

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

### Episode 130

### Conference Interviews, Part 3

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**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

**Guests: David Burnett (DB), Dr. Lynn Cohick (LC), and Dr. Peter Gurry (PG)**

### Episode Summary

During the recent annual meetings for biblical studies scholars held in San Antonio, Dr. Heiser interviewed a number of scholars about their recent work. In Part 3 of those interviews, we hear again from David Burnett, a familiar voice on the podcast, and meet Dr. Lynn Cohick (New Testament professor at Wheaton College) and Dr. Peter Gurry (New Testament textual critic, blogger at the [Evangelical Textual Criticism blog](#)).

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 130, "Conference Interviews, Part 3." (Or Part Trey, as I should say!) I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser.

**MH:** (Laughing) Yeah, you sound like a scholar there, Trey. That's the kind of academese you're going to here hear.

**TS:** It's what I bring to the table here.

**MH:** Well... Part 3. Again, more good interviews. We have David Burnett (of course, no stranger to the podcast). David is going to talk about some sort of additions to his paper, some other research avenues that he's on. Then Lynn Cohick from Wheaton. She teaches at Wheaton. She's a New Testament scholar and she has a new book coming out on women in the Early Church in the Patristic Era. Then Peter Gurry is our third interview. Peter is a New Testament textual critic—intimately involved with digitization of manuscripts—finding and, in some cases discovering, new manuscripts with Dan Wallace and his Center for New Testament Manuscripts. So again, another good line-up.

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**MH:** Our first interview at SBL (Society of Biblical Literature) meeting is none other than David Burnett. He's no stranger to listeners of the podcast. So David, what's up? What are you going to be doing here? Let's talk a little bit about your plans, and of course, your paper.

**DB:** Yeah, hey, hey, Mike! Plans... Well, I'm presenting my paper Monday in the 1:00 session of the "Systematic Transformation and Interweaving of Scripture in 1 Corinthians" seminar. The seminar is called, "Death, Resurrection, and Transformation in Scripture in 1 Corinthians 15." So, like I did on Episode 95 (I believe it was)... that's the paper I had already given at the regional SBL. So now I'm giving it in a seminar and it'll receive responses from scholars like Raymond Collins, Roy Champa, David Litva... Some others are in that session, so it should be really enjoyable. The papers look really insightful, so I'm excited to participate in that. There's been some cool developments, I think, in the project since we last spoke.

**MH:** What's something new you're going to throw at them?

**DB:** Well, in the last episode I remember talking about the creature list in Deuteronomy 4, the aniconic passage about not making any graven images because you didn't see "my form" in the cloud or the fire. And he says don't make any graven images of any form. And it's *eikon*, "the image." These are the same terms used in the Septuagint for Genesis for the image of God, you know, "made in the image of God." Well, he says not to make any of any image and then he says, "the likeness of" and he goes from male and female all the way down to the fish of the sea. And then he says to point to the heavens. What's interesting about this passage that I didn't really spend much time on last time is that there's no command not to make graven images of the celestial bodies. The command is just not to worship them. So not only is it asserting their ontology—that they exist, that they're gods to be worshiped—but they *aren't* to be worshiped. The reason Deuteronomy gives (this is the interesting part that I did not see originally—a connection to 1 Corinthians 15 that now I do)... Paul is drawing on more than just the list. He says, "Don't worship those gods because I'm the God that pulled you out of the furnace (out of Egypt) to be my elected people." So what's the significance in the midst of a passage about not making graven images to be going through the furnace, right? What's the significance? *They* are being made the image!

**MH:** So you're taking it as a reference to the method.

**DB:** Yes! So what's interesting about the...

**MH:** They do draw in both directions.

**DB:** Right! So Deuteronomy 4 opens with not making graven images because you didn't see my form in the cloud of fire, and it ends with, "Don't do this because I'm taking you through the furnace and making them an image."

**MH:** It's really interesting, the whole "the furnace," which would have been part of the process of making an idol.

**DB:** Exactly.

5:00

**MH:** So it's negatively stated and then positively that the people have essentially been "made the image" of Yahweh.

**DB:** That's right! And that was the point in Exodus.

**MH:** The furnace, yeah.

**DB:** Exactly. And this is the point, to make them the image. But this is the whole Christological narrative in the New Testament, as well, with the New Exodus. That you go "down into death," purging the world of sin and then coming out the other side in Exodus. Luke's gospel, for example, explicitly says right in the Transfiguration of Jesus (surprise, surprise—being transformed bodily), he says what they were discussing on the mountain (and Luke is the only one that says it) is his *exodos*, his exodus that he will accomplish in Jerusalem. Going down into death and then out the other side. So that is shaping him ultimately and restoring the image of God, the celestial glorified humanity over all the angels. And this is exactly why Paul is drawing on this Deuteronomy 4 passage, I suggest, because it begins in the same way with a kind of *inclusio*, like, "What kind of body will they have? How will it come?" Right? That's the question. "How will it be made? How will it be constructed."

