

## NT TEXT CRITICISM AND INERRANCY

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*Some contemporary, evangelical academicians and leaders are questioning the plausibility of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy because of the unavailability of the autographs of NT books. New Testament textual criticism is a vital discipline in responding to doubts of this type. One who undervalues textual criticism's importance in defending an evangelical doctrine of the Bible's inerrancy has a serious problem of one sort or another, because that field seeks to discover and correct copyist errors that through the centuries have crept into the text. The field is vital because inerrancy pertains to the manuscripts of Scripture as they came from the original authors. Establishing a relationship between textual criticism and inerrancy is not a new endeavor. Princeton theologians such as Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield continued a long tradition of tying inerrancy to the autographs of Scripture. Their response to doubters of their day is quite appropriate to give to contemporary evangelicals who have surrendered a high view of inspiration.*

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### Current Milieu of Evangelicals, Inerrancy, and Textual Criticism

A recent theological meeting attended by numerous evangelical professors was the scene of a perplexing conversation around one dinner table. A professor from a noted evangelical institution, who earlier had addressed the attendees, raised the question to members at his table: "Why do you even believe in inerrancy?" After receiving clarification of certain points from the affirmations of "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,"<sup>1</sup> among which was that inerrancy relates to the autographs as they came from the hands of the original writers (cf. article 10 of the Chicago Statement), the speaker stressed, "But we don't even have the autographs."

Another telling conversation with a prominent leader of Emergent and the emerging church movement stated that his approach to the biblical text had nothing to do with seeking to determine what the original author meant. He deemed, in fact, that this would be impossible and that *even if* one could get to the original meaning of a first-century text, it would not be very "helpful" for the community confronted by the text in the twenty-first century. The first argument to support his case was

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<sup>1</sup>See this historic evangelical document in its entirety reprinted in *TMSJ* 15/2 (Fall 2004):141-49.

posed this way: "We don't even have the autographs, right?"<sup>2</sup>

The difficulty some have in accepting inerrancy is no new trend in evangelicalism, nor is disregard for the the original text. But to dismiss a belief in inerrancy or to attack the original text because God's people today do not possess the original papyri on which the biblical writers wrote shows a great lack of confidence in the God who has given His written Word. Such doubters show distrust in the God who inspired and gave the text for His people's benefit, to be used in various settings besides that of the original audience (cf. Col 4:16; 2 Tim 2:2). They may be ill-informed or simply uninformed. But ignorance is not always bliss, especially when it leads one to disregard the text of sacred Scripture or question the veracity of the Bible by doubting its inerrancy. The field of textual criticism is crucial for the life of the church, both for ascertaining the original text and for affirming the inerrancy of that text.<sup>3</sup>

### The Approach of This Study

This article will examine current NT textual criticism and its relationship to the evangelical doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. With the lack of certainty that textual criticism generates for a given passage in the Bible due to variant readings, one who holds to the doctrine of inerrancy must defend the coherence of his view, particularly as inerrancy relates specifically to the *autographa* (i.e., the

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<sup>2</sup> responded at length to this individual's assertion, noting its profound implications for the field of textual criticism and for the ascertaining of what the *autographa* said. One may be thankful that those who hold such a view of the text are not actively practicing textual criticism. Their bent toward philosophy, scholarly ambiguity, and apathy toward the *autographa* could seriously hamper textual critical efforts. Certainly they cannot think that their English translations (which they assert are necessary for ministry and are able to "confront a community of faith") appeared "ex nihilo" and that they have no connection at all to the original text as preserved in ancient manuscripts.

