

**THE PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION  
OF THE GREEK TEXT OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT**

**By Rev. W. MacLean, M.A.**

**WESTMINSTER STANDARD**

## PREFACE

"The Providential Preservation of the Greek Text of the New Testament" has been compiled from the writings of distinguished scholars, in defence of the integrity and providential preservation of the Greek Text underlying the Authorised Version of the English Bible. The extracts in the main are from the following sources:

1. "The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established" by Dean Burgon of Chichester, completed and edited by the Rev. Edward Miller, Prebendary of Chichester after Dean Burgon's death. This is a standard work. The learned Dean's Vindication - 'that grand scholar' to use Dr. Scriviner's phrase - is unanswerable.

2. "The King James Version Defended. - A Christian View of the New Testament Manuscripts" by Dr. E. F. Hills, first issued in 1956\*. The Rev. Donald MacLean, Theological Tutor, Glasgow, in his review writes, "The refreshing title given to his book shows that Dr. Hills has no dubiety about the superiority of the Textus Receptus to other texts. We are not acquainted with Dr. Hills' theological position, but he is evidently a firm believer in the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, and a strenuous opponent of the modern critical methods which have so disastrously ruined the authority of the Word of God in the consciences of sinners. It appears, too, that Dr. Hills is a scholar of considerable ability. 'It is evident,' says President R. B. Kuiper of Calvin Seminary, Grand Rapids, in the Preface, 'that Dr. Hills is entitled to a hearing because of his scholarship. I think it is no less evident that he deserves a respectful hearing because of his theological convictions.' Prof. F. F. Bruce of Sheffield University, who does not agree with Dr. Hills' point of view, says of him - 'a well known textual critic and probably the most distinguished contemporary defender of the superiority of the Byzantine text-type.' It is encouraging to read one of Dr. Hills acknowledged ability being such a whole-hearted defender of the King James Version.

\* The Christian Research Press, P.O. Box 2013, Des Moines, Iowa, U.S.A.

"It would be out of place in a magazine of this kind to enter into a detailed discussion of the reasons given by Dr. Hills for accepting the Textus Receptus, but some indication may be given of his views on a proper approach to the subject. These stem from two positions which he considers to be absolutely necessary for one to have a proper view of the text of the Bible. The first of these is belief in the divine inspiration and the consequent infallibility of the Word of God. Anyone who looks upon the Bible as a divine revelation cannot approach it as he would any other book written by a human author. The second position taken by Dr. Hills is that the Scriptures have been preserved by God in His providence so that the Church would always have the Word as a light to her feet and a lamp to her path. Both these positions are contained in the admirable statement in the Westminster Confession of Faith, in which the Scriptures are maintained to have been "immediately inspired by God and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages." (Ch. I, Sec. VIII).

"Liberal scholars, of course, reject the doctrine of divine inspiration which makes God the Author of His Truth, and constitutes the Bible an infallible revelation of His mind. Conservative scholars, while accepting divine inspiration, have been lamentably weak on the second position concerning God's singular care and providence in keeping the Scriptures pure in all ages. This reviewer was very pleased with Dr. Hills' sharp criticism of Dr. B. B. Warfield on this aspect of the subject. Although Warfield was an evangelical scholar of great erudition, and an able opponent of Liberalism, he failed to show a similar consistency in the sphere of Textual Criticism. His view of God's singular care was that copies of the Scriptures had been multiplied and scholars raised up to collect and collate the various manuscripts and give us the Word of God. In this way he looked upon critics such as Westcott and Hort as instruments of God's singular care in keeping the text pure. He did not seem to see that the tendency of critical methods which looked upon the Bible as any other book, was not to preserve the Text but to destroy it,

## Providential Preservation

by making additions to and subtractions from it according to the subjective view of any particular critic. -

- - -

"While the true Christian is not dependent upon the fluctuating opinions of men for his belief in the Scriptures - (this comes from the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit) - yet he cannot fail to be interested in attempts made to defend the Word of God against the inroads of unbelieving criticism. Dr. Hills' book is a fine attempt to do this and we look forward to further books from his able and well-informed pen." - Donald MacLean. (Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Magazine, June 1960).

3. "The Doctrinal Deficiencies of the Modern Versions Traced to Their Sources, With Special Reference to the Revised Version and the Revised Standard Version " by the Rev. Terence H. Brown, a copy of which Mr. Brown sent to the Westminster Standard, Gisborne, and in his accompanying letter kindly said, "We would like you to feel free to use this material at your discretion" Mr. Brown's article has been incorporated in this tractate with the exception of the list of significant passages, denying the eternal deity of Christ, which he quotes from the Revised Standard Version.

Mr. Brown is the Secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society, London, a Society which prints and circulates the Authorised Version only. Mr. Brown is an authority on New Testament Manuscripts. His critique of the New English Bible - "The New Translation of the New Testament, A Detailed and Critical Examination of the Text" has had a world-wide circulation. With admirable clearness and precision he demonstrates how disastrously the translators have failed to substantiate the claims advanced for their translation that the work of the Church was hindered by the archaic language of the Authorised Version of 1611, and the Revised Version of the 19th Century.

The aim of this tractate is to counteract the insinuations and avowed attacks on the integrity of the text on which the Authorised Version is based.

"For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." II Corinthians 2, 17.

Rev. W. MacLean

## **THE PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION OF THE GREEK TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

"Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, all of which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life. The books commonly called the Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or else made use of, than other human writings." (The Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. I.)

"No sooner," writes Dean Burgon, "was the work of Evangelists and Apostles recognised as the necessary counterpart and complement of God's ancient Scriptures and became the ' New Testament,' than a reception was found to be awaiting it in the world closely resembling that which He experienced Who is the subject of its pages. Calumny and misrepresentation, persecution and murderous hate, assailed Him continually. And the Written Word in like manner, in the earliest age of all, was shamefully handled by mankind. Not only was it confused through human infirmity and misapprehension, but it became also the object of restless malice and unsparing assaults. (" The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established " p. 10.)

Behind this restless malice and unsparing assaults is the enmity of him who "was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." (John 8: 44). And never was

## Providential Preservation

there a time in which Satan's restless malice and unsparing assaults are so directed against the Written Word, through his agents under the cloak of religion and scholarship so-called, than it) this our day of blasphemy and rebuke.

"Before our Lord ascended up to heaven," continues Dean Burgon, "He told His disciples that He would send them the Holy Ghost, who should supply His place and abide with His Church for ever. He added a promise that it should be the office of that inspiring Spirit not only to bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever he had told them, but also to guide His Church 'into all Truth' or 'the whole Truth.' (John 16: 13). Accordingly, the earliest great achievement of those days was accomplished on giving to the Church the Scriptures of the New Testament, in which, authorised teaching was enshrined in written form, - - -. There exists no reason for supposing that the Divine Agent, who in the first instance thus gave to mankind the Scriptures of Truth, straightway abdicated His office; took no further care of His work; abandoned those precious writings to their fate. That a perpetual miracle was wrought for their preservation - that copyists were protected against all risk of error, or evil men prevented from adulterating shamefully copies of the Deposit - no one, it is presumed, is so weak as to suppose. But it is quite a different thing to claim that all down the ages the sacred writings must needs have been God's peculiar care; that the Church under Him has watched over them with intelligence and skill; has recognised which copies exhibit a fabricated, which an honestly transcribed text; has generally sanctioned the one, and generally disallowed the other."

The great theologian Dr. John Owen in the "Divine Original of the Scripture," states, "The providence of God hath manifested itself as no less concerned in the preservation of the writings than of the doctrine contained in them; the writing itself being the product of His own eternal counsel for the preservation of the doctrine, after a sufficient discovery of the insufficiency of all other means for that end and purpose. And hence the malice of Satan hath raged no less against the Book than against the truth contained in it." (p. 300).

"The doctrine of the providential preservation of the Scriptures," writes Dr. E. F. Hills, "was not explicitly stated in any creed until the seventeenth century, when two formulations appeared, the one in the Westminster Confession (1646) and the other in the Swiss Declaration (1675). The Westminster Confession affirmed that 'the Scriptures were immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages.' And the Swiss Declaration developed this same doctrine more fully in the following words: 'Almighty God not only provided that His Word which is a power to every one who believes, should be committed to writing through Moses, the Prophets, and Apostles, but also has watched over it with a fatherly care up to the present time, and guarded lest it might be corrupted by the craft of Satan or any fraud of man.'

"But the doctrine of the providential preservation of Scripture is not merely a seventeenth century doctrine. It is the doctrine of the Scriptures, and of Christ Himself. Our Lord evidently believed that the Old Testament had been thus preserved. There are two passages especially which clearly indicate this. The first is Matt. 5, 18: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." And the second is Luke 16, 17: it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Here Jesus attributes greater stability to the text of the Old Testament than to the heavens and the earth. - - -

Christ also taught that the same divine providence which had preserved the Old Testament would preserve the New Testament, too. In the concluding verses of the Gospel of Matthew we find His "Great Commission" not only to the twelve apostles but also to His Church throughout all ages, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." Implied in this solemn charge is the promise that through the working of God's providence the Church will always be kept in possession of an infallible record of Christ's words and works.

## Providential Preservation

"The providential preservation of the Scriptures is also a necessary consequence of their divine inspiration. The God who inspired the Scriptures and gave them to His people to be an authoritative guide and consolation cannot allow this perfect and final revelation of His will to perish. Because God has inspired the Scriptures, He has also preserved them by His providence."

"The very concept of God's providential preservation of Scripture," continues Dr. Hills, " involves this basic idea, that God authenticates as well as preserves, that He has placed His Church in actual possession of the genuine text. God chose the Jewish Church to be the guardian of the Old Testament. Scriptures and the Greek Church to guard the New, and at the time of the Reformation, Protestants received from the Jews and the Greeks the genuine texts of holy Scripture. - - - Therefore, if the New Testament really has been divinely inspired and providentially preserved, the theory of Westcott and Hort cannot be correct because it has neglected the two special factors which make the textual criticism of the New Testament different from that of all other books - - - .

