

In chapter ten, *Ecumenism from Prison*, Clements describes how Bonhoeffer was arrested in April 1943 and placed in the prison Tegel. Thanks to the letters, essays and poems that he wrote to his friend Warder, there is evidence that he remained as committed to ecumenism as before. In fact, Bonhoeffer's ecumenical activities continued to the end. Clements describes the day before he was killed in April 1945. When two Gestapo soldiers in civilian clothes come for Dietrich, he sent a message for bishop Bell through a British prisoner of war, Captain Payne Best: "...this is the end but for me the beginning of life. With him I believe in the principle of our universal Christian brotherhood which rises above all national interests, and that our victory is certain." He was taken to the concentration camp Flossenbürg and sentenced to death. The next morning, April 9, 1945, was executed by hanging in the prison yard.

In the last chapter, entitled *Still Ahead of us? The Continuing Quest*, Clements describes the memorial service in honor of Bonhoeffer and his ideas, starting with a heartfelt speech of bishop Bell at the commemoration service in the *Holy Trinity Church* in London in July 1945, which was broadcast by BBC in the presence of members of Bonhoeffer's family. Victoria Barnett recognized the process in Bonhoeffer's life as "the creation of an ecumenical saint." This process culminated in the setting of Bonhoeffer's bust in the front of Westminster Abbey in London, along with other Christian idealists of the twentieth century. Bonhoeffer was declared a victim, because of his Christian witness and faith.

The book *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ecumenical Quest* is recommended to those who wish to explore ecumenism and are interested in Bonhoeffer's ecumenical quest. Readers of this book will become familiar with new, so far unknown Bonhoeffer facts of life and activity. This book is a reminder of one great theologian and man who "lived what he believed." Thanks to Keith Clements, this summarized biographical work is available to a readership which cherishes Bonhoeffer's contribution to the development of the ecumenical movement.

Danijel Časni

Greg Gilbert

Why Trust the Bible?

Crossway, Wheaton, 2015, pp. 160.

In October 2015 Crossway Publisher house published the book *Why Trust the Bible?* Written by Greg Gilbert, senior pastor at Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, this book is yet another attempt of the author to discuss basic tenets of the Christian faith. Some of Gilbert's previous books in-

clude *What Is the Gospel?* (2010), *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* (2012), and *Who Is Jesus?* (2015). All of these books were part of the 9Marks series which address important practices for church life and growth. In that regard, *Why Trust the Bible?* is seeking to apologetically address questions of Bible reliability.

The book has seven chapters. In the first chapter, *Don't Believe Everything You Read*, Gilbert points to the idea that we cannot believe everything we read. With that notion he observes that a good number of Christians cannot explain why they trust the Bible. Even if they do, many of their answers are often not convincing for someone who does not yet trust the Bible. For this reason Gilbert writes this book to equip Christians to provide convincing answers for those who do not believe the Bible. Although he will address several arguments in this regard, his main thesis for the claim that the Bible is true is his belief that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Recognizing that this kind of reasoning can be labeled as *circular*, Gilbert claims this issue affects everyone, no matter what we take as a final authority (reason, logic, tradition). But the problem is not in having prepositions but in having unwarranted prepositions. So the key idea for Gilbert is "to come to a good and confident conclusion that Jesus really did rise from the dead without simply presupposing that the Bible is the Word of God, because "if we could do this, then we'd be able to avoid the charge of unwarranted circularity" (p.18). Hence, in chapters 2 to 6 Gilbert takes an historical approach to this question, seeking to establish Bible reliability on an historical ground by addressing the following questions: Do translations of the Bible from its original language accurately reflect the original? Can we be confident that copyists accurately transmitted the original writing to us? Do we have the right set of books that give us reliable and plausible perspectives on Jesus? Can we be confident that the original authors really intended to give us an accurate account of events? And finally, can we be confident that what biblical authors described really took place?