**MH:** By dying and coming out on the other side.

**DB:** Yeah. And it ends with making an image or an icon! "You once bore the *eikon* of the earthly man, but now you'll bear the *eikon* of the heavenly man, the celestial man." It's a new image.

**MH:** And you can see how it works both ways. Idolatry leads to death, and that's where you stay, as opposed to death leading to glorification. That's really good!

Now you sent me a reference to a passage in *The Testament of Naphtali*.

**DB:** Yeah—about Romans 1.

**MH:** Well, that's not really the paper then. Or do you want to get into that?

**DB:** Well, it's not my paper, but it is interesting. We can talk about it!

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**MH:** Yeah, well let's throw that out, because I think people will find this interesting.

**DB:** I think so.

**MH:** Other than your paper, you've been tracking on something to do with Romans 1 that's the result of a friend of yours and his work. So just give us the brief overview of that.

**DB:** So the brief overview of that is, I have a friend named Jeremiah Bailey, who is a PhD student in New Testament at Baylor. Real smart guy. We had met in Waco and we were at a coffee shop and we were having some conversation about papers and projects we're working on. He had done a seminar paper for Beverly Gaventa at Baylor. I hope he's okay with me sharing this! (laughing) I'm going to share it anyway.

**MH:** Only tens of thousands of people... (laughing)

**DB:** Sorry for not asking first, Jeremiah! I'm giving you the credit for this, okay?

**MH:** Just give us the basics. You don't need to get into the grunt work.

**DB:** Right. So basically, he had suggested in a paper what I thought was a brilliant idea: that there's a passage in Romans 1 about exchanging... The sexual stuff in Romans 1 and the Fall, that we normally... When it's read, it's normally seen as kind of lesbian stuff and gay sex.

**MH:** Yeah, women exchanging the natural... and then men with men.

**DB:** Exchanging the natural and then men with men. It's a really explicit text. But Jeremiah had a really interesting reading of this that I hadn't heard before. When it says in verse 24:

**<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.**

**<sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.**

10:00

**DB:** So traditionally, you'll have scholars say that the women and the men... This is kind of homosexual relations between women and homosexual relations between men. Well, Jeremiah suggested (and I think he's right on this) that the order is significant here. When it mentions the women exchanging natural relations for those that are contrary to nature, it never says "for other women." And that's a significant point. For the men it does—exchanging for men. But the first one doesn't. And this language, "contrary to nature"... This you find in the text. You mentioned *Testament of Naphtali*. In chapter 3, it mentions this abrogation of nature that happened when the Watchers came in to the daughters of men. And that happens first, and then the Sodom story where the men are with men.

**MH:** There's a chronology there.

**DB:** There's a chronology there. *Naphtali* flips them and does Sodom first and then the Watchers, but they're paired dyadically, which is a common tradition in the Judgment traditions and Second Temple, and in particular Apocalyptic tradition, that we see in the New Testament.

**MH:** Yeah, I've seen the passage in Peter... This is, again, one of the options there. But I've never seen it with Romans 1.

**DB:** So that's the suggestion in Romans 1, about the "unnatural relations." Since women aren't mentioned on the end, it's women having unnatural relations with these angels, with the Watchers.

**MH:** The reader's expected to fill in the gap there.

**DB:** That's right. And that's exactly what *Testament of Naphtali* says, using that same language. And the connection to the Sodom tradition—men for men—we see that in Jude, as well: the connection of the judgment of Sodom and of the Watchers read in conjunction. Luke does the same. He connects those two the same, dyadically. So this seems to be a common tradition to link these, and actually is probably a better explanation of what's actually going on in Romans 1.

**MH:** Yeah, that's interesting. Well, thanks for spending a few minutes with us.

**DB:** It's fun! Always fun.

**MH:** We'll have to catch up after... I plan to be at the paper, especially for the Q&A. I'm kind of interested to see what's going to come up there.

**DB:** Me, too.

**MH:** But we'll catch up a little bit later and you can give me the update.

**DB:** All right, sounds good!

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**MH:** We're back at SBL, and with have Lynn Cohick with us. Lynn, could you introduce yourself to the audience—a little bit of your training, where you teach, what you teach, and then we'll get into your new book.

**LC:** Well, thank you Mike! I'm delighted to visit with you here in San Antonio. My degree is in the New Testament and Christian Origins from the University of Pennsylvania. I teach at Wheaton College. I've been there about 16 years now, and I'm professor of New Testament.

