



Research: What's Been Done – Part Two

Transcript of an interview with Dr. Paul Elliott, ASF president

Video available on our website

Most of Christian academia – and as a result, the evangelical church – has lost confidence that the authentic Word of God even exists. That is a shocking statement, but we found it is easy to prove.

How did academia and the church get into this mess? Who stood firm? Who compromised? How did the denials come? Where were the seeds of doubt sown? How long ago did it start? Where did it begin? How did it spread, and who was involved?

Read [part one](#) of this interview

What have the archives revealed? I'll just go into this a little bit. There's so much that we could talk about, but keep in mind that we're on a quest to find the answers to several big questions.

We wanted to understand how and when Christian academia and the church lost confidence in Authentic Scripture. How did we get into this mess? Who stood firm? Who compromised at different periods? How did the doubts come? How did the denials come? How long ago did it start? Where did it start? How did it spread? Who was involved?

A Massive Effort

Well, so far in our quest, we've photographed and scanned well over 120,000 pages of documents of various kinds. We've spent many hundreds of hours doing that. We've traveled thousands of miles. It's been intensive work. We often spend 12 to 15 hours a day in libraries doing this.

And once you gather everything, you're not done. You've just started. Now, you have to organize what you've found. You have to make it accessible, and you have to get yourself in a position so that in over 120,000 pages of material, you can find what you want to



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access as easily as possible. And so when we come back to the office, we have to organize everything in a very particular way so that we can use automated tools to search everything. And the tools are wonderful once you get everything in place so that the tools can take advantage of it.

If we're working with camera scans that we've made of printed documents, then we have tools we can use so that we can search everything by word or phrase. But if we're working with scans of handwritten documents – lots of those – or photographs, or we're working with films or sound recordings, then we have to build our own indexes of what they contain. We have to produce printable transcripts of the films and sound recordings.

Well, over the last several years, we've had summer interns, college students who have helped us do this, and their work has been made financially possible by churches and individuals who have a keen interest in what we're doing. They want to see the work go forward, and we're grateful for that.

Where We've Gone Thus Far

So, where have we gone so far? What have we found? Well, so far we've been to the libraries of ten major universities and seminaries in the United States, and we've made extended visits, repeat visits, to a number of them.

We began at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Then, the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Massachusetts near Boston. Harvard Divinity School near Boston, multiple times. Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut, multiple times. St. Olaf's College near Minneapolis turned out to be an excellent resource for some of the things that we were interested in. Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey; several trips there, more to come. Bob Jones University in South Carolina was a very, very good source for the history of the responses from the evangelical side. Wheaton College in Illinois; multiple trips there and more to come, the Lord willing. Union Seminary, New York City. Southeastern Seminary in North Carolina. Those are the ones we've been to so far.

What We Knew That Shaped the Search

And what did we find? Well, I should start with a little bit of background. In the 19th century, the Greek text of the New Testament that had been used for Bible translations since the late 1500s, that text was rejected by a very vocal British Anglican churchman named Fenton John Anthony Hort. And so Hort and a close associate of his named Brooke Foss Westcott, who was also an Anglican churchman, created their own Greek



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New Testament text, which subsequently has become known as the Critical Text. Since the second half of the 19th century, the text that they created has been used for the vast majority of Bible translations around the world in every language.

And I do mean that they literally *created* a text. The text that they created, the text that's used for the vast majority of Bible translations, doesn't look like any Greek manuscript that came before it. They invented it.

How did they do that? Well, they set up a system of arbitrary, manmade rules for judging the text of the Bible. They also developed a theory stating that the text of the Bible had evolved over time. And so they revised the text according to nine arbitrary rules that they invented, which supported their theory of textual evolution. That's just a brief capsule background of something much bigger, but it's enough to begin with.

A Glimpse at We've Found

We knew these things before we started our research. But what happened after they invented this? Our research expeditions began to show us how Christian scholars reacted to this development.

What did we find in the archives? What we examined, especially at Harvard and Yale, was very, very revealing. We found that American scholars bought into Westcott and Hort's theory, their rules. They agreed to use their text instead of the authentic text.

