



Anglican Orthodox Church



Ad Captandum Vulgus: On Novices Addressing Text Critical Issues, A Reply to the Trinity Review (July/August 2004) BY **Theodore P. Letis, Ph.D. (28 August 2004)** John Robbins has an article on his website, and in the hardcopy of his Trinity Review (July/August 2004), by a Gary Crampton, who, so far as I can tell, has no training in text criticism, translation philosophy, or attending subjects. It is a common occurrence for those from the highly separatist world of American Fundamentalist Baptists to fling headlong into this subject clothed only in conspiracy theory, revisionist Baptist historiography, and insulting rhetoric. This has not, however, been a common occurrence in Reformation ranks, thankfully. When one reads Charles Hodge and Robert Dabney, and my mentor, Edward F. Hills, one reads men who are well informed theologians, historians, and in the last example, a world class technician. This two part essay by Crampton, however, is of another genus: bizarrely attempting a purely ideological move, attempting to marry B.B. Warfield, with John Owen/Francis Turretin/and the Westminster Confession of Faith, a magic that cannot be performed. It could only be attempted by a rash novice and never by someone at home in the subject matter. But these are the days of the Internet hack, and the phony diploma mill "doctorate." Below are my remarks as found on a discussion list about this article about which John Robbins himself eventually offered belligerent remarks, to which I also replied. My review that appears in my book, **The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind** (pp. 205-207), of Harry Sturz, an author referred to in this article from the Trinity Review, is found here in electronic form at the end. I would be happy to receive any comments you might like to send my way about any of this.

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Has anybody seen "Original Manuscripts, the Majority Text, and Translations" by W. Gary Crompton now posted at the Trinity Foundation Web site? One of the books he mentions in that article is new to me - Harry Sturz, "The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism" - and I wonder if any of you know of this book and can speak to its standard.

Thanks
Tim C.

----- Tim, I have a review of it [Sturz] in my book, The Ecclesiastical Text. Reviews of my book can be found here: <http://www.kuyper.org/thetext/ecctextReview.html> http://www.holywordcafe.com/bible/irish_biblical_studies_vol23.pdf The book can be purchased through our Institute. Who is this fellow Crompton? Theodore P. Letis ----- Just read it [the Crompton article]. That he can quote Warfield, (19th century) and E.J. Young (20th century), who were both Westcott and Hort advocates(!), along with Owen (17th Century) and Turretin (17th century), neither of whom EVER argued that the autographa were alone authoritative, shows he [Crompton] is a very confused individual. Very confused, indeed. TPL -----
----- Tim meant Dr. W. Gary Crampton ThD., a former Van Tillian turned Clarkian. I think he teaches at Whitefield Theological Seminary, and he frequently writes for the Trinity Review and for Richard Bacon's, Blue Banner newsletter.

Dr. Bahnsen was greatly disappointed that Crampton had rejected Van Tillian apologetics for Clarkianism back in 1990. Before that, Crampton was a frequent writer for the old "Journey" magazine. But in the 1990's, it was Dr. Ken Talbot of Whitefield Seminary who had influenced Crampton in a Clarkian direction. Someone once said (I think it was Frame) that the difference between Crampton and John Robbins is that the former has the scholarship to know better about the Clark/Van Til differences. Which therefore makes Crampton all the more inexcusable for his explicit defection from Van Til to the Clark/Robbins camp.

Also, Crampton is a former minister in the PCA. He is still there as a member, but I don't know if he is in the ministry now. Its funny how the Trinity Review never seems to provide any background information about its writers.

Colin ----- I think his main point was more about the Biblical doctrine of Divine providential preservation of the Apographa. Even Warfield believed that **[no he did not! TPL]**, but unfortunately only in regards to the Critical Text.

But I admit that this is one of the very few Trinity Reviews that I can say I mostly agree with, in regards to the writer's explicit advocacy of the views of Edwards F. Hills and Dean Burgon. Yet its odd that he doesn't cite Letis's scholarly works in this area. (Perhaps Letis's very negative critical 1993 Review of Clark's book on "Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism" made Crampton biased against Letis). For Crampton's bias towards Clark is obvious in the essay.

