

Westcott and Hort:- Unbelievers who influence millions

Written by K B Napier
Friday, 04 January 2013 11:36

I am often asked which is the best Bible version to buy and use. My answer is always the same – the 1611 King James Authorized Version (AV); but not the modern KJV. And I always advise that all modern versions are based on the sinful theological practices of Westcott and Hort (W&H), unbelievers who hated the AV.

Enthusiasts of the modern versions complain that their versions no longer follow the system developed by Westcott and Hort, so our statement is no longer valid. This is deception! Modern versions DO base their work on these two unbelievers!

Some textual critics of the 20th century tend to publicly distance themselves from W&H, because their work has been discredited. Now, they claim to use an 'eclectic' Greek text... even though these critics use unbelieving methods themselves. In other words, they 'cherry-pick' bits and pieces from a wide variety of sources, instead of from one source – W&H! All this does is to spread the muck over a wider area!

The only real way to translate is to use original sources, as favoured and used by genuine translators. This is how the AV translators worked. By 'genuine' I mean men who actually believed the Bible and did not try to 'win one over' on others.

As the Way of Life Literature website says:

“This position DODGES THE REAL ISSUE, WHICH IS THE FACT THAT WESTCOTT AND HORT REPRESENTED THE SIGNAL DEPARTURE FROM THE RECEIVED TEXT THAT IS REPRESENTED TODAY IN THE POPULAR THEORIES OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM. Westcott and Hort built upon the foundation established by their predecessors, such as Griesbach, Lachmann, and Tischendorf. Westcott and Hort adapted the textual theories of these men into their own unique blend, and their Greek New Testament represented the first popular departure from the Greek Received Text.”

The men referred to were advocates of Higher Critical analysis and similar modernist trends; they were unbelievers who imposed their own literature-based ideas onto the Bible given by God. So, W&H, who were unbelievers, based their own skewed translations on these men's

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work. Note that the much-used heretical Scofield Bible, used by dispensationalists, is also founded on the work of W&H, as are all modern versions, to a greater or lesser degree.

The statement says that W&H departed from genuine translation, by inventing their own, using unbelieving systems. And most modernist translators do exactly the same. This is proved by the work of Bruce Metzger, the most influential critical analyst today. He admitted:

“The International committee that produced the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament, NOT ONLY ADOPTED THE WESTCOTT AND HORT EDITION AS ITS BASIC TEXT, BUT FOLLOWED THEIR METHODOLOGY IN GIVING ATTENTION TO BOTH EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CONSIDERATION” (Metzger, cited by James Brooks, Bible Interpreters of the 20th Century, p. 264).

James Brooks adds:

*“There is nothing unique about Metzger’s theory of textual criticism. It is simply a refinement of Westcott and Hort’s theory in the New Testament in the Original Greek (1881)... this theory is dominant today in part because of Metzger’s great influence. It was the theory employed in producing the United Bible Societies Greek text. It is the theory lying behind the Greek text used by most modern versions: **The Revised Standard, the New Revised Standard, the New English Bible, the Revised English Bible, the New American Bible, the New American Standard, the Good News Bible, the New International Version, and to a lesser extent, also the Jerusalem Bible and the New Jerusalem Bible**” (Ibid.).*

“...the Westcott-Hort text has become today our textus receptus. We have been freed from the one only to become captivated by the other. ... The psychological chains so recently broken from our fathers have again been forged upon us, even more strongly. ... Even the textual specialist finds it difficult to break the habit of evaluating every witness by the norm of this current textus receptus. HIS MIND MAY HAVE REJECTED THE WESTCOTT-HORT TERM ‘NEUTRAL,’ BUT HIS TECHNICAL PROCEDURE STILL REFLECTS THE GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE TEXT. ... Psychologically it is now difficult to approach the textual problem with free and independent mind” (Clark, “Today’s Problems with the Critical Text of the New Testament,” Transitions in Biblical Scholarship, edited by J.C.R. Rylaarsdam, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp. 158-160).

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“THE TEXTUAL THEORY OF W-H UNDERLIES VIRTUALLY ALL SUBSEQUENT WORK IN NT TEXTUAL CRITICISM” (Greenlee, Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, p. 76).

“THE DEAD HAND OF FENTON JOHN ANTHONY HORT LIES HEAVY UPON US. In the early years of this century Kirsopp Lake described Hort’s work as a failure, though a glorious one. But HORT DID NOT FAIL TO REACH HIS MAJOR GOAL. HE DETHRONED THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS. ... Hort’s success in this task and the cogency of his tightly reasoned theory shaped—AND STILL SHAPES—the thinking of those who approach the textual criticism of the NT through the English language” (emphasis added) (Ernest Cadman Colwell, “Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text,” The Bible in Modern Scholarship, ed. J.P. Hyatt, New York: Abingdon Press, 1965, p. 370).

