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ART. II.—BURGON AND MILLER'S "TRADITIONAL TEXT OF THE HOLY GOSPELS."¹

THIS is a book that deserves more than a cursory glance. It should illustrate that saying of the "Preacher," that "the words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than" . . . I leave the rest to the recollection of my readers. Perhaps, however, I may be allowed to say that I am quite sure Dean Burgon's reasoning did not receive the attention really due to it in his lifetime. And I think the reason was partly to be found in the animus aroused by the controversy about the Revised New Testament. On the one side, there was the feeling that the authority of those who at least ought to know had been seriously impugned by his attack upon the Revisers. On the other side, there was the feeling of indignation excited, as I myself can testify, by the consciousness that men scoffed at the opinions maintained by Dean Burgon and by those who had followed his reasoning from the first, without taking the trouble to master them. What was it to them? They had taken degrees in Divinity, and obtained distinction for their knowledge of principles learned by listening to their teachers, which they had never really investigated for themselves. There could be for them no second opinion. To argue with such men that the balance of authority is really in favour of reading "God" instead of "Who" in 2 Tim. iii. 16; or to say that, after all, the last twelve verses of St. Mark are supported by overwhelming evidence as a genuine portion of the Gospel, was simply to expose one's self to incivility, as I can testify from personal experience. And I think that partisanship, or at least respect for living authority and habits learned at the feet of University teachers, in great measure accounted for this. Now, however, both Dean Burgon and Dr. Hort have been gathered to their fathers. Dean Burgon's posthumous work is before us. And the very fact that it is posthumous, and consists of materials left by him, and worked up by a different hand, deprives it of that element which was at once most distinctly *personal* to his friends and his adversaries. We who knew and did not misunderstand him, miss the life and fire of his well-known style. Our adversaries miss the vigorous and scathing language of rebuke, in which he exposed their infidelity, as he counted it, to the cause of sacred truth. Perhaps indifference, rather than infidelity, was their chief

¹ "The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels, Vindicated and Established by the late John William Burgon, B.D., Dean of Chichester." Arranged, completed, and edited by Edward Miller, M.A. George Bell and Sons.

delinquency. One comes at last to see that ordinary men—or, say, five out of six among men whose abilities are not ordinary—have not the energy, or the independence, or, they would say, the impudence, to contemplate the probability or even the possibility that the experts of the day may be in the wrong, the recognised authorities groping in the dark, and much in need of most unwelcome correction.

Well, here is the book—at least, its first instalment. And I am permitted to write these lines, in order to persuade some men to read the book calmly, with open minds, to try to grasp what it means, and to ascertain our true duty in regard to the text of the New Testament, and, most of all, the text of the Holy Gospels. For more than ever am I convinced, as years go on, that very few of us have the least idea what wonderful books the Gospels are. Gospel Harmony itself is a subject very little understood. And it is not that the matter is in itself beyond the reach of men's understanding, or women's either, for that matter, as I have ample proof. It is that hardly any one sees that there is anything worth the pains of "weighing the words of the Gospels in hair-scales," as Dean Burgon used to do. A very cursory glance, a casual opinion, is enough for most people. And as for suspecting that the weight of common authority may by any mischance have been cast into the wrong scale, the very notion is enough to mark the man who holds it as cracked!

I wish to rouse a little interest in the study. I want you to read this book, with the belief that it may possibly have some instruction for you. Let me introduce you to the title: "The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels." Pray, what may that be?

It is the text of the most precious portion of that Word of which the Church is a "Witness and Keeper"—the very foundation of the "faith once for all delivered to the saints."

Well, where is it to be found? Give it to me, and I will do my best to keep it.

It is to be found, as Bentley, Master of Trinity, told us long ago, not in any one, or two, or three, or four, or five old manuscripts, but in the whole body of copies, versions, and Fathers belonging to the Christian Church. It is not badly represented in the "Textus Receptus." But that is not by any means immaculate. It is most certainly not the text of the Revisers. Their emendations of the *text* of the Gospels appear, on sober consideration, to have been the very worst part of their work.

