

A TRILOGY OF
COMPILATIONS UPON THE
SUBJECTS OF BIBLICAL TEXTUAL
CRITICISM,
AND TRANSLATION ETHICS

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PREFACE

Somewhere in the 1970s I began training myself in the craft of Biblical textual criticism. Being a very isolated combat veteran of the conflict in Vietnam, I found it difficult to sit still in a liberal (or even a conservative) classroom. So I trained myself, as this was a part of my calling as a child of God. God put within my heart the very real interest in this field of study. I knew from the start that it would require the remaining years of my life.

In the beginning, the materials I utilized all presented the popular theory that the best manuscripts were from Egypt, as they were the oldest. It was also common to consider the Byzantine text-type as secondary.

With such tools I began my studies. As the years passed, I began the process of acquiring manuscript copies. Eventually I had enough resources to begin forming critical texts, derived from the manuscripts at hand, incorporating the methods I had taught myself.

At the first, I was confident that I had a good grasp of the science of Biblical textual criticism. I did practice work on the first epistle of John, Ephesians, then Romans and the Thessalonian epistles. While I studied my critically established Greek texts and the English translations, I noticed that I was increasingly giving preference to variant readings **not** recommended by Aland or Metzger or Fee, and others whom I read and studied. Yet many of these readings were absolutely correct, they were the original readings, contrary to the popular canons of textual criticism. Many of the variants

which I preferred were also of the Byzantine text-type! Within my bosom, I was certain that the readings I had selected were the correct readings. What convinced me was the Bible itself, the preferred readings were in accord to the intent or design of the Author Himself.

Yes, the Holy Spirit within me was quietly guiding me. Now I knew I was in trouble! For I also knew that most textual critics could not accept such dependence, a dependence upon the Holy Spirit. True I had manuscript evidence supporting my choices, but in numerous cases the classical canons of textual criticism were against my preference.

I had a choice, to comply with peer pressure, with the established methodology, OR, well....

Had you served with me in Vietnam (portions of 1966-1969), or had been in my high school math analysis class, you would know what I chose. I took the narrow way, an attempt to be true to what I believe to be true. Of course there are others who practice the craft of Biblical textual criticism "outside the box", I am not the first; there are a few other critics who also follow the "mind of Christ". Yet it is a bit lonely here, this loneliness is overwhelmed by the joy which the Scriptures bring me, I am a lover of truth.

Other scholars, giants in the field, such as Tischendorf and S. P. Tregelles, were also believers. Yet their critical editions of the Greek New Testament are based upon rational/classical textual criticism methods. For whatever reasons, each preferred a reading which accorded to the current system, regardless of what their faith may have suggested to them. They cannot be faulted, they were caught up in their era, when very old manuscripts were coming to light (Vaticanus, Sinaiticus). Even believers can be led astray. Though I do not agree with their results, I salute these men of God,

while rejecting many of their readings. I can and do hope that my feeble efforts are not also in error; that trusting my relationship with Jesus Christ, while trusting my understanding of God's written Word, while trusting that "still small voice" inside me—produces works which honor the validity of the text. To this end I strive, be it ever so humble. It is my sincere prayer, that my work stimulates **you** to think about God's written Word.

In working with my peers, I can only present the data and the supporting evidence which they can understand. I cannot put the Holy Spirit in those who lack Him. I also realize that my light is at odds with the world system, my work will be accepted by only a few. Despite this, I am constantly renewed, gorging myself upon the milk of the Word from God, and on occasion I even dine upon a prime rib roast!

As you read these essays, I want you to KEEP IN MIND THIS FACT: I do not claim that my textual choices, or translations are Divinely Inspired; that they are error-free, or that they are the final word in the science of textual criticism. My choices reflect my efforts, and hopefully my submission to the will of God. I make mistakes, my work and efforts will contain errors.

I recall re-editing works I did decades ago. Shocked at my ignorance or lack of insight into the very word of God. However, we each (I am referring to the elect) should grow. I hope my present labors reflect a certain maturity.

Speak out, I must, against the methods of textual criticism and Bible translation which are typically utilized today. We are living in an age when good is called evil, and evil has become good. Probably a sign that we are near the end of this present dispensation. God's will, will be done as it is written.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, ³ men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; ⁵ for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. ⁶ In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. [I Timothy 4:1-6 NASB]

These folks who "fall away" are believers, elected saints who have been deceived. They have not lost their salvation, they are just deceived by thinking that what they do is correct or orthodox. Certainly their deeds are rational and in accord with worldly estimates and the laws of textual criticism. But not true to the spirit of the Holy Writ. I hope to counter their negative effects, I hope to assist fellow believers.

The Bible is a sound and trustworthy document. Even though many people enjoy criticizing it. For centuries (circa A.D. 600-1650) a single form of the text—Byzantine—reigned supreme, for good reason. Not so today. Even so, the Bible (KJV, NASB, ASV, RSV et al) is worthy of all study, memorization, and as a guide for the unlimited circumstances believers may face in this life (however brief) upon this doomed planet. It is the Holy Word from God, it transcends human "wisdom". Each word of its 66 books is God-breathed. It is error-free in its original form, of which we have many good copies.

I also want to remind readers, that just because two critics or translators claim to be following the unction's of the Holy Spirit in their works, does not imply that their choices are identical. In these common cases where they disagree, it is not any sort of fault attributed to the Holy Spirit,

rather in some way one or both of the critics/translators has made an error, or is operating while deep in unconfessed sin. Being a Spirit-filled Christian does not in this age equal perfection. Nevertheless, these discrepancies can and should cause us observers to ponder the differences, why one or another reading is wrong, or why such and such a translation is suspect. In this manner a blessing occurs, as we find ourselves thinking upon the very text of God's written Word.

Before closing, I need to mention that one of the important functions of textual critics of the New Testament (whether or not they are elect is in this case, irrelevant) is to fully and accurately display all of the variants seen in the witnesses for each verse or text. Providing a full display, allows Bible-believing scholars, translators and Biblical textual critics the means whereby they can quickly scan and establish the text, relying upon the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is therefore important to have all (major) variants accurately presented.

May these essays inspire you, may they open your eyes to what is happening behind closed doors, within the classrooms of numerous seminaries,[†] within the conference rooms of various publishers. You may not agree with my choices as concerns variant readings, nor with my very literal English translations, but may the Spirit of truth grab hold of you too!

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. [John 14:16, 17 NASB]

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him, in spirit and truth ought to worship. [John 4:24, my translation]

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.
[John 14:26 NASB]

Though spoken to the 11 apostles, yet as Paul reveals, this is promised to us too, in this present dispensation. We, the chosen, are now indwelt by the Holy Spirit, each a permanent temple. Each of us has gifts, talents and abilities via which we can serve our brethren. Laboring, and producing fruit in the field of Biblical textual criticism, is one of many gifts or talents God has dispensed. May you use your gift or talent and shine!

† I have visited many Bible colleges and seminaries, I have sat-in during live classes. I have interviewed professors of Greek, examined their hand-outs, tests and teaching philosophies. Mostly on the west coast of America but also in the Bible-belt of America (Tennessee, Michigan, Texas, North Carolina, Florida). Finally, I have also had some university training in Linguistics, Hebrew and other languages. I know the situations, from personal experience, of more than six junior colleges and how evolution and other gross theories have invaded their curriculums.

Mr. Gary S. Dykes - while in Tennessee, spring of 2008.

**A FEW NOTES CONCERNING
TRANSLATION ETHICS WITH REFERENCE
TO THE BIBLICAL TEXT**

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Ever since the "craftiest" of the created creatures uttered this question: "Did God [Elohim] say?..." (Genesis 3:1, NRSV) the word from God has been under constant attack. Despite the severity and universality of the attacks, God has preserved His Word. The exact "how's and wherefore's" are largely beyond human scrutiny, yet enough is perceivable for observers to note the general parameters; both of the preservation process and of the attack processes. One of the current methods employed by the evil one, is the production of various texts which appear to be the word of God, texts which are also endorsed by those who appear certified or qualified to do so.

