

*The
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Biblical Studies*

**The Strange About-Face of the New American Standard Version
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The Lockman Foundation-the publishers of the NASB-have gone back to the drawing board and revised their product to keep it in step with the modern, ever sifting consensus within the discipline of New Testament Text Criticism. The original edition of the NASB was based on the 23rd edition of the Nestle/Aland Greek N.T. text. The current, "Updated" version of the NASB has been brought into conformity with the 26th edition of this same Greek Text.

This move, while typical of the programmed obsolescence of "modern translations" was intended to keep their product viable; it only helps to reinforce the most telling critique of this movement: namely, that this independent, corporate, private bible editorial and publishing activity has no external constraints and as the Greek N.T. remains in constant flux, so do the English bibles. These bibles are in lockstep with this ongoing experiment of trying to discover the "real" text of the Bible, an experiment that is now in its 27th try (1993). Hence, even this latest edition of the NASB (1995) still lags behind the most current textual consensus being based as it is on the now-out-of-date 26th ed.

The main difference between these two editions of the NASB will be seen in the shift in judgment by the Editorial Board, from accepting the Westcott and Hort theory regarding the so-called, Western Non-Interpolations, in the first edition, to finally rejecting this theory in its current Updated Edition (for a brief treatment of this subject of the Western Non-Interpolations, please see my "Theodore Beza as Text Critic: A View Into the 16th Century Approach to New Testament Text Criticism," in Theodore P. Letis, ed. *The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate* 2nd ed. [Philadelphia: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 2000], pp.140-144). This has resulted in their placing back into the text, several doctrinally substantive readings in Luke's Gospel, regarded by an earlier Editorial Board to be no part of the inspired text. One of these passages dealt with the ascension of Christ. The original NASB left this ascension account out, claiming it was not found in the

best witnesses. They have now, forty years later, put the ascension back into the text, thus bringing the NASB closer in conformity to the original Protestant Textus Receptus Greek N.T. underlying the King James Bible.

As embarrassing as this might be, we must now ask the Lockman Foundation, at what point did it become evident to them that the ascension should now be reconsidered as part of the inspired account written by Luke? I can answer for them: as of the discovery of papyrus⁷⁵, (p⁷⁵), a very early third century witness to the validity of this ascension account. This papyrus was discovered in the 1950s, just about the time that the NASB project was getting off the ground (translation work began on the NASB in 1959). The NASB New Testament portion appeared in stages between 1960 and 1963, but the entire bible did not materialize until 1971 and as with the current Updated Edition of the NASB which already lags behind the most current edition of the Greek N.T., 27th ed., the original NASB N.T. edition never took full advantage of this new evidence (p⁷⁵ was first published in 1961, thus affording them plenty of time to adjust their text to this new data--a photograph of the very passage in question as found in this 3rd century papyrus document can be seen in Aland/ Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* trans. By E.F. Rhodes [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], p.91). Rather, based on a 19th century theory about the text--which had by the Fifties been rejected by most N.T. text critics at any rate--the Lockman Foundation chose, nonetheless, to lock onto antiquated evidence, rather than be responsive to the most recent developments, even though this resulted in their dispensing with the ascension account in the Gospel of Luke! This reveals the lack of piety and respect the Editorial Board of the Lockman Foundation had for the text of Scripture. A bible translation project, once begun, cannot conveniently alter course, because it is like a large ocean liner which once in full sail cannot easily be stopped and expected to turn around and return to port without disappointing the financial investors (i.e., those who have purchased a ticket). For all the rhetoric about superior scholarship, in reality this factor tends to take a back seat to financial considerations in the world of the corporate boardroom bible.

The only question left to ask is this: If the ascension account in Luke, found in every edition of the English Bible from Wycliffe (cir. 1380-1384), until the liberal RSV (1946), was no longer considered inspired Scripture by the conservatives who produced the first NASB (1960-1995) which resulted in its removal from the text, how long can we now expect it to remain in the current edition, before the evidence shifts again and this precious passage is once more removed from the inspired canon?

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