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The Supernatural Approach To Textual Criticism

By Thomas M. Strouse, Ph.D.
Maranatha Graduate School of Theology
Watertown, Wisconsin

[Installment Number 4]

The Supernatural Approach To The Transmission Of The Text

The Supernatural Preservation of the Traditional Text through the People of God. Several varieties of this approach included the preservation of the NT by the Anglican Church Bishops¹⁶ or the Protestant priesthood of believers.¹⁷ God's spiritual work is done through His people because they only have His Spirit. More specifically, God's preservation of His truth is through "the pillar and ground of the truth"—the NT assembly (1 Timothy 3:16). God has preserved both the canon and the text of His Word through the NT assemblies, which is His institution for this age (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 3:10).¹⁸

This approach answers several important questions. For instance, "why is God's Word important?" It is important because "thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psalm 138:2). God has exalted His Word because it is the means to convey His propositional truth. It is important to man because only by special revelation can man be saved and do the Lord's will, "from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," (2 Timothy 3:15).

This approach answers the question "when

is God's Word important?" It is both a temporal and an eternal book. Temporally, it is for every man of every age. Eternally, it is forever settled in Heaven (Psalm 119:89). Peter said, "the word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Peter 1:25). Hence, God used the human languages of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic to convey His eternal message for mankind in all ages.

Since God's Word is extremely important, and since it is God's eternal Word for mankind in all ages, the next question to be answered is "What is God's Word?" God's Word is that which He uttered through His holy men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The words of the human authors of the canonical books of the Bible are God-breathed (*θεόπνευστος*) and therefore inerrant and infallible (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16). Thus, the inspiration of the Word of God is verbal and plenary. And God did not inspire His Word just to forget it;¹⁹ He has preserved His Word through the priesthood of believers,

I have yet man things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come (John 16:12-13),

and "heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away (Luke 21:33; cf. Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31). Hence, this

(Continued on page 2)

An Answer To "Textus Receptus: Is It Fundamental To Our Faith?"

By Rev. D. A. Waite, Th.D., Ph.D.
President, The Dean Burgon Society

[Installment # 3]

[Written by Dr. Thurman Wisdom, Dean of the School of Religion at Bob Jones University, as printed in FAITH FOR THE FAMILY, October, 1979, pp. 3-4]

2. ITEM # 2.

A. FAITH FOR THE FAMILY'S Statement. "The very nature of Christianity—built as it is ON CHRIST, the Incarnate Word—demands unflinching adherence doctrine of verbal inspiration." [From October, 1979, issue of Faith For The Family, pp. 3-4, lines ##11-15].

B. The Issue. Is indeed "Christianity" really "BUILT...ON CHRIST, THE INCARNATE WORD"?

C. My Comments. I do not deny the "incarnation" of the "Word" in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ through the miraculous Virgin Birth. Nor do I deny that "Christianity" is based on "BUILT" on "CHRIST, the Incarnate Word" in one sense (which is no doubt the sense in which Dr. Wisdom has used it here). But there is an extremely dangerous error in this statement, if taken to its literal and ultimate logical conclusion. If taken in that way, you would be saying that something other than the written Word of God was the very basis of Christianity or that on which it was "built." When given a choice between the written Word of God (as found in

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"KING JAMES FANS" (?)

By E. L. Bynum

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[Installment Number 4]

The Second London Confession of 1677 (Baptist) says, "The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule of all saving Knowledge, Faith, and Obedience..." We ask, how can the Holy Scriptures be a certain and infallible rule if we have no infallible Bible? To hear Dr. Rice and others tell it, all versions have errors in them, and if this be so, we are left in a tragic situation. The Second London Confession of 1677 says, "The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which was the Native language of the people of old) and the New Testament in Greek, (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the Nations) being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and Providence kept pure in all Ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of Religion, the

original Hebrew and Greek, and as accurately translated, for example, into English in our Authorized King James Version of 1611) as our basis on which Christianity is "built," and the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, I would have to take the former rather than the latter! This has been made famous by the modernists and liberals of our day when they ask themselves, "What would JESUS do" or "What would JESUS say" in a given situation. They use the supremacy of their own concept of "JESUS CHRIST" sometimes even to flatly contradict the written Word of God on the premise that it is "UNCHRISTIAN" and not what Jesus Christ would have said or done! We do not know anything whatsoever about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God (John 1:1-14), EXCEPT by and through the written Word of God! Hence, that "written Word" must ever be the bed-rock basis on which "Christianity" must be "built" and not the "Incarnate Word" except, of course, as the written Word shows and describes and tells about and reveals the Incarnate Word within its pages. Yes, Christ is the Rock, the Solid Rock, but only as He is expressly revealed within the pages of God's inerrant, infallible, and plenary and verbally inspired Bible of the Old and the New Testaments. Many have blamed us who are BIBLIO-CENTRIC as being "BIBLIOLATERS," but we must ever be Biblio-Centric and after we see what the Bible reveals of our Saviour, then and only then, in the second place, can we be truly "Christo-Centric"! Our entire modern theological world has sought to take us from the Bible as the basis for our Christian faith and turn us to some other basis, whether that be Christ, or love, or experience, or charismatic gifts! Fellow believer, be sure to think through carefully when anyone seeks to de-emphasize or to seek to remove you from a Bible-based or Bible-built Christianity!

