

STRAIGHTWAY

“AND STRAIGHTWAY THEY FORSOOK THEIR NETS, AND FOLLOWED HIM” (MARK 1:18).
CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Lord Gave the Word — Psalm 68:11

Dr. H. T. Spence

We prayerfully cite Psalm 68:11: “The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.” How does this verse emerge with purpose considering the psalm within which it is woven? Let us first note the psalm written by the sweet singer of Israel, King David.

Background of Psalm 68

Although we are not told the time or occasion that prompted the writing of this psalm, several rabbinical writings place it at the time when David removed the ark from the house of Obed-edom to the prepared tent on Mount Zion. Others have suggested that the psalm celebrated the final victory in the Ammonite war and the capture of Rabbah (2 Samuel 12). Nonetheless, no one can be dogmatic concerning the prompting of this psalm. However, it is evident that some great victory was associated with the writing of it. It is interesting to note that this psalm was a favorite of the

Huguenots (French Protestants); they called it the “Song of the Battles.”

Psalm 68 commences by giving God praise in dealing with His enemies. As this psalm continues to unfold, we read of praise to God for His doings at Sinai and in the wilderness; and then of praise to God for the conquest of Canaan and a series of victories culminating in the full establishment of David as king over Israel. Within this context of praise, we read, “The Lord gave the word.” The understanding is that He gave the *watchword*, the word of promised victory, a word that initiated the period to do battle with the enemy. And, “great was the company of those that published it [that word].” This verse announces that there were those who went from house to house heralding the watchword of the Lord. These were the damsels calling the men to battle, declaring confidence in the Lord in their going to battle, because the word of surety had been given by God.

Thus, for this article we have lifted this passage from this classic psalm to present the battle of God for His people. God's people are to rise and do battle because the Lord has given the Word. While the majority of the Book of Psalms deals with conflict and military battles, it is evident that the psalmist saw these conflicts and battles ultimately in the spirit realm. In more recent decades the Methodists have taken out of their hymnbooks the witness of the "blood" of Christ for our redemption; but equally sad, the Fundamentalists have taken the "militancy" out of their hymns. The psalms truly declare praise to God in battles and in the conflicts of His people.

The Lord Has Given the Word!

Yes, the Lord has given the Word! But what is this Word the Lord has

given? It is the Word that has always existed, eternal as God Himself; it is His Word. We must initially acknowledge that the Lord has given the Living Word. God gave His only begotten Son, Who took on flesh and dwelt among us. From the moment the Son took on flesh, He forever became the Son incarnate; He is forever the God-Man. The two natures of God and Man came together into one hypostatic union.

But God has also given the pre-existent written Word, called the "Scripture of Truth" (Dan. 10:21). This Word took on flesh as a written Word on earth and dwelt among us. As the Holy Ghost overshadowed the Virgin Mary, the Holy Ghost breathed upon holy men and brought His pre-existent Word into human language. Just as "The Living Word" coming into human flesh did not lose one iota of His deity, so the Word of God coming into the flesh of human language did not lose one iota of its eternal power and reality.

But how did God give such a written Word to us? God gave the written Word by divine inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21), with every word and every letter in the autographs (the original writings) being breathed by God upon holy men. The miracle is that when the Eternal Scripture of heaven entered the human language of earth, it did not lose any power or

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reality of what it was. The Scripture maintained both its eternality and its truth though coming into time. Here was truly a hypostatic union of God and man, with both united in the writing, but every word guarded by the Spirit. This Book is not simply a religious literary product of man; this Word was the product of the Spirit of God moving upon certain men. Let us remember! God gave the Word!

God's Word is infallible, meaning it does not contain any errors. God's Word is also inerrant, meaning it has been brought down to our time without being compromised or corrupted.

God Has Also Preserved His Word

As Christians we must also believe in the Word's *preservation*. The Bible was written a long time ago. Moses wrote around 1500 BC; the Book of Job is 600 years older than Moses. For thousands of years the Bible has been copied, both by hand, and later by the printing press. God promised that He would preserve or keep His Word. Yes, "The Lord gave the Word!" But He has also preserved His Word!

Over the course of history, God did use certain individuals or groups of individuals to play vital, providential roles in fulfilling this promise of God. Great was the company of them that published it, that declared it, and that preserved it! Yes, God has had His

Hand on the preservation of the Word that He gave, and God has used men through history for that preservation.

The Tares: Corrupters of the Word

Just as God has used men in the preservation of His Word, the Devil has had his children, the tares, who have worked tirelessly to corrupt and distort that Word. Not everyone who has copied the Bible (by hand or printing press) has produced reliable manuscripts. Some ancient manuscripts of the Bible are more trustworthy than others; false doctrines and poor copying practices have adversely affected some manuscripts, causing verses to be both deleted and completely altered. This should be no surprise to us, for Satan has always attacked the Word of God in this manner.

