

## BEHIND THE VERSIONS

### Introduction.

These days, if a person visits several churches, he can hardly predict what he will hear at the reading of the Scripture. The older folks will miss the familiar text of their youth; the younger folks may wonder where all the different phraseologies have come from. There are so many different versions. Part of this distressing confusion is due to the desire to modernize the language of King James. The desire is not without merit; but the result is not always an improvement. However, the present study does not particularly deal with the translations as such. There are several different translations of Homer, Plato, Cicero, and Goethe, of which latter Swanwick's is not the best. But behind all the translations stands the original text. On Sunday morning the ministers reads in English a few lines from a book in Greek.

Most American Christians know no Greek, but nearly all recognize that there are competing translations. There is the venerable King James, the American (and New American) Standard Version, the New International Version, several others that are rather paraphrases than translations (all bad), the Roman Catholic Jerusalem Bible, the more recent New King James, and translations of all or parts of the Bible by an individual rather than by a committee. Surely these different translations often puzzle the ordinary reader. Can he find a basis for making an intelligent choice? Without guaranteeing infallibility, I think he can, sometimes.

Congregations, not to insist on individuals, during the second half of this century, have been perplexed, pummeled, plagued, and sometimes, pleased by this plethora of new editions. The session of one church banished King James and ordered the pastor to use only the NIV in the pulpit. A year later they discarded the NIV and made the NAS their official Bible. Advertisers of the several versions castigate the KJ for its archaic terminology. True, it contains some antiquated words, though their number is usually exaggerated. The one or two new versions which merely replace an obsolete word with its contemporary counterpart are to be commended. But most new versions change the familiar terms simply for the sake of change. The result may be neither better nor worse: it is merely different. Sometimes the new translation is more accurate; usually it is not; and in several cases it must be considered one of those paraphrases rather than a translation. Such alterations are ordinarily controlled by the individual's or the committee's unorthodox theology.

Unfortunately for the communicant member, even for the paster, and for most who have recently graduated from seminary, something much more difficult and complicated hides beneath the English versions. Not only should a translation be accurate, as many are not, but ever more importantly the Greek text to be translated should be accurate, or as accurate as possible. Toward the end of last century Westcott and Hort substituted a different Greek text, and this development has carried over to the present date. Nearly all the modern Bibles are based on a text that differs in a thousand ways from the Greek underlying the Greek of the KJ. This new development must be carefully considered.

Most young students and too many adults think that the problem is simply to get the Greek text and translate it. But there is no such thing as "The Greek Text." Erasmus, who as the first to publish a printed copy, had eighteen or so Greek manuscripts, which differed in various ways from one another. He did not do a very good job. There was a third edition, corrected by Etienne, or Stephanus, which

now goes under the name of Textus Receptus. Another manuscript, in similar style, was discovered in 1624; and later were found complete or nearly complete manuscripts of the whole New Testament, manuscripts of the Gospels, or individual books, plus mutilated parts even so small as a single verse. At present all these amount to about 5000. These are by no means Xeroxed copies of a single text. One Greek scholar, with a compulsion for statistics, counted 3000 discrepancies, or various readings, in the Gospels alone — not counting mere errors in spelling. Textual criticism is the name given to attempts to discover the original wording of the authors. This is no easy matter. Textual criticism is a very difficult procedure, quite unsuited for the purposes of the present study, and admittedly beyond the competence of the present writer. The professional's material includes not only the 5000 New Testament manuscripts, but also several ancient versions (translations into other ancient languages), and hundreds of quotations in the early church fathers. Such a maze of tortuosities, requiring a knowledge of a half of a dozen ancient languages, is no playground for ordinary church members. Nor for the pastors either, who are supposed to know Greek and Hebrew. But even the church members, since the text of the Bible is so important, ought to know at least a little about the many Bibles not being printed. They buy them, don't they?

Because of such labyrinthian mysteries, because of their vital importance, and because of the probability of great misunderstandings, the exact purpose, scope, and limitations of the present study should be clearly stated. The professional textual critic will expect too much and make a negative judgment. The others will not know what to expect and should therefore be favored with the clearest possible statement of purpose.

Although the present writer is not a textual critic, he will be bold enough to make some small claim to acquaintance with logic. He taught the stuff for a good fifty years in college. If someone argues, 'All insects are quadrupeds, all quadrupeds are edible, therefore all edibles are insects,' the writer can with some degree of assurance declare the syllogism invalid, even though he may not know whether or not a bumble bee is an insect. Or, if someone say, 'All the heroes of Homer's Illiad died young, Alexander was a hero of Homer's Iliad, therefore Alexander died young,' he knows that the syllogism is valid, even if he thinks that the Iliad was written by Virgil. Similarly, if a textual critic asserts that manuscript B has the correct reading in Luke 5:33, and that therefore B has the correct reading in Jude 22, he will recommend a course in logic, even though he might think B was discovered in 1624 and represents the Byzantine text.

These of course are ludicrous examples; but the aim here is to show that much of textual criticism is not noticeably better. If Aland or Metzger says that B gives a certain reading, I shall not question it. I have never seen manuscript B. But the methodology of textual criticism cannot claim immunity from logical analysis anymore than entomology can.

