

Sunday, June 16, 2019— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 92 The Two Streams of Bibles Model of Transmission: Its Origins & Accuracy, Part 6
(Overstating the Case for the Critical Text)

Introduction

- We started the 3rd Term of this class with [Lesson 57](#) back on Sunday, September 9, 2018 with a “Summative Review of Preservation.” Lesson 57 was designed to reboot the course after a year hiatus. Recall that we took a year off so that I could work on some continuing education credits for my secular job. The goal of that Lesson was to review the main points from Terms 1 and 2. I also introduced a new point about the connection between “Preservation and Predictive Prophecy.”
- At the end of Lesson 57 I set forth the following “Focus” for Term 3:
 - Term 3 will primarily focus on the following issues:
 - Canonicity
 - Transmission
 - In terms of Canonicity, we will consider the following issues in detail.
 - False views of the Canon.
 - Scriptural view of the Canon.
 - On the matter of Transmission, we will seek to trace the text of preservation from the pen of the apostles in the 1st century till the publication of the Authorized Version in 1611. This will not be an easy task.
- While we did not quite succeed in making it all the way to the publication of the Authorized Version in 1611 as originally intended, we blazed quite a trail in terms of comprehensive teaching about canonicity and transmission.
- Lessons 58 (9/16/18) through 68 (12/2/18) were devoted to a study of canonicity. During these Lessons we have considered the following topics:
 - The Concept of Canonicity ([Lesson 58](#))
 - Introduction to Canonical Models ([Lesson 59](#))
 - Community-Determined Models ([Lesson 60](#))
 - Historical-Critical Model

- Roman Catholic Model
- Existential/Neoorthodox Model
- Historically-Determined Models ([Lesson 61](#))
 - Canon-within-the-Canon Model
 - Criteria-of-Canonicity Model
- Self-Authenticating Model (Lessons 62-67)
 - Introduction ([Lesson 62](#))
 - Corporate Exposure ([Lesson 63](#))
 - Divine Qualities & the Holy Spirit ([Lesson 64](#))
 - Corporate Reception ([Lesson 65](#))
 - Apostolic Origins ([Lesson 66](#))
 - Implications ([Lesson 67](#))
- Manuscripts & Christian Book Production: Forging a Link Between Canonicity & Transmission ([Lesson 68](#))
- More recently we have been studying the history of Preservation by looking at the Transmission of the text through history. Lessons 69 (12/9/18) through 91 (6/9/19) have been devoted to this topic.
 - Introduction to Transmission: The History of Preservation ([Lesson 69](#))
 - Transmission & Textual Criticism: The Importance of Presuppositions ([Lesson 70](#))
 - Approaches to Transmission: Preservation or Reconstruction ([Lesson 71](#))
 - Approaches to Transmission: Preservation or Reconstruction, Part 2 (Ehrman vs. Wallace: Absolute Certainty or Total Despair?) ([Lesson 72](#))
 - Materials & Witnesses in the Transmission of Scripture ([Lesson 73](#))
 - False Assumptions Concerning Transmission (Requires Verbatim Identity of Wording) ([Lesson 74](#))

- False Assumptions Concerning Transmission, Part 2 (Requires Verbatim Identity of Wording) ([Lesson 75](#))
- Verbatim Identity Case Study: William W. Combs & Richard Flanders ([Lesson 76](#))
- Textual Variants and Corruption: Defining our Terms ([Lesson 77](#))
- Textual Variants and Corruption: Defining Our Terms, Part 2 ([Lesson 78](#))
- Do Textual Variants Impact Doctrine: Mark 16 and the Ascension of Christ ([Lesson 79](#))
- Do Textual Variants Impact Doctrine: I John 5:7 & the Three Heavenly Witnesses? ([Lesson 80](#))
- Principles for Identifying the Preserved Text in History ([Lesson 81](#))
- Normal Transmission: From Paul to Tertullian, 200 AD ([Lesson 82](#))
- Normal Transmission: Four Controlling Factors ([Lesson 83](#))
- Normal Transmission: Application of the Four Controlling Factors ([Lesson 84](#))
- Normal Transmission: The Stream of Transmission ([Lesson 85](#))
- Normal Transmission: The Paulicians & the Preserved Text ([Lesson 86](#))
- The Two Streams of Bibles Model of Transmission: Its Origins & Accuracy (Lessons 87-91)
 - Gothic Bible ([Lesson 87](#))
 - Peshitta ([Lesson 88](#))
 - Old Latin vs. Latin Vulgate Dichotomy ([Lesson 89](#))
 - The Adventism of Wilkinson ([Lesson 90](#))
 - J.J. Ray's Plagiarism of Wilkinson ([Lesson 91](#))
- As the afore list chronicles, of late we have been analyzing the origins and accuracy of the popular “two streams of Bibles” paradigm of transmission. This morning, as a means of bringing Term 3 to a conclusion, I would like to offer some conclusory thoughts on the “two streams” view of transmission.

