

Timothy C. F. Stunt, *The Life and Times of Samuel Prideaux Tregelles: A Forgotten Scholar, Christianities in the Trans-Atlantic World*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. Pp. xviii + 282. ISBN 978-3-030-32265-6. Hardcover, €81.74. ISBN 978-3-030-32266-3. eBook, €64.19.

- [1] The name of Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (1813–1875) is not unfamiliar to students of New Testament textual scholarship. His text-critical judgments and ways of evaluating variant readings are often praised by modern critics, and for many his introduction to the history of scholarship up to his time is still an invaluable reference.¹ Yet, compared to the popularity received by his famous contemporary Constantin von Tischendorf, little attention has been given to Tregelles’s life and surroundings. Such a desideratum has now been gratefully fulfilled by a fresh biography written by an experienced church historian.
- [2] Notably known by his expertise of Brethren movements, the author Timothy Stunt is perhaps the ideal biographer of this nineteenth-century textual critic. He is from the background of Plymouth Brethren, the same group that Tregelles has belonged to for some fifteen years. Indeed, our author can even speak of his *Tregelliana* and that “this book has been some sixty years in the making” (p. vii). This should not be regarded as an exaggerated statement, since already in 1976 he published an article on Tregelles’s letters concerning Codex Sinaiticus and Tischendorf.²
- [3] On the one hand, this book follows the chronological sequence of Tregelles’s life, as is the common practice of most biographies. It is divided into thirteen chapters, beginning from his moderate childhood in Falmouth, youth time in Wales, religious change from Quakers to Brethren, marriage and work in London, several trips to the Continent, the productive years in his middle age, and concluding with his later years and “muted finale” in Plymouth. On the other hand, about a half of the chapters are more thematically oriented, including the developments of Brethren in Plymouth and Wales (chapter 4), a brief history of textual criticism of the New Testament (chapter 5), Brethren in Italy and Tregelles’s involvement with them (chapter 7), his view of and attitude to Roman Catholicism and Scripture (chapters 8 and 9 respectively), and also his interaction with Tischendorf (chapter 10). One can easily follow the main narrative plots by focusing on Stunt’s precise writing, but the richness of backgrounds and historical details can also be found in the footnotes, be it Welsh culture in the 1830s, the newly developed railway system on the Continent, or any person and event under discussion. In what follows a few examples that may be of some interest for readers of the *TC Journal* are selected.
- [4] It is interesting to note that Tregelles’s earliest published book, in 1844, was the Greek text of the book of Revelation.³ Given the fact that the Revelation in the Textus Receptus was poorly edited (to say the least), to start with this book might be a logical choice. But, according to Stunt, there was another important reason, that is, Tregelles’s conviction of biblical prophecy (24–32). Challenged and influenced by his then lifelong friend Benjamin Newton, Tregelles not only became a member of the Brethren community in Plym-

¹ Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament; with Remarks on Its Revision upon Critical Principles. Together with a Collation of the Critical Texts of Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf, with that in Common Use* (London: Bagster, 1854).

² Timothy C. F. Stunt, “Some Unpublished Letters of S.P. Tregelles Relating to the Codex Sinaiticus,” *EvQ* 48 (1976): 15–26.

³ Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Αποκαλυψις Ιησου Χριστου, εκ αρχαιων αντιγραφων εκδοθεισα. The Book of Revelation in Greek, Edited from Ancient Authorities; with a New English Version, and Various Readings* (London: Bagster, 1844).

outh but also began to show his interest in biblical studies. This led him to write several articles on the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the variety of textual variants found in the Revelation. As a result, a revision of the Revelation text appeared some fifteen years earlier than any other part of his Greek New Testament enterprise.

