**Which Bible 3**

2013

### My Apology

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. I have made several terrible errors in my posts entitled “Which Bible 1” and “Which Bible 2.” These errors were first uncovered by the article written by Dr. Daniel Baird Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary, “The Majority-Text Theory: History, Methods and Critique”, in *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (JETS) 37/2 (June 1994) pages 185-215.[[1]](#endnote-1) They are the reason that “Which Bible 1” and “Which Bible 2” were revised and republished as rB and rA.

Subsequently to reading this article, both of these posts, and every findable trace of them were removed from the internet: these deletions took place around August 17, 2013. Ever since that date, I have been scrambling to find satisfactory answers; but the subject matter is difficult and technical, not to mention highly controversial.

I immediately wrote to Dr. Fee and to Dr. Wallace requesting help. Because Dr. Fee is aged, he may not be able to help. Dr. Wallace may have pressing obligations that preclude his assisting me as well. In any case, neither Dr. Fee nor Dr. Wallace have yet responded.

I am very sorry for whatever trouble I may have caused you, and sincerely hope that I have not misled you in any way. This is the first of a series of posts, showing the sequence I went through in my own recovery from shock, and my own attempt to provide answers that will fill the vacuum created.

### What You Deserve from Me

You deserve a detailed and explicit account of my errors and what I intend to do about them. If my errors risk undermining faith, yours or mine, I need to address that issue. You deserve from me the faithful report of that rock solid foundation, Christ, on which you will continue to build your faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in God the Father, and in the Holy Ghost.

### Qualifications for Text Critics

Who is qualified to be a text critic. I am certainly not qualified to be a text-critic. Neither is your pastor. Nor are most of the professors that teach text-criticism in colleges, seminaries, and universities. My mentors, Mr. Farstad and Mr. Hodges were not text critics. Dr. Fee and Dr. Wallace are probably not text critics either. To be qualified as a text critic, one must have access to, and possess great familiarity with the manuscripts in question. The vast bulk of these manuscripts are located in English and German libraries, in the Vatican, in monasteries, and in various, hard-to-find archives around the world. Very few people have had the privilege of working in such libraries or of spending their lives in the meticulous examination of such manuscripts. Consequently, none of the rest of us are text critics: all of us must work with the reports published by the real text critics, which we possess only second or third hand.

We hope that this will not always be the case. The art of photography has long been capable of mass producing copies of such quality to be as good as the original for most purposes. Issues of manuscript chemistry, microscopic examination, and such, cannot, of course, be communicated through mere photographs. But photography has not provided any practical solution to the problem of extending visual access to the manuscripts. For the Bible, a sufficient collection, of such manuscripts would cost half a million dollars or more: and that is obviously outside the budgetary reach of most libraries.[[2]](#endnote-2)

We have new hope in the development of computers and the internet. Digital copies can be made, analyzed and published at no cost to the reader or student. There would necessarily be a great cost to the producer. This would make any interested party a potential text-critic. Such a person could become well qualified to examine the manuscripts, and evaluate such complicated subjects as text families, and text variants. Perhaps such technical capability will develop in the ensuing years.

### Our Contemporary Problem

In the meantime, the rest of us are limited to the published reports and text apparatus we can afford to buy. This information is, at best, complicated and second hand. At worst, this information can be misleading, wrong, and impossible to verify in any significant way.

Pastors and all who wish to study and explain the Bible are immediately confronted with the Greek Text and the Greek Apparatus beneath it. Our job is to make a thorough study of what these things say, and faithfully report that study to you in everything we preach, teach, and write. This is not an easy task.

### The Source of the Question

The last week and a half was not the best ever. It began with someone yanking the theological rug out from under me…. AGAIN! No, they did not repeat the action, they meant me no harm, it happened by accident. Yet, it has happened many times before. I stumbled on one of those crucial essays that makes us rethink our whole theological grid. This essay was about Text Criticism.[[3]](#endnote-3)

### The Objective

No, I’m not trying to make you into an expert text critic. I’m not even trying to become an expert text critic myself. However, because this is about what exact words exist in our Greek Bibles, it caused great concern, even confusion for me. After all, all our English language translations depend on these very words, as does our theology, even our very relationship with God. This is God’s love letter to us, isn’t it? If we don’t have a clue about what it says, we’re sunk. Needless to say, I was shook-up and scrambling for answers.