<sup>3</sup>NT textual criticism has progressed much since the time of Johann Jakob Griesbach in the late 18th century (cf. Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 4th ed. [New York: Oxford University, 2005] 167-94, and James A. Borland, "Re-Examining New Testament Textual-Critical Principles and Practices Used to Negate Inerrancy," *JETS* 25/4 [December 1982] 499, the latter attempts to show that although textual criticism has continued, it has not changed much since the 19th century, nor were or are all of the practices and principles good). The field continues to flourish. Scholars who either defend or dismiss the reasoned eclectic method have generated critical editions of the NT and of the Byzantine text-type, the dominant text-type throughout most of church history. A sample of proponents of the eclectic method favoring the Alexandrian text-type include Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd edition, rev. and enl., trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), Daniel B. Wallace, "Some Second Thoughts on the Majority Text," *BSac* 146/583 (July 1989) 270-90. Sample supporters for a Byzantine priority are Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, rev. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, n.d.), Zane Hodges and Art Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpoint, *The New Testament in the Original Greek Byzantine Textform* (Southborough, Mass.: Chilton Book, 2005). New discoveries continue as research and debates provide a better understanding of the accuracy of variant readings in extant manuscripts. Recent work includes that from Maurice A. Robinson of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. In a recent presentation at the Annual Meeting of the ETS entitled "Incomplete Truth and Its Consequences: A Clarification of the Manuscript Evidence Regarding 2 Corinthians 1:6-7," Nov. 17, 2004, Robinson gave proof that an editor of the UBS<sup>4</sup> and NA<sup>27</sup>, Kurt Aland, had not been forthright in providing full information supporting the Byzantine tradition for this reading. Robinson also had a recent debate with Barbara Aland for the Bingham Colloquium Lectures at McMaster Divinity School, Hamilton, Ontario, May 25-26, 2005. Robinson intends to continue his work promoting the priority of the Byzantine text-type.

original inspired text<sup>4</sup>) which contained the reading the critic attempts to discover, albeit always with a temporary hesitancy regarding a reading's certainty. But some may say, if textual criticism breeds ambiguity upon a passage's clear reading, why would one who holds to inerrancy look to textual criticism at all? Further, why would a textual critic be an inerrantist, knowing the problems that exist with establishing the original reading of the ancient biblical text? Is not holding to inerrancy in the *autographa* simply circular reasoning, allowing naïve evangelicals to feel confident in a text that they will never fully discover? Those are questions that this article will attempt to answer.

The inerrantist case for engaging in textual criticism will be defended, along with why inerrancy should be a prerequisite for all textual critics who seek the original text. The limits of this study are as follows. First, it will limit itself to the field of textual criticism in the NT.<sup>5</sup> Second, since the discussion is not a new one, a historical sketch of previous discussions and their major proponents is appropriate, which will allow the reader to recognize ideas that have already been formulated on the matter. It will show that fruitful conclusions of previous controversies argue for the inerrantist's serious involvement in textual criticism and the textual critic's serious consideration of inerrancy.

To achieve these goals the relationship between textual criticism and inerrancy will first be explained, by exploring the definitions of each. After this, a historical survey will develop the discussion of textual criticism and its relationship to inerrancy. In each questioning of the relationship between inerrancy and textual criticism, various arguments will be considered and responses given from an inerrantist position. Finally, a plea for textual criticism's continued dependence on the doctrine of inerrancy will come, including reasons why that is necessary for further fruitful work in textual criticism and inerrancy.

### Relationship Between Textual Criticism and Inerrancy

Textual criticism and inerrancy possess an intimate relationship to each other.<sup>6</sup> Though one may engage in textual criticism without holding to the doctrine of inerrancy, and one may believe in inerrancy while knowing nothing about or even

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<sup>4</sup>William R. Eichhorst, "The Issue of Biblical Inerrancy in Definition and Defense," *Grace Theological Journal* 10/1 (Winter 1969):11-12.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Abidan Paul Shah, "Inerrancy and Textual Criticism," unpublished paper presented at the Southeast Regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, March 19, 1999, 12. Shah states, "Since the basic principles of textual transmission differ between the two Testaments, the approaches [to doing textual criticism] should follow suit." This paper does not seek to identify methods and principles of performing NT textual criticism (whether by internal or external evidence), but the distinction between OT and NT textual criticism is upheld. The fields should be treated as separate fields of study. Furthermore, the burden to respond to issues that arise in the relationship between OT textual criticism and inerrancy do need more serious consideration from evangelical inerrantists. Hopefully, such a work will be forthcoming from someone.

