

NOTES ON TRANSLATIONS

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1 Some important questions are being raised about translations these days.
2 Church members are wondering why the verses the pastor reads from the
3 King James Version do not agree with the wording in their more modern
4 translations.

5 A new believer asks, "Which translation of the Bible should I buy?"

6 A missionary involved in Bible translation asks, "How do I apply my
7 fundamentalist theology of inspiration to the work of translation? All my
8 instructions about translation are given to me by liberal organizations."

9 These questions can be answered best by beginning with the claims
10 Scripture makes for itself. Just what is inspiration, and how far does it
11 it extend? Then one must determine which of the thousands of biblical manu-
12 scripts are correct, and finally translate them in a way consistent with the
13 biblical view of Scripture.

14 I. Inspiration.

15 A. What is it?

16 Inspiration may be defined as "that process by which God so superintended
17 the human authors of Scripture that, using their own individual personal-
18 ities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man, in
19 the words of the original autographs." Let us examine and support this
20 term by term.

- 21 1. "God." The basic difference between the Bible and any other book is
22 that it is the word of God. II Tim. 3:16; I Thess. 2:13; cf. the OT
23 formula "thus saith the Lord."
- 24 2. "superintended the human authors." II Pet. 1:21 describes the human
25 authors as being "moved" by the Holy Spirit. The Greek term used
26 literally means "borne along" or "carried." The verse very explicitly
27 states that not man's will, but God's was instrumental in originating
28 and executing the production of our Bible.
- 29 3. "using their own individual personalities." As we study the Bible,
30 we observe that, for instance, the writings of John are recorded in
31 simpler language than those of Paul. Isaiah uses distinctive terms
32 that are not used by other prophets, although they may talk about the
33 same basic concepts. This phrase in the definition emphasizes that
34 such distinctions do exist, and are traceable to the personalities of
35 the writers. This does not limit the degree of inspiration, however.
36 We believe that God designed the personality of each of His servants
37 so that it would be the most fitting vehicle for the part of the message
38 that person would bear (cf. Jer. 1:4-10; Exod. 4:10-12)!
- 39 4. "they composed and recorded." The writers were not merely "divine
40 typewriters." They themselves wrote with definite purposes in mind
41 (Prov. 1:1-6; Luke 1:4; John 20:31; I John 5:12) and sometimes spoke
42 of their research and motivation for writing (Luke 1:1-4; Jude 3;
43 Acts 1:1,2; II Cor. 13:10).
- 44 5. "without error." Jn. 10:35 "the scripture cannot be broken;" Matt. 5:18.
- 45 6. "His revelation to man." The heart of the question is the truth that
46 man cannot (Isa. 59:1,2) and does not (Rom. 3:10-18) reach up to God,
47 because of his sin. Thus, if God is to be known, He must take the
48 initiative and reveal Himself to man.

7. "in the words of the original autographs." The doctrine of inspiration has to do with the writing of the Bible books by the original authors. Unfortunately, we do not possess these original copies. For the Bible to reach us, it had to be copied by hand many times, translated from Hebrew and Greek into English, and printed. We do not understand the Bible to guarantee that the copying, translating, or printing are divinely guarded from error in the same way that the original writing was.

B. How far does inspiration extend?

To answer this question, we will try to find passages which show how heavily our Lord and the authors of the New Testament leaned on the Old Testament in proving theological points. Their view of how inspired Scripture was certainly ought to govern ours.

1. The individual words are inspired. In Matt. 22:43-45, our Lord confounds the Pharisees by showing from the Old Testament that the Messiah is both man and God. He does this by quoting Ps. 110:1, in which David calls the Christ, whom they acknowledge to be his son, "Lord." The Savior's argument rests on the fact that David wrote "Lord" rather than some other word.
2. The tenses of the verbs are inspired. In Matt. 22:32, our Lord proves the fact of life after death from Exod. 3:6. In Exod. 3, hundreds of years after the death of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God says, not "I was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," but "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Because God is the God not of the dead, but of the living, our Lord concludes that these individuals were still alive, as far as God was concerned, when He made that statement. The entire argument rests on the present tense of the verb "to be."
3. The numbers of the nouns are inspired. Paul, in Gal. 3:16, shows that the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant depended on the coming of Christ. He does this by reminding his readers that the promises associated with that covenant were not made to Abraham's seeds, his many descendents, but to his seed. Because the noun is singular and not plural in number, Paul concludes that no matter how much the nation of Israel may enjoy the promises, they were made with a single recipient, Christ, ultimately in view.
4. The individual letters, and even their parts, are inspired. In Matt. 5:17, 18, our Lord asserts that "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The jot is the smallest Hebrew letter, about the size and shape of a comma. The tittle is only a part of a letter. It is the small protrusion that makes the difference between the following pairs of Hebrew letters: $\aleph - \beth$, $\daleth - \gamma$, $\iota - \lambda$.