If the critics are not interested in the validity of their methods and will pay attention only to manuscript evidence, I would like to recommend several titles. An early book was The King James Version Defended, by Edward F. Hills. This early work suffers from some deficiencies, one of which is an excursion into the philosophy of science which, even if it were without other errors, would be irrelevant anyway. Much better are Zane Hodges' shorter contributions.

Perhaps the best book on the subject is Wilbur N. Pickering's The Identity of the New Testament Text (Thomas Nelson, 1977, 191 pp.). Further references to this excellent production will be made as we proceed. In particular he contrasts the painstaking procedures of the usually despised Bishop Burgon with the sloppy methodology of his detractors. Even the least academic member of the ghetto church in East Podunk, Missovania, ought to read some of Pickering's book.

But it may be that the people in Podunk are not only turned off from reading Pickering, they may also doubt that logical analysis can be at all interesting. Interesting or not, it is far more important than Homer, Alexander, and Virgil. For that reason I shall partly repeat and more fully extend some of these introductory inducements. Enemies of the Bible occasionally try to destroy the faith of believers by emphasizing the impossibility of discovering what the apostles actually wrote. The four or five thousand manuscripts differ in many places. Once when I quoted a verse from John's Gospel to a modernist, she quickly replied "But how do you know Jesus actually said that?" Led by an unusual inspiration from above, I instantly shot back, "How do you know Jesus said anything?" The other faculty members at the lunch tables gave vocal evidence of a point scored. The modernist woman professor and missionary wanted to use some verses but not others. She then, or the table companions, saw that if she insisted on her verses, she could not logically object to mine. At any rate the attempt to destroy Christian faith by an appeal to the difficulties of textual criticism has been based on considerable exaggeration. Someone has calculated that there is a textual variant or one word in seven, but that only one variant in a thousand words makes any difference in the sense. Still, since the New Testament contains about 200,000 words, it would mean 200 theological errors in the book as a whole. This is too many for comfort. Examples of both the nocuous and the innocuous will be given.

In Mark 14:52 a few manuscripts have "naked he fled;" a few other have "he fled naked;" and a large number have "he fled from them naked." Another example is II Cor. 11: 32. A few manuscripts read "to seize me;" many more have "wishing me to seize," where the me in the accusative case is still the object of the verb seize. And there are thousands of such insignificant alternative readings. However, there are many variants which are substantial. In both these categories the overwhelming majority of even mature Christians have no resources by which to judge whether this or that manuscript preserves the words of the original author. But they can, with a little attention, understand some of the methods of the textual critics use. In fact they ought to. What they do, they will not be so overwhelmed by the revisers.

When we come to examine the passages chosen, the particular textual method used in each case will be analyzed in detail. In order that the reader may not be completely discombobulated by their strangeness, a few of the more general criteria can server as preparation.

First, the number of manuscripts underlying the KJ versions exceeds all the other types combined. This would seem to be conclusive for the Byzantine text. The critics, however, propose a rule that number is less important than weight. A dozen or a hundred manuscripts all copied from a single ancestor count only as one; and therefore a lone manuscript of a different type equals the entire family in weight.

This argument, which seems so plausible at first, is not so weight a criterion as the critics seems to believer. There is another factor involved, which, if they have mentioned it, I have missed the mention. It is this. If a score or two score of manuscripts have a single ancestor, it implies that a score or two score copyists believed that ancestor to be faithful to the autographs. But if a manuscript has not had a numerous progeny, as is the case with B's ancestor, one may suspect that the early scribes doubted its value. Possibly the early orthodox copyists knew that B was corrupt, while the later heretics were less interested in wasting time copying their own altered text.

Furthermore, the argument that pits weight against number, if it were to have much force, would require a far more extensive knowledge of manuscript genealogies than anyone now has.

The critics use other criteria also. When several manuscripts differ at a given place, they prefer the reading that is harder to understand, rather than the easier reading. They justify this principle by assuming that the stupid scribe is likely to think that the harder reading was a mistake, with the result that the he guesses is easy interpretation is the original. No one can prove that this never happened. But it is also possible, for a number of reasons — fatigue, brilliance, the mispronunciation of the reader — that he changes an easy reading into something more difficult.

Similarly the critics often assume that the shorter reading is correct and the longer is corrupt. The underlying idea is that the copyist has several manuscripts before him, which is not often the case, and he wishes to preserve all their readings in his copy. But could not some scribes — if they had different manuscripts and were not listening, with a room full of scribes, to a reader — have been sufficiently devout to remember the Scriptural injunction neither to add nor to subtract?

Examples of how these and other criteria are used and misused will now constitute a list that could be much further extended.

### The List

Matthew 1:16. “Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom [feminine singular] was born Jesus.”

This first example is indeed a case of textual criticism, but it is much more importantly a case of dishonesty of the part of the RSV's translators. Before they completed their work on the Old Testament, they published the New Testament alone in 1946. It was well advertised and made quite a stir. People who picked it up would probably look at the first page and then leaf through. On the first page they would see nothing suspicious. There was the genealogy of Christ, and that was that.

