirmed the inspiration of the *autographa* by stating that Scripture "proceeds from the mouth of God," and affirmed the authority of the *apographa* (the written Word) by stating that it is the standard by which "man shall...live."<sup>9</sup>

## John Owen

<sup>3</sup> Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, translated by George Musgrave Giger, edited by James T. Dennison, Jr. (P&R Publishing, 1992), I:72-73.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism* (The Trinity Foundation, 1986), 9.

<sup>5</sup> In his *Biblical Theology* (Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1994), 495-533, John Owen argued that the original writings included, not only the Hebrew consonants, but also the Hebrew vowels (or vowel-points). He argued that consonants without vowels are not words, and God spoke to His people in words. See also John Gill, *A Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel-Points and Accents* (The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1999), who argues that the Masoretes did not claim to be the originators of the vowel-points, but "considered it as of a divine original" (9).

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Wayne Jackson and Bert Thompson, "Questions and Answers," *Reason and Revelation* (Apologetics Press, September 1989), 33.

<sup>7</sup> John Warwick Montgomery, cited in Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Here's Life Publishers, 1972, 1979), 40.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (Still Waters Revival, 1991), 236ff.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas M. Strouse, "Every Word: Matthew 4:4," *Thou Shalt Keep Them* (Pillar and Ground Publishing, 2003), edited by Kent Brandenburg, 35.

John Owen, who was a contemporary of the Westminster Assembly, said it this way:

The sum of what I am pleading for, as to the particular head to be vindicated, is, that as the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were *immediately and entirely* given out by God Himself, His mind being in them represented unto us *without the least interveniency* of such mediums and ways as were capable of giving change or alteration to *the least iota or syllable*; so, by His good and merciful providential dispensation, in His love to His Word and church, *His whole Word, as first given out by Him, is preserved unto us entire in the original languages*; where, shining in its own beauty and lustre (as also in all translations, so far as they faithfully represent the originals), it manifests and evidences unto the consciences of men, without other foreign help or assistance, its divine original and authority.<sup>10</sup>

### The Preservation of the Words

It should not surprise us that God has kept His Word pure throughout the ages, or that the present-day copies which we possess are so accurate. The Bible itself affirms the perpetuity of God's Word. *Psalm* 119, for example, declares: "Forever, O LORD, Your Word is settled in heaven....Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever....The entirety of Your Word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever" (verses 89, 152, 160). In *Isaiah* 40:8 we read: "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever." Then too, Jesus Himself claimed that "till Heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (*Matthew* 5:18). Regarding this latter verse, significantly, the "jot" is the smallest Hebrew letter, and the "tittle" is the tiny stroke on certain Hebrew letters. Hence, what Jesus is teaching here "is equivalent to saying that even the dotting of the 'i's, and crossing of 't's will stand."<sup>11</sup> Commenting on this verse, John Calvin averred: "There is nothing in the law that is unimportant, nothing that was put there at random; and so it is impossible that a single letter shall perish."<sup>12</sup> Each of these passages argues for the divine, everlasting preservation of the Word of God.

*Deuteronomy* 4:12; 12:32; and *Proverbs* 30:6, as well as *Revelation* 22:18-19, tell us that one must not add to or delete from the original Word of God. (It should not be forgotten that tampering with the Word of God was one

ploy of Satan to bring about the fall [*Genesis* 3:1-7].)<sup>13</sup> *Revelation* 22:18-19 are especially strong:

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

In *Jeremiah* 36, after wicked king Jehoiakim destroyed the prophet's original document, Jeremiah was told to make another copy. In *Deuteronomy* 17:18, we read that a copy of the law was to be made (the original was in the ark of the covenant: *Hebrews* 9:4), and given to the king so that he would know how to conduct his affairs according to Biblical law. And in *Colossians* 4:16, the Apostle Paul tells the members of the church at Colosse that after this letter had been read in their hearing, that they should make copies to send on to other churches.<sup>14</sup> Accurate copies, then, are attested to and approved by Scripture itself.