**MH:** University of Pennsylvania... of course, that's a good school. I went there. (laughs)

**LC:** I didn't realize you were an alum... that's nice!

**MH:** I have an M.A. in Ancient History there. We did that before moving to the Midwest and eventually going to Wisconsin. Small world.

So what specific courses do you teach at Wheaton? What do they have you doing?

**LC:** I teach in the New Testament books, mainly in Paul. I also teach in our major, so I'll do Hermeneutics, I'll do our Senior Seminar (which looks at global theologies), and I'll do the Social World of the New Testament. So I have a class on women in the New Testament, and also women in the Early Church. I also do New Testament in the Greco-Roman world, that sort of thing.

**MH:** Well, that's a nice segue into the book, your new book. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**LC:** Sure, I'd be delighted to! Yes, I am co-authoring a book with Amy Hughes, who is at Gordon College. It's called *Christian Women in the Patristic World: Influence, Authority, and Legacy*. We're looking at women at the second through the fifth centuries. It's somewhat of a follow-up to my former book, my other book on *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*. We're trying to look at both Gentile and Jewish women at the time of the early Church (first century B.C. to first century A.D.). What were women's lives like? This book looks specifically at Christian women, and it looks at how Christian women lived their religious lives and expressed their religious convictions—the legacy that they've left us, the authority that they had as the Church developed, and also their influence in key theological debates and in growing the Church. Many of the women that we

studied, especially after Constantine (so 325 and beyond)... Many of the women who were wealthy Romans gave much of their money to support the poor, to develop monasteries and nunneries. Women influenced not just at the level of theology as they talked with well-known Church Fathers (like Jerome, for example), but also they were very active at the grass-roots level, so to speak.

15:00

**MH:** Well, let's drill down in a couple places. Let's use the terms "influence" and "authority." So tell us something about either one of those (or hopefully both) that you... Something that maybe a reader would be surprised at, because most are not going to really be exposed to a lot of this kind of material. It's not a niche for a lot of Bible students or your typical lay person. So what would surprise us? What would stand out?

**LC:** I think the level of involvement probably will astound people. We tend to think of the Church as run by Church Fathers, by bishops who met a couple of times, like at Nicea or in Ephesus, and they produced a Creed, and that's just kind of it.

**MH:** (laughing) That's not a bad job if you can get it! Do something useful once or twice!

**LC:** Exactly. But in point of fact, there was lots of discussion going on in Rome, in Jerusalem, and in other key cities. These wealthy women both sponsored... Coming back to Jerome, they sponsored his intellectual and academic efforts, and so they were very much engaged with the theological debates. I think that would surprise people. I think we have kind of erased the presence of women in this formative stage of Christian history, and that's simply not true.

Before Constantine allowed for Christianity to be a legitimate religion and not politically oppressed... If we go back to the age of the martyrs, if you will, late second and third centuries, I think there we would perhaps be surprised at the influence that these Christian female martyrs had in the wider imagination of the early Church. So Thecla, for example, whose life is written about in a work called *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* (a very early work in the second century)... Thecla's stand, her endurance, her commitment to the faith, was referred to for centuries to come. We have a story of (I think the fellow was in Syria) who read her account (this was in the fifth or sixth century) and was convicted of taking up the celibate life. So centuries later, she is still a role model for the ascetic life. And when I say "asceticism" what I mean by that is a life of rigorous self-restraint. Having a limited diet, wearing, not fancy clothes, but more average clothes, regulating your life in terms of how much you might indulge in... practically anything. And so asceticism was a theological conviction at this time shared by men and women. Thecla as the (in a sense) first female martyr lived that life. The story goes that she was a wealthy woman who gave up marriage and a wonderful life in the city to cling to the Gospel, to preach to anyone who would want to hear, and lived an ascetic life that was a model. We also have important



martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas, whose "birthdays" (their martyr days) are remembered in the Church even to this day. Augustine has several sermons that mention these women, and so they became a fixture in the Church's imagination. Both men and women used these martyrs (Perpetua and Felicitas) as models for their own behavior.

**MH:** It's interesting. Do you think that one of the reasons we haven't heard a lot of this before is because (let's go back to a theological discussion) women aren't sort of credited or cited? Is that one of the reasons?

20:00 **LC:** I think you're exactly right. When you try and look at women in history, you're like a detective. You have to, in a sense, read between the lines a bit. You have to grab hold of the innuendo there, or the brief comment over here, and from that try and build a picture of what actual women were doing. We don't have many (much at all) written by women at this time, so we may have Jerome writing about a woman or his writing to a woman, but we don't have her letter back to him. So we have to piece it together from various sources, and they're mostly sources written by men. So we just have to take into account that we're not necessarily hearing voices directly from women. We have to be careful as we look at the sources.

