

E.S. Buchanan

The Early Revisers of the
Gospel

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The Early Revisers of the Gospel

✓ A Lecture by
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Editor of
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THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINAL WORDS OF THE GOSPEL;
A NEW TEXT OF THE APOCALYPSE FROM SPAIN, etc.

Delivered at
DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
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E. S. BUCHANAN

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A LECTURE BY E. S. BUCHANAN, M.A., B.Sc.,

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DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Madison, New Jersey

December 1, 1915.

DR. H. A. BUTTZ, Emeritus President, took the chair at 4 p.m.

DR. F. WATSON HANNAN opened with prayer.

DR. H. A. BUTTZ: The President is unable to be here to present in person the lecturer of the afternoon, and has assigned that privilege to me. It is a great privilege to welcome those who do so much to advance the interests of the Kingdom of God. The subject on which the lecturer today is to speak is one of the utmost importance, and has taxed the skill and wisdom of scholars throughout the centuries, namely, the attempt to get back to the first words, the original documents, the words spoken by Christ and His Apostles, so that we may know exactly what has been

written—may know that they are, indeed, the words of sacred truth. Mr. Buchanan comes to us after a thorough study of these important subjects. He is a specialist in this great department; and it affords me pleasure to welcome Mr. E. S. Buchanan, Master of Arts, and Editor of the Oxford Old-Latin Biblical Texts: Nos. V and VI, who will address you now.

MR. BUCHANAN: Dr. Buttz, Ladies—I am glad to see some ladies here—and Gentlemen: it is with great pleasure that I speak to you this afternoon about a subject which—as has been said—is of vital importance to each one of us, and not only to each one of us, but also to those whom we know and those whom we love, to those who live in this great country as well as to those who live in the Old World, whose past records I have had a better opportunity of studying than most of you here.

The subject I wish to speak about this afternoon is the Early Revisers of the Gospel. We have all of us the printed Bible. I hope that you use the King James' Version rather than the Revised Version, because, after eighteen years' research among manuscripts, I have come to the conclusion that the King James' Version is a much more trustworthy Version, both in its original text, and in its translation, than the Revised Version, which was put out in 1881 from the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster.

The text of our King James' Version is practically that of the first printed Greek Testament of Erasmus,

issued in the year 1516. Erasmus used a Greek manuscript of the 12th century, he tells us, but he believed that that manuscript took him back to apostolic times. He thought that in that manuscript he had practically the words as they left the lips of the inspired evangelists.

The Received text so called was in all important particulars the text issued by Erasmus in 1516; and the Received text continued to be in vogue and continued to be accepted until the text of Lachmann in 1831, when its supremacy was first really challenged.

Tischendorf followed up the work of Lachmann, and he was fortunate enough to discover an ancient Greek manuscript at Mount Sinai, which is now known to scholars as the Codex Sinaiticus. He said that he would rather have discovered that manuscript than the Koh-i-noor diamond, and he proceeded to bring out a very beautiful edition of his discovery. This he was able to do because he succeeded in obtaining the Tsar of Russia as his patron, and the manuscript is now lodged in the royal library at St. Petersburg. Tischendorf almost worshipped this one single manuscript. He was inclined to believe that even its eccentricities were excellencies; and even where it opposed all other existing authorities he often followed its reading.

Doctors Westcott and Hort, in England, drank deeply of the subjective spirit of Tischendorf, with the result that they likewise—and like foolishly—

established a single manuscript, the Codex Vaticanus, which I have seen in Rome in the Vatican Library—a sister manuscript to the Codex Sinaiticus—as their practically infallible guide.

Dr. Hort believed that a text which had the support of the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus was the same text as the apostolic autographs. He tells us that the text of Aleph and B (that is, of Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus), when they agree, gives us “a true approximate reproduction of the text of the autographs”—let me repeat his very words, *a true approximate reproduction of the text of the autographs*. The majority of the Revisers of our English Bible believed in the words of Drs. Westcott and Hort, and they were each furnished beforehand with a copy of the new text as edited by the two English University of Cambridge Professors, and hence our Revised Version follows in the main this new text of Drs. Westcott and Hort, which has been sent forth to all the English-speaking countries of the world as the last result of *scientific* Bible criticism.

