TRANSLATION DIFFERENCES
Does it matter?
by Philip J. Myers   *[2018, rev. 2020]*

A. WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF A BIBLE?

B. GREEK & HEBREW TEXTS
1. Codex Sinaiticus   A, *Codex Aleph, 1 Greek manuscript [MS]*
2. Codex Vaticanus   B, *1 Greek manuscript*
3. Textus Receptus   from 12-15 *Greek manuscripts*
4. Majority Text(s)   *many, many Greek manuscripts*
5. Byzantine Text(s)   *many, many Greek manuscripts*
6. Masoretic Text(s)   *Qumran scrolls, Hebrew, OT text*

C. GOOD TRANSLATIONS & BAD TRANSLATIONS

D. CHOICES TRANSLATORS' MUST MAKE
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2. Paraphrases
3. Interlinear Bibles
4. Rules for translators
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   c. Back-translating, *an ultimate accuracy check*

CONTINUUM: word-for-word ⟷ thought-for-thought

E. COMMENTS ON VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS
1. New World translation, JW, *Eng*.
2. Douay-Rheims, RC, *Eng*.
3. Dani-people's Bible, *tribal*
4. The Living Bible, one-man paraphrase, *Eng*.
5. Phillip's NT, paraphrase, *Eng*.
6. Septuagint, LXX, *72-man team, Greek*
7. Gutenberg's Bible, Jerome, *Latin*
8. Geneva Bible, Protestor's version, *team, English*
9. King James Version, Church of England, *team*
10. Other one-person translations
11. Still other true translations

ADDENDA

FOUR GREEK TEXTS YOU CAN BUY
3 from Majority Text
1 from Codices A & B

WHAT THEOLOGICAL ISSUES ARE AT STAKE?

Aha! I can read 18 Greek letters!

18 *[of the 24]* Greek letters
a b d D e i k l m n o o p r s t th z *or* x
α β δ Δ ε ι κ λ μ ν o ϖ π ρ σ τ θ ζ

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TRANSLATION DIFFERENCES
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A. WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF A BIBLE? *also called: Scripture, The Law, The Word of God, and several other appellations.*

"The Bible is the complete collection of the words of God given through holy men who wrote only those words which the Holy Spirit directed them to write. It is composed of only the 66 books commonly found."   *pjm*

> *I have a number of missionary friends who have translated the whole Bible or parts into languages which they learned on site. Their grasp of the language as they began, was inaccurate in many places. Yet we call the result "The Word of God."*
> *They later revised those earlier attempts as their fluency developed. We call these versions "the Word of God," not translations of the Word of God.*
> *Some of these translator-friends of mine were competent in Greek but not Hebrew. Others were scholars in neither of the "biblical languages." They worked from English Bibles and many modern linguistic tools: 1 \computers, dictionaries, lexicons, commentaries, and concordances. I also have a personal friend who was part of the NKJV translation team.*

B. TEXTS
Since the 1880s almost all contemporary translations of the New Testament have relied upon two primary manuscripts, Codices A & B, the New King James Version being the only popular exception.

Codices A & B have been chosen:
- ***not*** *for their accuracy*
- ***not*** *for their consistency*
- ***not*** *because they agree with each other*
- ***not*** *for having a history of reliability as a resource in translation*
- *. . .**but** because they are the longest and cleanest manuscripts*
    [which fact does not make them more accurate or more reliable].

#1 **Sinaiticus**, Codex A *[Codex Aleph]* *[OT & NT]* *Greek [not Hebrew]*
An unused *[and evidently unreproduced]* manuscript which survived since 350 AD
Evidently "set aside" because of non-conformity due to too many aberrations
Discovered at Sinai, 1911
2nd longest manuscript ever discovered but with excessive omissions
Often disagrees with the Vaticanus

#2 **Vaticanus**, Codex B *[OT & NT manuscript]*   *Greek [not Hebrew]*
Also unused and uncopied, resides in Vatican since 1209 AD, produced @ 300 AD
Longest Greek MSS found
Evidently "set aside" because of non-conformity due to too many aberrations.
Often disagrees with the Sinaiticus.

