

## Chapter 6: The Witnesses

It would be extremely beneficial at this point if we could simply produce the original autographs for examination. This would greatly simplify the operation of establishing correctly the New Testament text. But this simply cannot happen. It has long been acknowledged by scholars that we no longer have the "originals." They have long since passed from the scene. This is due to the fact that scribes were known to have destroyed worn out MSS after they had copied them. Apparently the early church valued the *words* of the original more than the original itself. Therefore, the readings of the originals must be preserved with us somewhere, or else God's words have "passed away" which we surely know, from the Scriptural record, cannot happen. (Psalms 12:6, 7 and Matthew 24:35). We must review the witnesses of the Bible record which have come to us through history. We will be required to keep two things in mind:

1. There is a marked disagreement between the two basic families of readings.
2. Due to the truth above, we must remember our spiritual considerations as well as historical. Remember, the Bible is like no other book. All other books are written and then cast adrift on the sea of time; this is not the case with the Bible. We must remember that *God* had His hand in its inception and will be seen to have His hand in its journey through history to the present. It must also be remembered that just as God will be active in its preservation, *Satan* will be active in attempting to disrupt or destroy it.

The "hard" evidence at hand today available for our examination consists of three groups:

### The Copies

1. *Copies* - Since there are no originals, every record of Scripture will be a copy. Copies are divided into three groups:

A. *Miniscules* - These are by far the most numerous of extant copies which we possess. Miniscules in Greek are like the lower case letters of our alphabet. The oldest copies of this type are papyrus MSS which were sewn together into a roll or scroll. Papyrus was an inexpensive paper somewhat like newsprint. Some were also written on vellum scrolls. Vellum is made from animal skins. This was used because of its durability although it was more expensive than papyrus.

In early copies the words were written end to end with no space in between. Words like God, Son, Father were abbreviated in this manner: God - gd, Son - sn, Father - fr. Later MSS separated the words for ease of reading. An example is shown here: "No-man-hath-seen-gd-at-any-time-the-only-begotten-sn-which-is-in-the-bosom-of-the-fr-he-hath-declared-him." (John 1:18).

Some miniscules were composed in book form instead of a scroll. These are known as *codice* (plural). *Codex* is the singular form. These also were written on either papyrus or vellum. In some cases, all that remains of a scroll or codex are fragments.

B. Majuscules or Uncials -- These are equivalent to the upper case letters of our alphabet. In the same verse as above, John 1: 18, letters of our alphabet would appear in this manner in an uncial MSS:

NOMANHATSEENGDATANY  
TIMETHEONLYBEGOTTEN  
SNWHICHISINTHEBOSOMOF THE  
FTRHEHATHDECLAREDHIM.

Majuscules MSS exist in fewer numbers than miniscules and do not appear until the 4th Century.

C. Lectionaries -- These are equivalent to the "responsive readings" found in the back of today's hymnals. Due to the shortage of copies of Scripture, lectionaries were used to put key verses into the hands of the people. In many cases their readings are very early, i.e., closer to the originals.

### The Versions

2. Our second group of Biblical witnesses are the ancient *versions*. God chose to write the New Testament in Greek, but He did not choose to keep it in Greek only. The early Greek MSS were translated into other languages in order that the true Word of God could be put into the hands of people in other lands. Some versions such as the Peshitto (or Peschito), a Syrian translation, and the Old Latin Vulgate (vulgate means "vulgar," i.e., "common") are actually older than our oldest uncial MSS. The Peshitto was translated from the Greek in about 150 A.D. The Old Latin Vulgate was translated about 157 A.D.

Other well known versions are the Gothic, Sahidic, Bohairic, and Coptic.

### The Church Fathers

3. Our third group is the early *church fathers*. These are the men who led the Christians in the first few centuries after the New Testament was completed. We have record of their early sermons, books, and commentaries. They will be able to provide us with much information on disputed passages. Many may have seen the original autographs.

