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## Going forward or sitting back?

*Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? Numbers 32 v 6*

We considered this text recently in the prayer meeting. The rebuke administered by Moses was occasioned by the desire of the two tribes of Rueben and Gad to remain on the east side of the river Jordan. It was a land suitable for their cattle. They were then prepared initially to allow their brethren (the other tribes) to cross the Jordan and to bear the responsibility of subduing the Promised Land. Moses, according to Matthew Henry, saw “evil in this motion”.

Sadly, we often see the same attitude among professing Christians. The Church is called to advance the cause of truth. The Great Commission is still in place. Every believer is to be involved. We recall the words of Frank Houghton –

“We bear the torch that flaming  
Fell from the hands of those  
Who gave their lives proclaiming  
That Jesus died and rose  
Ours is the same commission  
The same glad message ours,  
Fired with the same glad message  
To Thee we yield our power.”

We are to “strive together for the faith of the gospel” (Phillipians Ch 1 v 2) How easy however, it seems to withdraw from the work and to allow a decreasing minority to “take up the slack”. We can give reasons perhaps why we shouldn’t be involved. There were reasons why the tribes would not initially go up. We could site unbelief, love of ease, self concern and indifference to the brethren. How the flesh shrinks back from service! It entails self-sacrifice, discipline, co-operation with fellow believers an ordering of priorities and above all a passion for the glory of God. So many commands in Scripture are social. We are not to “go it alone”. The Church is a body with members, a house with living stones.

*Are you playing your part? Or are we allowing others to go to war while we “sit here”.*

By Neil Pfeiffer.

# FINAL JUDGMENT UPON SECRET SINS

**Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)**

*“But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”  
Romans 2:8-9*

WHEN the Day of Judgment comes, [the wicked] shall rise to the resurrection of damnation. When that day comes, all mankind that have died from off the face of the earth shall arise—not only the righteous, but also the wicked. “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2). “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Rev 20:13). The damned in hell know not the time when the Day of Judgment will be; but when the time comes, it will be made known. It will be the most dreadful news that ever was told in that world of misery. It is always a doleful time in hell. The world of darkness is always full of shrieks and doleful cries. But when the news is heard that the Day appointed for the judgment is come, hell will be filled with louder shrieks and more dreadful cries than ever before.

When Christ comes in the clouds of heaven to judgment, the news of it will fill both earth and hell with mourning and bitter crying. We read that all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him, and so shall all the inhabitants of hell. Then must the souls of the wicked come up to be united to their bodies and stand before the Judge. They shall not come willingly, but shall be dragged forth as a malefactor is dragged out of his dungeon to execution. They were unwilling when they died to leave the earth to go to hell. But now they will be much more unwilling to come out of hell to go to the last judgment. It will be no deliverance to them: it will only be a coming forth to their execution. They will hang back, but must come. The devils and damned spirits must come up together. The last trumpet will then be heard: this will be the most terrible sound to wicked men and devils that ever was heard. Not only the wicked that shall then be found dwelling on the earth shall hear it, but also those that are in their graves. “Marvel not at this: for

the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (Joh 5:28-29).

Then must the souls of the wicked enter their bodies again, which will be prepared only to be organs of torment and misery. It will be a dreadful sight to them when they come to their bodies again, those bodies that were formerly used by them as the organs and instruments of sin and wickedness and whose appetites and lusts they indulged and gratified. The parting of soul and body was dreadful to them when they died, but their meeting again at the resurrection will be more dreadful... Thus shall they rise out of their graves, and shall lift up their eyes and see the Son of God in the clouds of heaven in the glory of His Father with all His holy angels with Him (Mat 25:31). Then shall they see their Judge in His awful majesty. [This] will be the most amazing sight to them that ever they saw and will still add new horrors. That awful and terrible majesty in which He will appear and the manifestation of His infinite holiness will pierce their souls...

