

***Accuracy of Translation: The Primary Criterion in Evaluating Bible Versions with Special Reference to the New International Version.*** By Robert P. Martin. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989. 89 pages. \$9.00 Softcover.

While there is no shortage of books showing the deficiencies of the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible and its various updates, Robert P. Martin's contribution on this topic is one that deserves to have a place on the shelves of both Pastors' studies and seminary libraries. Written in 1989 when the NIV was still ascending in popularity, a popularity that is now in decline, Martin's treatise does a thorough and convincing job showing quite simply that the NIV is a poor translation of the NT that ought to be retired from popular use. It is through the following 6 chapters that Martin will show quite clearly that the NIV is an inaccurate translation of God's Word.

Chapter one is where Martin begins to lay out his case, citing Bob Sheehan's *Which Version Now?*, to highlight the "bewilderment" (a word used three times in the first four paragraphs) that the plethora of English translations causes both the pew and the pulpit. He avers, "What is the pre-eminent trait of a good Bible translation? The answer must be accuracy of translation" (2). We agree wholeheartedly with Martin's assessment at this point. It is unfortunately his very next point where Martin digresses into an error that we must take time to correct at the outset of our review.

Martin's next paragraph begins, "Some readers may be disappointed that I am not proposing that our first concern must be the textual tradition being represented in translation (e.g. the Textus Receptus, the text of Westcott-Hort, the Majority Text, etc.)" (2). It is unclear who the "some readers" are that Martin has in mind, but we would gladly identify as being disappointed by his decision here. This is not to say that every book on bibliology must center on the topic of the underlying texts of Scripture. But at the same time, it is impossible to identify "which Bible" be used if the text is not identified. All translations come from texts. The concern over which text should precede the concern over which method of translation is utilized, as a good translation of a bad text cannot be called a good translation, just as much as a bad translation of a good text cannot be called a good translation.

In support of his decision not to engage the text, Martin gives this reason: "But Machen long ago reminded us that the difference between the manuscripts is 'infinitesimal in comparison with what they have in common'" (2). This reviewer could also say a great many complimentary things about J. Gresham Machen. It was with his Greek Grammar of the NT that I first began to study my way through the underlying text of the Bible some 30 plus years ago. Having said that, this support that Martin gives from Machen is very feeble indeed. Appealing to Machen or any penultimate authority instead of appealing to Scripture here is a losing endeavor. Machen's statement is certainly one of his weaker moments. I am not sure why Martin introduces it by talking about "manuscripts" when the text (TR, CT, MT) is the issue at hand. Furthermore, the good Dr. Machen is simply not accurate on this point. The differences between the TR and the CT for instance amount to some 8% of the entire text of the NT. That is something like the

books of Peter or epistles of John being entirely omitted. And the differences can absolutely be shown to be significant. We certainly could go further on this point, but we leave it there because we do desire to focus on what Martin would have us focus on in this work: the accuracy of translation. We will simply close here by saying that since he will bring up the text again in Appendix C of this work, that we will comment again there.

The next section in this first chapter is strong in showing the proper perspective one must have on the Bible. Martin states, “The Bible primarily is the church’s book, regulating her faith and practice. Milton Fischer reminds us that “God’s written revelation was not directed to or primarily intended for the general mass of unregenerate humanity...it was directed to a select group within humanity” (3), and by this of course we understand that the Hebrew / Aramaic OT was given to the nation of Israel for stewardship (cf. Romans 3:2), while the Greek NT was committed to the Lord’s churches for stewardship (cf. I Timothy 3:15). Martin then provides a quote that is very interesting because it comes from Eugene Nida, the father of Dynamic Equivalence in Bible translation. Nida states: “Bible translators...have often made quite a point of the fact that the language of the New Testament was Koine Greek, the language of ‘the man in the street,’ and hence a translation should speak to the man in the street. The truth of the matter is that many New Testament messages were not directed primarily to the man in the street, but to the man in the congregation” (3). Nida is right to see that it is the local congregation that is the primary entity relative to God’s Word, and Martin concludes correctly by observing:

“No other claim on the Bible supersedes the church’s claim. The church’s need of an accurate and reliable standard of faith and practice supersedes every other concern. Indeed, the church has a right to demand that her need must occupy first place in the mind of the translator. The translator must remember that he is a servant of God translating God’s book for the benefit of God’s people. He has no right placing any other concern ahead of the church’s need for accurate translations” (3). It is at this point that Martin brings into focus the specific topic he will examine, that of the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible and its philosophy of translation.

