



The Blue Banner

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HOW DR. HILLS BECAME A KJV BELIEVER

NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM AT WESTMINSTER 1935-38

I have been interested in the problem of New Testament textual criticism since my high school days in the 1920's. At that time I began to read the commentaries of Charles Hodge, books that were a part of my Presbyterian heritage. I noticed that Hodge would sometimes mention variant readings, most however, just to show that he was knowledgeable, for he rarely departed from "the common text" (*textus receptus*) and "our English version" (King James). Even so my curiosity was roused, so that in 1931, when I was a sophomore at Yale University I took down C. R. Gregory's *Canon and Text of the N. T.* from a library shelf and began to read. I was dismayed at the large number of verses that, according to Gregory and his teachers Westcott and Hort, must be rejected from the Word of God. Nor was I much comforted by Gregory's assurance that the necessary damage had been done and the rest of the text had been placed on an unassailable basis. How could I be sure of this? It seemed to me that the only way to gain assurance on this point was to go to Westminister Seminary and study the question under the tutelage of Dr. Machen, who preached in New Haven rather frequently in those days, talking to Yale students at least twice.

I. DR. B. B. WARFIELD AND THE PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

When I began to study New Testament textual criticism at Westminister (under Dr. Stonehouse) I found that the first day or so was mainly devoted to praising

Dr. B. B. Warfield. He was lauded for being among the first to recognize the "epoch making" importance of the theory of Westcott and Hort and for establishing the Westcott and Hort tradition at Princeton Seminary, a tradition which was now being faithfully perpetuated at Westminister Seminary. To me, however, all this was very puzzling. Dr. Warfield was a renowned defender of the Reformed faith and of the Westminister Confession, yet in the department of New Testament textual criticism he agreed entirely with liberals such as Westcott, Hort and C. R. Gregory. He professed to agree with the statement of the Westminister Confession that the Scriptures by God's "singular care and providence" had been "kept pure in all ages", but it was obvious that this providential preservation of the Scriptures was of no importance to Dr. Warfield when he actually began to deal with the problems of the New Testament. When he engaged in New Testament textual criticism, Dr. Warfield ignored the providential preservation of the Scriptures and treated the text of the New Testament as he would the text of any book or writing. "It matters not whether the writing before us be a letter from a friend, or an inscription from Carchemish, or a copy of a morning newspaper, or Shakespeare, or Homer, or the Bible."

I may be reading back into my student days some of my later thinking, but it seems to me that even at that time I could see that the logic of Warfield's naturalistic New Testament textual criticism led steadily downward toward modernism and unbelief. For if the providential preservation of the Scriptures was not important for the study of the New Testament text, then it could not have been important for the history of the New Testament text. And if it had not been important for the history of

the New Testament, then it must have been non-existent. It could not have been a fact. And if the providential preservation of the Scriptures was not a fact, why should the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures be regarded as a fact? Why would God infallibly inspire a book and then decline to preserve it providentially? For example, why would God infallibly inspire the Gospel of Mark and then permit (as Warfield thought possible) the ending of it (describing the resurrection appearances of Christ) to be lost?

II. WHY DR. WARFIELD WAS SO INCONSISTENT - HIS SCHOLASTIC HERITAGE

Why was Dr. Warfield so inconsistent in the realm of New Testament textual criticism? Dr. Van Til's course in apologetics enabled me to supply the answer to this question. Dr. Warfield's inconsistency was part of his scholastic inheritance, an error which had been handed down to him from the middle-ages. Let me explain.

During the middle-ages the school men tried to reconcile the philosophy of Aristotle with the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church by separating faith from reason and praying from thinking. While dealing with dogma, faith and prayer were appropriate, but the study of philosophy was reason's province. So the medieval school men contended, and soon this doctrine of the separation of faith from reason became generally accepted throughout the medieval Roman Catholic Church.

The Protestant Reformers were fully occupied with other matters. Hence they spent but little time combating this medieval, Roman Catholic error of the separation of faith and reason. Hence this false scholastic doctrine survived the Reformation and soon became embedded in the thinking of conservative Protestants everywhere. In the 18th century Butler and Paley built their apologetic systems on this false principle of the separation of faith and reason, and in the 19th century, at Princeton and other conservative theological seminaries, this scholastic principle even governed the curriculum and the way in which the several subjects were taught. Systematic theology, practical theology and homiletics were placed in one box labeled FAITH. All the other subjects, including New Testament textual criticism, biblical introduction, apologetics and philosophy, were placed in another box labeled REASON.

We see now why Dr. Warfield was so inconsistent. We see why he felt himself at liberty to adopt the naturalistic theories of Westcott and Hort and did not perceive that in so doing he was contradicting the Westminster Confession and even his own teaching in the realm of systematic theology.

The reason was that Dr. Warfield kept these subjects in separate boxes. Like an authentic, medieval scholastic, he kept his systematic theology and the Westminster Confession in his FAITH box and his New Testament textual criticism in his REASON box. Since he never tried to mingle the contents of these two boxes, he was never fully aware of the discrepancies in his thinking.

