

REVIEW ARTICLE

New Age Bible Versions

Reviewed by
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New Age Bible Versions by G. A. Riplinger. Munroe Falls, OH: AV Publications, 1993, 690 pp., \$14.95.

New Age Bible Versions (hereafter, *NABV*) purports to be a “scoop,” an exposé of an “alliance between the new versions of the bible [*sic*] (NIV, NASB, Living Bible and others [i.e., NKJV, NRSV, NAB, REB, CEV, TEV, GNB, PHILLIPS, NJB]) and the chief conspirators in the New Age movement’s push for a One World Religion” (p. 1). Its author, G. A. Riplinger, is listed on the back cover as having achieved B.A., M.A., and M.F.A. degrees and as having done post graduate study at Harvard and Cornell Universities. Nowhere does the book reveal what area of study or expertise her degrees cover. It was necessary to inquire elsewhere to discover that her degrees are in home economics and interior design. She reveals that, while a professor at Kent State University, this book was the culmination of a study begun by a student’s question: “Is the fall recorded in Isaiah 14 about Lucifer [as the KJV and Hebrew text indicate] or Jesus, the morning star, as the NIV and NASB imply?” (p. 4). She feels that this supposed conflict¹ illustrates how subtle changes in the Word of God have come about as a result of modern versions which do not conform to the KJV (to whatever degree), and that these “changes, additions and omissions discovered in the new versions have affected the health of the body of Christ and taken it step by step away from the image of God” (p. 5).

The advertising blurb on the front cover which touts the book as “an exhaustive documentation exposing the message, men, and manuscripts moving mankind to Antichrist’s one world religion”

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¹These are not in real conflict anymore than “the *Lion* of the Tribe of Judah “and “the roaring *lion* seeking whom he may devour” are in conflict.

suggests the author's overall outline. The book divides twofold concerning what she contends are "New Age" Bible versions: first, their "Message"—presented in four major sections; second their "Men and Manuscripts"—presented in three major sections. The first four major sections subdivide into twenty-eight individual chapters while the last three major sections encompass fourteen chapters. Some of these chapters are unnaturally short: e.g., chapter 4—two pages; chapter 22—three and a half pages; chapter 24—three and a half pages.

A brief overview is in order. The front cover proclaims *NABV* as "The New Case Against the [modern versions listed above]." The author's procedure is first to cite a number of Scriptures which allude to the various wicked devices of Satan and/or of ungodly men. She then cites New Age authors and supporters to demonstrate their use of these devices, especially to deceive men and to infiltrate all religions and eventually convert all to New Age Religion (pp. 11ff.). The "newness" of her case, then, consists of her claims to expose a grand pattern in which New Age philosophy ("the Message") becomes that by which the Antichrist gains control of the world just prior to the end times by, among other things, introducing slow, subtle changes into the Bible (i.e., modern versions of it) which will eventually deny or eliminate or change Bible doctrines (p. 15). She then claims that Westcott and Hort ("the Men") in particular were Satanic spiritualists who produced their text from alleged deliberately corrupted (pp. 535–536) manuscripts ("The Manuscripts") on which modern versions, including the NASB and the NIV (her chief translation targets), rely. The results, she claims, will "wed Satan to the harlot church" (p. 27). Much of her support for these contentions takes the form of charts which compare or contrast New Age or what she calls "Luciferian" philosophy with what the Bible demonstrates to be Satanic philosophy. Alternatively, many charts show comparisons of KJV readings with supposedly inferior readings of the NASB, NIV, and other modern versions.

THE AUTHOR'S ASPIRATIONS

Though sympathetic to the idea of exposing and contesting the encroaching influences of New Age philosophy upon Christianity, I, nevertheless, have serious reservations about the tenor of this book. In Parts One and Two of the book, the author is quite right to note that New Agers, like other ecumenists, are working hard and deceptively to bring about a one-world religion. She is right to recognize that much wickedness will occur through the changing of word meanings, especially religious words, to empty them of their biblical content and infuse into them a new content of (among other things) New Age philosophy. She is quite right to alert us to the encroachment of eastern

mysticism into our religious atmosphere. In so doing, she has echoed some very important issues regarding the inspiration, preservation and transmission of the text of the Scriptures. These specifically concern the New Testament text and translations and have been frequently raised before. In spite of what may be a properly motivated concern about these issues on her part, the approach taken in her book has generated more concerns than it has resolved, due primarily to the impropriety of her argumentation and so-called documentation.

It is not my intention to cast any reproach on the KJV Bible. I consider the KJV to be the apex of English literature in general and of Bible translations in particular. In my opinion, if the Lord tarries, and other English versions continue to appear, there is not now nor ever will be an English translation to equal the KJV. It is unrivaled in its metrical balance, beauty of expression, and for its day, clarity of communication of God's inspired Hebrew and Greek Testaments. For me to say more of the KJV's merits would be by comparison to defame the volumes already written in similar vein, but to greater effect. The KJV quite simply stands on its own, ultimately needing no defense, which is why it has had such a profound effect on our language and culture since its production in 1611. Nevertheless, Riplinger appears to be another of those who rush to its defense, alarmed by the proliferation of its modern rivals, armed with nothing more than the blunderbuss of *ad hominem* apologetic, when what is needed is the keenness of incisive evaluation. Unfortunately, what *NABV* produces is intense heat rather than informative help. This is not the conclusion of merely those who take opposite sides of the King James controversy with her. This is also the conclusion of a growing number of her allies in the KJV debate.²