Here we now have our three sources of information. They are *copies*, *versions*, and *church fathers*. These three groups combined to give us in excess of 5,250 witnesses.<sup>9</sup> Over 3,000 of these are Greek MSS.<sup>10</sup> With this many extant MSS, versions, and the fathers for reference, we should have little trouble determining the Greek text of the original New Testament autographs.

### Taking Sides

These surviving witnesses of the Greek New Testament text which we now possess are found to generally fall into two groups, or "texts." This is where we begin to find some major problems. We find that these two texts disagree consistently concerning the major doctrines of the Bible. They are found to disagree on readings concerning the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the blood atonement, Christ's second coming, the deity of Christ, and many other fundamental Christian doctrines. It is for this reason that we must examine our witnesses to determine if their testimony is accurate (God's text) or if they are fraudulently misleading (Satan's text). *Remember our ground rules!*

## The Good Guys

The first of these two texts which we will examine is the Majority Text. This is the text which will be found to uphold the major Christian doctrines which are so vital to our fundamental beliefs.

The Majority Text has been known throughout history by several names. It has been known as the Byzantine Text, the Imperial Text, the Traditional Text, and the Reformation Text, as well as the Majority Text. This text culminates in the Textus Receptus or "Received Text" which is the basis for the King James Bible, which we know also as the Authorized Version.

I do not desire to add one more name to the list, but in the interest of finding the most accurate term to describe this text, and due to its universal reception by orthodox Christians through history, we shall refer to this text as the "Universal Text."

Dr. Hills justifies this choice: "There is now greater reason than ever to believe that the Byzantine Text, which is found in the *vast majority* of the Greek New Testament manuscripts and which was used well-nigh *universally* throughout the Greek Church for many centuries, is a faithful reproduction of the original New Testament and is the divinely appointed standard by which all New Testament manuscripts and all divergent readings must be judged."<sup>11</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

We describe this text with the term "Universal," because it represents the majority of extant MSS which represent the original autographs. Professor Hodges of Dallas Theological Seminary explains, "The manuscript tradition of an ancient book will, under any but the most exceptional conditions, multiply in a reasonably regular fashion with the result that the copies nearest the autograph will normally have the largest number of descendants."<sup>12</sup>

Even Dr. Hort is forced to admit this as Professor Hodges points out in his footnote, "This truism was long ago conceded (somewhat grudgingly) by Hort. A theoretical presumption indeed remains that a majority of extant documents is more likely to represent a majority of ancestral documents at each state of transmission than vice versa."<sup>13</sup>

Professor Hodges concludes, "Thus the Majority text, upon which the King James Version is based, has in reality the strongest claim possible to be regarded as an authentic representation of the original text. This claim is quite independent of any shifting consensus of scholarly judgment about its readings and is based on the objective reality of its dominance in the transmissional history of the New Testament text."<sup>14</sup>

Any corruption to the New Testament text would *obviously* have to begin after the original autographs were completed, or there would be *no originals* to corrupt! If the originals and the first corruptions of those originals multiplied at the same rate, the correct text would always be found in the majority of MSS. Add to this the fact that the orthodox Christian Church would reject the corruptions and refuse to copy them, and we would find that the correct text would be in the vast majority, universally accepted as authentic, while the corrupt text would be represented by an elite minority. These are exactly the circumstances which exist in the MS evidence available today! Fuller records, "Miller has shown that the Traditional Text predominated in the writings of the Church Fathers in every age from the very first."<sup>15</sup>

The Universal Text is that which travels north from Jerusalem to Antioch, the "gateway to Europe," heading for England. Upon arrival in England it would be ready for translation into the language through which God has chosen to spread His Gospel - English.

From Antioch (remember our study of Antioch), the Universal Text was sent up into Europe. From there it spread through Syria and Europe through its translation into the Syrian Peshitto version and the Old Latin Vulgate. There are still 350 copies of the Peshitto in existence today as a testimony to this widespread usage in the years since 150 A.D.

