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Professor David Parker
University of Birmingham
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Dear David,

When I was last in Birmingham Bruce Morrill told me that you'd expressed some curiosity about why someone not from the guild had become such an ardent volunteer in the work of the International Greek New Testament Project. Here are my reasons for participating as a collator of manuscripts for the IGNTP and you may share this with anyone who might be interested.

By its nature, volunteering implies a relationship to whatever one does for a living. The people I serve are proud of the fact that their pastor is involved in research regarding the old manuscripts, but I need to be careful that I don't give the impression that my congregation is no longer my first love. It is exceedingly helpful when I'm able to refer to this work in the Bible studies that are part of my teaching duties as pastor of the congregation.

My collating work and my participation in the biennial gatherings of the Birmingham colloquia are a major part of my continuing education. Is there a better biblical discipline than textual criticism? New Testament textual criticism requires the knowledge of biblical languages, history, theology and social sciences. My participation in this work keeps me fresh. To my mind this is infinitely better continuing education than some seminar entitled "Five Steps to Better Preaching" or going away to the Billy Graham School of Evangelism.

I love working with the old manuscripts. Every collation is an opportunity to be reminded that I'm not the first to put my hand to an important task. With every collation I take my place in the tradition of women and men whose lives are intimately bound up in the traditions represented in the biblical texts.

Regarding the colloquia, I am pleased to report that I have been accepted among my colleagues. This is no small matter. I attend meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature and am routinely moved to the margins because I have no PhD. and can claim no affiliation with a university. However, our discipline has a tradition of appreciation for the work of those who work for the love of it, that is, *amateurs*. Among my colleagues in the IGNTP, all that matters is the ability to do the work. Because of that I have made friends with whom I have continued to meet every two years for the last fourteen years. I credit you for creating an atmosphere in which the value of work is determined by the work itself.

Thank you for the work you do and for allowing my participation.

Cordially,

Pastor John Gram