

Sunday, September 8, 2019— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*  
 Lesson 93 The Two Streams of Bibles Model of Transmission: Its Origins & Accuracy, Part 7  
 (The Question of Perpetual Preservation & Textual Mobility)

## **Introduction**

- When this class last met on Sunday, June 16 for [Lesson 92](#), we wrapped up our look at the Two Streams of Bibles Model of Transmission. In doing so, I presented an argument for how this popular paradigm overstates the case for the Critical Text.
- In place of the “two streams” model I presented my Transmission Turnpike illustration as a possible suitable alternative.
  - 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 1<sup>st</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 of Lesson 92. To access these notes please click on the link above.
  - 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 (the ones swirling in Pickering’s “eddies”) 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 the body of Christ as the original text of scripture.
    - Ι, B, A, P<sup>45</sup>, P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup> etc..
- While I was able to wrap up that discussion before we took our summer break, there is a related peripheral matter that I did not have enough time to address at the beginning of the summer. This issue relates to the examples of *mixed texts* driving down the shoulders of history.

- How should the body of Christ view the textual remnants of languages that are no longer in use by the church. Is God obligated to perpetually preserve His *pure word* in every language, even ones that the body of Christ no longer uses? What happens to the preserving element when the body of Christ lays aside one language in favor of a different one?
- In our consideration of these points, I would like to use the Gothic Bible as a means of framing this discussion.

### **Gail Riplinger and the Gothic Bible**

- Recall from [Lesson 87](#) that my investigation into the Gothic Bible is what first led me to question the veracity of the “two streams of Bibles” model of transmission. Many “two streams” charts, diagrams, and books depicted the Gothic Bible unequivocally belonging in the stream of textual purity along with the MSS of the Byzantine Majority, the Textus Receptus, and the King James Bible. It was my discovery of non-King James readings in the extant copies of the Gothic Bible that shocked me and caused me to embark on a deeper investigation.
- After noting variant readings belonging to the so-called Alexandrian Text in Mark 1:2, Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53-8:11, Colossians 1:14, and I Timothy 3:16 in the extant witnesses to the Gothic Bible, I offered the following summary point:
  - “Even a cursory evaluation of the extant Gothic Bible reveals that it is far from the specimen of purity that Gail Riplinger and other King James advocates would have us believe. The situation when it comes to transmission is not as neat and tidy or clear cut as the “two streams of Bibles” narrative indicates. Rather than being an objective emblem of textual purity, the extant Gothic Bible is viewed more accurately as a *mixed text* driving down the shoulder of history on my Transmission Turnpike illustration.”
- Much of my prior thinking regarding the Gothic Bible had been influenced by Gail Riplinger’s work from the year 2000 titled *The History of the Bible: Erasmus & The Received Text Vol. II A.D. 500-1500*. In this work Riplinger reports that Ulfila used Byzantine or “KJV type” MSS to translate the Gothic Bible in 350 AD:
  - “The Gothic Gospels, among the oldest of the vernacular versions, match the text of Erasmus and the King James Bible.”
- Riplinger then quotes the following from the *Cambridge History of the Bible Vol. II* in support:
  - “The original Greek manuscript or manuscripts, from which Ulfila made his translation of the Gothic Gospels, belong to the Byzantine group [KJV type] . . . As in the Gospels, the original text of the epistles was of the Byzantine type . . . and differs little from the fully developed Textus Receptus of the later period.” (*Cambridge History of the Bible Vol. II*, pages 347, 355)
- In Lesson 87 I presented the following table comparing Riplinger’s quotation from the *Cambridge History of the Bible Vol. II* with what was actually written by M.J. Hunter in his section on the Gothic Bible. The bolded text in the *Cambridge* column highlights the words that Riplinger left out of her citation.

Riplinger's Citation	Original Statement for Cambridge
“The original Greek manuscript or manuscripts, from which Ulfilas made his translation of the Gothic Gospels, belong to the Byzantine group [KJV type] . . . As in the Gospels, the original text of the epistles was of the Byzantine type . . . and differs little from the fully developed Textus Receptus of the later period.” ( <i>Cambridge History of the Bible Vol. II</i> , pages 347, 355)	“The original Greek manuscript or manuscripts, from which Ulfilas made his translation of the Gothic Gospels, belong to the Byzantine group, <b>with a sprinkling of western readings</b> (347) . . . As in the Gospels, the original text of the epistles was of the Byzantine type, <b>with a number of western readings. This text represents the mid-fourth-century stage in the development of the Byzantine text</b> , and differs little from the fully developed Textus Receptus of the later period.” ( <i>Cambridge History of the Bible Vol. II</i> , pages 347, 355)

