



The Scofield Study Bible:

Scofield's use of the Critical Text and the AV

by the Editorial Manager

The preacher in an independent fundamentalist Baptist church in the USA approached the pulpit with a confident look on his face. As he gazed over the congregation he said, 'Turn in your Bibles to page 943'. He then announced that the sermon was from Jonah chapter one. With a smile on his face, he then said that for those who didn't find Jonah chapter one on page 943, 'It's springtime. Sell your coat and buy a Scofield Reference Bible'.

For many people, the Scofield Reference Bible (now called the Scofield Study Bible 1917 edition; herein it is referred to as the SRB) is *the* Bible which Bible-believing people should use. It is sold in many fundamentalist bookshops and even in churches which consider themselves King James Version Only. Its footnotes and mar-

ginal notations are viewed by many as containing absolute truth. Leaving aside the footnotes, this article will examine the textual notations in the margins of the SRB in order to demonstrate that C.I. Scofield supported the Westcott-Hort Greek text as the best representation of God's Word and that he made changes to the King James Version of the Bible based upon his views.

Dr. Scofield and the Widespread Use of His Bible

C. I. Scofield (1843-1921) did not invent the concept of the study Bible, but he did much to popularise it, with the editions of the SRB 1917 edition¹ having sold in the millions of

copies and having had a tremendous influence on many fundamentalist Christians and Bible-believing churches. Even opponents of the SRB admit this. Writing in 1947, O. T. Allis, a reformed scholar, wrote that ‘The fact that within a generation more than 2,000,000 copies of this reference Bible have been printed in this country [USA] has made it a very influential factor in the religious world of today.’² Writing in a recent work, Dr. Vern Poythress says regarding dispensationalism (the form of dogmatic theology found in the SRB footnotes), ‘Within this movement the Scofield Reference Bible, in particular, contributed more than any other work to the spread of dispensationalism in the United States. Because of its widespread use, it has now in effect become a standard. Hence we need to come to grips with its teachings’.³

People who support the SRB claim that it is a quick way to gain spiritual maturity. Famed Presbyterian Bible teacher Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse said, ‘I am still convinced that the Bible with the references by Dr. Scofield is the quickest way of bringing a spiritual baby to spiritual maturity...’⁴ Dr. Barnhouse used an autographed SRB as his English study Bible. Dr. Warren Wiersbe, in his autobiography, said that the SRB (along with several other study tools) was his ‘first serious introduction to...’ dispensational truth and that dispensational books have become ‘the nucleus of my library, which today numbers over 10,000 volumes’.⁵

The Marginal Reference System

In our day most of the numerous study Bibles are known for their interpretative foot-

notes and annotations. Works such as the NIV Study Bible, the MacArthur Study Bible and the Ryrie Study Bible have extensive commentary in footnotes with the usual references in the margins. The SRB was known not only for its interpretative footnotes but also for its unusual reference system containing topical or ‘chain references’. This reference system was central to Dr. Scofield’s work.

In the margin of the SRB, Scofield wrote a series of notes about translational and textual changes to the text. Since most people who are familiar with the AV are accustomed to this kind of notes, many people do not realize that the marginal notes in the SRB are not the same as those in the AV. In fact, many of the marginal notations call into question the traditional readings of the AV and suggest substitution of readings from the critical Greek text of the New Testament.

Scofield’s Views of the AV and the Textus Receptus

Dr. Scofield clearly states in his ‘Introduction’ what he proposed to do. From the Introduction to the 1917 Edition of the SRB (also found in the 1909 edition):

After mature reflection it was determined to use the Authorized Version. None of the many Revisions have commended themselves to the people at large. The Revised Version, which has now been before the public for twenty-seven years, gives no indication of becoming in any general sense the people’s Bible of the English-speaking world. The discovery of

the Sinaitic MS. and the labours in the field of textual criticism of such scholars as Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Winer, Alford, and Westcott and Hort, have cleared the Greek *textus receptus* of minor inaccuracies, while confirming in a remarkable degree the general accuracy of the Authorized Version of that text. Such emendations of the text as scholarship demands have been placed in the margins of this edition, which therefore combines the dignity, the high religious value, the tender associations of the past, the literary beauty and remarkable general accuracy of the Authorized Version, with the results of the best textual scholarship.⁶