The accuracy of transmission is also attested to in the Bible. Jesus, for instance, preached from a copy of *Isaiah* 42 (*Matthew* 12:18-21) and 61 (*Luke* 4:16-21), and told others to search the Scriptures (*John* 5:39). The Scriptures of Jesus' day were surely copies of the original manuscripts. They contained the original words inspired by God. In 2 *Timothy* 4:13, Paul asks that the "parchments" (obviously copies) be brought to him so that he might study the Word of God in his prison cell. He also commends the Bereans for searching their copies of the original Old Testament manuscripts (*Acts* 17:11). And in *Proverbs* 25:1 we read of Solomon's original "proverbs" being copied by the "men of Hezekiah"; and the copies are the Word of God.

Regarding the matter of transmission of Scripture, Warfield concluded that the New Testament "has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no, variation; and even in the most corrupt form in which it has ever appeared, to use the oft-quoted words of Richard Bentley, 'the real text of the sacred writers is competently exact...nor is one article of faith or moral precept either perverted or lost...choose as awkwardly as you will, choose the worst by design, out of the whole lump.'"<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), XVI:349-350. Italics added.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Lyons and Dave Miller, "Biblical Inerrancy," *Reason and Revelation* 24 (6):60.

<sup>12</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary* on Matthew 5:18.

<sup>13</sup> In *Genesis* 3:1, Satan added to the Word of God ("Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat from every tree of the Garden?"; compare 2:16-17), and in 3:4 he subtracted from it ("You will not surely die"; compare 2:17).

<sup>14</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *Colossians* (The Trinity Foundation, 1989), 131-132.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 44.

## Accurate Translations also Are the Word

It is also noteworthy that the frequent use of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) by the New Testament authors speaks highly, not only of the importance of and general accuracy of the transmission of the text, but also of the need for translations into the “vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship [God] in an acceptable manner; and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.” As the *Confession* teaches, all persons are enjoined, “in the fear of God, to read and search” the Scriptures, thus requiring that they be able to read and hear the Bible in their native tongues. This doctrine is taught in a number of passages in the Bible: *Deuteronomy* 31:11-12; *Jeremiah* 36:6-7; *Matthew* 28:18-20; *John* 5:39; *Romans* 15:14, just to list a few. In this manner, persons of all nations would come to know the way of salvation (*John* 20:31; *Romans* 1:16-17; 10:7), and be able to protect themselves against the evil one and his minions (*Ephesians* 6:10-18).

This same principle is taught in *Nehemiah* 8, where we read of the Word of God being read in the original language by Ezra, but being translated into the language of the auditors by the Levites. Further, in His earthly ministry Jesus taught the people in their native tongue (*Matthew* 5-7). His apostles and disciples did the same. On the day of Pentecost, persons from all over the world heard the Gospel preached in their own languages (*Acts* 2). And on their missionary journeys, Paul and his companions preached the Word of God in language that their auditors were able to understand (*Acts* 13-28). This implies, among other things, that propositional revelation is not only adequately and accurately expressed in the original languages, but in other human languages as well. Human language *per se* is a gift of God, and is an entirely adequate and suitable vehicle for expressing divine truth accurately and literally. Far from being an impediment to communication between God and man, language, speech, the human word, is the exclusive vehicle of such communication.

## Francis Turretin

It is not just the essential doctrines which are preserved, it is the wording of the text as well. Francis Turretin said it this way:

Unless unimpaired integrity characterize the Scriptures, they could not be regarded as the sole rule of faith and practice, and the door would be thrown wide open to atheists, libertines, enthusiasts, and other profane persons like them for destroying its authenticity...and overthrowing the foundation of salvation. For since nothing false can be an object of

[saving] faith, how could the Scriptures be held as authentic and reckoned divine if liable to contradictions and corruptions? Nor can it be said that these corruptions are only in smaller things which do not affect the foundation of faith. For if once the authenticity...of the Scriptures is taken away (which would result even from the incurable corruption of one passage), how could our faith rest on what remains? And if corruption is admitted in those of lesser importance, why not in others of greater? Who could assure me that no error or blemish had crept into fundamental passages? Or what reply could be given to a subtle atheist or heretic who should pertinaciously assert that this or that passage less in his favor had been corrupted? It will not do to say that divine providence wished to keep it free from serious corruptions, but not from minor. For besides the fact that this is gratuitous, it cannot be held without injury, as if lacking in the necessary things which are required for the full credibility...of Scripture itself. Nor can we readily believe that God, who dictated and inspired each and every word to these inspired...men, would not take care of their entire preservation. If men use the utmost care diligently to preserve their words (especially if they are of any importance, as for example a testament or contract) in order that it may not be corrupted, how much more, must we suppose, would God take care of His Word which He intended as a testament and seal of His covenant with us, so that it might not be corrupted; especially when He could easily foresee and prevent such corruptions in order to establish the faith of His church?<sup>16</sup>