Since the confusion of languages occurred at Babel, one would be safe to assume that the communication of God's Word requires translation. Translation is a process of communicating between two different languages. The languages may be similar—Latin and French or very dissimilar—Swahili and Tagalog. The effort required to fully communicate betwixt various languages is related to the similarity/dissimilarity of the languages involved. This simple fact is in opposition to one of the tenets of modern linguistics:

...all varieties of language are absolutely equal as instruments of communication and thought. [1]

Modern linguists fear the "rating" of languages. This fear is connected with an aura of evolutionary concepts intermingled with anthropology which have invaded the domain of modern language studies. Language is an important part of culture, and they reason that all cultures are equal, and hence so are their languages! Value judgments are forbidden, societies which promote homosexual behaviors and which practice human sacrifice, are equal to societies which try to adhere to basic Judeo-Christian principles! Languages and societies are not "equal".

Modern linguists currently are concerned with the synchronic study of language usage. Hence, historical linguistics and a solid diachronic analysis of language suffer a lack of attention. Many theories associated with a synchronic observation of language usage are not relevant to the task of Bible translation. Bible translation is concerned with the written language, and many current language theories apply only to the oral use of language. Some of these "theories of speech" have polluted the science and craft of Bible translation. Unfortunately, *how* a translation sounds and its stylistic idioms seem more important than actual basic literal translation. Feelings become more important than accuracy.

In the English speaking world, Bible translation is controlled by several similar monopolies. These monopolies serve the interest of a single group. These monopolies produce,

nearly, every major Bible translation since the mid-twentieth century. Exceptions are noted and private efforts continue to surface, but they are not those which line the pews of most religious organizations, nor which are placed in public places. The Bible producing monopolies are: the *American Bible Society*, the *International Bible Society* and the *United Bible Societies*. Several smaller organizations also work under the umbrella of these three organizations. The intellectual foundation for all of these Bible producing/translation organizations is focused, primarily, within the *Society of Biblical Literature* (SBL), and to a lesser extent the *American Academy of Religion*.

The NIV (a product of the *International Bible Society*) relied upon the efforts of numerous evangelical scholars, yet the final editing was controlled by an editorial board whose agenda was concerned mainly with style as opposed to accuracy.

The SBL has over 5,000 supporting scholars from all the major universities and political centers. Universities such as Harvard, Brandeis, the Hebrew University, University of Copenhagen, Berkeley, Chicago, Cornell, Princeton, Yale, Oxford, and many evangelical seminaries, are staffed and even directed by members of this intellectual cartel. Various "grants" both public and private add monetary fuel to their largely tax deductible efforts. Young promising scholars are groomed and programmed to enter the rewarding and exciting field of Bible translation and associated literary productions, including manuscript (Qumran scrolls) research.

Major publishing houses are a business, if they do not exact a profit, they will cease to publish. The Bible is a best seller. In America alone, in 1996, well over 400 million dollars was spent purchasing Bibles. Most publishing concerns, (though not all) which undertake the production of a Bible, desire to be successful. A well made Bible is not cheap to produce—especially if high quality paper and bindings are part of the production. To insure a successful venture, publishers desire that the edition is produced by recognized (i.e. "vested") scholars. As with the case of the *International Bible Society*, many of its ground-level translators are on the "company payroll" financed by sales of the product. Associated with the production of the biblical translation, (in this instance the *New International Version*), are commentaries, concordances, and a vast plethora of associated spin-offs. Thus a growing industry exists and is thriving. In 1987, the *International Bible Society*, (formerly the *New York Bible Society*) had an operating budget of nearly 10 million dollars. In 1995, it had more than doubled to 22.6 million dollars. [2]

One of the most disconcerting aspects of the industry, is that some of the scholars which serve the *American Bible Society* and the *United Bible Societies* and staff the SBL, are not apparently, Christians; [a short list of names is appended] they deny the reality of miracles,

they deny inerrancy, they deny a literal creation, and treat many portions of the Scriptures as fabricated myths from bygone cultures! Divine inspiration simply does not appear as rational to many of these scholars. A few (naïve in their association) may be genuine believers but their voice is not heard above the din of the humanistic oriented scholars.

To be free from such monopolies is not easy. To be an independent Bible scholar, and to not be dependent upon their "translations", one must learn the original languages and acquire good Greek and Hebrew editions and manuscript copies. Once years of study has given the student a working ability with the original languages, the communication of these profound Biblical truths often requires translation with a subordinate explanation.

When a sincere believer investigates the text and marvels at accurate insights, his/her perceptions will often offend the ecumenical religionists. Orthodoxy and dogmatic adherence to human creeds is demanded by the religionists. Individuals who hold to the literal plain meaning generated by a pure grasping of the Scriptures are branded as heretics. Publishing houses usually avoid such risky "deviates". Membership into career launching societies is quite often barred to those who cling to their learned observations which often stem from prayerful, personal study.

Actual translation from Koine Greek (the language of the original New Testament) to English is not as difficult as some translators seem to suggest. Some of the aspects of Koine Greek facilitate such translation. Koine Greek is not dependent upon word order as is English, though word order is used in a variety of ways in Koine Greek. Because Koine Greek is a highly inflected language, syntactical relationships are more concrete. That is, they are observable in the written text. English and many other modern languages rely heavily upon pragmatics and other paralinguistic techniques to effectively communicate, especially at the oral level. Written Koine Greek is not so hindered.

God's Word is preserved for us today, in ancient languages, their various speech acts are forever in the background. It is the written Word which commands our attention and study. God's foreknowledge has provided for this event, and His written word is completely understandable without assisting speech acts.

Further assistance for the translation of Koine Greek, in reference to the sacred Scriptures, comes from the fact that believers already know much of the Author's intent. Discourse analysis is not an ominous chore! God is communicating with very profound languages (Koine Greek, Hebrew and some Aramaic) each of which are highly inflected languages, well suited for written data. He is not trying to deceive anyone. Truths, prophecy, Laws and guides for modern living, are all clearly delineated in the Holy Scriptures. It serves as a guide to ancient history as well, as many archaeologists are increasingly learning. As

"Thy Word giveth light", the Word is well designed to be understood by all believers. Translation is included in God's efforts to provide His Word for all believers.

Since the intent of the Scriptures is fairly evident, the verbal contexts are grasped as accords to the Author's intent. This context often prescribes meaning (semantics) to the components of the context—words, phrases, sentences. Hence a context-free analysis is ludicrous as regards God's written Word. Yet many wild notions are derived from the Scriptures simply because the context is ignored. This ignorance has generated some corrupt "translations" as well. Many modern linguists focus upon context-free texts, which focus often utilizes principles foreign to proper Bible translation. The context of God's Word is primarily these overriding canons:

- (1) His Word is truth of a Divine origin ("God-breathed")
- (2) His Word contains parables, figures of speech, metaphors and other types of basic literary conventions, all should be translated literally
- 3) His Word is Holy, and is Alive, unique among all other texts!
- (4) His Word was originally penned via humans, and it miraculously incorporated the various personalities of these penmen!
- (5) It has singular interpretations, and also has a large variety of applications which stem from the singular interpretation of each passage.
- (6) It is coherent, complete, and self validating. It stands on its own.

Man, encouraged by the enemy, delights in dragging down the lofty precepts of the Scriptures. Vulgar (as in "rude") translations are one method of subjecting the Scriptures to human irreverence. The type or register, of a translation's language can reflect the level of respectability accorded to the text. Some English paraphrases are noble, and may indeed be based upon the underlying Greek text. However, many of the paraphrases radically alter the Author's intended expression. One current example is seen in this paraphrase of Philippians 3:2b,3:

...knife-happy circumcisers, I call them. The real believers are the ones the Spirit of God leads to work away at this ministry, filling the air with Christ's praise as we do it. We couldn't carry this off by our own efforts, and we know it. (from *The Message*, by Eugene Peterson. Published by NavPress).