When the entire Bible first appeared, those interested might look at the first page of Genesis and then leaf through. It was unlikely that anyone would pay attention to the first page of the New Testament. Had they not seen it in 1946 or 47? But the first page of Matthew in 1952 was not the same as the page in 1946. A footnote had been added. It would have generated wide-spread criticism in 1946, but it would be generally overlooked when hidden by the Old Testament pages.

The footnote says: “Other ancient authorities read: Joseph, to whom was betrothed the virgin Mary, was the father of Jesus who is called Christ.”

First of all, not the word authorities. What is an authority? No doubt the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament are authorities. Is Jerome's Vulgate an authority? Are Scriptural quotations or references, found in Christian writers of the succeeding centuries, authorities? Well, maybe; but as one goes beyond the Greek manuscripts the authorities become less and less authoritative.

Now, second, note that the word authorities in the RSV is plural. That mean six or seven, or at least two. But the truth is that the RSV had only one “authority,” a Syrian version. They deliberately deceived the public by using a plural instead of a singular. Even the liberal Metzger, in his A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (United Bible Societies, 1971) acknowledges “There is no evidence that reading (3) ever existed in a Greek manuscript of the first Gospel” (p. 7).

This attempt by the RSV to discredit Matthew's account of the Virgin Birth soon produced protests from knowledgeable conservatives, and the RSV was compelled to delete its deception from

later editions.

What has not been done, so far as I know, is some similar change in the Old Testament where the RSV alters the radicals — not just the Massoretic points — without even a footnote calling attention to their unsupported changes.

Matthew 8:12, “the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out . . .” Again the Aland text gives a C rating to a word that is almost certainly correct. “Shall go out” is the reading of the Aleph and an unimportant eighth century uncial. “Shall be cast out” of the KJ and the TR is in the first corrector of Aleph plus ten other major uncials and about fifteen other manuscripts. In itself this item is quite unimportant, but it is evidence of pervasive subjectivity in liberal textual criticism.

Matthew 9:4, “And Jesus, knowing their thoughts . . .” The word disputed here is distressingly unimportant. It is included merely to inform students and layman that though there are a thousand or so variant readings, the New Testament text is not utterly corrupt. Someone has estimated that there are variants for one word in every seven; but only one case in a thousand makes much difference in the sense.

The word in question is knowing. The Textus Receptus has idon, seeing; the first edition of Aland has eidos, knowing; and Metzger's note says that the Committee preferred idon. Their reason is that seeing is less appropriate than knowing; and therefore seeing must be the original while knowing must be a copyist's correction. Naturally one cannot expect the original author to have used the more appropriate word.

The manuscript evidence for knowing is B, Theta, Pi, and several minuscules. The evidence for seeing is Aleph, ten other uncials, and about fifteen minuscules. Though the Committee's reasoning in this case is faulty, idon is the word with the better manuscript support.

One also wonders how, if the Committee preferred idon, the text has eidos. Who changed the wording after the Committee adjourned.

Matthew 7:13, “for wide is the gate and broad is the way leading to destruction” is nothing so spectacular as the preceding. It is a very ordinary case. The Aland text gives the word gate only a C rating. Rating A is just about certainty, B is a bit less, and D is doubtful. Aleph's first hand omits it; Aleph's second corrector inserted it. No other Greek manuscript omits it, and it is attested by a long list of uncials and plenty of minuscules. Is it not most reasonable to suppose that Aleph, itself corrected by a second hand, made a mistake and that all the rest give the words of the autograph? Sure gate deserves a B rating, or why not an A?

Matthew 18:7, “Woe to the world because of offences (scandals); for it needs must be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.”

This verse presents a very insignificant textual problem. However it is solved, the meaning remains the same. Nor is there the least theological difficulty. Nevertheless, for these very reasons, it is a pure and excellent example of textual criticism. The question is, Did Matthew write “the man,” or did he write “that man”? The man is to anthropo; that man is to anthropo ekeino. Did Matthew use the extra word or did he not? This is so difficult to decide that the Aland-Black-Metzger-Wikgram text give the shorter reading a C rating.

There are relatively few manuscripts that omit the that. Many more include it. The two manuscripts which most present day critics think are the best divine: Aleph has only the article; B adds the demonstrative pronoun.

Metzger's Textual Commentary explains: "Except for the possibility of accidental oversight, there seems to be no reason why a copyist should have omitted ekeino. On the other hand, since the context seems to call for such a demonstrative, it is altogether probably that the word was added by more than one transcriber, either before the ouai or after anthropo."

Metzger's reasoning is peculiar. He admits the possibility of accidental oversight. Not many people copy Greek manuscripts these days; but typists, following handwritten manuscripts, often make peculiar mistakes. In fact, when I myself type my own handwritten material, I sometimes omit a word. Hence the pronoun may very well be genuine, as the large majority of the copies testify. Therefore modern critical texts should have very good reasons for omitting it. But Metzger's reason is very bad: since the context seems to require the pronoun, Matthew could not have written it — it just must have been added by a copyist! Stunning logic!

Matthew 21:44. Although textual criticism is legitimate and necessary, and although textual critics have done much good work, particularly in collating manuscripts, there are surprising exceptions. This verse is one of them. After giving the Pharisees the parable of the wicked husbandman — a parable of profound theological meaning — Jesus adds, "And he who falls on this stone shall be smashed to pieces; on whom it falls shall be crushed to powder."