Now, what is the character of these two manuscripts, the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus, and what is their age? I have seen the Codex Vaticanus, and I have seen a photographic edition of the Codex Sinaiticus, and after having personally viewed and personally handled 48 out of 50 of the oldest manuscripts of the Bible in the world, of the New Testament in the world, I should place the date of the copy-

ing of those two manuscripts—Tischendorf tells us they were both in part copied by the same scribe—between the years 360 A.D. and 420 A.D. That is the date when they were copied. They show a sinister agreement with the text which St. Jerome issued, the Roman Vulgate, in the year 382; and, therefore, I am compelled to place their production close to the year 382.

The Lord's Prayer in the Vulgate in St. Luke exactly agrees with the Lord's prayer in Codex B (that is the Codex Vaticanus) in St. Luke:

Father, hallowed be thy name;

Thy kingdom come;

Give us today our daily bread;

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every
one indebted to us;

And lead us not into temptation.

The rest is omitted, and entirely omitted only by Codex B among Greek manuscripts. The Sinaitic manuscript omits also part of what is omitted by Codex B, but it does not omit the whole. The only complete agreement is on the part of Codex B and the Vulgate.

We thus reach the year 382, when the great revision took place at Rome of the current text of the Gospels. Fortunately we have an account of this revision by the reviser himself, who was a single individual, not a company of men but a single individual, St. Jerome. We are thus on sure ground, and

are not building a theory of revision on an imaginary foundation. We have St. Jerome's own account of the conditions under which he began his work, and the end which he set before him.

He tells us there was a sad chaos in the text of all Latin manuscripts. There were as many texts as manuscripts; and, therefore, to end this diversity he had appealed, he said, to "the Greek truth." Now, we find that "the Greek truth" he appealed to was the text of the New Testament as edited by Origen; for St. Jerome was a slavish follower of the great Alexandrian teacher Origen, and what Jerome did was to make a Latin edition of the Gospels that agreed with the third century Greek edition of the New Testament which had the support and the prestige of Origen.

Origen was born in the year 185 and died in the year 253. He was the glory of the catechetical school of Alexandria. He lectured for forty years on Theology and Philosophy. It is said that he was the author of 6,000 books, which far exceeds the output of the most prolific of our modern Professors. He never wore any shoes or boots. I have not yet found out for what reason. He was a vegetarian, and his belief in celibacy led him to practise the most extreme asceticism.

Origen, who was deeply versed in the writing of Plato, believed with Plato in the pre-existence of the soul.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting, and cometh from
afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness and not in utter naked-
ness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, Who is our home.

Wordsworth has expressed this belief of Plato in these imperishable words; and this belief among others was adopted as part of his theology as well as philosophy by the great Origen.

Origen also investigated the depths of the mystery of the Trinity, and was inclined to believe that the Son of God was subordinate to the Father, and, further, that the Holy Spirit was subordinate to the Son. Alexandria encouraged speculation, and all the Gnostic errors and Arian heresies which troubled the early Church found a fertile soil for their growth in Alexandria.

We must remember that the Christian Gospel came into the world to meet hostile forces. As long as men looked upon Christianity as a new philosophy, they were ready to give it a place in their system and their speculations. As long as they looked upon Jesus Christ as merely adding another to their already long list of deities they were quite willing to receive the Christian teaching with complacency, if not with actual favor. But when St. Paul and St.

John and those who followed their teaching, preached Jesus Christ as "the true God," when they preached that He was "God over all, blessed for ever," that was a teaching which encountered then, as it encounters today, from philosophers and scientists as well as from Jewish catechists, a strong and often bitter hostility.

The conditions of the modern world, in which we live, are reproducing in many essentials the conditions of the first ages. We have allowed philosophy, and we have allowed science, to take the supreme place in our programme of instruction both in our schools and in our colleges. When I was a boy I was taught by my father the three R's, Latin and Greek, the Bible, and I think that was all that was regarded as of any great value. Nowadays instead of this we are taught science and philosophy and psychology and other ologies, which it would take me too long to enumerate one by one. The result is that there is in the world a paralyzing confusion of thought. In England, our scientists, like Sir Oliver Lodge, have set themselves up as teachers of divinity. I cannot say it is very good divinity, but it imposes on a great many people who have not had an opportunity to study the true and historic divinity; whilst our theologians have more or less gone over to the camp of the rationalists and the scientists; and there is a strong current running in England today, which depreciates, and not only depreciates, but endeavors to change and deface the record of the supernatural and miraculous acts of the Son of God.

