

Sunday, November 18, 2012—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 80
Rightly Dividing E.W. Bullinger: The Emergence of Acts 28ism, Part 5

Bullinger Fully Endorses the Acts 28 Position

The Lord Hath Spoken: The Foundations of Dispensational Truth (1911-1913), Cont.

- The lengths Dr. Bullinger employs to avoid the mystery having been revealed before Acts 28 are shocking. This is clearly illustrated by his comments on Romans 16:25-26 - EWB suggests to his readers that these verses were a postscript that Paul added to his epistles after he arrived in Rome in Acts 28.
 - “We cannot conclude our remarks on the Epistles to the Romans without attempting to meet the difficulty of ascription or doxology with which it concludes, in ch. 16:25-27. It is obvious that this is not a mere BENEDICTION such as that with which the other epistles conclude; or like that in verses 20 and 24. It is clear that a DOXOLOGOY forms no part of the teaching of the Epistles.

... We now propose to show how the inclusion of his doxology forms that starting point, and indeed the text of the Epistle which is immediately to follow; Romans being the seed and Ephesians the fruit; both standing together in the very centre of the chronological order of the Pauline Epistles.

That difficulties about the concluding verses of Romans have been experienced is well known; and this is exemplified in the notes in the margin of the R.V. Much has been said on the subject by such scholars as Dean Alfrod, Bishops Lightfoot and Gore, as well as by Dr. Hort.” (169)

- On page 170, Bullinger enumerates the nature of the supposed textual difficulties. Please keep in mind that EWB said nothing of these supposed difficulties in his comments on Romans 16 in either *The Mystery* (1895) or *The Church Epistles* (1898). It is only after he changed his dispensational views that he refers to the work of Alfrod, Lightfoot, Gore, and Hort to bolster his new dispensational edifice.
 - “Anyone who goes to the original manuscripts must recognize that he is in the presence of a difficulty; and in facing it, we are not doing so for any special purpose connected with interpretation, but to find a solution that shall do honour to the Word itself. **If, in doing this, other difficulties are solved, and our own interpretation finds support, we cannot be otherwise satisfied.**

There is no question whatever about the genuineness or authenticity of these verses. Let this be clearly understood. The evidence is overwhelming as to that. But the difficulty is there, and has to be accounted for.

The facts are these: 1) The doxology itself is variously placed in the different manuscripts; 2) In over 190 it stands after cp. 16:23; 3) In two or three manuscripts it is omitted altogether; 4) In one there is a space left after verse 24; and in another a space is left after 16:23; 5) In some manuscripts it stands in both places; 6) Even in the manuscripts where the doxology stands as we have it in the A.V., the benediction in verse 24 is omitted. This variation is exhibited in the R.V.

All of this furnishes overwhelming evidence for the accuracy of the text as preserved in the A.V.; and shows us that all the excitement among the transcribers was caused by the fact that the truth of Mystery had long been lost, and by their having been unaware of the suggestion (which we are not the first to put forth) **as to its being a doxology subsequently added.**

- How the textual difficulties cited above leads one to conclude that the verses in question were “subsequently added” at a later date is beyond our ability to comprehend. It appears that Dr. Bullinger is seizing upon a textual argument to undergird his new dispensational paradigm.
 - “The proper and invariable ending of the epistles is the benediction (“The grace of our Lord,” etc., more or less full), and *not the doxology*. For even when there is a doxology as well, the benediction always comes after it. In four epistles there is a doxology as well as a benediction, viz., Philippians, I and II Timothy, and Romans. But the benediction in these, except Romans, comes last. See Phil. 4:20; I Tim. 6:15-16; and 2 Tim. 4:18.

If the doxology in the Epistle to the Romans be not the postscript (as we suggest), then it stands out as the only exception to this rule which is observed in every other epistle; for we have: (1) the benediction (16:20); then (2) a second benediction (16:24), with a bona-fide postscript necessary to complete, and completely ending the Epistle. But then follows, after all this, a doxology, reopening the Epistle, introducing entirely fresh matter, and the Epistle is left to end in a manner quite unlike that of every other epistle ever written.