Peterson, a former pastor and current SBL member, claims the above text is an actual translation. His precise words, from a 1993 interview in *Christianity Today* (December 13, 1993, page 41) are:

While we are calling what I've done a paraphrase, I've also had the feeling that it is true translation.

He supports his definition by declaring that the Koine Greek of the New Testament is "street language", and hence he feels justified in lowering its register to that of trash-level language. Indeed, Koine Greek was spoken by the common person, but the literary papyri, and texts by dignitaries in all parts of the Hellenistic empire use the same basic register in their written documents! Many non-literary papyri contain very poor language, common in many letters and private documents, the New Testament is not at this "low" level of register or style. Peterson could declare that Koine Greek, *as seen in the New Testament* is also the common language style of kings and the elite class. Instead he seems to falsify the issue. His paraphrase may have some good phrases, but its overall result is destructive to the original intent of the Scriptures, which is truth and a Divinely engineered sequence and form.

The *American Bible Society's* new paraphrase is also billed as a translation from the original Greek. (As was the *Good News for Modern Man* (the TEV)). This new paraphrase is called the *Contemporary English Version* (the CEV). In this highly promoted paraphrase, the venom injected by Eugene Nida (another SBL club member) is everywhere evident. Nida (an ABS paid scholar), suggested that the theory of "dynamic equivalence" be applied to God's Word. It was, and is no longer even presented as a theory. Indeed, transforming passive Greek structures into active structures, is passed off as proper translation. The *New International Version* is one of the exponents of this theory. Concepts and words are added to the passive constructions, agents and objects of the Greek verb which may not be actual agents or objects, are added to the verb so as to create a passable active construction in the English "translation". The results pervert the Word from God, they add man's assumptions to the original sacred text.

The tensions which exist betwixt extreme literal translations and paraphrases are very real. There are Greek terms which cannot be translated via a single English word. Greek verbs pack a lot of information into a single word, such as: the number of the subject, transitivity, duration, mood potentialities, aspect, and person. At times, one Greek word can be defined as a complete sentence. Hence, a strict literal word-for-word effort cannot perfectly express the much fuller Greek in English. Words are often added in the English translation, and a humble caution is experienced by translators who are believers. The goal is not a sweet sounding text, not a pretentious text, nor an overly simplistic text, nor one which only incorporates a supposed level of "dynamic [or "functional"] equivalence". The goal is **complete equivalence**, which is the term used by Dr. James Price. [3] Paraphrases fall far short of this goal.

Another theory propagated by E. A. Nida, is his concept of "inspiration". Dr. Nida does not claim that the original text is the focus of inspiration, rather he labors to shift the focus of inspiration to the reception of the reader. That is, he believes that the important aspect is: is the *reader* inspired when he/she reads the text? [4] Thus, concern over the original language and semantics is reduced. This sublime tenet is very popular among professional translators today. Emphasis is laid upon the "feeling" which the new "translation" generates. One suspects that it should also be "politically correct" as well.

Indeed, a number of translations reflect "political correctness". One only needs to compare the various editions of the NIV and the TEV to note changes which suit those who worship the mother of Jesus, or language which suits major religious sentiments (as per the change in Acts 2:38 of a preposition. The NIV's first edition's "translation" "...so that your sins may be forgiven" was quickly changed to the current "...for the forgiveness of your sins") —as it had offended popular Baptist theologies. Today numerous Baptist churches use this popular version [but only the second edition!] as their standard Bible. Imagine God being referred to as the "Father-Mother" (per the 1995 *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*) which gender bending shows no respect for the original masculine terms.

Several modern "translations" are geared to the growing charismatic movement. One of the cornerstones of the charismatic movement is that God's written Word is not complete; and that today, men and women can "prophesy" and speak in "tongues" and actually **add** to the Word of God. One of the many texts, which forbids such behavior, is often mistranslated in many Bibles; it is I Corinthians 4:6, which reads thusly in the CEV:

Friends, I have used Apollos and myself as examples to teach you the meaning of the saying, "Follow the rules." ...

The TEV is here curiously similar! The NIV is a bit more accurate. Paul is referring to the *written* Word of God, the babes in Corinth (though "Spirit-filled") were going beyond the written text of the Word. Though this may be a "saying", Paul is, most likely, referring to texts just prior quoted (2:9), but he may also be referring to portions of the Law and his earlier epistles. All of these logical truths are lost when "written word" (γεγραπται) is mysteriously ignored. Here is the NASB's literal rendition:

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written...

The CEV's "Follow the rules" is a sad paraphrase, and it removes from the readers' mind the actual written text which is being referred to. Is this translation? Such attempts may generate the anger which God expressed to earlier "prophets" as seen in all of Jeremiah chapter 23, especially verse 30!

Another version is the *Black Bible Chronicles*, by a Ms. P. K. McCary (published by the *African American Family Press*). This paraphrase presents such sentences as; "Don't waste nobody." and "You shouldn't be takin' nothin' from your homeboys.", both are of the famous 10 commandments! Urban children who grow up learning the Scriptures in such an idiom may be forever hampered with a very distorted view of the actual nobility of the Holy Scriptures.

Translators themselves, may not be entirely to blame. Many educational institutions have adopted liberal linguistic theories, and have made them part of their curriculums. When aspiring translators are educated, their minds may be infused with some real liberal and twisted linguistic theories. For example some may encounter this text in their educational journeys, a text which appears to enlighten a students mind as to the **real** understanding of the Greek verbal system. I am referring to the second edition of Dr. Stanley Porter's 1992 work entitled: *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, published by the JSOT Press, of Sheffield, England. [Porter is also a SBL club member]. The book is presented as a standard grammar of the NT. But, alas! it simply serves as a stage to present Stanley Porter's radical theories. Porter boldly, ignores the diachronic lessons which the Greek language exhibits. In declaring that the morphological form of a verb is one depicting aspect *as opposed* to tense/time, a deceptive foundation is laid. Mycenaean Greek, Classical

Greek, and Modern Greek demonstrate the clear fact that aspect *and* tense/time concepts are both employed in the form of the Greek verb [notably in the indicative mood]. He never does explain why he thinks the Koine Greek is exceptionally unique. His theory, though useful and enlightening, is misleading, especially when presented in what appears to be a general work. He also has some bold notions concerning conditionals and particles. The book should be titled: "Some Grammatical Theories...".

Christians, need to be informed that some scholars who make their Bible translations, may be men and women who are not believers. Pagans with degrees have no business manhandling the Word from God (especially when textual variants are evaluated and decisions are needed). Yet, an alarming number of commercial Biblical translations are generated by extremely liberal theorists. *Wycliffe Translators* is infested with linguistic theories which were created in the dark recesses of pagan institutions by scholars on the tax deductible payrolls of various societies. These same scholars bring linguistic theories from liberal institutions and experiment with them upon the text of God's Word, and then sell (or "give") their experiment to the naive public or naive tribesmen! *Wycliffe Translators* have produced a few real fine translations, perhaps due to Divine intervention!

A Christians' defense against such onslaught is strategically diverse! Learning the original languages and using critical Greek and Hebrew editions is best (better: utilize copies of various ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures). Another tactic is to write letters to "Christian" (or evangelical) publishers, and demand to know the beliefs of the translators who make the books they sell. The ability of pagans to appear as angels of light is amazing. The Christian should also inspect the lifestyle and behaviors of these same peoples (if possible). Teachers and pastors have strict guidelines to adhere to, and it is the students' responsibility to "judge" or inspect his/her instructors (the epistles to Timothy and Titus are clear in the criteria needed for evaluating deacons and others). Another tactic, is to compare various translations. The indwelling Holy Spirit can, and does assist! However, very young or immature saints, may not have the experience necessary to recognize the urgings of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Certain past scholars were well known for their piety, they had a great and high regard for the text of God's Word. Most of the KJV translators were such men, Tyndale, and Martin Luther were such men. The Greek editions of S. P. Tregelles and Tischendorf are the works of men who dearly loved the Lord. Seek out the respected and well known versions which are reputed to be accurate. Being literal to the Greek and Hebrew is best. Deviations (paraphrase) have no true limits, a coarse-sounding literal translation is much better than a real slick-sounding paraphrase.