How easy it would be for a jot or tittle to be misplaced in writing. In English, it would be like forgetting to dot an "i" or cross a "t." Yet our Lord insisted that even these smallest parts of the biblical text were inspired by God.

C. So what?

People today often say that it does not matter what manuscript of the Bible we use as the basis of our Bibles, for the differences between the various manuscripts are very slight. They often suggest that the differences between the many translations available are for the most part insignificant, so that one may use any version one cares.

1 In the first place, though some differences might be considered minor by
2 some standards, other variations involve such doctrines as our Lord's virgin
3 birth (Luke 2:43); fulfillment of prophecy (Mark 15:28); the seriousness of
4 hell (II Pet. 2:17; Mark 9:44,46); the omnipresence of the Lord Jesus and thus
5 His deity (John 3:13b); the nature of our Lord's pre-incarnate existence
6 (I Cor. 15:47); His dual nature as "God manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16);
7 separation from apostate teachers (I Tim. 6:5); and men's sinful and wrath-
8 deserving nature (Luke 2:14). A comparison of these verses in the King James
9 and almost any modern translation will point out the differences involved.

10 But in the second place, it really doesn't matter whether the differences
11 seem to us to involve major doctrines or not. If Scripture is inspired to the
12 degree that it claims to be, the very existence of a difference is of great
13 theological concern. If we have the respect and love for God's pure Word that
14 we ought to, treasuring it even more closely than we treasured love letters from
15 our husbands or wives, we will be concerned if a single letter is out of place.
16 No one will be able to calm our concern with such platitudes as "It doesn't
17 matter if you don't know exactly what God said, as long as you have the general
18 idea." When we are concerned with the very Word of God, a "general idea" is
19 just not enough! Jer. 15:16.

20 II. The Question of Text.

21 A. A Limiting Note.

22 The problem of choosing the correct manuscript for making a translation
23 exists both in the Old Testament and in the New. However, most of the questions
24 which people ask about different readings come from the New Testament. Further-
25 more, because the Old Testament is more ancient than the new, its textual
26 history is more complicated and more intricate to explain. Thus we will discuss
27 only the New Testament in these notes.

28 B. The Problem.

29 Scholars estimate that we know of more than 5000 different manuscripts
30 (hand-written copies) of the New Testament, in part or whole, in Greek (the
31 language in which it was originally written). These manuscripts do not give
32 exactly the same wording at every point. Sometimes they differ in including or
33 excluding whole verses or even paragraphs.

34 We have already seen that the true believer, who loves and studies his
35 Bible, will be concerned that he has before him the correct wording of every
36 verse. He will not want to miss verses which, while excluded by some manuscripts,
37 were part of the original writings. Nor will he want to study and obey some
38 verse as part of God's Word if in fact that verse was not inspired. How is the
39 decision to be made among the many manuscripts available?

40 C. Proposed solutions.

- 41 1. Some suggest that we should use the readings of the oldest manuscripts
42 available to us. This is the criterion that seems to have dominated the
43 scholars who popularized the text of the New Testament largely followed in
44 modern translations. In the last century, some manuscripts were discovered
45 which dated from 350 to 400 AD, six hundred years earlier than the oldest
46 manuscripts which had been available. The excitement of having such very
47 old witnesses available is understandable. But is the age of a manuscript
48 a good index to its accuracy?