**MH:** What about leadership in early churches and beyond the formative century? What's an example, again, of something that might surprise a reader?

**LC:** Well, I think that once you have the imperial family that is Christian, you now have women empresses who are at the height of power. Constantine's mother, Helena, is credited with finding the cross.

**MH:** Right, she found all sorts of things. (laughs)

**LC:** Yes, yes. But she was a patron, and really developed the religious landscape—the physical landscape of Jerusalem. So she was not simply on a private pilgrimage, but she represented the imperial family as she invested in the Christian Church.

**MH:** How about house churches—Bishops, elders, the titular on a local level? What do you find there?

**LC:** I don't find evidence that a woman was ever called a bishop in the Orthodox tradition. But we don't have a whole lot of evidence, and maybe something will emerge—an inscription or something along those lines. What we have are women who use their influence. So Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea... These two brothers were very famous Church Fathers. Their sister, Macrina, was extremely influential in their lives and she ran her own sort of monastery kind of life, and she becomes a very powerful influence on the Church through her brothers.



**MH:** Sure.

**LC:** If we want to look at influence only as, "what title did you hold?" you could imagine that women weren't present at all. But when you look at how influence works, you realize that you don't necessarily need a title. Sometimes the people behind the title...

**MH:** It's like half the time we assume that women weren't part of the conversation. It's obvious they're going to be discussing theology! They're going to be talking about apostolic teaching, they're going to have good thoughts, and the men who are the ones who are known are going to go away from the conversation and think, "That's really a good thought! I wish I would have said that! In fact... I think I will!" (laughs)

**LC:** Sometimes I think that probably is the case!

**MH:** That's ordinary. That's just human experience. Again, there's no logical reason to think that sort of thing didn't happen with a fair amount of regularity. This isn't my field, but my impression is it's really a sourcing problem. The whole "absence of evidence, evidence of that..." Nobody seems to really apply that too much here, but you've kinda got that thing going on that just because you don't have (like you said) a list of titles or sort of a blow-by-blow account of something, that therefore it never happened in real space and time. And that just doesn't work too well.

**LC:** That's right. I think the other reason Amy and I wanted to write this book is we felt that at times the Church Fathers are rejected kind of wholesale because there are some places that sound just terribly misogynistic. There's just no other way around it. We thought, "Let's not throw everything out. Let's try and understand what they're saying in their context." Not to apologize for their remarks, but rather to put them in context and to see *all* of what they said as a way to find out more about what women are doing. I think the flip side is sometimes people just embrace the Church Fathers as though they walked on water, so to speak, and ignore that there really were some social restrictions that were placed on women in terms of freedom of travel, or their public voice. And that needs to be taken into account as we learn from the Church Fathers and from that early Church period to help us understand ourselves. It's certainly true that the more you understand your history, the better you are able to go forward. And that's our hope, that this will help us understand our history.

25:00 **MH:** So when is the book due out?

**LC:** I'm hoping this coming summer. I think that's when it's coming out, in August or something like that, 2017.

**MH:** Whatever their guess is! (laughing)

**LC:** It's off my desk. (laughs) That's all I know. With Baker Academics.

**MH:** We checked and it is available for preorder on Amazon. So give the title once more.

**LC:** It is *Christian Women in the Patristic World: Influence, Authority, and Legacy in the Second through Fifth Centuries*.

**MH:** Lastly, do you have a personal website, do you blog, do you do anything like that? If you do, we'll be happy to have you mention that hear. Yes, or no, do you have that?

**LC:** I don't, no. I am a scholar introvert.

**MH:** You need to get with the program! (laughs)

**LC:** I know, I'm sorry! Does it matter that I still use a rotary phone? Does that tell you anything? (laughter)

**MH:** Did you steal that? I've finally found someone who's not more backward than I am. I just got an iPhone a couple months ago.

**LC:** I don't know how to use the TV remote, but oh well.

**MH:** I'm with you there! (laughing) My wife could tell you all sorts of crazy stories about that.

Well, thanks for coming by and spending a few minutes with us. I hope the book does well and gets a wide readership.

**LC:** Thank you so much, Mike. It was a pleasure to visit with you.

**MH:** You bet.

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**MH:** We're back at SBL, and our next guest is Peter Gurry. This is my first introduction to Peter and his work. I'm familiar with sort of the (I don't know what you'd call them) agencies or institutions that you've been involved with, but why don't you introduce yourself first: a little bit of your academic history, and then

we'll get into the ETC blog, that experience that's part of what you've been doing, part of your background.