We also found that there are very strong parallels between the spread of the poison of Darwinism and evolutionary thinking in the natural realm and within Christian academia and the church, the spread of evolutionary thinking about the text of the Bible. The two were in parallel. And of course, evolutionary thinking – Darwinism – was making its way into Christian academia at the same time, while the men in both Britain and America who led the way on abandonment of Authentic Scripture were also leading the way on introducing Darwinism into Christian colleges and churches. They're introducing, on the one hand, biological and material Darwinism – evolution. On the other hand, they were also beginning to embrace and promote a theory of the evolution of the text of the Bible. The two things were happening simultaneously.

Our research has also amply demonstrated that most of the men who were responsible for introducing the corrupted Critical Text into Christian academia, into the church, into Bible translation, were not saved men. They weren't Christians regenerated by the Holy Spirit. In the United States in particular, most of the men who pushed for the adulteration of Scripture beginning in the 19th century, were either liberal



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Protestants or Unitarians. We saw this over and over in the historical documents that we examined. Men who did not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. They didn't believe that Jesus is God. Men who didn't believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, one God, three persons. Men who didn't believe that the Bible is historically factual. Men who didn't believe that the Bible is the only supernatural book, that holy men of God wrote as they were moved by God the Holy Spirit.

We also found evidence of longstanding and ongoing influence of the Vatican in the further evolution of the Critical Text, which began in the mid-1800s. But that evolution – manmade evolution of the Critical Text – actually continues today. There's a small group of scholars who continue that work today.

And under Vatican influence, the Critical Text is still being altered. What's behind that? What's behind it is a movement to create a “world Bible” which will be acceptable to all religions. That's an important point.

We also found that in the 1950s, the North American liberal council of churches, the National Council of Churches, spent the equivalent in today's terms of several million dollars on a massive publicity campaign, starting in the early 1950s and going through most of the decade. A massive publicity campaign to undermine confidence in the authentic text of the New Testament, and to replace it with trust in the work of the liberal scholars who had developed the Critical Text.

They used TV, radio, films, even stage plays, to sow the seeds of doubt. They sent speakers into every church that would have them, and a lot of the churches that invited them in were evangelical churches. And we found that many churches and colleges abandoned Authentic Scripture and embraced the counterfeit for another reason: so that they could participate in ecumenical endeavors with liberals and Roman Catholics, and so that their college and seminary professors could be accepted as peers by unbelieving scholars.

We found that the agenda to shape the text to conform to feminist agendas, and in more recent times LGBTQ agendas, all goes back much farther than most people realize. Farther back than I realized when we began.

We also found that the vast weight of evangelical response to these things, has been well-meaning but has in many cases been focused on the wrong issue. Evangelicals have mainly focused on which Bible version to use. And often they've focused on the wrong reasons for advocating a particular Bible version rather than focusing on the real issue



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– that liberal theologians have adulterated the text of the Bible, in particular the Greek of the New Testament. They have poisoned the tree at the roots. They have undermined the foundations. That's the critical issue.

An Example of the Detective Work: Ezra Abbot and Philip Schaff

Let me just mention one example of the kind of detective work that we got involved in. In 2015, we made our first research expedition to Harvard Divinity School Library. One of the special collections that we were permitted to examine contains the papers of a 19th century scholar named Ezra Abbott. Ezra Abbott worked and taught at Harvard Divinity School from 1856 until he died in 1884. Abbott was the teacher and mentor of many American scholars who took the lead in propagating the adulterated text of the New Testament in North America.

Ezra Abbott was a Unitarian – didn't believe in the Trinity; didn't believe in the deity of Christ; didn't believe in the inspiration of the Bible by God the Holy Spirit; took a skeptical view of the historical records of the Bible, a skeptical view of Jesus' miracles – and on and on.

Among the things that we discovered in the Harvard archives were two items that ended up uncovering a great deal for us. We found a letter dated June 3rd, 1871. It was written to Ezra Abbott by a scholar named Philip Schaff. A few hours after he wrote this letter, Philip Schaff boarded a ship to England. He talks about that in the letter – I'm getting ready to get on a ship to England. He was going there to meet with the ones who were involved, in Britain, in the adulteration of the Greek New Testament. Schaff wanted to bring their work to America. He wanted to promote it here. He wanted to produce a new version of the Bible based on this corrupted New Testament text.

In this letter to Abbott, Philip Schaff mentioned that he wanted to publish in book form the lectures that Ezra Abbott delivered to his students at Harvard each year on what Abbott called “the art of criticism of the text of the New Testament.”