III. DEAN BURGON - HIS EMPHASIS ON THE PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION OF SCRIPTURE

When I began to study New Testament textual criticism at Westminster in 1935, I noticed another thing. Almost as much time was spent in disparaging Dean Burgon as in praising Dr. Warfield. This again aroused my curiosity. Who was this Dean Burgon? Upon investigation, I found that he had been a British scholar that had not fitted into the usual scholastic mold. He had not kept his theology and his New Testament textual criticism in two separate boxes, but had actually dared to make his theology the guiding principle of his New Testament textual criticism. For this he was pronounced "unscholarly".

Actually, however, he was merely following the logic of faith. He believed that the New Testament was the infallibly inspired Word of God. Hence it had been preserved down through the ages by God's special providence, not secretly in holes and caves and on forgotten library shelves but publicly in the usage of God's Church. Hence the text found in the vast majority of the New Testament manuscripts is the true text because this is the text that has been used by God's Church. As soon as I began to read Burgon's works, I was impressed by this logic of faith and also by the learned arguments by which Burgon refuted the contention of Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott, Hort, etc. Finally, after some years of hesitation, I definitely committed myself to his view in 1952.

But there are problems connected with Burgon's view. Burgon was a high Anglican who emphasized the role of bishops in the history of the Church. He believed that the New Testament text had been preserved mainly by the bishops of the ancient and medieval Church. Hence he defended the text found in the majority of the New Testaments manuscripts, but he would not defend the printed Textus Receptus because it had not been produced by bishops. He would, however, defend the King James Version because this *had* been produced by bishops. Here he was inconsistent because the King James Version is a translation of the Textus Receptus.

We solve this problem by substituting the biblical doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers for Burgon's high Anglicanism. Just as the Old Testament

text was preserved by the Old Testament priests, so the New Testament text was preserved by the universal priesthood of believers, that is by true believers in every walk of life. And this providential preservation did not cease with the invention of printing. Hence the true text is found not only in the text of the majority of the New Testament manuscripts but more especially in the Textus Receptus and in faithful translations of the Textus Receptus, such as the King James Version. In short, the Textus Receptus represents the God-guided revision of the majority text.

Burgon mingled his faith with his New Testament textual criticism, urging the providential preservation of the Scriptures as the chief argument in favor of the traditional (majority) New Testament text. It was for this breach of etiquette that he was regarded as not truly scholarly. But isn't it possible to escape this stigma and still do a good job of defending the majority text? Isn't it possible to drop Burgon's emphasis on the special, providential preservation of Scripture and rely solely on more acceptable arguments? Hodges, Pickering and Van Bruggen seem to think that this is possible, but in so thinking they are badly mistaken. The same thing must be said of them that has just been said of Dr. Warfield. In spite of their good intentions, their thinking is pointed toward modernism and unbelief. For if the providential preservation of the holy Scriptures is unimportant for the defense of the New Testament text, then it must have been unimportant for the history of the New Testament text and hence non-existent and not a fact. And if the providential preservation of the Scriptures is not a fact, why should we suppose that the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures is a fact? For inspiration and preservation go together.

Hodges and Pickering try to substitute their theory of statistical probability for Burgon's doctrine of the special providential preservation of the Scriptures. According to these two scholars, statistical probability shows that whenever the transmission of an ancient book has been normal, the best text is found in the majority of the manuscripts. The transmission of the New Testament text has been normal. Hence the text found in the majority of the New Testament manuscripts is the best New Testament text.

In advancing this argument, however, Hodges and Pickering contradict themselves. For they both claim to believe in the providential preservation of the Scriptures, and if this providential preservation is a fact, then something is true of the New Testament which is not true of the transmission of other ancient books. Hence the transmission of the New Testament cannot have been normal. And even from a naturalistic point of view their argument is faulty. For the New Testament is a religious book, and the transmission of a religious

book is never normal because it is transmitted mainly by believers who do not regard it as a normal book.

IV. SCHOLASTICISM VERSUS THE LOGIC OF FAITH

Conservative theological seminaries organized on the scholastic model, separating faith and reason, inevitably become modernistic and unbelieving. The area allotted to reason is steadily enlarged and that remaining for faith correspondingly decreased. The box labeled FAITH is emptied, while REASON'S box is crammed to the full. This process of deterioration cannot be avoided because as soon as we give reason an equal place with faith in our thinking we have no true faith at all. God is the Supreme Reality, the Source of all things real, and therefore, we must believe on Him as such. We must allow nothing else to be as real to us as God. If we found even part of our thinking on a set of rational principles which are independent of God, then we are no longer believing but doubting.

We see, therefore, that if Westminster Seminary is to preserve itself from modernism, it must purge itself from all remnants of scholasticism. It must rid itself completely from every tendency to separate reason from faith. And especially must it do this in the department of New Testament textual criticism. In this area particularly it must put away the naturalistic theories of Westcott and Hort and others like them and follow the logic of faith, which runs like this:

Because the Gospel is true and necessary for the salvation of souls, the Bible which contains this Gospel was infallibly inspired and has been preserved by God's special providence, not secretly in holes and caves, but publicly in the usage of God's Church. Moreover, this special providence did not cease with the invention of printing. Therefore, the true New Testament text is found today in the majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts, in the Textus Receptus, and in the King James Version and other faithful translations of the Textus Receptus. And therefore also this same preserving providence operating today through the agency of all those true believers, however humble, who retain and defend the King James Version.Ω

E. F. Hills wrote *The King James Version Defended*. This article Copyright © 1996 Marjorie J. Hills. Used by Permission. Christian Research Press, P O Box 2013, Des Moines IA 50310.

