

October 1, 1994

The Reverend Lewis W. Kisenwether
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Dear Reverend Kisenwether:

Thank you for your letter and kind words in response to my presentations at the ABCNJ last weekend. My response to your questions will have to be brief, but I trust they will be sufficient for your interests.

Question 1: "Why juggle the letters?"

My wanting to shift the ך one space to the right is not motivated by the textual variants in 2 Kings 22:14 and 2 Chron 34:22, per se, although there are some interesting variations between Kings and Chronicles. Did you note these variations? Kings reads:

אִשֶׁת שָׁלֹם בְּנֵי-תִקְוָה בֶן-חַרְחָס שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים וְהִיא יֹשֶׁבֶת

But Chronicles has:

אִשֶׁת שָׁלֹם בְּנֵי-תִקְוָהּ בֶן-חַסְרָה שׁוֹמֵר הַבְּגָדִים וְהִיא יֹשֶׁבֶת

Within the brief period between the writing of Kings and Chronicles differences appeared in the tradition over the names of Shallum's father (or mother) and grandfather. The תִּקְוָהּ of Chronicles in the Leningrad codex and Biblia Hebraica is a misspelling! Note the absence of a *shewa* under the *waw*. Moreover, תִּקְוָהּ ends with a ך which is most commonly a feminine ending, suggesting that it is the name of Shallum's mother rather than his father (and this is equally true of King's תִּקְוָה which is a feminine noun, treated only here and in Ezra 10:15 as a male's name). The manuscript evidence has the following variant spellings of תִּקְוָהּ, namely תִּקְוָה, תִּקְוָה, תִּקְוָה, תִּקְוָה, and תִּקְוָה. Similarly, the name Harhas (חַרְחָס, with 10 manuscripts reading חַרְחָס) in Kings becomes Hasdah (חַסְרָה) in Chronicles, with other manuscripts having חַסְרָה or חַסְרָה. In addition, there is the difference between שֹׁמֵר and שׁוֹמֵר.

Obviously, this kind of textual data does not lend itself to the "popular" type of Bible study I was expected to give at the ABCNJ annual meeting. But since you asked "Why juggle the letters?" you need

to know that scribes over the past 2,000 years juggled many letters in these two texts; and some current translations (e.g., TEV and NEB, in contrast with the RSV, NAS) still juggle the letters to make the names here in Kings and Chronicles read the same way.

My shifting a *space* to the left is a minor variation in light of all the variants introduced by other scribes and translators over the many years. Since they did not keep the letters perfectly, must we assume that they kept the spaces perfectly? Why do some modern translations juggle the names in Chronicles so that they conform to Kings and not vice versa? My conjecture that the Hebrew originally had a feminine participle rather than a masculine participle is rooted in the question, "Why did the king and high priest choose Huldah, rather than Jeremiah or Ezekiel?" Why did she outrank her male counterparts? All three had the same title of prophet/prophetess. Do note that the king did not summon her to his court; rather his highest emissaries went to her residence. Why did she receive such respect from the crown? What was here unique qualification?

Juggling the space is warranted *only* because the word כְּלָיִם can mean other things than "clothes." There would be no advantage to shifting the space if it were simply making Huldah the *tailor* rather than her husband. But since כְּלָיִם can mean "true tradition, essentials of faith" as well as "clothes," the options for interpretation increase significantly. Were Shallum the "keeper of the tradition" (reading the masculine participle of the Hebrew text) then the question becomes "Why in the world was he not consulted by king and high priest, instead of his wife?" Once the space is shifted, the answer becomes obvious! Not only was she the prophetess, but she was the "guardian of the tradition." (In my study on the "Song of Deborah" [published in Jerusalem in 1983] I argued that the key to resolving the enigmas of Judges 5 is the redivision of 17 words or spaces in that one chapter.)

Question 2: "What if . . . conservatives juggle?"

Yes. I would be open to such an interpretation, assuming it is convincing. Such a juggled text could be added to a host of other texts, which without juggling, speak against women (in leadership). But then I would still have to wrestle with the *priesthood* of all believers and the *prophethood* of some women like Huldah. Some Biblical texts support a woman's role in leadership; some Biblical texts do not support a woman's role in leadership. It is dishonest to ignore either part of the Biblical tradition on this issue. One more text either way is not going to compel anyone to change one's mind. Since there is great diversity in the Biblical traditions, the crucial issue becomes how do we handle that diversity. Juggling texts either way does not solve this problem of diversity, nor settle the issue of women in ministry.

In my opinion there is a leadership role to be played by *all* Christians of *both* genders in this world of sinners. Once the world is saved through the ministry of *all* disciples, then male Christians may risk the consequences of excluding some from ministry. But in the meantime, in Christ there is ". . . neither male nor female, bond or free" and *all* are needed to minister to their maximum. *All* Christians have been empowered (following Joel 2:28–29) by the Spirit to prophesy. How dare anyone try to silence a daughter whom the Spirit has gifted for prophecy. Even "maidservants" are destined for ministry by the Spirit. Consequently, in my opinion, a good student of the Bible must face the diversity of 2 Timothy 2:11 and Joel 2:28–29 or any other verse juggled to fit either side of the debate.

Blood guilt for the unsaved may be on the hands of those who would deny women their responsibility or opportunity to comply with the great commission. To get the whole Gospel to the whole world, we in ministry need all the help we can get. *As male Christians we are increasingly failing to get the job done.* There are more unsaved people in the world today than ever before, and yet some folks in

the church actually want to cut the work force. May God forgive us for our chauvinism, for the price of our failure is staggering when you think of all that is *not* being done by male Christians! Instead of using all energies to spread the Gospel, too many are fighting over leadership roles in the church—much like the disciples debating which of them would be regarded as the greatest (Luke 22:24).

Question 3: “Baptist concept about original texts . . . ?”

Yes! However, since no one has an “original” text, your question begs the question. Students need to discover and affirm the authority of Scripture and define its inspiration with knowledge of the variants in the texts and with a critical awareness of conflicting *translations* and *interpretations*. Bible production is now “market driven” with Bibles being marketed as though they were hamburgers or hot dogs. Translators play to different constituencies and publishers put a spin on the cover and the text in a quest for market share and bottom line profits. Bible promotions are all too frequently profit-driven, not prophet-driven. We may not have the original texts, but we do have the original languages. Knowledge of these languages is the key to reliability. I appreciate the way you went to the Hebrew text to check out my reliability! Too few clergy and too few of the laity are prepared to do what you have done. Translators frequently remove the diversity and the ambiguities which the Spirit included or has, at least, permitted!

I seek to teach all my students at least two essential tenets about the Bible; namely,

- (I.) The Bible is the authoritative and inspired word of God about (1) the divine will and the divine way and (2) our human condition.
- (II.) Whatever blossoms in the light of the cross/love of Christ is the word of God about the divine way and the divine will; and whatever withers in the light of the cross/love of Christ is the word of God about our human condition.

On every page and with every chapter and verse we must ask the question “Which part of the revelation is this text?” It is all inspired. It is all authoritative. But we need to be extremely careful that we do not confuse the two components of the revelation. Christians who cannot tell the difference between the two parts of the revelation need to get closer to the cross! In Christ the difference has been made perfectly clear! The Living Word clarified the written word!

Well this has become longer than I had expected. Thank you for taking the time to write. Feel free to respond, but I may not have the time to keep up with a running dialogue. I would be please to meet you if and when you get to our campus.

שלום וברכות בשם ישוע!

Sincerely yours,

Thomas F. McDaniel