Then must they appear before their Judge to give up their account. They will find no mountains or rocks to fall upon them that can cover them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Many of them will see others at that time. [Some] were formerly their acquaintance, who shall appear with glorious bodies, with joyful countenances and songs of praise, and mounting up as with wings to meet the Lord in the air, while they are left behind. Many shall see their former neighbors and acquaintance, their companions, their brothers, and their wives taken and they left. They shall be summoned to go and appear before the Judgment Seat. Go they must, however unwilling. They must stand at Christ’s left hand in the midst of devils and wicked men. This shall again add still further amazement and will cause their horror still to be in a further degree than ever. With what horror will that company come together!

Then shall they be called to their account. Then shall be brought to light the hidden things of darkness. Then shall all the wickedness of their hearts be made known. Then shall be declared the actual wickedness they have been guilty of. Then shall appear their secret sins that they have kept hid from the eye of the world. Then shall be manifested in their true light those sins that they used to plead for and to excuse and justify. And then shall all their sins

be set forth in all their dreadful aggravations. All their filthiness will be brought to light to their everlasting shame and contempt. Then it shall appear how heinous many of those things were that they in their lifetime made light of. Then will it appear how dreadful their guilt is in thus ill-treating so glorious and blessed a Savior.

And all the world shall see it! Many shall rise up in judgment against them and condemn them: their companions whom they tempted to wickedness, others whom they have hardened in sin by their example shall rise up against many of them. The heathen that have had no advantages in comparison of them and many of whom have yet lived better lives than they shall rise up against them. And they shall be called to a special account: the Judge will reckon with them, they shall be speechless, they shall be struck dumb, their own consciences bearing testimony against them and shall cry aloud against them. For they shall then see how great and terrible a God He is against Whom they have sinned. Then shall they stand at the left hand, while they see others whom they knew on earth sitting at the right hand of Christ in glory, shining forth as the sun, accepted of Christ and sitting with Him to judge and condemn them.

Then the sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced by the Judge upon them. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat 25:41). This sentence will be pronounced with awful majesty. There shall be great indignation; and dreadful wrath shall then appear in the Judge—in His voice with which He shall pronounce the sentence. What a horror and amazement will these words strike into the hearts of the wicked on whom they shall be pronounced! Every word and syllable shall be like the most amazing thunder to them and shall pierce their souls like the fiercest lightning! The Judge will bid them depart from Him. He will drive them from His presence as exceedingly abominable to Him. And He shall give them the epithet accursed: they shall be an accursed company, and He will not only bid them depart from His presence, but into everlasting fire, to dwell there as their only fit habitation. What shows the dreadfulness of the fire is that it is prepared for the devil and his angels. They shall lie forever in the same fire in which the devils, those grand enemies of God, shall be tormented! When this sentence shall be pronounced, there shall be, in the vast company at the left hand, tremblings, mourning, crying, and gnashing of teeth in a new manner—beyond all that ever was before. If the

devils—those proud and lofty spirits—tremble many ages beforehand at the bare

thoughts of this sentence, how will they tremble when it comes to be pronounced! And how, alas! will wicked men tremble! Their anguish will be aggravated by hearing that blessed sentence pronounced on those who shall be at the right hand: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34).

Then the sentence shall be executed. When the Judge bids them depart, they must go. However [unwilling], yet they must go. Immediately upon the finishing of the judgment and the pronouncing of the sentence will come the end of the world. The frame of this world shall be dissolved—the heavens be dissolved, and then the earth shall be set on fire. As God in wrath once destroyed the world by a flood of water, so now shall He cause it to be all drowned in a deluge of fire; and the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and “the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2Pe 3:10); and that great company of devils and wicked men must then enter into those everlasting burnings to which they are sentenced. In this condition, they shall remain throughout the never-ending ages of eternity. Their punishment shall be then complete, and it shall remain in this completion forever. Now shall all that come upon them that they so long trembled for fear of, while their souls were in a separate state. They will dwell in a fire that never shall be quenched, and here they must wear out eternity... There is no reckoning up the millions of years or millions of ages; all arithmetic here fails, no rules of multiplication can reach the amount, for there is no end. They shall have nothing to do to pass away their eternity, but to conflict with those torments. This will be their work forever and ever. God shall have no other use or employment for them. This is the way that they must answer the end of their being. And they never shall have any rest, nor any atonement, but their torments will hold up to their height and shall never grow any easier by their being accustomed to them. Time will seem long to them, every moment shall seem long to them, but they shall never have done with the ages of their torment.