49 If an error is made in copying a manuscript, that error may be made just
50 as well in 400 AD as in 1400 AD. Furthermore, a 400 AD manuscript might be
51 produced by a group of scribes with sloppy, careless habits, while the
52 1400 AD manuscript might come from the hands of very careful workers. Of
53 course, the more times a text is copied, the more errors might accumulate.
54 But who is to say that the 1400 AD copy is separated by more intermediate
55 copies than the 400 AD one? Perhaps the older manuscript is more copies re-
56 moved from the original than the more recent one!

1 All of these suggestions are suppositions, of course, but suppositions
 2 widely recognized among textual scholars. But there is one observation
 3 which has not been so widely acknowledged. Books which are used more fre-
 4 quently wear out sooner than those which are not used. If a manuscript
 5 were known to contain errors, it would not be referred to, studied, or
 6 copied as long as more accurate copies were available. In the days before
 7 printing presses, books were rare, and it would be uncommon for someone
 8 lucky enough to have even a defective copy to discard it. But it would not
 9 be used as much as accurate copies would. Thus it would last longer--and
 10 perhaps, even lie forgotten in a corner of the attic! Its very age would
 11 suggest that it had been neglected, perhaps because it was considered suspect.

12 Thus we must reject the suggestion that we should choose manuscripts on the
 13 basis of "the older, the better."

- 14 2. A second suggestion, and one which dominates current textual scholarship,
 15 is that an intelligent man, by looking at the different readings on a given
 16 passage, can explain which one came first. But this is a highly subjective
 17 procedure, depending not on any external evidence, but on the opinion of the
 18 scholar. As might be expected, scholars frequently differ on the conclusions
 19 reached in this way. Very often, the factors which one scholar argues to
 20 support his choice of text can be turned around and argued just the other way
 21 by someone else. We need something better than the "learned opinions" of sin-
 22 ful and often unsaved men as a criterion for identifying God's Word. Thus we
 23 reject the philosophy of textual selection on the basis of internal evidence.
- 24 3. A third suggestion is that we count the manuscripts at each point of
 25 difference. We can take a vote, to see how many manuscripts have one reading,
 26 and how many have another. Then we may select the majority text as the
 27 correct reading.

28 It can be demonstrated mathematically that under normal conditions of
 29 textual transmission, the majority of copies at any given time will reflect
 30 the original. Thus it does make sense to ask what the majority is. We have
 31 more reason than not to assume that it will represent the original text.

32 This suggestion, like the others, has its objections. For instance, if
 33 thousands of years from now archaeologists were to dig up our libraries, they
 34 might find more copies of modern translations than of the King James version.
 35 Yet this would not justify a conclusion that the modern translations preserv-
 36 ed the original readings. It would only reflect a shift of scholarly
 37 opinion in favor of one specific family of manuscripts at a period of time
 38 when there was much interest in translating and printing the Bible.

39 In this illustration, the general principle that the majority indicates the
 40 original reading is overruled by a historical crisis that forced the balance
 41 of opinion in the direction of a certain group of texts. Thus, in applying
 42 the criterion of number of manuscripts to the text of the New Testament, we
 43 must not only count the manuscripts, but ask if there is some historical
 44 crisis which would account for any majority we might find.

45 When we do count the manuscripts of the New Testament, we discover that
 46 at least 80% of the manuscripts agree against the other 20% or less, on
 47 almost every point of difference. If we study the 80% as a group, we find
 48 that they agree very closely among themselves. The remaining 20%, on the
 49 other hand, differ so much among themselves that scholars do not treat them
 50 as one group (as they do the 80%), but divide them into two and even three
 51 distinct groups. This is a very striking array of evidence. If the majority
 52 text represents the original text, we have no problems. But there would have
 53 to be a historical crisis of major proportions to explain how the erroneous
 54 manuscripts could so dominate the picture.

1 Although the advocates of the minority manuscripts have from time to time
 2 guessed at such crises, none of these crises have ever been identified and
 3 proven, historically, to have existed. In fact, it seems likely that there
 4 was no such crisis. We know that manuscript copying was carried on in
 5 several centers of the ancient world. In the days before printing and rapid
 6 long-distance communications, one would expect that a crisis which affected
 7 one copying center, and yet which was small enough not to be detected now,
 8 would have left its imprint in only one geographic area--the area around
 9 that copying center. And yet the readings of the 80% are found in manu-
 10 scripts produced in every known copying center in the ancient world! In
 11 contrast, the readings of the minority group are often localized to one or
 12 two centers, suggesting that they are errors made and propagated in small
 13 areas.