3. ITEM #3. [TO BE CONTINUED]

Church is finally to appeal unto them." The Baptists of 1677 believed that the Scriptures were inspired of God, and that "By his care and Providence kept pure in all ages." They believed that the Church in all ages could appeal to the pure Scriptures. That is quite different than some of our modern fundamentalists who talk about inspiration, but who are constantly finding errors in the Bible.

Which Bible were the Baptists of 1677 using? It surely wasn't the NASV, ASV, RSV or the Living Bible. Don't you suppose that it was the KJV of 1611?

The General Baptists of England published the "Orthodox Creed" in 1678. It says, "And by the holy Scriptures we understand the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, as they are now translated into our English mother tongue, of which there hath NEVER been any doubt of their verity, and authority, in the protestant churches of Christ to this day." They then list the books of the Old and New Testament and then say, "All which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the Rule of faith and life." What Bible do you suppose these people were using in 1678? It was English and there can be little doubt, but what they are talking about the Authorized Version (KJV) of 1611.

The above confessions may be found in "Baptist Confessions of Faith" by W. L. Lumpkin and published by Judson Press. If this does not answer Dr. Rice's question, we would like to know why? Of course it is not worded in the exact way that his question is asked, but that is not necessary, if it speaks to the point. Please note that the General Baptists in their Confession said, "And by the holy Scriptures we understand, the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, as they ARE NOW translated into our English mother-tongue, of which there hath never been any doubt of their verity, and authority... All which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the Rule of faith and life." How much plainer does Dr. Rice want anyone to say it than that.

These Baptists were not weighted down with 20th Century theories, which would rob them of confidence in an infallible Bible.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

The Supernatural Approach To Textual Criticism

(Continued from page 1)

answers a fourth question, namely, "Where is God's Word?" God's Word is with us, preserved in the extant MSS., and especially in the Majority or Traditional Text. The printed form of God's Word then, is the Massoretic Text of the OT and the Received Text of the NT.

Does this mean that there is no more need for the science of Textual Criticism? Certainly not! This just takes us back about one hundred years ago before the critical text became in vogue.²⁰ The evidence needs to be examined from the perspective of this approach to fill the void left by the naturalistic approach and its resultant, eclectic text. Thus the Majority Text becomes once again the standard for measuring texts. There are, then, several categories by which NT passages should be grouped.

1. The meta passages, or the passages where the critical text (UBS) agrees "with" the Majority Text. From a practical point of view this would be where Aleph and B agree with the TR. These are the passages in the NT where there is no uncertainty about what the text is by the two different texts.

2. The epi passages are those which are based "upon" the Majority Text but are not found in the Critical Text. For instance, this would include such passages as: Matthew 19:17-22; Mark 16:9-20; Luke 2:14, 22:43-44; John 7:53-8:11; and I Timothy 3:16, etc. All of these passages have been demonstrated long ago by Burgon to be authentic as reflected in the Majority Text. There should be no doubt about these passages because Burgon proved both internally and externally that the evidence of the facts demands the Majority Text renderings.²¹

3. The anti passages are those which are diametrically opposed to or "against" the Majority Text and not found in it. These passages are characterized by omissions of certain words, such as the names for Christ, etc. These passages do not merit much consideration since they are based on just a minority of early but inferior MSS. They have already been deemed as unprofitable by the priesthood of believers concept. However, these are the passages that continue to receive contemporary textual critics' study, resulting in a non-definitive text.

4. The huper passages are those which vary or "surpass" different editions of the TR, or even passages such as 1 John 5:7. For instance Luke 17:36, "two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left," is omitted in the Stephen's 1550 text, but is included in the Beza 1598 text and the 1611 KJV. Likewise, Beza's text contains and extra preposition (en) in Ephesians 1:3 as compared to Stephen's text.²² These are the passages that continue to need examining by textual critics to ascertain God's Word.