**PG:** Thanks, Mike. It's great to be with you and your audience. So I'm finishing up a PhD at the University of Cambridge right now. I'm in my last month of work there. I've been working in New Testament textual criticism. As part of that interest, I help run a blog that I think we'll talk about called the "Evangelical Textual Criticism Blog" that I'm a contributor to. That's been my interest for a long time, going back all the way to my undergraduate years.

**MH:** Where did you do your undergrad?

**PG:** I did my undergraduate at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

**MH:** And then you have a connection with which seminary?

**PG:** Dallas Theological Seminary.

**MH:** Okay, so tell us a little bit about the ETC blog. I've posted a few (probably more than a few) things on my own blog and website that links back to them, but just tell us a little bit about what that is, when it started, and what your relationship to it is.

**PG:** Sure. So the Evangelical Textual Criticism Blog... We had our tenth anniversary last year, in fact last year at SBL. It was started by Pete Williams, who is the warden (or director) at Tyndale House, which is a research library in Cambridge, England, where I do my research, as well. Currently the editors are Peter Head and Tommy Wasserman. I have been a follower of the blog since my student days. Ever since I've been interested in textual criticism, I've been following it. Pete Williams started it as a forum for people with an interest in textual criticism (the history of the Bible and its transmission over time) to discuss its manuscripts and its texts from a distinctively historic, evangelical theological position. We've had good back and forth and debate on the blog over the years about what exactly that means. What does it mean to be an evangelical textual critic? Does it mean a specific method? I think our blog contributors might give different answers to that, and that's part of the fun of the blog. Even with the agreement we all share as evangelicals, we have some disagreement about method.

**MH:** Right. Is part of that kind of like, "Well, there are American evangelicals and then there are British evangelicals?"

**PG:** Yeah.

**MH:** So for the sake of the audience that is going to be unfamiliar with that, what are some of the basic differences? Most of my audience is going to just hear that term and think one particular thing.

**PG:** Evangelicalism, in some ways, came to the U.S. from England. I think you could make a good case for that. But they have in some ways diverged and in some ways stuck together. I think the shared commonality between both sides of the Atlantic would still be a high view of Scripture. Many American evangelicals would still connect that to inerrancy, and I think many of our blog contributors would, as well. It's that high view of Scripture that gives us a particular interest. Not an exclusive interest, but a particular interest, in the text of the Bible. We want to know what words God has actually inspired. So I think that's a real commonality between the two sides. But within that you might find disagreements about various matters of church government or other areas of theology for sure.

30:00 **MH:** Your relationship now... You're a fairly regular contributor?

**PG:** Yes, I am. Some might say too regular, I don't know. (laughter)

**MH:** You were at Dallas and so, obviously, you worked with Dan Wallace.

**PG:** Correct.

**MH:** What did that involve? Tell us a little bit about that.

**PG:** Sure. I was very interested in Dallas Seminary because of Dan Wallace. I knew from my time at Moody that I was very interested in textual criticism and in the manuscripts of the Bible, and I became aware in Bible college that Dan was taking these trips with the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, which is the organization he started and now runs. Their main goal is to digitally preserve manuscripts of the New Testament. It was kind of my dream from Bible college to see an actual manuscript. I had this (what I thought was a) crazy idea that if I went to Dallas Seminary and I worked with Dan Wallace, maybe there's a chance I could become an intern in his organization, and maybe then there was a chance I could go on a trip with him, and maybe there was a chance I could see an actual manuscript. And about a year or two into my program there, I was on a trip with him in Athens looking at manuscripts. (laughter) So I see it as God's good Providence that I was able to connect with Dan and he let me jump right in and get to work with him.

**MH:** So how many (if you can give us a round number)... how many manuscripts have Dan and his team or teams been able to digitize?

**PG:** That's a very good question.

**MH:** I'm sure it's in the thousands.

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**PG:** It is in the thousands, and I hesitate to give you an answer because I know I will get it wrong and Dan will send me an email to correct me (laughter), but it must be nearing ten thousand at this point? And I'll let Dan correct me. If you go to their website, which is [csntm.org](http://csntm.org), they've got a list of all the manuscripts that they've photographed, and even some that they haven't but that they have images for. It's a fantastic resource.

**MH:** So you'd think after all that there isn't much left to digitize. True or false?

**PG:** (laughs) Very false! Very false. I'm sorry, I just said ten thousand manuscripts, and that's wildly inaccurate. We actually have about 5700, a little more... closer to 5800 *Greek* New Testament manuscripts, so I'm going to correct myself now. There must be closer to a thousand that they digitized. Maybe. But there are so many more to do.

**MH:** So sort of "a thousand" *new* ones?

**PG:** That they've discovered, is that what you're asking?

**MH:** Well, you have the 5700 number, and that's kind of the number that sort of shows up in books. So when you say a thousand manuscripts they've digitized, they're both pulling from things you'd find listed in a book and then there's also some new ones, right?