Summative Problems with the “Two Streams” Model of Transmission

- First, an analysis of the extant textual data reveals that the Gothic (see [Lesson 87](#)), Peshitta (see [Lesson 88](#)), and Old Latin (see [Lesson 89](#)) translations are mixed texts i.e., they contain readings in their extant witnesses that King James advocates do not tolerate from the Critical Text or Modern Versions. Therefore, they cannot be placed in a monolithic stream/line of textual purity supporting the Received Text and/or the King James Bible. Some of their readings support the Traditional Text and some do not. Consequently, their witness must be considered on a case by case or reading by reading basis. Speculating as to what the original state of the Gothic, Peshitta, or Old Latin versions may have been will not solve the problem since they are not extant. Such speculation on the part of King James advocates is dangerous and inconsistent since we do not accept the speculative surmising of naturalistic textual critics in their efforts to reconstruct the lost text of the New Testament autographs.
- Second, the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm is built upon erecting a false dichotomy between the Old Latin, the “good” Bible of the Waldensians, and Jerome’s Latin Vulgate, the “bad” Bible of the Catholic Church. Evidence gleaned from Vulgate readings considered in [Lesson 89](#) revealed that the Vulgate is a mixed text as are the Peshitta and Gothic Bibles. The textual facts do not warrant the placement of the Latin Vulgate in an opposing stream of transmission from the Peshitta and Gothic. Moreover, the data does not suggest a dichotomous relationship between the Old Latin and Latin Vulgate as “two streams” advocates have suggested. Rather the Vulgate is a descendant of the Old Latin possessing more confluence with its Latin predecessors than with \aleph and B. Yet, in “two streams” argumentation the Old Latin and Vulgate are placed in opposite streams of transmission. Such a placement misrepresents the facts which show the Old Latin and Vulgate to be more closely aligned against \aleph and B than against each other. Furthermore, how does it make sense to paint the Vulgate as wholly bad/evil/corrupt if it is helpful to establish the authenticity of certain Received Text/King James readings? In this case, it is anti-Catholic bias on the part of fundamentalists that has demonized the Vulgate out of hand rather than looking at its actual readings. Lastly, when judged against the mixed extant witnesses for the Peshitta and Gothic versions, the Vulgate is no less mixed. Why then do the Peshitta and Gothic get placed in the pure stream of transmission while the Vulgate is relegated to the corrupt stream? When judged by the extant evidence, the situation is not so clear cut as the dichotomous reasoning of the “two streams” paradigm would have us believe. The fact is that when the Peshitta, Gothic, and Vulgate are judged against the twin standards of the Received Text in Greek and King James Bible in English all three are mixed texts and the “two streams” of transmission notion thereby dries up. The “two streams of Bibles” model of transmission is guilty of presenting a false dichotomy that is not supported by the textual facts. This is dangerous because, if one bothers to check the facts, they run the risk of having their faith overthrown by information that does not fit the either/or option presented by the dichotomy. Bible believers need not fret over the facts on the ground. The Bible does not teach the “two streams” dichotomy. Rather the Bible teaches that God would preserve His word and that Satan would attempt to corrupt it. The dichotomy was developed in the 20th century as a rhetorical device to answer the attacks of modern textual criticism against the Received Text and the King James Bible and stave off the incursion of Modern Versions into the English-speaking church. We are working towards being able to fully articulate an alternative model.
- Third, Benjamin G. Wilkinson, the fountainhead of the “two streams of Bibles” model of transmission, did not base his paradigm on an evaluation of the textual facts. In fact, one can read his chief work *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* (1930) as well as his later *Reply* to his critics

