

STRAIGHTWAY

"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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PRESERVING THE PRESERVED WORD

by Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, Founder

The Foundations Ministries

*The words of the Lord are pure words:
as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*

*Thou shalt keep them, O Lord,
thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.*

*But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.
And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

(Psalm 12:6-7; I Peter 1:25)

In the year 1969, I knew in my mind and heart that I would have to make an exodus from my background of Pentecostalism. My dear father, Dr. Hubert T. Spence, had risen to the highest positions his pentecostal denomination had. He was a man respected even by his enemies as one who would not compromise with the current trends towards the apostasy. He was a puritan in a decaying system that ultimately would fellowship Romanism. His death in 1969 was the prelude for me

to depart from nine years in the oldest pentecostal denominational seminary in the United States. I, too, stood as a puritan believer in that dying seminary.

By 1974, I had founded Foundations Bible College and Church. The last 26 years, now, at Foundations, have been the most meaningful and rewarding years of my life as a Christian minister. I was the same man continuing the same Biblical ministry I had always had since I was ordained in 1952, but having made an exodus, I became a pilgrim

outside the apostasy.

As one of the first active privileges to be involved in Fundamentalism, I was invited to be one of the morning speakers at the First World Congress of Fundamentalists in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1976. The invitation commenced with a conversation with Dr. Bob Jones, Chancellor of the University and Dr. Bob Jones III, president. This was at the time of the early organization of the Congress when it was first being planned. Of course, the Chancellor had been a faithful friend to me before those days.

One of the very first impressions of the Congress came on the first evening when Dr. Ian R. K. Paisley spoke on the subject of "The Faith, Fight and Fire of a Fundamentalist." That evening as I perused through the booklet of the Congress, on the very first title page was a striking announcement in bold type. It read as follows: "The Authorized (King James) Version of the Scriptures is the only English translation that will be read from the Congress platform."

My heart raced back across the years and suddenly I realized that I had never seen that respectful stipulation before on any printed material of any Christian series of

public services. The King James Version had been taught me as a child; my own dear father only preached from the King James Version; my mother read from only that version in the home; my father read that version for our family altar; and, every other preacher that we met preached from that version of the Bible. But in the first Congress of Fundamentalists I was glad to read such a bold dedication.

After World War II, when our young men returned from Europe, there immediately began to appear in our congregation of worship in Washington, D. C., the very same church my father had pastored some years before, other English translations among the young people. It was not long before the Philips English translation, a recent publication from the war, read during the blitz-bombings over London in the bomb shelters, became very popular. This was a "thought-translation" made by Pastor Philips who did not believe in a "literal-translation" of the New Testament. Some of the finest young people in my home church were carried away with this new English version. It caused quite a reaction in the church. It began to be noticed that pentecostal people would be often carried away again and again before the gamut of new English translations would run its course. Today, the charismatic movement is a hodgepodge of a multiplicity of different English versions.

Since those early days, much more has happened concerning the instability of what people are reading under the cover of a book identified as "The Holy Bible."

The late eighteenth century

STRAIGHTWAY

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through the early twentieth century marks the modern time when the archaeological findings of an increase of manuscripts of the New Testament surfaced to an unprecedented resource of church history. The Erasmus and Luther supports of the Textus Receptus, which were the basis of our beloved Authorized King James Version, and Luther's translation of his German Bible, began to be weighed on the new-found scales of scholarship. The influence of the Textus Receptus can be found much earlier in history and even with access to translations among smaller, remnant movements like the Waldensians. Of course, we realize that a distinction has been made between The Minority Text and the Majority Text, the latter being identified with the TR.