Chapter 2 - *Lost in Translation?* - addresses the issue of translations and the question of whether it is possible to precisely convey meaning from one language to another. Responding with one contemporary analogy, Gilbert argues that translation is not easy or simple, yet it is possible that genuine, accurate and correct communication occurs through translation. But, if communication is possible, then why are there so many different translations? Gilbert's response is that different Bible *editions* are simply the result of different marketing packages, and the various Bible *translations* do not render the Bible so differently from each other that we cannot really be sure about the original meaning. In communication it is possible to express the same meaning in many different ways/wordings. So, regardless of the translation, the meaning of the sentence is intact. Certain words and phrases are indeed difficult to translate, and in those cases different translators will often disagree about how to render those words or phrases. But even in

those instances, biblical scholarship offers a solid foundation for detecting and addressing the problematic passages. The final question Gilbert addresses is that, if the significantly disputed portions of the text are so rare and if they do not affect any major doctrines, then why have people gone to so much expense and trouble to make all those translations?

Chapter 3 - *Copies of Copies of Copies of Copies?* - deals with the issue of whether the people who copied the originals copied them correctly. This question is valid because we do not have the original manuscripts, but only copies of them. Hence, our correct translation of the biblical manuscripts is useless if in the copying process these copies were hopelessly corrupted, and therefore we cannot possibly know what the authors originally wrote. Here Gilbert addresses several objections. First, the occasional objection to Christianity - that today's Bible is a product of "a translation of translations of translations" - is not valid because the Bible is a result of translations *directly* from the original Greek and Hebrew into other languages. The second objection - that all we have available to us today are "hand-copied copies of copies of copies of copies" - Gilbert considers relevant if possessing the original piece of paper would be the only way we could have any confidence that what we do have is in fact what the authors themselves wrote. However, Gilbert says that even though we do not have the originals, we do have thousands of other pieces of paper that contain original-language text from each book of the Bible, and they are all copies of something older. The existence of those thousands of copies with all their variations allows us to reconstruct with a huge degree of confidence what the originals said. In some instances the (New Testament) time gap between originals and copies is only 45 to 75 years. Pointing to the fact that books were in that time kept and used for a very long time (even up to 100 or 150 years), the time gap between originals and copies is not so problematic. Discussing the textual variants that exist in manuscripts, Gilbert concludes that when we take the number of variants, the number of manuscripts and the number of significantly important variants we can be confident that our translations of the documents are accurate.

Chapter four - *Are These Really the Books You're Looking For?* - deals with the issue of canon, namely how we came to the collection of documents called the Bible. Rejecting the idea that this process was essentially mystical and there are no historically accessible reasons for privileging these books and not others, Gilbert observes that only the documents that were written in the latter first century were included in the canon. Furthermore, the understanding of the early church about the "receiving of" or "inheriting" and not "choosing" these books, together with criteria of apostolicity, antiquity, orthodoxy, and universality, gives us a solid foundation to believe that we have the right collection of documents.

Chapter five - *But Can I Trust You?* - discusses the reliability of biblical wri-

ters. If our translations of biblical manuscripts are reliable, if our manuscripts accurately reflect what the originals said, and if we have a right collection of the documents - all that is useless if people who wrote them were not trustworthy and did not intend to tell us accurately what they believed had happened. Gilbert presents four scenarios: a) the biblical authors might have had a nonhistorical purpose in writing; b) the biblical authors might have had a deceitful purpose; c) the biblical authors themselves might have been deceived; d) the biblical authors were trying to give us accurate descriptions of what happened, but their accounts are so hopelessly confused, contradictory, and error ridden that we cannot trust anything about them. Showing how these scenarios are unconvincing, Gilbert opts for the conclusion that we can trust the Bible to tell us what the writers actually believed had happened.