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ID	TEXT	TITLE
1 PETER		
931121A	1 PET 5:10	PETER SPEAKS I:INTRO TO 1 PETER
931128A	1 PET 1:11	PET SPEAKS II:PERSON/WORK OF CHRIST
931205A	1 PET 2:10	PET SPEAKS III:PEOPLE OF GOD
931212A	1 PET 5:10	PET SPEAKS IV:PEOPLE OF GOD
931219A	1 PET 1:2	SPRINKLED BY THE BLOOD
931226A	1 PET 1:3-5	CHRISTIAN'S SALVATION
940102A	1 PET 1:6-9	FAITH'S TRIAL
940109A	1 PET 1:10	INQUIRING PROPHETS
940116A	1 PET 1:13-16	SOBRIETY & HOLINESS
940123A	1 PET 1:17-21	CALL TO HOLINESS & LOVE
940130A	1 PET 1:22-23	BROTHERLY LOVE
940206A	1 PET 2:1-2	NEW CHARACTER
940213A	1 PET 2:4-6	COMING TO CHRIST
940220A	1 PET 2:6	CHIEF CORNER STONE
940227A	1 PET 2:7	STONE OF STUMBLING
940410A	1 PET 2:11-12	ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS I
940417A	1 PET 2:11-12	ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS II
940424A	1 PET 2:13	EVERY ORDINANCE OF MAN
940501A	1 PET 2:15	CHRISTIAN & CIVIL GOVERNMENT
940508A	1 PET 2:18	ACCEPTABILITY OF SUFFERING
940515A	1 PET 3:21	GOOD & NECESSARY CONSEQUENCES
940522A	1 PET 3:1-7	HUSBANDS & WIVES
940529A	1 PET 3:8	TURNING CURSING INTO BLESSING
940605A	1 PET 3:14-17	SUFFERING & CONSCIENCE
940612A	1 PET 3:17-22	SUFFERING AND TRIUMPH
940619A	1 PET 3:22	THE GREAT EXAMPLE & TRIUMPH OF CHRIST
940626A	1 PET 4:1	THE LUST OF MEN & THE WILL OF GOD
940703A	1 PET 4:4	SOBRIETY & WATCHFULNESS
940710A	1 PET 4:7-11	THE END OF ALL THINGS
940731A	1 PET 4:12-16	ADVICE TO THE AFFLICTED
940807A	1 PET 5:2	ELDERS' WORK DESCRIBED
940814A	1 PET 5:5	HUMBLY RECEIVING GRACE
940821A	1 PET 5:7	GRACE ACCOMPANYING HUMILITY
940828A	1 PET 5:10-11	PERFECTED BY SUFFERING
1 THESSALONIANS		
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920126A	1:1	SOURCE OF GRACE AND PEACE
920202A	1:2	THANKING GOD FOR ONE ANOTHER
920209A	1:3	THE CHURCH'S ENGAGEMENTS
920216A	1:4	THE ELECT LADY/THE CHURCH'S ELECTION
920223A	1:5	HOW THE GOSPEL COMES
920301A	1:6-7	TREMBLING AT THE WORD I
920308A	1:6-7	TREMBLING AT THE WORD II
920315A	ISAIAH 66:2	TREMBLING AT THE WORD III
920329A	1:6-7	TREMBLING AT THE WORD IV