#3 **The Textus Receptus, TR**, *also called The Authorized Text, [OT & NT Greek manuscript]*
Produced by Erasmus, 1516 AD from about a dozen Byzantine manuscripts.
It is the text from which the KJV came.
KJV = Authorized by King James I who was the head of the Church of England [in place of the pope].
        It is call the "authorized" version because Jas authorized it for his new church, the Church of
        England, because he rejected the exceptionally good Geneva Bible which included
        notes of Presbyterian theologians, whom James didn't like.
Translations made from other texts have 16 fewer verses than the TR.

○ #4 **The Majority Text**(s) = a compendium of 5,000 manuscripts, *none are complete, many are just Greek & Hebrew fragments of old manuscripts 0*
   1. The differences between all the manuscripts *[MSS]* hardly account for 3 or 4 pages of discrepancies in toto, but account for NO theological disagreements. Most commonly: word order, tenses, and spelling.
   2. Though quite similar, the Majority texts is to be preferred over the TR. Because there are many more MSS, there is less chance of error.

#5 **The Byzantine texts,** include 90% of all Bible manuscripts, *[MSS]*.
   A. The Eastern *[Byzantine Church]* kept using Greek for 1,000 years longer than Rome, until 1300 AD?
   B. The Roman Church ditched Greek in favor of Latin in 300 AD. The Vulgate appeared 400 AD *[the whole Bible translated from Greek text into Latin].* It is a one-man translation, Jerome. Quite good.
   C. Far fewer variations occur in eastern Byzantine Greek MSS than in the European, Roman Catholic, MSS.
      * Schism between eastern & western churches, 1054.
      * East, Constantinople
      * West, Rome

   Fully 85% of the New Testament text is the same in the Textus Receptus, the Sinaiticus & Vaticanus *[Codex A & B]*, as well as the Majority Text(s).

C. GOOD TRANSLATIONS / BAD TRANSLATIONS

Are there **good** as well as **bad** translations of the Bible? Yes!

○ Yes, a translation is considered good when its translators are trying with the best of their abilities to render the very words of the MSS available. They try hard to render exactly what the texts mean.

A bad Bible results when the translators insert their bias or preconceived ideas into the text of the new work about: denominationalism, theological hobby-horses, salvation, deity of Jesus, eschatology, inspiration, gender-neutral language, etc.
   Examples of theological bias.
   * *The New World Translation is a good example of a bad translation, 1961.*
   * *Westcott & Hort left no indication they believed in salvation by faith apart from works. They repeatedly aligned themselves with the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.*
   ∗ *The Chairman of the NIV OT Committee team, Dr. Marten Woudstra, was well known to be a homosexual. Virginia Mollenkott, another member of the same team, a proofreader who gave many suggestions for corrections, was a lesbian. The NIV eventually adopted a gender-neutral position in translation, 2011. Examples follow:*
      • *pronouns such as "He, Him, His" when referring to deity is changed to "God"*
      • *"men" is replaced with "men and women" or "they"*
      • *"man" becomes "mankind"*
      • *"fishers of men" is rendered "to fish for people"*
   * All translation teams choose specific member for particular reasons: scholarship or experience or ecumenism or denominational ties or theological viewpoints or reputation or influence.

D. CHOICES TRANSLATORS' MUST MAKE, and qualifications of translators

○ #1 Best Translations of the Bible are made directly from Greek or Hebrew manuscripts and should compare as many manuscripts as are available to determine accuracy. These are defined as "Bibles." Translations may also be produced by teams of eminent scholars *[as in the Jewish Septuagint, LXX, where "seventy-two(?)" Hebrew scholars were involved. Many believe that the Bible Jesus read in Jerusalem would have been in Hebrew, yet they also understand that it might have been the LXX [Greek] which He may read from in the synagogues in northern Israel.* However, Hebrew Bibles were most often used all over Judea in Jesus' day.

Paul would have encountered the LXX *[Greek]* Old Testament in his journeys in various synagogues in Gentile communities where Hebrew was not understood even by the Jews.

Translations may also be produced by a single person: a true scholar or a knowledgeable student of languages even though they are not conversant in biblical languages. Missionaries fall into this category.

#2   Paraphrases are not actually "Bibles" because they are not based on God's very words, but rather on the general thoughts, intents, and innuendos of any particular passage in the vernacular of the day. A paraphrase might choose to add or omit words in the text using idioms and a multitude of figures of speech to capture the essence behind the original text and may often uses imprecise terminology. In a class, you and I, as well as pastors and Sunday School teachers often paraphrase rather than quote verses verbatim when we are explaining what a verse means or while we're witnessing to our FedEx deliverer.

