

# Why We Hold to the KJV

## Part 4 – The Corruption of the Scriptures

**Text:** 2 Cor. 2:17; 2 Pet. 3:16

### Introduction:

1. From the beginning of time, Satan has attacked the Word of God (Gen. 3). Therefore, we should not be surprised that the New Testament was subjected to Satanic attack from the time it was written.
2. Concerning the attack against the Word of God in early church history, Scrivener summarizes his research as follows: "It is no less true to fact than paradoxical in sound, that the worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subjected, originated within a hundred years after it was composed."<sup>1</sup> Note example of Marcion.
3. There is a key fact each believer needs to be familiar with in this debate – there are two competing Greek texts that have come down to us. "There is a foundational fact about Bible versions today that must be understood by every student and that is this: All of the translations of the Protestant Reformation were based on the same Greek text whereas all of the modern versions are based on a different Greek text, and that accounts for thousands of changes."<sup>2</sup>
  - We could call it the tale of two cities – Alexandria of Egypt and Antioch of Syria. From Antioch came the Traditional, Received Text which forms the overwhelming majority of manuscripts. This is the text that underlies the KJV and other Protestant Reformation Bibles. From Alexandria came the Critical Text that forms the basis of the modern versions and represents a tiny percentage of available manuscripts. David Sorenson writes, "The Traditional Text of the New Testament can be traced, primarily through translations thereof from the mid-second century. However, another significant textual base developed later and would have profound implications to this very hour. Whereas the Traditional Text finds its roots in Antioch of Syria, the home church of the Apostle Paul, the modern Critical Text traces its lineage back to Alexandria, Egypt."
4. In the next two messages we will focus on these two streams of manuscripts that have come down to us as follows:
  - The Alexandrian Text.
  - The Antioch (Syrian) Text (Also called the Traditional, Majority or Received Text).

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<sup>1</sup> W Grady, *Final Authority*, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> D. Cloud, *Faith Vs. the Modern Bible Versions*, p. 64.

## I. **ALEXANDRIA EGYPT: THE POLLUTED ROOTS OF THE CRITICAL TEXT**

Alexandria in Egypt became a center for the corruption of the Biblical text whereas Antioch became the center for the propagation of the pure text of Scripture. Let's consider some history of the Alexandrian Text.

### A. **The City of Alexandria**

1. Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. and took its name from him.
2. During the Roman era it became a major center of academic elitism. It was considered one of the major centers of scholarship and academia in the Roman Empire.
3. David Sorenson writes, "The University of Alexandria was called the third great epoch in the history of civilization and was modeled after the great schools of Athens, Greece. The university library was arguably the largest library in ancient history containing 900,000 works."<sup>3</sup> For the ancient world, that was a large number of items for a library. Today the world's largest library is the Library of Congress in the USA with over 173 million catalogued items.

### B. **The Religious Climate of Alexandria**

1. Antioch had the more glorious Biblical heritage by far. It became to Gentile Christians what Jerusalem had been to the Jews, and superseded Jerusalem as the base for the spread of the Gospel. The Christians were called "Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). It was the starting point for the Apostle Paul's great missionary journeys. Notable men like Mark, Barnabas and Silas were there.<sup>4</sup>
2. Egypt in contrast was a center for false doctrine, false gospels and gnostic heresies. David Cloud writes, "Egypt shares no such glory. It has always been looked upon as a symbol of the world system which is opposed to the things of God. God would not allow His Son (Mt. 2), His nation (Ex. 12), His patriarchs (Gen. 50), or even the bones of the patriarchs (Ex. 13:19) to remain there. The Jews were warned repeatedly not to return to Egypt, not to rely upon it for help, not to even purchase horses there, etc. Thus, in contrast to what is being claimed today, it is hard to believe that Egypt and Alexandria would have been the central place where God would preserve His Holy Word. Frankly, it was the last place on earth that one could trust in doctrinal and biblical matters. It certainly wasn't safe to get a Bible there!"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> D Sorenson, *God's Perfect Book*, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup> Cloud, p. 66

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 66-67.

