

THE PRESERVATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

A Research Paper
Presented to
Dr. Bruce Ware
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for 27060MD

by
Student's name
student@students.sbts.edu
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Commented [ACH1]: FORMAT: This cover page follows the guidelines found in the *Southern Seminary Manual of Style*. Note that the title is two inches below the top of the page, ALL CAPS, with no other special formatting (bold, italics, underlined, etc.). This title is formatted as a single line because it is less than 4 inches long; titles longer than 4 inches may be divided, while titles exceeding 5 inches must be divided.

THE PRESERVATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

Part One: Three Leading Positions

The Issue at Hand

In our Sunday school years we confidently sang “The B.I.B.L.E. Yes, that’s the book for me.” Into our teen years we were introduced to the authority and trustworthiness of the Scriptures. Finally, in college we studied the doctrines of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. And yet many seem to be unaware of a seemingly gaping hole that exists. It is a hole that many careful theologians have passed over in their writings, but one that is being questioned more and more in our postmodern, scientific, and skeptical age. Christians generally affirm that the Scripture is “without any mixture of error” and “totally true and trustworthy” based on Scripture’s own witness to itself as a book brought about through the inspiration of God Himself.¹ But when pressed on the issue it must be admitted that the doctrine of inspiration and as a result the doctrine of inerrancy only properly applies to the original manuscripts that were written.² The gaping hole then is that which exists between the documents penned by the original Scripture writers and the copied and translated text that we hold in our hands today. It is a gap that includes thousands of interdependent copied manuscripts, scribal errors, and even some deliberate changes. As Harold Brown comments, “Critics of inerrancy and infallibility sometimes argue that since the doctrine applies only to the autographs, it is essentially irrelevant

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Commented [ACH4]: STYLE: First person references (I, we, our) are typically better suited for less formal assignments, while third person language is more formal, and are therefore desirable in academic papers like this one.

Additionally, using “we” here is problematic, because it is unclear who the author is referring to.

Commented [ACH5]: GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS: Avoid beginning sentences with conjunctions, like “and” or “but.” In instances where it seems fitting, consider a comma or semicolon instead, or sometimes it can simply be omitted.

Commented [ACH6]: ARGUMENTATION AND ORGANIZATION: This provides a good reason why this paper is relevant and worthy of consideration in the first place.

Commented [ACH7]: FORMAT: SEE FOOTNOTES. The style manual specifies that there should not be a blank space between the footnote number and the first letter of text. Footnotes 1 and 2 incorrectly leave a space.

¹ Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, SBC.net, accessed Sept. 9, 2013, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>.

² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 9.

today.”³ The basic question is “Did God preserve His Word for us today, or has it been lost through two millennia of transmission and translation?” In wrestling with this question some scholars have simply walked away from the faith, others have adopted deficient views of inspiration that render the question moot, while still others have claimed a miraculous work of perfect preservation. Tempting as it may be to adopt one of these approaches, Christians can confidently assert the inerrancy of Scripture as it stands today because of the careful work that the church has done in preserving the Scriptures through the years, the ability that modern scholars have through textual criticism to reconstruct the original texts with accuracy, and by trusting in God’s faithfulness to preserve His Word as He intends it to be. This paper delves into three common views of the preservation of Scripture as offered by modern theologians, reveals the issues with those views, and then puts forward the argument that a careful and honest look at textual criticism, alongside a faith in the character of God and the nature of His Word, is reason enough to trust in God’s preservation of His holy Word.

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STYLE/THESIS: The thesis and methodology statements should be prioritized in the introduction of the paper, so the reader can clearly follow along. In this paper, the student says a lot before stating the thesis. Evaluating the necessity of some introductory thoughts might strengthen the overall argument.

Commented [ACH9]: METHODOLOGY: Here the student generally describes the trajectory of the paper’s argument; however, the methodology statement needs to include more specific details on the main points of the paper. What are the three common views it references? Which modern theologians are helpful?