From “Sermon VII” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust, [www.banneroftruth.org](http://www.banneroftruth.org).

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Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): American Congregational minister; well-known Puritan preacher and author during the Great Awakening; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.

## News of the Fellowship

On the Lord's Day September 20th we received a visit from our friend Rev. Malcolm Watts. Mr. Watts has been a faithful preacher of the Gospel in Salisbury for over 30 years. Our Pastor was preaching at Wattisham Chapel in Suffolk.

The following week we enjoyed an after church fellowship in the Church school-room. Mr. and Mrs Stefano Marioti shared something of their work in Bologna Northern Italy. We hope to keep abreast of the work with regular updates. We continue to remember other friends labouring in that country including Pietro Lorefice (Sicily) and Antonio De Noia (S.E.Italy). Mr.Lorefice is recovering from a slight stroke.

On the Lord's Day October 25th we were supplied by Rev. Mick Harris. Mr. Harris is a retired minister who served the Lord in the London and Cheltenham area. He is a member of the Bible League Trust .Mr. Pfeiffer was preaching that day in Emmanuel Evangelical Church in Salisbury.

At our prayer meeting on the 21st of October we received a visit from Pastor Graham Haddow who serves the Lord in Mayrhofen ,Austria. He was called there at the age of 50 and has served 23 years .He is due to retire from the field next year and prayer is requested for a man to carry on the work there. He is also looking for guidance as to where to live in England when he returns home.

A small group of interested folk gathered to consider house visitation. Mr. Pfeiffer highlighted biblical principles as we seek to obey the Great Commission. We are to go to men and women with the Gospel. We have a sending God. It is hoped to commence this work shortly and to continue it three times a year with a simple printed message.

We are thankful to the Lord for seeing a number of people " raised up" including Mrs. Jane Hughes and Don Rowlands. We continue to remember the sick including Mrs. May Rabey who has suffered a stroke ,and Mrs. Avril Edwards and Mrs Mary Turner.

On Friday 6th November we had our Y.P. bonfire night at the home of Mr and Mrs. Mundy in Carmel. We were treated to the usual fireworks and ensuing refreshments including a bonfire shaped chocolate cake! Mr Mundy spoke from Psalm 102 vs 6 and 7 referring to creatures "not in their place". As a result they were sad, exposed to death and had no food. He drew a parallel with sinners who, being far from God, are not in their place. We are thankful for the hospitality given.

## Diary

### Lord's Days:

December

6th	–	Rev. Dafydd Morris	–	Communion - p.m
13th	–	Pastor		
20th	–	Pastor	–	Communion -a.m <i>after-church fellowship</i>
27th	–	Pastor		

January

3rd	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
10th	–	Pastor		
17th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m <i>after-church fellowship</i>
24th	–	Pastor		
31st	–	Rev. Colin Jones		

February

7th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - p.m
14th	–	Pastor		
21th	–	Pastor	–	Communion - a.m <i>after-church fellowship</i>
28th	–	Pastor		

### Pastor's engagements:

Lord's Day Dec 6th –Pencoed

.. .. Jan 31st – Exeter Reformed Baptist.

Please note- An after-church fellowship is held on every third Sunday of the month.

Christmas morning service -10 a.m.

## Peniel Green Fellowship Trip 2009

### Howell Harris and the Countess of Huntingdon

*Nathan Munday*

On Friday the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, Peniel Green chapel held its annual historical trip. This year we were driven to the heart of the Brecon Beacons in a trip round about the town of Brecon or Aberhonddu in Welsh. Howell Harris the great, eccentric, godly, powerful non conformist preacher; and Selina, Countess of Huntingdon the ‘Queen of the Methodists’ were our main characters that we would be taught about. The day begun with a powerful rain, which disheartened many of the folk. Our buses were bombarded by water until we drove north and the sun came out again. This was a relief! We had a stop half way for toilets and a stretch and we proceeded toward Brecon.