In the aftermath of God's declaring His Word to Adam concerning the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:16, 17), there was an obvious tampering with that Word. Adam told Eve those words from the Lord. This is when the corrupting took place. Satan communicated through the serpent to Eve in the Garden of Eden and cast doubt upon what God had told Adam. When the serpent asked, "Yea, hath God said" (Gen. 3:1), Eve in quoting what God had said left out the word *freely* (2:16). And then added, "neither shall ye touch it" (3:2, 3). Eve took the original words given to her and both added to and deleted from

them. The “original” word was given to Adam by God. Did Adam “corrupt” the Word given to him, or was Eve the first to corrupt the transmission of it? It is difficult for us to believe that Adam corrupted that word as he transmitted it from God to his wife. Therefore, we need to ask the sobering question, “What was in the heart of Eve to change that Word and delete from it?” Were there thoughts that entered her mind when her husband gave the inerrant revelation, thoughts of God being too hard on them? Or perhaps there were thoughts that God was withholding something precious from them? We do not know what her motive was to both *think* the change and then to *utter* the change of God’s Word. But it proved that the Word in transmission could be corrupted even from one person to another, if the heart was not true in its motive of preserving God’s Word. We dare not say that Eve “forgot” or accidentally “misquoted,” for she was in the purest hour of created humanity by God. The mind and memory were perfect and certainly in a greater heightened sensitivity of remembrance than is common today. It is evident that the Devil laid hold of her in the corrupting of that word and convinced her to go against God because of that word. Though it is true that Satan will always be attacking God’s Word, we must ever remember that God has promised that He will always preserve His Word.

God’s Power in Preserving His Word

One such promise is found in Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, and Luke 21:33: “Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.” “The Lord gave the Word,” and the Lord has preserved His Word through history! But how has He performed this promise? He has chosen through the multiplicity of tributaries the streams through which He has directed His Word. Yet, amidst the unique streams down through history, He Himself has preserved His Word to this hour. The Lord gave His Word over a time span of eleven hundred years for the Old Testament and some fifty years for the New Testament. God’s people have been called upon to earnestly contend for this faith, God’s Word which was once delivered unto the saints. And God also has through His providence used His saints to preserve that Word through history. And great has been the company of those, the preachers, who have published or preached this Word.

But why has there been an intentional deception of that Word down through history? Why the tampering with the Word of God? Why would individuals do such a thing? Because the world hates God and thus it hates His Word. The world hated Christ, the Living Word, when He came to this earth two thousand years ago, and

equally has hated the Written Word, for it is the infallible testimony of the Living Word, and it is the Word for the living of God's people. No other book has been so despised, attacked, discredited, and abused as the Bible. From the time of the writing of the books of Scripture, unholy men have done all they could to destroy and discredit these writings! Yet, God has continued to preserve His precious, written Word!

Satan's Physical Attack upon God's Word

There have been three diabolical approaches in Satan's arsenal to destroy God's Word. The first has been through actual physical destruction of the Scriptures. One of the most noted efforts of such destruction of the Scriptures is recorded in Jeremiah 36. Jehoiakim, the self-indulgent and vindictive king of Judah was displeased with the prophecies of Jeremiah, which at that time covered a period of twenty-three years. These prophecies had been spoken by Jeremiah at the command of the Lord and recorded by his amanuensis Baruch. Angered and frightened when he heard of the writing, Jehoiakim ordered the book brought and read to him. Then the king mutilated the scroll with a knife and burned it in the fire. He thought such a destructive act to the scroll would put an end to the prophecy of Jeremiah, but such an attack did not

make null and void God's Word of prophecy. For the Lord directed His prophet Jeremiah to write all the words again. And the prophet did so once again under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the same words as the first writing; but there were added besides unto them many other words. The original manuscript of Jeremiah was verbally inspired; its second writing was with equal inspiration. So instead of destroying the Word, the wicked king only caused God's Word to be increased, for Jeremiah included in the second writing the account of Jehoiakim's evil act.

Another contemptible man who attacked God, His Word, and His people was Antiochus Epiphanes, the mad Syrian ruler of the second century BC. When Antiochus ascended the throne in 175 BC, the land of Judea lay prostrate and bleeding under the cruel Syrian heel of his wickedness and hatred. Without regard for the sensitivities of the Jews and their Hebrew culture, or the depth of Jewish faith, the evil Antiochus set about to eradicate Judaism and replace it with Hellenism (Greek culture) and the religion of the Greeks. The desolation of Judea reached its limit in the years 168–167 BC. Not content to destroy the Jewish people and their lifestyle, Antiochus set his energies against their God, their temple, and most of all against their sacred books. He ordered everything characteristic of Jewish

worship to be destroyed. An occupying army of 20,000 men were ordered to pollute the temple and burn the holy books. Blood was splattered on the walls of the temple. The scrolls of the law were mutilated and heaped up for burning. As a master stroke of pollution and insult, a sow was slaughtered on the altar of God; the filthy broth of its fat and blood was poured over the sacred books. When the torch was put to them, the books went up in smoke of great stench. This horrific persecution was finally met by the resistance of Judas Maccabaeus and his brothers, who led a band of Jewish patriots in guerrilla warfare against the invaders. They triumphed through the providence of God, and Antiochus died a terrible death of a mad man.