- Notice how nicely the actual quote from *Cambridge* correlates with the textual facts we observed by looking at the extant Gothic Bible. The extant Gothic Bible is largely in agreement with the readings found in the Byzantine/TR/King James text platform, but it does contain instances of corruption that Riplinger would never tolerate from the Critical Text and/or a Modern Version.
- Rather than quoting the *Cambridge History of the Bible* honestly, Gail Riplinger has selectively engineered a quote that hides from her readers the fact that the extant Gothic Bible is not as pure as the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm has asserted. Not only does she leave out the inconvenient wording about “western readings” in the Gothic, she actively steers her readers away from the truth by inserting the phrase “KJV type” in brackets. Moreover, the exact same quote is reproduced in her 2003 publication *In Awe of Thy Word* on pages 625 and 969. Lastly, on page 74 of *Which Bible is God’s Word?* Riplinger recommends Bosworth’s *Parallel Gospels* with the following statement:
  - “The antiquity of the KJV type-text is evidenced in Joseph Bosworth’s *Parallel Gospels*. It includes the Gothic version dated about 360, the Anglo-Saxon version dated between 600 and 900, the Wycliffe translation dated 1381, and the Tyndale dated 1526. Comparing them with the King James Version and the new versions quickly shows that the King James is the text that has been used historically by the church as far back as the Gothic period, dated 360.” (Riplinger, 74)
- So, Riplinger is arguing that the Gothic, a Bible that contains readings in its extant copies that she would never tolerate in a modern version, is fundamentally the same text as the KJB. This is beyond my ability to comprehend and represents how far Riplinger is willing to go in order to salvage the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm.

### Cambridge and the Gothic Bible

- According to M.J. Hunter, author of the write up on the Gothic Bible in the *Cambridge History of the Bible Vol. II*, the translation in question is witnessed via the following extant MSS evidence:
  - “1. The *Codex Argenteus* (CA), the Gospels written on purple parchment in silver and gold ink. Its exact origin is not known. . . The *Codex Argenteus* contained 330 folios; 187

have survived. The order of the Gospels, Matthew, John, Luke, Mark, is that of the Codex Brixianus and of other Latin bibles prior to the Vulgate.

This manuscript is mentioned for the first time between 1550 and 1560 in the correspondence of German scholars. At that time the *Codex Argenteus* was at the monastery of Werden near Cologne. It is conjectured that it was brought there from Italy in about 795 by Ludger, a disciple of Alcuin, and founder of the monastery. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the MS was at Prague in the collection of the emperor Rudolph II. In 1648 the Swedes took the town and the *Codex Argenteus* formed part of the booty they carried away. After passing through several more hands, the MS was bought by Count de la Gardie, Chancellor of Sweden, who had a silver binding made for it and presented it in 1669 to the University of Uppsala, where it still is. The University Senate had a phototypographic reproduction made of it in 1927 (*Codex Argenteus Upsaliensis Iussu Senatus Universitatis phototypice editus*) as perfect as possible having regard to the present state of the MS and the use of ultra-violet rays.

2. The *Codex Gissensis* (Giss.), at Giessen, discovered in Egypt near the ancient town of Antinoe. It consists of a double folio of parchment, and contains fragments (Luke xxiii-xxiv) of a Latin-Gothic bilingual of the Gospels.

All the other MSS are palimpsests originating from the monastery of Bobbio. They are:

3. The *Codex Carolinus* (Car.) at Wolfenbuttel (formerly at Wittenberg). It contains the Latin-Gothic text of Rom. xi-xv.

4. The *Codices Ambrosiani* (Ambr.), four in number (A, B, C, D) in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. A and B contain the Pauline epistles, C fragments of Matt, xxv-xxvii, D fragments of Neh. v-vii. It is probable that the Ambrosian Codices A and B and the Codex Carolinus derive from a not-far-distant common ancestor. Kauffmann's view that Codices A and B were copied from the same original is untenable. The fifty-three marginal glosses contained in Codex A are an inconclusive foundation on which to base a conclusive argument.