There are two reasons according to Martin why he has chosen to examine the NIV translation of the Bible. The first is that, “according to a publisher’s release, the goal of the NIV is ‘to do for our time what the King James Version did for its day.’ Undoubtedly, Zondervan Bible Publishers hopes that the NIV will become the standard version of the English speaking world and apparently they have spared no expense in promoting it” (3). The second reason is that “the NIV has been promoted as an accurate translation of the Bible” (4). He notes that the NIV translation committee expresses a concern for “fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers” (4). This is telling in itself, as it helps the reader see early on that the NIV will be in fact aligning with dynamic equivalence, seeking to produce a thought for thought translation instead of one that is word for word. Martin closes his introduction with an overview of what he plans to accomplish in the next five chapters.

Chapter two is on The Philosophy of Translation and seeks to examine exactly what the NIV’s translation philosophy was in practice over and against what the Committee claimed.

Martin does a good job defining both formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence and identifying the practices of each and the extant translations that appear along the spectrum of the two philosophies. He notes, “the formal equivalence translator, when translating the content of the original text into English, tries to preserve the form of the original text as far as possible” (7-8). While the formally equivalent translator is attempting to maintain “word for word” consistency, Martin notes that “in contrast to formal equivalence translators, dynamic equivalence translators focus attention not so much on the form of the original text as on the response of the modern reader” (8). This statement should be read in light of the following statement, “Every translation of the Bible is a mixture of formal and dynamic equivalence” (9). The issues between formal and dynamic are not absolutist, because every translation is just that, a translation from one language to another. As one Greek professor was swift to point out to his first year students, “Greek is not another way to speak English.” To this reviewer it does not seem possible to produce an absolutely 100% formal translation from the original biblical languages into English, especially as it pertains to word order and idiomatic characteristics of the tongues.

Other interesting points in this chapter are Martin’s observation that the Revised Standard Version (RSV) is “philosophically schizophrenic” (10) because it tries to produce a dynamic update of the American Standard Version (ASV) which was formal. This would necessitate thinking of the English Standard Version (ESV) as the offspring of the “philosophically schizophrenic” because it is a revision of the RSV (thought not to be confused with the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and its numerous updates. He also states, “It is my desire to be fair to the NIV translators; however, their statement of translation philosophy is confusing” (11), the reasons being that they admit they are not practicing consistent formal equivalence, yet neither do they want to be identified as dynamically equivalent, “but the method of ‘equivalence’ (as they define it) is not different in kind from the method of dynamic equivalence” (11). Finally Martin notes, “The term ‘equivalence,’ of course, used without any qualifying adjective, is ambiguous” (12), and, “The Committee is accurate in describing the method used in the production of the NIV as ‘an eclectic one;’ however, it is not accurate to say that the NIV contains ‘a minimum...of outright dynamic equivalence.’ Although the NIV is not as ‘dynamic’ as the Good News Bible or the New English Bible, nevertheless the NIV translators have been heavily influenced by the dynamic equivalence philosophy of translation” (12).

Chapter three is on The Nature of the Bible’s Inspiration, and gives a brief overview of this Bible doctrine to lay the framework for examining the NIV per se. Martin states, “It is assumed that the vast majority of Bible translators acknowledge in some sense the Bible’s inspiration” (13), and this statement must be allowed to say all it is saying. First, why is it assumed? Can it be assumed, especially in the current age? And what does Martin allow for when he says, “in some sense the Bible’s inspiration?” Does the sense in which William Tyndale believed in the Bible’s inspiration find itself in the same plane as the translators of the NIV? How would one know that and how can it be identified?