And I think that particular and unfortunate bias towards Clark is what accounts for your comment about his apparent "confusion". Clark was a common ground rationalist in regards to the law of non-contradiction, yet Crampton frequently cites both Clark and the Van Tillian, Edward F. Hills (and the Theonomic Van Tillian, Rev. William O. Einwechter) in his essay. That in itself would cause some confusion. Since Warfield was also abit of rationalist in his epistemology, I can see why Warfield and Clark are favorably cited alongside the anti-Clarkian Hills and Einwechter, if the writer was himself a Clarkian.

I think his main point was more about the Biblical doctrine of Divine providential preservation of the Apographa. Even Warfield believed that, but unfortunately only in regards to the Critical Text.

I mostly agree with your critique here. What he is really on about--and why he never refers to me--is the "inerrancy" business. He wants Warfield even though Warfield denied Providential preservation and explicitly advocated Westcott and Hort! (Warfield made up his own doctrine and superimposed it onto the WCF--"providential restoration".) It is because of Warfield's advocacy of "inerrant autographs" that he is even taken up. I doubt that Robbins will learn the lesson he should have learned by now: namely, it was this defection from orthodoxy (i.e., the change to the paradigm of restoring "inerrant autographa," from the doctrine of the WCF of Providential Preservation), on the part of Warfield, that not only took down Princeton, but it also is taking down the Evangelical Theological Society, which Robbins himself bemoans but refuses to recognize the causes of. (On this point I will refer folks uncharacteristically to Gary North's work on Princeton titled Crossed Fingers.) This is because Robbins has been committed to a defective paradigm ("inerrant autographa") for his entire career. His friend Crompton may quote Hills, but Hills himself NEVER referred to "inerrancy" nor "autographa." Hence, the author of that essay is utterly random and chaotic in the sources he attempts to blend into one platform (when in fact they represent two very distinctly different paradigms: the 17th century doctrine of verbal inspiration as found in "Infallible apographs;" and the 19th century revisionist doctrine of "inerrant autographa," which utterly negates the WCF teaching Providential preservation...) I fully realize that this is a rather dense paragraph but if read carefully and more than once, it will explain what this present essay in the Trinity Review is really attempting to do. TPL

But I admit that this is one of the very few Trinity Reviews that I can say I mostly agree with, in regards to the writer's explicit advocacy of the views of Edwards F. Hills and Dean Burgon. Yet its odd that he doesn't cite Letis's scholarly works in this area. (Perhaps Letis's very negative critical 1993 Review of Clark's book on "Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism" made Crampton biased against Letis). For Crampton's bias towards Clark is obvious in the essay.

You got it and because I am the only one with male glands functioning enough to repudiate the root cause of all apostasy within Protestant ranks regarding Biblical authority since the turn of the 20th century--i.e., "inerrant autographa."

And I think that particular and unfortunate bias towards Clark is what accounts for ... his apparent "confusion". Clark was a common ground rationalist in regards to the law of non-contradiction, yet Crampton frequently cites both Clark and the Van Tillian, Edward F. Hills (and the Theonomic Van Tillian, Rev. William O. Einwechter) in his essay. That in itself would cause some confusion. Since Warfield was also abit of rationalist in his epistemology, I can see why Warfield and Clark are favorably cited alongside the anti-Clarkian Hills and Einwechter, if the writer was himself a Clarkian.

While the epistemological issue is of secondary importance here (I believe), what is really driving this essay is the desire to have the Majority Text position AND the Warfieldian revisionism of "inerrant autographa." But the two positions are absolutely incompatible and negate each other, because the latter was designed to replace the former! Moreover, while Einwechter may be Van Tillian he traffics entirely in secondary sources (i.e., the hard work of others), and has no training whatsoever in this subject... Ted -----

You got it and because I am the only one with male glands functioning enough to repudiate the root cause of all apostasy within Protestant ranks regarding Biblical authority since the turn of the 20th century--i.e., "inerrant autographa."<

Dr. Letis, just for historical record, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is and has been since its inception in the late 19th century in agreement with you in repudiating Warfield's view. This issue, along with others, is why the FPCS left the Free Church (of Scotland). The FPCS has upheld the WCF view regarding the Providential Preservation of God's word. I know too that many men in the FPCS appreciate your scholarship in defending this important truth.

