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## P<sup>46</sup> and Textual Criticism

By ELMER MOELLER

(A Conference Essay)

Not always have Christians taken kindly to investigations into the exact identity of the inspired words of Holy Scriptures. After Jerome, for example, had edited his Vulgate, making changes in the generally accepted Latin text on the basis of Hebrew manuscripts, he received a letter from Augustine telling him of a certain congregation which had threatened to abandon its bishop unless he restored the old Latin reading of Jonah 4:6, which he had replaced with Jerome's reading.<sup>1</sup>

In more modern times we are acquainted with the enthusiastic but ill-advised defense of the Textus Receptus made by J. W. Burgon and Edward Miller in their treatise *The Causes of the Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels*,<sup>2</sup> wherein they attempted to discredit the work of Westcott and Hort.

It was in castigation of the equanimity with which Protestants had accepted the edition of the New Testament text, the Textus Receptus, which the three Elzevirs, Isaac, Bonaventura, and Abraham, had taken in 1633 from their famous presses and which they had prefaced with the remark: "*Textum ergo habes nunc ab omnibus receptum, in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus*,"<sup>3</sup> that the English critic Samuel P. Tregelles wrote:

. . . Many Protestants ceased from all inquiry into the authorities on which the text of the Greek Testament in their hands was based; they received with a kind of traditional submission what the publishers presented to them; although they *might* have well known that the same care and attention are demanded as to the text of God's Holy Word as are bestowed upon ancient works of a value infinitely less. But so it was; and those who justly condemned the proceedings of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, in 1545, in declaring the Latin Vulgate version authentic, and who showed the ignorance and

<sup>1</sup> Gregory, Caspar R., *Canon and Text of the New Testament* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 411.

<sup>2</sup> London, George Bell and Sons, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> Von Dobschuetz, E., *Nestle's Einfuehrung in das griechische Neue Testament*, Vierte Auflage (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1923), p. 65.



weakness of the Papal decrees by which in 1590 and 1592 diverse editions of the Vulgate were declared to be exclusively genuine — were, in fact, following a Greek text which they had tacitly adopted as authentic; and they did this with as little intelligence as did the Romanists in their use of the Clementine Vulgate. . . . We need not wonder that Bentley should have spoken of "the Protestant Pope Stephens."<sup>4</sup>

Today the reverent student of God's Word is interested in every bit of progress in textual criticism. For, on the one hand, he knows that Christ has kept His promise to teach us all things.<sup>5</sup> With this promise textual criticism has no conflict. For of all the variant readings of the New Testament which can be classified as of more importance than a small difference in spelling, not one affects or changes a teaching of the Bible. On the other hand, knowing that the holy writers spoke in the very words "which the Holy Ghost teacheth,"<sup>6</sup> the student seeks diligently and reverently to make sure of each jot and tittle.

Of interest, therefore, is the recent development in New Testament textual criticism which has come through the discovery of Papyrus 46, or P<sup>46</sup>, as it is generally known.

In 1930, A. Chester Beatty, an American collector of mss., who lives in London, acquired a number of papyrus leaves from a dealer in Egypt, which on examination were discovered to be "portions of codices of various books of the Greek Bible." The source of the mss., as closely as can be ascertained, is "the region of Aphroditopolis, on the right bank of the Nile, about thirty miles above Memphis," where presumably there was some early Christian church, a part of whose library the mss. represent.<sup>7</sup>

The mss. have been numbered by Prof. E. von Dobschuetz and Prof. A. Rahlfs, whose registers of the New Testament and of the Old Testament mss., respectively, are generally accepted, as follows: P<sup>45</sup>, the Gospels and Acts; P<sup>46</sup>, the Pauline Epistles; P<sup>47</sup>, Revelation; 961, Genesis; 962, Genesis; 963, Numbers and Deuteronomy; 965, Isaiah;

<sup>4</sup> *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 35—36.

<sup>5</sup> John 14:26.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. 2:13.

<sup>7</sup> Kenyon, Sir Frederic, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), p. 128.