### **The "Original" Vulgate**

The Old Latin Vulgate was used by the Christians in the churches of the Waldenses, Gauls, Celts, Albigenses, and other fundamental groups throughout Europe. This Latin version became so used and beloved by orthodox Christians and was in such common use by the common people that it assumed the term "Vulgate" as a name. Vulgate comes from "vulgar" which is the Latin word for "common." It was so esteemed for its faithfulness to the deity of Christ and its accurate reproductions of the originals, that these early Christians let Jerome's Roman Catholic translation "sit on the shelf." Jerome's translation was not used by the true Biblical Christians for almost a millenium after it was translated from corrupted manuscripts by Jerome in 380 A.D. Even then it only came into usage due to the death of Latin as a common language, and the violent, wicked persecutions waged against true believers by Pope Gregory IX during his reign from 1227 to 1242 A.D. <sup>16</sup>

### **Crooked Tactics**

The Old Latin Vulgate had come into existence no later than 157 A.D. The Latin version of Jerome, translated by order of the Roman Catholic Church, was published in about 380 A.D. It was rejected by real Christians until approximately 1280 A.D. The Roman Catholic Church chose the name "Vulgate" or "Common" for Jerome's translation in an attempt to deceive loyal Christians into thinking that it was the true common Bible of the people. This is the same tactic used by the New Scofield Reference Bible (1967) and the Common Bible (1973). The former claims to be an Authorized King James Version, when in fact it is not (check the margin). The latter's name falsely implies that it is the Bible in "common" use, when in fact the Bible in *common* use is the Authorized Version of 1611! It would seem that such deception lacks a little in Christian ethics, if not honesty.

It is plain to see that the Universal Text has not only been universally accepted by the faithful Christians down through the centuries, but it was responsible for keeping the Roman Catholic Church contained to southern Italy for years. It was not until the Roman Catholic Church successfully eliminated this Book through persecutions, torture, Bible burnings, and murder that it could capture Europe in its web of superstitious paganism.

Perhaps we should learn a lesson. Where the Universal Text of the King James Bible reigns, God blesses. Once it is eliminated for a less "clean" text, God withdraws His blessing. Oh, that America could but look at what has happened to England since the corrupt Revised Version was published! Perversion has been the father of every "revision" since, on either side of the Atlantic. Yes, the sun began to set on the British Empire in 1904, when the British Foreign Bible Society changed from the pure Textus Receptus to the *Egyptian* text collated by Eberhard Nestle.<sup>17</sup>

## The Bad Guys

The other text which we must investigate is the Minority Text. This is the text which is found to be untrue to the beloved doctrines of Scripture such as the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the blood atonement, the Trinity, and others. This is also the text which is used in every translation of the Bible since the Revised Version of 1881.

Its two outstanding trademarks in history are that orthodox Christianity has *never* used it and that the Roman Catholic Church has militantly (read that "bloodily") supported it. We shall say more about this matter later.

The Minority Text is also known as the Egyptian Text, (remember our study of Egypt), the Hesychian Text, and the Alexandrian Text (remember our study of Alexandria), which was the basis for the critical Greek Text of Brooke Foss Wescott and Fenton John Anthony Hort. The Wescott and Hort Text of 1881 was collated with Weymouth's third edition and Tischendorf's eighth edition by Eberhard Nestle in 1898 to become what is known as the Nestle's Greek New Testament.<sup>18</sup> This is the text used in all "modern" translations.

The most notable MSS in the text consist of a handful of uncial MSS of the 4th and 5th Centuries. These uncials have been found to be error ridden and untrustworthy and found even to disagree among themselves.