14 Thus we conclude that the most objective and accurate way to determine the
 15 readings of the original copies of the New Testament is to count the Greek
 16 manuscripts we have now, and accept the reading of the majority of manu-
 17 scripts at each point where there is deviation.

18 D. Which translations follow the Majority Text?

19 I know of no translation of the New Testament that has been made on the
 20 basis of a systematic study of the majority of manuscripts. However, God so
 21 ordered the events of history that the King James Version follows what we now
 22 know to be the majority text in all but a very few places.

23 The Greek New Testament was first printed in 1514, under the impetus of
 24 the cardinal primate of Spain. However, that edition was slow in being put on
 25 the market. Perhaps desiring to "scoop" the Spaniards, a publisher named
 26 Johann Froben engaged the famous Dutch scholar Erasmus to edit a Greek text
 27 of the New Testament for immediate publication. Working with great haste,
 28 Erasmus was able to provide the printer with a manuscript in time for Froben's
 29 testament to be the first on the market.

30 Because of his haste, Erasmus used whatever Greek manuscripts came first
 31 to hand as the basis for his edition. Most of his text was compiled from only
 32 two manuscripts. Now, it is clear that if one selects two manuscripts at
 33 random from more than 5000, one is more likely to end up with two members of
 34 the 80% group than two from the 20% group, or even one from each. And this is
 35 just what Erasmus did. His manuscripts were plain Jane members of the
 36 majority text group. Although he revised his testament somewhat more carefully
 37 in later years, he shied away from the rarer readings when he did encounter
 38 them. And his text was the basis for the text used by the King James
 39 translators in 1611.

40 Thus the King James New Testament is basically the majority text.
 41 However, virtually every modern translation (the King James II is the only
 42 exception I know of) follows "scholarly opinion" to prefer in many places the
 43 readings of the minority of manuscripts. These readings, popularized by
 44 Westcott and Hort under the influence of the older manuscripts discovered
 45 during the last century, seem to have remained popular because of the
 46 scholarly prestige of these men and the tendency toward subjective methods of
 47 textual criticism in vogue today. But it is difficult to understand how a
 48 devout believer who understands the facts can advocate the use of translations
 49 based on any but the majority of manuscripts.

1 III. The Question of Translation

2 A. The Problem.

3 Our conclusions concerning the text of the New Testament have limited our
4 choice of translations to the King James in the New Testament. However, it
5 is not superfluous to discuss the question of translation techniques. For
6 one thing, one sometimes hears the King James criticized on the grounds of
7 its old English diction. "What good does it do us to have the correct text,"
8 we are asked, "if the English into which it is translated is almost a dif-
9 ferent language from that which we speak today?" A second consideration is
10 the Old Testament. Our conclusions concerning the text were limited to the
11 New Testament. Is it possible that some translation newer than the King James
12 might be helpful in the Old Testament? Third, the increasing popularity of
13 multi-translation Bibles tempts the Bible student to use newer translations
14 as commentaries, while retaining the King James as his basic text. The
15 validity of this procedure needs to be examined.

16 The translation problem exists because there is not a word-for-word corres-
17 pondence between any two languages. The Eskimo uses many different words to
18 describe the substance which we lump under the one term "snow." Arabs have
19 hundreds of words for which we have no need, to describe camels. Similarly,
20 the languages of some aboriginal cultures would be hard put to distinguish
21 the various branches of science which we denote by such specialized terms as
22 chemistry, electronics, physics, biology, and psychology. How much more complex
23 must it be, then, to translate abstract terms such as love, grace, faith,
24 and hypocrisy? Oh, we may have a word "grace" which we associate with the
25 Greek term "charis." But who is to say that we think the same group of thoughts
26 when we hear "grace" that the Greeks did when they heard "charis?"