<sup>6</sup>This has been pointed out very well by Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Inerrancy of the Autographa," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 149-93; Douglas Stuart, "Inerrancy and Textual Criticism," in *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, eds. Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 97-117; and more recently by James A. Borland, "The Preservation of the New Testament Text: A Common Sense Approach," *TMSJ* 10/1 (Spring 1999):50-51; and Shah, "Inerrancy and Textual Criticism" 1-4.

despising the field of textual criticism,<sup>7</sup> an intimate relationship still exists. The relationship is seen when one realizes that although someone may not hold to inerrancy, if and when he engages in textual criticism, he will certainly believe *something* about the doctrine of inerrancy (either accepting or rejecting it). On the other hand, the person who believes strongly in inerrancy owes a great debt to the field of textual criticism (whether he wants to admit it or not), which has provided the textual basis for the translation which he believes is inerrant.<sup>8</sup>

Conversely, one who thinks that the two have no bearing upon one another is in a difficult position, especially if he is a self-proclaimed evangelical. He may view the two as mutually exclusive, but will probably find himself in one of the following categories: (1) he is not an inerrantist or he is in favor of seriously modifying the doctrine of inerrancy;<sup>9</sup> (2) he does not care about textual criticism;<sup>10</sup> (3) he has never performed textual criticism and does not see problems with determining the autographic reading (i.e., he is ignorant of the difficulties that one is confronted with when practicing textual criticism);<sup>11</sup> (4) he is unaware of the problems that have been historically posed to inerrantists by textual critics; (5) he is unaware of recent problems posed to inerrantists by textual critics; (6) he does not truly desire to uncover the readings of the original text that were given by God and therefore has no pure motive for doing textual criticism at all.<sup>12</sup>

### Definitions of Textual Criticism and Inerrancy

Next, it is necessary to state clear definitions of the expressions being dealt with in this article. All do not agree on a clear definition for each of the two expressions, neither are the practices implied by each clear to all. Therefore conventional definitions will be given in this paper to guide the reader through the remainder of the discussion.

<sup>7</sup>Numerous fundamentalists find themselves having a phobia of anything with the title "criticism" when it comes to the study of Scripture. For this reason, B. B. Warfield penned the chapter, "Inspiration and Criticism," in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University, 1932; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 395-425. He gives three essential characteristics for the investigative work of "criticism" (*ibid.*, 409).

<sup>8</sup>It is no surprise to discover that many evangelical lay-people who hold the doctrine of inerrancy have no idea that the doctrine is most precisely related to the autographs only.

<sup>9</sup>E.g., John J. Brogan, "Can I Have Your Autograph?," in *Evangelicals and Scripture*, eds. Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguez, and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004) 107-11.

<sup>10</sup>Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 2d ed. (n.p.: Phillips and Hunt, 1890; reprint, Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2003) 129 refers to this individual as "an untrustworthy guide" and suggests that any "competent interpreter of Scripture is supposed to be thoroughly versed in the history and principles of textual criticism."

<sup>11</sup>Prior to my recent visit to the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center at Claremont School of Theology, a current graduate student working in the Center revealed a line of thinking of those involved in textual criticism. He joshed that many pastors and seminary students have never moved beyond the UBS or NA texts when doing textual criticism and are therefore ignorant of the true work of textual criticism. A further inquiry into his thoughts led him to say, "After you begin to work with some manuscripts, you realize that it is not as simple as the critical textual apparatuses make it seem. You realize that this field of study is pretty messy." His strain toward ambiguity and away from objectivity is a current trend pointed out by Zane C. Hodges, "Rationalism and Contemporary New Testament Textual Criticism," *BSac* 129/509 (January 1971):31-32.

<sup>12</sup>Borland, "The Preservation of the New Testament Text" 50.