Martin gives a defense of the doctrine of inspiration when he states, “The Bible is inspired in such a way that its very words are inspired (i.e. ‘verbal’ inspiration); and that inspiration extends to all the words of Scripture (i.e. ‘plenary’ inspiration). The nature of the Bible’s inspiration is such that what it says is what God has said” (14). He then goes on to contrast this Bible doctrine with the dynamic view of inspiration, wherein “God inspired the thoughts of the biblical writers, but left them to express those thoughts or ideas in their own words...The dynamic view of inspiration, of course, is wrong at its root. To my knowledge none of its proponents have succeeded in explaining by what method God conveyed the ideas to the minds of the biblical writers without using words, which are the building blocks of thought...The exact words are, therefore, of great importance” (14). Martin should have noted here that dynamic inspiration is no less unbiblical than dynamic preservation, and the Bible makes no allowance for either. The exact words of God, composed of jots and tittles (cf. Matthew 5:18) were given by verbal plenary inspiration, and have been kept by verbal plenary preservation. Martin is right to excoriate the dynamic paradigm, which refuses to acknowledge that “God is concerned with much more than general ideas” (14).

Chapters 4 and 5 comprise the bulk of the book and serve to prove that the NIV in fact employs dynamic equivalence in its translation philosophy. Martin states, “The purpose of this chapter and the next is to note seven characteristics of dynamic equivalence translations and to observe how the NIV, albeit in varying degrees, displays these same features” (18). This chapter is full of valuable information and gives evidence of copious amounts of research. He begins by showing that the Bible is designed to be a structurally and grammatically complex book, giving the anecdote, “I recall being required at seminary to produce a grammatical diagram of Ephesians 1:3-14, a passage which is a single complex sentence in the Greek text” (19). He shows that, “Unlike the modern newspaper, the Bible was never meant to yield the fullness of its message to those who are only willing to expend the absolute minimum of effort necessary” (20). This point needs to be emphasized in these days of anthropocentric consumer driven Westernized Christendom. Martin expands this point:

“It is true that many have been short-changed in their opportunity to acquire good reading skills. It is fashionable to place the blame on the educational experts who decided that an entire generation of students did not need to learn phonics as a basis for reading skills. But is it enough to place blame? At some point those who were short-changed by the educational system must cease to lament the wrong done to them and must take personal responsibility for bettering their reading skills. No matter how simply we translate, we can never produce a Bible for the functionally illiterate, or even for the marginally literate, and still remain faithful to the structure of what is, by any standard, a very complex book.

I fear that much of the cry for a translation which requires little effort to understand is rooted in the itch of our age for instant gratification. Many in a generation raised in the climate of instant everything (instant coffee, instant potatoes, instant on radio and television, microwave ovens, no-iron fabrics, computerized instant banking services - the list is virtually endless) have come to regard instant spirituality and instant Bible knowledge as their birthright. The idea that

one must labor over the Word of God in order to mine its gold is a revolutionary concept to many in our day” (21). To Martin’s overall sentiment we say Amen.

The author makes a very astute observation regarding the presence of italics in an English translation. In his subsection on The Addition of Words in Translation, Martin notes, “as a general rule (although not always, as the examples immediately following make clear) the formal equivalence translation uses italics to indicate words supplied by the translator but missing in the original text; whereas, also as a general rule, the dynamic equivalence translator uses no such convention” (22). This observation shows the value of the King James Version which allows the reader to see when a word has been supplied by the translators. Every Modern Version of the Bible adds words to the translation which are not in the underlying text, but few if any allow the reader to be aware of that fact by italicizing each case as the KJV does. The presence of italics is a real strength of the KJV and ought to be imitated by every English translation in print and translator working today in any receptor language. Martin goes on regarding italics and makes this accurate judgment:

“The NIV translators explained the lack of italics in their version this way: ‘To achieve clarity the translators sometimes supplied words not in the original texts but required by the context. If there was uncertainty about such material, it is enclosed in brackets.’ Apparently the NIV translators felt that they had achieved a high degree of certainty in their additions, for to the best of my knowledge only eight times do they use brackets in all of the New Testament (i.e. Luke 11:41, John 8:24, 28; 12:7; Acts 19:15; Galatians 2:4; 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:3). Even granting a high degree of certainty in such matters, however, one must question the prosperity of passing on to the reader (without the use of a convention such as italics or brackets) one’s conjectures as to ‘words not in the original text but required by the context’ to ‘achieve clarity.’ Should not all such conjectures be clearly marked so that the reader can judge them for himself?” (24).

