

HOW PRINCETON WAS CORRUPTED¹

How did such a dreadful situation arise in the first place? Sad to say, the man responsible was a man of God, a Christian brother. That brother's name is B.B. Warfield, and the following is a brief description portraying the truth of how "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." The time is in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

J.S. Buckminster had persuaded the officials of Harvard College to publish an American edition of Griesbach's² 1809 Greek New Testament, as he viewed text criticism "a most powerful weapon to be used against the supporters of verbal inspiration." Warfield, the eventual champion of the Princeton school, was well aware of this "weapon" and determined to neutralize it. However, in attempting to accomplish this goal he compromised his previous commitment and views on inerrancy, altering them into a new doctrine. The result on American conservatism was that lower (textual) criticism came to be viewed as "safe".

Princeton had for many years been a conservative Presbyterian bastion of faith, fully dedicated to verbal inspiration and inerrancy. True, some accommodations crept in after 1834, yet Princeton remained reasonably true to the Word. Prior to Warfield's arrival in 1887, no Princetonian had attained expert status in the young discipline of New Testament text criticism (though his mentor Charles Hodge had studied two years in Germany). Like Hodge, Warfield felt that one had to study in Germany to be abreast of critical issues. He also was aware that in New England text criticism (the so-called "lower criticism") was undermining the orthodox view of verbal inspiration.

With a letter of introduction from Philip Schaff, Warfield entered the University of Leipzig in 1876 for a year's study. Previously, as a firm believer in inerrancy, he had fully subscribed to the Westminster Confession which upheld the doctrine of preservation with regard to the Bible of the Reformation. After 1876, Warfield – guided by his Common

¹ Theodore P. Letis, *Edward Freer Hills' Contribution to the Revival of the Ecclesiastical Text*, (Unpublished M.T.S. thesis, Emory University: 1987), pp. 71-106 . The information under this heading has been adapted from Letis' second chapter.

² To recall Griesbach's canon regarding variant readings being "suspicious" if they favored orthodox teachings of the Church, see page 97. Then consider that Westcott and Hort venerated Griesbach's name "above that of every other textual critic of the New Testament." Westcott and Hort, *Introduction, op. cit.*, p. 185.

Sense philosophy – consciously rejected the "Scholastic"¹ approach and became the first American to become an authority in the theory and praxis of "Enlightenment"² New Testament text criticism at Princeton.

During his year at Leipzig, Warfield's resolve weakened under the constant barrage of "variant readings" and Hortism. He had come to believe the true text had in some places been lost though he still felt, for the most part, it had remained untouched through time. Warfield and Hodge had come to embrace the Westcott-Hort theory believing that these men were exemplary models of evangelical scholarship while at the same time attuned to German methods. Warfield now saw as his calling the integration of Biblical criticism with the historic view of verbal inspiration.

In short, neither Warfield, Hodge nor most evangelicals since have realized that what they correctly recognize as "that dangerous higher criticism" is inexorably interwoven with and subtly tied to the "safe" discipline of lower criticism. Warfield had intended to defend "verbal inspiration" from German attacks naively thinking that lower criticism, dealing as it does with the "concrete facts", remained immune to the "speculations" of the higher critics.

B.B. Warfield's Common-Sense philosophy allowed him to adopt the "scientific" text criticism method of Westcott and Hort. He accepted their claim that they had constructed a "neutral" text. The fact that W-H had arrived at such a determination *without* any reference to *theology* made their arguments all the more compelling for Warfield. He **reasoned** that this method must be God's means of **restoring the true text** (humanistic). Thus he had shifted from his former view of "providential **preservation**" to one of "providential **restoration**" in the new text of

¹ Scholasticism: the philosophical and theological method taught in Medieval schools which revived in the 16th through the 20th centuries. It embodied the use of Aristotelian logic as an aid to better understand the Christian revelation. It was an attempt by intellectual process to attain a deeper penetration into the inner meaning of Christian doctrine, thus philosophy had a great role in scholastic thought. Utilizing thesis method, it represented an attempt to reconcile reason and faith, philosophy and revelation.

² The Enlightenment: a "freedom of the intellect" movement in 18th century Germany which spread into much of Europe. It was founded upon the presupposition of faith in the omnipotence of human ability. The Enlightenment sought the path to absolute truth through "pure reason", observation and experimentation without guidance from anyone else. Its adherents distrusted all authority and tradition in matters of intellectual inquiry.

Westcott and Hort. This was a radical change of interpretation of the Westminster Confession.

Eventually Warfield and his colleague in textual studies, Philip Schaff, feeling that "enlargement is not alteration, development is not revolution, elaboration is not correction" (does not this sound akin to theistic evolution?) came to delight in the notion of updating the old creedal standards. They came to desire a revision of the Westminster creed that would be in accordance with "the advanced stage of theology".

Shortly after his return from Leipzig, the Westcott-Hort text was published (1882). Benjamin B. Warfield gave it a review that would forever endear it to conservatives in the United States. Philip Schaff, himself an accomplished textual scholar, was so impressed with Warfield's elucidation of the Westcott-Hort method of "genealogy" that he invited Warfield to explain it in his *Companion To The Greek Testament And English Version*. This was tantamount to elevating Warfield to the first rank in this discipline in America.