The scholarly names of the later years of our time would tend to replace the older Texts and would bring new findings by a new group of men like: Tischendorf; Westcott and Hort; Nestle; Weiss; Deissmann; Petrie; and others. Not all of these men, and many more, were directly involved in manuscripts, per se, but they contributed studies for the vocabulary of the New Testament. The responses to new finds would bring about a change of man's perspective of honoring the guarded Text of the Bible manuscripts of the past. Any significance God might have intended for us to draw by implication in His preventing our possession of the original manuscripts was now to be set aside permanently. There have always been comparative texts since earlier times, evidently, because the presence of the hexapla of the Old

Testament declares a plurality of six different texts in one scroll in comparative columns. Undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit, through God's providence, gave us a certain lineage of Greek copies as well as a certain lineage of translations.

Scholarship has always been dangerous to follow. But that is not to say we close the door on it. It simply means all scholarship is dangerous, and so is every other gift man has. It must be said again and again: unless we have the original manuscripts of the New Testament in our hands, we do not really have the most critical text. We run the risk of being strong in our own scholarship by setting up arbitrary statements that make too much of what we have studied outside of the Bible as compared to what is revealed in the Bible. This first has appeared in other things as the modern Liberals have gone to historical research and other languages to interpret the Bible. This fallacy has become a dialectical treatment of the Word of God which has made other sources, outside the Bible, to be the criteria of judging and interpreting the Bible.

There are indeed two kinds of conservative scholars who must be considered in this matter of the judgment of manuscripts.

First, there is the scholar who relies on scholarship to arrive at conclusions to his scholarly efforts. His is an admirable effort and a faithful journey to take. But the danger lies in the fact that nothing is allowed outside of the comparison of scholarships. Now, it must be readily agreed: we know nothing but by books. But other than within The Book, the Bible,

we have only human efforts and the human management of human intellect. In the days of the most ancient books, by the most ancient scholars, we find the myth, the legend, the saga, and the too often fictional ways in which history is recorded. The mood for the recording of ancient history has been "non-factional" in the actual facts. If the ancients were bent on the preservation of their history by such methods, what does that make us think about their records? It was not until the days of Herodotus of the Greeks, the father of near history, that the historical pursuit suddenly changed, and other historians, like Josephus, adopted factual history as we know it. This is the hope of literal history. What other things have affected us in the reading of their books? In other words, people, to this time, follow a scholarly knowledge of what is believed by scholars before them. I know they research their work; but they research sources something less than revealed and inspired by God.

Second, however, there is another kind of scholar who should be considered as valid, as far as a presupposition to follow. There are some scholars who follow the singular principle of only "One Scholar" before them. They do not accept scholarly fiction or incomplete fact, or always comparative fact. They would then choose to follow the infallible principle—God's Word—as their Scholar. They are not naïve in this. They are true scholars. But they have divided all human questions into two categories: one, what are the man-questions we may ask? and two, what are the God-questions we may not ask? They

would believe that what is a man-question may be solved through human scholarship. However, they would also believe that whatever is a God-question must be left open—unsolved and unresolved by man. Of course, they study books by other scholars, too, in order to know what other scholars are saying about it. In that sense, they compare; but they follow a singular presupposition: God must preserve His Word! We believe copyists of the Textus Receptus were men who were pursuing the most preserved texts of the Greek New Testament. It was a guarded work of the Lord to preserve this text and its copies. The writers were probably not aware of this fact, personally; they were being called upon by God to preserve the longest continuing preserved Greek Text of all. It is not that God hated all other copied texts, but rather that He would preserve His Word through a certain lineage of texts. It is inappropriate to inquire who were the men and what were their names. God was simply guarding a preserved text.

It is in this second position that the author of this article finds himself. As far as the original manuscripts of the New Testament are concerned, the Great Scholar is God Who sought to withdraw His providence in preserving those manuscripts. This attitude of God includes other copies of later centuries He did not preserve; not being of those copies He preserved. We do not believe God lost the original manuscripts; we believe He hid them, or did not desire for history to have them; or for some other good reason, according to His own knowledge and will, kept them from us. In

our time, unfortunately, there are those who have become bibliolitrists in their unguided zeal in believing that the King James is as inspired as the original manuscripts. They simply make an idol out of a book. In that group there are even some who believe that the KJV is the only inspired Word of God. God does not appreciate this view; He does not honor it.