Chapter four gives many examples of dynamic equivalence in the NIV, the use of supplied words by the NIV translators without italics for the benefit of the reader, and the omission of words in the text by the NIV translators. There is also an important discussion of the NIV’s tendency to erode the Bible’s technical terminology, whether it is uncommon words like “propitiation,” or more common but equally essential concepts like “body” and “flesh.” In fact Martin spends a large part of this chapter taking the NIV’s mishandling of “flesh” to task, and notes, “an obsession with simplicity is dangerous when it comes to Bible translation” (37). He states, “Surely it is better to teach each new generation the meaning of the Bible’s technical terms than to eliminate them and produce a generation of supposedly biblically literate people, who in reality are biblically and theologically illiterate from having suffered long term exposure to inaccurate and imprecise versions of the Bible” (37-28). Martin gives a lengthy quote from Nigel Turner which needs a fresh hearing these days:

“The Church today is concerned about communicating with the contemporary world and especially about the need to speak in a new idiom. The language of the Church had better be the

language of the NT. To proclaim the Gospel with new terminology is hazardous when much of the message and valuable overtones that are implicit in the NT might be lost forever” (38).

Martin closes this chapter with an analysis of the claim that formally equivalent translations are "culturally distant" (40). He basically dismisses this criticism as overblown, and cites examples to the contrary, where the language of formally equivalent translations has shaped the Western world.

Chapter five is the second part of the examination of dynamic equivalence examples in the NIV, and Martin begins by reminding the reader that, “The idea of completely non-interpretive translation is a mirage chased only by those who have never engaged in the work of translation” (41). He does differentiate, and notes, “Generally speaking, the formal equivalence translator intrudes his interpretive opinions only when the necessity of making grammatical decisions forces him to do so” (42). It is here that Martin will examine over twenty specific examples of the NIV practicing dynamic equivalence, and not heeding the adage that “the theologically ambiguous should be left theologically ambiguous” (46). Some of the examples Martin chooses are:

Matthew 6:22, where the NIV dynamically reads “if your eyes are good” instead of formally reading, “If therefore your eye is single.” Citing J.A. Alexander, Martin shows that the NIV rendering misses the entire point of the passage which is “the necessity of single-minded devotion to Christ” (48).

John 1:16, the NIV reads “one blessing after another,” instead of “grace for grace.” Martin says, “the NIV rendering is pure interpretive paraphrase with little formal linguistic correspondence to the original text” (49).

Acts 17:34, wherein the NIV states, “a few men became followers of Paul and believed,” instead of “howbeit certain men clave unto him.” Martin says, “the NIV rendering is misleading” (50).

Romans 8:3, where the NIV has “condemned sin in sinful man” instead of “condemned sin in the flesh.” Martin concludes, “Most likely the NIV translators have misinterpreted Paul here; and by substituting their interpretation for a literal translation, they mislead the reader” (51).

Romans 8:28, the NIV elects to translate as “and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,” instead of, “and we know that all things work together for good.” Martin warns, “There is quite a difference, of course, between ‘God works all things together for good’ and ‘in all things God works for the good.’” And he goes on to note, “it is not clear from the NIV’s translation that good will always be the outcome of God’s exertion” (52).

I Corinthians 7:4, where Martin observes, “The NIV translates the first clause as, ‘It is good for a man not to marry.’ The verb, *hapto*, however, does not mean ‘to marry’ but ‘to touch sexually’” (53). This is in contrast to “it is good for a man not to touch a woman.”

This is just a small sampling of Martin’s robust examination of poor translation choices by the NIV. Throughout this chapter he will have to conclude: “The NIV rendering creates as many problems as it supposedly solves” (54), “the liberty taken by the translators has

impoverished the text” (55), “In its attempt to clarify the apostle’s figure of speech, however, the NIV has destroyed it” (56), and many other such negative verdicts. Chapter five is a wealth of information and should be consulted carefully.