The results of the study of God’s Word by learned and spiritual men, in every division of the church and in every land, during the last fifty years, under the advantage of a perfected text, already form a vast literature, inaccessible to most Christian workers.⁷

What this means is that, while he did not believe the Revised Version had caught on with the public, he felt that the work done during the 19th century in the field of text criticism was needed to correct the ‘minor inaccuracies’ found in the Textus Receptus. Therefore, ‘such emendations of the text as scholarship demands have been placed in the margins of this edition’. The ‘general accuracy’ of the Authorized Version was to be combined ‘with the results of the best textual scholarship’ and its ‘perfected text’. Thus, the margins in the New Testament of the SRB were to contain the readings of Westcott-Hort and other text critics and not the original AV marginal readings. Many fundamentalists who wholeheartedly recommend this Bible realize

that there are a handful of marginal references in which Critical Text readings, omissions and changes are recommended. What many do not realize is the number and extent of the changes which Scofield suggested.

An Example of the Marginal Textual Annotations

A brief look at the margin of the SRB will show instances in which the phrase ‘the best manuscripts’ (or something similar) is used to indicate a preferred Critical Text reading. However, in many places the marginal note is a simple ‘Or’, giving no indication that the reading comes from a textual difference. Thus people believe that what appears simply to be a different way to translate the text is actually the fruit of 19th century text critics following the Alexandrian manuscripts.

One example is found in John 6.69 in which the AV reads ‘And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God’. The SRB margin note reads ‘Or, *we have believed and come to understand that thou art the Holy One of God*—closely following Westcott-Hort Greek text reading (as found in the American Standard Version of 1901), ‘And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God’.

The implication of this is that ‘that Christ’ and ‘the Son of the living God’ are to be replaced with ‘thou art the Holy One of God’. In doing so, in this passage the Messiahship of Jesus is omitted (‘that Christ’ equals ‘that Messiah’) as well as the truth that Jesus is the ‘Son of the living God’. Peter’s confession in the Critical Text is lacking essential



John 6.69 in the Scofield Study Bible

elements which the Textus Receptus includes. All of this is done without the benefit of the tell-tale phrase 'the best/oldest manuscripts omit'.

A Partial List of Textual Variants from the Critical Text

The following is a partial list of textual footnotes from the 1917 SRB which follow the Critical Text against the Textus Receptus. (The AV reading is added in some instances for clarity.)

- Page 1005, Matthew 8.15, reference 'n' unto him [AV 'unto them']
- Page 1006, Matthew 8.28, reference 'f' Gadarenes [AV 'Gergesenes']
- Page 1022, Matthew 16.20, reference 'c' Omit 'Jesus.'
- Page 1023, Matthew 17.21, reference 'i' The two best MSS. omit v. 21.
- Page 1031, Matthew 23.14, reference 's' The best MSS. omit v. 14.
- Page 1034, Matthew 24.42, reference 's' on what day [AV 'what hour']
- Page 1042, Matthew 27.42 reference 'd' believe on [AV 'believe him']
- Page 1049, Mark 3.29, reference 'g' is bound by an eternal sin [AV 'in danger of eternal damnation']
- Page 1057, Mark 9.29, reference 'u' The two best MSS. omit "and fasting."
- Page 1061, Mark 11.26, reference 'i' Verse 26 is omitted from the best MSS.
- Page 1069, Mark 16.9-20, [owing, perhaps, to the importance of this passage, the SRB departs from its customary marginal notation for a textual omission and inserts a footnote (footnote 1)]. The passage from verse 9 to the end is not found in the two most ancient manuscripts, the Sinaitic and Vatican, and others have it with partial omissions and variations. But it is quoted by Irenaeus and Hippolytus in the second or third century.
- Page 1115 John 1.28 reference 'j' Bethany [AV 'Bethabara']
- Page 1120, John 5.3-4, reference 'm' The Sinai MS. omits "waiting for the moving of the water." and all of v. 4.
- Page 1124, John 6.69, reference 'e' Or, we have believed and come to under-

stand that thou art the Holy One of God. [AV 'And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God'.]