But neither is it my intention to be unkind to Riplinger. I have observed that many of those in the KJV-only camp, taking their cue from Dean John Burgon, have embarked on a crusade. When one is on a crusade, woe be to anyone or anything that might hinder that crusade. For anyone to question it or any aspect of it *ipso facto* brands him as a traitor in the eyes of the crusaders. Secondly, Riplinger has revealed her driving force in an article which she wrote in a church newsletter subsequent to the publication of her book. Note carefully her own words on the matter:

Daily during the six years needed for this investigation, the Lord miraculously brought the needed materials and resources—much like the ravens fed Elijah. Each discovery was not the result of effort on my part, but of the directed hand of God—so much so that I hesitated to even put my

²Some examples are Jay Green, Dave Hunt, and David W. Cloud, who are well-known for their support of the KJV and its underlying Greek text. See the comments of these about Riplinger's work below.

name on the book. Consequently, I used G. A. Riplinger, which signifies to me, God and Riplinger—God as author and Riplinger as secretary.³

The assurance, whether rightly or wrongly assumed, that God is immediately directing one tends to produce the crusade mentality already mentioned. It also conveniently dismisses accountability. If one is assured that God is directing one's every action, there need not be too much concern about accountability to one's fellow humans—mere mortals that they be. The accountability for care in accusation or accuracy or even ultimately the truth at all, loses its force. All that is in God's hands! "So I make some mistakes," goes the attitude, "so I trash some character irresponsibly, so I ruin the reputation of a good man. That is not important. What is important is the cause!"

To be sure, as a Christian, I do believe the cause of Christ transcends personal considerations—Jesus taught as much (Matt 10:37; 19:29). But God does not call anyone to crusade or to take up His cause in violation of His Holiness, truth, love—in other words to violate His nature.

But whatever her motive, that must be between Riplinger and her God. Even those with the best of intentions are sometimes subject to error and misjudgment. It is solely my intent to demonstrate to the satisfaction of objective observers what are clear errors and misjudgments—often grievous ones—in her unabashed crusade to "save" the KJV.

THE AUTHOR'S APPROACH

For whatever rationale on Riplinger's part, she has produced not an exposé but rather a diatribe, often quite vitriolic, based on dogmatic, predispositional, and, more often than not, blatantly fallacious propaganda techniques rather than real evidence, carefully weighed and judiciously presented. Following a line of reasoning advanced strongly by Edward Hills, she equates any rival translation to the KJV with a direct, frontal attack on the very Word of God as though by anti-Christians or apostates.⁴ Hills' views about the text of the New Testament and the KJV as infallible have been decisively answered by Richard A. Taylor.⁵

³*The End Times and Victorious Living* (January–February, 1994): 15 (a ministry of the Paw Creek Church and Media Ministry).

⁴The line of reasoning is evident even in the title of Hills' first book, *The King James Version Defended! A Space-Age Defense of the Historic Christian Faith* (reprint of 1956 ed., Des Moines, IA: Christian Research Press, 1973). He repackaged his material with some additions in a second work, *Believing Bible Study*, 2nd ed. (Des Moines, IA: Christian Research Press, 1977).

⁵"The Modern Debate Concerning the Greek Textus Receptus: An Examination of the Textual Views of Edward F. Hills" (Ph.D. dissertation, Bob Jones University, 1973).

Riplinger has accepted uncritically the views of men like J. J. Ray⁶ and Peter Ruckman,⁷ involving a concept about the transmission of God's infallible Word on mostly unfounded assumptions and associations regarding both the text and men involved with it. Whether intentionally or not, she perpetrates the unconscionable argumentation (unconscionable even for a non-Christian) of Peter Ruckman to promote her thesis. Having then convinced herself that only the KJV has the heavenly *imprimatur*, she, like Ruckman and Ray, views any modern English version as a deliberate, concerted effort to distort and destroy the Word of God. But a careful examination reveals another side to the story from both a historical and Biblical perspective.

THE AUTHOR'S TREATMENT OF "THE MEN"

In part one of her book (pp. 391–463), Riplinger repeatedly insinuates that anyone who worked on modern translations of the New Testament or on the Greek text which underlies them is part of an occultic "New Age" conspiracy whose sole purpose is to recast the Bible in terms that will deceitfully lead readers into New Age beliefs rather than to God.

Her specific (though by no means sole) focus in this regard is seen in frequent allusions to Westcott and Hort as "spiritualists" in the sense of necromancers—whom she insinuates sought contact with the dead through seances. This line of accusation against these men occupies a disproportionate amount of space. For this claim, she cites with more effect than accuracy the biographies about both men by their sons. But the endeavor to which they refer, a "Ghostlie Guild" as they called it, had to do with documenting claims by others to this phenomenon, not to any attempts on their part to participate in it. She actually presents no documentation that either man dabbled in seances, other than in the context of investigating them. She only suggests as much. But though she may have convinced herself of that erroneous idea, her credibility suffers when she makes claims to that effect without clear, unambiguous proof. Guilt by association has no place in arguing real issues. Loose charges are especially reprehensible, necessarily vague, and difficult to answer because they are frequently no more than the interpretation of the one making them. This is the nature of innuendo and slander: easily accused and often difficult to either prove or disprove, but highly suggestible, especially to average readers who have neither the ability nor the inclination to look beyond the surface of the charge. Hence once

⁶*God Wrote Only One Bible* (Junction City, OR: Eye Opener Publications, 1976).