within the Seventh-day Adventist Church (see [Lesson 90](#)) without finding a single textual example to support his paradigm. Instead, Wilkinson took the conclusory statements of previous authors and assembled them in a particular manner to construct an argument. No one before Wilkinson had ever strung together this impressive line of citations to make such an argument. Next, Wilkinson added the SDA doctrine of the “Spirit of Prophecy” and appealed to the writings of Ellen G. White to corroborate his strung together chain of citations. Therefore, Wilkinson’s argument regarding the “two parallel streams of Bibles” is a massive appeal to authority with some heretical SDA teaching mixed in for good measure. It is important to note that Wilkinson’s dichotomous treatment of the Old Latin and Latin Vulgate were born out of the SDA doctrine regarding the “Spirit of Prophecy,” which said regarding the Waldensians, and not a textual evaluation of the facts. While I object to Wilkinson’s SDA defense of the “two streams” model on doctrinal grounds the main reason why his transmissional paradigm dries up is because it does not accord with the historical and textual facts. The substantive basis for the “two streams” paradigm is built upon sinking sand rather than upon an evaluation of actual readings. The net result was the creation of a transmissional paradigm that erected a false dichotomy and presented its would be adherents with an illogical either/or dilemma.

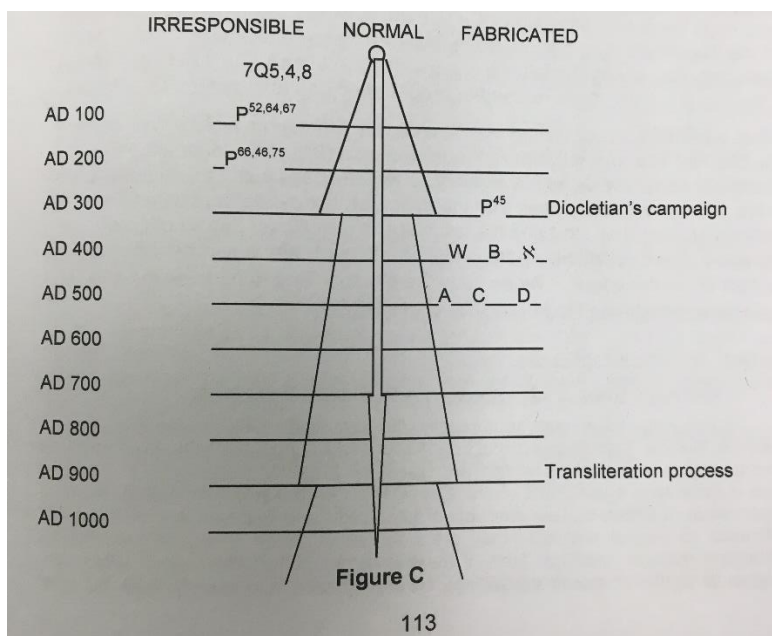
- Fourth, once this notion was deposited into the thought stream by Wilkinson it was picked up by later defenders of the Traditional Text and the Authorized Version and advanced in an uncritical manner. Through the influences of Jasper James Ray, David Otis Fuller, and Peter S. Ruckman the “two Bible streams/lines” paradigm of transmission cemented itself into the argumentation of the King James Only movement (see Lesson 91). Later pro-King James authors repeated this talking point in some manner to varying degrees.
- In summation, there are serious problems with establishing the positive or pure “stream” of transmission as it has been depicted and explained by advocates of the paradigm. The extant textual evidence is simply not there to sustain the model.