Yet, all copies are just that: copies. And they are to be corrected, where necessary, by the originals. In *2 Kings* 22 and *2 Chronicles* 34 we read of the finding of the “original” book of the law of Moses by the priest Hilkiah (the literal reading of *2 Chronicles* 34:14 is “by the hand of Moses”). Albeit the men of that day had copies of the law (which is obvious from their carrying out the work required by the law in *2 Chronicles* 34:1-13), there were apparently certain teachings which were not found in the copies which were in the originals. Israel had been guilty of not doing all that God had required (verses 19-21). Thus, obedience of the people had to be governed by the Word as it was originally given “by the hand of Moses” (verses 29ff.). Therefore, the appropriate corrections were made.

<sup>16</sup> Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, I:71.

## Accurate Translations

The question arises: How are we to know which translation is the most accurate?<sup>17</sup> As noted above, the controversy here is not over the Old, but the New Testament, at least as regards the textual issues. Just in the last century there have been numerous new translations, including the *American Standard Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, the *New American Standard Version*, the *New International Version*, the *English Standard Version*, and the *New King James Version*. Most of these new translations (the *New King James Version* being an exception) are based upon a Greek text of the New Testament, known as the Alexandrian Text or Critical Text,<sup>18</sup> that differs from the Greek text underlying the *King James Version* (and *New King James Version*), known as the Received Text (*Textus Receptus*), in over 5000 ways. Most newer translations rely heavily on a handful of early Greek manuscripts (particularly two: *Codex Sinaiticus*<sup>19</sup> and [especially] *Codex Vaticanus*) that were discovered in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The theory that these documents (the alleged “neutral” text) are to be favored, primarily due to their greater age, was promulgated by B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort.<sup>20</sup> If it were true that the earlier codices are to be considered as the most trustworthy, then it would seem that they ought to differ the least among themselves. But this is not the case; even among these few manuscripts, there are numerous differences.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Translation theory is extremely important on this question as well. But space prohibits the study of this matter in this article. For more on this, see William O. Einwechter, *English Bible Translations: By What Standard?* (Preston-Speed Publications, 1996), 13-24.

<sup>18</sup> Technically, there is a slight distinction between the Alexandrian Text and the Critical Text, but for the purpose of this article, they are considered to be basically the same.

<sup>19</sup> *Codex Sinaiticus* also includes two non-canonical books: the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Shepherd of Hermes*.

<sup>20</sup> B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (Hendrickson, 1988). Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1977), 31-40. See also Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, 1971, 1975), xiii-xxxi.

<sup>21</sup> Robert L. Dabney, *Discussions of Robert L. Dabney* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 1:364. Some textual critics who have rejected the Westcott-Hort “neutral text” theory have opted for an “eclectic text” theory. This group claims to have no preferred text-type, but considers the readings of all of them without positing a favorite. The fact of the matter is, however, that the majority of scholars in this group do share the views of Westcott-Hort that the Received or Byzantine Text is an inferior text. See Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 23.

The Westcott-Hort theory further maintains that some 85-90 percent of Greek manuscripts represented by the Received Text, which, unlike the Alexandrian Text, are in substantial agreement, underwent a radical editing process in the fourth century. Hence, they are unreliable. Other studies, however, have shown that this is simply not the case. “History is completely silent,” wrote Harry Sturz, “with regard to any revision of the Byzantine [Received] Text.”<sup>22</sup> As a matter of fact, there is evidence to show that the Alexandrian manuscripts were the ones tampered with, and these deliberate changes are the reason that these documents are so dissimilar.<sup>23</sup> As William Einwechter commented: “Due to this nearly total rejection of the value of the Byzantine [Received] Text as a witness to the original autographs, the scholars have established the MCT [Alexandrian Text] on the basis of only 10-15% of the available manuscripts.”<sup>24</sup>