If this be so, it must be allowed to be a serious fault. But on what ground do you make the charge? Read Mr. Miller's

book attentively, and you may soon learn. I am but writing an introduction to it for the readers of this magazine. Review it I could not, being committed to its reputation by an appendix, in which my own slight contribution appears. But though this is small, it is aimed at the very vitals of one position of the late Dr. Hort, wherein he maintained that the Curetonian Syriac is of older date than the Peshitto. He did this because he only classified characteristic readings, and then formed a verdict. If he had read the two versions side by side, and compared them sentence by sentence, he must have seen for himself in a very little while, that the one is an emendation of the other throughout, and that all emendation is on the side of the Curetonian, and that the facts cannot by any possibility be the other way. Now that is a sample. The Revisers acted in all good faith as a company. It were a shame to think otherwise. But, with all respect be it said, when they attempted to revise the text at all, they undertook a task for which they had no adequate preparation or equipment. They should have let it alone for the present, and confined themselves to the translation. Even there the fundamental position of the most learned of their number, the late Bishop Lightfoot, has not escaped serious damage when tested by time and the light of experience. How well I remember, when his book on "A Fresh Revision of the New Testament" first appeared, how self-evident its leading principles seemed to be: with what pleasure I devoured it from end to end, and wrote to him on the only point on which I saw a chance of differing, the question whether the Greek word for St. Paul's *thorn* in the flesh meant a *stake* or not, as he insisted; and the delight with which I sent him a reference in the LXX. that he had missed, viz., "pricks in your eyes," in Num. xxxiii. 55. But his contention then, which one accepted without a shadow of suspicion that it could be wrong, was, *the same word in English where possible for the same word in Greek throughout the New Testament*. The Revisers followed it, and the result was, not an English book at all, but a crib to the Greek text revised, simply. *That* we none of us foresaw. And yet we might have done. The English-speaking public throughout the world are witnesses. But to return to the point. Please note that these personal reminiscences are not in the least for display, but simply to excite a little interest. I do not pretend to be a wiseacre.

I say then, that our worthy Revisers were not competent to revise the Greek text of the Gospels, because, in the first place, there were only two of them who were specialists in textual criticism at all, Dr. Scrivener on one side, and Dr. Hort on the other. Dr. Hort was the better pleader. Dr. Scrivener him-

self told me that he (Dr. Hort) talked for three years of the ten spent upon the book—and the result is before us.

But why were they not competent? Because both these experts more or less, and the rest of the company absolutely, were in subservience to the accepted theory of textual critics in general, that the true text of the New Testament is laid up in a *portion* only of the witnesses to it, and that to examine the whole is needless. Whereas, on the contrary, the true text is not that of any portion of the witnesses, but the net result of the testimony of the whole. That seems a simple statement in itself to some; to others it seems a falsehood. Well, read what is written in these pages, and see. You will have to come to it in the long-run. It is of no use to plead that the best witnesses absolutely in every case are the five old uncials, known to the learned as A, B, the sign for Aleph in Hebrew, and C and D. They are the oldest extant manuscripts, and that is all. They do not come within centuries of the autographs. Yet, by habitually appealing first to them, a *pre judicium* in their favour is created, which gives them, upon some questions, more than their real value.

The volume before me gives, and explains carefully, seven notes of truth: 1, Antiquity or primitiveness; 2, Consent of witnesses, or number; 3, Variety of evidence, or catholicity; 4, Respectability of witnesses, or weight; 5, Continuity, or unbroken tradition; 6, Evidence of the entire passage, or context; 7, Internal considerations, or reasonableness.

I cannot here enlarge upon the meaning of all these. But one main consideration may receive a few words. If the Bible, as preserved in every Church of East and West, bears witness to one reading, or form of text, whether by cursive or uncial writing, it is manifestly unfair to condemn that form of text upon the testimony of two old uncials, which happen to come from one and the same quarter, and exhibit only one special line of tradition. One cannot but be struck in reflecting on this matter—and it is one on which I have thought much during the last fourteen years—one cannot but be impressed with the way in which the men of our generation have given themselves over to specialists in the matter of Biblical criticism, whether of the Old or New Testament. It seems to be forgotten that the only true specialists in Holy Scripture are the Prophets and Apostles, acting under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Church, in its most distinguished members or in its collective capacity, is but the "Witness and Keeper" of the Deposit which was once received. We have no right to set aside the Bible, which all Christendom has kept from the beginning, out of deference to experts of any sort or kind. When the manuscripts of the New Testament which we have