- Parnell McCarter, www.puritans.net

Thanks for your good comments, Parnell. Yes, I knew this--and greatly appreciate the fact--about FPCS; but unfortunately, they have negligible impact on the American Presbyterian scene. Here, the Warfieldians prevail (via Robbins, the PCA, OPC, etc.), as they do in Scotland amongst the Free Kirk, where they have irreparably damaged that body to the extent that I believe it is just a matter of time before they rejoin the apostate Church of Scotland. Thankfully, the Free Kirk (Continuing) are now carrying the torch (Rev. John Harding from their ranks was in attendance at my lectures before the Church of England Continuing's 10th Annual Assembly in Benson, Oxfordshire on 3 July). Ted _____ [John Robbins replies:] **Ted, Don't bother copying me with your blather. You have also made a choice to deny at least the importance of the inerrant autographa. Preservation makes no sense unless the autographa are inerrant.** JR _____

Preservation makes no sense unless the autographa are inerrant.

What you meant to say, of course, is that "inerrancy" makes no sense whatsoever unless the apographa are ALSO "inerrant" (a la the KJV Only simpletons), which, of course, they aren't. This makes your claims worse than obscurantism. At least Warfield had the integrity to admit ALL extant manuscripts have numerous errors, and so gave up defending the apographa in favor of defending exclusively the autographa which ALONE were inerrant in his estimation. On this point you are a victim of "modernist revisionism," as ironic as that may sound. You have neither history, science, nor theology on your side; merely **code words**, which failed Princeton as well as your Evangelical Theological Society, to which I had the good sense never to have been a member because of their defective theological ascription to "inerrant autographa"... Theodore P. Letis ----- [John Robbins replies again] **Ted, I am glad to see that you are finally coming out of the closet and admitting that you deny the inerrancy of Scripture. John Robbins P.S. I said exactly what I meant: Preservation makes no sense unless the autographa are inerrant.** _____

Ted, I am glad to see that you are finally coming out of the closet and admitting that you deny the inerrancy of Scripture. John Robbins P.S. I said exactly what I meant: Preservation makes no sense unless the autographa are inerrant.

Well, you can in a neurotic fashion just keep asserting your code language, but I will keep replying that **"inerrant autographa" make no sense whatsoever if you do not have corresponding "inerrant apographa," which no one on the planet claims to be the case but for simpleton "KJV Only" Baptists.** I will not let you get away with only half of the proposition! Coming out of the closet?! Wow! My book titled **The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate** was first published in 1987, 17 years ago(!), and it clearly documented in nearly all the chapters that I wrote, that Warfieldianism ("inerrant autographa") was a clear defection from classic Protestant orthodoxy (which the language of the WCF makes perfectly clear), as well as the cause that Princeton fell to Neo-Orthodoxy in 1929. Moreover, the book was very positively reviewed in your Evangelical Theological Society Journal (JETS) at the time. Where have you been? The literature that recognizes my research is also steadily growing: For works that interact with the chapters in this book, consult the following works:

Donald G. Bloesch's **Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation** (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), p. 307, n. 18; David B. Calhoun, **Princeton Seminary** 2 vols. (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1996), vol. 2, p. 469, n. 2; Gary North, **Finger's Crossed**; Harriet A. Harris, **Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism** (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), acknowledgment page, pp. 135 n. 3; 141 n.11; William Baird, **The History of New Testament Research: From Jonathan Edwards to Rudolf Bultmann** Vol. 2 (Augsburg Fortress, 2002), p. 346; Kim Riddlebarger, **The Lion of Princeton: B.B. Warfield on Apologetics, Theological Methodology and Polemics**, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, p. 47. Ted _____ [John Robbins replies again]

Moreover, the book was very positively reviewed in your Evangelical Theological Society Journal (JETS) at the time

Odd, how that ETS journal very positively reviewed your book. Perhaps the reviewer shared your belief that Scripture is not inerrant? That would help explain the apostasy of the ETS. JR _____ No, ETS was apostate from its founding in that it was Warfieldian at its base--hence, it is only now coming to full bloom... TPL

Finally, What follows is my review of Harry Sturz's book, with a few minor alterations from the copy that appears in my book: The following review is found in the **Ecclesiastical Text** 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 2000), pp. 205-207:

Harry A. Sturz, **The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism** Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984, 305 pp., hardback, \$18.95. Sturz's study is one of a considerable stream of recent works (that began as a trickle in 1956 with the publishing of E.F. Hills's **The King James Version Defended: A Christian View of the New Testament Manuscripts**), calling for either a favorable reevaluation of the Byzantine text; or else a full-scale return to it as the "proper" textual base for the N.T.