920405A	1:6	RESULT OF RIGHT HEARING I
920412A	1:6	RESULT OF RIGHT HEARING II
920419A	1:8	THE MESSAGE RANG OUT
920426A	1:9	NATURE O TRUE CONVERSION I: FROM IDOLS
920503A	1:9	TRUE CONVERSION II: SERVING GOD
920510A	1:9	TRUE CONVERSION III:PERSEVERANCE
920517A	1:10	CENTRALITY OF THE RESURRECTION I
920524A	RO 1:4	CENTRALITY OF THE RESURRECTION II
920531A	1:10	CENTRALITY OF THE RESURRECTION III
920607A	1:10	DELIVERANCE FROM THE WRATH TO COME I
920621A	1:10	DELIVERANCE FROM THE WRATH TO COME II
920906A	2:4	PUT IN TRUST WITH THE GOSPEL
920913A	2:7	LIKE A NURSING MOTHER
920927A	2:8/2:14	ENEMIES TO THE GOSPEL
921004A	2:17	PAUL'S DESIRE TO STAY
921011A	2:19	PAUL'S HOPE, JOY & CROWN
921018A	2:19	THE CHURCH, PAUL'S JOY
921025A	2:19	THE CHURCH, PAUL'S BOASTING
921101A	3:1-3	APPOINTED TO AFFLICTION
921129A	3:10	PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH
921213A	4:1-2	PLEASING GOD
921220A	4:3	SEXUAL SELF CONTROL
921227A	4:11	QUIETLY WORKING
930103A	4:14	OVERCOMING DEATH
930110A	5:1-11	THE PROBLEM OF JUDGMENT
930117A	5:12-13	CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY I:PASTORATE
930124A	5:14-15	CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY II:FELLOWSHIP
930131A	5:17-21	COMMUNITY III:LIFESTYLE OF WORSHIP
930207A	5:23-24	PAUL'S CONCLUDING REMARKS
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941016A	ACTS 1:4-5	INTRO TO ACTS
941030A	ACT 1:8	WAITING FOR THE SPIRIT PART 1
941106A	ACTS 1:14	WAITING FOR THE SPIRIT PART II
941113A	ACTS 2:4	PENTECOST: THE EVENT
941120A	ACTS 2:30	PENTECOST: AN EXPLANATION
941127A	ACTS 2:41	PENTECOST: THE EFFECT
941204A	ACTS 3:22	CHRIST CENTERED EVANGELISM
941211A	ACTS 4:29	CHRIST CENTERED PREACHING
941218A	ACTS 5:3	SATANIC OPPOSITION: WITHIN & WITHOUT
941225A	ACTS 5:28	SATANIC OPPOSITION: INTENSIFIED
950101A	ACTS 6:7	SATANIC OPPOSITION: DISTRACTION & DIVISION
950108A	ACTS 6:14-15	STEPHEN'S TEACHING AND EFFECTS
950115A	ACTS 8:5	PHILIP'S MINISTRY I: SAMARIA
950205A	ACTS 8:35	PHILIP'S MINISTRY II:ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH
950219A	ACTS 10:15	FIRSTFRUITS OF THE GENTILES I
950226A	ACTS 10:34	FIRSTFRUITS OF THE GENTILES II:ONE NEW MAN
950305A	ACTS 10:43	FIRSTFRUITS OF THE GENTILES III

950312A	ACTS 11:27	GREEK MISSION AT ANTIOCH
950319A	ACTS 12:1	OPPOSITION IN JERUSALEM
950326A	ACTS 13:3	FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY I
950402A	ACTS 13:5	FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY II
950416A	13:38-39	FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY III
950423A	ACTS 14:3	FIRST JOURNEY IV: ICONIUM AND LYSTRA
950514A	ACTS 14:27	JOURNEY V: RETURN TO ANTIOCH IN SYRIA
950521A	ACTS 15:1-5	RESOLVING CONFLICT IN COUNCIL I:THE ISSUE
950528A	ACTS 15:6	II: THE METHOD
950604A	15:20-21	III:THE OUTCOME
960121A	ACTS 16:9	MISSION IN MACEDONIA I: CALLING
960128A	ACTS 16:14	MISSION IN MACEDONIA II:CONVERSION OF LYDIA
960204A	ACTS 16:17	MACEDONIA III: A SLAVE GIRL'S DELIVERANCE
960211A	ACTS 16:25	MACEDONIA IV: JAILHOUSE AT MIDNIGHT
960225A	ACTS 16:36	MACEDONIA V: DEPARTURE FROM PHILIPPI
960317A	ACTS 17:3	GOSPEL AT THESSALONICA
960324A	ACTS 17:11	PREACHING IN BEREIA
960331A	17:16-21	PAUL AT ATHENS I
960414A	ACTS 17:31	PAUL AT ATHENS II
960428A	ACTS 18:10	MANY PEOPLE IN CORINTH PART I
960505A	ACTS 18:10	MANY PEOPLE IN CORINTH PART II
960512A	18:24-28	BOLD ELOQUENCE
960526A	ACTS 19:1-7	CERTAIN DISIPLES IN EPHEBUS
960721A	19:13-20	CONFUSING & CONVERTING GOD'S ENEMIES
960728A	19:21-41	IDOLATERS' RIOT
960804A	18, 19	REVIEWING PAUL'S METHODS
960825A	ACTS 20:1-12	A MEETING IN TROAS
960901A	20:13-25	ELDERS AT EPHEBUS
960915A	21:1-40	PAUL'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

ARMOR OF GOD

910915A	EPH 6:10	THE ARMOR OF GOD I
910929A	EPH 6:13	THE ARMOR OF GOD III:STANDING IN CHRIST
911020A	EPH 6:14	ARMOR V:THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNES
911103A	EPH 6:15	ARMOR VI: SHOD WITH THE GOSPEL
911124A	EPH 6:16	THE ARMOR OF GOD VII:THE SHIELD OF FAITH
911201A	EPH 6:17	ARMOR OF GOD VIII:THE HELMET OF SALVATION
911208A	EPH 6:17	ARMOR OF GOD IX:THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT
911215A	EPH 6:18	ARMOR OF GOD X: CHRISTIAN SOLDIER'S PRAYER

BAPTISM

911117A		SEAL OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH
920920A		BAPTISM I
920920P		BAPTISM II (BOTH PARTS ON SAME TAPE)
930711A	MATT 18:18	WHOSE CHILDREN
951029A	ROM 6:4-6	IMPROVEMENT OF BAPTISM
951210A	MT 28:19-20	BAPTIZING THE NATIONS
960114A	EZ 36:26	BAPTISM:RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COVENANT
960218A	RO 6:4	IMPROVING OUR BAPTISM
960707A	MT28:19	BAPTIZING THE NATIONS