3. Even Bruce Metzger, a supporter of the Alexandrian Text, is compelled to catalogue the vast amount of religious corruption which came from Alexandria: 'Among Christians which during the second century either originated in Egypt or circulated there among both the orthodox and the Gnostics are numerous apocryphal gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses. Some of the more noteworthy are the Gospel according to the Egyptians, the Gospel of Truth, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Kerygma of Peter, the Acts of John, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Epistle of the Apostles, and the Apocalypse of Peter. There are also fragments of exegetical and dogmatic works composed by Alexandrian Christians, chiefly Gnostics during the second century. We know, for example, of such teachers as Basilides and his son Isidore, and of Valentinus, Ptolemaeus, Heracleon, and Pantaenus. All but the last mentioned were unorthodox in one respect or another. In fact, to judge by the comments made by Clement of Alexandria, almost every deviant Christian sect was represented in Egypt during the second century; Clement mentions the Valentinians, the Basilidians, the Marcionites, the Peratae, the Encratites, the Docetists, the Haimetites, the Cainites, the Ophites, the Simonians, and the Eutychites. What proportion of Christians in Egypt during the second century were orthodox is not known' (Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, Clarendon Press, 1977, p. 101). [\* Metzger errs in implying that Pantaenus was orthodox. As we will see, he mixed pagan philosophy with Christianity.]<sup>6</sup>
4. "Let it be said again: Alexandria was the worst possible place to go for a Bible! Yet it is precisely the place that our present-day translators have gone in gathering the major sources of the modern Bible" (Jack Moorman, *Modern Bible Versions: The Dark Secret*).<sup>7</sup>

### C. Alexandria and Gnosticism

1. In the early Christian era, Alexandria became a major centre for Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a pagan system of philosophy and religion that was pagan to its core. It presented a real danger to the early churches and quickly began to make inroads into the professing church at that time.
2. One brand of Gnosticism was Docetism or Docetic Gnosticism which basically taught that all matter was evil. Because Jesus of Nazareth possessed a human body, the Gnostics claimed he could not be the Christ. They denied the humanity of Christ as well as the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

personality of God. Asceticism was advocated by them as a means of achieving communion with God.<sup>8</sup>

3. David Cloud notes, “The unscriptural practice of **ascetic monasticism** arose in Egypt in those days. In a confused attempt to gain holiness, men and women would live in caves, avoid marriage, deprive themselves of sleep and food for long periods, forgo conversation and bathing, sit on top of pillars for months at a time, etc. The ascetics began to congregate into monasteries in the 3rd century and by the middle of the 4th century there were an estimated 3,000 monks and 27,000 nuns.”<sup>9</sup>
4. Because they denied Christ would have a physical body, they did not accept Jesus of Nazareth as either Deity or the Christ. Several Gnostic Gospels such as the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Judas was based on this false teaching. The Gospel of Thomas blasphemously alleged that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and that they had children together. The popular book and movie “The Da Vinci Code” is based on these blasphemous claims.<sup>10</sup>
5. Gnosticism attacked the Person of Christ, particularly the truth that Christ was manifest in the flesh. Both Christ’s humanity and deity were attacked by Gnosticism. The key point in relation to the Bible Version issue is that Gnostic philosophy and bias found their way into the Alexandrian stream of texts. Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are in the Alexandrian family of manuscripts.
6. The Apostles warned against this error in the strongest terms (e.g., 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 7).

#### **D. The Catechetical School of Alexandria**

1. “By the end of the second century A.D. a notable institution of higher learning was formed called “The Catechetical School of Alexandria”. The third president of this seminary was none other than **Origen** who is often hailed as one of the early church fathers. In reality, he was a great corrupting influence large sections of early Christianity.”<sup>11</sup>
2. Origen’s heretical beliefs<sup>12</sup>

Though Origen is generally lauded as one of the great early Church Fathers, even his admirers admit he wasn’t exactly orthodox.

1. He was thoroughly acquainted with gnostic beliefs, though he contended against many of them on a philosophical plane.

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<sup>8</sup> Sorenson p. 150.

<sup>9</sup> Cloud, p. 94.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 151.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> R Sargent, *English Bible Manuscript Evidence*, pp. 128-129.