> EXAMPLE from Phillips' paraphrase: II Corinthians 5.21
> KJV   For He made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made
> the righteousness of God, in Him.
> Phillip's paraphrase [1958], ***The New Testament in Modern English,*** thought-for-thought
> *For God caused Christ, who himself knew nothing of sin, actually to be sin for our sakes, so that*
> *in Christ we might be made good with the goodness of God.*

> * Phillip's added words:
> "Christ" and "God" do not appear in the Greek text.
> * Philip's own words:
> The word "righteousness" does appear in Greek. "Righteousness" is removed
> and replaced with a mild term, "good."
>> To add words or remove words or to substitute far weaker words in order to make his work more readable to younger or less literate readers puts this book   into the paraphrase category.
>> Now, in teaching a class of second graders, you and I might even do the exact same thing after we read this verse from a Bible containing 50-cent words like "righteousness."

Many of the newer works unashamedly assert that they want to appeal to the weak readers, or accommodate non-native speakers of English. NIrV boasts that it is written for 3rd graders. That is okay for a paraphrase, but not for a translation. The "r" is for beginner "reader."

There is something to be said about our readership. In the 1960s the King James Version was considered 6th grade level reading. Today *[2020]* it is rated as 12th grade reading. It seems the literacy level of high schools has dropped considerably.

> KJV   12th
> NASB   11th
> ESV   10th
> NIV   7th
> NIrV   3rd   *I understand it has a vocab of 1,000 words*
>> * *Shakespeare is now widely taught in high schools from 20th century English renditions rather than from 16th century transcripts.*
>> * The Bible has a vocabulary of 8,674 Hebrew words and 5,624 Greek words.

#3 An Interlinear Bible is not a translation *per se.*
It would be the most literal of all versions if it were an actual "translation." This document shows the grammatical material: case, number, tense, gender, etc.
It also renders a very strict rendering of the script following the word order of the Greek or Hebrew regardless of the word order in English. Interlinears are helpful in rendering idioms and innuendos precisely as written and will not try to "give the sense or meaning" of hundreds of figures of speech. Interlinears will not add articles, conjunctions, nor punctuation. They render tenses precisely though seemingly awkward sometimes. An interlinear Bible will use the most common definition of a word in its context.
These scholars make no attempt to adapt the verse to fit any specific theology.

Example of the interlinear Bible.
> On your Smartphone, type in: *"John 3.16 interlinear."*
> "Houtos" will be the first word of that verse.

#3779 [e]	= Strong's concordance number
#3780 houtos	= "so" *other correct ways it was translated in the King James Bible:*
	"was as follows" / "on this wise" / "thus" / "this way"
	"so much" is not a proper rendering
Ουτοσ	= Greek letters
thus	= English meaning
adv	= part of speech, adverb

#4 <u>Three questions for translators:</u>
> A. Do you use "dynamic equivalent" and free translations?
> B. What do you do with added explanatory words *[in italics]?*
> C. Can you use "back-translating" into Greek to get the original sense of the verse?

> There are several principles used by translators *[as well as oral interpreters]*.
> Sometimes an oral interpreter *[in casual circumstances]* feels that a joke will not be understood in another culture so he tells an entirely different joke to illustrate the speaker's point which would be acceptable and funny to his audience.
> Bible translators face the same dilemma. Some figures of speech cannot be translated literally and still be easily understood. Innuendos would not be grasped. Plays on words usually do not transfer smoothly and clearly from society to society.

A. Is the practice of using the "<u>dynamic equivalent</u>" *[free translation]* acceptable in a translation? No.
Dynamic Equivalence is a technical term in linguistics which in the vernacular means, "Feel free to substitute any word, phrase, or illustration as long as the <u>general meaning</u> comes across."
These substitutions cannot be back-translated into Greek or Hebrew accurately.

We can see how any government document might suffer if it is written in <u>French</u> then translated from the original law or bill into <u>Swahili</u>, then into a <u>local tribal language</u>, and finally into a <u>local dialect</u> from the tribal language—4 steps. However, its integrity would have to be disputed and verified by back-translation or in a court of law.