Our suggestion as to its being a later addition *by the same hand which wrote the Epistle*: (1) at once explains all the facts we have stated above; (2) shows the cause as well as the groundlessness of the various attempts to amend the text; (3) completes the exquisite structure of the Epistles as a whole, which we show below; and (4) lets in a flood of light from the teaching which follows from it. (171-172)

- On page 173, EWB presents the following structure for the book of Romans.
 - 1:1-6—The GOSPEL, always revealed, never hidden.
 - 1:7-15—Epistolary
 - 1:16-8:39—Doctinal
 - 9:1-11:36—Dispensational
 - 12:1-14:7—Practical
 - 14:8-12—Dispensational
 - 14:13-16:24—Epistolary
 - 16:25-27—the MYSTERY. Never revealed always hidden.
- It is evident that EWB views the final doxology (Rom. 16:25-27) as necessary for completing the “divine structure” of the Epistle, however, he stands alone in arguing that it was a postscript added by Paul to the Epistle after he arrived in Rome in Acts 28. Despite attempting to make it appear that his postscript theory does not follow necessarily from his new Acts 28 position, EWB’s reasons for advocating for the postscript theory betraying his true motives.
 - It is this last which will probably form the chief ground of the objection, for it will be resisted more than the conclusions which flow from it than from the suggestion itself. (In the context, EWB is referring to point number four found on page 172, “lets in a flood of light from teachings which follow from it).”
 - 1) It affords additional evidence to the fact that Paul was not commissioned to commit the truths of the Mystery to writing until after he was in Rome, and in prison.
 - 2) Does not disturb the fact that the Pentecostal Dispensation, recorded in the Acts, was complete in itself.
 - 3) The interpretation of the Epistle falls into line with the other earlier Epistles (Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians), which do not go beyond the scope of the Acts, viz., that “gifts” and “ordinances” which are mentioned only in these earlier Epistles and in the Acts pertain to that Dispensation, which was the period of childhood, when all was “in part”; and when all that was “in part” was to be done away as soon as that which was perfect was come. That which is perfect came soon after the apostle’s arrival in Rome, and is incorporated for us in the later Pauline or Prison Epistles. All that pertains to this perfection of standing which we find in the earlier Epistles (especially Rom. 1-8) not only reminds us, but is the foundation, of “that which is perfect.” (172)
- In other words, the postscript theory fits EWB’s new paradigm. This allows for the explaining away of the revelation of the mystery prior to Acts 28. Once again, this is done despite EWB’s ignoring the clear reference to the mystery contained in I Corinthians 2:7-8, as we have already

seen. It appears that EWB is doing exactly what he said he was not, i.e., finding an explanation that will fit his new system of interpretation. Please consider EWB's final words on the subject.

- “It is evident from this, that without this doxology (Rom. 16:25-27), the structure of the Epistle as a whole would be incomplete. **It must either have formed part of the original Epistle, in which case it upsets the whole of its Dispensational teaching; or it must have been added later, on the apostle's arrival to Rome, in order to complete the structure, in which case it upsets nothing.**

From all this it appears that the doxology would have been out of place had it formed part of the original Epistle as sent by the apostle; and finds its true place if added by him while living in Rome among those to whom he had sent it. The Epistle itself was already there before him; and when the time came to put into writing, among the apostle's parchments (2 Tim. 4:13), the revelation of the Mystery, the doxology could be then added as being at once the inspired conclusion of Romans, and the inspired introduction to Ephesians.” (174)

- In preparing for this lesson, the *Grace History Project* has reviewed the following works: *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* by Kenneth Wuest; *An Introduction to the New Testament* by D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris; and *New Testament Introduction* by Donald Guthrie that discuss the various textual difficulties associated with the end of Romans. It is important to note that not one of them even suggests that Romans 16:25-27 comprised a postscript that was added to the book after Paul reached Rome. Perhaps the most telling point in this entire discussion was that when EWB wrote *The Mystery* (1895) and *The Church Epistles* (1898) not only does he not mention any of the so-called “textual difficulties”, he says nothing about the verses in question being a postscript. Furthermore, every so-called “textual difficulty” that EWB cites in *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth* was already known to textual critics when he wrote *The Mystery* (1895) and *The Church Epistles* (1898), yet he says nothing about them in these works. It is only after the 1908 discussion with Charles Welch, when the decision was made to divide the Pauline Epistles into two categories that EWB argues for the postscript theory with respect to Romans 16:25-27. Why, one may ask? Because his new dispensational paradigm demands that these verses must have been written after Acts 28:28. It appears that the good doctor was willing to stand alone in order to protect his new dispensational paradigm. The *Grace History Project* believes that this type of private interpretation should be outright rejected along with all its implications.