966, Jeremiah; 967, Ezekiel and Esther; 968, Daniel; and 964, Ecclesiasticus.<sup>8</sup> Included in the mss. was also the Book of Enoch and a homily of unidentified authorship "on the passion of Melito, Bishop of Sardis, in the third quarter of the second century."<sup>9</sup>

As originally acquired, P<sup>46</sup> consisted of ten leaves. Soon after these had been published,

it was announced that the University of Michigan had acquired thirty more leaves of the same codex, in excellent condition. . . . Scarcely had these been published by Professor H. A. Sanders of Michigan, together with the ten Beatty leaves, when they were capped by the acquisition of Mr. Beatty of forty-six leaves more. The entire manuscript therefore consists, in its present state, of eighty-six nearly perfect leaves out of a total of 104, of which the last five were probably blank.<sup>10</sup>

The age of P<sup>46</sup> has been estimated variously. Despite Professor Sanders' statement that although he agrees with Kenyon as to the third century dating, he hesitates to emphasize the first half of the century,<sup>11</sup> Kenyon holds firm, "and further consideration," he remarks, "does not make me think this too early. On the contrary, Prof. Ulrich Wilken, who is universally recognized as the first living papyrologist, considers that it may even belong to the second century and that, at any rate, 'about A. D. 200' would be a safe dating."<sup>12</sup>

"If we are startled by this early attribution," writes H. C. Hoskier, "we have only to examine the text, in order to rest assured that we are in the presence of something which is contemporaneous with, or which may have preceded the compilation of the Sahidic version; thus, the circumstantial evi-

<sup>8</sup> Kenyon, Sir Frederic, *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, Descriptions and Texts of Twelve Manuscripts on Papyrus of the Greek Bible*, Fasciculus I (London: Emery Walker Limited, 1933-1941), pp. 6-9.

<sup>9</sup> Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 126.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>11</sup> Sanders, Henry A., *A Third-Century Papyrus Codex of the Epistles of Paul* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1935), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri*, Fasc. III Supplement, p. xiv. Heinrich Seesemann, in "Der Chester-Beatty-Papyrus 46 und der Paulustext des Clemens Alexandrinus," *Zeitschrift fuer die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der aelteren Kirche*, 36 (Berlin, 1937), p. 90, likewise refers to Wilken's statement from *Archiv fuer Papyrusforschung*, xi, 113.



dence is definite, for this is generally attributed to a period circa A. D. 190."<sup>13</sup>

One can readily understand the impact of the discovery of such a manuscript on New Testament textual criticism, particularly in the study of the Pauline Epistles which are contained in P<sup>46</sup>. Heretofore the best manuscript authorities were the majuscule codices Sinaiticus (Σ) and Vaticanus (B), each of which is dated as from some time in the fourth century after Christ. Suddenly, however, the critic is whisked back through the years to the beginning of the third century, hardly a hundred years after the aged Apostle John was reading perhaps some of the original letters of St. Paul in Ephesus.

Just what does P<sup>46</sup> reveal to us?

First, let us see how far we have come without it.

In John 7:53—8:11 occurs one of the more important variant readings of the New Testament, the section of the woman taken in adultery. The evidence as given in Nestle's critical apparatus for and against the inclusion of this section is the following: supporting are the Koine text or Constantinople manuscripts, Codex D, and the majority of the remaining Greek manuscripts (excluding those mentioned below as opposed), old Latin manuscripts b (later European text), c, and e (oldest African text), ff<sup>2</sup> (later European), the Vulgate, and the Palestinian Syriac; opposed are the Alexandrian mss., Codex N, Codex Θ (representing Lake and Streeter's Caesarean text),<sup>14</sup> other Greek manuscripts of less importance that are not mentioned, Latin manuscripts aflq (which approach the Vulgate), the important Syriac texts, Origen, and Tertullian.<sup>15</sup>

According to the more recent methods of interpretation of evidence, based on the studies of Lake, Streeter, and others, one would judge this evidence in the following way:

The Koine demonstrates that in Constantinople and in the medieval world the variant was accepted. Codex D demonstrates that in Italy the reading was acknowledged, and

<sup>13</sup> "A Study of the Chester Beatty Codex of the Pauline Epistles," *Journal of Theological Studies*, XXXVIII (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937), p. 149.

<sup>14</sup> Nestle, D. Eberhard and D. Erwin, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Editio sexta decima, Stuttgart, 1936, p. 48\*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.



this is supported by the Latin mss. b and ff<sup>2</sup>, and by the Vulgate. That aflq, however, oppose acceptance would demonstrate that the opinion in Europe was divided. c and e of the Latin texts demonstrate that in North Africa the variant was accepted. On the other hand, Tertullian, resident in Africa, rejects it. The testimony of the Palestinian Syriac is opposed by the rest of the Syriac texts, the testimony of the latter also weakening that of the Koine. In opposition we find, in addition to the witnesses already mentioned, the entire weight of the Alexandrian texts, which include  $\aleph$  and B, showing that in Alexandria the variant was not accepted. In Caesarea also the variant was rejected, which strengthens the testimony of Origen against it, he having worked at Caesarea.