27 In the area of grammar, too, there is no complete correspondence between
28 languages. English has a multitude of tenses--past, present, future, past
29 perfect, present perfect, progressive past, progressive present, progressive
30 future, future perfect--all unambiguously designated by specific forms of
31 the main and auxiliary verbs. Hebrew has only two "tenses", and even these do
32 not behave like the English past and future after which they are sometimes
33 named. The Greek Genitive case behaves something like "of" phrases in English--
34 but has at least 23 possible meanings, not all of which are reflected in the
35 English expression.

36 Once we recognize the detail to which Scripture is inspired, and the fact
37 that no two languages correspond to one another closely enough to reflect that
38 detail perfectly, we must confess that it is impossible to translate the Bible.
39 In the most perfect sense, "the Word of God" exists only in Greek, Hebrew, and
40 Aramaic, the languages in which God inspired it. However, we believe from
41 Scripture that it is the privilege of every believer, even one who does not
42 read these languages, to study God's Word for himself (cf. Ps. 1). Many
43 devout laymen actually have taught themselves Greek, and sometimes Hebrew,
44 so as to be able to study the Bible as God gave it. But there is a place for
45 translations into the language of the people, as illustrated in Neh. 8:7,8.

46 B. The Nature of Understanding.

47 The translator faces a tension between literalness and understandability.
48 In his desire for literalness, he may make up English words to correspond to
49 Hebrew words for which there are no exact English equivalents. But the result
50 will be some new language--certainly not "English" as his readers speak it.

1 On the other hand, the translator may be tempted to make the English text
 2 say more than the Greek or Hebrew does, for the sake of clarity. He may be
 3 tempted, for instance, to translate the phrase "the love of Christ" as "the
 4 love which I have for Christ" or "the love which Christ has for me." His ex-
 5 cuse for doing this is, "It's necessary for understanding."

6 Modern translations place a high priority on "understanding". If we are to
 7 judge the tension between understanding and literalness properly, we need to
 8 have a biblical view of the factors which control one's understanding of the
 9 Bible.

10 1. Spirituality. I Cor. 2:14-3:2 shows conclusively that a person's under-
 11 standing of Scripture is governed largely by their spiritual maturity.

12 Heb. 5:13, 14 tells how this maturity is developed--by exercising the senses
 13 to use Scripture in making decisions.

14 This means that even to a Greek or Hebrew living when the Bible was written,
 15 it was not understandable apart from the leadership of the Holy Spirit. If
 16 a translator proposes to make his translation so clear that a baby Christian,
 17 or even a non-Christian, can understand it perfectly, he is probably making
 18 it clearer than the Holy Spirit did in the first place.

19 2. Study and meditation. The Bible does not say much about light, casual
 20 reading of the Word of God. On the other hand, it does encourage deep medi-
 21 tation and study in the Scriptures (Ps. 1; Ps. 119; Josh. 1:8; Deut. 17:18,19)
 22 Once we recognize this, we will not judge translations on how well they do our
 23 homework for us. We will not feel it is too much effort to consult Webster's
 24 Dictionary or Vine's Expository Dictionary to find the meaning of a King
 25 James word and its sense in Greek. We will not shun to consult our concord-
 26 ance and Treasury of Scripture Knowledge to find parallel passages that shed
 27 light on the verse or word we are allowing to saturate our souls. We will
 28 actually gain greater understanding from a more literal translation, one in
 29 which we can compare similar verses in English and be fairly certain that they
 30 are similar in the original as well, than we would from an interpretative
 31 translation.

32 3. Teachers and commentaries. Scripture recognizes that God has gifted certain
 33 people in the body of Christ as teachers of His Word (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:
 34 11, 12). Thus the believer ought to make discerning use of commentaries.
 35 He ought to seek and sit under the oral teaching of the Word. But because
 36 Scripture distinguishes the Word and those gifted to teach it, so ought we to.
 37 A translation which includes the commentary in the text destroys the distinc-
 38 tion between the inspired Word and the Spirit-guided, but fallible, human
 39 commentary on that Word, and is thus to be avoided.