"Since, therefore, God controls and directs all the activities and processes of the universe, even the smallest, surely the transmission of the New Testament down through the ages must always have been the object of God's special care and guidance. The nature and results of this providential preservation of the New Testament text can be summarized in the six following axioms of consistently Christian New Testament textual criticism - (a) The purpose of the providential preservation of the New Testament is to preserve the infallibility of the inspired original Text. (b) This providential preservation concentrated itself on the Greek New Testament text.

(c) This providential preservation operated within the sphere of the Greek Church. (d) This providential preservation operated through the testimony of the Holy Spirit. (e) The text of the majority of the manuscripts is the providentially preserved and approved text. (f) The text of the majority of the manuscripts is the standard text."

"The New Testament text, therefore, which is found in the vast majority of the extant manuscripts is the providentially preserved and approved text, the text upon which Almighty God, expressing Himself providentially in the usage of the Greek Church, has placed His divine sanction. This text is usually called the Byzantine Text, because it was the text of the whole Greek Church during most of the Byzantine Period (312 - 1453). It is found not only in the vast majority of the extant New Testament manuscripts but it is also very familiar to the vast majority of Bible readers all over the world, for it is the text of the King James Version and of the other early Protestant translations."

"The Byzantine text then, found in the vast majority of the New Testament manuscripts, is the text upon which God, working providentially through the usage of the Greek-speaking Church, has placed the stamp of His approval. It is the best extant text. It represents the inspired original text very accurately, more accurately than any other New Testament text which survives from the manuscript period. In other words, the Byzantine Text is the Standard Text."\* (Extracts front ch. 2 of " The King James Version Defended 1 ") See Appendix 11

## **PROOFS VINDICATING THE TRADITIONAL OR STANDARD TEXT**

### **1. PRINTED EDITIONS OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT**

"For many centuries before the Reformation," writes the Rev. T. H. Brown, "Greek Scholarship was virtually nonexistent in Western Europe. In 1453 Constantinople, the eastern capital of the eastern part of the Empire and the centre of the Eastern Church, fell to the Moslem invaders. One far-reaching result

of this calamity was that Christian scholars with a knowledge of Greek, and with Greek copies of the Holy Scriptures in their possession, fled to Western Europe where their influence gave a new impetus to the study of the Greek language. It has been said of this period that 'Greece rose from the grave with the New Testament in her hand.'

Among the next generation of Greek scholars was Erasmus of Rotterdam, who prepared an edition of the Greek New Testament from five manuscripts in repute at that time. This edition was printed in 1516 and was followed by four later editions. At Alcala (Complutum) University, in 1502, Cardinal Ximenes gathered manuscripts and men under the direction of Stunica, who published the "Complutensian Polyglot" in 1522, again from comparatively few manuscripts. Robert Stephens, relying largely upon Erasmus and Stunica, and with a possible sixteen manuscripts at his disposal, produced editions of the Greek text in 1546, 1550, 1551 and 1559. In 1552 he withdrew to Geneva and joined the Protestant cause. Theodore Beza produced five editions of the Greek between 1559 and 1598. These followed Stephens fairly closely, although Beza had some ancient manuscripts not available to Stephens. The Elzevir Brothers' 1624 edition printed at Leyden has much in common with those of Stephens and Beza. The Elzevir text announced itself as the "Textus Receptus" (Received Text) and since that time Stephens' 1550 edition has been known as the "Received Text" in England, while the Elzevir edition of 1624 has had this title on the Continent.

## **2. THE PROTESTANT TRANSLATIONS**

The Protestant versions in England and on the Continent in the 16th and 17th centuries were based on these editions of the Greek text. These early printed Greek editions were themselves based on comparatively few manuscripts, which have nevertheless proved to be representative of the Greek text embraced many centuries earlier throughout the Greek Church.

The English versions of Tyndale, Coverdale, Matthews (or Rogers), the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Bishops' Bible and the Authorised Version were all based upon this little company of Greek documents, in which was preserved the Greek Text, generally received throughout the Greek Church since the Apostolic ages.

### **THE AUTHORISED VERSION**

At the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 the Puritan leader Reynolds made the suggestion - which was first opposed and then adopted by the Conference with the enthusiastic approval of King James I - that there should be a new translation of the Holy Scriptures in English, to replace the different versions then in common use. Fifty-four men, including High Churchmen\* and Puritans, the greatest Hebrew and Greek scholars of the age, formed six companies to undertake the task. Using their Greek sources and the best commentaries of European scholars, and referring to Bibles in Spanish, Italian, French and German, they expressed the sense of the Greek in clear, vigorous and idiomatic English. In 1786 Dr. Geddes wrote, "If accuracy and strictest attention to the letter of the text be supposed to constitute an excellent version, this is of all versions the most excellent." Bishop Lightfoot affirmed that this version was the storehouse of the highest truth and the purest well of our native English. "Indeed," he wrote, "we may take courage from the fact that the language of our English Bible is not the language of the age in which the translators lived, but in its grand simplicity stands out in contrast to the ornate and often affected diction of the literature of the time."

\*Not to be confused with Anglo-Catholics.

### **3. RECENT DISCOVERIES AND TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

During the next three hundred years vast numbers of documents were brought to light and Biblical scholars made many attempts to reconstruct the Greek New Testament. There are now about 4,500 Greek manuscripts, including 170 papyrus fragments (2nd-7th century); 212 Uncial copies (4th-10th century); 2,429 Minuscules (9th-16th century) and 1,678 Lectionary copies. The overwhelming majority of these manuscripts agree so closely that they may be said to present the same Greek Text, called by some the "Byzantine Text" because it prevailed throughout the Church in the Byzantine period A.D. 312 - 1453 (and long after).

### **4. THE VERSIONS**

In addition to these Greek sources scholars have recovered copies of ancient translations in Latin, Syriac, Egyptian, Ethiopic, Armenian, Gothic, etc. Some of these originated before our oldest existing Greek copies and thus testify to the contents of still earlier manuscripts. The great weight of this evidence is favourable to the "Received Text" underlying the Authorised Version.

### **5. EARLY GREEK AND LATIN WRITERS THE " FATHERS"**

The writings of early champions of the truth (and heretics) contain copious references to the Scriptures and again testify concerning the Greek text as it was in the 2nd century onwards - in a period earlier than our oldest copies. The majority of these witnesses support the so-called "Byzantine" or "Received" or "Traditional" text underlying the Authorised Version, and they establish the antiquity of this text and its superior acceptance in the earliest period.

### **6. THE POPYRI**

It is alleged that the most ancient papyrus fragments are hostile to the Received Text, but it must be remembered that the fragments that remain are few in comparison with the many that must have perished through long and frequent use. It is probable that the surviving minority survived because they were not much used and that they fell into disuse because of their deficiencies. Twenty-nine papyri of the 6th and 8th centuries do not contain a distinctively "Byzantine" type of text, although it is beyond question that the " Byzantine " text was dominant in that period. These papyri are surviving representatives of a defective and discarded text.

### **7. FAVOURABLE EVIDENCE OF THE POPYRI**

Some of the papyrus fragments of earliest date do contain readings which 19th century scholars had wrongly rejected as belonging to a late "Syrian" or "Byzantine" revision. This is true of the document known as Papyrus Bodmer II (A.D. 200?) which contains John chapters 1 - 14 including 13% of the readings rejected by the 19th century scholars as "late Byzantine."\*

\* All the sections from "Printed Editions of the Greek New Testament" to "Favourable Evidence of the Popyri " are from the Rev. T. H. Brown's Article.

## **ATTACKS ON THE TRADITIONAL OR RECEIVED TEXT**

### **THE MANUSCRIPTS**

The attacks on the Received Text are based on the assumption that the new versions of the Bible are based on more reliable manuscripts than those available in the 16th and 17th centuries. But this claim is not supported by the facts. "It may be admitted," writes the Rev. Terence Brown, that the earlier translators had fewer manuscripts at their disposal, but the vast majority of the documents discovered since exhibit the same kind of Greek text as that which underlies the Authorised Version. There are now about 4,500 manuscripts of the New Testament, varying greatly in their age, extent and state of preservation. The bulk of these documents contain the Greek text in a form similar to that found in the copies available in A.D. 1516 or A.D. 1604.

### **THE DISSENTING MINORITY**

A small minority of ancient manuscripts contain a very large number of readings different from those found in the great majority. In the 19th century it became the fashion among Biblical scholars of the schools of Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort, to evaluate this small cluster of ancient but defective manuscripts to a position of supreme and infallible authority. Five of these copies were held to be of greater weight than one thousand or more documentary witnesses arrayed against them." (Rev. T. H. Brown.)

"Manuscript copies" writes Dean Burgon are commonly divided into Uncial, i.e. those which were written in capital letters, and Cursive or "minuscule," i.e. those which were written in running or small hand. This division though convenient is misleading. The earliest of the "Cursives" are more ancient than the latest of the "Uncials" by fully one hundred years. The later body of the "Uncials" belongs virtually, as will be proved, to the body of the "Cursives." There is no merit, so to speak, in a MS. being written in the Uncial character. The number of the Uncials is largely inferior to that of the Cursives, though they usually boast a much higher antiquity. - - - Now it is not so much an exaggerated, as an utterly mistaken estimate of the importance of the textual decrees of the five oldest of these Uncial copies, which lies at the root of most of the criticism of the last fifty years. We are constrained in consequence to bestow what will appear to some a disproportionate amount of attention on these five codices: viz. The Vatican Codex (also known as Codex B) and the Sinaitic Codex (also known as Codex Aleph) which are supposed to be both of the fourth century; the Alexandrian Codex A, and the fragmentary Parisian Codex C, which are assigned to the fifth; and lastly D, the Codex Bezae at Cambridge, which is supposed to have been written in the sixth. - - - It will be found in the end that we have been guilty of no exaggeration in characterising B, Aleph and D at the outset as three of the most corrupt copies in existence. Let not anyone suppose that the age of these five MSS. places them on a pedestal higher than all others. They can be proved to be wrong time after time by evidence of an earlier period than that which they can boast. (The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels, p. 24, 25.)