One example of a translation "problem" is literal translation of mid-Eastern cultural idioms from the Bible era, into a modern conception. Especially if the literal rendering has no current equivalent. For instance what does the "eye of a needle" convey to modern readers? or what does an "unveiled woman" indicate? One of my favorites is found in Romans 12:20b, (a quote of Proverbs 25:22):

...if [thine enemy] he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." (The *American Standard Version*, 1901.)

This passage has generated many unusual interpretations. Some modern "translators" would argue that the translation should pose the passage in modern idiom, in modern familiar concepts. Instead of "coals of fire" perhaps something like this—"when your enemy needs a jump (his battery is dead) give him a jump and a tank of gas". Though such a rendering communicates the concept (giving and forgiving) such rendering is not translation. Instead it is paraphrasing, it is interpretation, and it could do irreparable damage to the real integrity of the text. Translation is not commentary. In one sense, translation may be called interpretation, but only in that it is an effort to accurately render in precise fully equivalent terms the source language, interpreting the meanings of the words. Unfortunately many "translations" add theological and cultural/social interpretations into this mix. This results in what I term as improper mixing of translation and interpretation.

A paraphrase may be a form of translation, but it is generally not an accurate faithful rendering of the historical text. Imagine Shakespeare's shock if he heard his text as "friends, Romans, countrymen, give me your attention". The explanation of a cultural idiom belongs to the sermon, to the teacher. The urban-ghetto language used in the *Black Bible Chronicles* [see above] is an example of imputing cultural idioms into the actual sacred text. The text itself, should not be altered. Notes can be used (as in most study Bibles), but the altering of the literal text must not be tolerated, the standard is not to be recast, even though translations can improve and should improve. Rather than lowering the register (or level of speech style) of the Biblical text to that of "street-level" trash, why not patiently and lovingly, raise the language register of the young readers? This would be a true and valuable education.

God has provided teachers! Though good teachers may be rare they do provide an important function. The Jews of long ago, developed highly constructed Midrashes [commentaries] of the Holy text to explain and clarify and amplify, but they honored the text, it remained pure. Many of their Midrashes are questionable, yet they altered not the

text. The sermons and commentaries can change, but leave the text as is! A good accurate translation will preserve the original text's cultural idioms and nuances. Subjective assumptions belong in the notes.

Some paraphrases can be beneficial. Persons who are just learning English and children can benefit from using a paraphrase which is very simplified language. But the paraphrase must never be seen as the *standard* by which to fully evaluate God's Word. Some publishers avoid the term "paraphrase" and are claiming that their production is an actual "translation" (which designation implies a measure of accuracy, which is not seen in paraphrases). The *New Living Translation* now proclaims itself as a translation, instead it is a true paraphrase (and one of the better paraphrases at that). Believers who are shopping for a Bible need to realize what a paraphrase is, and not to trust the publisher's promotional chicanery. Their definition of translation can be deceiving. One of the best tests I know of for recognizing the differences between a paraphrase and a true translation is this one. Using the original Greek text of the NT, have a translator render the Greek text into an English translation. Then, have another translator take that resultant English translation (not seeing the original Greek text) and "back-translate" the English into its original Greek form. Now, compare the two Greek texts; if both are almost identical, then we are dealing with true translation. If they are widely divergent, then a paraphrase (or other "method") is suspected.

Once a student is capable, the student should advance to a true, literal translation. Suggested versions which are literal would include: *The New American Standard Bible*, the *King James Version*, and the *New Revised Standard Version* (NSRV). Recommended paraphrases are: Philips, *New Testament in Modern English* and *The New Testament in the Language of the People* by Charles Williams, the *New Living Translation* is also admirable.

According to *Publisher's Weekly* (in 1996) there were over 450 English translations and paraphrases of all or portions of the Bible, many of which vie hungrily for your attention and check book. Your Bible buying experience should not be haphazard, nor should you rely upon the advice of a salesperson. A pastor who has set a good example and who is truly humble may be able to offer helps and suggestions. Again it is best to take your time and to prayerfully examine each choice. A finely crafted leather-bound Bible can last you a lifetime, and become a valued and trusted companion.

The only weapon Satan fears, on this earth, is the written Word of God. It is the believers' Sword. If Satan cannot remove the Sword (Word), he will attempt to dull it. The great deceiver has found a very successful way to dull the edge, he uses men and women who appear to be qualified saints, mass produced pagan scholars. Satan is not so obvious as he was

in the garden, but his goals have not changed. He abhors any saint feeding upon the written Word and thus hopefully, growing and becoming an effective mature warrior. Going back to Eden, let each believer search and find out what does "God say"? It is not wise nor safe to let others (strangers!) feed you, especially if you can feed yourself. We live in a very dark dispensation!

In closing this essay on translation ethics, the author would like to apologize to any SBL members who are indeed genuine believers! It is known that such creatures exist! The SBL, on the surface, appears to be a harmless association. Via membership, a scholar is listed in the "directory" and is thus accessible, he/she need not contribute to the organization's publishing endeavors. He/she can be made to feel welcome in a powerful group environment. But the SBL must be evaluated on the basis of exactly what it does support and produce. The many monographs and publications of the SBL are 90% destructive liberal criticisms of the integrity of the inspired Scriptures. One only needs to examine their publications! However, some of their foreign language contributions are valued resources, but when dealing directly with the Holy Scriptures, one finds an unusually high number of truly destructive compositions. Hence associated scholars, are a part of this dark design [deny it though they may, it is a "dark design", an intended plot].

Other societies exist which do in fact honor the text of God's Word. Further, there are in *Wycliffe* and the *American Bible Society* genuine saints, doing a fine work for God, such believers know that this writer is not directing his warnings against them. It is hoped that these men and women will alter these societies for the good. Aristotle and Jesus Christ do not mix well, especially since "faith" and "miracles" supply such a poor premise in a syllogistic argument. God's Word shall endure forever. Aristotle's logic will perish.

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On the Nature of Biblical Textual Criticism

Mr. Gary S. Dykes

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Textual criticism is a science which has been practiced for centuries. It exists because peoples wish to verify or possess a text which is free of falsifications or corruptions. What indeed was the formula or the mixture of ingredients which served to preserve ancient Egyptian mummies? Egyptian priests of circa 800 B.C. needed to know the precise amounts of each ingredient which their predecessors from circa 2000 B.C. used. It is easy to imagine that they carefully examined the documents from bygone days so as to maintain their craft. If a potion or portion was lost or damaged, they would have to reconstruct the text from other copies. If the copies were inaccurate, then some common sense was needed to reconstruct what the true and original formula was. This effort defines classical textual criticism.

Other definitions often appear thusly:

The object of all textual criticism is to recover so far as possible the actual words written by the writer.

[Kirsopp Lake, *The Text of the New Testament*, London, 1900. page 1.]

A bit fuller is Tov's definition:

Textual criticism deals with the origin and nature of all forms of a text, in our case the biblical text. This involves a discussion of its putative original form(s) and an analysis of the various representatives of the changing biblical text. The analysis includes a discussion of the relation between these texts, and attempts are made to describe the external conditions of the copying and the procedure of textual transmission. Scholars involved in textual criticism not only collect data on differences between the textual witnesses, but they also try to evaluate them. Textual criticism deals only with data deriving from the textual transmission—in other words, readings included in textual witnesses which have been created at an earlier stage, that of the literary growth of the biblical books, are not subjected to the textual evaluation.

[Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1992, page 1]

Establishing the text as it was originally written, lies at the heart of most definitions. In fact this may serve as THE purpose of textual criticism as understood and practiced by most acolytes of the discipline. This purpose and the above definitions serve quite adequately when the texts under examination are of human origins—that is, texts created and copied by humans. However these definitions and purpose are inadequate when the text under examination was not created by humans, though copied by humans. Such is the case with the original Biblical documents.

Consequently the definition and purpose of textual criticism differs from that which is solely concerned with texts created purely by humans. In fact Biblical textual criticism is radically handicapped when it operates within the confines of the typical methodology of classical textual criticism.