One of these MSS is called Sinaiticus and is represented by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph. This MS from all outward appearances looks very beautiful. It is written in book form (codex) on vellum. It contains 147 1/2 leaves. The pages are 15" by 13 1/2" with four columns of 48 lines per page. It contains many spurious books such as the "Shepherd of Hermes," the "Epistle of Barnabas," and even the "Didache."<sup>19</sup> This MS has survived time well, but being in good physical shape by no means makes its contents trustworthy.

The great Greek scholar, Dr. Scrivener, points this out in his historic work *A Full Collation of the Codex Sinaiticus*. He speaks concerning correctional alterations made to the MS: "The Codex is covered with such alterations...brought in by at least ten different revisors, some of them systematically spread over every page, others occasional or limited to separated portions of the MS, many of these being contemporaneous with the first writer, but for the greater part belonging to the sixth or seventh century."<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Alfred Martin echos this, "Aleph shows the works of ten different correctors down through the centuries."<sup>21</sup>

The corrections are so obvious as to induce Dr. Burgon to comment therefore on Dr. Tischendorf's willingness to exalt this badly marred MS: "With the blindness proverbially ascribed to parental love, Tischendorf follows Aleph, though the carelessness that reigns over that manuscript is visible to all who examine it."<sup>22</sup>

May I note here that Dr. Tischendorf was the discoverer of Codex Sinaiticus. He found it in St. Cathrine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai in February of 1859. It was, of all places, in the *wastebasket!*<sup>23</sup>

Since this MS was of the 4th Century, Tischendorf, deceived by the outmoded philosophy "older is better," immediately altered his 7th edition of the Greek New Testament in over 3,500 places. He had claimed that this 7th edition (1856-59) had been perfect and could not be superceded. His 8th edition (1865-72), based primarily on Aleph, was apparently 3,500 times more perfect!

### **False Witness from Rome**

Another MS belonging to this family is called Vaticanus. It is often referred to by the letter "B." As its name implies, it is in the Vatican library at Rome (remember our enemy). No one knows when it was placed in the Vatican library, but its existence was first made known in 1841. This MS is also in the form of a book and written on vellum. It contains 759 pages which are 10" by 10 1/2" with three columns of 41 lines per page.

This Codex omits many portions of Scripture vital to Christian doctrine. Vaticanus omits Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 46:28; Psalms 106 through 138; Matthew 16:2, 3; Romans 16:24; the Pauline Pastoral Epistles; Revelation; and everything in Hebrews after 9:14.<sup>24</sup>

It seems suspicious indeed that a MS possessed by the Roman Catholic Church omits the portion of the book of Hebrews which exposes the "mass" as totally useless. (Please read Hebrews 10:10-12). The "mass" in conjunction with the false doctrine of purgatory go hand-in-hand to form a perpetual money making machine for Rome. Without one or the other, the Roman Catholic Church would go broke! It also omits portions of Scripture telling of the creation (Genesis), the prophetic details of the crucifixion (Psalms 22), and, of course, the portion which prophesies of the destruction of Babylon (Rome), the great whore of Revelation chapter 17.

Vaticanus, though intact physically, is found to be of very poor literary quality. Dr. Martin declares, "'B' exhibits numerous places where the scribe has written the same word or phrase twice in succession."<sup>25</sup> Dr. J. Smythe states, "From one end to the other, the whole manuscript has been traveled over by the pen of some...scribe of about the tenth century."<sup>26</sup>

If Vaticanus was considered a trustworthy text originally, the mass of corrections and scribal changes obviously render its testimony highly suspicious and questionable.

The corrupt and unreliable nature of these two MSS is best summed up by one who has thoroughly examined them, John W. Burgon: "The impurity of the text exhibited by these codices is not a question of opinion but fact...In the Gospels alone, Codex B (Vatican) leaves out words or whole clauses no less than 1,491 times. It bears traces of careless transcriptions on every page. Codex Sinaiticus abounds with errors of the eye and pen to an extent not indeed unparalleled, but happily rather unusual in documents of first-rate importance. On many occasions 10, 20, 30, 40 words are dropped through very carelessness. Letters and words, even whole sentences, are frequently written twice over, or begun and immediately cancelled; while that gross blunder whereby a clause is omitted because it happens to end in the same words as the clause preceding, occurs no less than 115 times in the New Testament."<sup>27</sup>

If we are to be thorough and discriminatory in our evaluation of the true New Testament text, then we must not - we *cannot* - overlook these facts.