5. The *Codex Taurinensis* (Taur.) at Turin is, strictly speaking, part of Codex Ambrosianus A, and contains, on four very badly damaged folios, fragments of the Epistles to the Galatians and the Colossians." (Hunter, 340-341)

- So, as we noted in Lesson 87, is not possible to assemble a complete Bible from the extant textual witnesses to the Gothic Bible due to their fragmentary nature.
- After having noted the presence of non-Byzantine or Western readings in the textual witnesses to the Gothic Bible, Cambridge admits that it is difficult to ascertain whether the Western readings were original to the translation or if they crept in over time.
  - "The *Codex Argenteus* represents a Byzantine text with a number of western readings. One of the main problems of the Gothic Gospels is to ascertain which of these western readings go back to the original translation. This is a difficult problem, since it often

happens that a western reading may derive from the Ulfilian Greek, or alternatively it may be the result of textual corruption caused by the influence of the Old Latin Version.

Streitberg has outlined the methods which he has followed in composing his suggested reconstruction of the Greek text from which Ulfila translated the Gospels. On page xlvi of the Introduction to *Die Gotische Bibel* he says:

“In isolated instances it cannot always be determined with complete certainty whether the divergence of the Gothic text from the Byzantine is due only to the influence of the Old Latin, or whether the element foreign to the Byzantine text had already penetrated to the Greek original: probability mainly suggests the first assumption, particularly in the case where the text of the Old Latin is supported only by purely Alexandrian MSS...” (Hunter, 341-342)

- Another important feature of the Gothic Bible that assists in discerning its original Byzantine textual basis is its rigid literalness of the translation.
  - “The most important point to be made in regard to the translation technique of the Gothic Gospels is that the translator has aimed at rendering every word in the Greek text by a corresponding word in the Gothic. Even particles like *u* & *v* and *&* *v* are represented in the Gothic, although such words, being peculiar to Greek, must almost necessarily, when reproduced in any other language, be unidiomatic or meaningless. The adherence to the word-order of the original is equally rigid. . . it is precisely this literalness of rendering which facilitates the task of reconstructing the Greek underlying text and therefore adds so much to the value of the Gothic Version.” (Hunter, 342-343)
- In other words, the readings themselves as well as the rigid word order found in the Gothic Bible speak to the fact that the original Greek exemplar(s) Ulfila used to make his translation were Byzantine in nature. Therefore, Streitberg asserted (see citation above) that the presence of Western reading in the extant copies of the Gothic Bible are due to Latinizing influence overtime rather than being original to the translation of Ulfila. In his section on the Gothic Bible, Hunter devotes a great deal of space to discussing the political background of the period and how the Goths came to be influenced more and more by the Romans throughout the fourth and fifth centuries.
  - “The development of the Gothic text of the Bible can only be fully appreciated if it is seen against the political background of the period. During the fourth and fifth centuries the ever-growing intimacy between Goth and Roman is a factor which must be borne in mind.” (Hunter, 344)
  - “Thus we see that for a hundred and twenty-five years before the *Codex Argenteus* [the oldest extant copy of the Gothic Bible] came to be written, influences were tending towards the Latinization of the bible-texts of Burgundians, Visigoths and Ostrogoths. With these the Vandals should probably be included, although their religious policy contrasted sharply with the toleration shown by the three nations mentioned above.

The intermingling of Goth and Roman is reflected in the close connection between the Gothic and Latin bibles.” (Hunter, 346)

- Based upon these factors, Hunter sees no problem in asserting that the original state of the Gothic Bible was more Byzantine in nature than what can be observed by looking at *Codex Argenteus*.
  - “The original Greek manuscript or manuscripts, from which Ulfila made his translation of the Gothic Gospels, belonged to the Byzantine group [Note that this is where Riplinger stopped her quotation.] with a sprinkling of western readings. Consequent on their migration into western Europe, the Goths came into even closer contact with Roman culture and the Latin Gospels, which belonged to the western family of MSS, began to influence the Gothic Gospels. Thus during the period which elapsed between the original translation by Ulfila and the production of the Codex Argenteus in the first half of the sixth century, a number of western readings from the Latin Bible infiltrated into the predominantly Byzantine text of the Gothic Gospels. Hence it came about that the Codex Argenteus, our only extant MS of the Gothic Gospels apart from the Giessen fragment, contained many more western readings than were present in the translation of Ulfila (we have no trace of the original translation, but the Codex Argenteus is a descendant of it).” (Hunter, 347)
- In the next two paragraphs, Hunter states the following in part:
  - “One of the main problems in connection with the Gothic Gospels is to trace the alterations to and corruptions of the original text of Ulfila. These were due to two main factors: the influence of the Old Latin Version, and assimilation of the Gothic text in parallel passages. Where parallel passages occur in different Gospels or in different parts of the same Gospel relating to the same biblical event or saying, the wording in one passage is often made to conform to the wording of the other, producing a fresh uniformity from the old diversity. . . This assimilation was not systematic but sporadic and haphazard, and reflects only the inevitable result of the Romanizing influences to which the Goths were from an early date exposed.” (Hunter, 347-348)
- So, we see from these citations that Hunter argued that the Gothic Bible was originally far more Byzantine than the extant witnesses testify. He argued that this was on account of the Romanizing influence that occurred as Gothic culture rubbed shoulders with Roman culture. Later on he writes:
  - “It must always be borne in mind that errors in the *Codex Argenteus* may be due to post-Ulfilian revisions with Greek manuscripts rather than to Ulfila or to his Greek original.” (Hunter, 353)
- None of this was discussed by Gail Riplinger. Not only does she selectively engineer a quote to hide the inconvenient portions of the source she was quoting but in so doing she obscures the true history of the Gothic text. Which, as it turns out, is not detrimental to her main point that the Gothic Bible was originally translated from a Byzantine exemplar(s). Caution is in order, however, because one cannot know for sure that the original work of Ulfila was wholly devoid of Western readings. Why? Because the original Gothic Bible is not extant.