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940904A	MATT 11:29	INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP
940904P	JOHN 8:31-32	THE WORD AND THE DISCIPLE
940911A	LUKE 9:23	BECOMING A DISCIPLE
940911P	LUKE 9:62	OBEDIENCE AND THE DISCIPLE
940918A	LUKE 14:33	DISCIPLESHIP & SACRIFICE

940918P	JOHN13:35	BADGE OF DISCIPLESHIP
940925A	LUKE 15:19	THE WORLD AND THE DISCIPLE
940925P	MATT 4:19	MAKING DISCIPLES
941009A	JOHN 13:14	THE DISCIPLE-SERVANT

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950611A	GN 1:26-28	PART I:COVENANTAL STRUCTURE
950611P	GN 1:26-28	PART II:COVENANTAL STRUCTURE
950618A	PS127	PART III:SOVEREIGNTY OF THE COVENANT
950618P	PS 128	PART IV:BLESSEDNESS OF THE COVENANT
950625A	MT 19:6	PART V:ONE FLESH
950702A	1 CR 7:3	PART VI:DUE BENEVOLENCE
950709A	1 CR 7:10-17	PART VII:UNBELIEVING SPOUSE I
950716A	1 CR 7:10-17	PART VIII:UNBELIEVING SPOUSE II
950806A	1 COR	PART IX:DATING I:FINDING A LIFE PARTNER
950813A	1 COR 6:18	PART X:DATING II:DANGERS OF DATING
950820A	1 TH 4:3-4	PART XI:DATING III:COURTSHIP & COVENANT
950827A		PART XII:DATING IV:PRACTICING DIVORCE
950903A	EPH 5:28	PART XIII:REASONS LOVE ENJOINED TO HUSBAND
950910A	PRV 5:18	PART XIV:REJOICING WITH A WIFE
951008A	HEB 13:4	PART XV: A HUSBAND'S CHASTITY
951015A	EPH 5:22	PART XVI:A WIFE'S SUBMISSION
951022A	EPH 5:22	PART XVII:DUTY & GROUND OF SUBMISSION
951105A	PRV 31:10	PART XVIII:A WELL VALUED WIFE
951112A	PRV 31:28,31	PART XIX:A BLESSED WIFE
951119A	GN 18:19	PART XX:FAMILY GOVERNMENT
951203A	EPH 6:4	PART XXI:IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION
951217A	2 TM 3:15	PART XXII:WISE UNTO SALVATION
951224A	PRV 6:20-22	PART XXIII:KEEPING A FATHER'S COMMANDS
951231A	PRV 15:5	PART XXIV:WARNINGS TO COVENANT CHILDREN
960107A	PRV 30:17	PART XXV:THE END OF DISOBEDIENT CHILDREN

ECCLESIASTES

920119P	ECCL 1	SEARCH FOR WISDOM
920126P	ECCL 1:2	EARTHLY VANITY
920202P	ECCL 1:3	WHAT PROFIT
920209P	ECCL 1:4	ENDLESS CYCLES
920216P	ECCL 1:8	NO SATISFACTION
920223P	ECCL 1:9	WHAT'S NEW
920301P	ECCL 1:11	FORGETTING & REMEMBERING I
920308P	ECCL 1:11	FORGETTING & REMEMBERING II
920315P	ECCL 1:11	FORGETTING & REMEMBERING III
920405P	ECCL 1:16	INCREASING KNOWLEDGE
920412P	ECCL 2:1-2	LAUGHTER: THE BEST MEDICINE?
920419P	ECCL 2:3	GIVEN TO WINE
920426P	ECCL 2:4	CORRUPTION OF VOCATION
920503P	ECCL 2:7	STILL ANOTHER VEXATION
920510P	ECCL 2:12	EXCELLENCY OF WISDOM
920517P	ECCL 2:16	ULTIMATE FRUSTRATION
920524P	ECCL 2:24	THE GIFTS OF GOD IN PERSPECTIVE
920531P	ECCL 3:1	TIMES AND SEASONS
920621P	ECCL 3:2	TIME TO PLUCK UP
920830P	ECCL 3:4	A TIME TO WEEP
920906P	ECCL 3:5	GATHERING & CASTING AWAY
920913P	ECCL3:7	BUILDING & TAKING APART
920927P	ECCL 3:8	A TIME OF WAR & A TIME OF PEACE