Christianity is meeting again, as it did in the early centuries, the full force of philosophy and the full force of rationalism, both of which it has always resisted by the power of God's Holy Spirit and by the help He gave to the early Christian teachers; and we can still only meet the opposition that every one of us has to face, by a renewed study of Scripture itself, and by the help of that same Holy Spirit of God, Who, first of all, enlightens our own hearts, and then instructs us what we ought to believe and what we ought to teach.

Those of you who are students of Textual Criticism know that we have set before us today really three forms of the Gospel text, each form claiming to be the true and authentic one:

(1) The Received text, consecrated by long usage.

(2) The Alexandrian text, which Doctors Westcott and Hort begged the question by calling the "Neutral" text.

(3) The Western Text, whose readings Dr. Hort thought to be no readings at all, but mere fabrications of ingenious copyists.

I am a believer in the Western text. It is a text, which in the second century was dominant not only in the west, but in the east, and in every clime or country where Christianity was taught. In the third and fourth centuries it was largely, though not entirely, dispossessed in Egypt by the Alexandrian text. Later it was ousted everywhere by the Received text, which is practically the Vulgate text in a Greek dress.

Drs. Westcott and Hort by reviving the Alexandrian text of Origen, revived also, sad to say, the Alexandrian heresies. A great many Arianized readings first crept into the text at Alexandria, and thence found their way into the Vulgate; for the Greek text used by St. Jerome took in a long series of previous revisions of the Greek Gospels. The chief merit of St. Jerome, to be set over against his fondness for the novelties of Origen, was that he fixed the Gospel text as he found it for fifteen hundred years.

It is true that our Gospels, as far as we have them at present, can be traced back to a form of text approved in Alexandria and in Rome as long ago as 382 A.D.; but there were, as we now know, very important changes made in their text between 82 A.D. and 382 A.D.; that is in the 300 years between their first copying and their being stereotyped by St. Jerome.

What was the nature of this early revision? It was a continued depravation of the pureness of the primitive records. It was very largely directed against the teaching of the Deity of Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Personality of the Holy Spirit, which we find clearly stated in the earliest Western manuscripts, but which largely disappear from the manuscripts of Origen and of the Vulgate, and from all Greek MSS. from the fourth century onwards.

That momentous 300 years saw many wounds inflicted upon the sacred body of Holy Scripture; and I have found at least twenty verses in the New Testa-

ment in Western manuscripts, which refer to the Holy Spirit, and which have been altogether expunged by the early Egyptian revisers. Again, with regard to the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ the earliest Western manuscripts show that this was once taught with much clearness in the Gospels and in the Epistles of St. Paul and in the Revelation of St. John. This clarity of teaching, however, was, darkened in these three hundred years, when men treated the Scriptures with a more or less free hand; when men like Marcion in the second century accepted only the Gospel of St. Luke and mutilated it to suit their own doctrinal prepossessions; when Cerinthus, an Egyptian, even in the first century declared that Jesus was born by human generation, and so shocked the Apostle St. John that he rushed from a public bath at Ephesus, which he had entered, on being told that the heretic Cerinthus was also in the room.

It is not a new teaching to deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. It is not a new teaching to declare that the Holy Spirit is merely an influence and not a Personality. These declarations were made in the first century by Cerinthus, and in the second century by Celsus, the Epicurean philosopher; and in the second century, too, by Marcion, the Scripture mutilator, who was a native of Pontus in Asia Minor, but who found his way later to Rome.

So therefore, when we think that we have formulated something new in our modern denials of the

essentials of the Christian faith, we are really turning back to what was put forth in the first and second and third centuries by the philosophers and pseudo-scientists of the day, who sought to overturn and overthrow what was distinctive in the Christian teaching.

We have clearly in our Gospel texts the marks of the Church's battles in the past. In the Gospel of St. Mark the first verse begins, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." In one ancient Latin manuscript, fourteen hundred years old, in the British Museum Harley Collection, that verse reads, "The beginning of the Gospel of the Son of God," omitting the words, "Jesus Christ." In the Codex Sinaiticus, discovered by Dr. Tischendorf in 1859, that verse reads, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," omitting the words, "Son of God."

