

In my previous post I said that, in my opinion, the best way to approach the “original” text of the New Testament – given the fact that we don’t actually *have* it – is to make a working assumption that we are pretty darn close, in most places, most of the time. I openly admit, and always have, that this is an *assumption*. But since it’s one that “works,” well, I think I’ll continue calling it a working assumption! And I’ll show why there are really very good grounds for it.

But first I want to affirm strongly that the assumption is contrary to what most people think about the New Testament – both scholars and lay folk. Among virtually everyone else that I’ve ever heard talk about it, there are two views, one the massive consensus and one the tiny minority; and I don’t agree with either one.

The consensus view seems to be that we really do *know* what the authors of the New Testament wrote. Deeply committed Christian readers of the Bible (including the scholars among them) often think this on theological/religious grounds – God wanted to give us his words and so we have his words. That’s what the Word of God is. His words. If God wanted to give us his Word, as he did, then he *did* give us his Word. And that must mean we have the actual words.

I think this view is obviously and demonstrably wrong.

The reality is that ...

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