John Burgon, a high Anglican priest but opposed to ritualism, spent most of his adult life at Oxford. Burgon, who eventually became the Dean of Chichester, viewed Westcott and Hort in a much different light. He saw them as guilty of importing the apostate German method into the British Isles. Warfield despised Burgon, an irony as they were fellow inerrantist, because he relied on theology to interpret textual data. Indeed, this is the correct world view, frame of reference and approach that the Christian should bring to every issue of life. To the contrary however, Warfield felt that the faithful should follow the same method as did the "Enlightenment" scholars, treating Scripture as any other piece of literature, without reference to either its inspiration or uniqueness. Thus Warfield took every opportunity to discredit Burgon's theological arguments in order to distance modern Presbyterians from the suspicion of resisting "scientific" scholarship by an appeal to theology.

Having been encouraged by A.A. Hodge to defend the Princeton view of verbal inspiration against an attack by the critical theories of Charles S. Briggs, Warfield found himself on the horns of a dilemma. His challenge was to act as champion and come to the rescue of Princeton in response to Briggs and other critics and still protect his own reputation as an emerging future authority in text criticism. Yet text criticism was the one discipline which seemed to undermine the Princeton view of verbal inspiration more than any other! Warfield had become a contradiction.

While admitting on the one hand that in text critical matters the Bible was as any other literature, Warfield had to contend that it was still the verbally inspired Word of God.

For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God
(John 12:43).

This was a demanding task indeed, but not intellectually beyond Warfield's abilities. Warfield's solution was to shift his doctrine of inerrancy to include **only** the original autographa; no longer holding to the belief in the inerrancy of the Bible of the Reformers, the Traditional Text. Thus he moved that if the locus of providence were now centered in *restoration* via "Enlightenment" textual criticism, rather than *preservation* of the traditional texts, then we need not concern ourselves with the criticisms lodged at the text of Scripture presently (and historically!) used in the Church. This posture allowed Warfield to actually join with the critics of the Princeton position as God's agents (or as some view it, as prophets) in the task of restoring the inerrant original.

HOW THE CONSERVATIVE SEMINARIES WERE CORRUPTED¹

Year after year, Enlightenment critics wore down the orthodox Calvinist and other conservatives by pointing out the many discrepancies (variant readings) within the textual data. Warfield proved untrue to his original goal and finally abandoned the scholastic, creedal approach. He determined that if text criticism – German Enlightenment text criticism – could be separated from the higher criticism that fathered it, with common sense at the helm, it could lead the Church safely to the goal. Moreover, if errors and "corruptions" within our present copies could be acknowledged, then perhaps just around the corner lay the pristine autographa waiting to be restored by God's good Providence. Yet textual criticism invariably leads to higher criticism in rejecting eventually the historical and miraculous in God's Word. The denial of *this* point has allowed the promotion of the many modern translations over the past century. It is a myth that text criticism is harmless to faith.

¹ Letis, *Edward Freer Hills' Contribution to the Revival of the Ecclesiastical Text*, *op. cit.*, the material written under this heading has been adapted from pp. 86, 87, 103-105.

Standard Bearers' Browser

Louis M Kole

Vision

Standard Bearers is dedicated to presenting the Biblical and Historical doctrine of Inerrancy; teaching the Bible is **100%** pure; inerrant in the **copy** which we hold in our hands today. Our goal is to strengthen the faith of Pastors, Teachers and Laymen in the authenticity and authority of the **100%** pure, inerrant Word of God, knowing ~ "So then faith cometh by hearing, hearing by the word of God." (Roman 10:17).

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Exhort

You **can** know for yourself the identity of the **100%** pure; inerrant, preserved **copy** of the Word of God by the aid of the Holy Spirit; the *Author* and *Superintendent* of the Word of God. This is the promise of God and the witness of the saints.

"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. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you." (John 16:13-14)

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." (1 John 2:27)

Francis Turretin¹ 1623-1687 (brackets and emphasis mine):

*"By **original** texts, we do not mean the **autographs** [originals] written by the hand of Moses, of the prophets and the apostles, which certainly do not now exist. We mean their **apographs** ² [perfect copy, 'authentical'; genuine original] which are so called because **they set forth to us the word of God in the very words of those who wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.**"³*

Hymn ~ Come, Gracious Spirit- Heavenly Dove!

God bless,

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"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Revelation 3:11)

¹Gerstner, called Turretin, "the most precise theologian in the Calvinistic tradition." *Turretin on Justification*' an audio series by John Gerstner (1914-1996) a Professor of Church History at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and Knox Theological Seminary.

² Apograh means "a perfect copy, an exact transcript". This is the same witness of the authors of the Westminster Confession when they described their copy of the Word of God as 'authentical', which Webster's 1828 dictionary defines as "having a genuine original".

³ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992 reprint), 1:106, See also Robert Barnett, "Francis Turretin on the Holy Scriptures," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Dean Burgon Society held at Calvary Baptist Church, Ontario, Canada, in 1995.

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Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones

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◇ [The Johannine Comma 1John 5 ~ Appendix B \(p.231\)](#)

◇ [Examples of Modern Criticism ~ Appendix C \(p.241\)](#)

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Hymn ~ *We Rest on Thee, Our Shield and Our Defender!*

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev 3:11)

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