“Thus THE TEXT, BUILT UP ON THE WORK OF THE 19TH CENTURY, HAS REMAINED AS A WHOLE UNCHANGED, particularly since the research of recent years has not yet led to the establishment of a generally acknowledged N.T. text” (Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece, 24th edition, 1960, p. 62).

“To deny their influence is similar to denying the influence of Darwin on contemporary evolutionary thought. Many planks of Darwin’s theories have been discredited, but Darwin and his theories are important because of their key, pivotal role in the field.” (wayoflife.org).

“MODERN TEXTUAL CRITICISM IS PSYCHOLOGICALLY ‘ADDICTED’ TO WESTCOTT AND HORT. Westcott and Hort, in turn, were rationalists in their approach to the textual problem in the New Testament and employed techniques within which rationalism and every other kind of bias are free to operate. The result of it all is a methodological quagmire where objective controls on the conclusions of critics are nearly nonexistent. It goes without saying that no Bible-believing Christian who is willing to extend the implications of his faith to textual matters can have the slightest grounds for confidence in contemporary critical texts” (emphasis added) (Zane C. Hodges, “Rationalism and Contemporary New Testament Textual Criticism,” Bibliotheca Sacra, January 1971, p. 35).

‘James White, author of ‘The King James Only Controversy’, and others attempting to discredit the defence of the King James Bible, claim that Westcott and Hort are not important because (they say) “the modern versions (NASV and NIV) are not based on the Alexandrian text or on the Westcott and Hort text. They are based on an eclectic text which sometimes favors the TR

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over Aleph or B”.’ (wayoflife.org).

“This is true as far as it goes, but it ignores the heart of the issue. The fact is that the United Bible Societies (UBS) text is almost identical to the W-H text of 1881 IN SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURES FROM THE RECEIVED TEXT.” (wayoflife.org)

“For example, both the W-H and the UBS delete or question almost the same number of verses (WH--48, UBS--45).

Both delete almost the same number of significant portions of verses (WH--193, UBS 185).

Both delete almost the same number of names and titles of the Lord (WH--221, UBS--212).”

(An extensive comparison of the TR against the WH text, the Nestle’s Text, the UBS text, and key English versions was done by the late Everett Fowler and can be found in his book ‘Evaluating Versions of the New Testament’, available from Bible for Today).

“The W-H text of 1881 and the latest edition of the United Bible Societies’ text differ only in relatively minor points. BOTH REPRESENT THE SAME TYPE OF TEXT WITH THE SAME TYPE OF DEPARTURES FROM THE RECEIVED TEXT. They follow the type of text found in the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, which the Reformation era Greek editors believed was a doctrinally corrupt text that was modified during the theological battles occurring in the two centuries after the apostles.

The fact is that the Westcott-Hort text represents the first widely-accepted departure from the Received Text in the post-Reformation era, and the modern English versions descend directly from the W-H text. The Westcott-Hort Greek text is very significant and its editors are highly significant to the history of textual criticism. Any man who discounts the continuing significance of Westcott-Hort in the field of Bible texts and versions is probably trying to throw up a smoke screen to hide something”. (These and all quotes above are from the wayoflife.org website).

Unbelief Dressed as Truth

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Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901). Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828-1892).

In 1881 Westcott and Hort published 'The New Testament in the Original Greek'. It is also called the 'Westcott and Hort text'. The very title implies that any other text is based on non-original sources. Whilst it is true that they used original sources, they omitted to tell readers that those sources were considered to be corrupt, by many centuries of biblical theologians, and so were not used for the famed 1611 KJV.

A statement made by W&H seems ordinary, but it attempts to ruin trust in the 1611 KJV: "'our belief that even among the numerous unquestionably spurious readings of the New Testament there are no signs of deliberate falsification of the text for dogmatic purposes.'" (Westcott, Hort, 'The New Testament in the Original Greek: Introduction, appendix, p282. Macmillan, 1907). This apparently congenial statement hides their hatred for the 1611 KJV. They favoured using *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* documents, both loved by Rome.

The Codex Vaticanus was stored in the Vatican and was translated with errors for some centuries. The full translation did not appear until the 19th century and so was used by W&H. "At that point scholars realised the text differed from the Vulgate and the Textus Receptus". (S P Tregelles, An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, London 1856, p. 108).