Biblical textual criticism, in general, has been operating under the constraints of classical scholarship; under the canons of classical textual criticism, and as a result the field is stagnant. Many modern critics appear as drunken men wandering aimlessly amidst floating bubbles of pretty colors, a landscape of transitory values and endless bubbles. The whole field has floundered over issues not germane to the task at hand. Trifling diversions, useless investigations and extravagant theories have plagued the efforts to really contribute to BIBLICAL textual criticism.

Years of this kind of aimless intellectual pursuits has left, nay robbed the present generation of useful results. Instead of a sense of trustworthiness today's Bible readers are left with a vacuum, empty like the fruits of nihilism. Instead of a sense of affirmation or validation today's Bible students are told that the texts and the multitude of Bible translations are all uncertain. What a fine foundation to base a life upon, or from which one may view supposed truth about life, death, resurrection, healing, guidance and glorious transcendent examples of morals and truths. For it is the textual critics who supply the data to the translators of the Bible and to the publishers of these translations. Examine any introduction of most Bibles as concerns their creation and history and you will find a den of textual critics behind the scenes. For example a translation may state that it is based upon the

Nestle/Aland Greek New Testament and perhaps, the Stuttgart Hebrew text, yet these very Greek and Hebrew texts are themselves the products of classical textual criticism. What is one to think of the once popular *Amplified New Testament* or the *Amplified Bible*? A scholar (Mrs. Frances E. Siewert) created this translation using over twenty-seven translations, and then based the results upon the Greek text of Westcott-Hort. Her work seems erudite, it may even seem revolutionary, but it is a very poor translation filled with dogmatic assertions about some grammatical slots (achieved with a very [apparently] limited grasp of Koine Greek), endless synonyms and comments about styles or manners attributed to the NT "authors". Readers are actually left with a very narrow and biased view of the text. The *Amplified Bible* is an obvious failure stemming from a mishandling of textual criticism and a naive editor.

What of the more polished texts such as the *New International Version* or Holman's *Christian Standard Bible*? Both claim to be produced by teams of well-meaning Bible scholars and critics, both based upon standard Greek and Hebrew texts. Anyone comparing these translations will instantly see that one (or both) are "playing a game with different rules, not according to Hoyle". When the translations vary, which is to be trusted? Indeed both are financial investments, the goal was/is to generate income for certain publishers and scholars. Textual fidelity is an abstract which they cannot claim, for when one looks under their pretensions, there lies the modern uncertainties associated with current theories of Biblical textual criticism! The very sources of their translations are themselves viewed as approximations of what the New Testament may have originally been, no confidence no certainties!

Not all practitioners of the science are guilty. There are those who are somewhat independent, who practice needed criticism with a clearer purpose and with better and more practical procedures.

An analogy might be seen in an attempt to infuse into the study of crystallography, elements of topological analyzes. This would produce many interesting results and theories (more bubbles) but the union of topology and crystallography would only hinder the simple and stable tenets of crystal-

lography, with its simple system of seven crystal classifications. In other words, the canons, methods and theories of classical textual criticism are inimical to the craft and science of Biblical textual criticism. I repeat—the typical procedures and purposes of most Biblical textual critics, are a hindrance to the establishment and validity of the Biblical text.

Can a better procedure be accepted? Does one exist? Perhaps the following may serve as a starting point for the practice of genuine Biblical Textual Criticism.

THE PURPOSE OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM

- to clarify the text
- to validate the text
- to maintain and preserve the text

"To clarify the text", means simply, via textual criticism, the critic produces results which actually clarify passages. That is, the meanings are clear, transmission errors are removed as well as prior religious biases from or via the ancient scribes. This requires an intimate knowledge of the entire Biblical text, all of the contexts, and a mature grasp of all the languages involved, styles of the various human agents involved and solid familiarity with the Greek manuscripts. Clarification also results from the accurate and full display of all of the known variants, which is still a required task. This seems to be a contradiction, but when the range of variations is known, the Holy-Spirit-enabled examiner can make a better decision! The textual variations need to accord to the Author's intent. When this process is utilized in the evaluation of variant readings, an actual elutriation should occur. When prayerfully accomplished, the text and translation should genuinely edify the reader.

"To validate the text", means to prove that it is genuine, that it is the very Words God intended. Only the Holy Spirit can accomplish this. Thus the actual critic MUST have within him/her the indwelling Holy Spirit, and must be living a fairly obedient life. Pagan critics (and the world is full of them) cannot fulfill this essential requirement. As a result they are the first to claim that this is not a rational purpose or method. They will claim that the text is being subjected to a belief system similar to a religion, and not to a science. Indeed! Is not an actual child of God in the best position to recognize and validate the Words of the Father? Bibles are not really meant for pagans, they are God's Word for His people, for His flock. Unbelievers may read the Bible, and manipulate its text, but it is not food for their souls. Following the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit in validating the text and in recognizing which variant reading is valid; is, of course, contrary to most definitions of scientific processes. But we are not dealing with a mere book created by some humans. We are dealing with a very unique book, the very Words God inspired and deigned to have written. Recognizing these Words is one of the many functions of the Holy Spirit. Various classical canons fail here, and human rationalism loses the day.

"To maintain and preserve the text", means to correctly copy it, and to assure it is accurately copied, printed and quoted. It also means to be able to recognize and remove attacks and distortions imposed upon the text. In order for a text to be maintained, it must first exist and be recognized. It should be an acceptable, established and validated text, confirmed by qualified (Spirit filled critics). Minor improvements and variations will naturally occur, and improved translations are a fact of language evolution, but the base text can and should be ardently maintained.

These are the results or purpose of Biblical textual criticism. These three goals should control every aspect of the many processes involved in establishing the Biblical text. Recognition of mature, Spirit-filled critics is accomplished by fellow believers who can testify to the lifestyle, to the

morals, to the behavior, to the humility and to the obedience of the critic under review. Genuine Biblical critics express a God-given gift, a talent. Not all saints and believers can be textual critics.

The science of Biblical textual criticism has for far too long been controlled by humanists; humanists professionally trained to be critics. Trained to ruthless objectiveness, an objectiveness which denies miracles, which denies the true transcendent status of God's written Word. Contrary to the canons of classical textual criticism a shorter text may not be the original reading, at times the original text is apparently conflated. An awkward Greek verb may indeed be the original spelling, even if it is Attic: a later reading may be the original, and all papyri are not closer to the original form of the Bible or New Testament text! Indeed, there is another criterion which supercedes all these classical canons, a criterion which stems from the mysterious. It is the symbiotic relationship of the Holy Spirit working within the bosom of a gifted Biblical textual critic. A mysterious ability which the haughty humanistic textual critics cannot fathom, it is absolutely foreign to them. *It is vain* to even hope that they might (as unrepentant pagans) ever accept the witness of the Holy Spirit. *It is vain* to even expect them to ever acknowledge the results of a believer's efforts in clarifying, or validating the text. Consequently, when believers confront the pagan academics, we should use their terminology, we should prove our efforts within the textual criticism parameters they can understand. A pleasant burden!

Below is a quote from a past textual critic, a man who did produce some useful works. And yes like us all is/was liable to mistakes and imperfections, but then that is our goal—perfection.

The New Testament is more than a book: it is the record of life, of *the life which is life indeed*. And all our study of its words will be in vain, unless they are the means of conducting us to Him Who is the Word. But the more earnestly we devote ourselves to that study with the best aids which modern discovery and research have placed within our reach, and the more loyally we follow the leading of the Spirit who has been sent to guide us into *all the truth*, the more fully we shall recognize with Origen, the first great Bib-

lical critic, that 'there is not one jot or tittle written in Scripture, which does not work its own work for those who know how to use the forces of the words which have been written.'

[George Milligan, *The New Testament Documents: Their Origin and Early History*. London, 1913. Page 80.]

Milligan was an academic, but foremost he is known as a man who submitted to the written Word of God.