Another historical incident of men physically destroying the Scriptures is found with Diocletian, the worst of the emperors of Rome. Unlike his predecessors, Diocletian seemed to be aware that the Scriptures were a principal cohesive force holding the Christians together. He believed that the Church would not be destroyed until its sacred books were also destroyed. Beginning on February 23, 303, he declared four edicts to wipe out the Christian faith, with one declaring that all the copies of the Bible or any portions of it were to be burned. Diocletian killed so many Christians and burned so many copies of the Bible that he thought he had put an end to the Christian faith

and its sacred Scriptures. He even ordered a medal to be struck bearing the inscription: "The Christian religion is destroyed and the worship of the gods restored." After Diocletian was dead and Constantine had legalized Christianity, the latter emperor issued a call for any Bibles that survived the edict of Diocletian to be placed in the churches of the new capital city Byzantium (Constantinople). Within twenty-four hours, fifty copies were delivered to him. The Word of God had survived another attack unleashed against it.

Satan's Philosophical Attacks Against God's Word

The second form of attack against the Bible has been the assault in ridicule and cunning sophistry of unbelievers. The Frenchman Voltaire stepped forward in the 1700s and became guilty of raw attacks of hatred against the Bible.

In his derision of the Bible, Voltaire predicted that within one hundred years the Bible would pass from common use and be found only as a curiosity in museums. During the century that followed his death (1778), it is estimated that the number of Bibles in the world increased from 200 million to 500 million. Before the century ended the very house in which this skeptic had lived was obtained by the Geneva Bible Society and was filled with Bibles. More strangely, the very press Voltaire had used to print his

atheistic literature was used to print portions of God's Word.

But Voltaire was not the only one. Thomas Paine arose in his hatred for God and gave to young America his books *Common Sense* and *The Rights of Man*. His strongest anti-Christian work was entitled *The Age of Reason*. Paine declared, "I have gone through the Bible as a man would go through a wood [forest] with an axe to fell the trees. Here they lie; they will never live again." Yet, Paine is the one who died and went to a drunkard's grave in 1809.

History is replete with the Bible haters continuing to pervade the 1700s through the 1800s: Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher; Robert Ingersoll, the American lecturer who threatened to put the Bible in the morgue; Karl Marx, a mastermind of Communism, along with Friedrich Engels; and many others who have marred history with their hearts of darkness. Yes, the list of malicious haters of God's Word became a marching army against the Lord and His Word. At one time in history, the Bible was attacked by isolated individuals; now whole systems of government and ideology (including America) are bent on the Bible's destruction.

Satan's Attack Through Form Criticism and Liberalism

But perhaps the greatest and most subtle attack against the Scriptures

has been by those who are supposed to be the Bible's friends, within the very sanctuary of God. Such attacks have come in the name of "objective" scholarship under the guise of Form Criticism, including Higher and Lower Criticism, also called Textual (Higher Criticism) and Introduction (Lower Criticism). Within Higher Criticism many theologians and preachers have discredited the Bible by denying its accuracy, rejecting its genuineness, denouncing its divine inspiration, and disputing even its relevancy for us today. Higher Criticism is an investigation into the dates, sources, and manuscripts. It does not assume the genuineness of any book of Scripture, but rather subjects it to severe doubt and suspicion.

Among such subtle, serpentine attacks has been the overwhelming reception of the corrupt manuscripts that arose during the 1800s. These have brought the greatest confusion to Christianity of what is the text. Men believed that these manuscripts found in a trash can of a monastery and in the Vatican archives were greater than the Preserved Word, the Received Text of God's providence. These mysterious manuscripts (brought to the forefront by the Liberals and Modernists collectively becoming the Alexandrian Text) denounced what God's providence had preserved. These manuscripts truly brought confusion within the Body of Christ as to "What Is the Word of

God.” And thus, what is to be believed. This has been the worst of attacks, because it has come from within the professing church.

Sad to acknowledge, Christianity is the only religion in the world that now denies the inerrancy and infallibility of its sacred writings. The Bible is not believed in both its text and its message. The public Church of Christendom no longer believes that the Bible is the singular, written revelation given from God to man. Many that may claim to believe the autographs are from God still do not believe that God has preserved His Word through history. With nearly six hundred English translations, revisions, and paraphrases on the commercial market today, there is no concern for the Bible’s integrity of inerrancy being preserved. For them the purpose of the Bible is to seek the “implied” thought of God. And how often, the translators are the ones who dictate what that thought is to be. Form Criticism and its promotion of certain manuscripts have become perhaps the greatest weapon of Satan in leading the world away from the truth of Scriptures.

Conclusion

May we ever remember that “The Lord gave the Word”! And He has preserved His Word through history! God has called us to *publish* His Word, to *proclaim* it, to *preach* it, and to *teach* it. He has not called upon us to criticize

it, to question it, to rewrite it by adding or deleting from it, or to denounce it. The critics of history have only died in their own despair, while the Bible continues to triumph in its eternal existence.