"These few ancient MSS. hostile to the true text abound in omissions, alterations and transpositions of words and phrases, and have no valid title to be regarded as the sole trustworthy guides to the text of Holy Scripture. Mere antiquity is no guarantee of authority. These are old copies but they are bad copies and the Greek Church as a whole in the 4th century rejected their unreliable testimony and permitted them to sink into undignified oblivion. They have been recently disinterred and permitted to foist their ancient errors upon undiscerning readers of our own times." (Rev. T. H. Brown.)



## THE VATICAN AND SINAI MANUSCRIPTS

In the 1860's the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus became available to Biblical scholars, and in 1881 Westcott and Hort advanced the theory that the New Testament text was preserved in an almost perfect state in these two fourth century manuscripts.\* The Codex Sinaiticus derives its name from the fact that it was discovered by Dr. Tischendorf in the Convent of St. Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai in a basket full of old parchments to be used as fuel. This Codex is also known as Aleph. The Codex Vaticanus, Codex B, also dating back to the fourth century, has been in the custody of the Vatican for over 500 years. "Hort made a distinction," writes Dr. Hills, "between B and all the other manuscripts commonly classed as Alexandrian. He believed that B contained a singularly pure text to which he gave the name 'Neutral' (uncontaminated). - - - This theory of the unique excellence of Codex B was enthusiastically upheld for many years by Hort's followers especially in England and America."

In connection with Westcott and Hort's theory Dean Burgon writes, "We oppose facts to their speculation. They exalt B and Aleph and D because in their own opinions those copies are the best. They weave ingenious webs, and invent subtle theories, because their paradox of a few against the many requires ingenuity and subtlety for its support. Dr. Hort revelled in finespun theories and technical terms, such as "Intrinsic Probability," "Transcriptional Probability," "Internal evidence of Readings," "Internal evidence of Documents," which of course connote a certain amount of evidence, but are weak pillars of a heavy structure. Even conjectural emendation and inconsistent decrees are not rejected. They are infected with the theorising which spoils some of the best German work, and with the idealism which is the bane of many academic minds especially at Oxford and Cambridge. In contrast with this sojourn in cloudland, we are essentially of the earth though not earthy. We are nothing if we are not grounded in facts: our appeal is to facts, our test lies in facts, so far as we can we build testimonies upon testimonies and pile facts on facts. We imitate the procedure of the courts of justice in decisions resulting from the converging product of all evidence, when it has been cross-examined and sifted.

\* See Appendix III

"I proceed to offer for the reader's consideration seven tests of Truth concerning each of which I shall have something to say in the way of explanation by-and-by. In the end I shall ask the reader to allow that where these seven tests are found to conspire we may confidently assume that the evidence is worthy of all acceptance, and is to be implicitly followed. A reading should be attested then by the seven following:— 1. Antiquity or Primitiveness; 2. Consent of Witnesses, or Number; 3. Variety of Evidence, or Catholicity; 4. Respectability of Witnesses, or Weight; 5. Continuity, or Unbroken Tradition; 6. Evidence of the Entire Passage, or Context; 7. Internal Considerations, or Reasonableness."

In the balances of these seven Tests of Truth the speculations of the Westcott and Hort school, which have bewitched millions are 'Tekel,' weighed in the balances and found wanting. "I am utterly disinclined to believe," continues Dean Burgon, "so grossly improbable does it seem - that at the end of 1800 years 995 copies out of every thousand, suppose, will prove untrustworthy; and that the one, two, three, four or five which remain, whose contents were till yesterday as good as unknown, will be found to have retained the secret of what the Holy Spirit originally inspired. I am utterly unable to believe, in short, that God's promise has so entirely failed, that at the end of 1800 years, much of the text of the Gospel had in point of fact to be picked by a German critic out of a wastepaper basket in the convent of St. Catherine; and that the entire text had to be remodelled after the pattern set by a couple of copies which had remained in neglect during fifteen centuries, and had probably owed their survival to that neglect; whilst hundreds of others had been thumbed to pieces, and had bequeathed their witness to copies made from them. - - - Happily, Western Christendom has been content to employ one and the same text for upwards of three hundred years. If the objection be made, as it probably will be, "Do you

then mean to rest upon the five manuscripts used by Erasmus?" I reply that the copies employed were selected because they were known to represent the accuracy of the Sacred Word; that the descent of the text was evidently guarded with jealous care, just as the human genealogy of our Lord was preserved; that it rests mainly upon much the widest testimony; and that where any part of it conflicts with the fullest evidence attainable, there I believe it calls for correction."

"Professor P. Glaue of Jena," writes Dr. Hills, "in a posthumous article recently published (1954) attacks the text of B and Aleph pronouncing it to be a "learned recension," which was produced in the first half of the fourth century, and which contains arbitrary (and even capricious) corrections of the text. Glaue believed that the Western text is the oldest text and the only text that has not been revised. In order to obtain the best possible edition of the New Testament, he argued, we must abandon our reliance on the text of B and Aleph and turn to the Western text, especially that found in D. This we must endeavour to purify through the use of conjectural emendation." (P. 63)

### **AN ERROR OF JUDGEMENT\***

"The discovery of these MSS, the Vatican (B) and the Sinai (Aleph)," writes the Rev. Terence Brown, "betrayed many Biblical students into a lamentable infirmity of critical judgment. Tischendorf himself, the discoverer of the Sinai Codex, amended his eighth edition in at least 3,505 places in conformity with new readings which he found in this document. The Codex Vaticanus exercised a similar mesmeric influence on the minds of many nineteenth and twentieth century scholars. The Revised Greek Text underlying the modern versions has the support only of that very small minority of the available MSS. which are in some respects in agreement with the unreliable text of the Sinai and Vatican Codices.

### **AN ELABORATE THEORY**

Westcott and Hort devised an elaborate theory, based more on imagination and intuition than upon evidence, elevating this little group of MSS to the heights of almost infallible authority. Their treatise on the subject and their edition of the Greek N. T. exercised a powerful and far-reaching influence, not only on the next generation of students and scholars, but also indirectly upon the minds of millions who have had neither the ability, nor the time, nor the inclination to submit the theory to a searching examination.

### **A FUNDAMENTAL ERROR**

Those who do so will find that the whole theory was based upon a fundamental error, namely the assumption that the reliability of these fourth century documents was in proportion to their age. There were no doubt bad copies in every age, some corrupted by accident, some by ignorance and some by design. These two exhibit the most amazing number of incorrect readings.

\* All the sections from "An Error of Judgment" to "The Unitarian Bias of the R.S.V." are from the Rev. T. H. Brown's article.

### **DEFICIENCIES OF THESE MSS**

These two MSS and a few others containing a similar text, present in a weakened form, many of the passages of Holy Scripture which speak most plainly of the deity of the Son of God. The trend of Biblical scholarship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been towards a 'humanitarian' view of the person of Christ. It does not surprise us that many modern scholars should welcome the support of these two ancient documents, but it saddens us to see so many earnest evangelical Christians ready to accept without question a theory so destructive of the faith once delivered to the saints.

## **REJECTING THE EVIDENCE**

In the words of a great nineteenth century scholar - "To cast away at least nineteen twentieths of the evidence, and to draw conclusions from the petty remainder is not less than a crime and a sin, not only by reason of the sacrilegious destructiveness exercised upon the Holy Scriptures, but because such a treatment is inconsistent with conscientious exhaustiveness and logical method."

## **THE TRUE TEXT**

The Sinai and Vatican manuscripts represent a small family of documents containing various readings which the Church as a whole rejected before the end of the fourth century. Under the singular care and providence of God more reliable MSS were multiplied and copied from generation to generation, and the great majority of existing MSS exhibit a faithful reproduction of the true text which was acknowledged by the entire Greek Church in the Byzantine period A.D. 312-1453. This text was also represented by the small group of documents available to Erasmus, Stephens, the compilers of the Complutensian edition and other sixteenth century editors. This text is represented by the Authorised Version and other Protestant translations up to the latter part of the nineteenth century.

## **THE REVISED VERSION OF 1881**

This version was intended to embody the testimony of the newly discovered manuscripts and the fruits of scholarly research in the Greek language, but the whole undertaking was so dominated by the mistaken textual theories of Westcott and Hort, that the years of labour produced an unreliable translation based upon an unreliable text.

## **INFLUENCE OF WESTCOTT AND HORT**

When the Revision Committee met, each member was given an advance copy of the edition of the Greek N.T. prepared by Professor Westcott and Professor Hort. These scholars had both persuaded themselves that the true text of the N.T. was preserved in its purest form in the Codex Vaticanus and that the testimony of this manuscript or the Codex Sinaiticus supported by one or more of a small company of documents exhibiting the same kind of text must be regarded as almost infallible in all cases where the available manuscripts presented a variety of readings.

Among the Revisers there was only one other who could lay claim to experience and ability in the realm of textual criticism, namely Prebendary Scrivener. As the revision proceeded textual matters were discoursed upon in turn by these three men and in many cases the more conservative opinions of Scrivener were set aside under pressure from Westcott and Hort. The majority of the Revisers were disposed to be influenced by the judgment of the two professors and the wiser and more judicious minority were constantly overruled in this way.

## **THE REVISERS' GREEK TEXT**

After the publication of R.V. Scrivener was commissioned to prepare an edition of the Greek Text which had been followed by the Revisers. This text was not identical with that of Westcott and Hort but it owed much to their dominant influence and followed their lead in most matters of major importance. In this edition Scrivener was bound to reproduce a Greek text in which there were many features which were repugnant to his own wiser judgment. In his own works, particularly the learned Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament (which went through numerous editions including what might be termed a definitive edition by Miller), and Scrivener's Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament, Scrivener dissented from many of the conclusions of the Revisers.

