

Dr. Bob Gray, Pastor

The Battle For The Bible

by: Mike Rios

The King James Bible is God's Word perfectly preserved in the English language. For nearly 400 years it has sounded the cadence for soul winners, missionaries, and God's people, leading them on to lives of purity and faith, giving honor to the God who inspired and preserved it. The Greek and Hebrew texts from which the King James Bible was translated are known as the Reformation Text, Textus Receptus (Latin for "received text"), and the Traditional Text. The greatest defenders and proponents of the King James Bible have been those fundamentalists whose ministries were characterized by aggressive soul winning, worldwide missions, and biblical separation. Their separation was not only from the world, but also ecclesiastical separation from churches and groups who were not of like faith and practice.

On the other hand, the false bibles come from manuscripts that are generally known as the Alexandrian or Western type texts, whose bases are the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus manuscripts. These Alexandrian Manuscripts originated from the now infamous university in Alexandria, Egypt, which, in its heyday, was a hot bed for humanism and Gnostic philosophy. The faculty at this university was well known for its hedonism, homosexuality and paganism. The Revised Standard Version, the New International Version, and basically any version other than the King James Bible, come from these manuscripts. The proponents of these bibles are characterized by ecumenism, works salvation, universal church theology, biblical liberalism, and very little or no separation from the world. Historically, they have opposed and persecuted those who have followed the Textus Receptus.

When the English Revised Version was introduced in 1881, it escalated the war over God's Word, which began in Genesis 3:1 ("...Yea, *hath* God said..."). The separation between the fundamentalists and the liberals became clearer than ever. On the side of the corrupt Alexandrian Manuscripts were the fathers of the Revised Version (RV), Westcott and Hort, both Mary-worshipping infidels. On the other side, defending the Textus Receptus and the King James Bible, were John William Burgon, Dean of Chichester, a High Church Anglican, and C. H. Spurgeon, pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, a well-known Baptist Church in England. These two groups fired the first volleys in the heated battle for the God-preserved English Bible. The battle continues to this very day.

The Bible version battle has been recently focused on a full page ad that Pensacola Christian College has been running in the *Sword Of The Lord*, entitled, *PCC's Response to the KJV Textual Debate*. In this ad, PCC promotes a series of videotapes concerning the King James Bible. Pensacola Christian College claims that, "Bible believers need these tapes to reinforce confidence in the preserved and infallible Word of God." The titles of these tapes by PCC are: 1) *The Bible Preserved...from Satan's Attack* 2) *The Bible...The Text Is The Issue* 3) *The Leaven in Fundamentalism*. These tapes consist of sermons, testimonials and seminars, featuring Dr. Dell Johnson, the chairman of the Bible department at PCC. Dr. Johnson explains and defends Pensacola's latest shift in favor of the King James Bible and the Textus Receptus. The content of the third tape, *The Leaven in Fundamentalism*, prompted Bob Jones University to respond in an open letter to Dr. Arlin Horton, president and founder of Pensacola Christian College. In this

letter, Bob Jones University defends its position on the inspiration of the Scriptures and more particularly, its position on the King James Bible.

The Leaven in Fundamentalism is a video of a joint lecture given by Dr. Johnson and Dr. Theodore Letis, a Protestant church historian. This video provides a brief and relatively accurate history lesson on the origin, progress, and result of Textual Criticism and its effect on the Word of God and fundamentalism. The form of Textual Criticism to which Dr. Johnson refers, has its origins in liberal German theology. Simply put, it is the critical study of the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Scripture. According to Dr. Johnson, the leaven in fundamentalism is the Textual Criticism theory expanded and developed by Westcott and Hort. This theory is used in an attempt to replace the God-preserved Textus Receptus with the corrupt Alexandrian texts. Dr. Johnson traces this leavening in the 20th century from Bob Jones University all the way back to Dr. Benjamin Warfield. He is quick to point out that many of the proponents of the Textus Receptus in today's so-called fundamental Bible colleges turn around and criticize the King James Bible in the classroom.

The facts and information Dr. Johnson presents concerning the manuscripts, textual criticism, and the methodology of Westcott and Hort, are correct. This information would be useful to anyone who wants to add to his knowledge on this subject. However, there are some flaws in this thesis that must be addressed.