Sturz, the late professor emeritus and former Chairman of the Greek Department (contra the dust jacket of his book), at Biola University, wrote this originally as his doctoral dissertation at Grace Theological Seminary, 1967. While it has been slightly revised, it is essentially this MS, that was circulated for many years by Biola as a syllabus, that was then picked up by Thomas Nelson in 1984.

Within the discipline of N.T. text criticism Sturz's proposal is a modest one. In fact, it practically echoes the position of Herman von Soden (1852-1913). Although, in an earlier review of Sturz, Professor M. Silva expressed an opinion that Sturz position was that of F.H.A. Scrivener (1813-1891), the coadjutor of Burgon, Scrivener's own assessment was that "I stand midway between the two schools, inclining much more to Burgon than Hort" [emphasis mine] (**Life of Burgon** vol. 1, p. 229). Hence, Scrivener's is not the position of Sturz in this book! Furthermore, a glimpse at Scrivener's **Introduction** (2 vols, 4th ed.), reveals that he nearly always defended as authentic the Byzantine reading, thus giving priority to this text-type. Sturz is, however, virtually restating von Soden's position.

Regarding von Soden, Metzger notes, **Von Soden tends to give preference to readings supported by two of the three main texts, by this procedure the Koine type [Byzantine] of text is elevated to a rank co-ordinate in importance with the other two texts.** (The Text of the New Testament, p.142.)

The unique contribution that Sturz brings to von Soden's approach is his detailed presentation of the data represented by early papyri, which did not exist in von Soden's day. In so doing Sturz destroyed forever Hort's theory that the Byzantine text was constructed in the fourth century by combining earlier text-types. Hort believed "distinctively" Byzantine readings could not be found before the recension that produced the Byzantine text in the fourth century. Since Sturz has provided an array of papyri readings from the third and fourth centuries, containing distinctively Byzantine readings (readings not shared by other text-types), he insists the Byzantine text, as von Soden argued, should be given equal authority with the other text-types when making a textual judgment. But even here Sturz is not saying anything new. In 1940, C.C. Tarelli, investigated the papyri and revealed the Byzantine text merited greater consideration: **The readings of the Byzantine text which the papyrus [p.45] supports, moreover, include at least as many with a pure "Syrian" attestation as those which it opposes, which cannot but weaken the presumption against readings so attested.... the occurrence of such readings...in this early manuscript suggests that it is at least unsafe to assume a late date for a reading which might be explained as an "improvement"** (The Journal of Theological Studies vol. xli., p 258).

However, while nearly everyone now admits that on the basis of external evidence, the Byzantine text cannot merely be dismissed when determining a reading, few accept the proposal that because some Byzantine readings are found in the papyri we can now assume that the Byzantine text is as old as the Egyptian or Western texts--old "readings" do not an old "text" make. Hence, when Zuntz made his confession that the Byzantine text must now be given greater respect because of the evidence from the papyri, he noted that , **"A number of Byzantine readings, most of them genuine, which previously were discarded as 'late', are anticipated by P46,"** for him this did not mean we were **"to resume the hopeless fight of Dean Burgon."** (The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition Upon the Corpus Paulinum, 1953, P. 55.)

The invoking of Burgon's name has great significance: the papyri do lend support to Burgon's thesis that the Byzantine text can be demonstrated not just to be equal in significance to the other text types, but rather the trunk from which the others diverged in a secondary fashion. This, as anyone who has studied the history of the discipline knows, is the decisive debate. Sturz's modest proposal has not been accepted just because it tends in the direction of Burgon. Hence, as modest as it may be, Sturz's position has not found acceptance among American N.T. text critics, because as Metzger says, **...so far from regarding the Koine as an independent entity...most scholars today follow the view of Griesbach, Hort, and others, that this text is largely secondary and derivative from the others** (ibid.).