Before the second coming of the Lord, may the Holy Spirit raise up “believing” preachers and teachers in these final days to publish and preach God’s own Word. It is the only truth and revelation from God we have in this darkest hour of global apostasy. It is the “more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19).

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The Lord Gave the Word: The Beloved Kings James Bible

Dr. H. T. Spence

David declares, “The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it” (Ps. 68:11). The Lord not only has given His Word to this earth but also has preserved His Word throughout history. Thus, is it possible that He has also permitted that Word to be safely transmitted into other languages, such as our own beloved English language?

The Original versus a Copy

Our burden in this article takes us back to the great prophet Moses and his writing of the inspired Pentateuch, the term commonly designated for the first five books of the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 17:14–17, Moses prophetically reveals the coming of kings for Israel; he warns that when such leaders arise in history, they are not to multiply horses, wives, or gold. The prophet then commands in 17:18–21 that each king is to make a copy of the Pentateuch for himself in order to rule the nation by that Word.

And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the

words of this law and these statutes, to do them.

Further reading of the words of Moses reveals that there were two identifications of this Word with the Ark of the Covenant: (1) The two tables of stone located inside the ark with the covenant (the ten commandments written upon them) and, (2) the original writing of the entire Pentateuch that was placed in holsters or sleeves on the sides of the ark (Deut. 31:25, 26). As the ten commandments were kept inside and under the lid of the ark itself, the greater Pentateuch was kept on the sides outside the ark. Moses declares that it is from these original scrolls that all future kings were to make a personal copy of the Pentateuch. It is obvious in Deuteronomy 17 that the king is responsible for such a copy in his reign. Whether the king wrote the copy himself, or had it copied, he was responsible for a copy by which to rule the kingdom. The emphasis is that each king is to have his own copy of the Law.

Several centuries later, we are brought to the reign and revival of Josiah (2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34). In his day the original scroll of the Law was discovered by Hilkiyah the high priest, who in turn declared it to Shaphan the scribe. The evidence

indicates that Hilkiah officially found the Law in the sleeves of the ark and brought it directly to Shaphan the scribe. Shaphan then proceeded to make a copy from that original Pentateuch; he read and remembered the command of the Law (Deut. 17:18, 19), and read to the king the copy of it. This made such an impression upon King Josiah that he called for the elders and the people to also hear a reading of the Law. Two very interesting verses should be noticed in this regard:

1. 2 Kings 23:3b—“to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book.”
2. 2 Chron. 34:30b—“he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.”

The phrase “that were written in this book” is to be distinguished from the phrase “all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.” The former phrase represents the copy “written” by Shaphan the scribe. The phrase “the book . . . found” in the house of the Lord refers to the original or autograph from the hand of Moses. This was an actual fulfillment of the command of Moses concerning future kings’ involvement of copying from the original Law.

The Absence of the Originals

How often we hear the claim that “we do not have the original writings

of the books of the Bible.” While this statement is true, there is a reason for this absence. God never intended for all of His people to handle, own, and personally read or preserve the original copy of the Pentateuch, any more than all men were able to see and handle the Word of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ (as John the Beloved acknowledged that he had done, 1 John 1:1). While there certainly was a handling of the original, God’s plan included a later copying of that original by the king’s command. God commanded that the original two stones written upon (The Decalogue) be kept in the ark; He commanded that the scrolls of the Law (the Pentateuch) be placed in the sleeves of the ark. He ordained that kings make copies from the original. Although the kings would perpetuate the copies, *He* alone would preserve both the copy and the perpetuity of the copies. In other words, the original copy was for the king, not for the people.

Christians should not think of the original manuscripts of the Bible as being lost today. Rather we should consider them deliberately hidden. At the same time, God has preserved and hand-delivered His Word to kings. This is part of the preservation of the Bible itself.

Two Important Copies for Kings

We must carefully note two important Bible translations that have arisen

in history to which Christians owe much. The first is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the “Septuagint” (285–265 BC); the second is the King James Bible of 1611. Both of these translations were authorized by kings. The Septuagint was authorized by King Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt. He invited 72 Jewish elders to Alexandria, Egypt, to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language. The King James Bible translation was authorized by King James of England through initially 54 Christian scholars of Cambridge, Oxford, and Westminster. Thus, these copies were brought into the two languages of Greek and English.

It must be acknowledged that many corrupted Greek Septuagint versions followed this original translation. Many scholars continue to have doubts about these other versions. Nevertheless, the original Septuagint initially became a received Greek text from a received Hebrew text.

The King James Bible came from a received text of a Hebrew and Greek text into the English language. For over 270 years the King James Bible was the preserved Word of God for the English-speaking world. It remained unchallenged until 1881, when the first steps were taken to attack the Received Text. The arrival of the Revised Standard Version initiated the migration toward a corrupted text.