Both Dr. Johnson and Dr. Letis, continually state that "fundamentalism" is responsible for the leaven of Textual Criticism being subtly brought into our churches and colleges. This is not so. Traditionally, fundamentalism has defended and fought for biblical preservation and inerrancy. Liberals like Westcott and Hort are the ones who are responsible for casting doubt on the Word of God and its transmission. The idea that fundamentalism is to be blamed for biblical corruption comes in part from Dr. Letis' definition of fundamentalism and in part because of Pensacola's pretension that they are a Baptist college. High church orthodoxy is part of what is defined as fundamentalism by Dr. Letis. This includes Protestant churches that are formalistic, ritualistic, and state or government sanctioned. During an appearance on the Southwest Radio Church, Dr. Letis defended the orthodoxy of Westcott and Hort, the "Ghost Busters" of the 19th century, by implying that they were fundamentalists! Dr. Letis himself is a Lutheran, who, among other things, believes that the sprinkling of babies is a scriptural sacrament! (See Dr. Letis' book *The Ecclesiastical Text* p. 163)

True Bible believing, fundamental Baptists have always taught and believed that each word, and even each "jot and tittle," of the Word of God is divinely inspired and preserved. The result of that belief compels the true fundamentalist to aggressively win the lost, fearlessly and vocally expose sin for its true nature, and reach out in compassion to the poor, the downtrodden, and the outcasts of society. Those who are called fundamentalists by Dr. Johnson and Dr. Letis are fundamentalists in word, but definitely not in practice, no matter how orthodox they claim to be.

There is another problem glaringly evident in PCC's videotapes. Dr. Letis, Dr. Johnson, and Pensacola Christian College have difficulty defining a "church." In their statement of faith, Pensacola Christian College claims that, "The Campus Church...operates in the spirit of an independent Baptist church in both faith and practice." (*Articles of Faith*, Pensacola Christian College Web Site p. 1) When a college or school becomes the foundational organization of a ministry, the result will be the same as that of the Southern Baptists, whose colleges set the standards instead of the churches setting the standards. The churches become a manifestation of their schools instead of their schools becoming a manifestation of their churches. Simply put, the tail wags the dog.

Dr. Letis, in the tape under discussion says, "By the church, I mean any orthodox branch of the church during the medieval period through the reformation period right down to the 19th century, who has one identifiable text type that was continually used by the church as Scripture." What?!?

Of course, he is talking about some unknown universal church. (You know, the invisible kind.) As a matter of fact, it resembles the Roman Catholic kind of church more than it does the Bible kind of church. Dr. Letis, in his book, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, labels the church as "ancient catholic orthodoxy" and identifies this catholic orthodoxy with Anglicanism, Lutheranism and Presbyterianism. (ibid. p. 168)

The Revival of the Ecclesiastical Text and the Claims of the Anabaptists, also written by Dr. Letis, is a critical look at the historical Baptist church. Baptists are defined as, "... ultra-separatists and generally recognize no visible institutional expression of catholic orthodoxy, whether Eastern, Western, or Protestant...they are certain that they alone are a living expression of a primitive, or apostolic, or first-century, or original, biblical Christianity." (p. 16) AMEN! It appears that Dr. Letis considers fundamental Baptists to be a bunch of ignoramuses who haven't given birth to an original thought since the day of Pentecost. Yet, this is the man that Pensacola Christian College, an organization that "operates in the spirit of an independent Baptist church in both faith and practice," is using to represent and explain their position on the Word of God.

The faith and practice of Baptists, at least of those who have followed their scriptural roots, is a faith and practice not only of separation from worldliness, but also of ecclesiastical and ecumenical separation. The inconsistency of PCC is such that one begins to wonder if they are not using the King James issue to present an image of traditional Independent Baptist fundamentalism in order to infiltrate the ranks of the soul-winning Independent Baptist churches in America. This would give them opportunity to recruit young people whose zeal for souls and Christ are second to none.

While the *Sword of the Lord* has no problem running the PCC ads, in spite of the tapes' evident inconsistencies, they will not run full-page ads from Hyles-Anderson College. Both Pensacola and the *Sword* want our results, our crowds, and our credibility without paying the price that we very willingly pay.

Bob Jones University's open letter to PCC suggests that Dr. Letis is less than genuinely confident in the doctrine of the inerrant original manuscripts. In this letter, Bob Jones University implies that Dr. Letis believes there are errors in the originals. They make this implication by citing several quotations from Charles Briggs that Dr. Letis used in his book. Charles Briggs did believe that there were errors in the originals, but Dr. Johnson and Dr. Letis do not. They both make it very clear that they believe the original manuscripts were perfect and inerrant. Bob Jones University was deceptive in this implication.