Our first stop in our two rather small vehicles was the parish church of Llangasty-Talyllyn about ten minutes from Brecon itself. After a very narrow lane we descended down the valley toward a very picturesque lake and the church on the coast hence the name ‘Talyllyn’. The speaker throughout this year’s trip was my grandfather Mr Higham. The church not a jewel of history by far is well known for one thing, being the true awakening of the great Howell

Harris. In the bell tower lies a quiet room where the Holy Ghost filled his heart and gave him blessed assurance and fire from heaven.

He was indeed a key character in the great revival, a giant of Wales although his somewhat strange ways. Mr Higham explained in a concise talk the great role that Harris played in the revival. He was the first man to preach outside the Church of England in Wales, being a very brave thing to do at the time. If anybody went through fire and water it was he. This man saw the need of revival and he travelled hundreds of miles preaching the true word opening the minds of both simple and clever folk to the one true gospel. Williams Pant y Celyn wrote:

“In the all prevailing darkness,  
From Trefeca, burning bright,  
Came a man of fierce passion,  
Blazing fiery sparks of light.”



**Howell Harris  
as a young  
preacher**

He came to faith at a communion service in Talgarth, but in Llangasty God answered his prayers for assurance and acceptance into his kingdom. He never forgot that day in June being the watershed of his life. He was tempted on many an occasion: “ I was sorely tempted to believe Satan that God does not exist” but God preserved this appointed man for his work in South Wales. He was a schoolmaster for a while and then he went to Oxford to train as a minister. He wasn't there for long being so disgusted by the life there. It reminded me of how Paul was “stirred in his spirit” at Athens when he saw the sin there.

Anyhow although being denied the priesthood many times due to “preaching irregularly” he came into contact with another great giant being Daniel Rowland in 1737 who encouraged as a great friend and a co -preacher in the great awakening. Through Harris, the mighty William Williams would be converted and another less known Howell Davies who would work immensely in Pembrokeshire. 1752 was a year when Harris and Rowlands quarrelled over leadership and pride overtook them both. We see that even these great men could fall. (Williams intervened later on as a great peace - maker.) He withdrew to Trefeca and would later set up the peculiar commune known as the ‘family’.



**The new Trefeca college.**

As I mentioned he was an extraordinary character. His patriotism obvious when he set up the famous Brecon militia in order to defend his motherland from the feared French forces. He appointed himself captain and Mr Higham told us of how he preached the sermon with his guards surrounding him lest a mob would arise.

In 1773 he died leaving a lasting legacy of outstanding spirit- touched sermons and the shaking up of Welsh gentry and peasant alike. His funeral was a large one with over 20,000 in attendance. He was indeed a great Welshman and although an eccentric and somewhat strange man, he was a ‘key player’ in the great awakening in 18<sup>th</sup> century Wales. Before we left, I saw Mr Evans and Mr Ken Williams robbing the Church of England of their fruit supplies! There they were amidst the branches and the hawthorn grasping at the damsons. Making the most of their day out.

Our buses then took us to lunch in a village called Three Cocks about five miles out of Brecon. We sat for hours awaiting our long sought after meal! I was very hungry by the time the food actually came. I felt like Esau awaiting his lentils! But, the food was lovely, the fish especially, and we were well fed for the remainder of the day.

We proceeded toward the college of Talgarth where we were given a talk on Selina, countess of Huntingdon. Trefeca was the home of Howell Harris. In 1768 a college was set up in Trefeca under Harris' supervision. The college was funded by the wealthy, aristocratic Countess of Huntingdon. Harris came into contact with the Countess in 1739 in a London preaching service. She was obviously a woman of noble birth and as she grew spiritually, she supported the evangelical movements in England and Wales. She sold much of her jewels in order to support the poor and funded the building of many chapels throughout the land.