Summarizing the testimony, one would state that in Alexandria and Caesarea, centers of Christian culture, the variant had no standing. In Africa its genuineness was contested, in Rome also. In Antioch it was not supported, although it was accepted in Constantinople. The opinion, therefore, of the chief centers of Christian culture stands against it. Apparently, although it might be a true incident from Christ's life, it is not a part of the Fourth Gospel.

That, in general, is how far textual criticism has come in the Gospels. (If the principles of criticism which the writer has attempted to clarify have not been followed correctly, it is not because the principles are at fault, but because the application has not been sound.) "In the Gospels," because we tread on different ground in the Pauline Epistles. For instance, there has not been found a Caesarean text in the Pauline Epistles to correspond to the  $\Theta$  text of the Gospels. Nor is the number of reputable mss. for the Epistles nearly so great as it is for the Gospels. The critic, so far as the writer knows, has therefore, up to the present time, not been able to determine what was the accepted variant in the several centers of Christian culture in the case of the Pauline Letters. It has therefore been necessary in critical studies in the Pauline Epistles to fall back on the principles of Westcott and Hort, who were influenced chiefly, and, as we would now say, unduly, by the testimony of Codices  $\aleph$  and B.<sup>16</sup> Briefly

<sup>16</sup> Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 39\*; Kenyon, *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri*, Fasc. I, pp. 15—17.



summarized,<sup>17</sup> the three groups into which Westcott and Hort divided the critical testimony and from them picked what seemed to be the best testimony, are the following:

The most recent type of text is the Syrian (substantially the *Textus Receptus* and our King James Version), which is preserved almost pure in the majority of the minuscules, as well as in the later majuscules. It is present especially in the Peshitta and Harclean Syriac versions,<sup>18</sup> although "all the versions from the fourth century onwards are more or less Syrian in text, among which Latin mss., like f and q and the Gothic Version, are prominent."<sup>19</sup> In Nestle's New Testament, the Syrian text corresponds to the Koine text.

The Syrian text is of least importance, since apparently "the authors . . . had before them the documents representing at least three earlier forms of text: Western, Alexandrian, a third."<sup>20</sup> The reason for the mixture of documents, it is assumed, results from the destruction of mss. under Diocletian's persecution (284—305), in which whole regions were undoubtedly robbed of texts, necessitating the procurement of copies from elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

Of the Alexandrian text "hardly a pure witness remains, but many traces are found in a number of mss. of the better class" (in the Pauline Epistles  $\neq$  ACP); "also in the Sahidic and Bohairic versions, especially the latter; further, in the Armenian, the Latin Vulgate (or another revised Latin text), the Alexandrian Fathers."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Souter, Alexander, *The Text and Canon of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 118.

<sup>18</sup> The Syriac Peshitta represents a probable Syriac revision, indicated by the existence of the older Curetonian Syriac Gospel, and the almost total extinction of other Old Syriac mss., contrasted with the great number of extant Vulgate (Peshitta) Syriac mss., and by the narrow range of variation found in the Vulgate Syriac mss. The revision was probably done at Edessa or Nisibis, centers of Syrian ecclesiastical life. The Antiochian text, found in the Antiochian Fathers, represents a revision at Antioch, which was taken as a standard for a similar authoritative revision of the Syriac text, which later was subjected to a second revision, which the Vulgate Syriac did not undergo, but which is found in the Harclean Syriac. Lucianus of Antioch was probably the moving spirit of the revisions. — Westcott, B., and Hort, F., *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, Introduction and Appendix (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882), pp. 136—138.

<sup>19</sup> Souter, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>20</sup> Westcott and Hort, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>22</sup> Souter, *op. cit.*, pp. 125—126.



The Western text, of which Westcott and Hort remark that it was the most widely spread text of Ante-Nicene times, and sooner or later every version directly or indirectly felt its influence,<sup>23</sup> is found pure, for the Pauline Epistles, in DGF, "with the chief Old-Latin mss. and the Fathers, . . . and the Greek (non-Alexandrian) Ante-Nicean Fathers." Many Western readings are found, however, in  $\aleph$ , B, "Latin Vulgate, Syriac versions, Sahidic, Armenian, Gothic (especially), Ethiopic."<sup>24</sup>

The third type of text represented in the Syrian text is what Westcott and Hort called the Neutral text, made up of Pre-Syrian non-Western readings, and found chiefly in B and  $\aleph$ , although B in Paul "has here and there Western readings," and  $\aleph$  likewise. Also H and M have preserved much Neutral text in the Pauline Epistles.<sup>25</sup>

The practical effect of following Westcott and Hort is to accept the testimony of  $\aleph$  and B as of supreme importance. Testimony of A is accepted only if it agrees with  $\aleph$  and B or with either of the two. Testimony of D is worth something only if it agrees with  $\aleph$  and B. When  $\aleph$  and B disagree, the reading in which D agrees is possibly the better. A reading which D alone has is a peculiar Western reading, an orphan in the world of textual criticism. The testimony of minuscules and of the Fathers is of importance only as it gives additional light to the picture which we find portrayed in the testimony of  $\aleph$  and B.