Chapter six is the conclusion of the matter, where Martin answers directly the question, “Is the NIV an accurate translation?” In his closing arguments he avers, “if we define accuracy in terms of formal equivalence principles, that is, in terms of close correspondence to the structure and wording of the original texts, then the NIV must be judged inaccurate on a number of counts, as the preceding chapters demonstrate” (68). It is important to recognize here that the inaccuracies cause doctrinal misunderstandings and can lead to erroneous beliefs and practices. Martin concludes:

“It should be obvious by now that my counsel is that we should use formal equivalence translations and promote them among the people of God. While dynamic translations may have their value, they should not be used as our primary study Bibles or as the standards from which we derive our personal or corporate theology and practice. It is also probably unwise to use them as pulpit Bibles or as pew Bibles, because in doing so they are invested with the aura of the approval of the church” (69-70), and goes on to say:

“The NIV is not worthy of becoming the standard version of the English-speaking world. Its accuracy is suspect in too many ways” (70). We whole-heartedly agree with this conclusion, and are thankful to have seen many churches, including our own congregation here in New York City, make the change away from the NIV and back to the King James Version.

Martin’s work concludes with three appendices, the third of which prevents us from giving an unqualified endorsement of this book. Appendix A examines the revision of the NIV. We would only point out here that since the time of Martin’s book there has been the third major revision of the NIV, the revision of 2011. Appendix B considers “Archaic Language and Translation Philosophy.” In this section Martin gives some push back to those who say the KJV is incomprehensible. He cites Kubo and Sprecht’s assertion about the KJV: “for the majority of English-speaking people its language has become almost a foreign tongue. There is grave danger that the continued use of this version may give modern man the impression that the Bible belongs to another age, and that it is irrelevant to the twentieth century” (73-74), and Martin concludes, “This surely is an overstatement. The ‘older generation’ in question did not grow up speaking sixteenth-century English” (74). He declares, “Now I am not proposing that we force the KJV on the present or future generations; but neither am I prepared to keep it from them. We should encourage people to use accurate versions in modern English; however, we should not insist that they avoid the KJV (or the ASV) just because some expert thinks that the style and vocabulary is beyond them” (74).

Appendix C is called, “The Textus Receptus and the Text of the New Testament,” and this is the section that Martin has reserved to discuss the topic of the Greek text underlying English translations. He begins by acknowledging the challenges to text criticism, namely, the absence of any “originals” or means by which to identify them, and the presence of textual variants. Referencing Machen again, Martin claims, “compared to what the manuscripts have in

common, the number of variant readings having significant interpretive importance is small” (75). It is possible to acknowledge that the commonly accepted statistic of “approximately 7% difference” is by certain definitions “small.” However, when one considers, 1) that percentage would be the equivalent of an entire epistle missing from the NT, 2) that the variants that make up the 7% in question are often passages of significant length and doctrinal importance, and 3) that the text issue is as essential as the translation issue, perhaps more so, in regards to accuracy of God’s word. Martin very much understates the issue when he writes, “And at those places where the manuscripts do differ, most of the variations are matters of word order, spelling, number (singular or plural), person (first, second, or third), tense of verbs, substitution of synonyms, etc” (76). He makes no mention of the two passages of 12 verses each (John 7:53-8:10 and Mark 16:9-20), nor of the key verses on trinitarianism (I John 5:7), believers’ baptism (Acts 8:37), and the incarnation (I Timothy 3:16), to name a few. The heart of Martin’s opposition to TR position is seen in the following paragraph:

“In the opinion of some conservative Christians, the application of the principles of textual criticism to the text of the New Testament is unnecessary, since in their view the Greek text used by the translators of the King James Version (the so-called Textus Receptus, or Received Text) represents exactly the inerrant and infallible original autographs of the New Testament. The expression of this view frequently is accompanied with the charge that emendation of the Received Text, by the substitution of variant readings from other manuscripts of the New Testament, is nothing less than tampering with the Word of God which our Lord providentially has preserved throughout all the centuries since the inspired documents were written. Furthermore, any translation based on a text at variance from the Received Text automatically is condemned because of its supposedly corrupt foundation. Appeal is often made to Psalm 12:6-7 and Matthew 5:18, with the assertion being made that these promises are fulfilled in the Textus Receptus” (76-77). Several incongruities and issues present themselves in Martin’s position statement:

“In the opinion of some conservative Christians,” - this rightly acknowledges the divide that exists within Christendom over this topic; better it would have been to state it as “the doctrinal position of some...”