The piety, linguistic abilities, and love for the Word of God found in the scholars of the beloved King James translation have never been matched in history. They received neither money nor gain; and despite the tremendous increase of other English versions since then, there remains to this very day a certain preserved aspect of this most honorable version. Even though the Elizabethan English of the Shakespearean period had been in decline for several years, yet it was believed that this literary form should be revived exclusively as this version’s English mode of expression. It was a sealed English that would not change or mutate into the contemporary philosophy.

The English Used by the King James Translators

There are many individuals over the recent decades who have attacked the beloved King James Bible and said that it was written in Old English. But this is not true. The King James Bible is written in what is known as Early Modern English. The history of the English language has three large periods. Old English (AD 150–1100), Middle English (1100–1500), and Modern English (fully-formed by 1550). Therefore, the King James Bible is clearly written in Modern English.

Another attack is upon its usage of words such as *thee* and *thou*. There are two important reasons for retaining

these pronouns. Their use takes us back in the history of the English language to a more majestic and a loftier form of the pronouns. How different they are from the gutter slang English of today, which is an indication of a gross decline and mongrelization into “slob” language. (This is truly another characteristic of the end-time apostasy, even in language.) During the period of the King James Bible translation, a complete set of personal pronouns was used to identify the person (1st, 2nd, 3rd, singular or plural) and case (nominative, objective, possessive) *more accurately* than the pronouns we use today. Let us note this usage in three expressions of the nominative, the objective, and the possessive in that order.

First person singular: *I, me, and my or mine*

First person plural: *we, us, and our or ours*

Second person singular: *thou, thee, and thy or thine*

Second person plural: *ye, you, and your or yours.*

Third person singular: *he or she, him or her, and his or hers*

Third person plural: *they, them, and their or theirs.*

From the above breakdown of pronouns, we see that the contemporary Bibles have mainly abandoned the second person singular pronouns and have also used the words *you* and *your*

to do double duty, functioning as both singular and plural. Whether one will acknowledge it or not, this has brought a “dumbing down” and debasing of the English language.

But there is another reason for retaining *thee* and *thou* in our Bible. It is to preserve a greater dignity and reverence in the style of writing, especially when the words are addressed to the God of heaven. We are living in a fleshly, slob-culture age that has continued to bring God down to its low-level living. In our conversation and living, nothing remains sacred anymore—life, marriage, family, nor the dignity of humanity. Yes, we live in the most debasing era of human history, and thus our language accommodates the mud and slime of our existence. Sad to say, we have drawn God’s written Word down to the gutter level of our living.

The Sword Against End-Time Apostasy

We must also acknowledge that in the English-speaking world the beloved King James Bible has been used by the providence of God to arise as the singular sword against Roman Catholicism; it has been the singular sword against the apostasy of Protestantism; and it has been the singular sword against Liberalism and Modernism. It must be emphatically declared, with no reservation, that there has been no other English ver-

sion identified for its militancy against the apostasy of the End! All the nearly six hundred English versions and paraphrases that flood the commercial markets today have *contributed* to the promotion of Neo-Christianity that pervades the End Time.

The English Language: Chosen by God and the Devil

History bears record that God has used the English-speaking world more than any to spread the Gospel globally. God has used the English language to preach the deeper truth and insight of the Christian life throughout the world more than any other language. More books about God and related subjects have been written in English than in any other language. Yet, sad to say, more confusing versions of the Bible abound in English than in any other language. More college and university teaching is found in English than any other language. We take it as no small providence that Foundations Bible College was birthed in the English-speaking world.

But it also must be declared that the language the Devil is using to bring the downfall of truth and the Word of God in the public sector is the language of English. Yes, the language that was used for the promulgation of the Gospel is now the language declaring the “death of God” and the destruction and corruption of God’s Word in the minds of global human-

ity. The countries that aggressively lead the Christian apostasy today are America, England, and other English-speaking countries. Truly, the public Christianity of the English-speaking world has become the peddler of the apostasy around the world.

The Multi-Version Weapon of the End Time

A major weapon of the Devil through his tares of workers and scholars in the End Time is the multi-version movement. In this last Laodicean Church Age when every man believes the way he wants to believe about God, it seems that everyone lusts for his own version of the Bible. Yet despite all these versions, there is more confusion about the Bible, more questioning of it, and more doubting of it today than in any other time in history. This delusion within the ranks of the institutional church is ever-deepening. Most ministers of our contemporary spend much of their sermon time criticizing and questioning scriptures they read, even questioning whether they should be in the Bible. Such men believe they have been called to be Bible critics rather than Bible proclaimers. Is it not most proper to stop and consider the spirit behind the fevered debate over the many English Bible versions?

After the Liberals and Modernists (at the turn of the twentieth century) opened the door for the Protestant world to begin accepting more than

one translation, the Neo-Evangelicals then brought the controversy into the evangelical world. The multi-Bible-version fever opened the door for the evangelical world to accept just about anything from the publishers marketing the Gospel. The versions became broader in their presentation as the liberty for “every man’s version” became a part of the Laodicean Church’s trendy mood and spirit of “doing that which is right in their own eyes.” Once the door opens, once the trend is accepted by the institutional church, then everyone is left to choose a version that pleases himself. With such an accepted spirit, who can say, or who should say which one is greater than the other?