The question now is, Does P<sup>46</sup> change anything?

Neither time nor space permit the presentation of all the evidence and reasoning by which one might show just why and how P<sup>46</sup> has changed the picture. But the change itself one can set forth.

Investigation of the text of P<sup>46</sup> in the Epistle to the Romans, an investigation made by comparing the evidence of the majuscules in some 333 variant readings which are more than mere differences in spelling, gives us the following overview of textual development:

At the end of the second century A. D. there were throughout the Mediterranean world texts of the Pauline Epistles which contained a mixture of what we call Western

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>24</sup> Souter, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 125.



and Alexandrian readings. The Neutral text of Westcott and Hort would be included in this conglomerate text, which we might well call the "mixed" text. P<sup>46</sup> is an example of a ms. which contains such a text, for not only does it have the basic text on which all the New Testament mss. agree, but it also contains within it the peculiar readings which Westcott and Hort called Neutral, which were to be found in so-called Western texts, and most important of all, Western readings which heretofore have been unexplained, which have been accounted by critics as malformations of no definite origin. Like Topsy, they supposedly "just grewed." For example, Codices F and G, of ninth-century origin, have heretofore shown readings which could not be explained and were peculiar to these mss. Now we find them in P<sup>46</sup>.

New Testament scholars of the third century, however, were not content to leave the text so unfettered, to allow the different readings to be perpetuated by copyists. So the scholars took up editors' pencils. Here a variant was deleted; there another. The result is what we call the Alexandrian recension, possibly the work of Hesychius, whom Jerome mentions.<sup>26</sup> The recension was not, we assume, the result of a single effort in text revision at one particular time, but the accumulated work of years. At any rate, we have as a result what we call the great Alexandrian mss., Codices  $\aleph$ ABC. From them have disappeared many of the readings of the "mixed" text. The text of the New Testament has become more standardized.

Meanwhile the "mixed" text was used throughout the Mediterranean world, in Syria, Asia Minor, Italy, Africa, even in Gaul and England. Some localities began to play favorites with some of the variants, as we saw in the example of the variant of the woman taken in adultery. But even such favoritism was a part of the freedom of the "mixed" text tradition.

Then there came, at the end of the third century, in the eastern Mediterranean world the Diocletian persecution. Whole regions of Asia Minor and Syria were swept bare of their sacred manuscripts. When finally, under Constantine the Great, order began to appear, it was found that there were no Bibles for the churches. Constantine therefore

<sup>26</sup> von Dobschuetz, *op. cit.*, p. 26.



ordered fifty from Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea,<sup>27</sup> to which number, some think, belong Codices  $\aleph$  and B.<sup>28</sup> These naturally were copies of mss. which showed the efforts of Alexandrian editing. As a result, the Constantinople mss., the Koine text of Nestle, are largely Alexandrian, the variations from the Alexandrian text to be accounted for by remnants of the "mixed" text, which survived in a few manuscripts that had not been destroyed, in the Syriac versions, and in the memories of the Constantinople scribes, who made copies of the texts which they received from Eusebius.

The culture of the western Mediterranean was for the greater part destroyed by the barbarian hordes. Many of the mss. of the "mixed" text perished. The dark ages of Christian culture set in. When learning in the West finally revived, it was from Constantinople that it drew nourishment. Scholars and texts from the East nurtured study of the New Testament in the original. The natural result would be the multiplication of mss. with the Constantinople text and the acceptance of the Constantinople text as the *Textus Receptus*, for the simple reason that there were no manuscripts of the "mixed" text to be had. Some, e. g., D and E, had survived, however. The safeguarding of Western Christian culture in Irish monasteries accounts for the perpetuation of the "mixed" text in such manuscripts of later date, e. g., in Codices F and G. The only thing is, it took the finding of P<sup>46</sup> to demonstrate that the peculiar Western readings of mss. like F and G are just as old as the preferred readings of Codices  $\aleph$  and B, and in some instances may indeed be God's own Word, hidden through many centuries.