## The Majority Text

Another group of New Testament scholars argues that the readings of the majority of manuscripts are to be preferred to the readings of a few older manuscripts. This is referred to as the Majority Text or Byzantine<sup>25</sup> Text theory. Because this text has been handed down and preserved by the church through the centuries, it is also referred to as the Traditional Text or Ecclesiastical Text. The Received Text belongs to the manuscripts of the Majority Text, but is not perfectly identical with it.<sup>26</sup> As far as this article is concerned, the Received Text and the Majority Text are used as generally synonymous terms. As stated by E. F. Hills: “The *Textus Receptus* is practically identical with the Byzantine text found in the vast majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts.”<sup>27</sup>

According to the Westcott-Hort theory, manuscripts are to be weighed, not counted. After all, it is alleged, all of the Byzantine Text came from one related family. Hence, the great number of them carries little weight. According to the Byzantine Text theory, on the other hand, greater age is not nearly so important as number. First, one text being older than another in no way implies that it is superior. The older text itself could be errant. Too, the weight of textual

<sup>22</sup> Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, 122.

<sup>23</sup> Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, 58-62, 107-110.

<sup>24</sup> Einwechter, *English Bible Translations: By What Standard?* 30.

<sup>25</sup> The Byzantine Text is so called because the majority of its manuscripts come from the eastern Greek-speaking church in the Byzantine Empire.

<sup>26</sup> See Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, editors, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> E. F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (The Christian Research Press, 1956), 121.

evidence now reveals that the Byzantine Text readings go back at least to the time of *Codex Vaticanus* and *Codex Sinaiticus*. Contrary to the teachings of Westcott-Hort, wrote Harry Sturz, “distinctively Byzantine readings of every kind have been shown to be early.” They are attested to by early papyri and several of the church fathers.<sup>28</sup> In the words of William Einwechter, it is virtually certain that “this text [TR] was in continuous use in the Greek church from at least the 4<sup>th</sup> century until the time of the Reformation when Erasmus made this text the basis for the first printed edition of the Greek NT.”<sup>29</sup> The fact that we do not possess any early copies of the Byzantine Text is easily explained: (1) the climate in Egypt, where the early Alexandrian Text manuscripts were found, is more arid, thus any text would last longer there; (2) the Egyptian manuscripts were probably not used, due to their corrupt nature, and therefore lasted longer, whereas the majority of manuscripts was frequently used and these manuscripts “wore out.”<sup>30</sup>

Second, if numbers of similar manuscripts have a single ancestor, as is alleged to be the case with the Byzantine Text, it does not necessarily mean that the greater number carries little weight. It may well imply that the copyists of that day believed that ancestor to be the manuscript most faithful to the original. The manuscripts that are fewer in number were in all probability rejected by copyists; their scarcity indicates their corrupt nature.<sup>31</sup> Further, it is not the case that the numerous manuscripts of the Byzantine Text have all come from one common parent. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that the Byzantine Text documents come from numerous parts of Christendom, and are not related genealogically.<sup>32</sup>

Third, the churches in the East used the Byzantine Text for over 1000 years prior to the Reformation. The churches of the Reformation used the same text for another 350 years, and some still continue to use it. As stated by E. F. Hills, the Byzantine text

was the Greek New Testament text in general use throughout the greater part of the Byzantine period (312-1453). For many centuries before the Protestant Reformation this Byzantine text was the text of the entire Greek church and for more than three centuries after the Reformation it was the text of the entire Protestant church. Even today it is the text which most

Protestants know best, since the *King James Version* and other early Protestant translations were made from it.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, there is every reason to believe that this same text was preserved “throughout the second and third centuries and down into the fourth century.”<sup>34</sup> If the scholars who have followed Westcott-Hort theory in opting for the Alexandrian Text are correct, then the church, in many cases, has been without the most authentic text of the New Testament for nearly two millennia. This in itself does not indicate that God has “by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages” the New Testament text.<sup>35</sup> This erroneous approach to textual criticism is more rationalistic than Biblical. It is highly subjective, rather than Biblically objective. It even has an Hegelian flair to it, supposing that somehow there must be a “progressive” element to textual criticism.<sup>36</sup>