She built the college in order to train evangelical, Calvinistic, reformed young men to be preachers. Harris also believed that a school to train men outside the Church of England would be a good idea. For they would be free from bishop domination. The building they chose was known as 'College farm' and still stands today. (We saw the building when leaving the current college.) This was a great celebration of Methodism and the college opened in 1768 under the preaching of the great George Whitefield. The college had a strict regime and was ruled with an iron rod by Harris. Mr Higham told us of the disciplined daily routine and then told us of the lack of qualified tutors that were available. A twelve-year-old boy was appointed; which obviously was a shambles. This was a peculiar appointment by the Countess that showed their slight eccentricity at the time. The Rev. Fletcher was appointed by Harris to fill in the post.

The Countess and Harris were both very strong characters and in 1772 the college was separated. Both blamed each other for wanting total superiority. Harris said: "The woman can't bare contradiction." The Countess replied: "It is my college, my masters, my students. Great and glorious things will come from my college, and let anyone tremble that let's the world or the devil in." Unfortunately Harris died shortly after the separation and both characters never made up (as far as we know.)



**The Countess**

Anyhow the Countess continued her great work throughout England and supported many ministers in this crucial time in Christian history. We see clearly how God used this powerful woman to aid the revival both financially and spiritually. God provided for the Methodists through this unique and powerful woman. Not only did

she influence the common people; but also she witnessed to the aristocracy and to the hierarchy of the land. Even the king himself would have known this most influential individual. There is certainty that you either loved her or hated her. Her position was used at an advantage especially in a time where women were to be 'seen and not heard'. John Wesley argued with her and was never received in her home. But she was very fond of his brother, the great hymnist Charles Wesley. He often visited her. The Countess spent a long period in Wales until her health deteriorated meaning her return to London.

Although an English lady her love of Wales was undoubted especially of Trefeca. She saw Trefeca as "Heaven on Earth" and she felt at home with the Welsh people. These were her "welsh family" and she never ceased to support them throughout her life. She was a great woman. Her evangelical zeal produced a powerful, godly, pious Christian lady. God used her throughout her eighty-three years on Earth. She died on June 17<sup>th</sup> 1791. She had a very grand funeral and the preacher was the famous David Jones Llangan. A young minister who would be the next generation of great welsh, Calvinistic Methodist preachers. He compared her to Deborah; and another said that Harris, Whitefield, and other great men who had gone before her would accept her in Heaven.

During her life someone complained to King George the third about the Lady's unusual 'zealous' ways; he answered: "I wish all my bishops had the zeal of this woman." This shows how influential this woman was that even a king would admire her godliness. Indeed, she was a colourful controversial but her faith would be a foundation in the great awakening. Without her, it would have been much more difficult for the famous men we hear so much about to do what they did. God used both men and women, especially this woman. She was a major force that spread the true, pure gospel throughout this Great Britain.

The fellowship continued with an afternoon tea at the college and we all had the opportunity to look around the complex before returning to the buses. We returned to Peniel Green after a good day of fellowship. We had learnt once again about our local history and how God has moved through the ages. We had heard of great individuals, which are an example to us all like modern Christians. I certainly learnt new things on the trip especially after seeing the places, which have seen and heard great things from our past.

## The Weakest Link

from *Free Church Witness* November 2005

### *The Preservation of Scripture (WCF 1.8)*

**Rev D P Murray**

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The chain that secures for us an infallible and perfect Bible has four vital links. The first link is ‘revelation’, the process by which God accurately revealed Himself to the human writers of Scripture. The second link is ‘inspiration’, the process by which God ensures that the human writers of Scripture accurately recorded the revelations He gave to them. The third link is ‘preservation’, the process by which God preserved His written Word through the years as it was repeatedly copied from the original Hebrew scrolls and Greek manuscripts. The fourth and final link is ‘translation’ from the original languages into various world languages. All four links are necessary if we are to enjoy the blessing of an ‘authentic’ or infallible Bible. It is the third of these, the preservation of Scripture, which we shall consider in this article.

The divine preservation of the Scriptures is God’s powerful keeping of His Word through the years. The Westminster Confession (1.8) puts it like this: ‘The Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek being immediately inspired by God, *and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical*’. In other words, not only were the original scrolls penned by the prophets and apostles rendered infallible by the inspiration of God, the copying of these manuscripts through the years has been similarly guided and guarded by God. Scripture proofs for this doctrine are: ‘Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Mt.5:18); ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away’ (Mt.24:35).