The Last Years

- “On July 6, 1912, Dr. Bullinger celebrated the silver jubilee of his ordination in the Church of England. Throughout his career he had often written and taught doctrine foreign or contradictory to established Church of England doctrine. Yet he had never sought separation from it. . . How Anglican Church authorities may have felt about Dr. Bullinger, especially during the later part of his ministry is unknown. He remained among the ranks of their clergy and no record seems to

exist of any official censure. For the most part, the criticism he received came from smaller independent Christian groups like the Plymouth Brethren. . .” (Carey, 195-196)

- “The autumn of 1912 saw the publication of *The Companion Bible, Part IV, Isaiah to Malachi*, the final section issued during Dr. Bullinger’s lifetime.” (Carey, 197)
- Early in 1913, EWB took considerable care to set his affairs in order. On January 9 he made up his last will and testament. His estate was to be left to Elizabeth Dodson with expectation of funds for his granddaughter Dorothy’s education as well as a sum payable to Dorothy upon the death of Elizabeth. The executors were given full power to carry on the publication of his works or to dispose of both plates and copyrights. *The Companion Bible* was dealt with separately.
 - “As to the Companion Bible (the account of which with balance) is with the London County & Westminster Bank Lothbury. The balance with any additional donations received for the same is to be held in trust for the completion of the same (should I leave it unfinished).

If I live to complete it, I shall make further Testament instructions dealing with the subject, it being my wish that all profits, after providing a sufficiency for the maintenance of Elizabeth Dodson, should go to the Trinitarian Bible Society provided it is carried on without departure from its original and fundamental lines.” (Carey, 199)

- Between January 10 and March 5, 1913, EWB traveled in Europe during which time his health suffered. After taking one last trip with his niece in later March, Bullinger spent April working on *The Companion Bible*. “During this crucial time, many decisions had to be made, not least of which was whether to divide the New Testament into two parts. This was a departure from the original agreement with William Barron, who was largely financing the work. Sometime during the month, Bullinger wrote to William Barron in New Zealand, informing him of this decision to publish the Gospels separately.
- E.W. Bullinger died on Friday, June 6, 1913, about midday. Dr. Bullinger died in his sleep at the age of seventy-five. Shortly after her uncle’s death, it became clear that Elizabeth had some pressing decisions to make. On July 29, the long-delayed answer from William Barron arrived concerning Dr. Bullinger’s decision to publish the Gospels in *The Companion Bible* separately. It stated, “Advise including Acts with the Gospels.” But it was, of course, too late. The work on *The Companion Bible* was put into abeyance while Elizabeth wrestled with the question of its continuation. Conflicts that could have been related to this question arose regarding her uncle’s will. Apparently the executors stated by EWB in his will refused to act as such. Consequently, on August 13, 1913, more than two months after Dr. Bullinger’s death, with his will not yet probated, Elizabeth Dodson was granted Letters of Administration, which allowed her to proceed with the settlement of the estate. (Carey, 212)
- “Pressures regarding *The Companion Bible* surrounded Elizabeth on all sides. William Barron, when he heard of Dr. Bullinger’s death, immediately sent her a telegram saying, “Put (Charles)

Welch on the Epistles”. . . In the end, Elizabeth decided not to follow Barron’s instructions but proceed with the help of H.C. Bowker, using the material left by her uncle at the time of death. She said, “We do not know what Dr. Bullinger would have written, we can only go back and adopt what he has already written.” Welch was dismayed. He claimed that Miss Dodson was looking to future sales when she rejected his editorship and the unpopular positions he might introduce, namely dispensational questions regarding the beginning of the church in the book of Acts. He cited Bullinger’s last book, *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, to support his arguments. . . From New Zealand, Barron withdrew his name from the project and terminated his financial support. Charles Welch had no further involvement with *The Companion Bible*. He continued to contribute his “Dispensational Expositions” in *Things to Come* until its end, but for the most part he now concentrated his energies upon his own journal, the *Berean Expositor*. It was Sir Robert Anderson who quietly stepped in at this juncture to oversee the completion of this project. It is probable that he also made up for the loss of financial resources. Henry Bowker took over the day-to-day work of *The Companion Bible* and *Things to Come*. (Carey, 212)

- In his autobiography, Charles Welch claims that he supplied the structure on The Eight Parables of Matthew 13 that appears in Appendix 145 of *The Companion Bible*. (Welch, 101) Much of the chronology cited in the previous point comes from Welch’s autobiography pages 111-112. Welch claims that he received a letter asking him to supply material for the structure of the Acts that EWB had left unfinished. While Welch is not clear as to who sent the letter or where the request came from, he states the following regarding the matter:
 - “Seeing that the last member, Acts 28:23-31, was not given its distinctive place but split into two sections, I supplied a complete structure, along the lines found in *From Pentecost to Prison* on page 3, but this was rejected.” (Welch, 111)
- Moreover, Welch claims that in response to a suggestion from the co-editor, he prepared 24 appendices in connection with Paul’s epistles for *The Companion Bible*. Welch says that they were acknowledged but never used. Regarding the matter, Welch states, “The reader may be interested to see the titles of these rejected appendices, and perhaps see the reasons that prompted their rejection.” (Welch, 112)
 - The Place of Abraham in the Epistles of Paul.
 - Chronological Order of Paul’s Epistles.
 - Parallels Between Ephesians and Colossians.
 - Parallels Between Philippians and 2 Timothy.
 - The Dispensational Bearing of Isaiah 6:10.
 - The Pentecostal Dispensation Neither Permanent Nor Continuous.
 - The Difference Between the Epistles of “Pentecost” and the Omission or Inclusion of Certain Words.
 - “Gifts” in the Church.
 - The “Body” in I Cor. 12:1 and Rom. 12.
 - The Usage of the Word “Gospel” in Philippians.
 - “Circumcision” in the Epistles of the Mystery.