Since the Holy Spirit is a NECESSARY component of true Biblical textual criticism, why is it that folks like Tov, Metzger, Aland and Lake omit or never mention this tool?

Perhaps one should answer with another question:

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD, OR NOT?

Each so-called Biblical textual critic should be forced to reveal their answer. Each should also be asked if they believe God's written Word to be Holy, uniquely Inspired [II Timothy 3:16,17] and error-free in the originals. These simple questions should be part of a mandated job description questionnaire. Before a person can serve as a peace officer, he is asked if he is a felon, and submits to a background check. Thieves are not usually hired as bank clerks. So why is it that folks who work with the most important documents in the universe, are largely unknown and mysterious as regards their actual perception of the Divine text? It reminds me of therapists who are also pedophiles, therapists who counsel children who are victims of pedophiles! Is it too much to demand for us end users and purchasers of various Bibles to know the qualifications of those who produced or edited the text? Just knowing their academic back-ground only reveals that each has submitted to some type of programming, and that they may be purely humanistic. We need answers to questions that concern their belief system, their personal attitudes towards the Scriptures and God.

What amazes me is the number of textual critics who avoid mentioning their faith in the written Word! Do they assume that readers accept their

myriads of journal articles and academic degrees as proof of their faith in God and His Word? Apparently. Such apparent behavior by these critics seem to mock and belittle the intelligence of devout Christians who may examine their comments about pretty bubbles. I suspect that they hide in silence for a reason. If the prefaces to their contrived exegeses revealed their possible paganism or humanism, they would jeopardize their incomes and status generated by their many sophistic ejaculations.

Am I angry? Yes. I ought to be.

One bold publication, appearing in 1990, exposed the inner workings of academically programmed textual critics. It was written by a "historical critic". One who eventually came to develop a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Eta Linnemann in her expose declared:

Today I realize that historical-critical theology's monopolistic character and world-wide influence is a sign of God's judgment (Rom. 1:18-32). God predicted this in his Word: "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Tim. 4:3). He also promised to send "a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie" (2 Thess. 2:11). *God is not dead, nor has he resigned. He reigns, and he is already executing judgment on those who declare him dead or assert that he is a false god who does nothing, either good or evil.*

[Eta Linnemann. *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology? Reflections of a Bultmannian turned evangelical*. Baker Book House, 1990. page 18.]

Dr. Linnemann had achieved much in her academic career. She experienced much typical programming in various German theological universities. She was a professor of theology at Braunschweig Technical University, West Germany. She had published numerous journal articles in prestigious religious journals. But when she met Christ, she could no longer assail the written Word using the learned techniques of the humanists and

pagans. So she "dropped out". Bravo! Currently she continues to serve the Lord, and additionally wrote several revealing books!

Classical textual criticism often labors with texts which may have only a few surviving witnesses. Not so of the Bible, literally thousands upon thousands of manuscripts survive, not just in Greek and Hebrew. Biblical textual criticism does not suffer from a lack of copies, it suffers from the practicing critics' inability to recognize truth, to recognize the Author's intent (a.k.a. discourse analysis). How does one expect a gopher to write upon the effects of deep sea diving? How does one expect a carpenter to perform routine brain surgeries? How does one expect critics, who lack faith, to examine faith and the very foundation of faith, the written Word?

The genuine textual critic must have a stable theology, not copied from some superior, but a theology learned via personal study, experience, prayer and meditation. A proper Biblical theology is required so that the critic can better detect evil, evil temptations, evil deceptions. Knowing Satan and his goals should alert the critic to unusual manuscript variants affecting a variety of key theological truths. Truths such as the expected return of the Lord Jesus Christ, the reality of sin, the reality of evil, the eternal destinations of the just and unjust, the concept of the Trinity, the power of Jesus' own faith which faith has been given to each believer. These and many more Biblical concepts are under *constant* attack from the very real enemy—Satan and his demons.

Satan hates the Word from God, the written Word, the Scriptures. Why? Below are several passages, illuminating one reason:

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[Hebrews 4:12, NASB]

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

[Ephesians 6:13-17, NASB]

The only weapon a Christian possesses is a sword, the only instrument for offensive tactics is the sword. We have prayer, faith and other pieces of armor, for defense; but again the only offensive weapon we have against evil, against Satan and his agents is the sword—the very written Word from God. This weapon, in the hands of a mature saint, terrifies Satan. Even a child can understand why Satan does all and focuses much of his efforts upon removing, sheathing, dulling or abusing this sword. Textual critics are an easy target, as many are totally unsuspecting. Educated pawns in the hands of a grand master.

As Paul the Apostle, said: "we have the mind of Christ", let us rely upon this insight into the Scriptures, upon this attitude towards truth. These attitudes and this Mind are absolutely necessary elements of Biblical textual criticism. These are also features which separates Biblical textual criticism from classical textual criticism (which only deals with documents created entirely by humans).

True Biblical textual critics have a great responsibility, yet as Linne-mann lamented, it seems that the nihilists and academic humanists are having their brief interlude, soon the curtain shall fall.

As for the Bible-believing, Biblical textual critic, may the good Lord Jesus Christ encourage you, may He maintain you, and may your light and efforts bear fruit. Your purpose, as proposed in this essay;

- to clarify the text
- to validate the text
- to maintain and preserve the text

is a noble task and gift indeed.

APPENDIX NUMBER THREE:

The Doctrine of "Inerrancy" and the Manuscript Variants

To many scholars and Bible believers, there seems to exist a real tension between the notion that God's written Word is Holy, perfect, error-free *and* the fact that thousands of manuscript variants exist. Traditionally this incongruity has been downplayed by some theologians who state that:

Only about 400 of the 100,000 or 150,000 variations materially affect the sense. Of these, again, not more than about fifty are really important for some reason or other; and even of these fifty not one affects an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teachings.

[*Companion to the Greek Testament and English Version*, 4th ed.. 1911. Philip Schaff. p. 177]

Many more such sentiments can be seen in evangelical works, such as that by Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 1972; pages 43 *ff.* The estimated number of 150,000 variants is by today's estimate, perhaps conservative. Most of these 150,000 variants are simple phonetic or spelling errors. In this present work on First Corinthians I disclose amongst its 437 verses about 2200 variants (not including simple phonetic or spelling errors). This occurs in just the 97 or so witnesses which I use, [refer to my end note following this essay]. There are about 560 *more* Greek manuscripts which contain all or a portion of I Corinthians! I would be fain to estimate a total of about 3,000 true variants in the Greek text of First Corinthians, incorporating all of its known Greek manuscripts. In my understanding of basic Biblical doctrines, I find in this great epistle alone, about 60 - 70 variants affecting any sort of a major doctrine, in fact only about a dozen or so may even be considered as really MAJOR. Consequently we do have some meaningful textual variations, and we should be able as Christians to answer for them. Hence the impetus for this appendix.

First I suggest we define "inerrancy" and its relation to "infallibility". The clearest definition which I have found is that which the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* declares:

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science.

[JETS - Volume 21, No. 4, December 1978. Article XII (in part), page 291]

Inerrancy, means without error. Infallible, means reliable, trustworthy and not misleading, a safe and sure guide. The Chicago statement also has an expositional essay attached which declares that "...the truthfulness of Scripture is not negated by the appearance in it of irregularities of grammar or spelling..." [op. cit. above - JETS, page 295]. Then on page 296, of the same journal, they state that:

God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographic text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need of textual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the text in the course of its transmission.

They then continue by declaring that we today have many good translations which are dependable, so that the "true Word of God is within their [the readers'] reach." I support most of the Chicago Statement, but I also realize that it glosses over the manuscript variations which do impact major doctrines, and their naïve acceptance of many modern translations as "excellent" is an overt deception, without excuse.

Such was the common view of inerrancy in the mid-twentieth century. Today in the early twenty-first century we see a movement to the other extreme! Numerous scholars suggest that we cannot ever discern the original text, that it will always remain elusive! Note these quotes:

[The NT] is open, and successive generations write on its pages.

[*The Living Text of the Gospels*, David C. Parker, 1997, page 92]

...the people of God have to make up their own minds. There is no authoritative text to provide a short-cut.