The preservation of the Scriptures is not some unimportant biblical doctrine, of interest only to academics and theologians. It is as important as the inspiration of the Scriptures. If the message was not from God no amount of careful copying will make it from God. Likewise, if the Bible has not been perfectly preserved then it does not matter if it was originally inspired. If the message was not carefully copied through the years then the original divine inspiration was pointless. To put it bluntly, our whole salvation depends on the divine inspiration *and* preservation of the Scriptures. One without the other would fatally undermine our confidence in the way of salvation revealed in the Scriptures.

## **I. SATANIC ATTACKS ON THE SCRIPTURES**

The Bible has been attacked more than any other book in history. The Devil has used many strategies. God's Word has been questioned, contradicted, banned, neglected, mocked, cut up, buried, burned, and criticised. It has been attacked by scientists, philosophers, psychologists, novelists, dramatists, journalists, teachers, artists, politicians, dictators, popes, cults and even theologians. However, the Word of the Lord endures forever. Its continued existence is a miracle which can only be explained by God's 'singular care and providence', to which we shall now turn.

## **II. DIVINE PRESERVATION OF THE SCRIPTURES**

Having accepted by faith that God has both inspired and preserved His Word in all ages, the question arises as to how He did it. Obviously our beloved Authorised Version did not just drop out of heaven complete with black leather binding. How did God preserve the divinely inspired Scriptures through the years? There are two main answers to this question: through special providence, or through so called scientific principles. As already noted, the first answer is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith. The latter view has arisen in the last 150 years and has seriously undermined the Word of God. We shall examine both of these views in turn.

### **1. Special Providence**

God, who inspired the infallible Scriptures, has, through His church, preserved what He gave for the church's use and benefit. This has resulted in the 'Received Text' (also known as the 'Textus Receptus'), as it is the text which the church has received and handed down through the years. This has happened in three stages.

#### **(a) The Jewish Church**

God chose the Jewish Church to be the guardian of the Old Testament Scriptures. Although Christ rebuked the Jewish teachers of His day for their false doctrine, yet He never accused them of corrupting the sacred text. The Apostle Paul said that one of the Jews' privileges was that to them 'were committed the oracles of God'. The Hebrew copies we have today, known as the 'Masoretic Text', coincide with all the early translations of the Hebrew Scriptures.

#### **(b) The Greek Church**

God chose the Greek Church to guard the New Testament Scriptures. Firstly, many trustworthy copies of the original New Testament manuscripts were produced by faithful scribes. Secondly, these trustworthy copies were read and recopied by true believers down through the centuries. Thirdly, untrustworthy copies were not so

generally read or so frequently copied and so were eventually rejected and laid aside. The resulting text is therefore a trustworthy reproduction of the divinely inspired original manuscript. This text is often called the ‘Byzantine Text’ as it was the text in use in the Greek Church during the greater part of the Byzantine period (452-1453 AD).

### (c) The Reformation Church

God chose the Reformation Church to receive from the Jews the ‘Masoretic Text’ of the Old Testament, and from the Greeks the ‘Byzantine Text’ of the New Testament. Together these are now known as the ‘Received Text’. Since the Reformation, thousands more Greek manuscripts have been discovered. Most of these agree so closely that they may be said to represent the same ‘Byzantine Text’ or ‘Received Text’.

The accuracy of this text is confirmed by the Scripture quotes found in the writings of the earliest Christians. These are so numerous that the whole New Testament might be gathered from the words of writers dating before the 7th century AD, and they prove the exact state of the text at the time in which they were made. They establish the antiquity of the ‘Received Text’ and its superior acceptance in the earliest period.

The accuracy of the ‘Received Text’ is further established by very early translations of the Greek New Testament into other languages. Some of these were translated before our oldest existing Greek manuscripts and thus testify to the contents of still earlier manuscripts. The great weight of this evidence is also favourable to the ‘Received Text’ — the text from which the Authorised Version is translated.