**PG:** That's right, yes. So what happens is that many of the libraries that they visit to digitize that are large entities, and they have massive collections. What can happen in a library...

**MH:** Nobody knows what they have! (laughing)

**PG:** That's right! That's exactly right. And some of these collections go back centuries. And so what's not uncommon for Dan and his team to experience on a trip like this is that as they begin to digitize the manuscripts they know about at a library, and the librarian may say, "Oh, we also have this one. Would you like to look at that?" And Dan says, 'Absolutely!' So it's very common on a trip with the Center, they will discover manuscripts—not that the library doesn't know about. Almost always the library knows they have it. But often a manuscript that is uncatalogued by the main cataloging organization that catalogs and keeps track of New Testament manuscripts. So essentially, manuscripts that New Testament scholars are unaware of.

**MH:** Okay. So what is that organization? Does it have a name?

**PG:** Yes. It's called the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, or INTF. And they're the people that produced your *Nestle-Aland* Greek New Testament.

**MH:** And that's in Germany?

**PG:** In Germany, correct.

**MH:** So tell us what does a textual critic do? Imagine yourself in a conversation with a lay person. They might know there's lots of different manuscripts floating around out there. What does a textual critic today actually do?

**PG:** Text critics today do largely what text critics have done for hundreds of years, and that is we try to catalog manuscripts of the New Testament and we try to study them as much we can. Then where we can, we relate them to each other with the ultimate goal of trying to establish what the authors of the New Testament originally wrote. As part of that process—an important part of that process—is trying to trace the development of the text over time: how it was copied across time and place. The better we can tell that story (that history of the text's transmission and copying), the better we know which manuscripts are most important and the better we can establish that original text.

**MH:** So how is that done? Roughly, how would a text critic discern that this manuscript here is related to this one over there?

35:00

**PG:** So we generally do it through agreement and we ask, "How often do manuscripts agree with each other?" Traditionally, the principle has been that, like in a family, if two manuscripts have shared traits with each other, that means they may have a shared ancestor. For the New Testament, we have some problem in that we have lots of what's called "contamination," which means manuscripts have influenced each other across family lines. It becomes very difficult to confidently relate manuscripts to each other. So generally, what New Testament textual critics have done is we've tried to group manuscripts with each other—by agreement, again—and then relate the groups to each other as groups. So we try to simplify the process a bit because we have so much information and because of the problem of contamination.

**MH:** In the case of Hebrew studies (Hebrew Bible), largely because of the work of F.M. Cross... He worked out this pretty full typology of handwriting. So he has this paleographic typology that is still used today. Very painstaking work. He was working with the Dead Sea Scrolls. But it was so well done that you could take a scroll and you could align it with the handwriting style, and then you'd sort of know at the very least that the same scribe did this one and that one. Do you have anything like that in New Testament?

**PG:** Yes, absolutely. The discipline of what's called paleography (the study of ancient handwriting)... The best way that it works is that if you have a manuscript that's dated (where the scribe has told you when he copied it), and by having those dated points you can tack them on a timeline and then you can compare

other manuscript handwriting to them and then you can chart the development of handwriting over time. And that's still the primary method by which New Testament scholars (and paleographers in particular) date our manuscripts, and say it's from the fourth century or the fifth century or much later.

**MH:** So, essentially, there's a typology for New Testament, and then that's going to be a cross-check against maybe a carbon-14 test or something like that. It's a calibration method. How common was it for scribes to date their work?

**PG:** Far less common than we'd like. (laughter) Really, you only begin to get it later on. We have very few early manuscripts that are dated. What we tend to have more of is... One of things we can do is date them by scribes who dated manuscripts that aren't necessarily Christian manuscripts. So we can compare "Christian handwriting" (if I can use that term) with non-Christian literary documents, which sometimes are dated, and try to chart them that way.

**MH:** Right. So you can have the scribe told, "Well, this is your job. This is what we're putting in front of you this month or whatever." That would make sense. So what about your own research? What are you doing? What's your doctoral work on? How does that contribute to doing textual criticism?

**PG:** Those are good questions. So my research is going back to that question of how we relate manuscripts to each other. In particular, how we relate the *text* of manuscripts to each other. In the last 30 years, a new method has been developed that's a mouthful. It's called the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (or CBGM), which is not my term. A simpler term might just be the Coherence method. It's been developed by the folks in Munster, Germany at INTF (that I mentioned earlier) and it uses computers to account for far more data than we've ever had available to us before. So in the past, scholars have generally tried to relate manuscripts based on a selection of their agreements. So you find what the scholar considers the most significant agreements and you do tabulations and say, "These five manuscripts agree at 90-percent of places." Today we're using far more data, so that in the Catholic epistles, which is where I work (which is essentially those letters not written by Paul in the New Testament: 1 and 2 Peter, James, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude), we have 3,000 places of variation among 123 manuscripts. We can now use all of that data to try to relate the manuscripts and their texts in particular, to each other. Using those relationships, then, we can revisit places where they disagree with each other and try to resolve those differences in a better way—a more informed way—than we've ever been able to before.