⁷*The Christian's Handbook of Manuscript Evidence* (Pensacola, FL: Pensacola Bible Institute, 1970).

slandered, even after proven to be falsely so, one finds it extremely difficult to cast off the cloud of popular suspicion thereby brought upon him. To thus bring ruin to a man's good name by an exaggerated estimate of one's own importance or the importance of his or her opinions, is the epitome of selfish and tragic betrayal. How much more so when the one slandered is not even alive to answer the false charges! Incidentally, this sort of thing can cut both ways. Robert Morey demonstrated this in his review of *NABV*.⁸ In answer to a number of personal character attacks Riplinger brings against Westcott, Hort, Kenneth Taylor (*Living Bible*), and others, Morey actually documents (in the same way that Riplinger "documents") similar charges against Erasmus (as "liberal," "occultic," "humanistic," "Catholic," "practitioner of kabalistic magic," "New Ager," whose voice became weak as a punishment of God). He likewise "documents" that King James was a "homosexual." Now I certainly do not accept such charges as affecting the Textus Receptus of Erasmus or the KJV. It would be foolish to stop reading the KJV because of the personal character (or lack of it) of King James. I do not attribute his culpable morality to the version that bears his name. And neither does Morey, as he makes clear in his review. But this merely illustrates the harm and untrustworthiness of such *ad hominem* argumentation by Riplinger and those who influenced her in this direction.

Moreover, even if Westcott and Hort had ideas that were not entirely orthodox in their own day, they would have little effect upon the Greek New Testament. Keep in mind that they worked with manuscripts already long in existence—they produced none of their own. They did not change the wording of those manuscripts. The manuscripts themselves are on display or available for consultation in libraries and museums throughout the world. The wording differences as recorded in the most significant of them are available for the general reader to inspect in the textual apparatuses of either the Majority Text Greek New Testament or the UBS Greek New Testament or the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament. These apparatuses differ from each other in some of their *sigla* and their layout, but they are each, in its way, helpful for demonstrating the wording variances in the manuscripts, versions, and patristic citations of the text of the New Testament. The ability to "tamper" with the text of the New Testament by manipulating the textual evidence is exceedingly minimal. Note how strong an affirmation of this truth the eminent French theologian, Louis Gaussen, expresses:

Hence we will venture to say, that were some able and ill-meaning person

⁸Review of *New Age Bible Versions*, by G. A. Riplinger, in *The Researcher* (January–February 1994), reprinted in *Baptist Biblical Heritage* (April 1994): 13–14.

(such as we may suppose the wretched Voltaire or the too celebrated Anthony Collins to have been in the last century) to study to select at will, out of all the manuscripts of the East and the West, when placed before him, the worst readings and the variations most remote from our received text, with the perfidious intention of composing at pleasure the most faulty text—such a man, we say (even were he to adopt such various readings as should have in their favour no more than ONE SOLE [emphasis his] manuscript out of the four or five hundred of our libraries), could not, in spite of all his mischievous inclination, produce a Testament, as the result of his labours, that would be less close to that of our Churches than Martin is to Osterwald.⁹

Gaussen's definition of Biblical inspiration, incidentally, is considered one of the classic expressions of that doctrine.

Of course, latent here is a major issue: the doctrine of the preservation of God's Word. The Scripture has much to say concerning its preservation. The Bible makes clear that God's Word will survive the most bitter and pointed opposition to it imaginable. Both Old and New Testaments affirm that Scripture shall stand forever (Isa 40:8; Matt 5:18), in contrast to the heaven and earth that will pass away (Luke 16:17; 21:33). Jesus indicated that it will always be available for man to live by (Matt 4:4). The implication of this is quite strong, but nevertheless often missed by those advocating that only in the KJV, or only in the Textus Receptus is the true Word of God to be found. For, if man is to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, the consequent necessity is that that word be available for all men. This statement of Jesus, taken at face value, might easily lead to the conclusion that there is indeed but one true text. However, the presumption regarding an alleged one true text poses some difficulties. First, the textual phenomena present us not with two conflicting texts to choose between,¹⁰ but somewhere in excess of 5,340 manuscripts of varying length and description,¹¹ whose textual variations are so complex and diverse as to make the mere preparation of a critical apparatus for a printed Greek

⁹*Theopneustia: The Bible, Its Divine Origin and Entire Inspiration, Deduced from Internal Evidence and the Testimonies of Nature, History, and Science* (reprint of 1841 ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1979 as *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*), pp. 175–76.

¹⁰As Ray suggests (*God Wrote Only One Bible*, pp. 15ff.).

¹¹These fall into four categories: papyri, uncials, minuscules, and lectionaries (ecclesiastical texts appointed to be read on certain days of the year). J. Harold Greenlee estimates that approximately 200 of these are complete or nearly so, about fifty have the New Testament except the gospels, and some 1500 have all or part of the Gospels only (*Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964], p. 16). Lately, archaeologists have turned up numbers of fragmentary manuscripts.

Testament a task of behemoth proportions.¹² Each of these manuscripts varies from the other in certain textual details, and there are no two of them that agree in every particular. The second difficulty is that God has not seen fit to indicate to us in any objectively verifiable manner which of the various manuscripts exhibits the one true text. Since none of the autographs exists (a point which no one disputes) and since, as far as one can discern from the textual evidence, there does not exist any single, absolutely flawless copy of the autographs, it may be justly concluded that God is satisfied that His Word remains undisturbed amidst those variants. It is interesting to recognize here that neither the Old nor New Testament addresses itself to the problem of manuscript variation. Yet the New Testament writers would certainly have been in a position to do so, for they were well aware of discrepancies in the wording between the Septuagint and the Hebrew text in many places. In fact, both Jesus Himself and His apostles (operating under the Holy Spirit) were in a unique position to verify the wording of the Old Testament to the very syllable had they wished. Apparently neither He nor they felt particularly constrained to do so. This is a point that even KJV-only proponent E. F. Hills notices when he says, “the Apostles sometimes quoted the Septuagint in passages in which it departed from the Hebrew text.”¹³ However, Hills (and most KJV-only advocates) displays what seems to be an illogical conclusion from this point. He says,