#### **Is the Canon Closed?**

Worse, if the Alexandrian Text theory were true, then we would have to ask ourselves if the New Testament canon will ever be closed, a fact admitted by Westcott and Hort.<sup>37</sup> Why? Because if new (and older) manuscripts continue to be found (which is possible), then we would have to re-evaluate the New Testament text every time a new manuscript is found. We would never be able to recover the actual New Testament text. To cite E. F. Hills: “If God has preserved the New Testament in such a way that it is impossible to obtain assurance concerning the purity of the text, then there is no infallible New Testament today, and if there is no infallible New Testament today, it may very well be that there never was an infallible New Testament.”<sup>38</sup>

One place where this problem is most noticeable is at the end of the *Gospel of Mark*. The versions following the Alexandrian Text bracket verses 9-20 as not part of the original, because they are lacking in *Codex Vaticanus* and *Codex Sinaiticus*. But most of the other Markan manuscripts contain the verses. A common theory adopted by proponents of the Alexandrian Text theory is that somehow the original ending of *Mark* has been lost, and verses 9-20 were added by a later redactor.<sup>39</sup> The advocates of this theory would actually have us believe (although they would not state it this way) that God was

<sup>28</sup> Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, 130, 79, 95.

<sup>29</sup> Einwechter, *English Bible Translations: By What Standard?* 27.

<sup>30</sup> Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, 124ff.; David J. Engelsma, *Modern Bible Versions* (Protestant Reformed Churches, 1988), 27.

<sup>31</sup> Clark, *Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism*, 13-16.

<sup>32</sup> Engelsma, *Modern Bible Versions*, 27-28.

<sup>33</sup> Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 40.

<sup>34</sup> Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 55.

<sup>35</sup> Engelsma, *Modern Bible Versions*, 32-33.

<sup>36</sup> This insight was given to the present writer by Dr. Charles H. Roberts, pastor of Ballston Center Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, in Ballston Spa, New York.

<sup>37</sup> Webb, “Not One Jot or One Tittle,” *Thou Shalt Keep Them*, 48.

<sup>38</sup> Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 141.

<sup>39</sup> Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 122-126.

either unable or unwilling to prevent the mutilation of the text of Holy Scripture. And certainly these advocates could not reasonably say that God has providentially “kept pure” this portion of His Word “in all ages.” In fact, we may go so far as to say that if *Mark* 16:9-20 is lost, then the statement of Jesus in *Matthew* 5:18 (“I say to you, till Heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled”) is erroneous.<sup>40</sup>

### **Romanism and Rationalism**

As noted, textual criticism actually began in the sixteenth century. The Reformers and the later Puritans were very much aware of this discipline. Believing in the principle of *sola Scriptura*, they were strong advocates of the belief that God has preserved His Word in the majority of Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, which manuscripts were in basic agreement. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, used a handful of copies in which numerous variants existed in an attempt to refute the principle of *sola Scriptura*. Without an infallible church to tell us what is and what is not the actual Word of God, said Rome, one can never be sure of the true text of Scripture. Romanism favored a few manuscripts with numerous differences, over the majority of manuscripts that were in basic agreement, whereas the Reformers and the Puritans, for the most part, took the opposite stand.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, textual criticism over the last century has followed the principles used by Rome (and Enlightenment Rationalism), not those of the Reformers and Puritans. And that practice has led the church astray. We have been told that a few texts upon which the new translations are based are better than the majority of texts upon which the *King James* and the *New King James Versions* are based. As this article has shown, however, this is not true. The Westcott-Hort theory is not dependable. As Pickering wrote, it is unproved at every point.<sup>42</sup>

### **Who Preserves the Word?**

Scripture not only tells us that God will preserve His Word, it also tells us that He will use His elect people (not a group of “text scholars”) to preserve it. Under the Old Testament administration, God “committed the oracles of God” to Israel, His chosen nation (*Romans* 3:2). Under the New Testament era, the same responsibility has been given to the church, which is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (*1 Timothy* 3:15). The church has a responsibility to “test all things; [and] hold fast what is good” (*1 Thessalonians* 5:21); to “test the spirits, whether they are

of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (*1 John* 4:1). And the church must be very careful how it handles the text of Holy Scripture.