This is foundational stuff. We think we’ve been building on granite bedrock, when suddenly we discover, not sand, but what might very well be quicksand. The whole theological house could be at risk. This is no time for panic. This is time for some real serious reflection.

***Where do we go for comfort and support when it seems as if all is about to be lost? Where do we find answers?***

### Where God Showed Me Answers

Obviously, I was driven on my face in prayer: not just to my knees — full prostration. God’s answer came swiftly and surely from the strangest of places. From the Law of God.

The Decalogue: The Law (Exodus 20:1-17)

And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

1. ***You shall not have other gods before Me***.
2. ***You shall not make for yourself any graven image***: any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.
3. ***You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them*** (for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me; and showing mercy to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments).
4. ***You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain*** (for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain).
5. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. You shall labor six days, and do all your work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: ***You shall not do any work in it***: not you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates (for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it).

**The First Commandment with promise**

**Honor your father and your mother**: that your days may be long on the land which the Lord your God gives you.

1. ***You shall not murder***.
2. ***You shall not commit adultery***.
3. ***You shall not steal***.
4. ***You shall not bear false witness*** against your neighbor.
5. ***You shall not covet*** your neighbor’s house; ***You shall not covet*** your neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.

Whoa, shouldn’t God have directed me to the Gospel? Isn’t this flying in the face of everything God showed Paul in Romans? Isn’t this counterintuitive to all that we believe?

### What God Showed Me

I was convinced a long time ago[[4]](#endnote-4) that the Decalogue is an ancient suzerainty covenant or suzerainty treaty. This idea was either gleaned from the writings of Meredith Kline,[[5]](#endnote-5) or reinforced by them.

As I remember it, the general historical setting and construction of such a document ran something like this.

* A people came into grave danger and oppression: most often life threatening, or involving at least mayhem and/or cruel slavery. In their suffering they cried out to a great king or suzerain for redemption or salvation.[[6]](#endnote-6)
* The suzerain graciously, powerfully, and unilaterally redeemed or saved them.[[7]](#endnote-7)
* Now, as a result of this redemption or salvation, after it is effected, the suzerain meets with the delivered victims, and draws up a suzerainty covenant or suzerainty treaty with them.
* The delivered victims make no contribution to this treaty, they contributed nothing to the redemption; therefore, they have no rights. The suzerain delivers the covenant or treaty unilaterally as part of his gracious gift: part and parcel to their redemption and salvation.
* The treaty is introduced with a summary statement that specifies the nature of the deliverance, the saving act.
* The treaty then lists the suzerain’s laws or requirements which the delivered victims must accept if they wish to continue to live under the suzerain’s protection, become his vassals.
* The suzerain represents himself in the middle of the suzerainty treaty showing that this is his unilateral redemption or salvation, and his unilateral law.
* The delivered victims are free to accept or reject the treaty with its stipulations.[[8]](#endnote-8)
* However, rejection may bring stiff penalties. The suzerain may be offended at the rejection of such a great gift. The delivered victims may be unable to prevent reacquisition by their cruel former owners; they may be exposed and unable to fend off new foes; they may be left without means to care for themselves.

### Suzerainty Treaty and Decalogue Covenant

Among the more remarkable aspects of the suzerainty treaty is the suzerain’s representation of himself in the middle of the treaty. Consider what this means for the Decalogue, which is called an eternal or everlasting covenant.[[9]](#endnote-9) The pre-incarnate Christ stands in the middle of the covenant as the perfect Son. Of all the sons in the universe, He alone honors both Father and mother perfectly.

**The First Commandment with promise**

**Honor your father and your mother**: that your days may be long on the land which the Lord your God gives you.

This, the Commandment with Promise, summarizes the ten words[[10]](#endnote-10) perfectly. Honor your Father expresses Christ’s love of God; while, honor your mother expresses Christ’s love of the Church and humanity. This one Commandment combines the two Great Commandments in a single phrase.[[11]](#endnote-11) Mother calls to mind, Eve[[12]](#endnote-12) or Zoe,[[13]](#endnote-13) the mother of all living.[[14]](#endnote-14) As C. S Lewis puts it, “the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve.”[[15]](#endnote-15) Mother, also addresses Mary, in typology, the full expression of the Church, the whole people of God.[[16]](#endnote-16) Christ the Λόγος comes offering His λόγοi to the Father as the sweet smelling sacrifice of perfect obedience.