The approach that God has preserved His Supernatural Text through His people does not mean that the TR or the KJV is not

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Book Reviews

By Ken Johnson

"KING JAMES FANS" (?) (by E. L. Bynum, Tabernacle Baptist Church, 49 pages, paperback, \$1.00).

It is becoming more popular among "Fundamentalists" of our day to criticize the Authorized Version of the Bible rather than preach it. Their concepts of correction and rejection of God's Word are mounting in directions that simulate the steps of modernists they denounced at the turn of the century.

Pastor-Editor E. L. Bynum has placed into print a series of articles from the **Plains Baptist Challenger** (of which he is editor), that are written in answer to a series of questions asked by Dr. John R. Rice in the March 30, 1979, issue of the **Sword of the Lord**. Dr. Rice, the respected editor for many years, designated those who hold certain convictions

wanting further examination. Hills realizes this, stating, "Admittedly the KJV is not ideally perfect. No translation ever can be. But it is the product of such God-guided scholarship that it is practically perfect."²³

Once for all, we request it may be clearly understood that we do not, by any means, claim perfection for the Received Text. We entertain no extravagant notions on this subject. Again and again we shall have occasion to point out that the **Textus Receptus** needs correction. We do insist, (1) That it is an incomparably better text than that which either Lachmann, or Tischendorf, or Tregelles has produced: infinitely preferable to the 'New Greek Text' of the Revisionists. And, (2) That to be improved, the **Textus Receptus** will have to be revised on an entirely different 'principles' from those which are just now in fashion. Men must begin by unlearning the **German prejudices** of the last fifty years; and address themselves, instead, to the stern logic of facts.²⁴

Therefore, in order to ascertain the Supernatural Text of God, we must understand the materials, men, and methods of Textual Criticism as we approach this subject, believing that God has preserved His Word in the evidence before us. □

¹⁶Hills gives two reasons why "Burgon and Scrivener looked askance at the TR and declined to defend it except insofar as it agreed with the Traditional Text found in the majority of the Greek NT MSS." 1) The material for the TR was not collected by Anglican bishops, but by the independent scholar Erasmus; 2) The Church of England used the Third Edition of Stephanus, a Calvinist. **The King James Version Defended**, p. 192.

¹⁷Hills, p. 193.

¹⁸It is interesting to note that Aleph and B are both considered originally of the 50 Bibles Emperor Constantine commissioned Eusebius to produce, Metzger, p. 47. The State-Church of Constantine was the root movement of the Roman Catholic Church. It was certainly extremely divergent from NT ecclesiology, and it was certainly an appropriate carrier of these depraved texts. On the other hand, Ruckman points out how the Majority Text was preserved and used by the movement of NT assemblies (Asia Minor churches, Waldensians, Albigenes, Lollards, etc.) in the history of Christianity. p. 171. So it seems, both historically and theologically, that the believers who were faithful in practicing NT ecclesiology were also faithful in preserving and using the Traditional Text.

¹⁹Burgon cogently sums it up thusly: "There exists no reason for supposing that the Divine Agent, who in the first instance

about the Authorized Version as "King James Fans." His comments were little more than a badinage of those who think seriously about what is the Word of God.

Pastor Bynum in a formidable manner dissects each claim, derogatory remark, and statement of ridicule made by Dr. Rice. The presence of glaring errors of misapplied quotations by Dr. Rice are significantly pointed out showing he basically formed wrong conclusions from materials he read and referred to in his editorial. The gracious answers and documented statements of E. L. Bynum in answering the claims of Dr. Rice are a credit to the testimony of one who honestly dealt with a problem.

We heartily recommend this booklet and urge every serious Christian to obtain many copies and give them to friends. It is a valuable "eye-opener" of many things presently disputed among Fundamentalists concerning the controversy surrounding Bible Versions. □

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 the 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 recognized which copies exhibit a fabricated, which an honestly transcribed text; has generally sanctioned the one, and generally disallowed the other." **The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established** ed. Edward Miller (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), pp. 11, 12.

²⁰Van Bruggen states, "already for more than 100 years the certainty that this type of text Byzantine is inferior has been taken for granted. Yet, certainly about a better, superior text type has failed to come during this long time... That still very little progress has in fact been made, despite much intensive work, is apparent from the procedures followed to prepare new scientific editions of the Greek NT." p. 12.

²¹It is to be acknowledged that Burgon's work has been ignored or maligned by many subsequent textual critics. This ignorance is obvious because many contemporary textual critics do not refer to his unanswerable arguments, let alone try to refute them. Greenlee mentions Burgon in one passing reference (pp 81, 82) and Finigan omits Burgon's name altogether in his chapter on historical development.