**The Bible is Not Trustworthy:
Bart Ehrman**

Many secular scholars claim that the Bible is not trustworthy based on information gathered through textual criticism. What makes Ehrman of particular interest is that he came to discard the trustworthiness of the Scriptures through his study of textual criticism in spite of beginning his studies at the very conservative Moody Bible Institute. In his book *Misquoting Jesus*, Ehrman stops short of discussing inerrancy, arguing that inspiration is irrelevant since we do not have the originals but only “error-ridden copies and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals.”⁴ He goes on to cite that we are not only lacking the

Commented [ACH10]: THEOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION: The author does not define these theological terms. More context, both biblical and historical, are necessary for the sake of clarity and overall quality of argument.

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While the paper adequately provides attribution to the source, a few improvements are necessary: (1) On the first reference to an author, use first and last name, using last name only on subsequent references, and (2) when introducing a book for the first time, include the full title, including subtitles.

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³ Harold O. J. Brown, “The Inerrancy and Infallibility of the Bible,” in *The Origin of the Bible*, ed. Philip Wesley Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2003), 41.

⁴ Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2005), 7.

originals but almost certainly also the first copies.⁵ One of the problems, Ehrman contends, is located in the early scribes. Noting that the early scribes were generally untrained and personally interested in the copies, he writes that the copies were not alike, “for scribes who copied texts inevitably made alterations in those texts—changing the words they copied either by accident (via a slip of the pen or other carelessness) or by design (when the scribe intentionally altered the words he copied).”⁶ As a result of carelessness, mischief, and the overzealous orthodox, Ehrman speculates that there are as many as 400,000 variations among the manuscripts;⁷ more variations than there are words in the New Testament.⁸ He relates that this led him to see Scripture as “a human book from beginning to end.”⁹

**Kerygmatic Inspiration:
Pinnock & Grenz**

Though the doctrine of kerygmatic inspiration is primarily a position on inspiration offered in the inerrancy debate, it does affect the issue of preservation, essentially removing the need for it all-together. Clark Pinnock and Stanley Grenz were influential in the inerrancy debate and championed this model. What Pinnock and Grenz mean by a ‘kerygmatic inspiration’ is that the object of inspiration is the overall message of the Bible, not particular words and facts. Grenz states that “the primary norm of theology is the biblical message. The theologian must look first and above all to the kerygma as inscripturated in the Bible.”¹⁰ Speaking of the Verbal Plenary Theory that every word is inspired Pinnock says, “But this is not what the Bible claims to be...

Commented [ACH13]: ARGUMENTATION & ORGANIZATION: It’s usually best not to end a paragraph with a quote. This writer could add a short sentence after the quote either explaining the quote or restating the most important points from the paragraph as a whole. The beginning and ending sentences of a paragraph carry the greatest emphasis, so they provide key opportunities to remind readers of the writer’s most important points.

Commented [ACH14]: FORMAT: Always write out “and” in place of the ampersand, even in citations.

Commented [ACH15]: THEOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION/SOURCES: Here the author skillfully utilizes quality sources in order to clearly define theological terms.

Commented [ACH16]: FORMAT: SEE FOOTNOTES: Avoid using Ibid. as the first note on a page; rather, use the shortened form of the work so that the reader does not to go back to the previous page in order to find the source.
Footnote 10, however, is an example of a correct citation.

⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁷ Ibid., 89.

⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 92.

the authority of the Bible in faith and practice does not rule out the possibility of an occasionally uncertain text, differences in details and between the gospels, a lack of precision in the chronology of events.”¹¹

This approach then relies on a heightened view of the doctrine of illumination whereby the Holy Spirit works in the believer to accept and apply Scripture. Pinnock says that this view of inspiration “means that revelation is not locked in the past as a collection of inflexible rules but is a disclosure that comes alive today...that the Bible, for example, cannot be seen as simply a set of ancient propositions, but as a means of grace by which God is able to speak to us in new ways.”¹² He later quotes Eph. 1:17, reasoning that Paul prays that they might receive the “spirit of wisdom and revelation” so that they might be able to apply His teaching in their context.¹³

With a more dynamic view of inspiration and a heightened emphasis on illumination, the doctrine of preservation becomes a non-issue. The message that God intended supersedes the details that are put in question and is even safe in spite of some large sections that may or may not be original to the text. Pinnock’s advice is that the Christian should “concentrate upon the focused authority of the Bible, which is concerned to bring us the gospel and reconcile us to God, and not allow the marginal difficulties to cause us so much anxiety.”¹⁴ Furthermore, Scripture is not viewed as the deposit of truth, but rather as the means by which the Holy Spirit speaks to believers¹⁵ and surely His work of continuing revelation to the believer is not threatened by the corruption and adaptation of the text.

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FORMAT: Write out biblical books in the main body of the paper.

¹¹ Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1984), 104.

¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁵ Grenz, *Evangelical Theology*, 114.

One Perfect Bible: The Received Text

Finally there are those who hold to the perfect preservation of the Received Text. Those who hold this view argue for absolute confidence in a particular and narrow stream of manuscripts and translations based on God's direct work of providence. Proponents of this view would agree with Ehrman that "no two of these thousands of manuscripts are exactly alike"¹⁶ and that "the slightest alteration in a verb, in an adverb, or even in the simplest conjunction, might lead an interpreter into the most serious error."¹⁷ And yet, Benjamin Wilkinson, a proponent of this view, argues that "there is only one Bible, the others at best are only approximations. In other words the Greek New Testament of Erasmus, known as the Received Text, is none other than the Greek New Testament which successfully met the rage of its pagan and papal enemies."¹⁸ Another supporter, Edward Hills, points out that this was "no accident but the work of God's special providence."¹⁹ They posit that God worked through unbelieving Jewish scribes for the Old Testament²⁰ and the priesthood of believers for the New Testament²¹ to preserve the Scriptures. There are three main lines of reasoning used to support this claim. Edwards Hills derives a biblical defense from passages such as our Lord's promise in Luke 16:17 that "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law."²² A second line of reasoning argues that if God has truly inspired Scripture for His church, it logically follows that He would also preserve it

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¹⁶ Philip Mauro, "Which Version," in *True or False?*, ed. David Otis Fuller (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1973), 62.

¹⁷ Louis Gaussen, "The Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," in *True or False?*, ed. David Otis Fuller (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1973), 44.

¹⁸ Benjamin C. Wilkinson, "Our Authorized Bible Vindicated," in *Which Bible?*, ed. David Otis Fuller (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1971), 132.

¹⁹ Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 4th ed. (Des Moines, IA: CRP, 1984), 86.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

²² *Ibid.*, 73.

from being lost.²³ And a third logic rests on the widespread usage of the King James translation, the English embodiment of the Received Text. Mauro says that the King James Version, being the single most used version of the Bible and “all this known to God beforehand,” leaves us “fully warranted in the belief that it was not through chance.”²⁴ On these pillars the supporters of the Received Text argue that there is no problem with perseverance, because God has guarded His Word.

Though each of these points has some warranted concerns and valid arguments, they each seem to deviate either from an orthodox view of Scripture or from an honest view of the reality of the manuscript evidence. Thus it is necessary to offer a fourth option, a reasonable and honest look at the history of the text as well as the manuscript evidence and their variants in light of God’s faithfulness which points us toward an orthodox and biblically faithful view of the Word of God. This will be the focus of the second portion of this paper.

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Part Two: Solid Ground to Stand On

Textual Criticism

The three options above are sadly deficient. Adherents to these views are left abandoning the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, clinging blindly to a delicate façade that overlooks the reality of how the Bible has come to us, or abandoning the value of God’s Word altogether. Thanks be to God, there is another option. A clearheaded look at textual criticism, supported by a faith in the character of God and the nature of His Word is solid ground upon which the Bible believing Christian can stand with confidence. First we will turn to textual criticism.