We ought not think this presence of Christ, our Champion, in the center of the Decalogue as strange. Ancient battles were often decided by single combat: a single champion represented each side of the dispute. We remember David and Goliath, where David’s victory over Goliath determined the outcome of that day’s battle; ultimately, it set the tone for the whole war with Israel triumphing over the Philistines. David establishes that momentum which results in final victory. So, the discovery that Christ is our Champion, Who fulfills all the righteous demands of the Law for us, should come as no surprise.

### The Essential Problem of Humanity

And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Mankind’s essential problem is that it tends to slavery. People inherently[[17]](#endnote-17) love slavery, because they inherently, since the Fall, hate God and all His works. The wondrous nature of God’s Law is that it demands the defeat of all human slavery. The beloved slaves of God cannot be slaves to any other. God wants to give His slaves their freedom, and the Law spells out the essential elements of that freedom.

Christ the Λόγος comes in perfect obedience breaking all the chains of slavery and setting men and women free everywhere. He initiates the eternal year of God’s Jubilee.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all those who were in the synagogue were fastened on Him.

He began to say unto them, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”[[18]](#endnote-18)

### The Law is Received by Love

I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me; and showing mercy to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

The great dividing line between the children is over those who hate God and those who love God. This is the key to the law. The lovers of God are characterized as keeping God’s commandments: that is, treasuring them. Keeping cannot possibly mean that perfect blind, rote, obedience to these Laws will save these children. They are already saved; the Law is given to them as a redeemed people. Such perfect blind, rote, obedience is clearly impossible as Psalm 119 shows us. The Psalmist agonizes over his inability to keep the Law. Again and again he requests instruction.[[19]](#endnote-19) Before he was afflicted he went astray.[[20]](#endnote-20) His eyes run with rivers of tears, because he did not keep the Law.[[21]](#endnote-21) He describes himself as a lost sheep.[[22]](#endnote-22) These are not the words of a person who has discovered the secret of perfect obedience through works of the law. These are the words of a person who has found humility, grace to help in time of need, the Gospel as the law actually teaches it.

Paul’s rib[[23]](#endnote-23) with the Law cannot possibly be with the Decalogue. Paul is a Pharisee, who formerly believed that the perfect blind, rote, obedience to these Laws would save Him. To his dismay, yet finally to his everlasting joy, Paul learned this such obedience would not work. The Pharisees, to their shame, not only were graceless, yet punctilious in their observation of the Law; worse, they added to it many rules and regulations of their own. Paul observes that these are under the Law.

Even so, if men and women can put themselves under the Law[[24]](#endnote-24) and find death, there must be an opposite. This opposite is most certainly not above the Law, but on the Law. Now we see that the Law itself is just and good.[[25]](#endnote-25) Being under the Law is to be crushed by it. On the other hand, building on the Law is to be supported by all the gracious power of God through faith.

Now, we see the blood of Christ everywhere, sprinkled upon the Law, upon the mercy seat. This is the blood of the eternal and everlasting covenant. Christ stands in the middle of the Law as the perfect Son. He is at one and the same time, the Law’s Author, Fulfilment, and Interpreter. The Pharisees must be corrected because they do not understand what Christ wrote to begin with. But now, we see Jesus, the great cornerstone of our faith, and we are able, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to build on Him, together with all the Apostles and Prophets who have laid such a great foundation for us.

No quicksand here, only solid granite. The love of the Law and the love of God, and the Gospel are one seamless garment that was not divided at the Crucifixion. The tension between Law and Gospel is mostly the tension between the corrupt-use of the Law, in opposition to the Gospel. The Law can only be fulfilled by faith. The Law can never be fulfilled by perfect blind, rote, human obedience. This kind of obedience requires Divine power.

### The People are Confronted with a Decision

These are real people confronted with real decisions having life effecting consequences. They have been redeemed.[[26]](#endnote-26) They are not completely saved. Salvation is from something: they have been saved from the slavery of Egypt. However, salvation is also to something: salvation is to the promised land, to the kingdom of God, to the fruit of the Eternal Year of Jubilee. Faced with this declaration the people have three choices: one, they can enter the promised land, they can wander in the wilderness for the rest of their lives, or they can return to their slavery in Egypt. They chose to wander in the wilderness for the rest of their lives. There were few exceptions. To Jeremiah’s dismay, eight hundred sixty years later, they chose to return to Egypt.[[27]](#endnote-27) This is not decisional regeneration; this is the difference between walking by faith or by sight. We have been confronted with the same choice. Christ has completed our redemption on the cross. We have been saved from great slavery, we have been set free. Sadly, great masses of people chose to squander this great salvation and wander in the wilderness for their entire lives. Others chose to return to the bondage of sin. A few accept the glorious gift and are saved to the glory that has not yet been fully revealed.