Biggest Problem with the “Two Streams” Model of Transmission

- My biggest problem with the “two streams of Bibles” model of transmission is that it gives the Critical Text and Modern Versions more credit than they deserve. “Two Streams” charts, diagrams, and literature leave their readers with the impression that there is an unbroken line of systematic and sequential corruption stretching back to the earliest centuries of church history in the following reverse order:
 - Modern Versions—NASV, NIV, NKJV, ESV (20th & 21st Centuries)
 - UBS/Nestle Aland Greek New Testaments (20th Century)
 - Revised Version (1881)
 - W&H Greek New Testament (1881)
 - Douay Rheims Translation (1582)
 - Codex Alexandrinus (A)—(5th Century)
 - Latin Vulgate (382)
 - Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ) & Codex Vaticanus (B) (330-350 supposedly)
 - Origen
 - Papyri
 - Alexandria, Egypt

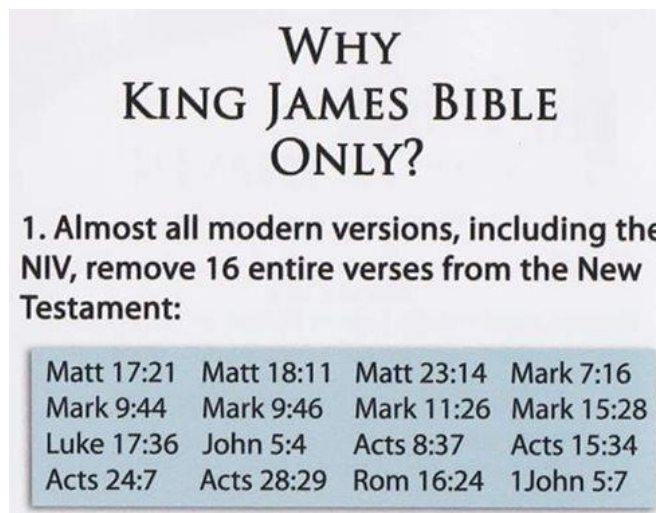
- Is this really the case? I submit that the answer is an emphatic no! We need to judge the so-called corrupt “stream” outlined above based on our three scriptures principles for identifying the preserved text in history. Recall the following from Lessons 69 and 81, “when approached from a believing viewpoint, a study of transmission is a study of the history of preservation.” Once again, our job as believers is not to reconstruct the text as though it has been lost. Rather, our job is to allow the scriptures to be our guide in identifying the text God has preserved from generation to generation.
- The following scriptural principles will assist the believer in identifying the preserved text:
 - *Multiplicity of Copies*—in Lessons [48](#), [49](#), [50](#), 51, [52](#), and [53](#), we studied the Process and People of Preservation in both the Old and New Testaments. In doing so, we observed that God’s design was to preserve His word in a multiplicity of accurate reliable copies that were just as authoritative as the originals. Therefore, we ought to be able to observe in history a collection of manuscripts that are plenteous and in substantive agreement with each other regarding doctrinal content despite not possessing *verbatim identicality* of wording.
 - *Available/Accessible*—this principle was covered in [Lesson 55](#). The Preserved Text would not only exist in a multiplicity of copies, but these copies would be available to God’s people to possess, study, copy, believe, translate, and preach from. They would not be hidden under a rock, buried in the sand, or in an inaccessible library or monastery.
 - *In Use*—a third Biblical hallmark of the Preserved Text would be use by God’s people for generations. God’s word was preserved through the dynamic of people handling it, not in one copy sitting on a bookshelf for 500 or 1000 years far away from God’s people who were actually doing the work of the ministry. That is not the way God preserves His word. He preserves His word by it being in the hands of Bible believing people, and those people are charged with the responsibility to execute God’s purpose.
- The proposed “corrupt stream” identified above containing the Critical Text supporting Modern Versions fails on all three counts to pass the tests of scripture: 1) it has few manuscript witnesses that substantively disagree with each other, 2) its principle manuscripts were not accessible or available to believers throughout the dispensation of grace, and 3) given their lack of availability, they certainly were not copied and/or used by Bible believing people during the church age.
- The Modern Critical text was a 19th century creation of textual critics based upon the primary witness of two Greek Codices: Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (ℵ). These two codices disagree with each other in over 3,000 places in the gospels alone, many of which are substantive. Moreover, they were inaccessible to the body of Christ throughout the dispensation of grace because they were not even known to exist until the 15th (B) and 19th (ℵ) centuries respectively. Lastly, they have no history of ever having been used and/or copied by the body of Christ.
 - “No amount of subjective preference can obscure the fact that they are poor copies, objectively so. They were so bad that no one could stand to use them, and so they survived physically (but had no ‘children,’ since no one wanted to copy them). (Pickering, 2)