This is important, because the Textus Receptus was used by translators of the 1611 KJV. It should be noted that "The most widely sold editions of the Greek New Testament are largely based on the text of the Codex Vaticanus." (K Aland & B Aland, Text of the New Testament, pp. 26–30). This proves the unstable and corrupt sources of all modern versions of scripture.

Most Sinaiticus sources are in a variety of places, but just over 50% of them are in the British Library. It, too, came to notice in the 19th century, containing books not included in the original canon of scripture, and omitting certain words and phrases. In total Sinaiticus deviates from Vaticanus on 3036 occasions. The Sinaiticus was 'corrected' many times, so how W&H could assume its applicability, I cannot tell! It was written in the 4

th

century, so was not an 'original' text.

Yet, W&H used these corrupt sources to devalue the 1611 KJV: "Westcott and Hort distinguished four text types in their studies. The most recent is Syrian, or Byzantine text-type, of which the newest example (thus from the critical text view less reliable) is the Textus Receptus" (Wikipedia). W&H departed from the 1611 KJV ethos, depending mainly on corrupt sources only recently and contemporaneously discovered, and the work of Higher Critics.

King James Only

(Quotes are from graceway.com)

'You don't have to read very much in contemporary, fundamentalist, Baptist literature to come across warnings about the "King James only controversy".'

Dr. Jerry Falwell announces that he is hiring Dr. Harold Rawlings to *"refute the 'King James Only' cultic movement that is damaging so many good churches today."*

Dr. Robert Sumner warns about the *"veritable fountain of misinformation and deceptive double talk on the subject of 'King James Onlyism'."*

Dr. J. B. Williams refers to those who advocate the King James Only as *"misinformers" and as "a cancerous sore."*

Dr. Robert Joyner calls King James Bible loyalists, *"heretics"*.

Dr. James R. White warns about King James Bible proponents *"undercutting the very foundations of the faith itself"*.

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(Note who these people are! Also note that charismatics tend to sneer at the 1611 KJV, particularly because they are universalist/Arminian heretics. The name of their various denominations is irrelevant to this).

“Such references to the ‘King James Only’ controversy are very common. Some refer to loyal supporters of the King James Bible as the “King James Only Cult”. Another common term is the sneering reference to the “King Jimmy Boys.” However the use of the “King James Bible only” wasn’t always so controversial, for the world was definitely ‘King James Only’ for centuries, as newer versions came and went.”

There had always been opposition to the KJV from Rome, but the attack in the 1870s came from men who were ‘officially’ Anglican: Westcott, a bishop (and spiritual advisor to the Queen), and Hort, professor at Cambridge University. Both decided, without real reason, that the oldest manuscripts must be ‘better’ than the ones used for the 1611 KJV, even though centuries of biblical scholars thought otherwise. They set out to replace the KJV and its textus receptus sources, with their own version, based on manuscripts rejected by KJV translators and earlier scholars. As one commentator says, “In short, their theory suggests that for fifteen hundred years the preserved Word of God was lost until it was recovered in the nineteenth century in a trash can and in the Vatican Library.” (graceway.org). Both major sources used by W&H were, then, of Roman Catholic origin, just like Arminianism.

RAB, an editor for graceway.org, adds: “Hort clearly had a bias against the Textus Receptus, calling it “villainous” and “vile”. Hort aggressively taught that the School at Antioch (associated with Lucian) had loosely translated the true text of Scripture in the second century A. D. This supposedly created an unreliable text of Scripture which became the Textus Receptus. This was called the Lucian Recension Theory.”

Hort used his own hypothesis to ‘prove’ the sources for the KJV were wrong! He had no actual proof from anywhere. In this he reflected the wicked theories put out by the emerging Higher Critical schools and their various sub-schools. This undermining of truth still goes on in most Bible schools and seminaries.

“Alfred Martin, former Vice-President at Moody Bible Institute, wrote in 1951, “The present generation of Bible students having been reared on Westcott and Hort have for the most part

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accepted this theory without independent or critical examination. ...if believing Bible students had the evidence of both sides put before them instead of one side only, there would not be so much blind following of Westcott and Hort."The two most popular Greek manuscripts today, Nestles-Aland and UBS (United Bible Society), differ very little from the Westcott and Hort text." (Rab in graceway.org plus the following section).

WHAT YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE TO ACCEPT THE WESTCOTT AND HORT THEORY.

"You have to believe that people who believed in the Deity of Christ often corrupt Bible manuscripts.

You have to believe that people who deny the Deity of Christ never corrupt Bible manuscripts.