- These findings are further strengthened by a textual consideration of the Gothic Epistles.
  - “As in the Gospels, the original Greek text in the epistles was of the Byzantine type, with a number of western readings. This text represents the mid-fourth-century stage in the development of the Byzantine text, and differs very little from the fully developed *Textus receptus* of the later period. The MSS with which the underlying Greek text has closest affinities are the ninth-century codices K L M P. With these, as in the Gospels, is associated the text of Chrysostom, which is within a generation of the traditional origins of the Gothic Version.”

The Gothic text, as it stands, differs considerably from the text of the original translation. The comparison between the Greek text of Streitberg's edition and the Gothic text will provide an indication of the extent to which the original translation has been disturbed, usually by conformation to the Old Latin. . . Where the Greek MSS fall into two clearly defined groups, with Byzantine authorities on the one side and Alexandrian MSS on the other, the Byzantine reading may be assumed for the Ulfilian original with a very strong degree of probability. But where the Byzantine witnesses are divided, we are faced with the necessity of deciding which of the competing readings represents the original.”  
 (Huner, 355-356)

- In the case of non-Byzantine readings in the Gothic Epistles Hunter states the following:
  - As in the Gospels, the majority of non-Byzantine readings in the epistles belong to the western group of MSS. After the elimination, however, of those readings which are the result of accommodation to the Old Latin Version, there remains a residue of readings which are sponsored by the Alexandrian MSS. These MSS, especially B (Codex Vaticanus), not infrequently present western readings, of which some go back to the third-century Chester Beatty papyri. It is therefore possible that some of these readings were present in the text from which the epistles were translated.” (Hunter, 356)
- Mark well that Hunter merely notes the possibility that non-Byzantine readings were present in the exemplars used by Ulfiaus to translate the Gothic Bible. Later, he states:
  - “If there is one fact in connection with the origins of the Gothic epistles that may be affirmed without hesitation, it is that they were rendered into Gothic from the Byzantine text represented by K L P and Chrysostom. The readings which agree with the text of the Old Latin alone are secondary and belong to the later history of the Gothic text. The hypothesis of an original of mixed type, recovered by retranslating the existing Gothic into Greek, of the kind postulated by A. Jillicher1 and, more recently, by Lietzmann, is unsupported by any existing evidence.” (Hunter, 359)
- So, the Gothic text, as it has come down to us, is best viewed as a *mixed text* driving down the shoulder of the Transmission Turnpike. The evidence suggests that it started out in the main Byzantine stream of transmission i.e., on the highway. Over time, however, as it rubbed shoulders with the Latin text of the Western Roman empire it drifted to the shoulder.