We need to keep in mind who Philip Schaff was and what his agenda was. Philip Schaff was not a saved man. He was a theologian, but he was not a saved man. He was a church historian as well. Philip Schaff advocated a theology that said that the world would be saved not by the *work* of Christ, but by the *person* of Christ.

When you divorce the saving *work* of Jesus Christ from the *person* of Jesus Christ, that's not a mere technicality. What you are doing is opening the door to a broad ecumenicalism, and that's exactly what Philip Schaff wanted. Philip Schaff is recognized



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by biographers and church historians as the father of the ecumenical movement to bring Protestantism and Roman Catholicism together. He wanted that reunion. He wanted to promote a world religion.

And in Schaff's view, a world religion required a "world Bible" – a Bible that would be acceptable to all religions, that eliminated the things that would be objectionable to any religion. And so that's why Schaff promoted the Critical Text. He promoted the adulteration of the text of the New Testament because he wanted to promote a world church.

Well, I began searching for the book that Schaff mentioned in his letter to Abbott, and I found that it was never published. I looked through all the records of the books that Ezra Abbott had written that were published. This was not among them, nothing of that description. Abbott died before Philip Schaff was able to carry out his plan to publish it, as we found out.

I thought we'd come to a dead end. But the next day we opened another container of the Harvard archives, and we discovered a bound handwritten volume, over 600 pages, which was the draft of the book that Ezra Abbott had written that Philip Schaff had intended to publish, but never did.

What did we find in that book? We found, in his own words, detailed evidence that Ezra Abbott denied the deity of Christ, didn't believe in the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture by God the Holy Spirit, took a very naturalistic view of the Bible. It evidenced clearly that Ezra Abbott was not a saved man. But Ezra Abbott exerted a major influence as a teacher and a mentor on the next generation of men who brought the corrupted text, the Critical Text of the New Testament, to the United States, where it became the text that's been used for the vast majority of Bible translations around the world in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Well, we had to leave Harvard a few hours after we discovered this unpublished book because we had an appointment to spend the next two days in the special collections at Yale in Connecticut. So we had some driving to do to get to Yale. We didn't have time to get into the kind of detail that we wanted to with Ezra Abbott's book. But we're at Yale, we're working on other things. And my wife's with me, a tremendous research helper. She's there working on things, and she said, "We've got to go back to Harvard before we go home. We've got to make a digital scan of that whole book because it's going to be really important."



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I wasn't crazy about the idea of driving back to Harvard, and I wasn't crazy about the ideal of digitally scanning a fragile 600-page handwritten book. But I knew she was right. We needed to go back to Harvard. So I called the archivist at Harvard while we're sitting in the library at Yale and asked, "Could we come back tomorrow and work with the Abbot book?" And she said, "I was just getting ready to put it back in storage. But I'll keep it out if you can come back tomorrow." "Fine. Done. We'll be there."

And so we went back and we spent a day carefully photographing that entire book. My wife carefully held the pages open, and I operated the camera. And in order to get it all, and to get it just right, to do a 600-page book took about a thousand shots. It was a good solid day's work.

I asked the archivist if anybody else had ever looked at this book, and she said, "I cannot recall that anybody else has ever asked to see this. Certainly nobody else has ever photographed it." And so I told her, "Well, for the work that we're doing – and I could tell even as we were going through it as I was photographing it – this is a real find. This is a historical gold mine." And so it has been. What we found in Abbott's book opened up several other avenues of research for us. One of our summer interns read the Abbott book and made a detailed table of contents of the entire book, which has been extremely useful.

Why This Research Is Important

Well, that's just one example of the kinds of things that we've discovered. One of the things that we want to do is place these evidences before Christian educators and pastors and church members so that they can understand what happened, and why it happened. How did Christian academia go wrong? How did the evangelical church get into the state that it's in? How was Bible translation corrupted on a global scale? And what has that meant? And who stood firm in opposition to those who compromised? How did all those denials come? How were the seeds of doubt sown?

I think that's an important thing, especially, for Christian parents to understand as they think about their children, their young people, their grandchildren. How do the seeds of doubt come? How are they sown? How can we recognize that? How can we arm our young people against that? So we need to continue to do this research, and we need to publish this research in order to God willing help to turn the tide of doubt about the word of God, and restore confidence in Authentic Scripture.



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