**MH:** Is this just a faster way of getting agreement and disagreement, or did somebody write software with rules to sort of judge or assess what an agreement or disagreement means?



**PG:** It's still slow at the beginning stages, because you still need someone to input the data into the computer. So you take these 123 manuscripts, and you have to have somebody input every reading for all 123 manuscripts. So it's still a lot of work.

**MH:** So it's a hand-typing process? Someone has to key the text in?

40:00 **PG:** That's right. They have to type it into a computer. They have two people do it independently and then they check them against each other and resolve any disagreements with the manuscript itself. Once the data is in, that's when the computer can really start to do its work. That's when the power of the computer comes into play because then getting an immediate result of say, "Manuscript A agrees with Manuscript B at 90 percent of the places." That's pretty quick to do. And that's where we get so much more data than we've ever had available before. And that's really what's reshaping the discipline.

**MH:** Are the major manuscripts, the major uncials, we'll say... Have they been input into this? What has been inputted and what hasn't been?

**PG:** Yes. The way they work for the Catholic epistles (which I'll use as an example, but the process will work the same in other parts of the New Testament), they start with all the manuscripts that we have. So for the Catholic epistles we have over 500. And they take selections. So you might start with 20 or 30 places where you check all of the manuscripts. And you compare them in those 20 places, and based on that you can then kind of weed out almost 400 of them because they're so similar. They're what we call the "Byzantine Manuscripts"—later manuscripts that agree at an incredible high rate with each other. So you can actually represent a very large number of manuscripts with just a few representatives. So from that initial check, they reduced the number of manuscripts to 123—that's the number for the Catholic epistles that they've settled on. That includes all the manuscripts up to the year 1000, and then a good number after the year 1000. So if a manuscript is under the year 1000, they automatically include it no matter what. And if it's younger than the year 1000, then they exclude it based on whether or not they think it's already represented by another manuscript.

**MH:** We've done one episode on the podcast on textual criticism. For listeners, the reason why you'd have such a high agreement (you mentioned the Byzantine Manuscripts) is that was the enterprise in the eastern part of the Empire. You had a professional class of scribes and they were very productive, very prolific, and as you're saying, very uniform. That was a lot different than the initial stages of copying the New Testament. I would use the word... it was somewhat "haphazard." In other words, it wasn't structured. Not that it was necessarily awful or bad or anything like that, but it was just unstructured.

**PG:** Now, I should say there's quite a lot of debate about that.

**MH:** The degree of which?

**PG:** The degree of which. It's clear that it gets more stable as we progress.

**MH:** "Stable" is a good word.

**PG:** Yeah. It's clear that it gets more stable. Partly that's a function of how many more manuscripts we have that are later. The question is, "If we had a much higher percentage of early manuscripts, would that sort of even out?" What looks like instability...

**MH:** Yeah, if you had the same numerically, yeah... And that's a good... It's an assumption, so that's good. Now given your context from Moody, you're going to understand this question. I'm going to ask it because of the audience. Typically, when I get emails about New Testament manuscript stuff, it's always going to drift into the King James debate. It's always going to drift into the Alexandrian manuscripts. "Is it true that Satan made these?" (laughs)

**PG:** I don't think that's true, just for the record. (laughter) I have no way to prove it, but I don't think it's true.

**MH:** But you get the idea. It's this rehash again of "demonizing" one language or one manuscript family versus another to prop up this idea about the King James. As a textual critic, just give me the elevator speech on why we should not be paying attention to such arguments.

**PG:** Right. Well, such arguments take a variety of forms, but the basic reason why we shouldn't is that the King James version is based on a small selection of pretty late manuscripts—manuscripts that essentially those who produced our first printed Greek New Testaments had available to them in the libraries in Europe at the time. Since then we've discovered far more, far better manuscripts that are much earlier. Now I want to be careful, because an earlier manuscript isn't necessarily always better, but all things being equal, we generally should follow an earlier manuscript rather than a later manuscript because it's closer to the original text, the original authors. So most advocates of textual criticism since the late 19th century have followed the earlier evidence. And also, they've been convinced that the earlier evidence is better on matters of what we call "internal evidence." That is the evidence of what they are most likely to have done in copying—the mistakes they're most likely to have made. Also the kind of evidence about what an author is most likely to have written. So as you work through the manuscripts, you can see in the later manuscripts the kinds of changes they make (the kinds of differences they have) are the kinds that you would expect scribes to make—in clarifying things often, clarifying ambiguity in the text, maybe filling out theological titles for Jesus... the kinds of things you would expect to happen in the context of Christian worship and community.