We adopt the same attitude toward the King James Version that they maintained toward the Septuagint. In their Old Testament quotations the Apostles never made any distinction between the Septuagint and the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁴

The King James translators themselves noted this differentiation between the Septuagint and the Hebrew text and concluded from it that a variety of translations is good to have, even though some might not attain to the originals in every particular.¹⁵ But then the KJV translators were having to contend with the same kind of arguments against them

¹²Gordon D. Fee maintains that even the nearest two manuscripts vary from six to ten times per chapter from each other notwithstanding their membership within the Majority text (“Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the Textus Receptus,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 [March 1978]: 23). For the magnitude of the critical apparatus difficulties, see Kurt Aland, “The Greek New Testament: Its Present and Future Editions,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87 (June 1968): 183–84.

¹³*Believing Bible Study*, p. 14.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁵“The Translators to the Reader,” in *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha Translated out of the Original Tongues: And with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised, by His Majesty's Special Command* (Greenwich, CT: Seabury Press, n.d.), p. xiv.

that the KJV-only contenders such as Hills and Riplinger use now against other good translations.¹⁶ Whereas the apostles were demonstrably tolerant of textual variations between the Old Testament Greek and Hebrew texts, Riplinger, following Hills, is manifestly not so tolerant even of a good translation from the Greek if it reflects some variation from the KJV. She indiscriminately classifies liberal (RSV, TEV, et al.) and conservative (NASB, NIV, NKJV) versions together without distinction, based on the wording variations from the KJV. It does not even seem to matter to her that the NKJV, by contrast with other modern versions, is, like the KJV, based on the *Textus Receptus*.

Nevertheless, the fact that Jesus and the New Testament writers used the Old Testament in more than one form without correction precludes the idea that there is a single God-given line of Old Testament manuscripts. There is no reason why the same should not be true of the New Testament. No copy is without variation from the originals. The proposal that there arose a satanically altered text that blurs the Word of God is not only naively simplistic, in the light of the numerous minor variations and historical facts of its transmission, but also it is theologically untenable. Riplinger is one of many appealing to the Scriptural doctrine of preservation with a preconceived notion of how and in which version God has accomplished the preservation of the text of the New Testament. This naturally raises an important issue—that of the exact nature of God’s preserving His text.

The Nature of Preservation

There is no hint in Scripture either as to the nature of this preservation or to the medium of it. Nowhere does God say explicitly or implicitly that He moved in the copyists in a manner similar to His inspiration of the Scripture writers themselves (2 Peter 1:21), preserving them alike from all error and from all omission. One nowhere finds a hint of “double inspiration,” nowhere reads that “holy scribes of God were moved by the Holy Spirit” or anything equivalent to it.

Proper Perspective in Preservation

Perhaps no one has manifest a proper perspective on the textual problems of the New Testament, especially in light of the controversies currently circulating, so well as Benjamin B. Warfield. Warfield was careful to distinguish between textual purity and the purity of the sense of any given message.¹⁷ There is a purity with regard to the wording of a

¹⁶Hills, *Believing Bible Study*, pp. 226–27. Cf. also Riplinger, *NABV*, pp. 614–615.

¹⁷Benjamin B. Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886), p. 11. “Divergencies which leave the sense wholly unaffected may be to him [the textual researcher] very substantial errors. It

text that is different from the purity of the message. This merely recognizes that the same thing can be said reliably in more than one way. For example, there is no effect on the meaning of a statement like “she denied her daughter permission to go,” if the wording is altered to read “she refused to permit her daughter to go.” For a textual researcher who is trying to determine which of those was the original wording of a particular author, it is a question of wording purity. He may thereby refer to one text as “corrupt” and the other as “pure” without reference to the substance of the passage.

Warfield regards the purity of the New Testament text against two standards. First, compared to a *modern* book produced by modern proofreading methods with the original available for consultation, the text of the New Testament is “sorely corrupt.”¹⁸ The New Testament copyists had none of the valuable assistance of the modern printing press that eliminates the introduction of new errors while old ones are being corrected. Second, when Warfield compares the New Testament with any other *ancient* writing, he finds it “marvelously correct.” His full wording is,

Such has been the care with which the New Testament has been copied, a care which has doubtless grown out of true reverence of its holy words; such has been the providence of God in preserving for His Church in each and every age a competently exact text of the Scriptures, that not only is the New Testament unrivalled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use, but also in the abundance of testimony which has come down to us for castigating its comparatively infrequent blemishes. The divergence of its current text from the autograph may shock a modern printer of modern books; its wonderful approximation to its autograph is the undisguised envy of every modern reader of ancient books.¹⁹

So then, in the discussions of texts, terms like “corrupt text” and “pure text” have a special application, and do not necessarily reflect on the reliability of transmission of the sense of the passages. As a matter of fact, Warfield goes on to point out that at the very worst, the text descends through the various manuscripts substantially unaffected by the variations.²⁰ The lack of recognition of these considerations has led Riplinger to the position that acknowledging the KJV to be God’s Word requires, by her logic, a rejection of any variation from it as a Satanic (or

is even possible that he may find a copy painfully corrupt from which, nevertheless, precisely the same sense flows as if it had been written with perfect accuracy” (Ibid.).

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 12–13.

²⁰Ibid., p. 14.

New Age) counterfeit. As such, hers is not a “new” case against modern versions (as touted on the front cover of her book) after all. It is nothing more than a warmed over Ray-Ruckman-Hills-Fuller-Waite-hash with the same ingredients.