## Textual Criticism

The necessity of textual criticism becomes obvious when one realizes that the original manuscripts of the NT no longer exist and that the existing manuscripts have numerous errors.<sup>13</sup> Textual criticism seeks to discover and correct errors that have crept into the text through transmission, in order to come as close as possible to the original. It is “the art and science of recovering the original text of a document.”<sup>14</sup> A more precise definition is offered by Philip Comfort: “The task of textual criticism is to determine which variant readings in the ancient manuscripts most likely preserve the original wording and then reconstruct a text that best represents the autographs.”<sup>15</sup> This field of study provides a methodology to discover what the biblical writers wrote when God inspired the original text.

In this field, once called “lower criticism” but hardly referred to by that title any longer,<sup>16</sup> the textual critic has a tremendous task before him. His job is threefold:

- (1) the gathering and organization of evidence, including especially the collation (comparison) of manuscripts (=MSS) with one another to ascertain where errors and alterations have produced variations in the text, and the study of how and why these variations happened; (2) the evaluation and assessment of the significance and implications of the evidence with a view to determining which of the variant readings most likely represent the original text; and (3) the reconstruction of the history of the transmission of the text, to the extent allowed by the available evidence.<sup>17</sup>

Some have concluded that the practice of textual criticism is irrelevant and unnecessary to Bible study and also threatens the doctrine of the inspiration. However, it is most appropriate to embrace the necessity of textual criticism so as to come as close as possible to the autographs.<sup>18</sup> In principle, errors that occurred in transmission are correctable by this field of study. Its result, then, is that “we possess a biblical text that is substantially identical with the autographa.”<sup>19</sup>

## Inerrancy

Inerrancy is not as simple to define as textual criticism. Space does not allow an exhaustive treatment of this term’s meaning.<sup>20</sup> The term can be traced back

<sup>13</sup>David Alan Black, “Textual Criticism of the New Testament,” in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, eds. David S. Dockery, Kenneth A. Matthews, and Robert B. Sloan (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994) 396.

<sup>14</sup>Michael W. Holmes, “Textual Criticism,” in *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*, eds. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991) 101.

<sup>15</sup>Philip W. Comfort, “Textual Criticism and Theology,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2d ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) 1178.

<sup>16</sup>Eldon Jay Epp, “Textual Criticism in the Exegesis of the New Testament, with an Excursus on Canon,” in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley Porter (Boston: Brill, 2002) 45.

<sup>17</sup>Holmes, “Textual Criticism” 102.

<sup>18</sup>Stuart, “Inerrancy and Textual Criticism” 97-98.

<sup>19</sup>Bahnsen, “The Inerrancy of the Autographa” 183, 193.

<sup>20</sup>There are a number of people desiring to modify this term’s plain meaning. Most notably, the Evangelical Theological Society has passed a resolution on inerrancy that will clarify the position of a majority of its members. Every year ETS members must sign a document stating that they believe in the Trinity and in this following statement regarding Holy Scripture: “The Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs.” At the November 2003

to the 1930s, 1880s and even further.<sup>21</sup> However, because of the current direction of the Evangelical Theological Society, the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy seems to be the best place to start. Specifically, inerrancy means that “Scripture is without fault in all its teaching.”<sup>22</sup> It is based on the trustworthiness of God, His Word, and its absolute authority. Former ETS President Wayne Grudem gives a similar definition: “*The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.*”<sup>23</sup> Here Grudem shows that inerrancy is linked to the autographs. The Chicago Statement goes further. The article that is most pertinent to this article’s topic is Article 10:

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they represent the original. We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.<sup>24</sup>

Each of the nineteen articles goes into further detail about inerrancy and lists affirmations and denials. But here is the clear affirmation of inerrant status being given to the *autographa* alone. Roger Nicole gives the rationale behind this simply because “manuscripts differ” as a result of the frailty of copyists and because “God’s veracity applies to the wording of the Bible.”<sup>25</sup> And since that wording has been established as inerrant, to be discovered through the work of textual criticism, the historical plane upon which these issues may be discussed may now be explored.