The crux of the matter is Westcott and Hort's insistence upon the superiority of the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus and a few kindred documents. The worst corruptions of the Greek text appeared before the end of the second century and it is generally agreed among critical scholars that the few manuscripts available to Stunica, Erasmus and Stephens were infinitely better than many of the earliest period. Some of these ancient but imperfect manuscripts were progenitors of documents like the Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, but side by side with them were other MSS exhibiting the text more or less as represented by the so-called Received Text and Authorised Version. The most ancient writers and the translators of the most ancient versions were apparently acquainted with both kinds of text.

### **THE ANTIQUITY OF THE RECEIVED TEXT**

This fact is admitted by Bishop Ellicott the chairman of the revisers in his pamphlet, "The Revisers and the Greek text of the N.T. by two members of the N.T. Company," pp. 11, 12. "The manuscripts which Erasmus used differ, for the most part only in small and insignificant details from the great bulk of the cursive MSS. The general character of their text is the same. By this observation the pedigree of the Received Text is carried up beyond the individual manuscripts used by Erasmus. . . That pedigree stretches back to remote antiquity. The first ancestor of the Received Text was at least contemporary with the oldest of our extant MSS, if not older than any one of them."

It must be emphasised that the argument is not between an ancient text and a recent one, but between two ancient forms of the text, one of which was rejected and the other adopted and preserved by the Church as a whole and remaining in common use for more than fifteen centuries. The assumptions of modern textual criticism are based upon the discordant testimony of a few specimens of the rejected text recently disinterred from the oblivion to which they had been deliberately and wisely consigned in the 4th century.

### **THE "SYRIAN RECENSION" THEORY**

Being convinced that the Vatican/Sinai type of text was the most ancient and most pure, Westcott and Hort assumed that there must have been a "Syrian Recension" of the Greek text some time between A.D. 250 and A.D. 350 and that this recension was the progenitor of the "Received Text." In their Introduction to the Greek N.T. these two scholars spun a web of theories to advance the claims of their favourite manuscripts to the highest antiquity. One great obstacle was the frequent agreement of the Peshitto Syriac with the Greek Textus Receptus. This obstacle was removed by the simple expedient of changing the relative dates of the Peshitto and Curetonian Syriac, calling the latter the "Vetus" and the former the "Vulgate" Syriac.

In his book on the N.T. Canon (1855), Westcott himself saw "no reason to desert the opinion which has obtained the sanction of the most competent scholars, that the formation of the Peshitto Syriac was to be fixed within the first half of the second century. The very obscurity which hangs over its origin is proof of its venerable age, because it shows that it grew up spontaneously among Christian congregations. . . . Had it been a work of later date, of the 3rd or 4th century it is scarcely possible that its history should be so uncertain as it is." In the "Introduction to the N.T. in Greek," 1882, Westcott contradicted himself on all these points and contended that Curetonian Syriac was of greater antiquity, and that the Peshitto was an authoritative revision in the latter part of the 3rd or 4th centuries.

Although entirely lacking in historical evidence, the Syrian Recension theory was particularly attractive because it appeared to give some semblance of authority to those engaged in the process of recasting the Greek Text in the mould of the Vatican/Sinai MSS. These documents belong to a small group exhibiting the kind of Greek text familiar to and generally approved by Origen, whose pronounced Arian

tendencies sufficiently explain his preference for MSS of this character. In many passages relating to the Person of Christ this type of text dilutes the testimony of the Holy Scriptures to our Lord's deity. (Some of these passages are commented on below.)

### **THE DEITY OF OUR LORD**

In his Bampton lectures on the Divinity of our Lord, delivered in the year 1866 Canon Liddon gave a timely and solemn warning of the perils which then beset the Church of Christ through the denial of our Saviour's essential and eternal deity. The detractors of this vital truth of God's Word have found a powerful ally in the modern versions which have been based upon the pro-Arian type of Greek Text exhibited by MSS of the Vatican/Sinai group. Perhaps the most powerful Unitarian assailants of the true doctrine of Holy Scripture to-day are the so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses." It is significant that their own version follows this type of text and that they are generally disposed to welcome versions like the R.S.V. and N.E.B. which display similar deficiencies and rest upon the same unsound foundation.

Most people to-day, including theological students, teachers and ministers, are prepared to adopt the attitude that the "scholars" must be right and that matters relating to the Greek Text must be left in the hands of "experts." The evangelical professes to stand firm by the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, the equal and eternal deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the atonement and other vital doctrines, but hopefully surrenders both text and translation to the biased judgment of unsound scholars and meekly allows the text of Holy Scripture to be arbitrated by a group of ancient but unreliable documents.

### **THE AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION**

After the English Revisers had completed their task the American Revision Committee continued its deliberations for some years and published the fruit of their labours early in the present century. This version was in many respects very similar to the English Revised Version, although diverging from it in hundreds of details of varying significance.

### **THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION (R.S.V.)**

This version which is a revision of this "Standard Version" is the property of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., has achieved a measure of popularity in the English-speaking world, and some of the Bible Societies have amended their constitutions in order to permit its circulation. Its general adoption by English readers was commented on without disapproval by Professor Bruce in his article entitled, "One Bible-Many Versions" in "The Christian" on 9th October, 1964. It is quoted by evangelical preachers and writers and widely circulated by evangelical organisations.

Notwithstanding its present popularity and the misleading and sometimes ill-informed testimonials to its excellence, there are Very good reasons why discerning Christians with a reverent regard for the divine inspiration, authority and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures should exercise great caution in the use of this Version and refrain from encouraging its general use by undiscerning readers.

### **THE TRANSLATORS**

Some of the translators have written articles which indicate that they do not acknowledge the Bible doctrines of the Deity of Christ, His Pre-existence, His Virgin Birth, His Atoning Sacrifice and present intercession in Heaven. A translator who has adopted an entirely "humanitarian" view of the Son of God, and is prepared to respect His ideal humanity and to disregard His claims to full deity, is likely to betray

his erroneous dogma in his translation. That this deficiency is apparent in the R.S.V. is demonstrated by the examples given later in this article.

## **SOCINIANISM**

The last 150 years have witnessed a great resurgence of ancient heresies relating to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and these errors have left their mark on modern translations of the Bible.

The translator, as well as the reader, is confronted with the vital question, "Whom do men say that I am?" The Ebionite of old, and later the Socinian, asserted that Jesus was merely man, whether supernaturally born, or as modern rationalists generally maintain, subject in all respects to ordinary natural laws. They contended that His moral eminence alone entitled the enthusiastic admirer to call Him "divine." Socinianism will confess Christ's "divinity" if this involves nothing more emphatic than an acknowledgment of certain moral features of the Divine Being displayed in the human life of Christ.

## **MODERN HUMANITARIANISM**

In modern days this phenomenon of "humanitarianism" is reproduced by writers who use language which seems to do justice to Christ's deity. They recognise Him as the "perfect revelation of God" and the "true head and Lord of human kind," but they deny the existence of a Trinity in the Godhead, and recognise in God no pre-existent Personal Form as the basis of His self-manifestation to man. They therefore avoid any plain assertion that Christ is God.

## **ARIANISM**

Arians maintain that our Lord Jesus Christ existed before His Incarnation and that by Him, as by an instrument, the Supreme God made the worlds, and that He is to be "worshipped" only as the highest creature. They insist that there was a time when He did not exist, that He had a beginning of existence and cannot be called God in the sense in which the Name is applied to the Supreme Being. This view of the Redeemer satisfies neither reason nor faith and has been well described as a resting point for minds which are sinking from a profession of Christian faith downwards to pure humanitarianism. Some of the translators have embraced and expressed unscriptural views akin to these, in contrast to the faith of the whole Church of Christ, which acknowledges the pre-existent and eternal deity of the only-begotten Son of God, His equality with the Father, His miraculous incarnation, his atoning death and physical resurrection.

## **DOCTRINAL CHANGES**

The advocates of the R.S.V. endeavour to assure their readers that the numerous changes in the text do not affect any fundamental doctrine. They allege that the alterations are exclusively dictated by newly discovered manuscripts and by the gains of scholarly research in the Biblical languages. These assurances are not in accordance with the facts. Fundamental doctrines relating to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ are weakened and obscured in the R.S.V. and the translators appear to have made some changes on dogmatic rather than linguistic or documentary grounds.

## **A JEWISH SCHOLAR AMONG THE R.S.V. TRANSLATORS**

The translation committee included in its membership a Jewish scholar, Mr. H. M. Orlinsky of the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. This man would not accept the deity of Christ, but would favour a "unitarian" emphasis in any passage referring to the Messiah.

For example, the prophecy of Isaiah 7, 14 was altered to read "A young woman shall conceive and bear a son." The correct reading is, "A virgin shall conceive. The erroneous reading in the R.S.V. makes it possible to dissociate this prophecy from the record of our Lord's miraculous birth of the virgin Mary in the New Testament.

### **THE COMMENT OF A JEWISH RABBI**

The corrupted text met with the warm approval of Rabbi Balfour Brickner of Temple Sinai, Washington, who declared, "I am delighted to know that at last this great error of translation has been finally corrected, and that at last some elements of the Christian world no longer officially maintain that Isaiah 7: 14 is a prediction that Jesus was to be born of the virgin Mary.

### **THE UNITARIAN BIAS OF THE R.S.V.**

Shortly after the R.S.V. New Testament was published its deficiencies were exposed in an article by Dr. R. C. Foster, Professor of Greek & N.T. in Cincinnati Bible Seminary, Ohio. His treatise was published in 1946 in the July issue of the "Church News Letter." After presenting a careful study of the numerous changes in the text, he wrote, "The Revised Standard Version is frankly unitarian and offers a very subtle attack upon the deity of Christ . . . It is as if the scholars were saying - This stubborn and unscientific generation of the 20th century insists on maintaining that Jesus was God in the flesh, but by the use of a literary device we will put words into their mouths as they read this version so that they will consciously or unconsciously admit that Jesus is not God but man."