THE AUTHOR’S TREATMENT OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

The text of the New Testament exists in a *plethora* of manuscripts (more than 5,360) no two of which are identical as to precise wording. Further, it exists in various languages around the world via translations. The Bible clearly tells us that it is inspired and that it is preserved; it says nothing of which textual family best preserves it or which translation best expresses its original statements. To say otherwise is to give nothing more than one’s own opinion; it is certainly no Bible doctrine. There are ample demonstrations that copyists introduced minor changes in the interests of making their documents more smooth and readable. In the case of the New Testament, many such changes occurred under the scribe’s assuming that previous copyists had made an error and that they were correcting it. This alone accounts for a multitude of textual variants in the Greek New Testament.²¹ Beyond that, there are almost always multiple ways to translate from one language to another; hence the multiple versions translated from the very same Greek text. The translator’s task, in fact, is to decide from among the differing ways what is best for his translation to accurately and effectively communicate the message before him. This is why we are able to see wording differences between Tyndale’s translation and the KJV at places with no differing Greek texts. The same is true to a large degree between the KJV and the NKJV, where the underlying Greek text is the same (*Textus Receptus*).

THE AUTHOR’S USE OF SOURCES

In referring to “The Manuscripts” (Part Two), the author, for her “new case against the [modern versions],” essentially reproduces all the old arguments for the Majority Text.

Misunderstanding of Sources

Riplinger approvingly cites Wilbur Pickering’s *The Identity of the New Testament Text*.²² Pickering suggests that the modern Greek text is

²¹See any standard handbook of textual criticism for demonstrations of the kinds of errors the scribes characteristically made. Two excellent examples are Bruce Metzger’s *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* and Kurt and Barbara Aland’s *The Text of the New Testament*.

²²Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1977.

“maliciously corrupted” and further from the originals than the AV/Textus Receptus. But, as I have shown elsewhere, he cites no examples to demonstrate the substance of this alleged malicious corruption.²³ Rather, his tendency in this regard is to draw exaggerated conclusions from some cryptic remarks of some early writers. However, it is unclear that when early writers like Irenaeus and Gaius, to whom he refers, make reference to a text altered by heretics, they are referring to the kind of textual word variation changes that differentiate text families. In view of the fact that the readings themselves vary so little in doctrinal orthodoxy, it is difficult to think so. There were then, as there are now, religious groups and individuals like the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons, who while citing the Bible as their authority, nevertheless made a travesty of it by their use. It is quite likely that Irenaeus, Gaius, and other early writers referring to the same sort of heretics thus spoke of them as “altering the text” to suit their own purposes just as we so complain of their counterparts today. In any event, Pickering, as mentioned, could cite no examples of unambiguous textual aberration from the manuscripting period that would justify the kind of complaint against the eclectic text that he lodges. What is more, his very contention is exploded by the fact, as Colwell points out, that the most orthodox Fathers actually *used* all the variant readings except clear scribal blunders.²⁴ Incidentally, this fact also lays to rest the contention that the Alexandrian text-type exists in early documents where the Byzantine does not because God’s people supposedly recognized the “depravity” or “inferiority” of the Alexandrian manuscripts and thus set them aside rather than using them. While Pickering has perhaps the most cogent defense of the Majority Text to appear in book form, and certainly the least pejorative presentation from that viewpoint, nonetheless, his case is not entirely compelling.

Riplinger cites John Burgon, whom she calls “the scholar who has collated the most early New Testament witnesses (87,000)” (p. 468). She neglects to mention that none of these are manuscripts of the Greek New Testament but that they are allusions to Scripture made by the Church Fathers (hence referred to as “Patristic Citations”). In fact, they are frequently not even direct quotations but rather often loose references which are often anything but determinative of the text as to particular wording choices. It is noteworthy that these 87,000 quotations by early Patristic writers amassed by Burgon have reposed since that

²³S. E. Schnaiter, “The Relevance of Textual Criticism to the Modern English Version Controversy for Fundamentalists” (Ph.D. dissertation, Bob Jones University, 1980).

²⁴Ernest C. Colwell, *What Is the Best New Testament?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 35.

time in the British Museum and do not present a prima facie case for the Byzantine text type. Burgon hoped that they would. But for no one actually engaged in the business of textual criticism have they ever overturned the weight of evidence from the actual manuscripts of the Greek New Testament.²⁵

Riplinger quotes Edward F. Hills' general complaint in his book, *The King James Version Defended*, to the effect that "modern speech bibles [*sic*] are unscholarly" (468). She gives no explanation or demonstration of their "unscholarliness," let alone a refutation of it. The scholar's approach to a thesis is to consider and evaluate all the pros and cons regarding it and then to draw conclusions about it. In view of her complete silence regarding arguments damaging to her own thesis, accusing others of unscholarliness seems amusing.

Riplinger cites in shotgun fashion celebrated textual scholars' isolated complaints on various aspects of text transmission and translation. An example is Zane Hodges' complaint that new versions are "monstrously unscientific, if not dangerously obscurantist" (p. 469), but again, no demonstration. She paints a picture of the text as the product of arbitrary selections where "the 'Wheel of Fortune' is whirled and readings are selected for inclusion in what scholars call a 'critical edition of the Greek text'" (p. 470). She thereby ignores the entire processes by which Westcott and Hort (and many textual researchers before them) painstakingly worked out decisions regarding the text. She ignores wholesale the wealth of knowledge we now have about scribal habits and how these would affect their attitudes and actions towards the text. These matters are amply detailed in many textual research manuals, and for Riplinger to merely gloss over them without so much as a mention while simultaneously portraying Westcott and Hort either as New Age monsters who invented a text out of philosophical notions taken from Plato, or treating them as "arbitrary selections" from the manuscripts is a serious indictment of her understanding of these issues and severely undermines her credibility. Far from being arbitrary, Westcott and Hort devoted an entire volume to the demonstration of the lack of arbitrariness in their textual choices.²⁶ One may fault their handling of certain aspects of the evidence as Colwell, Klign, and others have done. One may disagree with their conclusions, as Hodges and Pickering have done. But merely to caricature their efforts as she has done is not scholarship; it is not evaluation; it is not reasoned disagreement; but

²⁵See Michael H. Heuer, "An Evaluation of John W. Burgon's Use of Patristic Evidence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (December 1995): 519-30.