40 C. The Basic Principle of Translation

41 We have seen that while Christians may expect to understand the Bible, they
 42 have no warrant to expect to understand it completely without spiritual growth,
 43 deep study and meditation, and even the assistance of other believers. Thus
 44 the argument that translations must be far from literal in order to be under-
 45 standable is not accurate. It aims at producing a translation which is clear-
 46 er than the original, and which short-circuits the God-ordained means of under-
 47 standing.

48 Scripture itself warns seriously against adding or subtracting anything from
 49 at least two books of the Bible, Deuteronomy (4:2; 12:32) and Revelation
 50 (22:18,19). It would be difficult to avoid the spirit of that command with
 51 regard to the rest of the Bible. Certainly, any technique of translation which
 52 intentionally amplifies or paraphrases the biblical language is in disobedience
 53 to this fundamental principle.

1 D. Conclusions and applications.

- 2 1. Which translation shall I use? We should use the one which is as literal
3 as can be understood by using the means of understanding outlined in III B
4 above. The most literal English translation available is probably the Amer-
5 ican Standard Version of 1901. However, in the New Testament it departs
6 further from the majority text than does any other popular translation. The
7 King James is almost as literal, and presents a preferable New Testament
8 textual basis. It is more literal than most of the modern translations, and
9 certainly is far preferable to such paraphrases as Phillips and the Living
10 Bible.
- 11 2. How about multi-translation Bibles? When a person compares translations
12 in Bible study, they will either find that the translations agree, or are
13 are different. If they agree, nothing has been gained over using the King
14 James alone. (Sometimes all the versions agree on a wrong translation, so
15 one cannot even use this as a confirmation of the accuracy of the King James
16 translation!) If they differ, the student must decide which is the correct
17 rendering.

18 If the student has the training to determine whether the variation resulted
19 from textual differences or from translation, he could use disagreement
20 among the versions as a clue to do further study in the original languages
21 to resolve the discrepancy. But usually, students who can use the original
22 languages do not bother comparing translations. Those who do study from
23 several translations are usually those with little or no skill in Greek and
24 Hebrew. Thus they cannot decide objectively which is the best rendering.

25 If they cannot decide the question objectively, they do it subjectively.
26 All too often, a student selects the translation which "sounds best" or
27 "which I understand most clearly" or "which I like the best." At best, they
28 will choose on the basis of understandability. But we have already seen
29 that understandability is no criterion of accuracy of a translation. In
30 fact, the more understandable a translation is, the more danger there is
31 that the translator has violated the basic principle of translation and said
32 something more clearly than the original did! At the worst, the student may
33 pick the translation which bothers him the least. If a passage challenges
34 one's life, it is relatively simple to find a version somewhere which
35 softens the force of that challenge. But of course, when my life and the
36 Word of God disagree, it is my life, and not the Bible, which ought to change.

37 Thus multi-translation Bibles are of limited usefulness. They may help
38 identify a defective translation in the King James. But more often than
39 not, the other versions will differ from the KJV because of a defective
40 text or translation procedure, and not an error in the King James. And
41 sometimes, where the King James does make a mistake, the other versions
42 make the same mistake. But they are not of use for what they are usually
43 advertised for--increasing one's understanding of Scripture. Understanding
44 of the Bible comes not from simpler translations, but from godly teachers,
45 diligent meditation, hard study, and steady spiritual growth.

Preliminary annotations to "Notes on Translations."
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These notes are to be read as footnotes appended to the sentence which ends on the page and line indicated. If there is more than one period on a line, the note indicates to which it refers.

Page 1, line 8. The substance of this statement was expressed by UFM missionary Bill Fay, working with the Dani People of Irian Jaya, in a conversation in October, 1973

Page 3, line 44. Bruce Metzger, The Text of the New Testament (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 209. It is true that Hort recognized the dangers of citing age as a criterion for the true text (B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, The New Testament in the Original Greek: Introduction and Appendix (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882), p.5). But he went on to excuse himself: "The . . . presumption that a relatively late text is likely to be a relatively corrupt text is found true on the application of all available tests in an overwhelming proportion of the extant MSS in which ancient literature has been preserved." (Pp. 5f). These "available tests" are perhaps the various arguments from internal evidence which dominate the rest of the book. These are criticized under II C2 below. Is it mere coincidence that Hort's highly subjective internal criteria point almost invariably to the then recently discovered manuscripts?