In chapter six - *So Did It Happen?* - Gilbert addresses the question of whether we can have any confidence that what the writers believed happened really did happen? The question is legitimate because biblical authors could have been convinced that something happened which in reality did not happen. In this regard Gilbert dedicates the majority of this chapter to the question of miracles. His introductory argument is that people who have not experienced miracles are naturally skeptical about them, since people naturally find it hard to believe things that lie completely outside their experience. On that notion Gilbert continues to refute scientific and philosophical objections to biblical miracles, arguing for their plausibility. Unlike the miracle reports of that time, biblical miracles are not legends or myths but eyewitnesses account of historical events, and they are connected to the message Jesus was proclaiming. Gilbert devotes the rest of the chapter “to the one miracle that underlies and indeed launched the entire Christian faith, the one on which the whole superstructure of Christian history, belief, and practice ultimately rests—indeed, the one on which the Christian belief that the Bible is the Word of God finally rests” (p. 114) – the resurrection of Jesus as the only plausible explanation for the change that happened in the lives of the disciples and throughout two thousand years of history.

Concluding that on *historical grounds* the Bible is reliable, in chapter seven - *Take It on the Word of a Resurrected Man* - Gilbert excellently concludes the thesis of his book, combining the historical reliability of the Bible with the idea of Jesus' resurrection. From start to finish Gilbert is trying to create a strong basis for confidence that the Bible is reliable as a witness to history. However, for Christians the Bible is primarily trustworthy because Jesus rose from the dead: “Because of Jesus's resurrection, we believe what Jesus said, and since Jesus himself endorsed the entire Old Testament and authorized the entire New, we believe they are reliable and true. That's pretty much it” (p. 127). Based on these two premises, Gilbert is able to draw the conclusion that, if the Bible is historically reliable, then Jesus'

resurrection falls into this category as well, and if Jesus rose from the dead, that affirms the authority and reliability of both Old and New Testaments:

So there you have it. If Jesus was resurrected, then he is the long-awaited Messiah, Christ, King, Son of God, and Prophet par excellence. And if that's true, then we'd better pay attention to him, including his endorsement of the entire Old Testament as the Word of God. Not only that, but we have every reason to trust that he did precisely what he promised he would do—send the Holy Spirit to guide his apostles into all the truth he wanted to reveal to them for the good of the church—and then to trust the Spirit's work of guiding the church in recognizing that truth. In the end, therefore, the answer a Christian will give to the question, "Why do you trust the Bible?" is, "Because King Jesus the Resurrected endorsed the Old Testament and authorized the New." That's not a presupposition. It's not an unthinking, close-your-eyes-and-jump leap of faith. It's a considered conclusion built from a careful argument that 1. the Bible is historically reliable; 2. Jesus was resurrected from the dead; and 3. the whole of the Bible therefore rests on Jesus's authority. That's why we believe it. That's why we trust it.

Gilbert's book is easy to read, but that does not mean it is simplistic and/or shallow. This "easiness" is a result of deep and sound theological thinking and reasoning. This is reflected primarily in the structure of the book which follows a logical order, in the design of the chapters which start with a story or event which serves to underline the point, as well in the argumentations that Gilbert uses to make his case. So, from the start to the finish we have a book focused on one topic, properly organized and convincingly argumentative. If someone wants to study this topic more thoroughly, Gilbert provides a list of books for that purpose at the end of the book in the appendix. Also at the very end of the book there is an explanation about the *9Marks series* which this book is the part of.

Why Trust the Bible? is a book that will be read by those who do not share the author's view on Christianity, but it is also suitable for the average believer who would like to know more about the historicity of Christianity. That being said, the book is also suitable for theological seminaries and schools and courses that deal with the introduction to the Bible or New Testament, the issue of canon, etc. Although this book does not discuss the issues of inspiration and inerrancy, nevertheless this approach of blending history and theology (somewhat in the style of N.T. Wright) is indeed valid and necessary. I believe that this book can even be useful for evangelization because of the topic and the way it is written. Finally, as a part of the *9Marks series*, this book was written by a person who is both a scholar and pastor, and in the world where these two entities are sometimes miles apart, this is a helpful insignia that the church can benefit from academia, and vice versa.

Ervin Budiselić