## **ATTACKS ON PARTICULAR PASSAGES OF GOD'S WORD**

The Aleph and B Codices as has been shown, have no valid title to be regarded as the sole trustworthy guides to the text of Holy Scripture. "They abound" says Dean Burgon, "with so much licentiousness or carelessness as to suggest the inference that they are in fact indebted for their preservation to their hopeless character. Thus it would appear that an evil reputation ensured their neglect in ancient times; and has procured that they should survive to our own, long after multitudes which were much better had perished in their Master's service." It is not surprising, therefore, that omissions occur in these Codices. The fact that they occur in these Codices, oracular in the estimation of the Westcott and Hort school, is sufficient to daub their appearance in the "Textus Receptus" as interpolations and forgeries. Reference to two passages will suffice to show how daringly men take from the Word of God.

### **1. THE LAST TWELVE VERSES OF MARK'S GOSPEL**

"These verses," writes Dr. Hills, "have an enormous weight of testimony in their favour, which cannot lightly be set aside. They are found in all the Greek manuscripts except B and Aleph and all the Latin manuscripts except k. And even more important, they were quoted as Scripture by early Church Fathers who lived one hundred and fifty years before B and Aleph were written; namely Justin Martyr (c. 150), Tatian (c. 175), Irenaeus (c. 180), and Hippolytus (c. 200). Thus the earliest extant testimony is on the side of these last twelve verses. Surely the critical objections against them must be exceedingly strong to overcome the evidence for their genuineness. It is necessary, therefore, to hear the most important of these objections against Mark 16: 9-20 and to judge of their validity." Dr. Hills deals with these objections and concludes as follows: "The modern critical attack upon the last twelve verses of Mark must be judged a failure for three reasons. (a) No satisfactory theory has been advanced to explain how Mark's Gospel could have ended at chapter 16, verse 8. (h) No objection has been raised against Mark

16:9 - 20 which cannot be readily answered. (c) There is no counter-consideration which can avail to set aside the tremendously weighty evidence in favour of this concluding section of Mark, the evidence of all the Greek manuscripts and of four Church Fathers of the second century."

Dean Burgon's book "The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to Mark, Vindicated Against Recent Critical Objectors and Established," a classic on the subject, received the following favourable review from Dr. Scrivener, "Dean Burgon's brilliant monograph - - - has thrown a stream of light upon the controversy; nor does the joyous tone of his book mis-become one who is conscious of having maintained a cause which is precious to him. We may fairly say that his conclusions have in no essential point been shaken by the elaborate and very able counter-plea of Dr. Hort."

## **2. 1 JOHN 5: 7**

This verse, often referred to as the Johannine comma is regarded by the critics as a forged entry. "As to its being wanting" wrote the learned Dr. Gill in his Commentary, "in some Greek manuscripts, as the Alexandrian and others, it need only be said that it is to be found in many others; it is in an old British copy, and in the Complutensian edition, the compilers of which made use of various copies; and out of sixteen ancient copies of Robert Stephens', nine of them had it: and as to its not being cited by some of the ancient Fathers, this can be no sufficient proof of the spuriousness of it, since it might be in the original copy, though not in the copies used by them, through the carelessness or unfaithfulness of transcribers; or it might be in their copies, and yet not cited by them, they having Scripture enough without it to defend the doctrine of the Trinity, and the divinity of Christ: and yet after all, certain it is, that it is cited by many of them; by Fulgentius in the beginning of the sixth century, against the Arians, without any scruple or hesitation; and Jerome, as had been observed before has it in his translation made in the latter part of the fourth century. In his epistle to Eustochium prefixed to his translation of the canonical epistles, he complains of the omission of it by unfaithful interpreters. It is cited by Athanasius about the year 350; and before him by Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, about the year 250; and is referred to by Tertullian about the year 200; and which was within a hundred years, or little more, of the writing of the epistle: which may be enough to satisfy anyone of the genuineness of this passage; and besides there was never any dispute over it till Erasmus left it out of the first edition of his translation of the New Testament; and yet he himself upon the credit of the old British copy before mentioned, put it into another edition of his translation."

## **CONCLUSION**

"We have seen," writes the Rev. T. H. Brown in the conclusion of his article, "that a small group of ancient but untrustworthy manuscripts are at variance with the vast majority of the documents now at the disposal of Biblical scholars. It has become the vogue to refer to the few as "the best manuscripts," whereas in reality they contain some of the worst corruptions of the ancient text. Some of these documents, particularly the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus were produced at the time when the most dangerous heresies prevailed in the Church with regard to the Person of Christ and His relationship to the Father. This little group proved specially attractive to those modern scholars who were disposed to adopt very similar erroneous views themselves.

"Westcott and Hort in the last century endeavoured to make this deficient minority of the manuscripts respectable by propounding a theory that the majority of the N.T. documents were derived from copies which had been deliberately "edited" and embellished, implying that their conformity with the Trinitarian doctrine embraced by the Church was artificial and not original. There is in fact no historical evidence for any such revision, but this groundless and dangerous theory has cast its long shadow over the whole field of Biblical scholarship right down to our own time.



## Providential Preservation

"The Bible testifies to the eternal deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of the Eternal God. The modern versions and the defective manuscripts upon which they rely, obscures this vital testimony, which the Authorised Version faithfully preserves."

One of the many proofs of the appalling apostacy of our day from the faith once delivered to the saints is the eagerness shown to discredit the Authorised Version of the English Bible on the one hand, and to popularise on the other, modern versions based on untrustworthy manuscripts whose translators have proved themselves unfaithful to the Received or Standard Text underlying the Authorised Version, which text through the special providence of God, has been preserved down through the ages from apostolic times. One of the stock arguments of the Jehovah's Witnesses in defence of their blasphemy is that the text of the Authorised Version is unreliable, and that the true text of the New Testament is to be found in the modern versions which deny the eternal deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Upon the Authorised Version the Lord has manifestly set the seal of His approval in imparting the blessing of eternal life through both the reading and preaching of it. The Lord in His mercy deliver us, and the rising generation, from the wolves in sheep's clothing who would rob us of this priceless heritage, and who by their carnal and unwholesome views foul the pure waters of divine revelation. "From such," it is written, "withdraw thyself." (I Timothy 6:5). Instead of listening to the "perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth," let us rather give heed to what the Faithful and True Witnesses say, "Because thou hast kept the Word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. 3: 10).

### **"BUY THE TRUTH AND SELL IT NOT"**

"The Christian who rejects the King James Version," writes Dr. Hills in the conclusion of his excellent book, "and adopts one of its modern rivals, by this very action, places himself on the high road to modernism. For along with the King James Version he has rejected the only concept of the providential preservation of Scripture which gives him any assurance that a pure New Testament text has been preserved down through the ages and is obtainable to-day. He has rejected the view that the special providence of God has operated in the sphere of the Greek Church and expressed itself in its usage and that therefore the Byzantine text, found in the vast majority of New Testament manuscripts, is a trustworthy representative of the divinely inspired original text and the best of all extant texts. And not only this, but he has adopted other concepts of the providential preservation of Scripture, concepts which suggest that God does not really care whether or not a pure New Testament text is available to His people, or whether or not His people have any assurance concerning the purity of the New Testament texts available to them. For, according to the best of these concepts, God has done nothing more than to preserve the true New Testament text somewhere amid the extant manuscripts, leaving the scholars the task of finding it, if they can. According to the others God may not even have done this. Nay, it may even have been the purpose of God to allow a considerable degree of corruption to make its way into all the extant New Testament manuscripts.

"These faulty concepts of the providential preservation of the New Testament lead speedily to a faulty concept of the original inspiration of the New Testament. For if God has been careless in the preservation of the New Testament, it is hard to see why He should have been scrupulously careful in the original writing of the New Testament. If God has preserved the New Testament in such a way that it is impossible to obtain assurance concerning the purity of this text, then there is no infallible New Testament to-day, and if there is no infallible New Testament to-day, it may very well be that there never was an infallible New Testament. If God has allowed the New Testament to lose its infallibility, why should we suppose that He created it infallible in the first place? Thus the rejection of the King

James Version for one of its modern rivals leads first to the rejection of the doctrine of the providential preservation of Scripture, then to the rejection of the infallibility of Scripture, and finally, to the adoption of a modernistic religion which rests not on the authority of Scripture but on human reason.

"Not all those who have thus rejected the King James Version have followed out the logic of their action to its final conclusion but they are always in danger of doing so. It is the purpose of this book, therefore, to lead such persons away from this danger back to the Byzantine Text, found in the vast majority of the New Testament manuscripts, to the Reformation Text (Textus Receptus), which is the historic printed edition of the Byzantine Text, and to the King James Version, which is the classic English translation of the Reformation Text." (Dr. Hills).

## **THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES**

"We take this opportunity to point out to our members and adherents at home and abroad two of the main doctrines which are essential for the establishment and progress of the Kingdom of Christ on earth. These two are (1) The Inspiration of the Scriptures, and (2) The need of an enlightened heart to receive unto salvation the divine truth of the Inspiration of the Rule of Faith.

There is no occasion here to present any detailed statement of the truth of the Inspiration of the Word. Such statements can be got in appropriate books, specially for ordinary, popular purposes, in the writings of Halyburton. All that we have in view is to lay emphasis on the Confessional statement. The ultimate ground of receiving the Rule of Faith as inspired is not evidently the majesty of the whole and harmony of the parts - useful though these and other parts are - but that the Scriptures are self-evidencing. This implies that while men are unregenerate, they cannot spiritually discern the inspired rule to be inspired at all. No one, therefore, apprehends in a due manner, the self-evidencing light of Scripture, but those belonging to the Israel of God. It is essential for a soul to be divinely illuminated to appreciate savingly the Scriptures. These two fundamental doctrines of inspiration and internal illumination embrace, in their implications, all the confessional doctrines.