### The Historical Plane

The relationship between textual criticism and inerrancy has been a matter

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meeting. L. Rush Bush moved that the Executive Committee of ETS propose a resolution to refine and clarify the society’s position on inerrancy, since many seemed confused about the meaning of this term. With a further three sentence caveat at the end of the resolution that was passed at the 56th Annual Meeting of the ETS, November 19, 2004, this resolution states, “For the purpose of advising members regarding the intent and meaning of the reference to biblical inerrancy in the ETS Doctrinal Basis, the Society refers members to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978).”

Unfortunately, a number of the scholars on hand were unfamiliar with the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, prompting the Society to print copies for members present who desired to become familiar with *what they are supposed to believe already* regarding inerrancy. It was shocking to see that a number of scholars appeared to be unfamiliar with the Chicago Statement. Forget about *defining* inerrancy, apparently many evangelical scholars do not even care about it. These evangelical professors (with Th.M., Th.D., and Ph.D. degrees) remain incredibly uninformed. So much for doctrinal statements and scholarly precision regarding a beloved doctrine which once defined conservative evangelicalism.

<sup>21</sup>Richard J. Coleman, “Reconsidering ‘Limited Inerrancy,’” *JETS* 17/4 (Fall 1974):208; John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982); Robert D. Preus, “The View of the Bible Held by the Church: The Early Church Through Luther,” in *Inerrancy*, 357-84; John H. Gerstner, “The View of the Bible Held by the Church: Calvin and the Westminster Divines,” in *Inerrancy*, 385-412.

<sup>22</sup>“Appendix,” in *Inerrancy* 494.

<sup>23</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 90 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>24</sup>“Appendix,” in *Inerrancy* 496.

<sup>25</sup>Roger Nicole, “The Nature of Inerrancy,” in *Inerrancy and Common Sense* 73, 75.

of discussion more than just recently. When discussing the two, one must look at previous conversation between textual critics, churchmen, and scholars among both inerrantists and errantists. That is significant, especially if the same arguments previously dealt with decisively continue to surface.

### Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century Inerrantists

In the 1800s, Princetonians Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield were powerful biblical theologians championing the doctrine of the Bible's inspiration and inerrancy. Hodge stood in the Reformed tradition of men who held that the "Sacred Scriptures filled with the highest truths . . . [were] so miraculously free from the soiling touch of human fingers." In 1872, Hodge published his three-volume systematic theology. His view of inspiration and inerrancy extended only to the autographs because "there may be some things about [the Bible] in its present state which the Christian cannot account for."<sup>26</sup> Rejecting theories of partial inspiration, he declared, "The whole Bible was written under such an influence as preserved its human authors from all error."<sup>27</sup>

### Charles A. Briggs and Other Errantists

On January 20, 1891, Charles Briggs delivered the Inaugural Address of Union Theological Seminary, New York. The address was an outright attack on the views of inerrantists Hodge and Warfield. Among six barriers keeping men from the Bible, Briggs mentioned "the dogma of verbal inspiration." He then noted errors of transmission and stated, "There is nothing Divine in the text—in its letters, words, or clauses."<sup>28</sup> He further labeled "inerrancy" as a barrier erected by theologians to keep men away from the Bible. Admittedly inclined toward destroying the authority of the Bible with Historical Criticism, Briggs saw errors in the Bible he claimed no one is able to dismiss. He stated, "[T]he theory that they [i.e., errors] were not in the original text is sheer assumption, upon which no mind can rest with certainty."<sup>29</sup>

Llewellyn J. Evans dismissed the Princetonian's views as "dangerous, rationalistic, or worse."<sup>30</sup> Henry Preserved Smith of Lane Theological Seminary also espoused the view of Briggs and was suspended from the Presbytery of Cincinnati in 1892 after challenging Hodge's view of the biblical authors and their assertions in Scripture having been kept free from all error.<sup>31</sup>

### Benjamin B. Warfield

In January 1894 Warfield responded to the views of Henry Preserved Smith about limited inspiration and an errant Bible.<sup>32</sup> The issues were not new to

<sup>26</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d., reprint, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2001) 1:170

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 182

<sup>28</sup>C. A. Briggs, ed., *Inspiration and Inerrancy* (London: James Clarke and Co., 1891) 50