The Aland text brackets this sentence. Brackets indicate a passage is regarded as a later insertion, but which nonetheless is evidently ancient and important. Metzger's note is, "Many modern scholars regard the verse as an early interpolation (from Luke 20:18) into most manuscripts of Matthew. On the other hand, however, the words are not the same, and a more appropriate place for its insertion would have been after ver. 42. Its omission can perhaps be accounted for when the eye of the copyist passed from outes (ver. 43) to auton. While considering the verse to be an accretion to the text, yet because of the antiquity of the reading and its importance in the textual tradition, the Committee decided to retain it in the text, enclose within double brackets."

But the textual apparatus acknowledges only one uncial (a sixth century uncial of dubious lineage) and one ninth century miniscule without the verse; while there is a long list of uncials, including the critic's favorites, Aleph and B, plus about twenty miniscules that have the verse. How then can one logically infer that the verse is an interpolation, early or late?

Matthew 24:6, "for all (these things) must come to pass." The critical edition reads, "for it must happen." This reading is supported by five uncials, a couple of miniscules, and few versions. Yet the Aland text gives it a B rating. The other readings say either "all must happen," or "these things must happen," or "it must happen all," or "all these things must happen," or "these things all must happen." These other readings are numerous, many more than those cited by the textual critics for the shorter reading. But the critics are wedded to the idea that the shorter readings must nearly always be the original. Having suffered at the hands or fingers of various typists, I cannot accept this conclusion. They more often omit words and phrases than make additions. The critics will reply, 'the typist copies only one manuscript; those who copied the New Testament manuscripts had several copies in front of them.' Did they? Maybe sometimes. Maybe not. Who knows? In this case the preponderance of evidence favors a longer reading, even if we cannot be sure of the order of the words all and these.

Matthew 28:9, "And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying All hail

(KJ). “And behold James met them and greeted them” (NAS).

The Aland text gives the shorter reading a B rating. It is supported by Aleph, B, D, K, W, Theta, family 13 (about a dozen manuscripts of lesser importance) and seven miniscules. The longer reading occurs in A, C, K, L, Delta, Pi, family 1, and ten miniscules. The modern textual critics put great emphasis on the combination of Aleph and B. Their argument in my opinion is not convincing. Metzger is kind enough to suggest that the shorter reading was the result of a homeoteleuton: i.e. the copyist looked at his text and wrote down a phrase in his copy; then he looked to the text again and his eye struck the same last word occurring a line below, thus omitting a line. Such mistakes occur; but these verse do not make a very obvious homeoteleuton. Metzger concludes that the longer reading is a copyists's unwarranted expansion of the preceding verse. This is pure speculation. So far as I can see, no firm conclusion can be drawn. Either reading could be chosen and rated C, or even D; but neither merits a B.

Since families 1 and 13, mentioned here, will be used again, it seems best to provide some information about them. The word family surely indicates a number of manuscripts. When f 13 is given as evidence, one naturally thinks that a dozen or a score of lesser manuscripts support the critic's conclusion. Yet this is not the case. On page xii of his Commentary Metzger explains, “It should be observed that, in accord with the theory that members of f 1 and f 13 were subject to progressive accommodation to the later Byzantine text, scholars have established the text of these families by adopting reading of family witnesses that differ from the Textus Receptus. Therefore the citation of the siglum f 1 or f 13 may, in any given instance, signify a minority of manuscripts (or even only one) that belong to the family.”

Two things must be said. First, this quotation assumes that the Byzantine text is corrupt and that readings in these families must be important when they differ from it. Of course this is the major bone of contention and the purpose of all these items in this study is to show how fragile are the arguments which support this assumption. But second, while it is true that Metzger warns the public on p. xiii of the Abbreviations that citing a family may be simply citing one manuscript, it is also true that many students not read the introductory Abbreviations (pp. ix – xii). They then incorrectly conclude that the sign f 13 means a dozen or so manuscripts, when it fact is means only one, and one in which the reading is at variance with all the rest. To me this seems more like an accidental mistake in the one manuscript than a blunder or deliberate alteration in the others. Metzger could have prevented such student carelessness by using a sign such as f 13, 9.

Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God.”

This is also a case a ratings. Devout laymen of ordinary intelligence and seminary students who have paid little attention to the actualities of textual criticism are probably inclined to rate ratings D in importance. Nevertheless these examples are given because seminary students really should have more than vague ideas on the subject; and even the layman, who knows no Greek, can by these examples perceive a measure of subjectivity in the work of the liberal critics.

The question in this opening verse of Mark's Gospel is whether the two words “Son of God” should be included or omitted. The Aland text encloses them in brackets and gives them a C rating. Metzger thinks that their absence could be due to an oversight in copying, since Christ, Son, and God all end in the same two letters, ou. But he prefers to think that copyists like to expand what they were copying, especially in titles. However, since support of the words “extremely strong” they decided to put the words in brackets. Apparently extremely strong support barely balances three manuscripts plus

conjectures about scribal insertions.