How did these MSS come into being? How did it happen that they should be beautiful to the eye, yet within contain such vile and devastating corruptions? It seems that these uncial MSS along with the papyrus MSS included in this category all resulted from a revision of the true, or Universal Text. This revision was enacted in *Egypt* (remember our study of Egypt) by Egyptian scribes!

Prior to documenting this statement, it will be needful to identify several of the uncial and papyrus MSS which will be referred to in the documentation. These are uncial manuscripts A, B, C, D, and Aleph. Also included are the Chester Beatty Papyri, designated as P45, P46, P47, and the Bodmer Papyri, designated as P66 and P75.

### **The Local Mess**

It seems that this type of text was a *local text* of Alexandria, Egypt (remember our study of Alexandria) of which Eusebius made fifty copies to fulfill a request by Emperor Constantine. Unfortunately Eusebius turned to the education center in Egypt and got a "scholarly revision" instead of turning to Antioch for the pure text which was universally accepted by the true Christians.

Why would Eusebius choose Alexandria over Antioch? Primarily because he was a great admirer of Origen, an Egyptian scholar. Origen, though once exalted by modern day Christianity as a trustworthy authority, has since been found to have been a heretic who interpreted the Bible in the light of Greek philosophy (remember our study of Athens). He propagated the heresy that Jesus Christ was a "created" God.<sup>28</sup> This is a false doctrine clung to by Jehovah's Witnesses of our day, who strangely enough get their teaching from the corrupt Alexandrian Text's rendition of John 1:1-5 and John 3:13, a corruption which Origen is responsible for when he revised the Universal Text to *read in agreement with his personal heresy!*

Origen himself said, "The Scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written."<sup>29</sup> Which explains Bishop Marsh's statement, "Whenever therefore grammatical interpretation produced a sense which in *Origen's opinion* was irrational or impossible, in other words was irrational or impossible according to the philosophy which Origen had learned at Alexandria, he then departs from the literal."<sup>30</sup> (Emphasis mine.) Dr. Adam Clarke claims also that Origen was the first person to teach *purgatory*.<sup>31</sup>

### **Total Corruption**

Where did this "Local Text," from which all new Bible translations since 1881 are rendered, originate? Let us see what evidence scholars have unearthed in a search to discover its source.

Kurt Aland "proposes that the text of P75 and B represent a revision of a local text of Egypt which was enforced as the dominant text in that particular ecclesiastical province."<sup>32</sup>

Professor Hodges assures us, "Already scholars are willing to concede a common ancestry for P75 and B. We can postulate here that this common ancestor and P66 meet even further back in the stream of transmission...It is quite possible, then that all three manuscripts go back ultimately to a single parent manuscript in which this emendation was originally made."<sup>33</sup>

Dean Burgon remarks, "As for the origin of these two curiosities, it can perforce only be divined from their contents, that they exhibit fabricated texts is demonstrable. No amount of honest copying - preserved in for any number of centuries - could by possibility have resulted in two such documents. Separated from one another in actual date by 50, perhaps by 100 years, they must needs have branched all from a common corrupt ancestor, and straightway become exposed to fresh depraving influence."<sup>34</sup>

Dr. Edward Hills concludes, "The best way to explain this situation is to suppose that it represents an intentional neglect of the Traditional Text on the part of those ancient Alexandrian scribes who kept revising the text of Papyrus 75 until finally they created the B text."<sup>35</sup>

He also states Aland's opinion: "Aland thinks it possible that the Chester Beatty Papyri also came from this same place."<sup>36</sup>