In the absence of the original manuscripts, we would appeal to a pattern for this in the Old Testament. We appeal to this as an illustration of the second group of scholars who would see that as Moses was commanded to place the Oracles in the "sleeves" of the Ark in the Holy of Holies, not to be permitted in the congregational camp, so copies would be made by kings or leadership authority from the original Oracles in the sleeves of the Ark. The congregational camp would only possess a copy, or have access through a prophet or a king to read a copy, or have it read.

Further inquiry of the pattern revealed that during the times of King Josiah, a time when God's people thought that the original copy of the Oracles was lost, while they were repairing the Solomonic Temple, they "found" the Oracles in the Temple and made copies for the king. We would believe that they were in the "sleeves" of the Ark; which had been neglected; where else? This one pattern in the Bible may possibly be one of the greatest insights in the Bible for us to consider the God-question of why we do not have the original manuscripts. This author had not read this among the scholars but simply read a continuity of pas-

sages from the Pentateuch in the Bible one morning. Whether it is an insight or not is not so important, but there are scholars who simply believe, like a child, if you please, that God Himself preserved His own Word in a certain lineage of its original language copies and a certain lineage of translation copies. Of course, a distinction should be made between the "oracles" in the "sleeves" of the Ark, and what was in the Ark—a pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets upon which were written the Ten Commandments.

In these dark and difficult times in which we live, times of apostasy, it is neither naïve nor inferior scholarship to believe that God is responsible for the preservation of His Word—not only through a certain lineage of Hebrew copies of the Old Testament, but also the New Testament original copies through a certain lineage of Greek copies as well as through a certain lineage of translation copies. The God-questions and the man-questions were already thought of by God, and He gave us His response.

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law (Deut. 29:29).

While we are writing this very discourse, we are well aware of the fact that much is missing in the search of all the explained details needed for either one of these kinds of Christian scholars we have proposed. Neither side has the critical resources absolutely necessary to finalize all the argument needed. God has left all of us in a bind because of our lack

of the availability of the original manuscripts, and much more in-between. That is another reason we have accepted God as the Scholar Who is necessarily the One Who must preserve His own Word. This brings us, each one, down to the motive of our presupposition of why we follow the manuscripts the way we follow them. That matter of motive keeps coming up as it does for everything we do and think in the Christian life in our relationship with the Lord. Our own motive, personally, is that we are motivated by the personal claim of desiring to be scholarly, while at the same time believing that the academic scholarship is necessary in order to be honest and honorable. However, with the best of all our studies, we were not dedicated to preserving scholarship, but rather defending that God must preserve His Word. Yet we believe the problem we are dealing with is too large, with too many missing connecting links to solve. This is not only true because of the absence of the original manuscripts, but compounded because there is a broken chain with an incomplete collection of all the manuscripts needed to fill in all the gaps of the known branches of texts—the Byzantine, Alexandrinus, etc. There are scholars who follow both of these or others. They are scholars, too. We must not take the position that only those who follow our own position are scholars. A scholar is simply one who studies in research of resources, most earnestly, being qualified by his studies. Once again, it is imperative that God preserve the Text.

The need before us now as evangelical Fundamentalists, since

there is a controversy raging all around us concerning the King James Version, is not to hurt the good and reliable while thinking that we have found the better. The earlier Greek manuscripts and the Textus Receptus manuscripts were not born so late as to be discovered in the late eighteenth century; they were preserved by God's providence through centuries.

We do not know how far out there into the future, either before the second coming of the Lord, or after His appearance in the clouds, before some "famous" or "reputed," or more "critical" manuscript than the one we have, might be found and thought to be even greater than the recently discovered "critical text," and substantiated by and accepted by a more impressive scholarship than all claims at the present time. There came a flood of liberal presentations of later Septuagints, written by Jewish scholarship, which made obsolete and obscure the first one, thought of as the "textus receptus" (185-165 B.C.), ordered by Ptolemy Philadelphus IV, in Alexandria, Egypt. So, the principle has happened again in our time. We do not say this with abandonment to a lack of reality for the future; we say it because the days have become that deceitful. It is this writer's prayer that no one will assume that what we need are "better renderings," but rather a "better understanding" of that which has already been rendered through the years, long ago, centuries past.