2. He was steeped in the philosophy of Plato. (Plato believed that the material world as it seems to us is not the real world, but only a shadow of the real world. Reality can be known only by those who do not rely on their senses.)
3. He frequently interpreted the Old Testament in a mystical way by allegorizing it. He said, "The scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written."
4. He denied the Genesis account of a literal Adam and Eve.
5. He believed that souls existed from eternity past.
6. He believed in the transmigration of the soul — that one's soul would pass to a higher or lower life form after death, depending upon one's deeds.
7. He believed in universal salvation — that the wicked would eventually be saved after punishment (purgatory?) then instruction by angels.
8. He denied a physical resurrection.
9. He believed that stars and planets had souls.
10. He believed that devils would be saved.
11. He was one of the first to refer to pastors as priests, and said that bishops participated in the forgiveness of grievous sins.
12. He intimated that unbaptized people were lost.
13. He held a postmillennial view of the return of Christ — most early Church Fathers were chiliasts (premillennial).
  3. Origen was one of the early Ecumenists, seeking to bring certain aspects of paganism under the umbrella of the church.<sup>13</sup>
  4. It was Origen who first included the apocrypha in the Bible. His writings influence Arianism, the denial of the Deity of Christ. He freely acknowledged involvement in deliberate tampering with the manuscripts of Scripture.<sup>14</sup>
  5. "From this religious and apostate environment would come the Alexandrian manuscripts which in recent times have become the basis of the modern Critical Text."<sup>15</sup>
  6. Origen brazenly tampered with the text of Scripture. Consider the testimony of Presbyterian scholar Robert Dabney: "Origen exercised a powerful influence over the transmission of the Greek text in the period before some of the most ancient copies now in existence were written. ... HE WAS THE GREAT CORRUPTER, AND THE SOURCE, OR AT LEAST THE CHANNEL, OF NEARLY ALL THE SPECULATIVE ERRORS WHICH PLAGUED THE CHURCH IN AFTER AGES. Nolan asserts that the most characteristic discrepancies between the common Greek text and the texts current in Palestine and Egypt in Origen's day are distinctly traceable to a Marcionite or Valentinian source, and that ORIGEN'S WAS THE MEDIATING HAND FOR INTRODUCING THESE CORRUPTIONS INTO THE LATTER TEXTS. IT IS

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<sup>13</sup> Sorenson, p. 151.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 152.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT THAT IMPORTANT TEXTS BEARING ON THE TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE, WHICH APPEAR IN THE GREEK AND LATIN ARE LACKING IN THE OLD MSS OF THE PALESTINIAN AND EGYPTIAN.” (Robert Dabney, “The Doctrinal Various Readings of the New Testament Greek,” *Southern Presbyterian Review*, April 1871).

7. One of Origen’s disciples, **Eusebius**, would become another key architect of the Alexandrian text. He was thoroughly Gnostic in his philosophical bent. Origen’s textual errors were transmitted through Eusebius in the manuscript work he did for Constantine the Great.

#### **E. Constantine the Great**

1. In A.D. 312, Constantine the Great had a so-called conversion to Christianity and made Christianity not only legal but the state religion. Between 324-330 A.D. Constantine built a new capital city at Byzantium and renamed it after himself as Constantinople. He also facilitated the construction of new church buildings in his capital city.<sup>16</sup> Constantinople is today known as Istanbul in Turkey.
2. In 331 he (Constantine) ordered fifty ornate copies of the New Testament for the state churches of Constantinople. He commissioned Eusebius to produce them. Remember, Eusebius was a disciple of Origen and a Gnostic. Athanasias recorded that scribes of Alexandria (likely Gnostics) prepared these Bibles for Constantine and the state sponsored churches of Constantinople.<sup>17</sup>
3. From Tischendorf onward, the consensus of textual historians is that Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus are the remnants of those fifty Bibles. Vaticanus and Sinaiticus went on to become the backbone of the modern Critical Text. Today, approximately 90% of the modern Critical Text is based upon Vaticanus.<sup>18</sup>
4. Significantly therefore, the modern Critical Text finds its origin in Alexandria Egypt, at a time when the city was permeated by Gnostic philosophy. Further, it was the apostate Eusebius to which Constantine turned for the production of his state churches. The variations of these manuscripts show a distinct pattern of Gnostic-friendly and Gnostic-oriented alterations.

## **II. THE GNOSTIC INFLUENCE UPON THE CRITICAL TEXT**

The fingerprints of the Gnostics can be detected in the critical text as the Person of Christ is attacked and diminished. We will consider a number of examples, using the ESV as our modern version example to contrast with the KJV. **Refer slides in power point.**

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<sup>16</sup> Sorenson, p. 153.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pp. 153-154.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## CONCLUSION:

We can expect to find the purest text of the New Testament Scriptures not in Egypt but in Asia Minor and Europe. "I believe we may reasonably conclude that in general the quality of copies would be highest in the area surrounding the Autograph and would gradually deteriorate as the distance increased. ... Taking Asia Minor and Greece together, the Aegean area held the Autographs of at least eighteen (two-thirds of the total) and possibly as many as twenty-four of the twenty-seven New Testament books; Rome held at least two and possibly up to seven; Palestine may have held up to three (but in A.D. 70 [when Rome destroyed Jerusalem] they would have been sent away for safe keeping, quite possibly to Antioch); Alexandria (Egypt) held none. The Aegean region clearly had the best start, and Alexandria the worst--the text in Egypt could only be second hand, at best. On the face of it, we may reasonably assume that in the earliest period of the transmission of the N.T. Text the most reliable copies would be circulating in the region that held the Autographs" (Wilbur Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, chapter 5). (Cloud, pg. 76)