A common objection is that, owing to the transcription of manuscripts down the ages, the Church lacks the original copies. The view of the Reformed Church regarding this is that God's special providence watched over Scripture. Moses Stuart points out that about 95 per cent of the existing variations have about as much significance as the question whether "honour" should be spelled with or without the letter "u." Although there are "various readings" yet "not one doctrine of religion is changed," says Stuart. "Not one important fact altered by the whole of the various readings collectively taken." Apart from the relatively few and unimportant variations, which are perfectly evident, we are in possession of the inspired Word of God. We therefore earnestly direct the attention of our people to these two fundamental doctrines of the Westminster Confession, namely, that Scripture is self-evidencing, or seen to be the Holy Infallible Word in its own light, while, at the same time, it cannot be savingly discerned as such, apart from the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. To be established in these two complementary doctrines leads on to being rooted and grounded in the other doctrines of the one, holy, supreme rule given for the salvation of immortal souls." (Rev. D. A. MacFarlane, M.A., Dingwall, Theological Tutor, Extracted from "Proceedings of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Synod" May 1954.)

"The Bible reveals the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are unchangeable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveller's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is

## Providential Preservation

restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of Hell disclosed. CHRIST is its GRAND SUBJECT, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened in the judgment, and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labour, and condemns all who trifle with its holy contents."

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (II Timothy 3: 16.)

## APPENDIX I

### THE HEBREW TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT VINDICATED

It was in connection with the Old Testament Scriptures that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Faithful and True Witness declared, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matt. 5: 18), and again, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10: 35).

"For Christians it will be enough to know that our Lord Jesus Christ has set the seal of His infallible sanction on the whole of the Old Testament," wrote the late canon H. P. Liddon who was professor of Exegesis in the University of Oxford during the last part of the last century, when the heretical and destructive views of the Higher Critics were in the ascendancy." He (Christ) found the Hebrew canon just as we have it in our hands to-day, and He treated it as an authority which was above discussion - nay, more, he went out of his way, if we may reverently speak thus, to sanction not a few portions of it which our modern scepticism too eagerly rejects. When He would warn His hearers against the danger of spiritual relapse, He bade them to remember Lot's wife. When He would point out how worldly engagements may bind the soul to a coming judgment, He reminds then how men ate, and drank, and married, and were given in marriage, until the (lay when Noah entered into the Ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. When He would put his finger on a fact in past Jewish history, which, by its admitted reality, would warrant belief in His own resurrection, He points to Jonah, three days and three nights in the whale's belly. When standing on the Mount of Olives, with the Holy City at His feet, He would quote a prophecy, the fulfilment of which would mark for His followers that its impending doom had at last arrived, He desires them to flee to the mountains, when they 'shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place.'

. . . Yes, the trustworthiness of the Old Testament is, in fact, inseparable from the trustworthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, if we believe that He is the true light of the world, we shall resolutely close our ears against any suggestions of the falsehood of those Hebrew Scriptures which have received the stamp of His divine authority."

Professor Robert Dick Wilson, M.A., Ph.D., Princeton, who died in the first part of this century was a staunch defender of the doctrine of the Verbal Inspiration of Holy Scripture and claimed, with justice, to be an expert in all the questions involved in such a belief. Through long years of continuous study he mastered all the ancient languages and dialects needed to read the manuscripts of the Bible. In order to master the Babylonian language, not taught in any American University, he had to travel to Germany and study at the University of Heidelberg. To Babylonian he added Ethiopic, Phoenician, various Aramaic dialects, etc., until he had mastered 45 ancient languages and dialects. In his book "Is The Higher Criticism Scholarly?," he writes, "I have seen the day when I set out on sonic Bible research with fear and trembling - wondering what I should discover - but now all that fear has passed."

The following are selections from an address by Prof. Wilson on What is An Expert?

## Providential Preservation

"If a man is called an expert, the first thing to be done is to establish the fact that he is such. One expert may be worth more than a million other witnesses that are not experts. Before a man has the right to speak about the history, the language, and the paleography of the Old Testament, the Christian church has the right to demand that such a man should establish his ability to do so. For forty-five years continuously, since I left college, I have devoted myself to the one great study of the Old Testament, in all its languages, in all its archeology, in all its translations, and as far as possible in everything bearing upon its text and history. I tell you this so that you may see why I can and do speak as an expert. I may add that the result of my forty-five years of study of the Bible has led me all the time to a firmer faith that in the Old Testament we have a true historical account of the history of the Israelite people; and I have a right to commend this to some of those bright men and women who think that they can laugh at the old-time Christian and believer in the Word of God.

You will have observed that the critics of the Bible who go to it in order to find fault have a most singular way of claiming to themselves all knowledge and all virtue and all love of truth. One of their favourite phrases is, "All scholars agree." When a man writes a book and seeks to gain a point by saying "All scholars agree," I wish to know who the scholars are and why they agree. Where do they get their evidence from to start with?

I remember that some years ago I was investigating the word "Baca," which you have in the English Bible - "Passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well." I found in the Hebrew dictionary that there was a traveller named Burkhart, who said that "Baca" meant mulberry trees. That was not very enlightening. I could not see how mulberries had anything to do with water. I looked up all the authority of the scholars in Germany and England since Burkhart's time and found they had all quoted Burkhart. Just one scholar at the back of it! When I was travelling in the Orient, I found that we had delicious water here and there. The water sprang up apparently out of the ground in the midst of the desert. I asked my brother who was a missionary where this water came from. He said, "They bring this water from the mountains. It is an underground aqueduct. They cover it over to prevent it from evaporating." Now the name of that underground aqueduct was Baca.

My point is that you ought to be able to trace back this agreement among scholars to the original scholar who propounded the statement, and then find out whether what that scholar said is true. What was the foundation of his statement?

I have claimed to be an expert. Have I the right to do so? Well, when I was in the Seminary I used to read my New Testament in nine different languages. I learned my Hebrew by heart, so that I could recite it without the intermission of a syllable; and the same with David, Isaiah and other parts of Scripture. As soon as I graduated from the Seminary, I became a teacher of Hebrew for a year and then I went to Germany. When I got to Heidelberg I made a decision. I decided - and I did it with prayer to consecrate my life to the study of the Old Testament. I was twenty-five then; and I judged from the life of my ancestors that I should live to be seventy; so that I should have forty-five years to work. I divided the period into three parts. The first fifteen years I would devote to the study of the languages necessary. For the second fifteen I was going to devote myself to the study of the text of the Old Testament; and I reserved the last fifteen years for the work of writing the results of my previous studies and investigations, so as to give them to the world. And the Lord has enabled me to carry out that plan almost to a year.

Most of our students used to go to Germany, and they heard professors give lectures which were the results of their own labours. The students took everything because the professor said it. I went there to study so that there would be no professor on earth that could lay down the law for me, or say anything without my being able to investigate the evidence on which he said it.

## Providential Preservation

Now I consider that what was necessary in order to investigate the evidence, was first of all, to know the language in which the evidence is given. So I went to Berlin, and devoted myself almost entirely to the study of the languages bearing upon the Bible; and determined that I would learn all the languages that throw light upon the Hebrew, all the cognate languages, and also all the languages into which the Bible had been translated down to 600 A.D., so that I could investigate the text myself.

Having done this I claim to be an expert. I defy any man to make an attack upon the Old Testament on the ground of evidence that I cannot investigate. I can get at the facts if they are linguistic. If you know any language that I do not know, I will learn it. Now I am going to show you some of the results.

After I had learned the necessary languages I set about the investigation of every consonant in the Hebrew Old Testament. There are about a million and a quarter of these; and it took me many years to achieve my task. I had to read the Old Testament through and look at every consonant in it; I had also to observe the variations of the text, as far as they were to be found in the manuscripts, or in the notes of the Massoretes,\* or in the various versions, or in the parallel passages, or in the conjectural emendations of critics; and then I had to classify the results. I prize this form of textual research very highly; for my plan has been to reduce the Old Testament criticism to an absolutely objective science; something which is based on evidence, and not on opinion. I scarcely ever make a statement which rests merely on my own subjective belief.

\*The Massoretes were a body of Jewish scholars who made it their business to hand down what they believed to be the true text of the Old Testament.

In order to be a textual expert of this kind it is necessary to be a master of paleography (the science which deals with ancient writings) and of philology; to have an exact knowledge of a dozen languages at least, so that every word may be thoroughly sifted. To ascertain the true text of the Old Testament is fundamental to everything concerning Bible history and Bible doctrine.

The result of those thirty years' study which I have given to the text has been this. I can affirm that there is not a page of the Old Testament concerning which we need have any doubt. We can be absolutely certain that substantially we have the text of the Old Testament that Christ and the Apostles had, and which was in existence from the beginning.

I would like to give a few other examples of true Biblical criticism. I can remember when it was thought very unprofitable to read the long genealogies found in the first chapters of First Chronicles - nine chapters of proper names. But to-day, in the scientific criticism of the Old Testament, proper names are of the profoundest importance. The way in which they are written - indeed, all that is connected with them - has come to be one of the very foundations upon which scientific criticism of the Old Testament is built. Take the following case. There are twenty-nine ancient kings whose names are mentioned not only in the Bible but also on monuments of their own time; many of them under their own supervision. There are one hundred and ninety-five consonants in these twenty-nine proper names. Yet we find that in the documents of the Hebrew Old Testament there are only two or three out of the entire hundred and ninety-five about which there can be any question of their being written in exactly the same way as they were inscribed on their own monuments. Some of these go back for two thousand years, some for four thousand; and are so written that every letter is clear and correct. This is surely a wonder.