²⁶*The New Testament in the Original Greek*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1882). Volume 1 deals with matters of textual research and the selections for their text. Volume 2 is the Greek text so produced.

egregious propaganda.

Misunderstanding of the Manuscript Evidence

Riplinger's technical arguments favoring the Byzantine or Received Text get into trouble due to her lack of real understanding of the textual issues and documents. For example, she cites P⁶⁶ as a witness to Byzantine readings (p. 471). Indeed, some isolated Byzantine readings have been found in it, but it is a monstrous leap from the existence of a few readings to think of the document as in any way Byzantine. Its textual affinities are much closer to P⁷⁵ and B. She is quite evidently unaware of the significant studies done on P⁶⁶ by Gordon D. Fee²⁷. She also calls it the "oldest papyrus in the world" (p. 489), evidently ignorant of the well-known Rylands Papyrus (P⁵², ca. A.D. 125).

A favorite procedure on her part is to selectively cite scholars who appear to support her contentions about the Majority Text/KJV. In this, however, she is preceded by others and actually follows the lead of Wilbur Pickering, who did the same with E. C. Colwell. She implies, as did Pickering, that Colwell had "a change of heart" regarding the reliability of the readings of the new versions (p. 468).

However, as I have demonstrated in my dissertation, Pickering quoted scholars unfriendly to his position to show that scribes made deliberate changes more often than accidental ones.²⁸ But from this he assumed that such changes were deliberately heretical. The implication he leaves from his quotations of textual scholars like E. C. Colwell is that they agree with him regarding the deliberate heretical alterations to the text.²⁹ On the contrary, Colwell, and other modern scholars as well, recognize that most deliberate changes in the text were made in the interests of *strengthening orthodoxy* rather than perpetrating heresy.³⁰ Pickering has apparently misunderstood the writings of scholars like Colwell. His reference to the remarks of E. C. Colwell on genealogy is another prime example. In a footnote, Pickering candidly admitted that none of the scholars he quotes actually agree with his position regarding the text of the New Testament.³¹ Nevertheless, in his discussion of

²⁷Gordon D. Fee, "P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶, and Origen: The Myth of Early Textual Recension in Alexandria," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974): pp. 19–45.

²⁸Schnaiter, "The Relevance of Textual Criticism to the Modern English Version Controversy for Fundamentalists," pp. 213ff.

²⁹Pickering, *Identity of the New Testament Text*, p. 42.

³⁰Colwell, *What is the Best New Testament?* pp. 35, 99–104.

³¹Pickering, *Identity of the New Testament Text*, p. 169, note 85.

genealogy Pickering unequivocally asserted that Colwell “demolished” the genealogical method.³² Pickering made this claim on the basis of some complaints Colwell raised about the practical inapplicability of genealogy to the extant manuscripts of the New Testament text due to mixture and lack of direct descendants in the textual families.³³ By his construction of quotations from Colwell, Pickering erected in the mind of the reader the idea that Colwell refutes the genealogical *principle* and not just its specific application in identifying close relationships among the New Testament manuscripts. Of course the very reality of the genealogical principle is fatal to Pickering’s claim that each witness of the Majority Text is an independent testimony to the autographic text of the New Testament. It is the principle of genealogy at work in the manuscript copying process which makes ludicrous the idea that the rival witnesses to the autographic text of the New Testament are several thousand (Majority Text) to a handful (Alexandrian text). It is interesting to note that Colwell himself expressed shock that he had been so misunderstood in his critique of Hort’s methodologies.³⁴ Colwell never dismissed the principle of genealogy. He did criticize Hort for drawing exaggerated conclusions about specific text-types from it. Pickering was guilty of some strong wishful thinking when he deduced from Colwell’s critiques that all the manuscripts of the Majority Text are independent witnesses on the basis of Colwell’s having demolished the genealogical principle. Such misleading impressions, whether done intentionally or not, is most blameworthy on both Pickering’s and Riplinger’s part. But Riplinger far outdistances Pickering in creating false impressions, and frequently in ways that make it virtually impossible to believe that they are unintentionally produced.

THE AUTHOR’S APPROACH TO PERSUASION

Riplinger’s propaganda technique of choice for creating false impressions is selective use of evidence. This is by no means her only one. This is the device of the unscrupulous salesman who shows you all the good things he can manufacture to say about his used car or other product. But he neglects to tell you (though he knows it) that the transmis-

³²Ibid., 46.

³³Ernest C. Colwell, “Genealogical Method: Its Achievements and Limitations,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 66 (June 1947): 109; idem, “Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text,” in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (New York: Abingdon, 1965), p. 370.

³⁴“External Evidence and New Testament Textual Criticism,” *Studies in the History and Text of the New Testament*, ed. Boyd L. Daniels and M. J. Suggs (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1967), p. 72.

sion is about to break down and will require expensive repairs. This is the device of the religious cult member and his use of Scripture to teach false doctrine by giving only half the story. What follows is a mere sampling of her use of this device (certainly not an exhaustive list).