Furthermore, Sturz makes it clear that he, too, has no intention of "resuming the hopeless fight of Dean Burgon." He spends all of chapter four debunking Burgon and Hills for using a theological framework for interpreting the data of N.T. text criticism.

For the record, let it be known that Hills was the first text critic to make use of the papyri to vindicate Burgon's argument that the Byzantine text reaches back well before the fourth century. In fact, in 1942, while a doctoral student under E.C. Colwell, Hills proposed a dissertation topic that would prove "the K MSS [Byzantine] that had attestation among the oldest witnesses [papyri] would be older than those that had many variants without such attestation" (Theodore P. Letis, "Edward Freer Hills's Contribution to the Revival of the Ecclesiastical Text," Unpublished M.T.S. Thesis, Emory University, 1987. p. 141). If his proposal had been accepted he would have accomplished what Sturz set out to do, and more, twenty-five years in advance of Sturz. The proposal was refused. So Hills wrote his dissertation on another topic, (the so-called "Caesarian text), under a different Director (H. Cadbury), at a different institution (Harvard).

However, in 1956, still eleven years in advance of Sturz, Hills argued, **When the Chester Beatty Papyri were discovered, still other Byzantine readings which previously had been regarded as late were found to be early.... [this] has given material aid to the cause for which Burgon stood** (The King James Version Defended p. 74).

Furthermore, in his Introduction (1959) to the reprint of Burgon's monograph defending the last verses of Mark's Gospel, Hills listed a table of seventeen distinctively Byzantine readings discovered by him in P66, the famous Papyrus Bodmer II, published just two years earlier. Sturz is silent about all of this (with good reason), focusing rather on Hills's theology of the text, something of which he seems not to have a firm grasp (on this, see my contributions to, The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate, Philadelphia: IRRBS 2nd ed., as well as my master's thesis on the life and work of Hills).

Sturz did, nevertheless, provide an important contribution in continuing to keep the data before those who want to dismiss the Ecclesiastical Text as though it was without substance, or support, in the early Church, even if Thomas Nelson never kept it in print after the first print-run. Theodore P. Letis, Ph.D. <http://www.thetext.org/>

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Letis Online

Sites that review my work: <http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/preservation.htm>,

<http://www.ourredeemerlcms.org/nttext.htm>

Synopses of my two books defending the TR/AV, *The Majority Text* and *The Ecclesiastical Text*: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/letis1.html>

Reviews of my current books: http://www.holywordcafe.com/bible/irish_biblical_studies_vol23.pdf

<http://www.kuyper.org/thetext/ecctextReview.html>,

[Review of The Majority Text](#),

[Edward Hills thesis](#)

The foreword to my study on the life and work of Edward Freer Hills, written as my master's thesis at Emory University: <http://www.holywordcafe.com/bible/Forewor11.html>

My assessment of the significance of Hills' work: http://www.holywordcafe.com/bible/letis_KJBible.pdf

My assessment of the NIV: <http://www.holywordcafe.com/bible/IRRBS-11-15-01.pdf>

My assessment of the NASB: http://www.holywordcafe.com/bible/electronic_NL_3.pdf

My radio interview re: the "English Standard Version" - Southwest Radio Church, Jan. 2, 2003: <http://www.swrc.com/broadcasts/2003/january.htm>

My view of the Pope as the very Antichrist: <http://www.wls.wels.net/Publications/Theologia/vol3no1/WrightAntichrist/WrightAntichrist.htm>

Abstract of lecture given at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Berlin the summer of 2002: http://www.bts.edu/trobisch/Temp/SBL_Berlin_2002.htm

Lecture this summer before the international meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Cambridge University, 2003: http://www.sbl-site2.org/Congresses/IM/2003/IM_Public_Program_Review.php3?Last_Name=letis

Lecture this past November before the Evangelical Theological Society, Atlanta, Georgia, 2003: [ETS](#)

Important Text Critical Essay: [From Lower Criticism to Higher Criticism](#)