The question remains, however: what do we now do in response to the enlarged printed expressions and positions of writers, even

among our Fundamentalist brethren, who speak for their loyalty to the Authorized King James Version? In all of our previous Congresses of Fundamentalists, it was strongly asserted on the title page: "The Authorized (King James) Version of the Scriptures is the only English translation that will be read from the Congress platform." Is this to remain a strong statement, yet for us to go away from the Congresses with a weak application in our lives afterwards? Could a time come when we will believe this is to be considered too strong a statement, in need of modification or newly extended definition? Or, is it a prelude, ultimately, to the discontinuance of the use of the statement for the Congresses at all?

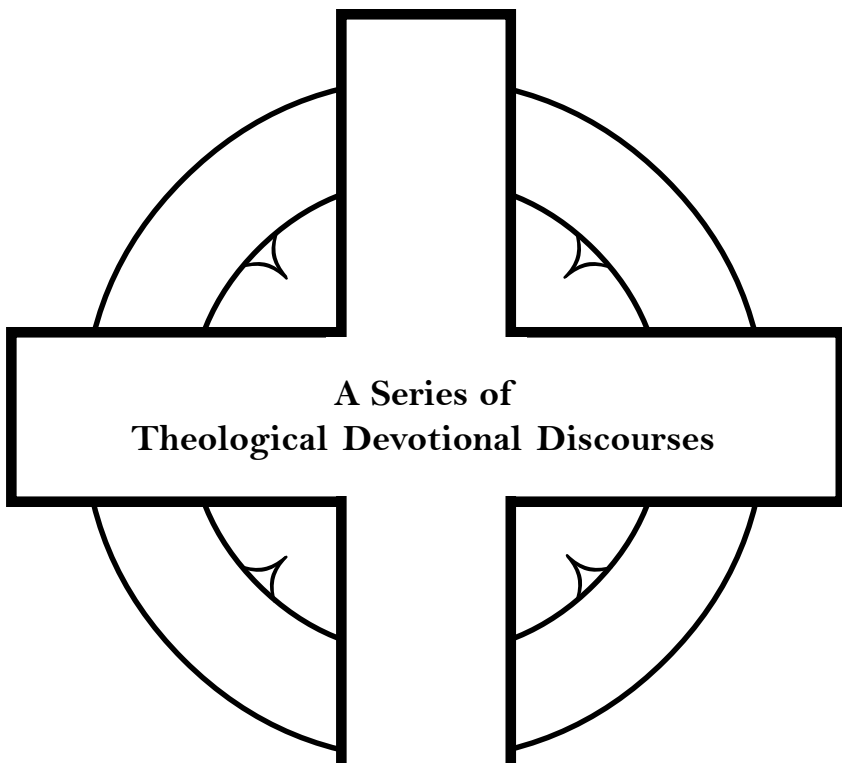
There appears to be a double-meaning of our position being developed that was not voiced at the time of the First Congress. Will we hold the KJV in our public congresses, and hold to other translations in other public teachings and preachings elsewhere? I do not imply anything in the motives of my brethren, but the working of an inconsistency in our practice that is becoming harder and harder to maintain. When we give up such a strong position on an English translation, we could be changing, before others and ourselves, from a position we formerly held about Biblical Authority. Fundamentalism among us could suffer a great tragedy indeed to change the distinctiveness of what we have held to as the very Word of God from our beginnings together, brethren.