“The application of the principles of textual criticism to the text of the New Testament is unnecessary,” - It is noteworthy that the starting point for Martin is the necessity of text criticism instead of the promises of God in Scripture regarding the doctrine of bibliology. This is a watershed in the discussion. Sola Scriptura and modern NT text criticism are incompatible, and for the modern Academy member, to question the validity of modern NT text criticism is on par with questioning the moorings of Darwinian evolution among those in the world of the scientific academy.

“since in their view the Greek text used by the translators of the King James Version (the so-called Textus Receptus, or Received Text) represents exactly the inerrant and infallible original autographs of the New Testament.” - It is not just the translators of the King James Version that used the Textus Receptus, but all traditional Protestant English translations from the

time of the Reformation era. The text of the NT is not directly a “translators of the King James Version” issue, but a doctrinal issue that must meet the model predicted by Scripture, as with all doctrines of faith and practice. Martin seems to deride “the so-called Textus Receptus” but provides the reader with no alternative as to the representative of the inerrant and infallible originals.

“The expression of this view frequently is accompanied with the charge that emendation of the Received Text, by the substitution of variant readings from other manuscripts of the New Testament, is nothing less than tampering with the Word of God which our Lord providentially has preserved throughout all the centuries since the inspired documents were written.” - The Lord Jesus commanded His churches to teach immersed disciples “all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” and warned the churches not to add or to subtract from the words of the Scripture (cf. Matthew 28, Revelation 22). Martin does not provide guidance to his readers as to the dangers of tampering with the words of Scripture, nor does he exegete the NT to produce a doctrinal foundation for the doctrine of Preservation. Churches like CCBC do identify the Received Text as the fulfillment of the promises of preservation. Speaking of those promises, Martin goes on to say,

“Furthermore, any translation based on a text at variance from the Received Text automatically is condemned because of its supposedly corrupt foundation. Appeal is often made to Psalm 12:6-7 and Matthew 5:18, with the assertion being made that these promises are fulfilled in the Textus Receptus.” - The text of the NT is an essential issue, not a non-essential, and any translation based on a text other than the Received Text ought properly be identified as such, and its deficiencies ought to be held accountable. What Martin refers to as a condemnation others might see as a warning. Furthermore, it is proper to appeal to both Psalm 12:6-7 and Matthew 5:18, along with numerous other Scriptures, to establish a biblical doctrine of bibliology as it relates to the doctrines of inspiration, preservation, text, and translation. If these promises are not fulfilled in the Received Text, as Martin seems to say, then it must be asked where are they fulfilled? Or are they unfulfilled promises?

In contrast to the TR position, Martin begins to advocate for a Critical Text mindset, stating, “Where there are variant readings in the extant manuscripts of the Scriptures, these Christians seek to determine, through the application of sound principles of textual criticism, which readings were penned by the biblical writers and which readings came into existence through other means” (77). Neither side denies the existence of variant readings in extant manuscripts. However, Martin’s solution of appealing to “the application of sound principles of textual criticism” is a fool’s errand, as the goal of textual criticism has radically shifted since he penned this book, and since textual criticism has yet to establish a single reading of a NT passage so that no further textual criticism is needed. The “sound principles” of textual criticism are ever changing because they are not based on Scripture, but are based on the changing whims of the Academy. Furthermore, Martin’s reference to “readings which came into existence through other means” ignores the elephant in the room, that these readings which were not penned by the biblical writers must be viewed as a violation of Revelation 22.

Martin has a valuable observation that this debate often devolves into ad hominem attacks and innuendo, with each side talking past the other and with not much listening going on. He gives several examples, and warns, “Such blanket categorizing is both unwarranted and unkind” (77). Several of Martin’s points in this appendix are outdated due to new discoveries in the field of textual criticism, but his admonitions here are timeless.