Dr. Tischendorf declared that this omission showed the extreme value of the Codex Sinaiticus. He pointed out that Origen five times quoted the text in the way that it was found in the Codex Sinaiticus. He pointed out further that St. Jerome, who follows Origen, quoted it twice as Origen did. And therefore, says Dr. Tischendorf, "Supported by the testimony of the Fathers, there can be no doubt that the Codex Sinaiticus contains the primitive text, although even by the time of Irenaeus [A.D. 180] men already read the text with the noble addition put in, but the added words, 'The Son of God,' seem to me in this connection out of place. It would be very foolish,

and opposed to the whole history of the sacred text, to argue that the words were removed by non-believers rather than inserted by an officious and mistaken piety."

"It would be," says Dr. Tischendorf, "opposed to the whole history of the sacred text to argue that the words were removed by non-believers rather than inserted by an officious and mistaken piety." But in this controversy my study of Western manuscripts for the last eighteen years has shown me more than one hundred cases in which letters and words in Western manuscripts as first written have been altered—always altered in one direction, to take away from the Deity of Christ, and never in one single instance altered so as to bring out more clearly the witness of the Apostles to the Deity of Christ; and, therefore, I am convinced that the omission by the Codex Sinaiticus is only another evidence of the early work of the unbeliever and the heretic in depraving the true copies of Holy Scripture.

I have recently published as *Sacred Latin Texts: No. III*, a manuscript copied at Armagh in Ireland, of the Four Gospels, and this manuscript gives us in many of its readings the Western text, or Old-Latin text; and I wish to give you from the Gospel of St. John a few verses from this ancient Western manuscript. Instead of "In Him was life"—a colourless saying—which is found in our Bibles, this manuscript has "In Him was the life of God which is

the light of men." "In Him was life and the life was the light of men" is our Bible. "In Him was the life of God which is the light of men" is the Western reading.

Again, in the eighth chapter of St. John, the Jews asked our Lord, "If Thou art Christ tell us plainly"; and He answers, "I have told you already and ye believe not." But the Armagh manuscript has a remarkable reading and tells us that the question was, "If Thou art God ["God" instead of "Christ"] tell us plainly"; to which our Lord answers, "I have told you already and ye believe not." It is impossible that DEUS could have been miscopied for CHRISTUS. There is here a deliberate alteration. DEUS is under, is the lower reading. It has been erased and CHRIS-TUS has been placed on the top. Now, it is with this science of textual criticism as with geology, the lower strata are the more ancient strata, and the upper strata are those of later formation.

The Codex Bezae has in the main a second century text with many Western readings, and I wish to give you just one or two of the confirmations of my thesis to be found in the Codex Bezae. In the beginning of St. Mark's Gospel our Bible reads, "Make straight His path" or "His paths." The Codex Bezae reads, "Make straight the paths of our God." And the Codex Bezae is supported by at least eight Old-Latin manuscripts, which I myself have seen and copied.

Again, in the Book of the Acts, where St. Paul

heals the cripple at Lystra, the Greek manuscripts tell us that St. Paul said, "Rise up and walk," but Codex Bezae with the Old-Latin and Western manuscripts tells us that St. Paul said, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I bid thee rise up and walk."

In the story of the baptism of the Ethiopian by St. Philip, the Western text tells us that the Ethiopian made a confession, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," and thereupon was baptized. The Greek text, which comes from Alexandria, omits this confession altogether, but the confession stands untampered with in many non-Alexandrian Greek manuscripts and in the Western text. Codex Bezae is unfortunately mutilated in this chapter.

I hope that you are gathering from this what I wish you to gather, that there was *from the beginning* revision of the Gospels. That revision, always operant, detracted one by one vital elements from the teaching of the Apostles, and from the teaching of the primitive Christians. The revision sought to bring down the Christian revelation to the level of the non-supernatural philosophical culture of the day; and one of the most powerful means that these non-believers had—and many non-believers were then as now in high positions in the Church—one of the most powerful means that these non-believers had was the falsification of the records of the evangelists. *Scriptioni Christum Deum neganti praestat adiunctionem* is thus a valuable canon in our search for the primitive text.

For Tertullian again and again tells us that the heretics falsified the Scriptures. Irenaeus, too, at the end of one of his works, puts in a solemn adjuration that the man who copied his manuscript was to copy it faithfully, or else he would be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. And all the early Fathers constantly tell us how unbelievers like Marcion to establish their own doctrines resorted to depraving and mutilating the sacred text.