The evidence is as follows. “Son of God” occurs in the first corrector of Aleph, B, D, L, W, A, K, Delta, Pi, f 1, f 13, about twenty numbered manuscripts, and some versions and quotations. The two words are absent from the original Aleph, Theta, and not much else. It therefore seems to me that there is no objective justification for giving the two words less than a B rating. In fact, the only important evidence for the omission is Aleph before it was corrected. The NAS surely exaggerates when in its margin it says that “many MSS omit the Son of God.”

Mark 1:34, “because they know him.” If these examples seem always to charge the critics with underrating, here is a possible overrating. They give it an A. Incidentally the Textus Receptus also has the reading. The rejected reading is “because they knew him to be the Christ.” Admittedly the shorter reading has excellent attestation: the original Alpha, A, possibly D, K, Delta, Pi, and about eight numbered miniscules. The longer reading has the third corrector of Aleph, B, C, L, W, Theta, families 1 and 13, and a half dozen numbered manuscripts.

Aside from the recorded evidence Metzger argues, “It is clear that Mark terminated the sentence with auton, and that copyists made various additions. . . . If any one of the longer readings [all using the same words in different orders, as is possible in Greek] had been original in Mark, there is no reason why it should have been altered or eliminated entirely.” No good reason, certainly; but copyists sometimes make mistakes. Pardon the personal reference again, but writing a manuscript in longhand, I sometimes think a word but neglect to put it on paper. The shorter reading here in Mark is probably correct, but a B rating seems sufficient.

Mark 1:41, “feeling compassion” versus “being enraged” is the problem here. It is one example where there is a sharp difference in the meaning of the verse. In favor of “feeling compassion” are Aleph, A, B, and on and on. The only Greek manuscript that has “enraged” is the peculiar D. D is so often so badly mistaken that the rating should be B instead of only C. Note also that while the Aland text gives it a C, Metzger in his Textual Commentary reduces it to D. This is indefensible, and the whole shows how untrustworthy modern textual criticism is.

Mark 5:1, “And they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the G . . . .”

The problem here has as little to do with theology as possible. For this reason it is a pure example of method. The last word of the verse is Gaderenes in A, C, K, Pi, f.13, and about thirteen numbered manuscripts. Gerasenes occurs in the original Aleph, B, D, and apparently no other Greek manuscript. Gergesenes has the support of the third corrector of Aleph, L, Delta, Theta, f. 1, and less than ten numbered manuscripts.

It should be noted that the parallel passage in Matt. 8:28 gives slim support of Gadarenes, though the critics give it a B rating; there is abundant support of Gergesenes, and no Greek support for Gerasenes. In Luke 8:26 Gergesenes has some support, Gerasenes has p. 75, B, and D; while Gadarenes has a long list of supporters. Luke 8:37 has moderate support for Gergesenes, and strong support for Gadarenes.

By this evidence one could conclude that Matthew wrote Gergesenes; Mark wrote Gadarenes, and that Luke also wrote Gadarenes. The critical text has Gadarenes in Matthew, Gerasenes in Mark, and Gergesenes in Luke both times.

To establish these critical conclusions Metzger in his Commentary argues, “Of the several variant readings, a majority of the Committee preferred Gerasenes on the basis of (a) superior external evidence (early representatives of both the Alexandrian and Western types of text), and (b) the probability that Gadarenes is a scribal assimilation to the prevailing text of Matthew (8:28), and that Gergesenes is a correction, perhaps originally proposed by Origen (see the comments on Mt. 8:28). The reading of W (Gergustenes) reflects a scribal idiosyncrasy.”

In reply one may insist first that the “superior external evidence” favors Gadarenes in Mark. Then, second, one may question the alleged “scribal assimilation” to Matthew, for Gadarenes in Mark could not have been copied from Gergesenes in Matthew. Indeed, there is no evidence that any copyist assimilated anything to anything. The critics' argument is mainly unsupported speculation.

Mark 8:38, “For if anyone be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man shall also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

This verse contains two textual problems that form a strange contrast. “Words” near the beginning of the verse has almost unanimous support. Only papyrus 45 seems to omit it, and W is the only other Greek omission. The Aland text rates it A. Toward the end of the long verse the preposition “with” has the same attestation, and its deletion with and replacing it has essentially the same few supporters. But Aland rates it only B. Here are two cases when the evidence in Greek is identical, and the slightest difference in the non-Greek sources; yet they are rated differently. Metzger is at least consistent, but in my opinion wrong by giving them both B. With greater probability, and justifiably I would say, Metzger in Mark gives a B rating to what is rated A in the Aland text.

Those readers who know more than most may expect a discussion of Mark's final paragraph. Unfortunately it is too complicated for the present purpose. But before swallowing all the liberal critics say, those interested should read John W. Burgon's The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to Mark, reprinted in 1959 by The Sovereign Grace Book Club. I am well aware how greatly the modern critics despise him, but he seems to me to do a much more thorough job than the present critics do. These latter, to put it a little loosely, think that the combination of Aleph and B virtually outweighs all other manuscripts together. This assumption permits a modicum of doubt, and it seems that Westcott and Hort are beginning to lose some of their hold on contemporary scholars.

Luke 9:59, “He said to another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, allow me to go first and bury my father.”