He goes on to cite A.E. Houseman’s interesting quote from Metzger’s seminal tome:

“Textual criticism is not a branch of mathematics, nor indeed an exact science at all... A textual critic engaged upon his business is not at all like Newton investigating the motions of the planets: he is much more like a dog hunting for fleas. If a dog hunted for fleas on mathematical principles, basing his researches on statistics of area and population, he would never catch a flea except by accident. They require to be treated as individuals; and every problem which presents itself to the textual critic must be regarded as possibly unique” (78). Houseman’s quote is one of countless illustrations of the futility of modern textual criticism as it is practiced in the post-modern era, what perhaps should be called post-modern textual criticism. Following this Martin clarifies his main point:

“My purpose solely is to challenge the opinion that the Textus Receptus represents at every point the original documents of the New Testament and, therefore, that it is tampering with the Word of God ever to give preference to variant readings from other manuscript evidence for the text of the New Testament” (78-79). In so many words, Martin is arguing that the Word of God is found in the entirety of existing manuscripts, and that modern textual criticism will identify the words, if given enough time. No standard is provided for how to determine if one is tampering with the Word of God or not.

Martin also has a lengthy section where he repeats the oft told tale the Erasmus back-translated / reverse engineered the last verses of Revelation from Latin into Greek. This popular myth has been debunked many times. For a recent example, see Jeffrey T. Riddle, “Erasmus and the Ending of Revelation” published by the Reformation Bible Society. Martin also makes a passing reference to the “Which Textus Receptus” objection, which also has been answered many times. For a recent example, see Taylor DeSoto, *The Received Text: A Field Guide*.

Martin’s concluding paragraph is reproduced here:

“Having read the preceding remarks, the reader may be tempted to conclude that I am arguing that the Textus Receptus is in some way dangerous. This is not the case. Although there are differences from what some might regard as a purer text, these differences should not be blown out of proportion. The Textus Receptus is a dependable guide for the people of God and has shed blessed light on the path of many pilgrims on their way to the celestial city. And the same can be said for the King James Version, which is still one of the finest translations of the Scriptures ever produced in any language. My purpose merely is to ask that no unique or exclusive place be given to the Textus Receptus or to the King James Version, to the exclusion of other safe guides in the Scriptures” (82).

The first observation we make from his statement is that, while Martin is attempting to steer his reader away from what might be termed the “King James Only” movement, he conversely is forcing them into a “Multiple Versions of the Bible Only” position. By requiring the reader not to give a unique or exclusive place to the TR or KJV, one would naturally wonder which Bible should be given a unique or exclusive place. To this Martin gives no answer, and provides no guide for those seeking a clear and certain standard. In reality, the opposite problem is taking hold in the Academy and in many churches, as CT and MVs are given a unique and exclusive place over the TR and KJV.

The twin sibling to “Multiple Version Only-ism” is “King James Never-ism.” There is a hypocrisy of those who laud the KJV only to bury it out of sight from today’s Christian. While Martin certainly does not come close to saying that, his hesitancy to embrace fully the Received Text will tend toward more confusion for Bible students today, even as he rightfully tries to steer them away from the NIV.

The obvious conclusion that can be drawn from Martin’s book is that the NIV is not a safe guide. The NIV is a safety risk to those who are seeking to know God and understand His Word. This reviewer grew up in a home that was fully Multiple Versions Only, and was blessed to trust Christ as Lord and Savior through the witness of the New International Version of the Holy Bible. For that he is eternally grateful. Nevertheless he cannot endorse anyone using the NIV, because it is such a poor and misleading and unreliable translation of the word of God. It ought to be retired from use and go out of publication as older modern versions before it.

In *Accuracy of Translation*, Robert Martin does an excellent job highlighting the many deficiencies and inaccuracies of the New International Version and why churches ought to continue to move away from it. Anyone involved in translation work should have and refer to Martin’s book, and anyone whose church is still stuck using the NIV should read this work and prayerfully consider the serious problems at hand. While we do not endorse his myopic approach to the text issue, we are glad that many good works exist that show how essential the text issue is to glorifying God and fulfilling the GC, which includes the work of translation.