Compare this accuracy with that of other writings. I have been blamed for not referring to the classical writings more frequently in my book on Daniel. Here is the reason. Take the list made by the greatest scholar of his age, the librarian at Alexandria in 200 B.C. He compiled a catalogue of the kings of Egypt, thirty-eight in all; of the entire number only three or four of them are recognisable. He also made a list of the kings of Assyria; in only one case can we tell who is meant; and that one is not spelt correctly. Or take Ptolemy, who drew up a register of eighteen of the kings of Babylon. Not one of them is properly

## Providential Preservation

spelt; you could not make them out at all if you did not know from other sources to what he is referring. If any one talks against the Bible, ask him about the kings mentioned in it. There are twenty-nine kings of Egypt, Israel, Moab, Damascus, Tyre, Babylon, Assyria, and Persia, referred to, and ten different countries among these twenty-nine; all of which are included in the Bible accounts and those of the monuments. Every one of these is given his right name in the Bible, his right country, and placed in the correct chronological order. Think what that means!

Here is yet another case in which the labours of the expert are needed. It is the contention of the critics that the presence of Aramaic\* words in the Old Testament books is a clue to their date. I came to the conclusion that the critics said much about the Aramaisms that they could not substantiate. So I took a Hebrew dictionary and went through it from the first word to the last, and gathered up the results. Then I went to the Aramaic, and did the same. I compiled a list of all the relevant words and compared them with those in the Babylonian language. By carrying on the investigation in this scientific manner I found that, as a matter of fact, there is very little in the argument built on the presence of Aramaisms in the Old Testament. There are only five or six of these words in the whole of the book that could even be considered doubtful. The truth is that a century ago there was no Babylonian known; and when people found the Old Testament form of a noun or a verb that did not suit the Hebrew, they said it was Aramaic, and that the book which contained it was of a later date than it claimed to be. But since then God has given us a knowledge of Babylonian, with this result. Certain Aramaic nouns end in ooth (rhyming with "booth") and it was thought that this was peculiar to that language. But now we know that this is found in both Babylonian and Hebrew. The Babylonian records take us back before the time of Abraham; and from thence onward, until the Babylonian kingdom came to an end, we find this noun-ending recurring. Thus the foundation of the old argument fell to pieces.

In closing, I desire to call attention to the fact that while the study of the religious systems of the ancient peoples has shown that there was amongst them a groping after God, nowhere is it to be seen that they reached any clear apprehension of the One True God, the Creator, Preserver, Judge, Saviour and Sanctifier of His people. Their religions were of an outward kind; the Old Testament religion is essentially one of the mind and heart; a religion of love, joy, faith, hope, and salvation through the grace of God. How can we account for this?

\* Aramaic was the language of Mesopotamia and adjacent lands.

The prophets of Israel declared that their teaching came from God. The modern critical school is antagonistic to this claim. They say that the prophets gave utterance to the ideas of their own time, and that they were limited by their environment. But if this is so how does it come about that neither from the oracles of Thebes and Memphis, nor from Delphi and Rome, nor from Babylon, nor from the deserts of Media, but from the sheep-folds and humble homes of Israel, yea, from the captive by the river of an alien land, came forth those great messages of hope and salvation? One of the mighty phrases of Scripture is that of "God with us"; this is the key which unlocks the mysterious chambers of the Old Testament, and opens to us their rich and enduring treasure." Bible League Quarterly, 1955

The late scholarly Principal J. Willoughby, a former President of the Sovereign Grace Union, wrote: "In recent times many scholars have attempted to discredit the written Word, especially of the Old Testament. Many other scholars of repute, however, have found that the evidences on which the destructive critics base their conclusions are utterly worthless. The late Professor Dick Wilson was a scholar of massive learning. At the age of twenty-five he could recite the New Testament in nine different languages. He could repeat from memory a Hebrew translation of the entire New Testament without missing a single syllable. He could do the same thing with large portions of the Old Testament also. He says: 'For forty-five years continuously since I left college I have devoted myself to the one great study of the Old Testament in all its languages, in all its archaeology, in all its translations, and, as far as

## Providential Preservation

possible, everything bearing upon its text and history.' He was acquainted with about forty-five languages and dialects. He probably knew more about the Old Testament and everything connected with it than did all the destructive critics put together. Professor Wilson, having long and thoroughly examined the evidence on which the destructive critics base their conclusions, found that it was utterly worthless. Concerning the evidence for the orthodox position he writes: 'The evidence in our possession has convinced me that "at sundry times and in divers manners God spoke unto our fathers through the prophets," and that the Old Testament in Hebrew, "being immediately inspired by God," has "by His singular care and providence been kept pure in all ages."'

## APPENDIX II

God in His mercy did not leave His people to grope after the true New Testament text. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit He guided them to preserve it during the manuscript period. God brought this to pass through the working of His preserving and governing providence. First, many trustworthy copies of the original New Testament manuscripts were produced by faithful scribes. Second, these trustworthy copies were read and recopied by true believers down through the centuries. Third, untrustworthy copies were not so generally read or so frequently recopied. Although they enjoyed some popularity for a time, yet in the long run they were laid aside and consigned to oblivion. Thus as a result of this special providential guidance the true text won out in the end, and today we may be sure that the text found in the vast majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts is a trustworthy reproduction of the divinely inspired original text. This is the text which was preserved by the God-guided usage of the Greek Church. Critics have called it the Byzantine text, thereby acknowledging that it was the text in use in the Greek Church during the greater part of the Byzantine period (452-1453). It is much better, however, to call this text the Traditional text. When we call the text found in the majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts the Traditional text, we signify that this is the text which has been handed down by the God-guided tradition of the Church from the time of the Apostles unto the present day.

A further step in the providential preservation of the New Testament was the printing of it in 1516 and the dissemination of it throughout the whole of Western Europe during the Protestant Reformation.

This printed text is commonly called the Textus Receptus (Received Text). It is the text which was used by the Protestant Reformers during the Reformation and by all Protestants everywhere for three hundred years thereafter. It was from this Textus Receptus that the King James Version and the other classic Protestant translations were made. In the Textus Receptus God provided a trustworthy printed New Testament text for the Protestant Reformers and for all believing Christians down to the present day. Thus the printing of it was, after all, no accident but the work of God's special providence. (Believing Bible Study by Dr. E. F. Hills.)

## APPENDIX III WESTCOTT AND HORT

These two men were, Dr. (afterwards Professor) F. J. A. Hort (1828-1892) a very aggressive personality, and his friend Professor (afterwards Bishop) B. F. Westcott (1825-1901) both of Trinity College, Cambridge. In doctrine they favoured the Romanising movement in their church, the 'Larger Hope' (of F. D. Maurice and Dean Farrar), the Darwinian hypothesis and the Old Testament Higher Criticism. They had been those who had turned from the Textus Receptus and had become infatuated with the Codex Vaticanus (B) and the other four oldest manuscripts (Codices Sinaiticus (Aleph), Alexandrinus (A), Ephraemi (C), and Bezae (D)). They had come to feel that these, being the most 'ancient copies of the

## Providential Preservation

Scriptures known, must be the most accurate. For some years they had been at work on a reconstruction of a new Greek New Testament text on this basis.

The Vaticanus, the Sinaiticus and the Bezae codices, Dean Burgon considered the depositories of the largest amount of fabricated readings, ancient blunders, and intentional perversions of truth, which are discoverable in any known copies of the Word of God. Like many scholars before him, he became convinced that these manuscripts survived, only because they were full of mistakes and little used.

Dean Burgon in his classic, the Revision Revised, deals with several hundred omissions and alterations Westcott and Hort made in their Greek New Testament.

"Shame - yes, shame on the learning," the Dean exclaimed, "on the learning which comes abroad only to perplex the weak, and to unsettle the doubting, and to mislead the blind! Shame - yes, shame on the two thirds majority of well-intentioned, but most incompetent men, who - finding themselves (in an evil hour) appointed to correct plain and clear errors' in the English 'Authorised Version' - occupied themselves instead with falsifying the inspired Greek Text in countless places, and branding with suspicion some of the most precious utterances of the Spirit! Shame - yes, shame upon them! "

Extracts from "The Greek New Testament and The Modern Versions" by Bishop D. A. Thomson. (The Reformation Link. Dec. 1967 and The Bible League Quarterly, Jan. March 1968).

Let the Reformed Church in New Zealand and also all professedly evangelical bodies holding to the Westcott and Hort school take note!

## APPENDIX IV

Bishop D. A. Thomson in his article "The New Testament Text and Early Church History" in "The Bible League Quarterly" (April 1968), refers to the rise and spread of Gnosticism in the 2nd century. "It began as 'cells' within the Church," Bishop Thomson writes, "expanded rapidly and widely, and took different forms according to place and leadership. . . . The orthodox leaders who attacked Gnosticism were Justin Martyr (c. 100 - 165), Irenaeus (c. 130 - 200), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - 215), Tertullian (c. 162 - 200), Origen (c. 185 - 254) and Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260 - 340).

This brief reference to Gnosticism has been made so that the controversy concerning the Greek text of the New Testament may be followed more clearly. It highlights the fact that throughout the second century there was very powerful propaganda, sometimes even from within Christian circles, which was thoroughly unsound with respect to the Person of Christ. There was the denial of His essential Deity and perfect manhood. Moreover some of the Gnostics did not scruple to tamper with the text of the gospels and the epistles, deleting or altering a scripture in the interest of their heretical views<sup>3</sup> Hence the number of corrupt copies of portions of the New Testament began to multiply at an alarming rate. So much was this the case, that Dr. F. H. A. Scrivener declared, "It is no less true to fact than paradoxical in sound, that the worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subjected, originated within a hundred years after it was composed; that Irenaeus and the African Fathers, and the whole Western, with a portion of the Syrian Church, used far inferior manuscripts to those employed by Stunica, or Erasmus, or Stephens thirteen centuries later, when moulding the Textus Receptus."<sup>4</sup> The detractors of the work of Erasmus, of the Textus Receptus and of the A.V. should weigh well this considered judgment of the leading textual critic of the generation that saw the production of the R.V. of 1881.