²²Cf. also Matt. 10:8, 27:35, Lk. 2:22, 17:36, Jn. 1:28, 3:25, 16:33, Acts 8:37, 9:5, 9:6, 20:28, Rom. 8:11, 12:11, 16:25-27, Eph. 2:21, 1 Tim. 1:4, Heb. 9:1, James 2:18, Rev. 22:19.

²³Believing Bible Study, p. 83.

²⁴The Revision Revised (Paradise, PA.: Conservative Classics reprint, 1883), p. 21.

Dean Burgon Said It—"BURGON ON THE INFERIORITY OF THE WESTCOTT-HORT TEXT" "The last to enter the field are DRS. WESTCOTT AND HORT, whose beautifully-printed edition of 'the New Testament in the original Greek' was published within five days of the 'Revised Authorized Version' itself;...With regret we record our conviction that these accomplished scholars HAVE SUCCEEDED IN PRODUCING A TEXT VASTLY MORE REMOTE FROM THE INSPIRED AUTOGRAPHS OF THE EVANGELISTS THAN ANY WHICH HAS APPEARED SINCE THE INVENTION OF PRINTING." [Revision Revised, pp. 24-26]

An Answer To "What Is The 'Inspired' Word Of God?"

[Written by Dr. Edward M. Panosian, Chairman of the Division of History at BOB JONES UNIVERSITY as printed in FAITH FOR THE FAMILY, February, 1979, pp. 1, 3-4]

By Rev. D. A. WAITE, Th.D., Ph.D.
President, The Dean Burgon Society

[Installment # 10]

16. ITEM #16.

A. **FAITH FOR THE FAMILY'S Statement.** "The competition growing among enterprising printers in that 16th century, ... led one of their number to prevail upon Erasmus to HASTEN the completion of this project of preparing a Greek text for publication." [February, 1979, lines ##104-111].

B. **The Issue.** Does the word "HASTEN," imply that there was something of a "sloppy" nature in Erasmus' work?

C. **My Comments.** Listen to Edward Miller again on this: "Erasmus had however, as it appears, MADE SOME PREPARATIONS OF HIS OWN BEFORE HE HEARD FROM FROBEN." [Edward Miller, A GUIDE TO THE TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, p. 9]. So it was not, apparently, as much RUSH as it would appear from the wording. If he indeed had "MADE SOME PREPARATIONS OF HIS OWN" from his own study of the Greek New Testament, he had merely to solidify them, and send them to the printer, which is the way many of us do even today in our written or research ministries.

17. ITEM #17.

A. **FAITH FOR THE FAMILY'S Statement.** "Having at his disposal only one manuscript which contained the Book of Revelation, lacking completely the last six verses, Erasmus boldly translated those verses into Greek from his Roman Catholic Latin Vulgate Bible." [February, 1979, lines ##112-120].

B. **The Issue.** Is Erasmus to be faulted beyond recovery for having Greek manuscripts of Revelation with the last six verses missing?

C. **My Comments.** Though it is an accurate statement made by Dr. Panosian, the word, "boldly" seems to imply that there was something wrong with Erasmus, either because he had a manuscript of Revelation which did not have the last six verses of Revelation, or because he used the Latin New Testament which he had in his possession to complete his Greek edition. What would the alternative have been? (1) Erasmus could have put the last six verses of Revelation into Latin, and have all the rest of the New Testament in the Greek language. (2) Erasmus could have left the last six verses of Revelation out of the New Testament completely, thus making people wonder whether or not he thought they were spurious and really did not belong there perhaps. Or, (3) He

could have translated them from Latin into Greek, and put them in their proper place to the best of his ability. He chose the last of these three possibilities. But the whole Traditional Text of the Greek New Testament does not revolve around what Erasmus did or did not do with the last six verses of Revelation. What did Robert Stephen (1546 ff.) do with them? What did Theodore Beza (1565 ff.) do with them? What did Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir (1624 ff.) do with them? It is agreed that it would have been better to have had these last six verses of Revelation in the manuscripts Erasmus was using for his edition, but such was not the case.

(To Be Continued)

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ALABAMA: Been enjoying the monthly "News", keep up the good work. Presently witnessing to some Jehovah Witnesses, including their pastor?!? Been quite an exchange of scriptures, and man made sentences. The Holy Spirit has been "dialing their #" until their only fortress is 1 John 5:7. Could use some of Rev. C. J. Drexler's help on this verse. Enclosed find \$2.00 for 2 copies of his work.

PENNSYLVANIA: You are to be commended for your stand against the egotistical Laodicean "scholars." I praise the Lord for the Dean Burgon Society.

PENNSYLVANIA: Our prayers are with you as you faithfully uphold the Person, the work, the Words and the worth of our Lord Jesus Christ as found only in the Authorized Version.

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