[*Ibid.*, Parker, page 212]

At last NT textual criticism has lost its innocence and has learned to tolerate ambiguity—one of the sure signs of maturity.

[JBL, 123/1, (2004), page 9: *The Oxyrhynchus New Testament Papyri: "Not Without Honor Except in Their Hometown"?* Eldon J. Epp]

These postulations appear to be the results of frustration, the apparent conclusions which rational scholars succumb to. It is quite probable that these men and women are not able to use the one God-given *key* which enables believers to unravel the many variants and to see the correct and true reading. Without this type of faith, most scholars are thwarted in their attempts to rationally determine the original text via purely humanistic or scientific means.

Even an associate of mine—Dr. Reuben Swanson—feels that we cannot ever discern the original text [per correspondence]. The apparent frustration seems to be contagious.

However, if I may, I have a reply to such scholarly ejaculations:

God has allowed variants to exist in His preserved mass of manuscript witnesses. These variants serve two great functions:

(1) They serve as "road-signs" illuminating the path through the chaos of numerous manuscripts and versional survivors. They link and expose truths and errors, these revelations as truth or error, are the fruits of much protracted study, experience, and a trust in the Author.

(2) They serve as a protective shell or seal blocking out relevant humanistic or pagan extrapolations. They lure the enemy (Satan) into supposing that their presence will confuse and stop true prolonged confidence in the original semantics. Consequently a clear perception requires a mature, faithful exegete who utilizes the one key to their inner crystalline interlaced form—the indwelling Holy Spirit within the bosom of a hopefully obedient saint—this is the *necessary* key, the Holy Spirit. Without reliance upon this inner assistance, critics and exegetes are left to chance or the bleakness of human rationalism.

Alas! faith, that old ingredient, coupled with a mature saint who trusts and recognizes the indwelling Holy Spirit, can produce meaningful results. Results which should and do inspire confidence that we, have in the mass of surviving manuscripts, the full and complete Word from God. I further posit, that no one manuscript or text-type is to be seen as perfect, or error-free. No, I suggest that we need to utilize and examine numerous manuscripts in order to filter out the intentional variations and the variations which result

from transcriptional error. That is why I use about 16 percent of the surviving Greek manuscripts of the Pauline corpus in this work, I do not rely upon one or two manuscripts, or a single text-type.

By allowing His Word to disperse itself into a mass of surviving testimonies, God has effectually protected the Word; leaving it only accessible to believing saints. Accessible especially to saints who are gifted to do the work of textual criticism. Hence, to me, a genuine Christian textual critic is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit existing in our present dispensation. The earlier temporary gifts (prophecy, tongues, special knowledge, interpretation of tongues [i.e. languages]) existed because back then (pre A.D. 98) they did not have the complete Bible. Today we have the complete Bible, but now we require a number of gifted saints to perceive its integrity amongst the manuscripts, and to share and publish their research for the benefit of other hungry believers.

This is not to suggest that for hundreds of years past believers were denied a full and correct Bible; the KJV is a very good translation (in English) and presents a fine text for many general purposes, especially for the purposes of past generations. The same is true of the German Bible translation by Martin Luther. One can even peer back to the medieval ages when they often utilized the Byzantine text-type, which seems to be more accurate than the competing texts in Rome and in Egypt. In our present dispensation, it is possible that we are living in an era when the "last days" is nearly upon us, thus we require precise information about the text. We also live in an era when old pagan beliefs are resurfacing such as gnosticism, drug induced philosophies, a growing trust in all sorts of magic, an increase of bloody ritual sacrifices, a belief in numerous gods and goddesses, a Greek style of religious humanism and a resurgence of the old Sodom and Gomorrah immoralities/homosexualism. Rising up against all of these old and new deceptions is a clearer perception of God's Holy and complete written Word.

The Bible itself paints a troubled picture of the latter days of this age, note these passages: [each is a citation from the KJV]

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. [II Timothy 3:1-7]

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9 For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
[Colossians 2:6-9]

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.
[1 Timothy 4:1-3]

The above selections amply disclose that the last days of this dispensation will be filled with all sorts of increased deceptions and pagan religious activities. Consequently a clearer and highly ratified Biblical record is surfacing to meet the challenge, to lead and comfort those who seek to know the truth.

When confronted with variants in the ancient witnesses, the genuine textual critic will need to have met the following criteria to make proper decisions:

- [1] Properly trained in all the aspects of the original language(s).
- [2] Able to perform palæographical evaluations of each manuscript.
- [3] Able to pray and wait upon the Lord (and the indwelling Holy Spirit).
- [4] To have been called and equipped by God for this type of service.
- [5] To have years of experience of trusting God, to recognize His subtle guidance and that inner "still small voice".
- [6] To be making an effort to live a proper life, living in sin corrupts, so the sin needs to be stopped and confession and prayer instituted. Otherwise fellowship with God is severed and the work is crippled.

- [7] The critic should be mature, (yes, I know I am repeating myself) having experienced a range of challenges in this dark and evil world. New "converts" need aging. Babes are never drafted into an army and textual critics should be highly trained soldiers, ready for spiritual battle and experienced in spiritual warfare. Able to see the enemy's camouflage.
- [8] Able to effectively communicate [speak, write] in his/her native language. He/she needs a quiet place to study, and is able to focus or concentrate. Various resources are also required—good copies of the manuscripts, along with tested and reliable information sources.

The above presents a partial list, even as such it seems intimidating to this writer, as I know that I struggle with sin, and I need to often re-establish fellowship with the One Who chose me.

One may have noticed in the quote of Philip Schaff's work (*Companion to the Greek New Testament...*) he wisely mentioned that concerning a doubtful passage [that is a passage in which the variant seems unresolvable] the basic truth is elsewhere in the Bible sustained. I find this is usually so, so it helps if the critic is also conversant with the full text of the Bible. But what is to be done when several apparent orthodox critics cannot agree, each preferring a different reading? I assume that each seems to be a trained saint. Many scoffers would declare that when a critic relies upon faith to establish the text, that any and all whims result, and that no two exegetes fully agree.

This charge on the surface, seems serious. When we examine the translations of many different Bibles, we note various disagreements. Yet suppose that each was crafted by a group or committee of believers, what then, has God misled both? Certainly most claim that God has blessed their effort; yet their results often do not agree, and may even be incompatible! Note this passage as quoted from three translations reputed to be made by believers and of an evangelical stance:

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not arrive until the rebellion comes and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.
[Net Bible, II Thessalonians 2:3]

Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a [sic, the] falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;
[KJV]

Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,
[NASB, first edition]

There is much more to this verse than meets the eye. However, I shall confine myself to observing the words—"rebellion", "falling away first", and "apostasy". Each is a rendering of the Greek word ἀποστασία (and πρῶτον, "first"), interestingly the Net Bible omits "first" which is in all texts and known manuscripts which have this passage. The KJV renders an article "the" as an "a", which is an error. Our Greek term is translated in three different ways! One translation is somewhat ambiguous—"apostasy" as it is a transliteration—yet this Greek word had *two* meanings. The popular meaning was "rebellion", and this notion of "standing-apart" exists in the earliest forms of this word, back to the Mycenaean period (1450 BC.). Etymologically both "rebellion" and "apostasy" seem to be on firm ground. The term is only used here in the NT. In hundreds of other non-Biblical occurrences, it carries this semantic denotation of rebellion. Yet, there is seen several ancient writings which carry the meaning of "falling-away", a physical separation, not a separation via a rebellious stance.