are *all* collated, and their evidence grouped correctly according to the Churches represented, and the continuity of the tradition of each Church: when we have, alongside of this apparatus, the versions also similarly collated and grouped in continuous order: and when the Fathers of each Church that bears witness are set forth with their testimony beside the copies and versions, then we shall have a real apparatus outlined, and be in a position to see, what our Revisers certainly did not know, the real verdict of the Church of Christ upon the text of the New Testament—the complete traditional text. At present the untrustworthiness of the common method is only too evident, while we have not yet worked out the problem which textual critics have too hastily attempted to solve. Dean Burgon's work was a real step in the right direction. And his text of the Gospels has a basis which it will not be easy to disturb. Dr. Hort's theory attempted to shut us up practically to the testimony of one Church—Alexandria, and two principal manuscripts, which he himself proved to be not independent witnesses. The verdict resulting from his theory, in many particulars, was opposed to the collective testimony of all Christendom. When his oldest version, the Curetonian, and his two oldest copies are shown to be unworthy of the high value which he placed upon them, and his theory of their being the "neutral" text, as opposed to a Syrian recension, which never took place, is shattered for want of any historical evidence to support it, we may well ask what remains of the foundation on which the Revisers' text chiefly rests? It is fairly disposed of. And Mr. Miller is no blind follower of Dean Burgon's theories. In his preparation for the publication of this volume, he has re-edited the whole of Scrivener's great work on the text of the New Testament. And besides this, he has, in the volume before us, collected the witness of all the Early Fathers to what Dr. Hort was pleased to call the "Syrian" text of the fourth century. Mr. Miller has shown that this testimony is emphatically in favour of the traditional text, in the proportion of three to two. On thirty important passages, "it beats its opponent in the proportion of three to one." A special Appendix is devoted to bringing out the sceptical character of the two old uncials, the Vatican and Sinaitic MSS.

Many minute points of interest are to be found in the volume, which I must not mention here. I do but refer once more to the main purpose of what I have written, which is, to remind our readers that the question of the text of the New Testament has not been settled for us by authority as yet—most certainly not by the authority of the Revisers; and that if from idleness and reluctance to look into an important question, we leave this matter to go by the judgment of supposed experts, instead

of hearing and keeping the testimony of the Church at large, in a matter in which the Church has really received a Deposit, we shall be answerable for the consequences to the cause of Truth.

C. H. WALLER, D.D.

ART. III.—THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION QUESTION.

THE withdrawal of the Education Bill, after it had passed its second reading by a majority of 267, has caused a not unnatural feeling of annoyance in the minds of those friends and supporters of Voluntary Schools who approved of the main principles of the Bill, which, so far as it referred to primary education, were three: (a) Decentralization, by the establishment of a county authority to undertake some of the duties at present discharged by the Education Department, and new duties imposed upon them by the Bill; (b) increased financial aid to poor schools, Voluntary and Board; and (c) a security for definite religious teaching in accordance with the expressed wishes of the parents of the children. When the first feeling of irritation has passed away, it will probably be felt that, though the Government has undoubtedly received a severe shaking by the course of events, the cause of education will probably in the long-run gain by the delay. Further discussion of the new principles which the Bill contains will be of great advantage, and will, I feel sure, show how carefully it was thought out, and how valuable are some of those provisions which at first startled many of us by their novelty and unexpectedness; while, on the other hand, some undesirable features of the Bill may be modified or removed with advantage during the breathing-time gained, especially some which seemed to outsiders to show that, after the Bill has been carefully prepared by its authors, not only in the interests of Voluntary Schools especially, but of education generally, influences had been at work and changes made, which once more show the truth of the old adage, "Too many cooks spoil the broth."

It may be hoped also that the delay which will occur will show to some friends of the Bill and of the Government the folly of making unreasonable demands, and remind them also of another truth which the large majority on the second reading helped to put out of sight, "A house divided against a house falleth."

The Government will speedily recover their lost ground if