- Page 1125, John 7.53-8.11, [here is another departure from the marginal notation for a textual omission, and the insertion of an explanatory footnote (footnote 1).]

John 7.53-8.1-11 is not found in some of the most ancient manuscripts. Augustine declares that it was stricken from many copies of the sacred story because of a prudish fear that it might teach immorality! But the immediate context (vs. 12-46), beginning with Christ's declaration, "I am the light of the world," seems clearly to have its occasion in the conviction wrought in the hearts of the Pharisees, as recorded in verse 9; as, also, it explains the peculiar virulence of the Pharisees' words (v. 41).

- Page 1134, John 13.2, reference 'g' Gr. during supper [AV 'supper being ended']
- Page 1148, Acts 1.15, reference 'j' Or, brethren [AV 'disciples']
- Page 1160, Acts 8.37, reference 'h' The best authorities omit v. 37.
- Page 1171, Acts 16.7, reference 'q' R.V. adds of Jesus, as in the best authorities.
- Page 1173, Acts 17.26, reference 'y' "blood" is not in the best manuscripts. R.V. omits.
- Page 1174, Acts 18.5, reference 'o' Or, constrained by the Word [AV 'pressed in the spirit']
- Page 1187, Acts 27.37, reference 'f' Some ancient authorities read, about threescore and sixteen souls [AV 'two hundred

threescore and sixteen souls'. The Westcott-Hort text reads 'threescore and six'; the UBS 4th edition reads the same as the AV/TR.]

- Page 1201, Romans 8.1, reference 'b' The statement ends with "Christ Jesus"; the last ten words are interpolated [AV has 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' following 'Christ Jesus']
- Page 1209, Romans 16.5, reference 'w' Or, Asia [AV 'Achaia']
- Page 1216, 1 Corinthians 5.5, reference 'd' Some ancient authorities omit Jesus [AV 'Lord Jesus']
- Page 1263, Colossians 2.2, second reference 'b' The best authorities omit "and of the Father, and of Christ"
- Page 1264, Colossians 2.11, reference 'd' Omit "the sins of"
- Page 1271, 2 Thessalonians, 'Introduction' 'The theme of Second Thessalonians is, unfortunately, obscured by a mistranslation in the A.V. of 2.2, where "day of Christ is at hand" (1 Cor. 1.8 note) should be, "day of the LORD is now present" (Isa. 2.12, refs.).' [The note at 1 Corinthians 1.8 says, in part, 'A.V. has "day of Christ," 2 Thes. 2.2, incorrectly, for "day of the Lord" (Isa. 2.12; Rev. 19.11-21). The "day of Christ" relates wholly to the reward and blessing of saints at His coming, as "day of the Lord" is connected with judgment'.]
- Page 1302, Hebrews 11.26, reference 'n' Omit of the reward. [This is a mystery or quite possibly an error. Two editions of the TR, two editions of the Byzantine majority text and three editions of the Critical Text all have 'of the reward'.]
- Page 1314, 1 Peter 3.20, second reference 'e' Omit "once"

- Page 1325, 1 John 5.7, reference ‘o’
It is generally agreed that v.7 has no real authority, and has been inserted.
- Page 1325, 1 John 5.8, reference ‘q’
Omit “in earth”
- Page 1328, Jude 1, reference ‘a’
the called ones, beloved in God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ [The word ‘beloved’ is in the Critical Text, while the TR has ‘sanctified’.]
- Page 1335, Revelation 4.11, reference ‘h’
O, our Lord and God [AV ‘O Lord’]
- Page 1336, Revelation 6.1, reference ‘e’
Come! Omit “and see” [AV ‘Come and see’]. See also 6.3, reference ‘i’; 6.5, reference ‘l’; 6.7, reference ‘q’.]
- Page 1339, Revelation 9.18, reference ‘r’
three plagues [AV ‘three’]
- Page 1339, Revelation 9.19, reference ‘s’
the power of the horses [AV ‘their power is in their mouth’]
- Page 1343, Revelation 14.1, reference ‘a’
his name and his Father’s [AV ‘his Father’s name’]
- Page 1344, Revelation 15.3, second reference ‘j’
Or, *ages* [from the Westcott-Hort text; UBS 4th reads ‘of the nations’; AV/TR ‘of (the) saints’.]