> *Example: Dave is a personal friend of mine, a serious translator, and a diligent student of the Word. In his work with the Dani tribe in the jungles of Indonesia, he came across the fact that there was no word for "lamb." Nor goat, nor llama, nor ungulate, nor similar mammal. What to do?*
> *He began to look for a representative sacrificial animal. Aha! Eventually he found one. It was not a sacrifice for sin or payment to make amends, but it was acceptable as an appeasement offering. And so he jotted in his notebook:*

> > *"Behold, the pig of God which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1.29*

> *Just as you, my reader, are doing right now, Dave struggled with this "dynamic equivalent" rendering. He had not violated any translation principle he knew, but he set this verse aside for a while to ponder.*
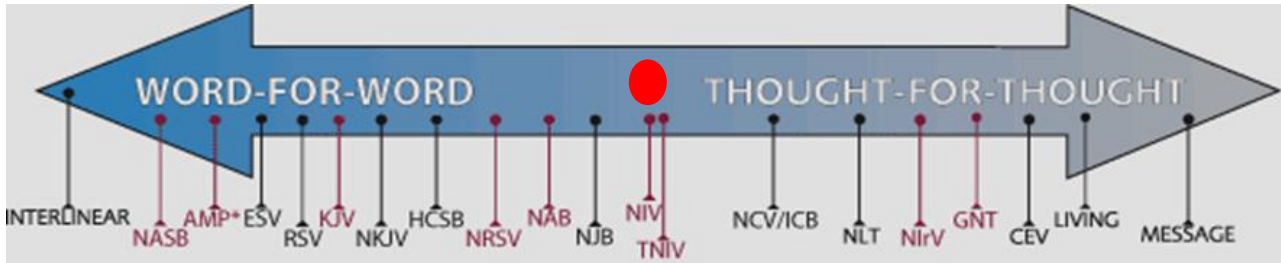> *Another translator might be content with juxtaposing pig and lamb, but Dave could not. He never went to print with that phrase, rather he simply introduced the English word "lamb" into their vocabulary. Others might have felt justified to use the Greek word "amnos" [lamb].*

> *But "pig" just wouldn't do.*

> *Rather than use a synonym such as dip, plunge, immerse, or soak, the King James team anglicized the Greek word* baptidzo *and rendered it "baptism" which has now become a common dictionary entry.*
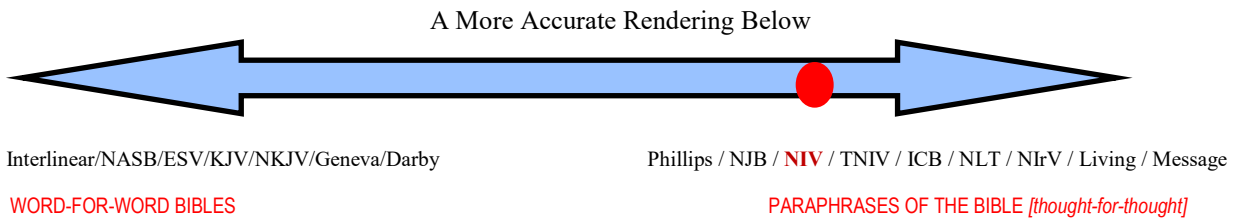> *That's what Dave did with "lamb." "Lamb" is in the new Dani dictionary.*

There are certain teams of translators who have taken great liberties in using the principle of dynamic equivalence in some of the newer "bibles." In my estimation this actually gives us a paraphrase rather than a true translation. NIV seems to be one of these.

WORD-FOR-WORD ⟷ THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT

INTERLINEAR NASB AMP* ESV KJV RSV NKJV HCSB NRSV NAB NJB NIV TNIV NCV/ICB NLT NIrV GNT CEV LIVING MESSAGE

NIV publishing house

"Thought-for-thought" is sometimes the means of "translating" figures of speech. This practice procedure is called the "dynamic equivalent."
Publishers of NIV made the upper diagram.
Look where the NIV placed their translation in their own diagram—dead center *[red dot]*.
Look where I placed the NIV translation on the lower arrow, pretty close to paraphrase.