You have to believe that people who died to get the gospel to the world couldn't be trusted with the Bible.

You have to believe that their killers could be trusted.

You have to believe that the Celtic Christians, Waldenses, Albigenses, Henricians, Petrobrussians, Paulicians, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Protestant churches, the Anabaptists and the Baptists all did not have the pure word of God.

You have to believe that the Roman Catholics and the nineteenth century rationalists did have the pure word of God." (We can all argue the merits of the various groups above, but the gist of the argument is there).

Textual scholar, Dean John Burgon, said of Westcott and Hort's work, that it was a "violent recoil from the Traditional Text", showing "their absolute contempt for the Traditional Text". He called their unproved theory "superstitious veneration for a few ancient documents." And RAB says "It is a phony claim to scholarship to simply parrot the ideas of Westcott and Hort and pretend that you are superior to those who don't accept their ideas. Those who wish to change

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the King James Bible, so long greatly used of God and cherished by the English speaking people, need to give clear reasons why!" Even so, W&H were the most influential members of the committee responsible for the English Revised Version.

W&H – Heretics

(Some quotes below are found in graceway.org).

Westcott and Hort were heretics who hated scripture as God's word, and hated the 1611 KJV, because it is closest to the original scriptures. Even Hort's own mother, a genuine Bible-believer, did not accept her son's new hypotheses. Hort received a letter from Westcott, saying that he totally rejected the *"idea of the infallibility of the Bible"*. Hort agreed and repeated this to Bishop Lightfoot. Then, when Westcott became Bishop of Durham, the Journal of the University of Durham praised him because *"he was free from all verbal or mechanical ideas of inspiration."*

Hort believed that Christ's death on the cross was *"immoral"*, and so repeated the usual stance of the 'high church' (unbelieving). The 'lower church' was, at that time, evangelical and Bible-believing.

The 'high church' was Romanistic and taught salvation by works (which is the usual overall stance of modern Anglicanism). Thus, W&H taught that the idea of propitiation was *"foreign to the New Testament"*

, and that salvation is merely a continuing process on a continuum of 'becoming' a Christian by changing one's character and ideas. That is, people are 'always' Christians but need to work it out in their lives. The so-called 'high church' specialised in using vague terms, so as not to alarm the population, and especially in denying the deity of Christ. Being intellectuals, both W&H could easily have used clear language when teaching on Christ, etc. But they did not; they chose unclear 'fuzzy' language in order to hide their true position from scrutiny.

Westcott rejected the historicity of Genesis 1 to 3. Hort praised Darwin and evolution. Both W&H also praised the Christian Socialist movement (and thus communism), and Westcott took active part in its organisation and work. Inevitably, both men advocated re-union with Rome. They read and approved rationalist philosophers (see our series on Philosophy) and made much of Aristotle and Plato. It is my view, based on details of their lives, that neither man was saved. Both hated and rejected true Gospel preaching.

The English Revision Committee

These were brought together by the British parliament, to revise the 1611 KJV. At its head were W&H, haters of the KJV! Translators even included an Unitarian! Most were from the unbelieving section of the Church of England. Another team was built in the USA, and both were instructed to make as few alterations to the KJV as possible. But, the unbelief and hatred of W&H ensured this was not complied with.

A few thousand evangelical preachers from the Church of England formally protested the inclusion of an Unitarian, saying, correctly, that only saved men should translate scripture. W&H privately worked to retain the unbelieving Unitarian, and gave copies of their own work to each committee member. Thus, they sowed the seed of corruption in the first major modern revision of scripture. The actual work was based on running arguments between Dr Scrivener and W&H, and bore no resemblance whatever to the holy and righteous work of the 1611 translators. Also, Bishop Lightfoot urged W&H to go beyond the original instruction by government... which they did with great vigour.

Hort used a peculiar and devastating criterion to translate: his own *"inner consciousness"*! Forget the text and truth – just rely on your own ideas devoid of Holy Spirit or even facts. Dean Burgon described this 'method' as coming to a decision by the "ring of genuineness". Hort relied, then, on his feelings and not on the texts. This was no different from the way Higher Critics worked. The first Chairman of the Committee, bishop Samuel Wilberforce, resigned after describing the project as *"this most miserable business"*, leaving W&H to guide the revision along unbelieving lines.

Scrivener and Burgon joined forces to publish refutations of the revised Bible. Burgon called it *"excursions into cloud land... blowing smoke"*. Queen Victoria was led to abandon any idea of making the revised version the official Church of England version, because of the controversy and the unwillingness of the people to adopt it. Yet, decades later, in the 1970s, I was urged to use it for my theological studies! (Which I declined).