921011P	ECCL 3:11	ETERNITY IN THEIR HEARTS
921101P	ECCL 3:14	GOD'S CERTAIN COUNSEL
921108P	ECCL 3:17	JUDGMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
930124P	ECCL 3:18	MAN OR BEAST?
930131P	ECCL 4:01	OPPRESSION UNDER THE SUN
930207P	ECCL 4:04	COMPETITIVENESS
930214P	ECCL 4:08	ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE
930221P	ECCL 4:13	IT'S LONELY AT THE TOP
930307P	ECCL 5:1-7	WHEN WORSHIP IS VAIN
930314P	ECCL 5:8	YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU
930411P	ECCL 6	APPETITES
930418P	ECCL 7:1	MOURNING AND MIRTH
930425P	ECCL 7:11	FRUITFUL VINEYARD
930502P	ECCL 7:14	PROSPERTY/ADVERSITY I
930509P	ECCL 7:14	PROSPERTY/ADVERSITY II
930516P	ECCL 7:14	PROSPERTY/ADVERSITY III
930523P	ECCL 7:19	ADVANTAGES OF WISDOM I
930530P	ECCL 7:23	ADVANTAGES OF WISDOM II
930606P	ECCL 8:1	OBEDIENCE TO THE KING
930613P	ECCL 8:14	ANOTHER VANITY
930620P	ECCL 9:11	SQUEEZING LEMONS
930627P	ECCL 10:15	ANATOMY OF FOLLY
930704P	ECCL 11	CELEBRATING LIFE
930711P	ECCL 12	WHOLE DUTY OF MAN
951001A	ECCL 1:11	FORGETTING & REMEMBERING I
951001P	ECCL 1:11	FORGETTING & REMEMBERING II
951008P	ECCL 1:11	FORGETTING & REMEMBERING III
951015P	ECCL 1:14	CHASING THE WIND
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910224A	EPH 4:7	THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH II
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PART SIX

6 THE WESTMINSTER TRANSACTIONS

The Westminster Assembly of 1643-1652¹ composed numerous documents during its tenure. Most Presbyterians are at least somewhat familiar with the three major documents which the Assembly of the Westminster divines produced. The Assembly created what may be called “the doctrinal capstone of the Reformation” in its *Confession of Faith*. The divines also completed two catechisms: the *Larger Catechism* was finished first, with the *Shorter Catechism* being finally prepared to send to Parliament on November 19, 1647.²

In addition to the three well-known documents, the Assembly also produced a number of other documents. Its *Psalms of David in Metre*, with revisions by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, is still in use in many places.³ The Assembly also produced three other lesser-known documents which we will examine in the remaining parts of this study.⁴ The documents were *The Form of Presbyterial Church Government and Directory for the Ordination of Ministers*, *The Directory for the Public Worship of God*, and *The Directory for Family-Worship*. Those three documents dealt with the subjects of church government, public worship, and family worship, respectively.

The main transactions of the Westminster Assembly may be viewed under four heads:

¹The Assembly met in numbered sessions through February 22, 1648/49. Subsequent to that date, the Assembly became little more than a committee for the examination of ministers. On June 2, 1648, the minutes reflect that Stephen Marshall moved that a letter of thanks be written to the Church of Scotland for their “constancy and faithfulness in the cause of God wherein they and we have been engaged.” However, no activity on the part of any of the Scots Commissioners is recorded in the minutes after November 9, 1647. On that date “Mr. Rutherford took his leave of the Assembly.” See Mitchell and Struthers, eds. *Minutes of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, (Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1991 reprint of 1874) 487-88. Hereafter *Minutes*.

²*Minutes*, 491.

³Words-only versions of the Psalter are available from Trinitarian Bible Society and Presbyterian Heritage Publications. The TBS edition is compact, fairly rugged, and priced under five dollars. The PHP edition is larger print and contains the explanatory notes of John Brown of Haddington. A Words and Music edition is available from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The RPCI edition utilizes a “split-leaf” design which allows any Psalm-tune to be used with any Psalm of the same meter. This concept is easily facilitated since the Psalter has a common meter (Iambic Heptameter) rendition of all 150 Psalms.

⁴A fourth document, *The Grand Debate*, is the subject of a planned dissertation and will be mentioned only briefly in this thesis.

- I. Debates resulting in the *Directory for Public Worship*.
- II. “” “” *Form of Presbyterial Church Government*.
- III. Debates concerning the “Erastian Controversy.”
- IV. The composition of the *Confession*.

Rather than taking a strictly chronological approach to the history of the Westminster Assembly, we will be taking a “bibliographic” approach. We will examine the events and debates in a logical, rather than a chronological, order. Since the controversies and issues in the Westminster Assembly generally dealt either with some documents or with advice to Parliament, it will help clarify the significance of the events somewhat if we see them in their documentary setting. The discussions and debates relating to the various documents necessarily overlap somewhat, but we will content ourselves with accuracy, though we will not follow a strict chronology of events.

Hopefully we will see how the various documents produced by the Westminster Assembly were products of specific ideas, attitudes, debates, and philosophies present in the Assembly. There were political, epistemological, and hermeneutical forces at work in the Assembly, as we saw in previously articles. In this and subsequent articles we will trace how those considerations came to have a bearing upon the *Directory for Public Worship*, the *Form of Government* and the *Confession of Faith*.

THE DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP

We must remember that the Assembly of divines was originally called together to revise and reform the Thirty-nine Articles together with the government and liturgy of the Church of England. On Thursday, October 12, 1643, however, the Assembly received an extended commission. The extension was due primarily to the insistence of the Scottish Commissioners after Parliament adopted the *Solemn League and Covenant*. It then became necessary to write not only a common *Confession*, *Catechisms* and *Form of Worship*, but to construct a plan of church government directly from the Scriptures.