Where Dr. Johnson and Dr. Letis fall short in their stand for the Bible is when they refer to the copies of the originals. They claim that the copies of the originals cannot contain the characteristic of inerrancy that the originals had, but they are infallible. Most dictionaries define the word "inerrant" with the word "infallible." These words are synonyms. In their video, *The Leaven in Fundamentalism*, Dr. Johnson and Dr. Letis attempt to redefine these two words. They make a distinction between inerrancy and infallibility. They claim that the originals were inerrant, but that the copies were less than inerrant. They call this "infallibility." This gives them room to attempt to please people on both sides of the issue. When speaking to a King James or Textus Receptus defender, they would insist that they believe in its infallibility. On the other hand, if

challenged by one who does not believe that the Textus Receptus is perfect, they would quickly agree, and state that by "infallibility," they do not mean inerrancy.

Any claim that is made about the character and person of the Lord Jesus Christ must be relevant to His Word. It is no accident that the apostle John was inspired to write, "...and the word was God..." (John 1:1). If our Savior is sinless, His Word must also be of the same nature. Our Savior is timeless and eternal, and so is His Word. Any doubt that is cast upon the Word of God also casts doubt upon the God who spoke it. Deity does not degenerate. That includes His Word and His person. If inerrancy is only a characteristic of the originals, it can be successfully argued that the preexistent Christ was God, but the same Christ who walked the earth did indeed have faults and sin. The two cannot be separated.

A statement made by Dr. Letis sheds more light on this matter. He said, "Anyone who ascribes the inspired characteristics of the Hebrew Bible or the Greek N.T. to an English Bible and anathematizes everyone who does not agree with them is a cult. These tend to be - as I have shown in my work referred to earlier—highly separatistic and unlearned Baptists..." This is a quote from an e-mail debate between James White and Dr. Letis which can be found at <http://www.aomin.org/Tletis.html>.

At the end of his lecture in *The Leaven in Fundamentalism*, Dr. Johnson warns his seminar attendees about "King James Extremists." He quotes a portion from page 47 of Dr. Hyles' book, *Enemies of Soul Winning*, in reference to the "incorruptible seed," which he believes is too far to the right. Dr. Johnson then immediately mentions Drs. Bill Grady, Samuel Gipp and Peter Ruckman in the same sentence, obviously trying to discredit Dr. Hyles and these other men by name association.

It is our understanding that Dr. Johnson has since said that the adjective "extremist" was an unfortunate use of the word. So what are we to believe? *The Baptist* called Pensacola Christian College to confirm this, but Dr. Johnson's secretary stopped us cold. She questioned us extensively about our need to talk to Dr. Johnson, and finally told us that he was busy and would call back later. As of press time, neither his office nor any other representative of PCC has contacted us. (It should be noted that in researching this article we contacted Dr. D. A. Waite, Dr. Letis, Dr. Peter Ruckman, and Dr. Stewart Custer. Dr. Custer was not in his office, but was gracious enough to return our call. Even though these men take differing positions in this debate, all except Dr. Dell Johnson were very willing to talk to us.)

Pensacola Christian College has publicly and quite vocally stood for the final authority of the King James Bible. Those of us who stand firmly behind the King James Bible as the final authority raised our hands to applaud them. Our enthusiasm was short-lived when, upon closer investigation, we discovered that Pensacola has changed their policy on the biblical text issue three times since the school's inception. 1) They originally taught the same thing as Bob Jones University; that the Alexandrian texts are the superior texts and that the NASV and NIV were acceptable English versions. 2) They changed from this to using only the King James Bible, still holding to the Alexandrian text as the best and most reliable of the biblical manuscripts. 3) Now, they have shifted to a King James, Textus Receptus position, reserving the right to correct any translational errors or original language anomalies in the classroom. Ironically, Dr. Johnson defends the King James Bible on the videotapes and then criticizes it in the classroom, just like the so-called fundamental Bible colleges he refers to in *The Leaven of Fundamentalism*.

To proclaim their new position on the Word of God, PCC has embraced a man, Dr. Letis, whose philosophy is anti-Baptist, pro-ecumenical, and whose church theology is one of a universal, invisible church. This

philosophy cannot be found in the Bible. They have embraced a man who is a member of an organization in South Dakota that has rewritten the King James Bible. They call it the KJ21. (See <http://www.kj21.com>) This same group is producing a so-called Third Millennium Bible, which will, for the first time in almost 400 years, be a Protestant Bible with the Apocrypha. This new Bible is geared toward reaching the Catholic Church and is intended to replace the Douay-Rheims Catholic Version. Both of these Bibles are being touted as acceptable to both Catholics and non-Catholics. Their paid media representative is none other than Dr. Theodore Letis. Don't get too excited about Pensacola's "revival" and acceptance of the God-honored and preserved King James Bible. The wind may change directions again.

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