Through Misquotation or Quoting Out of Context

Riplinger quotes Norman Geisler out of context in an interesting attempt to discredit modern versions for referring to Jesus as “the Christ” (though the KJV uses this phrase of Him at least nineteen times as well): “We should be particularly wary when someone refers to Jesus Christ as ‘the Christ’” (p. 318). The fraudulence of the misquotation becomes apparent on inspection of his actual statement. Geisler’s full statement reads:

We should be particularly wary when someone refers to Jesus Christ as “the Christ spirit” or “Christ-consciousness.” Generally, when New Agers (and many liberal Christians) speak of Christ, they are not referring to the historical Jesus spoken of in the New Testament and the great Christian creeds. If they do speak of the historical Jesus, they usually refer to Him as only one of several figures in human history.³⁵

Riplinger’s similar misquotation of Westcott (408) is even more irresponsible since he and Hort are particular targets of her attack and should thereby illicit greater care for truth and accuracy: “Their [Westcott & Hort] subversive and clandestine approach continued, as seen ten years later when Westcott writes to Hort, ‘...strike blindly...much evil would result from the public discussion’” (p. 408). Here Riplinger insinuates that Westcott and Hort are using great subterfuge in the promotion of their Greek New Testament. Observe carefully the full statement of Westcott:

Have you entered into the Maurice controversy? I only hope it may pass away quietly. At the first onset we always strike blindly; and much evil would result from the public discussion of the moot points just now. It is well, I believe, that they have been named; and it will be well for men to get familiarised with them. Then at length they may debate if they please. This is a strange symptom of belief or disbelief—that Mr. Maurice’s views on the Atonement seem to have called forth comparatively little criticism.³⁶

It should be clear to any reader that the direction of the discussion

³⁵J. Yukata Amato and Norman Geisler, *The Infiltration of the New Age* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1989), p. 142.

³⁶Arthur Westcott, *The Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott* (London: Macmillan, 1903), p. 229.

here has nothing to do with textual or translational matters but with a certain controversy revolving around Mr. Maurice—specifically dealing with the atonement. The reader may be forgiven if he got an entirely different impression about the nature of this matter from its selective quotation by Riplinger.

Elsewhere, in like manner, she misquotes NIV editors Larry Walker (pp. 89, 213), Edwin Palmer (pp. 170, 344), R. Laird Harris (p. 292), Herbert Wolf (p. 165), Richard Longenecker (p. 345), as well as Philip Comfort (p. 530) and D. A. Carson (p. 345). In fact, nearly every sensational quotation she uses to advance her thesis against modern versions and the men who prepared them, upon close inspection, turns out to be misrepresented in some way.

Through Exotic Claims

Riplinger offers some interesting ideas to substantiate her predisposition against the modern English versions and for the KJV. For example, after citing 2 Timothy 2:9b, “the word of God is not bound,” she states that the KJV is the only version *not bound* by copyright. She writes, “No author or publisher receives a royalty because God is the author” (p. 171). This historical error has been quite popular until Doug Kutilek publicly corrected it with a thorough demonstration of how the copyright of the Authorized Version worked and how it was imprinted into versions of the KJV by the Latin inscription *cum privilegio*.³⁷ Kutilek maintains that the British copyright prevented printing of the KJV in America until after the Revolutionary War, in 1782. He further indicates that the copyright is still in effect in England. In time, perhaps even less time than for the KJV, the copyright of many modern versions may also run out. I do not look for any change of attitude on Riplinger’s part about the versions as a result.

Even more interesting is her bias against the biblical doctrine of predestination, which she attributes solely to Calvinism, apparently. With complete disregard for the historical fact that the preponderance of KJV translators were proponents of predestination, if not outright Calvinists (as Puritans), and equally unaware of the teaching of the apostle Paul in this regard (Eph 1:4–5; Rom 8:29), she chastises Edwin Palmer and other NIV editors as though, because they are Calvinists, they are also anti-Christian rather than participants in a dispute within Christendom. Whatever one’s view of the Calvinist’s five points, he would no doubt be surprised to learn from Riplinger that they “form a Satanic pentagram” (p. 231).

On the next page we learn that the letter “s” has diabolical associa-

³⁷“The KJV: A Copyrighted Bible,” *Biblical Evangelist*, 27 May 1983, pp. 5–7.

tions. “Watch out”, she warns, “for the letter ‘s’—sin, Satan, Sodom, Saul (had to be changed to Paul). The added ‘s’ here is the hiss of the serpent” (p. 232). It gives one pause to think what deceit and treachery might await us in words like “saint, salvation, savior, Son, sanctification” and other such sibilants. Examples could be multiplied. Suffice it to say that such wild and exaggerated statements demonstrate the zeal of a propagandist rather than the concerned evaluation of a careful biblicist.

THE AUTHOR'S PREDICTABLE RESULTS

Of the theological works that I have reviewed, seldom have I seen such scope and scrutiny of criticism as is leveled against *NABV*. The number of reviews available from divergent quarters is notable. Not only is the sheer number impressive, the similarity of the reviewer's critiques are also notable and divide nicely into two camps. The minority opinion in this instance (favorable reviews) consists of her staunch supporters who see no wrong in her book, so enamored are they with her ideology. As demonstrative of the majority opinion, however, are the following quotations from some of the unfavorable reviews of Riplinger's book. Note that some of these reviewers would align themselves with Riplinger's KJV-only stance. Still they do not share her unbridled zeal which produces the kind of work that we have indicated is hers.