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The work of textual criticism has done much to show that the words which had written in the original autographs are indeed represented in the Bible we have today. In the words of

²³Ibid., 6.

²⁴ Mauro, *Which Version*, 80.

scholars David Black and David Dockery, “the textual critic seeks to understand the transmission process and the causes and effects of corruption that produced imperfect copies from the originals, in order to reverse the process and thus work back from these surviving imperfect copies to reconstruct the lost originals.”²⁵ The particular strengths of this process are discussed below. And, with the New Testament being the immediate foundation of Christian doctrine and the focus of most of the preservation debate, we will focus our attention there.

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Manuscript Quantity: An Embarrassment of Riches. The first reason to see textual criticism as a viable endeavor and a trusted tool for showing the trustworthiness of our Bible is that the pool of manuscripts from which these scholars draw is simply massive. New Testament Scholar A.T. Robertson refers to this “many stranded cord” as “our biggest safeguard.”²⁶ Scholars today work with over 5,000 New Testament manuscripts.²⁷ For the sake of perspective, *The Iliad* of Homer has only 643 manuscripts, there are only 8 extant copies of the *Peloponnesian War* of Thucydides, and Tacitus’ *Wars* stands on only 2 manuscripts.²⁸ Though it must be noted that many of the biblical manuscripts are incomplete or just fragments, as a whole their witness is impressive. Fifty-nine documents contain the entire New Testament, another 149 lack only Revelation, 2,328 contain the Gospels in their entirety, 779 have all of the Pauline Epistles, and 655 have all of the General Epistles.²⁹ The breadth of these historic resources is superior to every other ancient document by a vast margin. Furthermore, the New Testament

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Commented [ACH23]: GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS: This paper rightly capitalizes Scripture, and correctly leaves the word biblical lowercase. This can be tricky for writers, since Bible is capitalized.

²⁵ David Alan Black, and David S. Dockery, *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 193.

²⁶ A.T. Robertson, *Can We Trust the New Testament?* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 34.

²⁷ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1968), 247.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

²⁹ Black and Dockery, *New Testament Criticism*, 104-105.

began being translated into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic by as early as 180 A.D. and the early church fathers quoted from the New Testament to the extent that almost the entire Greek New Testament could be reconstructed working only from their quotes.³⁰ Though the original autographs do not exist, the manuscript witness to those documents is overwhelmingly strong.

Manuscript Quality. A second factor validating textual criticism in its endeavor to produce a trustworthy text is the quality of the manuscripts available. The New Testament stands head and shoulders above any other historical document not only in the quantity of manuscripts but also in the quality of those manuscripts. The biggest factor in the quality of a manuscript is its age; specifically, how far the copy is removed from the original.³¹ Though it must be admitted that a full sixty-five percent of the manuscript evidence we have comes from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, it is no less than astounding that 125 manuscripts are from the first five centuries.³² One of the earliest manuscripts, designated P52, is a few verses of John 18 dated between 94 and 127 A.D. With the Gospel of John being published in the late 80s to mid 90s, P52 is very likely a first generation copy.³³ P46 is another manuscript which many scholars date as early as the mid second century. It contains all of the Pauline Epistles except the Pastorals.³⁴ In addition to this, there are two complete manuscripts which hail from early in the fourth century (B and Aleph).³⁵ For the sake of comparison, the two manuscripts from Tacitus are eight

³⁰ Ibid., 103.

³¹ Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction*, 285.

³² Black and Dockery, *New Testament Criticism*, 105.

³³ Philip Wesley Comfort, *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 31.

³⁴ Philip Wesley Comfort, *The Origin of the Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 186.

³⁵ Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction*, 285.

and ten centuries after the original and Thucydides' earliest manuscripts are some thirteen hundred years removed from the autographs. The historical quality of the New Testament manuscripts is nothing less than astounding.