45:00

**MH:** The clarification is a good example. Just put it in a real-life context. If your job is to copy this particular thing, you're not going to sit there with the thing you're supposed to be copying and ever have the thought, "I'll bet I can make this more complicated. I'll bet I can make this line more obtuse." But when you encounter something that doesn't quite make sense to your brain, you might be tempted to think, "Well, I think there was a mistake made here so I'm going to help a little bit." So that's the normal human tendency, as opposed to the reverse.

**PG:** And I think we need to be careful not to assume too much thought on the process of scribes. I think clearly some scribes did this, and some readers in particular did this kind of reflection on the text and changing it, but the vast majority of scribes simply wanted a copy. They didn't have time to sit there and think about how to improve the text. But if you're a scribe and you have two manuscripts or you know of two readings of a particular point, your inclination is going to be to choose the one that is smoother or that clarifies, I think. So I think that's often how it happened. Once a variant arises, where one of them is smoother or more clarifying than the other...

**MH:** ... that must be the right one.

**PG:** That one tends to dominate. It gets chosen over the alternative.

**MH:** So to wrap up... Book recommendations. What would you recommend for someone who's interested in textual criticism, either Old or New, that would ask, "What should I read to get started?" Do you have a recommendation there?

**PG:** Sure. If you want something that covers both Old and New Testaments, the only book I know that does both is by Paul Wegner. It's called *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism*. If you want New Testament, the standard still is Bart Ehrman and Bruce Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament: The Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*. And I think all three of those are important to emphasize. And then D.C. Parker (David Parker) also has a book published by Oxford University Press called *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts*. Those are the places I would start. There's also some more... David Allen Black has a good short introduction, as well, that guests could look up. If you go to our blog, actually, we have a page right up at the top called "Recommend Reading" where we recommend the top ten books. So that's actually where I'd send people to go.

**MH:** Okay, and for the King James thing. Is it still Carson's little book? Is that the best entry point?

**PG:** I think so, although I will shame myself here and say I've never read it because that's not an issue I've dealt a whole lot with, so there's probably better people you can ask about that issue.

**MH:** Yeah, I always recommend it. I used to require it for a Bibliology course. It's very readable, it's very short, you can consume it an afternoon.

**PG:** And it's important to say there are advocates of what's called the *Byzantine Text* who are not necessarily King James only, so I'll just mention Maurice Robinson, who is a contributor to the blog, in fact, who advocates that the Byzantine Text does the best job of preserving the original text. But he would never advocate that the King James translation is inspired in a special way more than any other translation.

**MH:** Is there anybody besides Maurice that takes that position? I know that he's in the minority.

**PG:** He has some students that do. He's certainly the most prominent and has done the most work on it. His co-author of his own Greek New Testament was William Pierpont, but he passed away a few decades ago maybe.

**MH:** Do you have any books?

**PG:** Not yet. Stay tuned. (laughs)

**MH:** So did you hand in your dissertation?

**PG:** I just handed it in about a month and a half ago!

**MH:** Is it publishable, or is it a database thing?

**PG:** I hope it's publishable. It's prose, it's not just a bunch of data, although there is data in it. So I have my oral defense (I have to defend the thesis when I return from SBL) and then after that we'll think about publishing somewhere.

**MH:** Good! Well, thanks for joining us.

**PG:** Thank you so much, Mike. It's been great to be with you!

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**TS:** Okay, Mike! Well, three MORE excellent interviews. Peter was interesting. That textual criticism is pretty interesting.

**MH:** Again, there are people who actually do this! Better him than me! I'm interested in the outcome but I don't want to do the work.

**TS:** That's a lot of work!

**MH:** It is.

**TS:** We'll wait for them to do the work and benefit from the results.

**MH:** Absolutely. We would never be that meticulous.

**TS:** All right, Mike. Sounds good. So be looking for Part 4. We have a big interview coming up—I'll give a little tease there, so be looking for Part 4 in a few days.

**MH:** Do we want to spill the beans there?

**TS:** Sure. Maybe we should just... Is there a clue or something? Maybe we should give the initials...

**MH:** Yeah, the first two initials are N and T.

50:00

**TS:** There you go. We'll leave it at that. If they don't know what N.T. is, then I guess they'll have to Google it or something. All right. Be looking for Part 4 here in a few days. Again, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast. God bless.