Thus it has come about, that, in many texts where we should expect a clear utterance concerning such an important question as to the nature of Jesus Christ, we find a cloudy and an ambiguous utterance that is not the work of the original evangelists, but of which we can only say, "An enemy hath done this."

I do not wish you to conclude that my manuscript researches have brought the great cardinal facts of the Gospel into any doubt. The miracles all stand. Not one has been added; and not one has, to the best of my knowledge, been altered. The parables stand. A few of them have been here and there changed; but their number has not been lessened nor added to. It is the doctrinal statements; it is the statements which concern the divinity of Christ, the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the office of the Church, eternal punishment, and the everlasting mercy of God—it is on these vital issues that we find there has been an almost uniform rehandling of the primitive words of the Apostles.

And so we are brought to this point, that whereas we have the facts, the great facts, which are pronounced in the Apostles' creed, the great facts which are so amply attested in the MSS., unshaken, and, thank God, unshakable—the virgin birth of Christ, the miracles that He wrought, His resurrection and the sending forth of the Holy Spirit—whereas those *facts* are established, doubt has been thrown, very serious doubt has been thrown, upon the validity of certain verses which have been used as foundation texts on which to build vast ecclesiastical structures that have overtopped and finally hidden from view the original Gospel, which was proclaimed to be and is, “Good tidings of great joy for all people.”

One verse, in conclusion to illustrate this. Our Lord once wistfully and earnestly asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I am?” One of them replied, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Christ replied, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in heaven”; and He continued according to our Bible, “And I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” In this connection I was happy enough only six months ago to make in this country a discovery, which I shall narrate in some detail owing to its great interest. I was working all alone last June in the library of the University of Michigan,

at Ann Arbor, where I spent the summer in deciphering a Spanish manuscript, loaned to me by the heirs of the late J. P. Morgan of New York. This Spanish manuscript contains the work of a Spanish presbyter called Beatus, who lived in the eighth century. It was acquired in October, 1910, in London by the librarian of the late J. P. Morgan for the Morgan library. The vendor, a Spaniard, said he had purchased it from the convent of San Clemente, Toledo, where tradition said it was given to the convent by King Alfonso VI (1030-1109). A very large sum was asked and paid for the manuscript, owing to its richly colored miniatures (numbering an hundred and ten) being in an almost perfect state of preservation. It is a large folio containing 184 leaves of thick vellum, each leaf measuring 21 inches by 14 inches. The binding is elaborate Spanish work of the seventeenth century. Besides the Apocalypse, the manuscript contains the Book of Daniel with a commentary. The manuscript is complete except for the loss of three leaves. It has two perfect postscripts, one by the scribe Emeterius, written 970 A.D., and one by the chief of the Vulgate correctors in 1220 A.D. By reason of its two postscripts the manuscript is an exact landmark of the highest value, not only to the textual student, but also the student of early Spanish art. Although copied in the tenth century, it has in the main a second century Western text, antedating both Origen and the Vulgate.

While at work on this manuscript, I saw that the remarkable words to St. Peter as we know them, had been written over some other erased words; and after patient search I discovered what those erased words were, and they were these: "I say unto thee upon this rock"—omitting "Thou art Peter"—"Upon this rock shall be built by the Holy Spirit His disciples." There is no mention accordingly in this Spanish text of St. Peter, or of the Church, or of Hell.

I say that such a discovery as this is an eye-opener. It makes one feel, it makes one believe, that if it was possible to get into the New Testament such a strong blast as this on behalf of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, and possible to get it accepted textually so widely, then we have not yet come to the end of the revisions that may have found their way into our Gospels, nor have we come to the day when we can say that further search for the original words of Jesus Christ is not necessary.

DR. BUTTZ: I am sure I express the gratitude of us all to Dr. Buchanan for his very instructive and inspiring lecture. It will certainly awaken a new interest among all of us in this Seminary in this subject, which is so important. It is a great privilege we have enjoyed today, that of having an expert in the great department of textual criticism present to us the results of his investigations. It shows us on how strong a foundation our Christian faith is built. I would ask Dr. Sitterly to bestow the benediction.

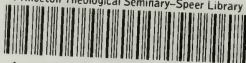
DR. CHARLES F. SITTERLY: The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the blessing of God, our Heavenly Father, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost be with us all for ever. Amen.



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