## Conclusion/Takeaways

- Here are the facts on the ground currently. There are no extant copies of the original Gothic Bible. Therefore, we cannot know beyond doubt that there were no non-Byzantine readings in MSS from which Ulfias made his transition. Therefore, it does defenders of the King James no good to speculate as to original textual state of the Gothic Bible by placing it unequivocally in the “pure stream” of transmission as is customarily done by advocates of the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm. 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.
- The extant evidence presented by Hunter in the *Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol. II* suggests that the original Gothic Bible had much more in common with the Byzantine textual tradition than either the Western or Alexandrian text-types. This studied and measured opinion raises interesting questions related to the topics of preservation and transmission that warrants further discussion.
- Psalms 12:6-7—the Biblical promise of preservation secures the notion that God’s word will be made available to every generation.
- Romans 16:26—God wants “all men” in “all nations” during the dispensation of Grace to know the “fellowship of the mystery” (Ephesians 3:9). Therefore, translation of God’s word into the languages of the nations is going to play a role in the process of preservation. God did not require men to learn the original Biblical languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) in order to possess His word so that they could read and understand the “preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery” (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:4).
- Recall from previous studies that there are three Biblical hallmarks of the preserved text: 1) multiplicity of copies, 2) availability/accessibility, and 3) used by God’s people.
- Throughout the history of the dispensation of grace, the word of God has been translated into many different languages. When a given language is *in use* by the body of Christ there is a corresponding preservative impact the believing church has upon God’s word in a given language. In short, God’s word is preserved and transmitted through the dynamic of the believers handling and using the text. Put another way, the body of Christ in a given geographic area utilizing the language of that region possesses the responsibility to identify the preserved text, translate it into their language, and safeguard the resultant translation.
- When a given language such as Gothic fell out of usage i.e., the body of Christ found it more expedient and/or necessary to begin utilizing a different language, God is not obligated to perpetually preserve the purity of the text in the abandoned language. Put another way, after the Gothic language fell out of usage and the body of Christ was not actively preserving it, one should not be surprised to observe elements of corruption creeping into its extant copies. In fact, what one would expect to happen is that once the body of Christ stops using a particular language, the preservative and protective effect of utilization by the Church would cease and

Satan's never ending efforts to corrupt the word of God (Genesis 3:1-5, II Corinthians 2:17, II Thessalonians 2:2) in that language would be unopposed and effective.

- These observations have significant implications for the ongoing dialogue in the Bible version debate. Hard core King James Onlyists are fond of asking folks to show them a text, translation, or version other than the King James Bible that is completely inerrant in every detail. It is important to realize that questions such as these presuppose the unscriptural standard of *verbatim identicality* of wording as the standard for preservation. In other words, this question maintains that in order for something to be considered the inerrant word of God it must be an identical match with the KJB.
- Questions such as these undermine the doctrine of preservation in the following manner. God promised to preserve His word “from this generation for ever,” according to Psalms 12:6-7. This means that every generation had God’s word available to them even if they did not have an identical match to the KJB. The promise of preservation assures that the *pure text* of scripture in terms of its substantive doctrinal content was available to the body of Christ even if it was not an exact match with the KJB.
- Given the fact that God is not obligated to perpetually preserve His word in languages that have fallen out of usage, it is a misunderstanding of the scriptural doctrine of preservation to require that versions of the Bible in other languages before 1611 match the KJV with *verbatim identicality*.
- Because it assumes *verbatim identicality* of wording as the standard for preservation/transmission “two streams of Bibles”, advocates assume that all texts and translations depicted on their charts are *fixed* in nature. In other words, the paradigm fails to deal with the extant evidence in a fair and/or honest way as typified by Gail Riplinger’s work on the Gothic Bible. The extant evidence for the Gothic Bible speaks to a *mixed text* containing both Byzantine and non-Byzantine readings. However, as Hunter highlights in the *Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol. II*, the original Gothic translation of Ulfias was initially much more Byzantine than the extant witnesses testify. The “two streams of Bible” model does not and cannot account for this type of textual movement over time. Rather the paradigm views all textual evidence as *fixed* or frozen in time when the situation is much more fluid.
- In my opinion two things account for this error. First is the unscriptural assumption that preservation/transmission occurred with *verbatim identicality* of wording. In reality, as long as the substantive doctrinal content of the text is maintained, there is an element of flexibility as one acknowledges the difference between: 1) a different way of saying the same thing and 2) a substantive difference in meaning. Second, is the assumption that God is required to perpetually preserve is His word in a static or *fixed state* in a given language even after the body of Christ has ceased using that language.
- My Transmission Turnpike illustration avoids both of these mistakes by acknowledging that *verbatim identicality* is an unscriptural standard to begin with as well as noting the reality of textual mobility over time in the case of *mixed texts* that began on the turnpike and drifted to the shoulder over time.

## Works Cited

Hunter, M.J. "The Gothic Bible" in *The Cambridge History of the Bible Vol. II: The West from the Fathers to the Reformation*. Cambridge University Press, 1969.