Though the revised versions (both English and American) were discarded, the heresy of the work of W&H prevailed and all future versions followed their example. Even the Theosophist, Helen Blavatsky, praised their work. Of course, those who preferred the truth, were called "simple minded" by W&H supporters – a convenient form of ridicule used to this day for KJV

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people. Today, many charismatics and other Arminians use similar terms to derogate believers. Eventually this constant ridicule led to many seminaries and colleges slyly adopting the work of W&H in their teaching. And Jehovah's Witnesses boasted of basing their own teaching on that of W&H. In this way 'evangelicals' put a stake through their own spiritual hearts by basing their teachings on W&H and Roman Catholicism.

W&H – Occultists?

In 1993, Gail Riplinger claimed W&H were, in fact, occultists. It was found that W&H, together with bishop Edward White Benson, founded the 'Ghostly Guild', to investigate paranormal/supernatural occurrences. Evidently, this presupposes that scripture is not sufficient to explain them, but science is. It became the Society for Psychical Research, and led to the rise in spiritualism. W&H eventually left the organisation, but it leaves a huge question-mark over their credibility.

Westcott's son said that his father had a life-long faith in spiritualism. It was fashionable, even with Queen Victoria, who was misled by her advisors (including Westcott). Westcott also believed in, and practised, the so-called 'Communion of the Saints', which believes we can commune with the recently-dead. Westcott loved to 'commune' with spirits in the cathedral, alone at night! Both W&H joined a secret society called 'The Apostles', which also tried to use occult forces.

Westcott joined another secret society, The Eranus Club, containing members who held séances (such as Arthur Balfour, who became Prime Minister, and a founder of the socialist League of Nations). The Club became known for its occultism.

Many who support W&H claim they use 'the right language'. This is to be expected of men who wanted to hide their true positions behind great orthodox statements of faith! It happens today amongst unbelieving Anglican priests. Letters by W&H clearly indicate they were devious in their beliefs because they 'could not afford to have all their beliefs made known to the general public'.

"Dean John Burgon was a contemporary and acquaintance of both Westcott and Hort. He was a firm opponent of the Westcott and Hort theory, their new Greek text and the revision of the English Bible that they so heavily influenced. In an article entitled "The Secret Spanking of Westcott and Hort" Burgon wrote: "the text of Drs. Westcott and Hort is either the very best which has ever appeared or else it is the very worst; the nearest to the sacred autographs or the

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furthest from them. There is no room for both opinions, and there cannot exist any middle view." In other words things that are different are not the same." (graceway.org).

“Millions of professing evangelicals have never heard of Westcott and Hort. None the less, their approach to the Scripture is based upon the theory of Westcott and Hort — ‘Westcott and Hort Only’. No matter how many books, professors, colleges and denominational leaders these theories are filtered through, they are still the work of Westcott and Hort Only.

Those who challenge the primacy of the King James Bible in the English speaking world depend on the work of Westcott and Hort.

Westcott and Hort are not a sufficient basis to reject the Textus Receptus or the King James Bible. Their objectivity, scholarship and doctrine are all at best "suspect." There is no reason to believe that they were saved men. There is more reason to believe that they were influenced by the occult than there is to believe that they were influenced by the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the "King James Only Controversy" is misnamed. It is really a "Westcott and Hort Only" controversy.

Are you willing to abandon the historic contributions of the Textus Receptus and the King James Bible for Westcott and Hort, Westcott and Hort Only?" (graceway.org)

Conclusion

You want a house built and go to someone called an architect. He designs your house and you get a builder to build it, though he tells you the architect appears to be very unorthodox. But, the architect is also the project manager, and the builder does what he says, though he warns that the design is precarious. A short while after moving in the house collapses. Then you discover that the architect threw out known ways of building and gave the builder some ‘new ideas’, which seriously threatened the integrity of the building. Would you use that architect again? I do not think so!

Westcott and Hort used ‘feelings’ and ‘conscience’ to rewrite the Bible, leaving aside the

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well-worked processes of proper translation. They had occult leanings, and hated the KJV. They used dubious, rejected sources, and loathed evangelicals. So, if you follow modern versions, can you explain why?

Your theological house is about to fall down, so why allow Westcott and Hort to rule your biblical studies and choice of Bible? There is abundant evidence here to throw out every modern Bible you own! Get a 1611 KJV, before W&Hs evil legacy stops publication of the KJV altogether.

Note: modern printings of the KJV omit the precious Preface. To see this Preface go to our Article A-392.

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