

**Charity...rejoiceth in the Truth:  
A Critique of Schnaiter and Tagliapietra's  
*Bible Preservation and the Providence of God***

**Dr. Thomas M. Strouse**

**INTRODUCTION**

David Beale, in observing the inherent weakness of soft conservatives' capitulation to Neo-Liberalism in their churches in the 1930's, states, "The tolerant conservatives were quite willing to accept peaceful coexistence, though most did not realize that it would mean gradual extinction for them." (*In Pursuit of Purity* [Greenville, SC: Unusual Publication, 1986], p. 245). Peaceful coexistence with those who deny the Biblical doctrine of verbal plenary preservation of the Words of God is certainly not what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he warned Timothy, stating,

*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: **from such withdraw thyself** [all bold the reviewer's] (I Tim. 6:3-5)*

Exemplary of the capitulation to theological error is the recent book entitled *Bible Preservation and the Providence of God* (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corp., 2002, 349 pp.) by Bob Jones University professor Sam Schnaiter and Bob Jones University writer Ron Tagliapietra. These authors, holding to different textual views, give an informative and perhaps helpful survey of seven textual theories, including representative proponents and translations, in the field of the transmission of the Bible text. However, this volume is both revealing and alarming as it purports to discuss Bible preservation and the transmission of the text. It is revealing in that it demonstrates the apparent need that Bob Jones University has to give the final warning ("Christians espousing the KJV Only view should protect themselves against the charge of heresy by not majoring on **minor issues**," p. 165) and the last word ("Is there not a place for charitability amongst Christians... We submit this book with the hope that God will be glorified for inspiration, preservation, and providence, and that God's people will focus on obeying His Word instead of arguing over **trivia**," pp. 280-281) on the subject of Bible texts and translations. It also reveals the desire for BJU to target fundamental churches that use the KJV and reassure them concerning the supposed orthodoxy of their faculty in Bibliology. This book alarms by exposing several weaknesses of the Bible faculty of BJU and other Bible schools of their textual ilk. The readers of the book should be alarmed because it manifests the deficiency of the Critical Text advocates to exegete Scripture for their Bibliological arguments. Second, it reveals the obdurate attitude of the Critical Text devotees toward the TR/KJV proponents who do exegete Scripture for their position (i. e., E. Hills, D.

Waite, and D. Cloud). Third, it emphasizes the limits of human scholarship in restoring the Words of God since only three (conservative eclecticism, majority text, independent text) of the seven textual theories (the remaining four are radical eclecticism, critical eclecticism, *textus receptus*, and King James Version Only) may be “offered to the readers for mature consideration” (p. 182). Fourth, it suggests that the allies of the position of the book are moving further into the Neo-Orthodox practice of “term changing” while pleading for charity (p. 120). Fifth, the authors attribute to the Lord Jesus Christ a cavalier attitude toward the Biblical doctrine of inerrancy by alleging that “he (sic) called the extant copies **inspired** in spite of any ‘**typos**’ in them” (p. 26). These men have the audacity to declare that the Lord Jesus Christ taught the doctrine of “inspired typos” (= inspired errors)!? The omniscient Lord Jesus, Who is the Truth (Jn. 14:6), never questioned the pure Words of the truth of the preserved OT (Prov. 30:5-6; Ps. 19:9), referred to the OT as truth (Mk 12:14; Lk. 4:25; Jn. 17:17), and bore witness to the truth (Jn. 16:7; 18:37). To suggest that the Lord’s view on the inerrancy of the OT was an “errant inerrancy” position of inspired and preserved errors (“typos”) is not only an example of blatant Neo-Orthodoxy but of horrific blasphemy.

## WEAKNESSES

### Neo-Orthodox Tendencies

Persistent and pernicious errors, which must be repudiated with Scripture, permeate this volume. Beginning with the most serious error facing fundamentalism, this reviewer focuses on the fact that Schnaiter deliberately rejects the Biblical identification of the “Word” of God with the “Words” of God and espouses that God’s Word refers to the “Message” of God’s Word and not to the precise wording (p. 284). This book by professed fundamentalists is an example of the escalating tendency toward the Neo-Orthodox practice to re-define what is the Word of God. In contrast, the Lord Jesus Christ identified the Words of the Father with the Word of God (Jn. 17:8, 17) and promised the preservation of His Words (= Word). Again He said, “*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not **my words** (remata), hath one that judgeth him: the **word** (logos) that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day* (Jn. 12:48). The Just God of the Bible will judge all mankind with the canonical **Words**, not merely the message, He has preserved for every generation since their inscripturation. Again, Luke identified the Words of God with the Word of God in Peter’s preached sermon, which was eventually inscriptured (Act. 10:44; I Pet. 1:23-25).