The critical text puts Lord or Sir in brackets, and gives it a C rating. Metzger's explanation is: “The omission of kurie from B D syr al is puzzling; what motive would have prompted copyists to delete it? On the other hand, the word might well have been added, either from ver. 61 or from the parallel in Mt. 8:21. Since, however, the absence of kurie may have been due to a transcriptional blunder . . . it was thought safer to retain the word in the text, but to enclose it within square brackets indicating that it has a right to stand there.”

Note that the critics found the omission puzzling. Had they held B in less esteem, they would hardly have been puzzled at all. Before the evidence is cited, note that a person in declining an invitation to be a disciple, unless he were very antagonistic (but then Jesus would not have invited him), would have been rather polite. Possibly also, unlike Americans with their informality, but in a tradition the Europeans have inherited from antiquity, the people of that day would almost

automatically use the polite form of address. But of course this much is speculation.

The textual evidence against the word Sir or Lord, is the original B, D, and apparently only two numbered manuscripts. The evidence in favor of the word is p 45, p. 75, Aleph, A, B's third corrector, C, K, L, W, X, Delta, Theta, Xi, Pi, Psi, f.1, f.13, and twenty numbered manuscripts.

The critics could not ignore this overwhelming weight of evidence, but such was their prejudice in favor of B that they put the word in brackets and gave it a C rating.

Luke 10:15, “. . . shall be cast down into hades.” This verse presents a most peculiar confusion. Greek has two verbs for “cast down.” There is a short and more common verb, and there is a longer, rarer verb. The meaning of both is the same.

Now the Aland text has the longer verb. Yet Metzger's Commentary says, “A majority of the Committee, impressed by the superior external testimony of p. 75, B, D, al, adopted [the shorter verb].”

But the “superior external evidence” is anything but. In contract with the few manuscripts with the shorter form, the longer form has the support of p. 45, A, C, K, L, W, X, Delta, Theta, Xi, Pi, Psi, f.1, f.13, plus about twenty numbered manuscripts.

Luke 11:2, “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be they name” (KJ). “Father, hallowed . . . “ (NAS)

The marginal note in the NAS is “some mss. Insert phrases from Matt. 6:9-13 to make the two passages closely similar.” This is of course an accusation of willful dishonesty.

The Aland text ives the simple pater an A rating on the basis of p 75, Aleph, B, and not much else. It rejects “Our . . . which art in heaven” as found in A, C, D, K, P, W, X, Delta, Theta, Pi, Psi, and a dozen more cursives. Yet in the next line Aland text gives a B rating to “They kingdom come,” which is supported by essentially the same evidence it rejected in the preceding line.

Similarly in Luke 11:4 the Aland text omits “Deliver us from evil,” and ends the verse with the word temptation. The critics favorite combination of Aleph and B support the omission, plus p. 75; but Aleph was correct to include it, plus en other uncials and many cursives. All this points up the critics' inconsistencies.

Something should be said about their favorite combination of Aleph and B. They are fourth century uncials. That means they were written let us guess, about A.D. 350. They are supposed to have marked similarities which distinguish them from other uncials, such as A, C, K, etc., not to mention cursives. This leads to the supposition that they were both copied from an earlier now lost manuscript, and hence represent an extremely early text.

Frederic G. Kenyon (Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, London, 1901, p. 56) wrote, “If Tischendorf's opinion as to the identity of the corrector of Aleph and the scribe of B be true, it is more than probable that the two MSS. were written in the same place; and in any case the similarity of text suggests at least the possibility of a community of origin.” On the next page Kenyon estimates that Tischendorf's new edition, using both Aleph and B, differs from the Textus Receptus in more than 3000 places. And he adds, “It is primarily (though not by any means entirely) to their influence that the textual differences between our Authorized and Revised Versions are due.” He then

continues with about two pages of examples.

As for B, or Codex Vaticanus, Kenyon says, “This is generally held to be both the oldest and the most valuable of all manuscripts of the Greek Bible” (p. 63). “Excellent authorities believe that there are proofs of a community of origin between B and Aleph” (p. 67). “it is the foremost champion of what we have called the [non-Byzantine] text . . . It differs from the [non-Byzantine] text especially in the Gospels, and most notably in the way of omission” (pp. 69, 70).

These two manuscripts are the critics' most important example of their principle that weight outweighs number. That the numerical superiority of the Byzantine copies might have been due to the early wide-spread acceptance of that type as being closest to the autographs does not impress the critics. Furthermore, while it is reasonable to treat all descendants of one source as one, there is more difficulty in tracing the heredity of manuscripts, their 'families,' than the critics like to admit. Then again, it is not true that the earliest surviving manuscripts must be the best. Since Christianity was plagued with heretics and enemies, one of them might have deliberately altered his copy of the autograph. The result could be that Aleph and B may be excellent copies of a deliberately altered ancestor. Indeed deliberate alteration seems more likely to have occurred early, rather than later when the number of manuscripts had increased. Why could not Aleph and B have come from an earlier proto-Arian text or a Marcion deception?

Luke 13:27, “And he will say, saying to you . . .” However queer this sounds in English, or even in Greek, it is a very common Hebrew construction. That Luke, though a Gentile, was widely cognizant of Hebrew customs may be verified by the opening chapters of his Gospel. The whole atmosphere is genuinely Jewish. Aleph and four minuscules omit saying. All the others, including one papyrus, ten lettered uncials, families 1 and 13, plus ten numbered minuscules have the Old Testament construction. Saying deserves a better rating than C.