A More Accurate Rendering Below

Interlinear/NASB/ESV/KJV/NKJV/Geneva/Darby   Phillips / NJB / **NIV** / TNIV / ICB / NLT / NIrV / Living / Message

WORD-FOR-WORD BIBLES   PARAPHRASES OF THE BIBLE *[thought-for-thought]*

Phil Myers

B. How should translators note the addition of "clarifying words" which they deem necessary to God's text. These would be words not in the Greek or Hebrew text which would clarify, in English, thoughts obvious to those who read Greek or Hebrew.

Translators of the KJV team instigated a procedure to put these words in ***italics*** which were not found in the Greek text. These words were added to make the reading dramatically clearer and smoother. They are simply the translators editorial marks. In the same way the translators also added punctuation, capitalization, and sometimes quotation marks. Many chapters in the KJV have not italicized words at added to the text.

The NIV adds 24,233 "clarifying" words more than the KJV but the NIV reader cannot tell which words. That seems to me to qualify it closer to a paraphrase, rather than a true translation.

C. How does back-translating from the recently translated Bible "back into" the original text verify accuracy.
We all learned in our high School language classes that this was on of the teacher's favorite litmus tests of our comprehension. It is also used by missionaries. Dynamic equivalent cannot be back-translated.

E. **COMMENTS ON *VARIOUS*** [good & bad] ***TRANSLATIONS***

#1 **New World Translation**, 1961 AD   *English*
The reason this is a poor translation by the Jehovah's Witnesses, is that their church has intentionally inserted words or deleted words to make passages agree with their church doctrine. The result cannot be substantiated by back-translating their English text back into Greek.   not a Bible *[borderline]*

#2 **Douay-Rheims**, @1600 AD   *English*
Although this is an English Catholic version and was translated by *[most probably]* unbelievers, it is a quite good rendition of the Scripture. I believe it should be considered a reliable Bible since there seems to be no attempt to insert Catholic doctrine. *[sans notes]*   a Bible

#3 **The Dani-People's Bible**, @1970 AD   *tribal*
This is the one-man version I spoke of produced by my friend Dave. It may not have the benefit of a team of true linguistic scholars, but we consider it to be the Word of God *[and so with the multiplicity of Bibles into indigenous tribal languages in the last 2 centuries].* Yes, a true translation: <u>a Bible</u>.

#4 **The Living Bible**, 1971 AD *English* - a dad's retelling for family worship *[paraphrased from KJV]*
Ken Taylor had several school-aged children who had a hard time wrapping their minds around King James compound-complex sentences which contained an average of 30 words, plus commas, semi-colons, and 12-letter words. So one evening he wrote out a Dad's-American-Version to read to his kids. And he kept it up long enough to discover, Voila! Maybe some other dads would like to see this. The Living Bible was born. A family-worship <u>paraphrase</u>, produced one chapter at a time for living room reading. *I actually did the same thing for my own nine children, but I didn't call it a Bible.*
<u>Not a Bible</u>
Taylor received 28 rejections from publishing houses *[as I recall]* and so he self-produced it under the title Tyndale House, a company Taylor started.

#5 **Phillip's** <u>New Testament in Modern English</u>, 1958 *contemporary rendering,* <u>not a Bible</u>

#6 **The Septuagint**, **LXX**, ca. 300 BC *[OT translation by a Jewish team from Hebrew into Greek]. S*ome *[pjm]* feel this may have been <u>the Bible</u> Jesus read from when He was in the synagogue, *[Luke 4.16, Nazareth]*; however, the Hebrew would certainly been used in the Temple. The LXX was already common outside of Israel among the Greek speaking synagogues in Jesus' day.
<u>A Bible</u> in *Greek*
We know that Jesus often quoted from the LXX in His sermons *[30x in Matt].* Matthew was also obviously familiar with the LXX.
God seems to be putting His seal of approval on this translation, even though it may have had spelling or grammar errors contained in it by a careless scribe.

#7 **Gutenberg's Bible,** *first book ever printed with moveable type,*
<u>A Bible</u>   *in Latin*
This is the Vulgate, a Latin translation from the Greek & Hebrew which also contained the Apocrypha.