If there is anything good to say about Riplinger's *New Age Bible Versions*...it is that the book is not any longer than it is and that the foolishness of its various claims are transparent when one takes the time to study them.... *NABV* is replete with logical, philosophical, theological, biblical, and technical errors. Riplinger lacks the proper training to write this book (her M.A. and M.F.A. in “Home Economics” notwithstanding).³⁸

This is beyond all doubt the worst book I have ever read. Its pages bristle with so many logical fallacies and biblical, theological, historical and linguistic errors that one wonders where to start.³⁹

Riplinger has a penchant for quoting out of context, or accusing all new versions without distinguishing which ones say what she says they say,...writes well in many pages, but there is a pejorative cast to much of what she writes. By equating her own theology to the Bible, she often accuses merely because the target person or version disagrees with her

³⁸H. Wayne House, “A Summary Critique: *New Age Bible Versions*,” by G. A. Riplinger, *Christian Research Journal* (Fall 1994): 46.

³⁹Morey, review of *New Age Bible Versions*, p. 14.

views.⁴⁰

...the author's charts are incomplete and misleading. The translators of the KJV and the translators of the earlier translations such as Tyndale's and the Geneva Bible often translate the same Hebrew and Greek words in the same way in other references as the new translators do in the references that Riplinger complains about. If Riplinger's arguments are valid, then we must also say that the earlier translations and even the KJV are also New Age. The author's inconsistencies, use of fallacies, and false claims undermine the validity of this book.⁴¹

If *New Age Bible Versions* (*NABV*) had both accomplished its goal and fulfilled it in the way the author stated, *NABV* would be of great value to the church. The book, however, not only misses the author's professed marks, it seriously undermines her credibility and brings her integrity into question.

We've received a half dozen evaluations of *NABV* from individuals whose research we respect. Their work, much of it checked against the difficult-to-obtain sources quoted by Riplinger, has complemented our own scrutiny of Riplinger's book.

Those who have a preference for the KJV, as we do, will find no encouragement in Riplinger's endeavor. Her writing is driven by a misleading style and loaded with contrived 'evidence.' She starts off misrepresenting people and continues to do so throughout the book.⁴²

Yes the modern versions are corrupt, and I AM NOT defending them. I am against error, though, regardless of where it appears. We do not have the right to make false statements even about the devil himself. When our speaking and writing is filled with the error of fact and is characterized by shoddy research and indefensible extremism, we discredit our entire position.... The book...also is filled with illogical and improper statements which have the effect of discrediting everything the author says that is true.

There is no reason, friends, to promote a book like this when there are so many dependable volumes which defend the preserved Word of God and expose the error of the modern versions.⁴³

I believe the author has not only failed to achieve her purpose, she has given a black mark on any one of us who ever tries to honestly defend the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) or the Textus Receptus.

When sincerity or zeal is substituted for truth and integrity, God's

⁴⁰Jay Green, *New Age Bible Versions* [review], *Christian Literature World* (April/June 1994): 16

⁴¹Rick Norris, review of *New Age Bible Versions*, by G. A. Riplinger, in *Baptist Biblical Heritage* (April 1994): 12

⁴²Dave Hunt, "Questions & Answers," *The Berean Call* (May 1994): 20.

⁴³David W. Cloud, *The Problem with New Age Bible Versions* (Oak Harbor, WA: Way of Life Literature, 1994), p. 14.

cause is always hurt. Truth is more important than our personal views, even if the personal view is a noble one, like the defense of the KJV.⁴⁴

It is a sad thing to witness the agony into which Riplinger has cast some of her allies, who, while strongly persuaded of her position against modern versions and for the KJV, nevertheless are not willing to jettison truth and integrity just to promote it at all costs.

As for the physical characteristics of the book, its author apparently spent very little of the touted six years required to produce this effort in careful editing or proofreading before publication. The book abounds with typographical and spelling errors including the consistent misspelling of D. A. Carson's name ("Carlson," e.g., pp. 478, 484, et al.) and of Ugaritic ("Ugartic" p. 510). Often her ellipses, disproportionately swollen by her overuse of quotations, carry distractingly over to the following line so that numerous lines appear to begin with a period (as, e.g., p. 617, lines 5–6). No doubt a regular publisher of books would have caught and eliminated much of this.

On the whole, this book no doubt will be quite popular with those already embarked on the crusade for the KJV-only. As a fair presentation of views and balanced evaluation of the salient issues in the modern version controversy, however, it makes a miserable showing. And this is really too bad, for there are cogent issues to deal with in the matter of modern versions and their use by dedicated Christians. Caveats are needed for God's people who are not themselves in a position to uncover the truth without some help. Christians need to hear warnings, for example, about a modern version produced by Robert Bratcher, who has such unbridled hostility to the fundamentals of the faith as well as scorn for fundamentalists who hold them dear. Factual warnings of his clearly blasphemous error will alert us so that when he publishes his so-called *Good News Bible*, we who love the Lord and take His Word seriously can know to avoid it as we would avoid a man like that in the pulpit, once we realized that he blatantly denies the atoning work of Christ's precious blood.

It is necessary to sound warnings but not good to ride hobbies. God's people who are interested in glorifying and serving Him can readily evaluate and make spiritually motivated decisions about modern translations when presented with the facts. Clearly, we Christians, by our calm, but firm convictions expressed both vocally (in humility) and in what we do or do not buy and use as a Bible translation, do have an impact on what happens in this arena. This is seen in the recently announced decision to jettison the projected gender-neutral version of the

⁴⁴Ron Minton, review of *New Age Bible Versions*, by G. A. Riplinger, in *The Baptist Preacher* (March/April 1996): 20.

NIV. Due to complaints from God's people, it has been withdrawn—at least for now.

Unfortunately, a book such as Riplinger's brings great reproach on God's people and needlessly diverts attention away from the issues that desperately need our attention. Perhaps this is why even some of the KJV-only supporters are so distressed by this work.