

Preservation of Holy Scripture – Critical versus Traditional Views
 From *The Doctrine of the Preservation of Holy Scripture* by Dr Jillert Cammenga
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As part of this study, Dr Cammenga also examines what goes into making a good translation of the Scriptures: ‘Specifically, what more can be said regarding a version’s reliability? How does one determine which of the various Bible versions currently on the market is, or are, reliable?’ Part of this, of course, are the translation principles used, but of more fundamental importance are the principles used in producing the underlying Biblical language texts. Here Dr Cammenga gives a detailed examination of these principles. He begins by giving an overview which briefly summarises ten contrasting features of the two views. It should be noted that there is overlap in these in individual textual critics; for example, in point 1 some who hold the critical view believe that the Scripture is the unique Word of God, but they would treat it as if it were not, as seen in point 2.

Critical View	Traditional View
<p>1. Scripture is like any text of human origin.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>2. Approach Scripture like any other text.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3. The subjective judgment of the individual critic is the ultimate criterion for determining the Scripture text, to be applied through the methods of intrinsic and transcriptional probability.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>4. The older the manuscript, the better its text.</p>	<p>1. Scripture is the unique Word of God.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>2. Scripture requires its own special approach.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3. The Scripture text is to be established on the basis of all the available textual evidence by applying all the relevant textual principles, at least the ‘seven notes of truth’ (defined by John Burgon...).</p> <p>.....</p> <p>4. The age of a manuscript is a necessary but not sufficient criterion for determining the quality of its text, even less an absolute one. For the New Testament text, age is also inadequate in that some of its earliest manuscripts are among the most corrupted ones, so that an older witness is not necessarily better. Moreover, the oldest uncials’ adduced to support the Critical Text are not the oldest extant manuscripts.</p>

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Critical View	Traditional View
<p>5. The quality of a manuscript is determined by its genealogy.</p>	<p>5. Genealogy is an inadequate principle, insufficient in and of itself. Drawn as it is from familial relationships, the textual analogy is flawed. As the precise relationships between most extant New Testament manuscripts are unknown, this principle is inapplicable.</p>
<p>6. The number of manuscripts is not a criterion for determining the quality of a text.</p>	<p>6. Insufficient in and of itself, the number of manuscripts is one of several textual criteria necessary for determining the providentially preserved Text. The normal laws of evidence require it. . .</p>
<p>7. The traditional majority text is the result of conflation (the mixing of two or more texts).</p>	<p>7. There is no sufficient and unambiguous historical evidence to support any conflation, much less wholesale conflation, of the Traditional Text. Omission in the Critical Text is more plausible.</p>
<p>8. The Traditional Text is the result of at least two deliberate revisions.</p>	<p>8. That there were the two revisions supposed by Hort is pure conjecture. This view is not supported either by external evidence of the existence of church councils on such revisions, or of any documents relating to major Bible revisions produced by such councils.</p>
<p>9. Cureton's Syriac is the only surviving specimen of the unrevised version.</p>	<p>9. This critical assumption is pure hypothesis, unsupported by historical or textual evidence.</p>
<p>10. The critical minority text is the purest.</p>	<p>10. The traditional majority text is the purest.</p>

“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever”
 Psalm 12:6-7

Preservation of Holy Scripture – Critical versus Traditional Views – Notes

Introduction

The TBS item has contrasted the traditional view of the preservation of Holy Scripture that Dean Burgon validated by means of his 7 Tests of Truth and the critical i.e. Aleph, B-based Westcott-Hort subjectivity of modern editors that Dean Burgon likewise condemned as *“this sojourn in cloudland.”* See *‘O Biblios’ – The Book* pp 32-33 www.timefortruth.co.uk/why-av-only/ and this extract.

7. Burgon carefully set out 7 tests of truth for manuscripts readings [*Which Bible?* 5th Edition David Otis Fuller, D.D.] p 92:
1. Antiquity of witnesses
 2. Number of witnesses
 3. Variety of evidence
 4. Respectability of witnesses
 5. Continuity of witnesses
 6. Context
 7. Internal considerations

He declared that *“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”* [*Which Bible?*] p 92.

Of Westcott and Hort’s subjective exaltation of Codices Aleph, B, D, Burgon stated *“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”* [*Which Bible?*] p 91.

The effectiveness of Burgon’s method may be illustrated by means of an AV1611 majority reading i.e. 1 Timothy 3:16, an AV1611 minority reading i.e. 1 John 5:7 and a non-AV1611 addition to Acts 8:39. See www.timefortruth.co.uk/why-av-only/ *‘O Biblios’ – The Book* pp 32-33, 249-255:

1 Timothy 3:16 **“God was manifest in the flesh”**

ALL the manuscript evidence is in favour of either **“God”** or **“Who”** or **“Which.”** I described in Section 6.2 how **“THEOS”** or **“God”**, which is found in the majority of manuscripts and is written **“THS”**, can easily be changed into **“OS”**, **“Who”**, or **“O”**, **“Which”**.

Pickering [*True or False?* 2nd Edition David Otis Fuller, D.D.] p 260 summarises Burgon’s findings on 1 Timothy 3:16 as follows:

“Burgon found that 300 Greek MSS (uncial, minuscule, lectionary) read the word “God” in 1 Timothy 3:16 and only seven did not.”