In one of the occurrences a similar term used, is derived from ἀποστασις which word is an earlier form of ἀποστασία. The sample is from Clement of Alexandria's work titled: *Stromata*, and the passage is labelled, 4.22.141.1.2 on the TLG disk E. The Greek text appears as:

καὶ περὶ θανάτου εξακουεῖν. ἑκάτερος γὰρ δηλοῖ τὴν ἀποστασιν τῆς ψυχῆς

Clement mentions the "separation of the soul (ψυχῆς)" at death, which is likened to sleep. Though in the above, "division" may also be a good rendering of ἀποστασιν. More precise, is the term used in the apocryphal text titled: *The Assumption of the Virgin*, as transcribed by Tischendorf in *Apocryphes Apocryphae: Mosis, Esdrae, Pauli, Iohannis: Item Mariae Dormitio*. Lipsiae, 1866, page 105:

ἠγνοεῖ γὰρ ὁ χιλιάρχος τὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῆς μητρὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἀποστασίαν τὴν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ

For the commander was not aware of the departure [ἀποστασίαν] of the apostles and the mother of the Lord to [or, into] Jerusalem."

Here the noun clearly shows a separation, a departure—as opposed to the common meaning of "revolt", or "rebellion". One should also note that in the work by the Alexandrian philosopher, Olympiodorus (circa A.D. 560), titled: *In Aristotelis Metora Commentaria*, 003 320.2 [per the TLG indexing] we also find a clear usage meaning - departure, or removal.

τη ξηροτητι την αιτιαν της αποστασιας του υγρου παρατιθεται και ταυτη διδωσι την πηξιν

the cause of the dryness (is) the separation (or, removal) of the moisture as it is set before, and this gives the freezing (or, coagulation)

The term does occur with the meaning of "departure"—(Clement wrote circa A.D. 200, and the Assumption text probably originated in Egypt no earlier than "the close of the fourth century" [HDOB-extra volume, page 435a])—we cannot dismiss this meaning if the context, or some other reason, supports it. I might add that forms of the word are also used for "divorce" in numerous writings. The rendering of the KJV as "falling away" has definite historical support. An older form of αποστασια (αποστασις), was used as early as 450 B.C. for "departure", [in Euripides, per *Greek English Lexicon*, ninth ed., Liddell, Scott, Jones et al.. pages 218f.].

The final decisive clue as to the meaning of our apparent ambiguous term αποστασια, will come from the context of the Thessalonian correspondences themselves. Paul clearly states that the "day of the Lord" ["Lord", is the better reading here, as the "day of Christ" is reserved for the later Philippians epistle] would not come until after two events FIRST occur. The two named "events" are the exposure of the "man of lawlessness" and our "apostasy" or "departure". Now Paul had been trying to comfort the Thessalonians as they had been lied to, they were told that their dead were lost, or that the day of the Lord has already come or is about to come. Note verse two of II Thessalonians chapter two:

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 the Lord is at hand.

[modified KJV text - "Lord" for the KJV "Christ" substituted]

One of Paul's proofs, which should convince them that the day had not yet then occurred was that the "departure" had not occurred. If it had occurred, they would not be on earth! Paul has in mind the rapture, the

removal of the heavenly Body of Christ before the coming "time of Jacob's trouble". As for a "rebellion" this has always been occurring, as evidenced by the oft reoccurring prophets of doom who base their expectations on the many periods of revolt and rebellion seen in the world and even amongst believers.

So my choice as to the meaning (and even concerning several variants within this verse, "Lord" for the KJV "Christ, *et al*) is based upon my understanding of the two epistles—I and II Thessalonians. [In the wider contexts, one might need to recall the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians, and texts from Daniel's prophecy!]. Certainly someone is going to be "snatched" and to rise and meet the resurrected Lord *in the air*! The first epistle to the Thessalonians teaches this, which is a classic text describing the actual "snatching" or rapture. The event occurs in the air, so it is not the second coming of Christ to establish His earthly rule, it is a coming to remove the believers; it is to be a comforting message. If it were a message of a coming tribulation (oh the horrors) this would not produce any comfort, hence in my mind the ἀπαζω/ rapture, describes this "departure".

My choice is also shaped by my resultant theology, which theology was forged from years of Bible study. Another text critic, and one who would also be a believer in the validity of the Bible and via his or hers own salvation through the death, burial and resurrection of the Christ; might declare that the term means "rebellion", as perhaps he/she cannot accept a pretribulation rapture. There are quite a few folks (believers, saints) who follow the standard Reformed theology, and who would reject my interpretation and variant choice.

Only one choice is correct, this is not an ambiguous passage. Despite the pleasure that a David Parker or Eldon Epp might receive by entertaining confusion here, the text has one meaning, it is not confusing. There are passages in Scripture which do and should have several meanings: for example numerous prophecies have a near (in a chronological sense) fulfillment, and a later fulfillment. Certain "types" also can carry multi-semantic meanings, and these are usually perceivable especially to those who have a fairly comprehensive knowledge of the entire Bible. Some texts can have a true ambiguous meaning because of intended grammar, such as the syntax of the word "joyously" below:

11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.
[Colossians 1:11,12- NASB]

The word "joyously" be can read as in the above translation, or it can be rendered (via Greek syntax) as such:

...for the attainment of all steadfastness and patience with joy. 12 Giving thanks to the Father...

In both cases the text has an altered meaning, and both are grammatically correct. It is my understanding that BOTH renderings are valid. This is because I suspect that this particular type of ambiguity is intentional, a design via the Author.

As concerns our text in II Thessalonians, I arrive at a conclusion which has no ambiguity, as there is no intended ambiguity herein. Just because two or more *interpretations* can exist, does not mean that the text of God's Word is ambiguous. In our sample text from II Thessalonians, several meanings *seem* possible, but only one is right. It is also possible that when two (or more) interpretations collide that the resolution may not stem from which of the variant readings is correct, but rather which exegete is currently living a proper life in the presence of God! Further, one of the exegetes may be blinded by religious bias, or may not even recognize the transcendency of the Holy Writ. In such cases we students must evaluate the exegetes themselves in order to clear the conflict, confusion or fog.

Differing opinions and the presence of variants should encourage open discussion, and a hammering-out of the facts. This discussion is good and healthy, it helps believers to think about God's written Word. Hopefully to come to their own independent conclusions, not dependent upon the popular religious creeds or thousands of competing religious organizations. [*à la* Harnack!].

One needs to recall that this is God's Word, it is not to be handled as if it were the mere creation of some humans, it is Holy and distinctive, filled with transcendent concepts! I know of no humans who will ever, while on earth, fully comprehend the totality of this wonderful Book. It is an endless mine, into which the hard working miner can probe forever for gems of truth and beauty. It is the only source of real truth on earth; and to this editor, it is a great unending source of joy and awe.

In its original form, God's Word existed as error-free (inerrant). That original text required many copying events to preserve the text. In God's wisdom He allowed variants to occur in the copies. These are not truly hindrances to believers who seek their way through the Word. To the non-elect, to pagans, and even to immature beginners they can be forks in the path

which lead the unwary astray. Variants, it seems to me, serve as God's security devices. Devices which require a unique key to bypass or open, that key is the indwelling Holy Spirit within the bosom of a sincere student. So, study, pray and exercise your God-given faith.

Pagans and other types of critics may sense frustration when encountering tough theological/linguistic decisions, but their frustrations should not force believers to accept their liberal indifferences or their contrived and superficial solutions. I thank God for the variants! May they cause you to study and to become immersed within the text of God's Word.

END NOTE: In my estimation of total variants in the Greek text of I Corinthians, I am basing the estimates upon what I have published, for example: chapter one of I Corinthians has 31 verses, and I count 156 valid Greek variants in the 31 verses. This does not include simple phonetic errors, moveable -nu or itacisms et al. Nor does the count include any of the versional evidence. In verses 18 and 19 (for example) I would and do count 11 real variants, not the full 22 displayed. Nor do I count each witness, I count the actual Greek variants, not the number of manuscripts reading or not reading such-and-such a variant.

Thus, we note about 2200 variants in all of I Corinthians via my estimation based upon chapter one, and based upon 15% of the known manuscripts. This works out to about 5 variants per verse. I suspect that when all 650 Pauline MSS are examined that we would be close to 3,000 true variants, or about 6.8 per verse. IF this estimate holds true for all of the Greek New Testament, we would then see a grand total of about 54,000 valid Greek variants in the entire Greek New Testament (using the KJV total verse number of 7,959).