That tedious lawyer and former Supreme Court Justice, Philip Mauro, has aptly determined, "It should be observed, before we proceed with this question, that the agreeing testimony (where they do agree) of the Vatican and Sinaitic MSS cannot be properly regarded as having the force of two independent witnesses; for there are sufficient evidences both internal and external to warrant the conclusion that these two Codices are very closely related, that they are, in fact, copies of the same original, itself a very corrupt transcript of the New Testament."<sup>37</sup>

He also states, "It is admitted on all hands that the Text used as the basis of the Authorized Version correctly represents a Text known to have been widely (if not everywhere) in use as early as the second century (for the Peschito and Old Latin Versions, corroborated by patristic quotations afford ample proof of that). On the other hand, it is now known that the two Codices we are discussing represent anything but copies of a bad original, made worse in the copying."<sup>38</sup>

It also seems generally agreed that this Local Text was used for a basis of the 50 Bibles which Eusebius supplied to Constantine.

The noted Greek scholar, A.T. Roberson, states, "Constantine himself ordered fifty Greek Bibles from Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, for the Churches of Constantinople. It is quite possible that Aleph and B are two of these fifty, though the actual copying was probably done in Egypt or by Egyptian scribes."<sup>39</sup>

Gregory adds, "This manuscript (Vaticanus) is supposed, as we have seen, to have come from the same place as the Sinaitic Manuscript. I have said that these two show connections with each other and that they would suit very well as a pair of the fifty manuscripts written at Caesarea for Constantine the Great."<sup>40</sup>

To which Burgon and Miller testify, "Constantine applied to Eusebius for fifty handsome copies, amongst which it is not impossible that the manuscripts B and Aleph were to be actually found."<sup>41</sup>

Dr. David Fuller finalizes, "Age alone cannot prove that a manuscript is correct. B and Aleph probably owe their preservation to the fact that they were written on vellum, whereas most other documents of that period were written on papyrus. Many students, including Tischendorf and Hort, have thought them to be two of the fifty copies which Eusebius had prepared under the order of Constantine for use in the churches of Constantinople. They are no doubt beautiful manuscripts, but their texts show scribal carelessness. B exhibits numerous places where the scribe has written the same word or phrases twice in succession.



Aleph shows the marks of ten different correctors down through the centuries. Burgon's excoriation of Wescott and Hort's method cannot be considered too strong in the light of the facts concerning the character of these two manuscripts."<sup>42</sup> Who could be responsible for the corruption of the universally accepted text of the New Testament?

Wilkenson reports, "Beginning shortly after the death of the apostle John, four names stand out in prominence whose teaching contributed both to the victorious heresy and to the final issuing of manuscripts of a corrupt New Testament. These names are: 1. Justin Martyr; 2. Tatian; 3. Clement of Alexandria; and 4. Origen."<sup>43</sup>

The Local Alexandrian text fell into disuse about 500 A.D. while the original Universal Text was spreading true Christianity throughout Europe.

Hoskier reports this in his statement: "Those who accept the Wescott and Hort text are basing their accusations of untruth as to the Gospellists upon an Egyptian revision current 200 to 450 A.D. and abandoned between 500 to 1881, merely revised in our day and stamped as genuine."<sup>44</sup>

So we see that once a pure copy of the Universal Text had been carried down into Egypt, it was recopied. During the process of this recopying, it was revised by men who did not revere it as truly the Word of God. This text was examined by the critical eye of Greek philosophy and Egyptian morals. These men saw nothing wrong with putting the Book in subjection to their opinion instead of their opinion being in subjection to the *Book*. This process produced a text which was local to the educational center of Alexandria, Egypt. This text went no farther than southern Italy where the Roman Church found its unstable character perfect for overthrowing the true Word of God which was being used universally by the true Christians.

At this point, I believe it will be helpful to study the ruthless Roman Catholic Church to more clearly understand her part in all new translations of the Bible since 1881.

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