Another example of this re-defining of terms (Neo-Orthodoxy) manifests in the statement “every Christian is a textual critic” (p. 29). This nonsensical statement is not only Biblically wrong (where were the textual critics in the Ephesian church who were to preserve the Book of Revelation for the six other churches [Rev. 2-3, 22]?) but historically insensitive. The Biblical criticism movement of the 17<sup>th</sup> century spawned the critical discipline designated “textual criticism” with its various canons or axioms. No Christian walks into a Christian bookstore and says “I am going to apply Axiom #1 ‘the oldest is best’ and Axiom #2 ‘the hardest is preferred’ to my selection of a translation.”

## Imprecise Definitions

In Schnaiter's brief and rather elementary discussion of the process and product of inspiration, he seems to indicate that the originals were inspired (pp. 15-20). Indeed, *theopneustos* ("is given by inspiration of God") is a very technical word and can only refer to the *autographa*. However, Schnaiter says in conclusion "we need never be ashamed to hold up **an English Bible** and declare 'this is the **inspired** Word of God'" (p. 67). This loose usage of "inspired" is Ruckmanism *redivivus*, and if Schnaiter's statement is true, then there is no need for *Bible Preservation and the Providence of God*.

With regard to the doctrine of preservation, Schnaiter gives another Biblically imprecise definition, stating, "These passages [Ps. 119:89-90, 160; Isa. 40:8; Mt. 4:4; 5:18; 24:35] give us every right to believe that those who want God's Word are not now, nor ever will be, **substantially** without the Word of God" (pp. 23-24). The promises of Scripture are far more precise: "*The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever*" (Ps. 12:6-7). The Lord has promised the preservation of every jot and tittle, not merely a substantial amount of His Words (Mt. 5:18).

## Bible De-Emphasis

One would think a book with Bible preservation in the title would deal with what the Bible says about preservation. However, Schnaiter and Tagliapietra devote two paragraphs, maybe four, to any explication, and sophomoric at that, of verses dealing with preservation (pp. 21, 23-24), in a 349 page book. The book really gives what man says about preservation and what theories man attempts to use to determine the exact Biblical wording (pp. 25-183). Although the authors may be credited with bringing together seven "theories" for evaluation, ultimately they can not state which "theory" is correct, nor do they demonstrate the Biblical foundation of the five theories which require Textual Criticism (the *Textus Receptus* and KJV Only "theories" excluded).

## Unproved Assumptions

Part and parcel of the Critical Text position is the unproved assumption that Christ and the Apostles quoted or cited the Greek OT (cf. pp. 26; 120; 181; *et al*). The Bible teaches neither the example nor the necessity of Christ and the Apostles using the *LXX*. In fact, the Bible argues against this false assumption. The Lord taught that the Scripture He used was the preserved Hebrew OT ("is written" *gegraptai*) which had jots and tittles and the three-fold Tenak division (*Torah, Nabiim, Kethubim*) starting with Genesis and ending with II Chronicles (Mt. 4:4; 5:18; Lk. 24:44; Jn. 11:50-51, respectively). When He and the Apostles dealt with Jews and Gentiles, they used the appropriate Hebrew OT Scriptures or their Greek NT words. In fact, the example the authors put forward to prove that Christ "quoted" the *LXX* was His citation of Ps. 8:2 in Mt. 21:16. But their own words disprove their assumption since Schnaiter and Tagliapietra state that the Lord quoted the Hebrew when speaking to "Hebrew speaking

Jews,” who were His audience in this case (v. 15) as “chief priests and scribes” (p. 65). The historical evidence for the pre-Christian *LXX* is suspect and unconvincing, and cannot pre-empt this Biblical teaching, the KJV translators notwithstanding (p. 205).

Although the texts and translations differ in words, Schnaiter assumes that “no doctrine is lost” (p. 122), “no doctrinal variations arise” (p. 263), and “differences...never affect doctrine” (p. 247). Schnaiter attempts to assure his readership that although there remains doubt as to the exact wording of 12.5% of the NT, about 7.5% of these differences are insignificant, stating “None of these variants affect (sic) meaning much less doctrine” (p. 83). How can he be sure that no doctrine is affected since doctrine is built upon precise words (e.g., Gal. 3:16). In fact the doctrine of verbal, plenary preservation is lost if the Words are lost (Mt. 24:35; Jn. 12:48). These assumptions must be proved Biblically, and of course, they cannot.

The authors assume that there is Biblical value in Textual Criticism. They state, “Textual Criticism is the comparison of manuscripts with the goal of eliminating ‘typos’ and obtaining a copy of the autographs. Textual Criticism seeks to find the true history of God’s providence over His Word” (p. 29). This view assumes that Christ did not promise to preserve His Words and man’s responsibility is to restore them by applying the axioms of Textual Criticism to the mass of manuscript evidence. The Bible teaches that God has promised to preserve His perfect Words and man’s responsibility is to recognize (Jn. 10:27), receive (Jn. 17:8, 20; Acts 2:41, 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; I Thess. 2:13), preserve (Mt. 28:20; Rev. 22:7-11), and obey God’s Words (Dt. 4:6; 5:1; 7:12; 12:28; 28:1; 29:9; Heb. 5:9). The Apostle Paul believed this Bible teaching since he never instructed Timothy in any principles of Textual Criticism to be passed on to future generations (cf. II Tim. 2:2). Paul was opposed to things such as “manuscript evidence” since it cannot “build up believers” (p. 11) but ministers “*questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith*” (I Tim. 1:4).