...The ONLY early witness which could be in favour of **“Who”** is Aleph

[\[standardbearers.net/uploads/The_King_James_Version_Defended_Dr_Edward_F_Hills.pdf\]](http://standardbearers.net/uploads/The_King_James_Version_Defended_Dr_Edward_F_Hills.pdf)

The King James Version Defended 3rd Edition Edward F. Hills Th.D.] Chapter 5, p 137. The bad character of this manuscript has been discussed in detail. See Chapter 1, Section 1.6 and Chapter 9.

The TBS Publication No. 10 *God Was Manifest in the Flesh* states that *“(Aleph) was characterised by numerous alterations and omissions.”*

Dr Hills states further that *“The Traditional Text reads “God was manifest in the flesh”, with A (according to Scrivener), C (according to the “almost supernaturally accurate” Hoskier)...the Western text (represented by D2 and the Latin versions) reads “which was manifest in the flesh””*...

Concerning the versions, Burgon [*The Revision Revised* Dean John William Burgon] pp 426, 448 shows that the Old Latin...[bears] witness to ...**“O,”** **“which”** and that *“From a copy so depraved, the Latin Version was altered in the second century.”* See Hills, above. The TBS Publication No. 10, p 8, states *“While the Syriac “Peshitto” version has been justly described as “the oldest and one of the most excellent of the versions...It was evidently influenced by Greek manuscripts like Codex D and the Latin versions, which have “which was manifested”...It is probable that the earliest Syriac copies had “God was manifested””*...

As for...the fathers, Burgon [*The Revision Revised*] p 479 found only Gelasius (A.D. 476) and “*an unknown author of...uncertain date*” citing “which” and NOT ONE citing “who.” By contrast, the fathers citing “**God**” are numerous. They include Gregory of Nyssa (d. A.D. 394, TBS No. 10), who “*in at least 22 places, knew of no other reading but “Theos”*” [*The Revision Revised*] p 45...

[R]eviewing ALL the evidence, it is significant that 1 Timothy 3:16 certainly meets 6 if not all of Burgon’s tests of truth. It may be that some “*respectability of witnesses*” is lacking in the aberrant readings of some ancient versions but other “*respectable*” witnesses are numerous.

1 John 5:7, 8 “in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth”

Christian writers who cited the words in question BEFORE the 4th Century are Tatian (A.D. 180), Tertullian (A.D. 200) and Cyprian (A.D. 225) [*New Age Bible Versions* Gail Riplinger] p 381, [*1 John 5:7* Dr Peter S. Ruckman] pp 7-8. Athanasius cited the words in A.D. 350...Priscillian, who cited the verse in 385 A.D., [*When the KJV Departs from the “Majority” Text* Dr J. A. Moorman]...

The early versions which cite the verse are the Old Syriac (170 A.D.) and the Old Latin (A.D. 200) [*New Age Bible Versions*] p 381, [*1 John 5:7*] p 8...Wilkinson...citing Nolan, says of the Old Italic Bible, which existed in A.D. 157 [*Which Bible?*] p 208, that “*it has supplied him with the unequivocal testimony of a truly apostolical branch of the primitive church, that the celebrated text of the heavenly witnesses (1 John 5:7) was adopted in the version which prevailed in the Latin Church, previously to the introduction of the modern Vulgate.*”

See...kjb.benabraham.com/html/chapter-2.html...

The TBS *Quarterly Record*, Jan.-Mar. 1993, No. 522, p 9, cites R. L. Dabney as follows:

“There are strong probable grounds to conclude, that the text of Scriptures current in the East received a mischievous modification at the hands of the famous Origen. Those who are best acquainted with the history of Christian opinion know best, that Origen was the great corrupter...He expressly denied the consubstantial unity of the Persons and the proper incarnation of the Godhead - the very propositions most clearly asserted in the doctrinal various readings we have under review...

When one reviews ALL the evidence, it is noteworthy that 1 John 5:7-8 satisfies at least 5, if not 6 of Burgon’s 7 tests of truth, Section 6.2, [*True or False?*] pp 264ff. Only “*number of witnesses*” and in consequence some “*respectability of witnesses*” is lacking, through omission.

Acts 8:39 “the Spirit of the Lord fell upon the eunuch”

Our critic...states “*...some of the manuscripts which have Acts 8:37 also have in v. 39 “the Spirit of the Lord fell upon the eunuch”*” and poses the question “*Why is this not in the KJV?*”

There are at least three good reasons.

1. The AV1611 translators, being much more scholarly than the modern translators and endowed with much greater spiritual wisdom, Luke 21:15, were able to discern between the authentic reading and the false one...
2. The spurious reading in Acts 8:39 no doubt lacks number, respectability, continuity and variety of witnesses. It may also lack antiquity and the context, as defined by Burgon [*True or False?*] pp 264 ff, may be suspect...
3. There are two references in the Book of Acts to the Holy Ghost falling upon individuals, Acts 10:44, 11:15. They deal with incidents in Acts 2:3, 4 and 10:44. In each case there were Jews present and the gift of TONGUES was manifested, magnifying God as a SIGN to these Jews, 1 Corinthians 1:22, Acts 2:5-11, 10:45-46, 11:17-18. In Acts 8:39 NEITHER condition applies and therefore internal considerations mitigate against the reading.

The reading therefore fails 5 TO 7 of Burgon’s tests and is therefore rightly rejected.

Conclusion

The above are but three applications of Burgon’s 7 tests of truth but they bear witness to the effectiveness of his method and in turn therefore to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ “**Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away**” Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33.