This picture leaves much to be desired in way of proof. That must come elsewhere. The picture, however, is merely a composite of various conclusions drawn from the study of P<sup>46</sup> by the writer.

1. The Constantinople mss., as sole testimony, are of little importance. When they join with the Alexandrian mss., they demonstrate that the East adopted the Alexandrian tradition.

2. The Syriac text is a witness for the preresension "mixed" text. The Syriac Peshitta is generally a second-century witness when it differs from the Harclean Syriac.

<sup>27</sup> Gregory, *Canon and Text*, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 326—7, 336—7, 339.



Either, however, may prove to be the older or better witness, depending on the supporting testimony.

3. The Armenian version is a follower of the Syriac and Constantinople texts.

4. The Alexandrian majuscules, including P<sup>46</sup>, united, represent a very important ancient text. Divided, they represent two types of text called by the writer Western and Alexandrian, the relative value of which must be decided by the weight of their respective support.

5. The Bohairic and Sahidic versions are good second-century witnesses.

6. DEFG represent a very good second-century text, a reading of which is probably of the same antiquity as that of an opposing P<sup>46</sup>ABC reading. Divided, they represent different texts, each of which probably goes back to the second century, each of which must be judged on the basis of supporting evidence.

7. The Itala, or old Latin version, represents a second-century text. Where the Itala testimony is divided, supporting evidence must decide which reading is to be preferred.

8. The Vulgate, in agreement with the Itala, supports the same original text as does the Itala. When opposed, its value must be determined by the witnesses of the reading which it supports.

9. The Fathers, in general, represent the text of their locality and age. The Constantinople Fathers reproduce generally the Constantinople and Syriac texts. Origen and Clement represent prerecension texts. Irenaeus represents a second-century text, both in the Greek and in the Latin, the latter being possibly the early Itala text, possibly an accurate translation of his original Greek text. Tertullian represents both second-century original Greek and the earliest Itala texts. Cyprian represents the Itala. Ambrosiaster and Hilary represent the mixed Latin tradition which preceded the Vulgate.

10. A demonstrably second-century reading is better than a later reading. When two readings are demonstrably second-century, the number of supporting witnesses (e. g., Itala, Syriac Peshitta, Sahidic, DEFG are each a witness) must determine the better reading. When two readings seem to have equal testimonial merit, an analysis of their essential worth on the basis of hermeneutical principles must be made.



To illustrate these principles, one might apply them to a variant reading taken from Rom. 6:12. There we read αὐτῆ with P<sup>46</sup>DEFGdfr Or Tert. \*ABC\*α7HI0480142vgsahcop syr<sup>sch</sup> (Peshitta) arm aeth Or (five times) Meth Aug Dam have ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ. C<sup>c</sup>KLP have αὐτῆ ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ.

The testimony of the Constantinople, KLP, is definitely to be discounted, for it represents a perfect example of a conflate reading. P<sup>46</sup> represents part of the second-century tradition, \*ABC\* another part. It is therefore evident that both readings existed side by side. DEFG represents a witness for αὐτῆ, the combined group of Western majuscules. It also indicates several streams of Greek testimony, converging into one unit. In the writer's opinion P<sup>46</sup>DEFG balance \*ABC\*. Irenaeus is a part of the P<sup>46</sup>DEFG tradition, and adds nothing. dfr, supplemented by Tertullian, furnish another witness for αὐτῆ as a second century reading. That e, however, disagrees, as does also Aug, weakens the Itala evidence somewhat. Origen's testimony is split, with his heavier approval on the longer reading. The Peshitta is a strong witness. The selection of e's testimony by the vg is presaged by Aug. That α7H-0142 abandon their usual Constantinople position is not too strong a testimony, but it adds weight to the witness of the Alexandrian group.

The witnesses therefore seem to balance thus:

P<sup>46</sup>DEFG Ir vs. ABC\*α7H-0142 Meth Dam  
dfr Tert vs. sah cop  
Or vs. Or

The remaining witnesses, syr<sup>sch</sup> arm, vg Aug, aeth, throw the balance definitely in favor of the longer reading.

To conclude this inadequate handling of a subject too great for so short a consideration: these principles of criticism in the Pauline Epistles, applied in the foregoing example, are the result of preliminary, albeit thorough, studies in the Romans text of P<sup>46</sup>. They represent a hypothesis. It will take much more study in P<sup>46</sup> to test it. May there be scholars interested in, and willing to do, this work.

Bismarck, N. Dak.