The Process of Textual Criticism. A third reason to trust textual criticism is that over the years a careful and trustworthy process has developed by which these manuscripts and the variants in them are evaluated. The manuscripts are categorized into three basic "text-types," comparable to branches on a family tree. Each text-type is identified by a high degree of agreement between manuscripts as well as distinctive readings.³⁶ Having each manuscript identified in its own text-type allows scholars to weigh variations with added insight. Then they undergo a method of criticism known as 'reasoned eclecticism.'³⁷ In the words of Dockery and Black this approach "applies a combination of internal and external considerations, evaluating the character of the variants in light of the manuscript evidence and vice versa in order to obtain a balanced view of the matter and as a check upon purely subjective tendencies."³⁸ The process is complex, but the end goal is to find which variant best accounts for the origin of the others.³⁹ The result is a coherent collation of the myriads of manuscripts into a single unified text with a degree of accuracy which, according to Geisler and Nix, exceeds 99 percent in reproducing the exact words of the autographs.⁴⁰ The few remaining questions are footnoted in the English translation.

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³⁶ Black and Dockery, *New Testament Criticism*, 106.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁰ Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction*, 238.

God's Faithfulness

Though textual criticism can bring us to 99 percent certainty, as certain as any historical method could ever produce, it must be admitted that this is yet short of 100 percent. So how can we account for this final margin for error? Solid confidence can only be gained by believing that "God in His providence not only inspired the authors of Scripture to write those things He wanted to communicate to His people, but also superintended their collection and preservation."⁴¹ Geisler and Nix write, "The providence of God, a characteristic which is consonant with a self-revealing God, is the force that welds together the entire chain of communication."⁴² Jesus lends confidence to this assertion in John 10 saying that "Scripture cannot be broken" as well as in Matthew 5, promising that "not one iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." Nevertheless, we must heed the warnings that this faith in God's providence cannot be used to short-circuit the scholarly work of textual criticism. "Piety and devotion can never take the place of knowledge and scholarly judgment."⁴³ Yet, in the end, our faith does not rest in scholars and manuscripts but in the God who speaks. Our hearts should resound with the words of A.T. Robertson who said "the scholarship does not give me faith, but it increases by confidence that my faith is not misplaced."⁴⁴ It is only by embracing both God's faithful providence and the careful scholarly work that we can find full assurance that the book we hold before us is in fact the very Word of God as He intended it for us.

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⁴¹ David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority, and Interpretation*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 94.

⁴² Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction*, 240.

⁴³ George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 81.

⁴⁴ Robertson, *Can We Trust the New Testament?* 134.

Two Objections

In spite of the convincing evidence given above for the trustworthiness of the modern Bible, scholars like Ehrman raise objections that need to be answered. Two such objections are answered here. The first objection raised by Ehrman and others is this: “Because early Christian texts were not being copied by professional scribes...we can expect that in the earliest copies, especially, mistakes were commonly made in the transcription.”⁴⁵ The second and more common objection was noted above and has to do with the vast numbers of variants in the extant manuscripts. Ehrman suggests that there are 400,000 variants,⁴⁶ more variants than there are words in the New Testament.⁴⁷ Conservative scholars, armed with the actual historical data, are able to answer these objections with confidence.

Amateur Copyists. The accusation against the earliest copyists seems at best to be built on misinformation and, at worst, to be intentionally misleading. The fact of the matter is that many of the original manuscripts were not just written but actually published. Irenaeus tells us specifically that at least Mark, Luke and John made a distribution of multiple copies of their works. This would certainly have been done by a professional amanuensis such as Paul and Peter often used.⁴⁸ Furthermore, these many original copies were treated with great respect. The copiers would have recognized they were copying a sacred text written by an apostle. “As such, certain scribes copied them with reverential fidelity.”⁴⁹ Finally, the professional scribes left clear evidence behind. Speaking of seven early papyrus manuscripts, scholar Philip Comfort notes that “these were written with uniform lettering throughout, in what paleographers call ‘Biblical

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⁴⁵ Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 51.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁸ Comfort, *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament*, 45.