- “Till He Come”, “That Blessed Hope”, “The Hope of Glory”
 - The Evidential Character of Miracles.
 - The Mystery of Christ and the Mystery of the Present Dispensation
 - The Twofold Ministry of Paul.
 - Reconciliation.
 - Ministry in the One Body.
 - The Laying of Hands.
 - The Two Orders of the Apostles.
 - “Godliness”
 - The Crown and the Prize.
 - Light Upon Phil. 3 forms a Consideration of the Theme of the Epistles to the Hebrews.
 - The Resurrection of Christ as viewed in the “Acts” Contrasted With the View of the Epistles of the Mystery.
 - O.T. Quotations in the Epistles of Paul Demonstrating the New Line of Teaching Revealed in Ephesians. (Welch, 112-113)
- “Exactly how much of the final portion of *The Companion Bible, Part VI, Acts to Revelation*, is Dr. Bullinger’s work has been a matter of speculation over the years. The evidence, however, strongly indicates that, although unfinished at the time of his death, it was, in the main, Dr. Bullinger’s work. . . Further confirmation that the preparation of the material in *Part VI* was Dr. Bullinger’s work comes from the working notes and papers left in his Bible at the time of his death. These indicate that Dr. Bullinger continued to review and rework topics vitally important to the final volumes of *The Companion Bible* and their accompanying appendices right up to the end of his life.” (Carey, 213-214)
 - Juanita Carey, Bullinger’s chief biographer cites a letter dated Oct. 12, 1913 addressed to EWB’s niece Elizabeth from a Mr. W.T. Board, writing from Alberta, Canada as proof that the bulk of the work for *The Companion Bible* was in fact completed before the good doctor’s death.
 - “. . . “The Companion Bible” to me is a veritable “Magnum Opus,” a vast treasure. I do hope that he was able to complete the mss. of the New Testament. I see from T. to C. the Vol. on the Gospels and Acts is to be out in October. I will send this week for a copy. Kindly tell us in T. to C. about the last volume. If unfinished, cannot someone put it together from what is published in his other works? From what he told me, I gathered the last part of the N.T. was almost done before the 1st Vol. was started.” (quoted in Carey, 214)
 - The *Grace History Project* does not view any of this as overly reassuring the originality of the final section of *The Companion Bible*. Readers of this Bible have noted the sterile nature of the final section. Supporters of the Acts 28 position have bemoaned the fact that the Bible’s final section which should be its strongest portion is in fact the weakest section of *The Companion Bible*. In short, the final section simply does not possess the same life observed in the earlier segments.

- *The Companion Bible, Part V The Four Gospels* was released in December 1914. *Things to Come* continued to be published, after EWB's death but rising prices for paper and other wartime needs, coupled with the death of old subscribers led to the end of the publication. In November 1915, H.C. Bowker issued a letter informing the readership of *Things to Come* that the publication's 21 year run was ending. (Carey, 219-220)
- "*The Companion Bible, Part VI, Acts to Revelation* was published late in 1921. It was followed in 1922 by the complete Bible in one large volume." (Carey, 222)
- "The term "Bullingerism" was coined by Bullinger's critics to designate those positions with which they did not agree. Generally speaking, "Bullingerism" denoted Bullinger's stand against water baptism and the Lord's Supper as not being intended for the church age; his distinction between the church of the bride found in the Gospels and the church of the body recorded in the Pauline epistles; his views on death and what happens to the soul after death; and the study of biblical future events. The most important objection to Dr. Bullinger's teaching, however, was usually with regard to his stand on what was labeled "Dispensationalism." It was his claim that the Christian church commenced after Acts 28:28, as outlined in his book *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, instead of on the Day of Pentecost." (Carey, 225)

Works Cited

Bullinger, E.W. *The Foundation of Dispensational Truth*. Decatur, MI: Invictus (Truth For Today Bible Fellowship), 1993.

Carey, Juanita S. *E.W. Bullinger: A Biography*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000.

Welch, Charles H. *Charles H. Welch: An Autobiography*. London: The Berean Publishing Trust, 1960.