God often uses forerunners before the final appointments of His plan. He used John the Baptist to “prepare the way” of the Lord, making the path straight for the Messiah’s public coming. He used pre-reformers before the Reformation’s reformers. The same was true in finally bringing forth the Word of God to the English-speaking world. God chose the beginnings of His Word in English with the versions such as the Wycliffe, Tyndale, and Geneva Bibles to be forerunners to prepare for the coming of a translation that would be the consummated English translation drawn from the previous ones. The King James Bible became the one upon which God placed His providential hand, preserv-

ing it over these past several centuries in the English-speaking world.

But we are now witnessing in the End Time the global falling away of the institutional Christian Church. The accepted trend of the versions is now rapidly mutating with every new version providing its unique contribution.

One important question needs to be asked. Is there a final version coming that will be the final Bible for the final Apostate Church? Is the multi-version debate we have been witnessing in the past one hundred years preparing the world for a coming final version? No doubt, this final version will have all the ingredients needed to be accepted by the World Church. Is the present plethora of English versions merely a collection of forerunners needed to acclimate the public church for diversity of thought and interpretation? If so, what will the final version be called? Though the New International Version has outsold in a given year the King James Bible as the new accepted version, what will be on the horizon next year, and the next, and the next? What surprising manuscript find will draw the church scholars into a carnal frenzy and cry, “We have found the true Bible”? The church of earth is accepting the trend of change even in their view of God, and His Son, and His written Word—ever changing with every generation.

As the NIV and the ESV are accepted today by a strong portion of the New Age Movement, what version out there will be accepted by all lifestyles, all beliefs, all religions, and all ethnic groups? The Antichrist will not make his debut necessarily denying the Word of God; he will appear by simply questioning (as the serpent), “Yea, hath God said?”

This serpentine spirit of questioning is the great controversy of the *versions* debate today. Our modern English world is now in the mood for new versions; they are strongly discontent with the old! The multi-version movement is part of the “Neo” movement for the final Apostate Church leading the rest of the religious world to ride the back of the scarlet-colored beast, the Antichrist. What will be the *version* to which all the modern English versions today have been leading us?

Conclusion

The original Pentateuch was stored in the side of the Ark resting and waiting for a king to copy and, by which, to rule the nation. This principle has been one of the unique characteristics of the King James Bible: it was copied or prepared for a king. The later versions have no such biblical identification.

But we must make it clear that we do not give allegiance to the “advanced revelation” view. We do not believe the beloved King James Bible is verbally

and plenary inspired as the original manuscripts are. We do believe, however, that God has preserved this version for the English-speaking world. It is not to the unending debate of scholarship that we look; we look to the sovereign, providential workings of God. It is too late in the End Time to get another version; there is no time to try and test it as the King James Bible has been tested over the centuries. The present popular versions will eventually wane in their “rise to fame” while another version will have for a season their “day in the sun” of depraved humanity. While these others rise with boastings, popularity, global acceptance, and glamorous endorsements, the beloved and God-honored King James Bible has been, in these final days of the End Time, maligned, hated, and intimidated. And like His Word, God’s saints will be maligned, hated, and intimidated by the popular church. The popular church will long to be rid of both this English version and the Christians who have embraced it.

We must repeat for emphasis: no other version has ever been identified with the battle against the apostasy and Romanism as the beloved King James Bible. It must be clearly proclaimed that *all* other versions of modern times have been part of the Neo-Christianity movement! Even the most conservative version elevated today in Fundamentalism and in Evan-

gicalism *has not* and *is not* identified with the battle against Rome (the end-time Mother Harlot) and the global apostasy of Protestantism. However, the King James Bible has been hated by the Church of Rome and by the World Council of Churches over these centuries. How often you can tell the character of a thing by its enemies, as well as by its friends.

In his book *Preserving the Preserved Word*, my dear father Dr. O. Talmadge Spence gave seven precious principles to preserve the preserved Word of God:

1. Preserve it in love. This means to simply preserve it, not prove it.
2. Preserve it by always using it publicly. This means to publicly preserve, not publicly compare it.
3. Preserve it by defending its English words publicly. This means to use its English words paramount to the English audience, not defending it by Biblical languages as a greater authority for the audience.
4. Preserve it in English Bible departments in Christian schools. This means teach the Elizabethan English distinctives of that time of the unity of the KJV [King James Bible] in reaction to the contemporary time in which we live.
5. Preserve it by witnessing and evangelizing—planting KJV [King James Bible] words for evangelism

and revival. This means we teach that God has His Word in our English-speaking world.

6. Preserve it in power. This means that an English word, under the work of the Holy Spirit, has the power of the Word of God behind it.
7. Preserve it in the doctrine to others, too. This means that all the fundamental principles of the Gospel can be easily found in the KJV [King James Bible].