### **Neglected Biblical Means**

These authors chant the popular mantra that God did not reveal the “means” or the “how” of Bible preservation (pp. 26-33). And yet the Bible is profoundly clear on the teaching that the Lord used His people, the Jews of the OT (Rom. 3:1-2), and the Baptist churches of the NT, to preserve His Words. The Lord’s Great Commission, organized around at least three significant parts of speech (imperative, three participles, and an infinitive), mandated that His disciples “teach” all nations, “go[ing],” “baptizing,” and “teaching,” with the purpose of these baptized church members “to observe,” guard, or preserve Christ’s Words (Mt. 28:19-20). Paul confirms this theological interpretation (I Tim. 3:15) and several other passages give Biblically historical examples (Col 4:16; Rev. 22:16). Failure to receive and believe the integrative role of Ecclesiology in Bibliology severely limits one’s understanding of what the Lord Jesus Christ has stated about the preservation of His Words. The Lord’s immersionist churches have recognized, received, and preserved both the NT canonical Books and canonical Words of the Books, while at the same time rejected the false canonical books (II Thess. 2:2) and false canonical words (II Pet. 3:16; Rev. 1:3-7; 22:7-19).

## **Internal Inconsistencies**

Several inherent inconsistencies in the book are worth pointing out. The authors seem to approve of the KJV translators who advocated that “All translations (even poor ones) are the Word of God and deserve respect” (p. 319), while condemning the TEV and NWT for their deliberate theological bias (p. 264). Furthermore, they state that the subject of bibliology is “an enormously important matter” (p. 7) while calling the same subject “trivia” (p. 281). Even more egregious is their blatant perverseness in stating, on the one hand, that the Radical Eclecticism theory “cannot identify the autographic text” and “leaves doubt as to whether the true wording can be known at all” (p. 180), and then asserting, across from this page, that “all seven modern theories are orthodox and viable” (p. 181).

## **Attitude toward KJV Only**

The tenor of this book is both patronizing toward and condemning of the KJV Only advocates. The authors pontificate, stating “the KJV Only position, then, displays serious weaknesses but need not be heretical...Some...remain ‘quietly convinced’ and do not make it a test of fellowship...While the exact inspired-English wording sounds comforting, God expects study, comparing thought and preaching with Scripture, and even comparing Scripture with Scripture. Such demands ensure that Christians get the tenor of Scripture and will not be ensnared by some copyist’s error or translators quirk...” (p 163.) Schnaiter’s Critical Text view places him in an awkward position. Dr. Schnaiter, professor of NT Language and Literature and chair of the Ancient Languages Dept. at BJU, needs to appeal to fundamental churches that use the KJV, which position his book openly denigrates, for students because churches which use the other theories’ translations (RSV, NEB, NIV, NAS), if available, are either liberal or few and far between. Pastors of KJV Only churches should beware that their pastoral students going to Critical Text Bible colleges and seminaries will undoubtedly be indoctrinated in Custer’s conservative eclecticism and Schnaiter’s totality of manuscript text criticism.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Bible explicitly teaches that God has promised to preserve His Words (Ps. 12:6-7; Mt. 4:4; 5:18; 24:35). It teaches Satan’s ongoing attack on the Lord’s Words (Gen. 3:1 ff.; II Thess. 2:2; II Pet. 3:16), and that local Baptist churches are currently responsible to guard His Words from the demonic attack (Mt. 28:19-20; I Tim. 3:15; Col. 4:16; Rev. 22:16). Schnaiter and Tagliapietra reject these Biblical doctrines and are therefore, severely benighted toward and heavily handicapped from producing a book on Bible preservation. They reject these Biblical claims because they do not think history verifies the promises of God. To them historical evidence must have the last word (pp. 25; 28; *et al*). For the fundamental Christian, one’s faith is based on what the Bible teaches, not on what “historical evidence” seems to teach. The Lord Jesus Christ said, “*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*” (Jn. 20:29; cf. Heb. 11:1-3).

It appears that Prof. Schnaiter and his colleagues would rather reject the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ and remain under the cloud of the charge of Neo-orthodoxy.

Can the Christian co-exist with those who deny the clear promises of the Bible about verbal, plenary preservation of the Words of God? If the believer will not heed the Pauline warning about withdrawing from Bibliological unbelief (I Tim. 6:3-5), will he at least learn from history, as Beale observed, and recognize he can not co-exist with Neo-Orthodoxy? Is this review un-loving? Was Paul un-loving when he rebuked the Apostle Peter (Gal 2:11-14)? Paul said, *Charity...rejoiceth in the truth* (I Cor. 13:6).