The day that such a strong statement is considered for re-

moval from the World Congresses of Fundamentalism is the same day we no longer believe our statement to the degree we believed it then. The only thing we can see that would be a stronger offense would be to change our resolutions of doctrine as Fundamentalists. I know of no English Bible Department of any Christian college or seminary, including Foundations Bible College, but what speaks more for Hebrew and Greek than it honors the worth of the Elizabethan, classical English of the King James Version to the degree it deserves. I rarely hear any more anyone speak highly of an English word from the King James Version. Our forebears did. The times are so flexible; we need to make stronger our belief in the very words of the KJV. Enough words have been said, and books written among us, to reveal there is a growing division among us that no matter how nice we try to say it, it is controversy anyway. All of the various views cannot be equally true; there are inconsistencies and lack of final evidence. We have always believed in a comparative study of texts, but that is never to say they are all equal. I do not doubt the integrity of our brethren, and the articles they write, but I do doubt the kind of hopeful unity that is being developed that believes all of our sides among us are tenable or equal.

That is also another reason we must bring God into this urgency. God has preserved His preserved Word among us. The Authorized King James Version is the most preserved Text in the English world.

God expects us to preserve His Preserved word, too.



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Discourse #1
The Human Spirit in the Cross

*But God forbid that I should glory,
save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by whom
the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

(Galatians 6:14)

This book will be useless to the reader unless we establish quickly where the study of the human spirit must lead us. Anything known about a creature who is human commences in the fall of man. At the other end of the revealed Word of God lies the redemption of man by the free grace of God as set forth in the Cross of Calvary where Christ Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures (I Cor. 15:3).

Therefore, we may view man—the *human spirit*—in the fall or in the Cross. We begin this unpretentious book with man in creation and the fall, as well as in the Cross and redemption. It has been this struggle of theology concerning man in these two places that has been the battlefield for both libertines and legalists. After all is said and written, all false teachings lie in these two entities—the libertines and the legalists. More formally, they may go by other names and systems down through history, but the end is the same: can man, as a human spirit, save himself to God? or can man, as a human spirit, aggrandize himself to God in his own goodness? We extend quickly and absolutely in both categories, “No!”

In our hope in this volume of speaking on behalf of the revealed Word of God, we must identify quickly a number of differences in man’s use of the word “Cross” as various interpretations have been presented.

Of all the views which have been taken, we desire to reach into the use of several prepositions in the New Testament as the best of Christians have chosen to use them. We leave apostates, liberals, legalists, and all that is seen as clear heresy, and hopefully go into the holy precincts of Biblical interpretation for a life in Christ. These treacherous slopes, heretofore, have led many to what is called “the higher life,” “the deeper life,” “the holy life,” “the sanctified life,” “the humble life,” “the pious life,” and a host of other names which of themselves are precious in the thinking of a grace-forgiven Christian. However, and far too often, movements have led to concerted error, and finally their “ism” has brought their “schism.” Often in our own readings across a half-century, we have found grave error in the very areas we would have least expected it—in certain movements such as the “Deeper Life,” the “Higher Life,” the “Pious Life,” etc. Through all these years we have wondered more about our need of Christ in “The Desperate Life” for the times in which we live. But we have also known individual Christians who lived a life by grace that was “the different life in Christ” from many others who walked not in such a path.

Can we not see the hunger that grace often brings to the lost and famished soul, when that soul has, for the first time in its existence, hungered aright in spite of certain humanities in its spirit? This book is dedicated, hopefully, to a better understanding of that *human spirit*. How else can we deal with one of the least of them in both their grace-pure hunger or their sin-purged weakness? We certainly must deal with and reject the belief of the unsaved, the compromiser, and the apostate; but we must deal differently with a grace-saved sinner who has the right hunger although he may have the wrong appetite.

So we have entered into both a dangerous and a delightful subject, or else we must believe that man’s depravity is so total it has gobbled up all creatures to hell. A soul is worth more than that; a soul is precious in God’s sight and should be in our sight. It is with a vicarious concern for such Christians who hunger for the Christ life that we share a definite affinity in these dark and desperate and unholy days.