See further on this point Zane Hodges, "The Greek Text of the King James Version," Bibliotheca Sacra CXXV (October, 1968), pp. 336-339.

Page 4, line 19, Cf. Hodges, Bib. Sac. CXXV (Oct., 1968), 342ff. G.D. Kilpatrick, "The Greek New Testament Text of Today and the Textus Receptus," in Anderson., ed., The New Testament: History and Contemporary Perspective (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 189-206, has illustrated this ambivalence by departing from popular textual conclusions in favor of the TR at various points. Ernest C. Colewell has pointed out the ultimate futility of the genealogical method, Hort's basic approach, on two counts, and noted that even Westcott and Hort were aware of these shortcomings (Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 66-69). Yet they still made it the backbone of their text!

Page 4, line 22. Compare Hort, p. 280 who suggests that corruptions in the text of the New Testament "may be due to the original writer." How does this square with the biblical view of inspiration? A telling criticism of the basic philosophy behind contemporary New Testament textual criticism has been offered by Hodges, "Rationalism and Contemporary New Testament Textual Criticism," Bib. Sac. CXXVIII (January-March, 1971), 27-35.

Page 4, line 30. (first punctuation). A mathematical model of the situation has been described by Zane Hodges in "A Defense of the Majority Text" (Dallas: By the author, n.d.). Even Hort had to admit, "A theoretical presumption indeed remains that a majority of extant documents is more likely to represent a majority of ancestral documents at each stage of transmission than vice versa." (p. 45).

Page 5, line 3. Hort insisted, "The Syrian text (the Majority Text) must in fact be the result of a 'recension' in the proper sense of the word, a work of attempted criticism, performed deliberately by editors and not merely by scribes." (p. 133, cf. pp. 132-35).

Metzger explained the process in more detail: "Produced by Lucian of Antioch (martyred A.D. 312), this text, with various subsequent alterations, became the prevailing text throughout the Byzantine Church (Westcott and Hort's Syrian text)" (p. 141). Of course even this model grants to the Majority Text an antiquity rivaling that of the oldest complete uncial mss. But it has been called into question.

Hodges (Bib. Sac. CXXV, p. 340) cites some of the recent discussion.

Even Colewell could insist in a paper first published in 1961, "The Greek vulgate--the Byzantine or Alpha text-type--had in its origin no such single focus as the Latin had in Jerome." (italics in the original; p. 53).

Page 5, line 10. Marchant King has recognized and emphasized this criterion in "Should Conservatives Abandon Textual Criticism," Bib. Sac. CXXX (Jan.-March., 1973), p. 36. He emphasizes that the mss produced in various areas are not conformable to the Majority Text. But he is silent about the fact that in these admittedly minority-text mss, there can frequently be found Majority Text readings. His general advocacy of the modern critical text seems based largely on the confusion between the Textus Receptus per se (i.e. the editions of Erasmus, and the text underlying the King James Version), and the Majority Text as a goal of critical endeavor. The TR as we have it does contain some errors. There is a need for text-critical study, not simply a return to Erasmus. What is under debate is simply the method to be used in such study.

Page 5, line 39. For the history of this period cf. Metzger, pp. 95-106.

Page 6, line 1. For an insightful summary of recent linguistic and anthropological contributions to the problem of translation, see Eugene A. Nida, Toward a Science of Translating (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964). However, it is this writer's impression that his criteria attempt to short-circuit the scriptural requirements for understanding Scripture, as outlined in II B below.

More recently, John Beekman and John Callow have produced a handbook from a more conservative point of view (Translating the Word of God. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974). But even in their careful treatment, one does not feel that sufficient attention is given to the factors other than translation technique which ought to determine the understandability of Scripture.

Page 6, line 45. The scriptural legitimacy of translations may also be inferred from the frequent quotations made by our Lord and His apostles from the Septuagint, a translation of the Old Testament into Greek made during the two centuries before Christ. However, when our Lord referred to the entire Old Testament in Luke 11:50, 51 and 24:27,44, His statements can only be understood as applying to the Hebrew Old Testament. Thus although He made use of translations, His authority was the original.