## **2. Scientific Principles**

The theory of Scripture preservation through scientific principles was originally proposed in the 1800s by the liberal Anglican churchmen, Professors Westcott and Hort. However their ‘scientific’ or ‘rationalistic’ method has been embraced by many Evangelical and Reformed scholars, and the resulting Text underlies most modern versions on the market today.

The Westcott & Hort theory begins with the assumption that infallibility rests only in the original scrolls and manuscripts, the actual documents written by the apostles and prophets. The theory goes on to claim that, since about 400 AD, corruptions have crept into the copying process through carelessness and through the desire of orthodox churchmen to ‘smooth out’ and ‘fill out’ the Scriptures. Westcott & Hort believed that the biblical text stayed in this corrupt form for 1500 years until the

discovery of a handful of older Greek manuscripts in the 1800s (often called the Alexandrian Text), which, They allege, gave clues to the original purer

text of the early New Testament Church. In essence, then, advocates of this view do not believe in 'providential preservation' of the Scriptures but 'providential restoration'. They claim that the pure text was lost to the Church for 1500 years, and now is being restored through application of the standard scientific principles of literary criticism which scholars use to reconstruct the text of any ancient book.

The Westcott & Hort theory, however, rests on the questionable assumption that the oldest manuscripts are the best and most accurate. However, their continued existence may simply be explained by lack of use. They survived because the Church set them aside as inaccurate and corrupt. As the Rev T H Brown said: 'Mere antiquity is no guarantee of authority. These are old copies but they are bad copies and the church as a whole in the 4th century rejected their unreliable testimony and permitted them to sink into undignified oblivion. They have been recently disinterred and permitted to foist their ancient errors upon undiscerning readers of our own times.'

We should also question the perverse literary assumptions of Westcott & Hort. For example, they propose that when 'their' five Greek manuscripts show one reading and thousands of Greek manuscripts show another that the least common reading is correct. They also propose that the least likely reading is to be preferred to the most likely, and that the shorter of two possible readings is to be preferred to the longer. This, despite the fact that scribes are far more likely to mistakenly miss out words than add them.

Furthermore, the fact that one of these five manuscripts was discovered in the Convent of St. Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai in a basket full of old parchments to be used as fuel, and another had been in the custody of the Vatican for 500 years should place serious question marks over their authenticity. Would God have allowed His Church to labour for most of her life with an inaccurate Bible? Also, if the true New Testament text was lost for 1500 years, how can we be sure *it* has been found now?

Advocates of the 'Received Text' believe that God's singular care and providence has preserved His Word through the usage of the church through the years, not through recent finds on Library shelves and the rationalistic principles of textual criticism.

### III. CONCLUSION

Firstly, one of the reasons why the authority of God's Word has been so undermined in the last 150 years is the publication of a number of new Bible versions based on the supposed scientific principles. These versions are liberally peppered with the footnotes of the textual critics casting doubt on historic, traditional and much-loved versions, and claiming to be founded upon older, better and purer text. This cannot but put question marks over numerous portions of God's Word and therefore undermine faith and confidence in it.

Secondly, the version of Scripture we read should be determined by its faithfulness to the divine preservation of the Scriptures. Many of the advocates of scientific principles say that their theories do not affect any major Bible doctrine. But they do. They affect the doctrine of Scripture which is foundational to every other doctrine.

Thirdly, unless I am confident that I have in my hands the final and full text of Scripture, can I confidently face death and judgment resting upon its contents? What if another batch of Greek manuscripts were found tomorrow? The advocates of textual restoration through scientific principles would be forced to re-examine the evidence and re-issue a Bible which would take into account the most recent discoveries.

Fourthly while a more modern version of Scripture may be desirable in some circumstances, it is not worth sacrificing a jot or tittle of Scripture in order to produce this. If more readable versions of the Bible are deemed to be necessary in some circumstances then let them be based upon the historic 'Textus Receptus', the text God has specially preserved through His church through all ages.

Fifthly, as previously stated, the chain that secures an infallible Bible is only as strong as its weakest link. There is no point in being doughty defenders of divine inspiration if we do not similarly defend the divine preservation of the Scriptures. This is undoubtedly the weakest link in the chain in the Evangelical world in our own day.