- The Critical Text is a Frankenstein text that was cobbled together by text critics in the 19th century using an eclectic method. No member of the body of Christ had ever seen such a text; much less used a text like the one printed by Westcott and Hort in 1881. The publication of the Critical Text was the fruit of lower criticism's application of Enlightenment Rationalism upon the Biblical text.
- Therefore, to assert that the Critical Text and its resultant Modern Versions are part of the "stream" of corruption stretching all the way back to Nicaean antiquity (325 AD) is to overstate the case and give the critical text more credit than it deserves. While there was corruption of the New Testament text to be sure throughout the history of the dispensation of grace, such corruption was random, isolated, and not monolithic, not systematic and/or sequential as has been argued by "two streams" advocates.
- Recall from Lesson 85 that Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering argued in *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV* that it is not even possible, based upon principle witness to the Critical Text \aleph and B, to reconstruct a cohesive textual archetype to compete with the Byzantine Majority.
 - "In his book, Aland's discussion of transmission of the NT text is permeated with the assumption that the Byzantine text was a secondary development that progressively contaminated the pure Egyptian ("Alexandrian") text. But the chief "Alexandrian" witnesses, B A (except e) and \aleph (The Text, p. 107), are in constant and significant disagreement among themselves; so much so that there is no objective way of reconstructing an archetype. 150 years earlier the picture is the same; P⁴⁵, P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵ are quite dissimilar and do not reflect a single tradition. In A.D. 200 "there was not a king in [Egypt]; everyone did what was right in his own eyes," or so it would seem. But what if we were to entertain the hypothesis that the Byzantine tradition is the oldest and that the "Western" and "Alexandrian" MSS represent varying perturbation on the fringes of the main transmissional stream? Would this not make better sense of the surviving evidence? Then there would be no "Western" or "Egyptian" archetypes, just various sources of contamination that acted in such a random fashion that each extant "Western" or "Egyptian" MS has a different 'mosaic.' In contrast, there would indeed be a "Byzantine" archetype, which would reflect the original. The mean text of the extant MSS improves century by century, the XIV being the best, because the worst MSS were not copied or worn out by use; whereas the good ones were used and copied, and when worn out, discarded." (Pickering, 125-126)
- If one cannot even construct a cohesive textual archetype to compete with the Byzantine majority for MS witnesses listed in the alleged corrupt stream, how does it make sense to say there is a "stream" of corruption? Such a stream does not exist. Therefore, Dr. Pickering argued that the \aleph , B, A, P⁴⁵, P⁶⁶, and P⁷⁵ are best viewed as "eddies" or pools of water swirling along the mainstream of transmission that are cut off from each other as well as from the main transmissional stream. Recall the following figure presented by Dr. Pickering:



- Dr. Pickering explains his diagram as follows:
 - “The MSS within the cones represent the “normal” transmission. To the left I have plotted some possible representatives of what we might style the “irresponsible” transmission of the text—the copyists produced poor copies through incompetence or carelessness but did not make deliberate changes. To the right I have plotted some possible representatives of what we might style the “fabricated” transmission of the text—the scribes made deliberate changes in the text (for whatever reasons), producing fabricated copies, not true copies. I am well aware that the MSS plotted on the figure above contain both careless and deliberate errors, in different proportions (7Q5, 4, 8, and P^{52, 64, 67} are too fragmentary to permit the classification of their errors as deliberate rather than careless), so that any classification such as I attempt here must be relative and gives a distorted picture. Still, I venture to insist that ignorance, carelessness, officiousness and malice all left their mark upon the transmission of the New Testament text, and we must take account of them in any attempt to reconstruct this history of that transmission. . . What we find upon consulting the witnesses is just such a picture. We have the Majority Text (Aland), or the Traditional Text (Burgon), dominating the stream of transmission with a few individual witnesses going their idiosyncratic ways. We have already seen that the notion of “text-types” and recensions, as defined and used by Hort and his followers is gratuitous. Epp’s notion of “streams” fares no better. There is just one stream, with a number of small eddies [a circular movement of water, counter to a main current, causing a small whirlpool] along the edges. When I say the Majority Text dominates the stream, I mean it is represented in about 95% of the MSS.” (Pickering, 114)
- In short, there are examples of corruption to be sure, but there is no “stream” of corruption as has been asserted by “two streams” advocates. The Critical Text reflected in Modern Versions did not exist until the late 19th century when it was created by textual critics. To place these modern creations in the same “stream” of transmission along with the Latin Vulgate and even the

Catholic Rheims New Testament of 1582 serves to mask the monster created by text critics in the 19th century. Recall our discussion of the following meme in Lesson 89:



- The Catholic Rheims New Testament of 1582 is always placed in the stream of corrupt Bibles along with Modern Versions such as the NIV, NASV, ESV, and NKJV. I downloaded a PDF copy of the original Rheims New Testament and checked to see if the sixteen verses listed on the meme above were omitted. My investigation revealed that all sixteen verses that are missing from modern versions were present in the Rheims New Testament of 1582. Textually, one would be better off reading a Rheims New Testament than they would be using a Modern Version. Yet the Rheims and Modern Versions are listed in the same stream of transmission.
- For these reasons I believe that the “two streams of Bibles” model of transmission inadvertently strengthens the pro-Modern Version side of the translation debate. This is accomplished by hiding how dissimilar the Critical Text and Modern Version are from anything that came before including the Catholic Vulgate and Rheims New Testament. One reason is because the “two streams” model was not based upon an objective evaluation of textual data but upon the conjectural doctrine of the SDA church. I further believe that this is one reason why Critical Text supporters and Modern Version advocates have not more heavily excoriated King James advocates for utilizing the “two streams” argument in their prosecution of their case in favor of the King James Bible.

Transmission Turnpike: Forging a More Accurate Model

- Based upon the historical and textual evidence we have considered, if one were to diagram the stream of transmission it would resemble a highway, Transmission Turnpike if you will, stretching from the 1st century to the 21st and beyond into the “ages to come” (Ephesians 2:7). Remaining squarely on the highway, and thereby safely traversing time and history, are the Greek MSS of the Byzantine majority as well as translations, patristic quotations, and lectionaries that are in substantive doctrinal agreement with each other despite not possessing *verbatim* wording. This mass of textual witnesses preserved and transmitted the *pure text* of scripture.
 - See our factors for identifying the preserved text in history on page 6.

- In addition, we should expect to find some textual witnesses driving with wheels on both the highway and the shoulder. These witnesses are best viewed as *mixed texts* in that they contain *pure* readings as well as corrupted ones to varying degrees. While they may have begun squarely on the highway, they have drifted to the shoulder over time. Therefore, we would expect to find MSS in this category traveling with varying degrees of recklessness i.e., differing amounts of purity and corruption.
 - Gothic, Peshitta, Old Latin, Latin Vulgate
- Lastly, Bible Believers should expect to encounter “FORDs” or Found on Road Dead MSS littering the ditches of history. These MSS not only disagree with the readings of the majority but they also disagree with each other. These are the left for dead MSS of history that have no evidence of ever having been copied or used by the body of Christ. Their existence in the present is due to their intentional abandonment by the believing church in the past. It is these discarded vehicles (MSS) along the ditches of the Transmission Turnpike that have been revitalized by modern textual critics and foisted upon to the body of Christ as the original text of scripture.
 - ⱼ, B, A, P⁴⁵, P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵ etc..

Works Cited

Pickering, Wilbur N. *The Identity of the New Testament Text, IV*. Brazil, 2014.