The Assembly appointed several committees to do the actual drafting of the documents. It became clear early on

that there would be struggles among the various factions over the questions of church government. The Assembly was very much agreed, however, on questions of doctrine and worship. They therefore determined to approach the more debatable subject by degrees. Their gradualistic approach also ensured that the document's structure would be more methodical. They began with Christ as the very fount of authority in the church. Christ is the head of the church and all other authority in the various offices flows from him.

Urgent as the need was to prepare some form of worship to take the place of the recently supplanted *Book of Common Prayer*, it was impossible to avoid debate over the questions of church government. Thus the differences over church polity occupied the first two years of the Assembly. When the dust settled over "the church question," the result was a document known as *The Grand Debate*. But the preliminary discussions respecting the offices of Apostles, Pastors, Doctors or Teachers, Ruling Elders, and Deacons also resulted in the new *Directory of Worship*.

All factions in both the Assembly and the Parliament agreed to enforce the new *Directory* in place of the Prayer Book. The Assembly began the work on the *Directory* on May 24, 1644, and finished on December 27 of the same year. They sent it to Parliament on December 27 and Parliament passed it into law after final revision on March 13, 1644/45. Parliament immediately ordered it to be printed and brought into use.⁵

Preaching

The *Directory* is not truly a liturgy in the sense of having set forms or prescribed prayers. It is what the name implies: general directions for public worship, the sacraments, and the ordinances of preaching, prayer, and praise. The brief chapter called *Preaching* should be required reading in every seminary. In two and one half pages the *Directory* distills the essence of puritan homiletics. The chapter may have been equaled on the subject, but it certainly has never been surpassed. It is obviously the result of the experiences of men who not only talked about preaching, but preached; and had become masters of the sacred art of rhetoric.

All sermons should consist of doctrine, reasons, and use (those readers familiar with Puritan preaching will recognize the form). The doctrine should be raised from the text of the sermon and it must be: 1. the truth of God; 2. grounded upon the text; and 3. that doctrine which is principal in the text and most designed to edify the hearers. The doctrine must be expressed in plain terms. The arguments, or reasons, should be solid and convincing. The illustrations should be "full of light" and

convey the truth of the text in such a way as to cause the hearers to delight in it. Objections of tender consciences should be also handled under reasons.

Finally, and most importantly, the preacher "is not to rest in general doctrine, although never so much cleared and confirmed, but to bring it home to special use, by application to his hearers." A sermon without application is merely a lecture. The Assembly recognized that this is the preacher's hardest work — "to the natural and corrupt man it will be very unpleasant." Yet they also realized that this is the portion of the sermon calculated to cause the preacher's hearers to "feel the Word of God to be quick and powerful, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and that if any unbeliever or ignorant person be present, he may have the secrets of his heart made manifest, and give glory to God." Some of the applications are: for information in the knowledge of some truth, for confuting false doctrine and warning of error, for exhorting to duties, for dehortation, reprehension, and public admonition with warning against the dangers of sin, for applying comfort to the afflicted heart, and for giving some marks by which the hearers may examine whether they have attained to the graces, performed the duties, etc. All in all, the sort of preaching described by the *Directory* is quite different from the twenty minute "sound bite" found in most American churches.

The other sections of the *Directory* are quite free from minute regulations or impositions. The *Directory* sets forth the essentials of public worship in terms of broad guidelines. While the *Directory* does not deny the lawfulness of stated forms of prayer, its concern is to stir up the gift of public prayer in the minister. Neither, on the other hand, should ministers settle for the slothfulness of merely extemporaneous, non-devout or unpremeditated prayers.

Prayer

Up to the time of the adoption of the Westminster *Directory*, the Scots frowned upon "read prayers" at least in part because *extemporary* prayer had been prohibited on pain of deprivation in Laud's Service Book (1637). Also discountenanced was the use of the *Gloria Patri* and the Apostles' Creed in the administration of the Sacraments. At least some Scottish ministers must have been in the habit of bowing [their heads?] in silent prayer upon entering the pulpit. None of these things are either allowed or disallowed by the *Directory*; yet the Act by which the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland adopted the *Directory* said in part, "That this shall be no prejudice to the order and practice of this kirk, in such particulars as are appointed by the books of discipline, and acts of General Assemblies, and are not otherwise

⁵Parliament made the *Directory* mandatory for use after August 1645.

ordered and appointed in the Directory.”⁶

Scottish Practices – Readers

Since the time of Knox the Scottish Church had used “Readers” to conduct the portion of worship which preceded the sermon — the opening prayer, the lessons (readings) from Scripture, and singing of a Psalm. The Westminster divines found no scriptural warrant for the office of “Reader” and seemingly against at least the early wishes of the Scots, enacted that the Minister should conduct the entire service. Baillie wrote,

“Here came the first question, about Readers: the Assemblée has past a vote before we came, that it is a part of the Pastor’s office to read the Scriptures; what help he may have herein by these who are not pastors, it is not yet agitat. Alwayes [Nevertheless] these of best note about London are now in use, in the desk, to pray, and read in the Sunday morning four chapters, and expone some of them, and cause sing two Psalms, and then to goe to the pulpit to preach. We are not against the ministers reading and exponing when he does not preach; bot if all this work be laid upon the minister before he preach, we fear it put preaching in a more narrow and discreditable rounge than we would wish.”