Within Fundamentalism (the last movement of Christendom to be identified with the beloved King James Bible), the greatest change foreseen is that of divisions over “What is the text?” Although there has always been some latitude in what the interpretation of the text is, we must not be divided on “what is the text.” One day we will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (the *bematos*, 2 Cor. 5:10) and give account of ourselves. This accountability may include why we chose the version of Scripture we did as well as how we interpreted the Scripture. We take by personal faith the version of Scripture to which we have committed our lives. This too must be worked out with fear and trembling.

Our need is not better renderings, but rather a better understanding of that which has already been rendered through the years. As the English

version controversy rages all around us concerning the King James Bible, may we not hurt the good and reliable while purporting that we have found the better.

May God have mercy on Fundamentalism as it has certainly entered the vestibule of the contemporary with its generic preaching, its contemporary music, and its scholastic intoxication with the multi-versions of the Bible.

“The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of those that published it.” May we be part of that company!

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The Bible: God's Gift to Me

Dr. H. T. Spence

The Bible is the singular revelation from God that reveals the plan of God for the full conformity of an individual to the image of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the revelation that proclaims the universal Gospel for all mankind. It is the revelation that carefully unveils the self of all who come to its pages. It is the revelation that discloses how Christ can take the life and form it to become what God desires for the individual.

Through the medium of the world and the Devil, the mankind of Adam has had a multitude of voices to conform it into their image. Every day these voices call for conformity through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Publications, internet, television, government, education, music, pleasures of the world and its wardrobe, and especially the ally found within (the Old Man) all vie for conformity of that self to a universal man for all men.

The Bible reveals to all the need of coming into another kingdom, of another Man coming within the inner man of my soul, and of the conformity to this Man, Christ Jesus. The voices without and the Old Man within call us to become a man of the world. But when we become a Christian, the New Man (Christ Jesus within us) hears

the one voice of the Word of God and His Spirit.

Although the world desires the cloning of men to the ultimate loss of their individuality, this is not God's desire or will. God wants to preserve the individuality of every soul while bringing it into conformity to the New Man Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all mankind. We carefully read in the New Testament that though we are baptized into one body (the Christ), we are individual members; our purpose or function is uniquely different while complementing the whole. How does this happen?

The Bible: The Revelation of Humanity

The Bible was written with the principles of God woven through the many stories of men and women. It is not a collection of empty religious platitudes that typically mark other religious writings. It is a book dealing with humanity, with men and women, boys and girls. It tells their history, their thoughts, their motives, their failures, their weaknesses, and their successes. It speaks of a multitude of individuals; several lives are fully unfolded from birth to death. It is important to understand that the Bible was not written for angels; it was written for humans. It is God's revelation for humans, their

history and their living.

The Bible tells us of births, specific births, and how such births affected the lives of their families and others. It reveals how individuals came providentially into their birth genealogies and nativity surroundings and families. It reveals those who succumbed to the weaknesses of those surroundings, while others rose above their birth surroundings. The Bible amazingly gives such a variety of births and family environments that an individual should be able to find himself somewhere among its vast characters. There are enough stories presented in the Bible about one's birth situation, no matter what the situation is. Did providence appoint me to be an only child? Or the second, third, fourth, or fifth? The Bible will even speak of those who were born in a religious context and those who were not. It reveals the history of deaths, and the circumstances surrounding the different deaths—from glorious ones to suicides. It tells of those who died young (including those who died in infancy), of those who died in their prime, and of those who died in old age.

The Bible tells us of those who were born in poverty, in wealth, and in-between. It speaks of those who were born well, of those born with afflictions and handicaps; it speaks of those who came into afflictions and handicaps after they were born. It speaks of

blind men, the lame, and those who fell and became lame. Yes, God has given within the Bible so many human examples that they truly reveal every scenario of life.

Sometimes the Word reveals the physical problems of the individual—a woman with an issue of blood, a leper, a palsied one, or a blind man from birth or later in life. Other historical declarations do not reveal what the problem was, such as Paul's thorn in the flesh; however, enough information is revealed for men to gain from that which is told and even from that which is not known. The Christian is personally to gain from the principles revealed in each human situation.

Every man is born, and every man dies; every man is afflicted in some way or another. But the Bible reveals that every man is also "tempted." God will even give a variety of incidents where the steps of temptation came to the thoughts and heart. James 1:14 declares, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Every man is different in this, so God gave us in His Word a variety of people and their temptations. How did men such as Joseph, Samson, David, and Solomon handle the temptation of lust? We read of temptation to wealth, to the world, and to fleshly sins. We are told of the first man's temptation (the Devil through a serpent), and the second man's temptation only from

the Devil (Matthew 4); yet why did one yield and the other overcome? How do you overcome temptation, and how do you recover after succumbing to temptation? God has given so many stories of men's temptations, how they sinned, how they recovered, and how they overcame.