### A Few Applications

How does this solve problems in text-criticism? It doesn’t. What it shows me is that my faith does not rest on a perfect Bible, on a perfect translation; but, on Perfect God, and Perfect God-Man.

I may never resolve the controversy between Alexandrian and Byzantine text-types. In the final analysis, I don’t need to. I stand on a perfect foundation without them. I stand on the Perfect Foundation, with God as my Father, with the Church as my mother in full assurance that I am a building stone, a brick in God’s palace, being placed in my proper position by the work of the Great Architect and Savior of my soul.

In the image of God, I am an heir of a noble line of people. My earthly father is a Swanson, not a Johnson. My earthly mother is a Knapp. I give the greatest glory to God in my appreciation of the fact that I stand on their shoulders, and so I am built up in Christ. My appreciation and recognition of my earthly heritage gives the utmost glory to God. It is what He has built.

In the same manner I have been standing on the shoulders of Erasmus, since 1971. All those who have built on the Byzantine text-type have had their part in supporting my place in the building of God. I do Christ great disservice by being disloyal to them. I do not need to become the second Judas. I cannot give glory to God by ceasing to stand on their shoulders.

If time should prove that the Byzantine text-type must be abandoned, then this can only be done by following the Truth and continuing to appreciate and honor my rich heritage. There is nothing left, with which to be in perfect blind, rote, human obedience. There is only God and faith. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”[[28]](#endnote-28)

Yours in Christ,

Augie-Herb

[[29]](#endnote-29)

1. http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/37/37-2/JETS\_37-2\_185-215\_Wallace.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. My rough cost estimate based on cost figures I encountered around 1975: it can doubtless be improved. Suffice it to say that a single photo copy of one manuscript of Matthew cost in excess of $500: there are thousands of manuscripts know to us. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/37/37-2/JETS\_37-2\_185-215\_Wallace.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. 1971, Dr. Bruce K. Waltke’s Old Testament Introduction class at Dallas Theological Seminary: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce\_Waltke [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meredith\_Kline and Meredith G. Kline, “The Two Tables of the Covenant”: *Westminster Theological Journal 22* (1960) 133-46, and many other places. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Here we are using the words redeem and save as completely synonymous. This is not usually the case. Frequently, redeem means the act of freeing the victim; while salvation may refer to the victim’s acceptance or rejection of the gift. Salvation generally looks at the end of the process; while redemption looks at the beginning of the process. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Some ancient suzerains were fond of claiming the name or title, Savior, for themselves. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Exodus 24:3, 7; Joshua 1:16-18; 24:15 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Exodus 6:4, 5; 19:5; 24:8; 31:16; 34:10, 27, 28; Leviticus 24:8; 26:9, 15, 25, 42, 44, 45; Numbers 25:13 (even the subsidiary parts are everlasting covenant); Deuteronomy 4:13. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. δεκάλογοi = δέκα + λόγοi, ten + words [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Matthew 22:36-40 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Hebrew [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Greek [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Genesis 3:20 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. *Chronicles of Narnia* [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Hebrews 12:18-29 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. This does not mean that Original Sin is transmitted genetically, or legally: that is because, Adam was the legal decision maker for the whole human race and the father of us all. Rather, it means that we mystically participated in Adam, and therefore helped commit the Original Sin. Mystically emphasizes the fact that none of us understands how this can possibly be, it defies further explanation. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Luke 4:18-21 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Psalm 119:12, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Psalm 119:67, 71, 75, 107 [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Psalm 119:82, 123, 136 [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Psalm 119:176 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Hebrew (reev), argument or contention [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Romans 6:11-18 [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Romans 7:12 [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Here we see the explicit theological difference between redemption and salvation. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Jeremiah 42:18-22, see also all of Jeremiah 40-45. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. 2 Corinthians 13:14 [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
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