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 55

<sup>30</sup>Llewellyn J. Evans, "Biblical Scholarship and Inspiration," in *Inspiration and Inerrancy* 113

<sup>31</sup>Henry Preserved Smith, "Biblical Scholarship and Inspiration," in *Inspiration and Inerrancy* 235

<sup>32</sup>David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary, vol. 2: The Majestic Testimony, 1869-1929* (Carlisle, Pa: Banner of Truth, 1996) 142

Warfield's day.<sup>33</sup> His response was firmly grounded in the Westminster Confession of Faith and its distinction between translations of Scripture and the original text. He saw the debate as being more than just a fight over the bare "inerrancy" of copies or the autographs. He saw it as an attack on the trustworthiness of the Bible.<sup>34</sup> He did not dodge the difficulties posed against his view of inspiration.<sup>35</sup> He acknowledged the views of his opponents,<sup>36</sup> but was driven to a view of verbal inspiration that fueled his "presupposed" view of the truthfulness and inerrancy of the autographs.<sup>37</sup> Consistent with his view of inerrancy, he elsewhere gave support to a genuine criticism of the biblical text<sup>38</sup> and later even published his own work on textual criticism.<sup>39</sup>

Warfield's view of inerrancy belonged "only to the genuine text of Scripture." He was criticized for holding this evasive view as one retreating to something that was unverifiable. Yet he decisively defended his position:

[W]e affirm that we have the autographic text, and not only we but all men may see it if they will, and that God has not permitted the Bible to become so hopelessly corrupt that its restoration to its original text is impossible. As a matter of fact, the great body of the Bible is, in its autographical text, in the worst copies of the original texts in circulation, practically the whole of it is in its autographic text in the best texts in circulation, and he who will may today read the autographic text in large stretches of Scripture without legitimate doubt.<sup>40</sup>

Warfield's statement must not be taken lightly. It is an overwhelming refutation of any claim about inerrancy's irrelevance because of not having the original documents. Here Warfield's confidence in God's trustworthiness emerges, along with his sound view of the relationship between textual criticism and inerrancy. Warfield affirms "the text," but not "the codex." He later contends that "defenders of the trustworthiness of the Scriptures have constantly asserted, together, that God gave the Bible as the errorless record of his will to men, and that he has, in his superabounding grace, preserved them to this hour—yea, and will preserve it for them to the end of time."<sup>41</sup> He amplifies later the need for textual criticism of the far from perfect copies of the inerrant originals with these statements held up by the Presbyterian Church in his day: "that the original Scriptures . . . being immediately

<sup>33</sup>Hoffman shows how S. T. Coleridge advocated a modified view of inspiration in the early 1800s. He did not hold to inerrancy in the Bible's technical matters and set the stage for later critical theories to come upon the scene (Daniel Hoffman, "S. T. Coleridge and the Attack on Inerrancy," *TrinJ* 7/2 [Fall 1986] 55-68).

<sup>34</sup>Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973, reprint, 2001) 2:580-81.

<sup>35</sup>Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. John E. Meeter (New York: Oxford University, 1932, reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 1:73.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 171. Here Warfield acknowledges that Briggs thought that criticism had completely destroyed the theory of inerrancy.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>39</sup>Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London: n.p., 1886).

<sup>40</sup>Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings* 2:583-84.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:589.



inspired of God, were without error,' and 'that the Bible, as we now have it, in its various translations and versions, when freed from all errors and mistakes of translators, copyists, and printers, is the very Word of God, and consequently wholly without error.'<sup>42</sup>

### **Strong Ties Inevitable**

A careful implementation of textual criticism is the answer to those who would question the value, plausibility, or practicality of a doctrine of an inerrant New Testament. Warfield's handling of the issue many years ago pointed out that God's role in the inspiration of Scripture guaranteed its errorless content. That factor should be more than sufficient to erase doubts that any evangelical might have regarding the issue. Historical critical concerns over whether God has chosen to preserve His inerrant Word should not shake the confidence of a Bible scholar in the Bible's accuracy. Through application of text critical principles, one may retrieve the original text in spite of errors in its transmission.

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<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*