Two Important Examples of Textual Variations

Two further observations need to be made regarding the textual references in the SRB. First deals with the note at 1 John 5.7. Scofield says ‘It is generally agreed that v.7

has no real authority, and has been inserted’. Actually, this is not generally agreed. Most AV users and Christians who support the Textus Receptus would argue that there are significant reasons for accepting the verse as being original (see the Society’s article *Why 1 John 5.7 is in the Bible*). However, when the margin of a Bible asserts that there is general agreement that these words, which so clearly teach the doctrine of the Trinity, have no real authority and have been inserted (by implication, by an unauthorised person), many would not question it.



1 John 5.7 in the Scofield Study Bible

The second observation may explain the reason why a man like Dr. Scofield would prefer to use the Westcott-Hort text. The text

of 2 Thessalonians 2.2 reads, ‘That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand’. The phrase ‘the day of Christ’ is unacceptable to the dispensational understanding of prophecy. Instead, it would need to read ‘the day of the Lord’, as the Critical Text has. This is so crucial that Scofield not only has a marginal note, but also includes it in the introduction to the book and in a note at 1 Corinthians 1.8, as mentioned above.

People who hold this view would go on to say that the ‘day of the Lord’ refers not to the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, but the time of judgment preceeding and including the glorious appearing of Christ (the Second Coming of Christ). For 2 Thessalonians 2.2 to read the ‘day of Christ’ contradicts the dispensational system of theology. Therefore, he says the AV ‘incorrectly’ reads ‘day of Christ’, that it is a ‘mistranslation’ in the AV. It needs to be noted that the AV does not have a ‘mistranslation’; it follows a different Greek text and thus has a different reading.

Conclusion

Many fundamentalist Baptist preachers and ‘Brethren’ leaders in the UK, Australia and USA use and recommend the Scofield Study Bible 1917 edition. I have seen it advertised on KJV-Only Internet web sites as well as bookshops. Some acknowledge that there are flaws in the theological footnotes as well as in the margin textual notes. Many, however, may not be aware of just how many problematic textual notes there are and how damaging they can be. Many believers who are not taught about such things lack discernment and follow the Scofield marginal renderings without question.

The use of these kinds of annotated study Bibles is problematic to begin with. The pre-interpreted footnotes often short-circuit the learning process. Annotated study Bibles in the modern versions make it very clear that their marginal notations favour the Critical Greek Text. The Scofield marginal notes which extol the Critical Text can lead astray many believers who are not aware that his ‘better’ readings are from the Critical Text. It is time for those who love, use and recommend the AV as it is found in the Scofield Study Bible to take note of these important textual problems and not only avoid using the Scofield Study Bible but also warn the innocent and uninformed of the dangers involved with its use.

Endnotes:

¹ There have been four different editions of the Scofield Reference Bible. The first edition was published in 1909. The second edition was published in 1917 and is known as the ‘Old Scofield’.

² In 1967 Oxford issued an edition (the New Scofield Reference Bible) which had changes and corrections to the footnotes and used a modified AV text. These modifications, some marked and some unmarked, were made in the AV text of that Bible, resulting in many fundamentalists and KJV-Only people objecting to the tampering with the AV text. Therefore, the New Scofield Study Bible using the AV text was re-typeset in 1998 with suggested word changes given in the margin rather than being made in the text. The NSSB has also been published using the NIV and NKJV texts.

³ O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Nutley, NJ, USA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1947), p. 267.

⁴ Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd edition (Phillipsburg, PA, USA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1994), pp. 19-20.

⁵ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God’s Remedy* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954 reprinted 1983), 2.176.

⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Myself* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Victor Books, 1994), p. 59.

⁷ *Holy Bible: Scofield Reference Edition* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1917), pp. iii, iv.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. iv.