The Bible unveils people's lives to include their failures and successes. We read of Lot and the critical situations with his family. The Bible speaks of weak wives and strong wives, of weak husbands and strong husbands. We read of relatives and their influential powers to draw hearts away; even Jesus Christ was tempted by His mother and brethren to leave His preaching and come outside to visit them (Matt. 12:47–50). The Bible speaks of the process of David's temptation with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), the process of temptation with Joseph (Genesis 39), and the process of the temptation with Achan (Joshua 7). Yes, the Bible even gives the record of temptations that lead to compromise as well as difficult and delicate situations. The Bible presents a variety of situations with relatives, business, neighbors, employees, and employers. It presents stories that include situations with carnal believers and how to handle them, and with carnal relatives who profess to be Christians. It addresses situations with governments—when it is righteous and when it is against God. The Bible reveals situations when

laws are passed that are against God, and what we are to do with such laws.

What am I to do when I am alone? What am I to do when parents reject me? What am I to do with sickness, temporary or terminal? What am I to do with pain or discomfort? What is a wife to do when a husband forsakes her and their children? And how do I come to know what is right for my life, my occupation, my calling; how do I follow through with such commitments? The Bible reveals situations when the tribulations of life are overwhelming, when individuals did not know if they had the strength to live one more day.

God Wrote It All in the Bible

God placed in the Bible examples of all these circumstances and situations. The Bible is a book of eternal principles, a sacred book declaring God Himself and His Truth. But all is couched in human language, human living, human feelings, and human thoughts. God breathed all these words, but He did so through men in the circumstances and history of life. We read of Joseph being sold into slavery and taken down into Egypt. We read of how he as a young man dealt with it and of the fallout from this seeming tragedy. Moses wrote many details concerning the children of Israel, including how they rejected him. But how did Moses handle the people's gainsaying and rejection? The

story unfolds that Moses sometimes responded well and at other times he did not. Then there is the historical narrative of Daniel, a prophet caught in the vortex of the Babylonian and Persian governments. Similarly, Esther was caught as a woman in the Persian empire. Paul's life is told revealing his far-flung missionary journeys among the Gentiles. Matthew records the narrative of Jesus' earthly sojourn from a Jewish perspective; Mark, from a servant's perspective; Luke, from a perfect-man perspective; and John, from heaven's perspective of Christ's deity.

Is there a story of love in the Bible? We read of pure love in the Book of Ruth, and of the prime of love in the beautiful Song of Solomon. We will also read of the need of wisdom and discernment in the Book of Proverbs. Ecclesiastes reveals what is gained by a backslider returning to God after twenty years. The Bible presents denial, as Peter denied His Lord. We read of good marriages, bad marriages, good children and bad children, good grandchildren and bad grandchildren, etc. Yes, they are all found in the Bible!

With every conceivable situation, disposition, and circumstance of life found in the Bible, this precious book conveys the fullness of my life within its pages. It tells me everything that I will ever face, and how God wants me to come to Him, to overcome, and to live. And thus, ultimately how to be

conformed to the image of the blessed Son of Man.

Dear reader, the Bible is both a universal book and a personal self book. It tells me how to deal with sins committed, of the carnality that controls the self; it reveals that sanctification is an individual working of God to deal with the sin that has uniquely come out through me. Romans 7 reveals two different *I's* or *self's*. There is the self that God made, and there is the self that sin has made. The Bible reveals how I am to walk in the Spirit, and how I am to live in the Spirit? This blessed book reveals how providence works in individual lives and in individual situations. Through all these inspired details exemplified in the lives of those within the Scriptures, the Bible calls me to find Christ for every aspect of my life. Yea, I must find myself in Christ! As for the *I's* in Romans 7, which one is to die, and which one is to live? If I am to live, how am I to live, and how am I to live in Christ (Gal. 2:20)?

Conclusion

When we read the Bible, the characteristics and principles are to be taken personally, for the stories reveal how individuals took the workings of God personally.

Perhaps the Book of Psalms is a book within the books of Scripture that is composed fully with the thoughts and words of individuals

in the various circumstances of life. It truly is a book revealing personal, individual thoughts, more so than any other book in the Bible. These psalms, no doubt, cover every situation and circumstance we will ever face from our birth to our death. They reflect every mood of man's life; there is no single feeling or image that is not reflected in its mirror. Psalms reveals all griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, and anxieties. Yes, they all are found within the Psalter of the Bible. As the Bible is to guide us in our faith and detailed practices of life, the Psalter is most valuable for our emotions and feelings.

Ever since they have been written, the psalms have played a large part in

the life of God's people. The Israelites used them in a prolific manner in the temple worship; the Jews over the centuries used them in the synagogues. And the Christians from New Testament times throughout Church history have sung them. We as Christians find ourselves treading the same paths as those Christians mentioned in the psalms. And within these psalms we find a hope for the same heart of trust in God.

May the Lord's Spirit take the sacred book, *my Bible*, and make it *my Gospel* and *my book*. And may I become the product of its power and revelation for my personal life.



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Volume 6

Dr. H. T. Spence

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