Jesus claimed that He had given His apostles the same infallible, inerrant words which His Father had given Him, and that “they have received them” (*John* 17:8). These are the very words which He taught “will by no means pass away” (*Matthew* 24:35). “The Scripture,” He taught, “cannot be broken” (*John* 10:35). And “it is impossible for [Him] to lie” (*Hebrews* 6:18). At the same time, however, Paul warned against faulty documents in *2 Thessalonians* 2:2, and Peter cautioned the church against those who would “twist” the Scriptures in *2 Peter* 3:16. In writing to Timothy, Paul stated that “if anyone...does not consent to wholesome [that is, Scriptural] words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing...[he is] destitute of the truth” (*1 Timothy* 6:3-5). Any other words will lead “to no profit, the ruin of the hearers.” We must “shun [such] profane and vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.” If not checked, these unwholesome words “will spread like cancer” (*2 Timothy* 2:14-17). These passages remind us that this subject is no small matter. We are dealing with the Word of God. It is not enough that the translations be accurate; the Greek text underlying the translations must be the correct one. The new translations use an incorrect Greek text. The Byzantine Text theory, which fully adheres to the doctrine of divine providential preservation of the Scriptures, provides a superior text, and translations should be based upon it, not upon the Alexandrian Text.

The doctrine of divine inspiration of the original writings, implies the doctrine of the divine preservation of Scripture. And the doctrine of divine preservation of Scripture demands the adoption of the Byzantine Text theory rather than the Alexandrian Text theory. This does not mean, as E. F. Hills averred, “the Byzantine Text is an absolutely perfect reproduction of the divinely inspired original text.” Rather:

All that is intended by this expression [that the Byzantine Text is to be considered as the Standard text], is that the Byzantine Text, found in the vast majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts, represents the original text very accurately, more accurately than any other text which survives from the manuscript period, and that for this reason it is God’s will that this text be followed almost always in preference to the non-Byzantine texts found in the minority of the New Testament manuscripts and in most of the ancient versions.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For a thorough study of this matter see John W. Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark* (Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1959).

<sup>41</sup> Einwechter, *English Bible Translations: By What Standard?* 34, 62-63, 70.

<sup>42</sup> Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, 91-92.

<sup>43</sup> Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 122.

The church, then, needs to do its duty. It needs to recognize the hand of God's providence and confess the Byzantine Text to be the "authentic" text. Just as the church has made a definitive statement regarding the 27 books of the New Testament, it should also make a definitive statement on the extant New Testament text.

### **Scripture Alone**

Once again we see how important the Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is, in this case having to do with our understanding of how we should judge which translations are best. Here the two major doctrines are the verbal and plenary inspiration of the *autographa*, and the providential preservation of the inspired words.<sup>44</sup> That is, God has not only "immediately inspired" the original writings, but He has also "kept pure in all ages" the *apographa* so that they are "authentic."

According to the Word of God, as summarized in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (14:2), by saving faith "a Christian believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein." In His Word God tells us that He will providentially preserve His Word unto all generations. The matter of the authenticity of the inspired text in a majority of the Hebrew and Greek copies is not an option. The Alexandrian Text, which implicitly denies this, must be rejected, and the Received Text accepted. As stated by E. F. Hills: "Because the Reformation Text (*Textus Receptus*) is the true text of the Greek New Testament, it shall always be preserved by the special providence of God and held in high honor by those Christians who do think consistently."<sup>45</sup>

### **Recommended Reading:**

Jakob van Bruggen, *The Future of the Bible*  
John W. Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*  
Gordon H. Clark, *God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics*  
Gordon H. Clark, *Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism*  
W. Gary Crampton, *By Scripture Alone*  
Louis Gaussen, *God-Breathed: The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*  
Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended*  
Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*  
Harry Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*  
B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*  
Edward Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*

<sup>44</sup> Einwechter, *English Bible Translations: By What Standard?* 5-12, 44.

<sup>45</sup> Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 133.