#8 **The Geneva Bible**, *1560 AD, 90% identical with KJV, transl from the T.R., the edition which spawned the creation of the KJV in English*
This Bible was produced 50 years prior to the King James Version. Many Presbyterian-based footnotes & marginal notes, multitudes of cross references, book summaries, as well as opening arguments. Middle English spelling.
New features: chapters & verses, first dual column layout, maps, & wood-cut pictures. Bible of the
        Puritans, Presbyterians, and Pilgrims.
Superior to all versions prior. <u>A Bible.</u>
The Geneva Bible, an emblem of the Protestant Reformation, was rejected by the Church of England
        which did not consider itself to be part of the "protest" movement nor the Reformation which
        produced Protest-ants.
Outlawed by the Church of England primarily because of its copious Reformation *[Presbyterian]* notes.

#9 **King James Version** *into English from Textus Receptus, 1611.*
Produced by scholars in the Church of England, *Whole NT, Pentateuch, plus Job were by produced by Tyndale*
Originally contained the Apocrypha, later versions omitted it.
Used "thee" and "thou" to determine plurality and singularity of you. *Thee & thou had been out-of-date
        for many years prior to 1611.*
Uses only 300 archaic words, many have become familiar, though not used.
3 revisions since 1611, *421 words changed*, *mostly misspellings and typos [NKJV would be the 4th
authorized version].*
King James rejected the "Protestor's" Geneva Bible because of its copious notes and thus
        produced a "Church of England" version *[1611]* which swept Europe quickly.
No notes, 2-column text, marginal references and helps. <u>A Bible.</u>

#10 **Other, one-person translations**, *from Greek into common languages*
The Vulgate, *Jerome, 400 AD [from Greek into Latin]*
Wycliffe Bible, *1400, Middle English, from Latin [not Heb or Gr], unfinished, subsumed by Coverdale*
Tyndale Bible, *1500, first English trans from Heb. & Gr, whole NT, Pentateuch, plus Job [completely subsumed by KJV]*
Luther's New Testament, *German from Greek*

The Amplified Bible, *1965, Frances Siewert, editor adding thousands of "amplifications"* (in parentheses) *to the*
    American Standard Version,
        EXAMPLE: "For God so [greatly] loved *and* dearly prized the world, that He [even] gave His [One and] only begotten
            Son, so that whoever believes *and* trusts in Him [as Savior] shall not perish, but have eternal life."
The Message, Eugene Peterson, *2002, a paraphrase from English translations*   *English*

#11 **Still other true translations** of note: The Great Bible, Coverdale, Bishop's, Matthew's,
      Masorite *[Heb]*, among others. A true Bible.

For further reading: www.GotQuestions.org/WhatIsTheMajorityText?

G. ADDENDA

Hodges
The amount of variation between thousands of manuscripts containing the Majority Text appears to be significantly less than the variations found in the two non-Byzantine MSS, Codex A & B, *[Sinaiticus & Vaticanus]*.

N. Eshelman
Among all the major new translations. . . since the end of the nineteenth century, the New King James Version is the only version that explicitly holds to Erasmus' Textus Receptus as its base.

Most of these manuscripts are in substantial agreement. Even though many are late, and none is earlier than the fifth century, usually their readings are verified by papyri, ancient versions, quotations from the early church fathers, or a combination of these.

Colin Smith, An Introduction to Textual Criticism

The NIV purports that out of 1,000 Greek manuscripts 99.5% of the copies of the New Testament that have been around for centuries would be considered untrustworthy, based on the two texts, Codices A & B.

Would the truth of the text of Scripture reside with a vast multitude of manuscripts that have a remarkable level of agreement, or with a handful of manuscripts that cannot agree with one another many times?

G. FOUR GREEK TEXTS YOU CAN BUY

From the Majority Texts
Robison & Pierpoint, The New Testament in the Original Greek, 1991
From the Byzantine & Majority Text form

Hodges & Farstad, The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text, 1982

Christianity Today, Greek-English New Testament, *literal interlinear*

From Codex A & B
Westcott & Hort, Nestle Aland Greek New Testament, *[United Bible Society]*

H. WHAT THEOLOGICAL ISSUES ARE AT STAKE?

Considering we have over 5,000 ancient manuscripts to examine, if all of the mistakes, discrepancies, typos, verb tense differences, word order, misspellings, glosses, additions, deletions, and aberrations were compiled in one document, it would not cover more than 3 or 4 pages. None of these differences deny any doctrines of the faith.

What we hold in our hands is more reliable than Plato, Julius Caesar, Aristotle, or any ancient writer of the same time period. The reliability factor is a hundred-fold compared to any other work of antiquity.

Leviticus, 2nd century