- [5] It is also intriguing to read some details about Tregelles's stay in Rome in 1845, mainly for the study of Codex Vaticanus (63–77). Except for the well-known story that he was prevented from examining the manuscript concentratedly because two prelates kept interrupting him, we now know more about his several attempts to consult the manuscript, his impression of Rome, his interactions with the Vatican authorities, and even the Pope himself. Based on Tregelles's own accounts and correspondence, Stunt carefully reconstructs what could be known of that unsuccessful trip. Valuable is also his treatment of the subtle relations between Tregelles and Tischendorf (143–62). For our author, the rivalry between these two scholars was mainly due to the different beliefs they held. In striking contrast to Tischendorf, who seems to have been pursuing himself as the textual critic *par excellence*, Tregelles was more single-minded in restoring the earliest approachable text of the Word of God. Although the German scholar was (and still is) much more famous in terms of his achievement, the excellence of the text provided by the British has gradually been recognized in recent years.⁴
- [6] Moreover, known as a devotional Christian scholar, it is not surprising to see Tregelles's view of biblical authority as a recurring topic (especially 119–42). On the one hand, he held a conservative position of the inspiration of the Scripture, the so-called verbal or plenary inspiration. But on the other hand, he insisted that scribal errors could and did happen during the transmission of the text, as nicely put by Stunt: "A corollary to the affirmation of his belief that the biblical authors were verbally inspired, in their writing, was his comparable intransigence that such inspiration did not extend to the subsequent transmission of their writings" (123). Therefore, Tregelles considered the task to reconstruct the New Testament text based on the earliest manuscripts as a calling that he should devote his entire life to. The results were his edition of the Greek New Testament (1857–1879), named by our author as "SPT's *magnum opus*." The way in which Tregelles has prepared this edition under a fragile health is vividly depicted (187–99). Notably the records gathered explains why the concluding part of the edition was further divided into two parts, Hebrews to Philemon as one part published in 1870 and the Revelation alone in 1872. In early 1870, while he was working on the last chapters of the Revelation, a second and severe paralysis befell Tregelles. This tragic element forced him to publish the available portion first, and then the Revelation part was actually prepared with great help from Newton.⁵
- [7] The first and foremost strength of this book is Stunt's knowing of this "forgotten scholar" and the period under examination. Based on plenty of first-hand sources, the author apt-

⁴ A revealing remark can be found in David Parker's review of the part of James in *Editio Critica Maior*: "It may be that we have overlooked the significance and standard of Tregelles' achievement. For thoroughness of citation, the *Editio Critica Maior* may be the new Tischendorf, but so far as its text goes it deserves to be called the new Tregelles" ("The Development of the Critical Text of the Epistle of James, From Lachmann to the *Editio Critica Maior*," in *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis. Festschrift J. Delobel*, ed. Adelbert Denaux, BETL 161 (Leuven: Peeters; University Press, 2002), 317–30 (here 330). This is also cited by Stunt (albeit from the 2009 reprint) on p. 207 of the reviewed book.

⁵ Further, the last volume of 1879 (*Prolegomena, and Addenda and Corrigenda*) was edited and published posthumously by F.J.A. Hort and Annesley W. Streane.

ly offers his readers a very fine biography. His comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter can be supported by the inclusion of six unpublished letters of Tregelles (209–37) and by far the most complete list of this nineteenth-century textual critic's publications (258–61; nearly fifty titles!). But Stunt by no means puts all the records in a tedious way. Quite the opposite, he is such a gifted writer that successfully reconstructs the world Tregelles lived in from those historical minutiae. Secondly, the author's reconstructions and judgments are modest, fair, and evidence-based. For instance, he disagrees with Henry Scrivener's description of Tregelles's later turn to the Church of England (183 n. 33) and shows hesitation in accepting S.E. Porter's appreciation to Tischendorf (for instance, 151). Last but not least, although he admits himself not an expert in New Testament textual criticism (x), Stunt does offer a very good sketch regarding textual scholarship in general and the scholarly history of the mid-nineteenth century in particular. This kind of historical awareness is of crucial importance for locating Tregelles's achievement in his own context. Nevertheless, there are still a few drawbacks in matters text-critical. Sometimes information about referred manuscripts of Greek New Testament is given less precisely. On occasion descriptions about the history of textual scholarship are not completely accurate.⁶ Besides, I have spotted several typos and some misplaced hyperlinks (in the e-book version).⁷

- [8] All in all, this engaging and informative biography should serve as the standard reference for those interested in the life and thought of one of the most significant New Testament textual critics, which Stunt is to be thanked for. Although one will not find many discussions on Tregelles's text-critical works per se, this volume can definitely broaden our understanding of the origin, backdrop, and preparation of his *magnum opus*. As our author remarks on Tregelles's activities other than text-critical related (96):

For a significant segment of SPT's life—in fact, for about twenty-five years—his maturing ecclesiastical convictions repeatedly side-tracked this gifted scholar from devoting himself entirely to his textual researches. Possibly it gave his life a human dimension that his other work lacked—a measure of relief perhaps from the tedium of textual *minutiae*.

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⁶ For example, on p. 58 n. 11, in fact only until his 1734 edition did Johann Albrecht Bengel explicitly formulate the famous principle, not in the 1725 *Prodromus* as many presume; on p. 59, Richard Bentley's *Proposals for Printing* was first published in 1720, not 1721; on p. 65, only the collation of B03 by Apostolo Mico was copied by Carl Gottfried Woide.

⁷ For example, p. 3 n. 6 “10 June 1766–1763 June 1831” [sic]; p. 127 “Chapter 11” (faulty hyperlink); p. 138 “Chapter 8” (faulty hyperlink); on pp. 204–7, the space between “Hort and Westcott” is missing several times.