

## **Founder's Foreword: The Received Text**

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June 1997

When I was a student, I heard a lecture on the Bible by an ostensibly orthodox Biblical scholar which was very disappointing. He insisted on arguing from within the ranks of the critics and with a ready acceptance of their premises. He assumed the validity of their manuscript evidence and their textual criticism as well as their "reconstruction" of the text. His view of infallibility was limited to the original manuscripts which were nowhere in evidence.

It was with great pleasure that I encountered, some years later, the work of Edward F. Hills, whose studies in the Received Text carried on the work of Dean Burgon. Hills' perspective tied in very closely to Cornelius Van Til's presuppositional philosophy: there are no neutral facts in all the universe, only God-created facts; and all facts are interpreted in terms of the interpreter's presuppositions. This was brought out clearly in 1996 by William O. Einwechter in *English Bible Translations, By What Standard?* Wrong presuppositions always lead to wrong conclusions.

The basic presuppositions of textual criticism are anti-theistic and assume a naturalistic and evolving world and history. This means that the writing of the Biblical texts, their transmission, and their histories are totally naturalistic and evolutionary. The Bible is thus in radical contradiction to its expressed nature and history. This view, however much contradicted by various findings, survives all its errors because its basic premise is accepted. Thus, in my student days, more than a few seminary literary books still reflected the opinion that the ancient Hebrews in Moses' day had neither alphabet nor written literature. When it was proven that Moses' era was one of literacy, the critical views continued because this error had not affected their basic premise, namely, the totally naturalistic history of the Bible.

This is at the heart of the problem. People refuse to accept the idea of a valid received text because they cannot accept the God to whom such a belief points. The *Textus Receptus* position requires certain things. *First*, it states that the living God of the Bible not only gave the Word but that He also preserved it over the centuries. Such a view eliminates the need for the critics who must do what God supposedly could not do, protect and preserve the text of His Word. The critics thus make themselves in effect the true givers of the Word.

*Second*, the doctrine of God necessitated by the Biblical revelation leads to some inescapable conclusions. The God of the Bible can speak only an infallible and inerrant word. Because man is a creature, and a fallen creature, his word can be only an errant and fallible word. He can speak only a proximate and fallible word because he is not God. To be a man is to know one's fallibility and proneness to error.

*Third*, it is no accident of history that the only works claiming infallibility are imitations of the Bible, having arisen in the Christian era. Examples of this are the Koran and the Book of Mormon. Ancient religions had at best vague and incoherent "revelations" from spirits and oracles because they had no omnipotent and omniscient God who could speak only infallibly. These ancient religions thus had a vein of incoherence as against the Biblical coherency. The Biblical critics have a view of God which is at best pagan and evolutionary. Their view of God, if they claim one, is of an evolving spirit in the cosmos who is somewhat unconscious and at best incoherent.

*Fourth*, the Biblical critics and modernist scholars are more consistent than their opponents because they are faithful to their views of God and of history. They have often changed their views on the development of Biblical religion. For example, it was at one time held that all religions moved from simplicity to complexity, as did also languages, supposedly. Later, it was the reverse: earlier stages saw complexity in religion and then in languages also, this complexity being then slowly reduced to simplicity. At all times, however, the modernist position has been clearly naturalistic; the God of the Bible has been rejected in favor of some kind of process whereby men and religions have developed.

The failure of the ostensibly orthodox Biblical scholars of various church and theological backgrounds has been their insistence on implicitly beginning with the same world and life view as their opponents, and then trying to reason their way to a radically different view. One scholar, an otherwise fine man, tried to prove the truth of the resurrection to modernists by arguing from their premises. He convinced no one.

We must begin with the premise or presupposition of the Triune God and His infallible enscriptured word, or we must begin with a total rejection of that God. The presupposition of fundamentalism, Lutheranism, many Reformed scholars, Anglicans, and others has been Enlightenment rationalism. This presupposition assumes the ultimacy of an impartial reason in all men whereby all things can be correctly assessed and adjudicated. But this is the premise of Scholasticism, not the Reformation.

The question of the Received Text confronts us again with the basic question of the Reformation, our starting point. The history of philosophy since Descartes has shown that, if we begin with the autonomous mind of man and its doubts, all we will end up with finally is doubt, and nothing more. If, however, we begin with the Triune God and His enscriptured Word, then we begin and end with all reality. By taking man rather than God as the starting point, the modern age has created its own crisis and is self-destructing. It is the course of folly for Biblical theology and scholarship to self-destruct with it.

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