<sup>3</sup> Tertullian accused Marcion of issuing a mutilated Gospel according to Luke. We have already noticed instances of serious omissions reproduced in this gospel by WH (pages 93-95). Other heretics altered the text of the other gospels. Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Jerome bear witness to this. See Traditional



## Providential Preservation

Text of the Holy Gospel, by Burgon and Miller, pages 287-291, and Believing Bible Study, by Dr. E. F. Hills, pages 129-135.

4 Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament, Third Edition, page 511.

Fortunately the Orthodox leaders were alive to this menace of the corrupting of Scripture engendered by the Gnostic movement. They exposed the corruptions and the corruptors. Then the Gnostic movement began to wane and with it the production of faulty copies of Scripture. It seems that only those survived which were hidden away and not used. Meanwhile an increasing number of accurate copies came into circulation.

By the middle of the 4th century the Traditional Text was prominent and shortly afterwards predominant. It held on its way without any serious challenge in the east, until in the 16th century it issued from the printing press and later was called the Textus Receptus and the Reformation Text. From it all the Protestant Versions of Europe, including our Authorized Version, were made.

Just as there are still scholars and commonsense, well-read Christians who reject the Higher Criticism and believe the Bible to be the fully inspired and inerrant Word of God, so there is a similar group who are satisfied that this Textus Receptus is the descendant of a long line of pure copies made from still earlier accurate manuscripts taken in the first instance from the original New Testament writings. They consider that the oldest manuscripts (the Vaticanus, the Sinaiticus, the Bezae, etc.), because of their inconceivably large numbers of discrepancies, obvious inaccuracies and omissions, should not be styled "the best." They feel that they are amongst the worst and are probably copies of some of the corrupt gospels and epistles, which in the 3rd and early 4th centuries were still circulating as the legacy of Gnosticism. They suggest that these most ancient codices have only survived the ravages of time because they were recognised as inaccurate and were laid aside and neglected .5

Had they, after they had been made, been used to any extent, they would have become worn-out and perished long ago, as has been the fate of hundreds, if not thousands, of others. Their age, considered in conjunction with the aforementioned other factors, witnesses rather to their corruption than to any special purity of text.

5 Since Dean Burgon's time some sixty-eight New Testament papyri have been discovered in Egypt and the East. Most are fragmentary. Their texts seem very mixed. It had been claimed that they witness against the early date of the Traditional Text. Dr. Hills dissents from this verdict. He points out that papyrus Bodmer II, written it is believed at the latest A.D. 200, and so having the distinction of being the oldest N.T. MS. now known, while being textually mixed, contains a fair proportion of distinctively Traditional readings. See Dr. Hills' Introduction to Dean Burgon's The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to St. Mark, Vindicated against critical objections, and Established, pages 44-67.

The thoughtful and the studious who hold these views are confirmed in their convictions by noticing a parallel. In their judgment there is a similar work of Grace and Divine Providence in the giving and preserving of this Text of Inspiration to that in the long series of events making up the History of Redemption. Grace and Providence have issued in Faith - begotten and lived out. To them it is significant that loyalty to the Traditional Text and its translation into many other tongues in Europe and further afield has been accompanied by many manifestations of faith, whereas the discarding of this text and the issuing of the modern versions to which reference has been made, has many associations with the rejection of the historic Christian Faith and of positive unbelief.

(Printed with the kind permission of Bishop Thomson) APPENDIX V

## Providential Preservation

When we regard the New Testament manuscripts from the believing point of view, we see that they confirm the orthodox Christian faith. We perceive that the Traditional text found in the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts is the true text which Christ has promised always to preserve in His Church. But there are many scholars today who claim to be orthodox Christians and yet insist that the New Testament text ought not to be studied from the believing point of view but from a neutral point of view. The New Testament text, they maintain, ought to be treated just as the texts of other ancient books are treated. And in this they are followers of Westcott and Hort (1881), who laid down their basic principle in the following words: "For ourselves we dare not introduce considerations which could not reasonably be applied to other ancient texts, supposing them to have documentary attestation of equal amount, variety, and antiquity."<sup>1</sup>

In this present chapter we will endeavour to point out the error of this neutral, naturalistic Bible study and also the error of the modern, neutral world-view which underlies this false method of handling the Holy Scriptures.

Why is it that the neutral method of Bible study has always this tendency to breed scepticism concerning the text of the Bible? The reason is plain. The reason is that it is not really possible to be neutral about the Bible. If you try to be neutral, if you ignore the divine inspiration and the providential preservation of the Bible and treat it like an ordinary human book, then you are ignoring the very factors that make the Bible what it is. If you follow such a neutral method of Bible study, you are still playing about on the surface and have failed to come to grips with the very essence of the Bible. In your textual criticism you have not yet dealt with the real, divinely inspired and providentially preserved Bible but with a false, purely human Bible of your own imagination. And since you are dealing with a false, purely human Bible, doubts as to the purity of its text must necessarily arise in your mind, doubts which you can find no means of banishing.

But if by the grace of God you drop your neutral position and take your stand on the Bible as God's infallible Word, inspired by His Holy Spirit and preserved by His special providence, then it becomes evident to you that the true New Testament text has been preserved in the God-guided usage of the Church. Hence this true text is to be found in the vast majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts, in the Textus Receptus, and in the King James Version and the other classic Protestant translations. (Believing Bible Study by Dr. E. F. Hills.)

## **THE WONDER OF THE BOOK**

The wonder of the Book grows upon us as our experience is enlarged, for the more deeply we search it, the more we feel that the Bible is not merely a book, but The Book. It alone is the universal Book, the eternal Book, the Book for all time. It is the voice of the Lord. It stands alone, unapproachable in its grandeur, as high above all other books as heaven is above earth, or as the Son of God is above the sons of men.

### **The Wonder of its Unification**

The Bible, though regarded as a Book, is in fact a library of sixty-six volumes, written by between thirty and forty different authors, in three languages, on totally different topics and in extraordinarily different circumstances. One wrote history another biography, one wrote on theology, another poetry, another prophecy, others on philosophy, jurisprudence, genealogy, ethnology, and narratives of wonderful journeys. Here in the Bible we have them all, in a little Book that a child can carry in its little hand. The strangest thing of all is that, although their subjects 'are so diverse and difficult, and although it was impossible for the man who wrote the first pages to have the slightest knowledge what others would

write 1500 years later, yet this collection of writings is not only unified by men in one Book, but so unified by God, the Author, that we can never think of it today as anything else but one Book ! And one Book it is indeed - the miracle of all literary unity.

### **The Wonder of its Preservation**

The Bible has withstood ages of ferocious and incessant persecution. Century after century men have tried to burn it and to bury it and to extirpate it. Kings of the earth set themselves and rulers of the church have taken counsel together to destroy it. Diocletian the Roman Emperor inaugurated in AD 303 a terrific onslaught upon the Book. Bibles were destroyed, Christians were slain, and the Emperor boasted that the very name of the Christians was blotted out, and yet after a few years, the Bible came forth as Noah from the ark to re-people the earth, and in AD 325 Constantine enthroned the Bible as the Infallible Judge of Truth in the great council of the Church held in that year.

Later the Church of Rome denied the Scriptures to the people and for ages the Bible was practically an unknown book. Martin Luther was a grown man when he said that he had never seen a Bible in his life. No jailor ever kept a prisoner closer than the Church of Rome kept the Bible from the people.

The worst opposition of all has been during the last two hundred years, with rationalism and modernism seeking to undermine the authority, inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. It was Voltaire's boast that within one hundred years of his death not a Bible would be found save as an antiquarian curiosity. Many more than one hundred years have passed, and other pens and other voices have joined in the attack, but the Bible remains and is being more widely distributed and used than ever before.

### **The Bible is Self-Authenticating**

You need no historical critic for God's own Word. The Holy Spirit, who is the Author of the Book, makes it speak to our souls in such power as to give divine conviction. Men may arise to unsettle and destroy, but the Spirit of Christ comes to validate and confirm, with a certainty that is incommunicable by mere reason, and is impervious to the assaults of doubt. Spurgeon spoke of a poor woman who was challenged by an agnostic to prove that the Bible in her hand was God's Word. She pointed to the sun and said, "Can you prove that there is a sun in the sky?" The unbeliever answered, "Of course, the proof is that it warms me and I see its light." "That is it," she replied, "and the best proof that this Book is the Word of God is that it warms and lights my soul."

### **It Cannot Be Improved**

We do not gild gold. We do not paint rubies. We cannot brighten diamonds. Neither can any artist add any final touch to this finished Word of God. It stands as the sun in the sky and this proud age can add nothing to it. It has the glory of God and any attempt to improve it can but disfigure it. It speaks with authority and breaks upon you as the Voice from heaven. Five hundred times in the Pentateuch, three hundred times in the following books and twelve hundred times in the prophets, the declarations are prefaced or concluded with such expressions as "Hear the Word of the Lord," or "Thus saith the Lord." No other book dares thus to address itself to the universal conscience. No other speaks with such a binding claim or presumes to command the obedience of all mankind. The book speaks to the inner conscience with the authority of God Himself.

### **It reveals Christ**

The supreme wonder of the Book is Christ, Who is its fulness, its centre, its great subject. Of the whole Book it may be said, "The glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." As long as men

## Providential Preservation

live upon the face of the globe, the Book that tells of Christ the Revealer, Redeemer, the Risen, Reigning, Returning Lord will draw men's hearts like a magnet, and men will stand by it, and live for it, and die for it.

Do not think that we ought to read this Book as we read any other book, and study and analyse it just as we do any text book in literature or science. No! When you come to this Book, come to it with reverence. Read it with a plea for the Spirit's help. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Other books are of the earth. This is from heaven, it is the living Word of the Living God, supernatural in origin, divine in authorship, regenerative in power, infallible in authority, personal in application, inspired in its every part. (Summarized and selected from "The Wonder of the Book " by Prof. Dyson Hague, M.A. )

No. 31: A Westminster Standard Publication. For further copies write to Westminster Standard, P.O. Box 740, Gisborne, N.Z.