⁴⁹ Comfort, *The Origin of the Bible*, 191.

Uncial’ or ‘Biblical Majuscule.’”⁵⁰ These, at least, were not the work of untrained and careless amateurs, but trained scribes working carefully in their field of expertise.

Various Variants. The second accusation is that the vast number of variants leaves us without hope of finding the original. First and foremost the actual number of variants must be considered. Ehrman suggests there could be as many as 400,000,⁵¹ whereas Geisler and Nix suggest that there are only as many as 200,000.⁵² Even this number, however, is misleadingly high. By those 200,000 variants only 10,000 places in the New Testament are actually affected.⁵³ “If one single word is misspelled in 3,000 different manuscripts, this is counted as 3,000 variants or readings. Once this counting procedure is understood, and the mechanical variants have been eliminated, the remaining, significant variants are surprisingly few in number.”⁵⁴ Looking at seven major manuscripts Black and Dockery suggest that “if one were to leave aside certain idiosyncrasies and minor differences between these editions, it may be estimated that the number of verses about which there is substantial agreement approaches 90 percent of the total.”⁵⁵ This is far from what is implied with Ehrman’s statement that the variants outnumber the words of the New Testament.⁵⁶

Once the number of variants is brought into clearer view the next question concerns the significance of those variants and what exactly is at stake. Here even Ehrman must admit

⁵⁰ Comfort, *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament*, 51.

⁵¹ Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 51.

⁵² Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction*, 361.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Black and Dockery, *New Testament Criticism*, 127.

⁵⁶ Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 10.

that “in fact, most of the changes found in early Christian manuscripts have nothing to do with theology or ideology. Far and away the most changes are the result of mistakes, pure and simple—slips of the pen, accidental omissions, inadvertent additions, misspelled words, blunders of one sort or another.”⁵⁷ Beyond simple spelling mistakes and slips of the pen, many of the variants are not contradictory at all but complimentary, and many make little or no difference what so ever. Textual critic Ezra Abbot found that “about 19/20 (95 percent) of the readings are ‘various’ rather than ‘rival’ readings, and 19/20 (95 percent) of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection makes no appreciable difference in the sense of the passage”⁵⁸ In the end the readings which are significant to the meaning of the text amount to less than one half of one percent and none of these put any basic Christian doctrine into question.⁵⁹ The problem of the variants is not nearly what some scholars would like the public to believe. The vast majority of the text is without question and what issues do remain are well within the reach of textual criticism to resolve.

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Conclusion

Many have been shaken by what they have seen as they delved into the manuscripts that give us our modern Bible. Others have turned a blind eye, either by redefining the doctrine of inspiration or by blindly trusting in one stream of texts as if that could make the problem disappear. The fact is we do not have the original, inerrant writings of the apostles. And what manuscript evidence we do have does contain some variants and errors. But a clearheaded and careful look at textual criticism, shored up with faith in a sovereign God who intends to communicate with His people leaves the Christian returning to that confession of our youth “the B.I.B.L.E. Yes, that’s the book for me. I stand alone on the Word of God, the B.I.B.L.E.” The

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⁵⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁸ Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction*, 365.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 375.

manuscript evidence is impressive in both quantity and quality, the scholars working in the field of textual criticism have developed trustworthy methods, and the God who oversees it all is faithful and true in all He does. To close with the words of A.T. Robertson: “For the Christian walks always in this life by trust, and not by sight. And he is content to close his *Te Deum*, his most confident affirmation of faith, with the prayer of vulnerability: O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.”⁶⁰

Commented [ACH32]: STYLE: It is not ideal to end with a quote. One final summary sentence in the student's own words would end this paper on a stronger note.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Black, David Alan, and David S. Dockery. *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.

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