The Scots lost the office of Reader which, it could be argued, was only a temporary expedient of the Second Book of Discipline at any rate. But on more substantial matters, they often carried the day. Against the virtually universal English custom, it was enacted that baptism was never to be administered in private, but always in “the place of Public Worship, and in the face of the Congregation.”

Yet another phrase in the *Directory* seems to be a compromise of sorts. The Scots were insistent upon their own custom of arranging themselves at the table in receiving the Lord’s Supper. They then served one another the elements as at an actual meal. The Scots finally obtained their usage. Though posture or placement may be regarded as a circumstance with respect to receiving the Lord’s Supper, it must be remembered that reception of the elements in a kneeling posture was one of the five noent ceremonies which the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland had only recently thrown off. While kneeling may have been regarded by some as indifferent in theory, it was not indifferent in use due to the offense it caused the Scots. By the same token, the Scots regarded the innovative idea of carrying the elements about the church building to bring them to the communicants as totally without any scriptural warrant. The rule finally read, “The Table...being so conveniently placed, that the

Communicants may orderly sit about it, or at it.” Accordingly, when the Scottish Assembly adopted the *Directory*, they added:

“That the clause in the Directory of the Administration of the Lord’s Supper, which mentioneth the Communicants sitting about the Table, or at it, be not interpreted as if, in the judgment of this Kirk, it were indifferent, and free for any of the Communicants not to come to, and receive at the Table; or as if we did approve the distributing of the Elements by the Minister to each Communicant, and not by the Communicants among themselves.”⁸

Finally, a subsequent Act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland abolished all festival days and affirmed, “there is no day commanded in Scripture to be kept holy under the Gospel but the Lord’s Day, which is the Christian Sabbath.”⁹

As Leland Ryken has expressed so well:

“...puritan Worship resembles the plays of Shakespeare. Shakespeare was content with the scantiest of stage props and built scenery and imagery into the texts of the plays themselves. In a similar way, the Puritan got rid of the ‘stage scenery’ of the Catholic/Anglican worship and relied on verbal imagery and symbolism, most of it based on the Bible.... Once we grant the validity of the verbal image it becomes clear that the Puritan worship service did not starve the imagination or even the senses of the worshipper.”¹⁰

The *Directory*, in its main features, continues to be followed by virtually all sections of English speaking Protestants who do not use a liturgical service. While it will be immediately granted that churches do not self consciously follow the *Directory* and that more and more Protestant churches are adding unbiblical elements of worship to their public services, yet the *Directory* has exerted a profound influence even in those quarters.¹¹

Professor Doctor Benjamin B. Warfield well summarized the significance of the *Directory*:

“At this distance of time we may look upon it dispassionately; and, so viewed, it can scarcely fail to commend itself as an admirable set of agenda, in spirit and matter alike well fitted to direct the public services of a great Church. It is notable for its freedom from petty prescriptions and ‘superfluities’ and for the emphasis it places upon what is specifically commanded in the Scriptures. Its general tone is lofty and spiritual; its conception of acceptable worship is sober and restrained and at the same time profound and rich; the paradigms of prayer which it offers are notably full and yet free from

⁶ Act of the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, assembled at Edinburgh, February 3, 1645. Cited in *The Confession of Faith*, (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publication Committee, 1985) 371-72. Hereafter *Confession*.

⁷ Baillie, II, 122-23.

⁸ *Confession*, 372.

⁹ Warfield, 50-51.

¹⁰ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 125.

¹¹ For a discussion of the Psalter produced by the Westminster Assembly, see Laing’s *Appendix to Baillie’s Letters*, a chapter in S. W. Carruthers’ *The Everyday Work of the Westminster Assembly*, three sections in Beveridge’s *A Short History of the Westminster Assembly* and chapter five of *The True Psalmody*.

over-elaboration, compressed and yet enriched by many reminiscences of the best models which had preceded them; and it is singular among agenda for the dominant place it gives in the public worship of the Church to the offices of reading and preaching the Word. To both of these offices it vindicates a place, and a prominent place, among the parts of public worship, specifically so called, claiming for them distinctively a function in inducing and expressing that sense of dependence of God and of subjection to Him in which all religion is rooted and which is the purest expression of worship; and thus justifying in the ordering of the public services of the churches the recognition of the Word as a means, perhaps we should say the means, of grace. It expends as much care upon the minister's proper performance of the offices of reading and preaching the Word, therefore, as upon his successful performance of the duty of leading the congregation in prayer and acceptably administering to it the Sacraments. The paragraph of the Preaching of the Word is in effect, indeed, a complete homiletical treatise, remarkable at once for its sober practical sense and its profound spiritual wisdom and suffused with a tone of sincere piety, and of zeal at once for the truth and for the souls which are to be bought with the truth.”^{[12} *Warfield*, 51-52.]Ω

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