Luke 16:14, “all these things.” To disabuse the uninstructed Christians of the notion that the doctrines of the New Testament are widely distorted by a multitude of textual errors, this reference is included because of its triviality. “These all” has the favor of the critics favored combination of Aleph and B, plus p. 75, plus (with the addition of and) a great number of others. “All these and,” “all and,” and “these” alone have some support. None of this makes any difference to the sense of the passage, and there are hundreds of similar examples.

Luke 16:21 is more serious: “desiring to be fed from the fallen [things] from the table . . .” The Textus Receptus reads, “desiring to be fed from the crumbs which were fallen from the table.” The shorter form, which the critics rate a B, seems to have only four Greek manuscripts as evidence. The word crumbs occurs in all the others, including twenty-two minuscules and the two families 1 and 13. Metzger pontifically disposes of the problem in one sentence: “The more picturesque expression 'of the crumbs' [in Greek] was introduced by copyists from Mt. 15:27.” No evidence is forthcoming.

Luke 19:25 is another instance of the critics' prejudice against the evidence. Because D, W, and three minuscules omit the verse, they give it a D rating in spite of the fact that it is found in Aleph, A, B, K, L, Delta, Theta, Pi, Psi, and a long list of others. It seems as if the critics doubt even the combination of their favorites when these support the Byzantine text.

Luke 24:3, “[The women] entering [the tomb] did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” The critical text brackets the Lord, though the article the is retained. The supposedly conflated Byzantine cursives, according to the modern textual critics, use many 'devotional phrases' or 'liturgical additions.'

On this assumption subjective modern preferences omit kuriou. Iesou alone seems to correct to them. Yet p. 76, Aleph, A, B, plus other uncials and scads of cursives have kuriou. Very few, only one uncial and two twelfth century cursives omit it. One may therefor suspect that 'liturgical additions' are not liturgical additions at all, but the normal which in which devout Christians referred to the Lord Jesus.

Luke 24:9, “Returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven.”

The modern textual critics give only a D rating to the words “from the tomb.” Yet p 75, eleven uncials including Aleph and B, plus plenty of cursives have these words. Only D omits them. Surely this deserves an a rating, and it is hard to see why the critics did not at least give it a B.

Luke 24:12, “Peter, rising, ran to the tomb” and on to the end of the verse.

The critics bracket the whole verse and give it a D rating. The evidence in favor of the verse is similar to that of Luke 24:9: p. 75, eleven uncials, including Aleph, A, B, and plenty of cursives. The only Greek manuscript that omits it is D.

The same is true for Luke 24:40 also. The critics rate is D; and the NAS omits it from the text, demoting it to a marginal note. It says, “Some MSS add verse 40.” The NAS should have said, 'Nearly all.'

John 7:53 – 8:11. This is the passage concerning Jesus' judgment on the woman whom the Pharisees caught in the very act of adultery, and because of its length it will not be quoted. This example of textual criticism must be included here in order to make it clear that the present writer does not consider the Textus Receptus inerrant, much less the KJ version. After I was sixty years old, I met for the first time in my life, a man who believed that the KJ version was completely inerrant. I think the liberals exaggerate the number of such people, but there seems to be or have been at least one such ignoramus.

Parenthetically the KJ contains a contradiction. In one place it says that David's first wife had no children and later it assigns five to her by name. In this case the newer versions avoid the contradiction by showing that two women of different names are specified in the text. For once they are an improvement.

The Textus Receptus derives its name from the work of Erasmus. His first edition of the Greek New Testament appeared in 1516. It is full of mistakes, many typographical. The story is that Erasmus was anxious to have the honor of being the first to publish the Greek New Testament, and to do so he had to rush it through the printers before Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros could publish his so-called Complutensian Polyglot. The Cardinal seemed to have no such eagerness, and though his edition seems to have been set in type possibly as early as 1514, the actual publication date was 1522. Erasmus' sloppy work doesn't hold a candle to it.

Deficiencies other than typographical are not all Erasmus' fault, or only partly so. He had the use of less than twenty manuscripts and mainly used only two or three. His only manuscript of Revelation lacked its last page; so Erasmus himself translated the Vulgate back into Greek for the last six verses. He did this also in some other places where his manuscript was unintelligible. Presumably this was unavoidable. Then to his credit, he omitted I John 5:7-8. This shocked the Church. He replied that if they would produced even one Greek manuscript that had the verse, he would include them. So the obliging papacy quickly got an Irish priest to make such a manuscript and Erasmus included the

verses.

Robert Etienne (Stephanus) of Paris printed a third edition of Erasmus work. In it he used the codes Bezae, part of the Complutensian edition, all typographical correct. This is the Text Receptus.

Now, the Textus Receptus and the KJ version have John 7:53 – 8:11. These verses are not found in p. 66, 75, seemingly omitted in A and C, omitted in L, N, W, X, Y, Delta, Theta, Psi, two numbered uncials and about ten miniscules. Containing the passage are D, G, K, M, U, Gamma, and about as many miniscules. Some of those that include the passage indicate that it is doubtful. One unimportant manuscript puts it after Luke 21:38.

