

(to whom was entrusted the keeping and transmission of the Old Testament writings) with the Old Testament writers.

We have already noted some statistics concerning the Old Testament; now let us note some concerning the New. We have about 5,000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament (either the whole New Testament or portions of it). These include: (1) 80 papyrus manuscripts, dating as far back as the second century; (2) 260 vellum manuscripts (uncials) dating back as far as the fourth century; (3) 2,700 cursive manuscripts, dating from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries; (4) 2,100 lectionaries, containing selections from the New Testament for use in church services; and (5) a number of ostraca and amulets. In addition to these Greek manuscripts, we have many manuscripts of ancient versions; those of the Latin Vulgate alone exceed 8,000. In addition to the manuscript evidence, we have the important connecting link of the early church fathers, a number of whom included citations of the New Testament in their writings. Let us note six of these writers, the first five of whom died before A. D. 255, and the sixth died in A. D. 340. The number of citations of the New Testament included in their writings is as follows: (1) Irenaeus -- 1,819; (2) Clement of Alexandria -- 2,406; (3) Origen -- 17,922; (4) Tertullian -- 7,258; (5) Hippolytus -- 1,378; (6) Eusebius -- 5,176.

In this great mass of evidence for the text of the New Testament there is also a large number of variations. In regard to these, Benjamin B. Warfield, in his *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, calls attention to Ezra Abbott's view that nineteen-twentieths of the variations in the New Testament text "have so little support that, although they are various readings, no one would think of them as rival readings; and nineteen-twentieths of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection would cause no appreciable difference in the sense of the passages where they occur."⁴ Warfield goes on to state that

the great mass of the New Testament ... has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no, variation; and even in the most corrupt form in which it has ever appeared, to use the oft-quoted words of Richard Bentley, "the real text of the sacred writers is competently exact; ...nor is one article of faith or moral precept either perverted or lost ... choose as awkwardly as you will, choose the worst by design, out of the whole lump of readings."⁵

It should be noted, in connection with the matter of textual criticism, that the great question which liberal scholars raise is not that of whether the text which we have accurately represents the autographs, but rather that of the value of the autographs themselves! For them the autographs are not the Word of God, but the word of man; and amazingly accurate copies of the word of man do not overly excite them! Their problem appears to lie in their doctrine of revelation itself; and behind that problem stands the even greater problem of their doctrine of the nature of God.

The fifth step in the transmission of God's Word is that of the translation of the best-attested texts of the Old and New Testaments into the native or common language of every nation to which the Scriptures come. Here we must ask the question. "Can the best-attested text of Scripture be translated with such accuracy that we can confidently call the resultant version The Word of God?" To this question we must respond by pointing out two facts. First, in a number of places the New Testament