Sixthly, let us adore the power and grace of God, His singular grace and providence in keeping pure in all ages His Word. Despite centuries of both violent and subtle attack, His Word endures to ages all. Let us rest our whole soul upon it both now and forever.

***Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,***

*I am writing to you on behalf of the Church in Margam road to express our deep thanksgiving for your prayers and your concern for us all. As you know we are going through a difficult time- our deacon and wife having resigned from the church due to ill-health .Nevertheless, we continue in hope knowing the Lord's blessing through the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word by your Pastor and the men of God that he sends to us. We also thank God for the continued support of Mr. Howell Green.*

***Our Thursday meeting, though small in number, is also a source of strength to those who attend it. We are conscious that our Lord has promised that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is there in the midst of them and we know the promise to be true .We are much in prayer for you and your Pastor .May the Lord prosper you in your work and witness for Him.***

*The enclosed cheque is a token of our gratitude to you and to our God for all that is being done to maintain the preaching of the Word in this dark and needy area. We would like you to use it for the purchase of the new hymnbook which is to be published shortly. The heartfelt singing of the hymns at Peniel is a joy to those of us who are able to join with you on the Sabbath and, with you, we look forward with anticipation to the publication of the hymn book- which has been a labour of love to those concerned in all the work which has been involved.*

*May we ever sing the praises of our God and Saviour in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs which accord with the Word of God and are appointed for His worship.*

***Yours in Christ,  
Shirley David.***

***The cheque enclosed was for £ 1,000.***

**The Rev. David Jones Llan-gan.1736— 1810.**

**By Rev.R.B.Higham**

**Mellen Press, New York.**

This book on the life and work of the Rev. David Jones, Llan-gan fills a much needed gap in the history of Calvinistic Methodism during the 17th and 18th centuries. The book draws material from a wide range of sources both manuscript and print and contains an account and letters showing his close links with Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. The publication contains detailed analysis of his sermons, diaries and letters, with extensive quotations from them. Honour was bestowed upon David Jones in that he was requested to preach at both the funerals of Daniel Rowland. and the Countess of Huntingdon.

It was as an evangelist that he was in such demand by Welsh and English people alike and he became known as ‘the angel of Llan-gan’. This little church in the Vale of Glamorgan saw congregations of three to four thousand every month when David Jones preached there, and this continued throughout his lifetime.

Next year will be the two hundredth anniversary of his death. The book is well illustrated with photographs in colour, and black and white, taken by John (Mr. Higham’s son) and Nathan Munday (his grandson)

Mellen Press mainly print books for universities, libraries and colleges. So their publications are not cheap. Up to May, 2010 individuals can purchase at half price. Anyone interested can obtain details from Mr. Higham.

## The Epilogue

*'Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came' (Amos 6:1).*

The 'Established Church', with perhaps one or two exceptions, may well be said to be vividly portrayed in our text. But I fear there are many Nonconformist churches which must also be included. The picture here is one of complacency: a people with little or no sense of even the most basic spiritual need.

Literally understood, 'Zion' and 'the mountain of Samaria' identify the two capitals of the two kingdoms, Judah and Israel. The latter had become wholly addicted to idolatry and had become the object of divine indignation, but the former was also now showing fearful signs of departure and decline. They are figures, of course, of the Church (Matt 5:14; Heb 12:22), part of which may be spiritually 'dead' and part of which may be in a state of 'spiritual apathy' and 'inactivity'.

In churches where professing Christians are 'at ease there is a lack of spiritual concern, neglect of fervent prayer and despising of evangelistic activity. Hardly surprising that people with no sense of their own spiritual need, will have no sense of the spiritual need of the church or the world! Such complacency is deadly; not least because there is a selfish apathy and a false security. The church of Laodicea, in Revelation, comes naturally to mind. Our Lord's indictment of that church is well known, at least among spiritually-minded people generally - 'thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:' (Revelation 3:17). How this highlights the need of revival in these days, when people are taken up with inconsequential things such as personal wealth and possessions - 'Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?' (Ps 85:6)

Owen French (Elder, Emmanuel Church, Salisbury)