On the basis of this evidence it is doubtful that the original contained the verses because it is unlikely that one or several scribes would have omitted or deleted this many verses. On the other hand, if it was not original, how can one explain the manuscripts that include it? Now, if the liberal critics dogmatically assert that this copyist did this and that copyist did that, perhaps someone else can modestly suggest a different possible explanation. No doubt the critics will hoot at the suggestion, but surely it is at least a possibility. Just perchance the Apostle John himself wrote a second edition of his Gospel, adding the paragraph, I can point to a book on Ethics, whose second edition differs from the first by only the addition of an extra chapter. Could not John have done similarly?

Acts 5:37, “. . . Judas of Galilee rose up . . . and drew people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were scattered.”

The Aland-Metzger text gives the word all a C rating in spite of its being supported by p. 74, Aleph, A, B, C, E, F, Psi, and plenty of cursives. Note that this list contains the critics' favorite combination of Aleph and B. Only p. 45 and D omit it. Papyrus 45 of the third century carries some weight, but D is often obviously incorrect. Metzger in his Commentary on Acts 13:27-29 properly states that “Here and there the text of the codex Bezae is obviously corrupt and ungrammatical.” These rating therefore must have been decided by tossing a coin rather than by manuscript evidence. Metzger's explanation in his A Textual Commentary on the New Testament is, “Although it is possible that pantes [all] was added to a growing text [note that he believes the text grew by continual additions] a majority of the Committee was inclined to regard the absence of the word from p. 45, D, . . . as due to accidental oversight.” Well, the Committee was right about D, but in my judgment quite wrong in the low rating.

Acts 8:37. This is the supposed confession of faith by the Ethiopian eunuch to Philip. The Textus Receptus has it, and therefore the KJ. In reacting to the inconsistencies of the modern critics, one should not assume that the TR is without mistakes. While Stephanus did better than Erasmus, neither of them had very many manuscripts. Indeed, Erasmus seems to have seen it only in the margin of one late manuscript. Apparently only one uncial has the verse, plus a very few miniscules. Erasmus should not have trusted a mere marginal note.

Let it be observed, for the benefit of the students who wish to do more in textual criticism than read a few easy samples, that Acts contains several extremely complex and difficult problems. Those in which D is used can be alleviated by ignoring D. Others are not so easily explained. One difficult passage is 15:30, 29 plus 21:25. Some of these difficulties are exegetical rather than textual. For such consult J. Gresham Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion (Macmillan, 1921, pp. 87-98). Whereas Metzger's Textual Commentary usually gives six to twelve lines, roughly, to an item, here there are five full pages. About as puzzling, but not nearly so important is the three page discussion of 16:12. Again,

the troubles with 16:35 – 40 would vanish if D were disregarded. In fact D is almost as bad as some new American translations. Acts would do much better without it, and them.

Romans 1:25, “to those in Rome” deserves an A rating rather than B, because only one Greek manuscript, the ninth century G, omits it.

Romans 5:1 is one of some theological importance. The choice is between an omicron and an omega — the indicative versus a subjunctive verb. The Aland note agrees with the Textus Receptus, though Metzger claims “far better external support” for the subjunctive. Since the short o is hardly distinguishable from the long o in sound, a scribe receiving dictation could use either vowel without thinking. If he were copying a text, he would likely get it right. But clearly the sense requires the indicative. As even Metzger acknowledges, “Paul is not exhorting, but stating facts . . . only the indicative is consonant with the apostles' argument.”

Romans 6:16, “whether of sin unto death.” This is another example of the critics' curious grading system. The words “unto death” are found in thirty manuscripts listed in the Aland footnotes. Only two manuscripts omit the words. Therefore, “a majority of the Committee was disposed to regard the omission as an unintentional oversight.” But they gave “unto death” only a C rating. Just above they gave a B rating to the words “in Christ Jesus” (verse 11), even though there are not just two, but twenty four variant manuscripts. The critics's frequent defense is that textual criticism is not a science but an art. Aesthetics is decisive.

In Romans 8:23 adoption rates only a C, even though only one papyrus and three Greek manuscripts omit it. The Aland footnote lists twenty-eight with it. Its inclusion may seem to contradict 8:15, as Metzger notices, but this is a theological, not a textual problem. The evidence overwhelmingly supports its inclusion. In contrast “and he who believes” in Rom. 9:33 has a B rating with seven manuscripts, while “and everyone who believes” is supported by about two dozen. Of course the argument is that p. 46, Aleph, A, and B overpower all other combinations. But consider I Cor. 1:13.

I Cor. 1: 13, “Is Christ divided?” In the first edition of their New Testament the critics give the word divided a C rating. They may have raised the reading in the second edition. If so, well and good, for their first decision pitted p. 46 practically alone against everything else, including their favorite combination of Aleph and B, plus even D.

True, p. 46 is a third or even a second century document, antedating all the uncials. It surely carries some weight. But papyrus is cheap; it would not elicit the same care from the copyist that vellum would, and therefore does not guarantee accuracy. Hence the next reference favors a fishy eye.

In I Cor. 3:10 a C rating occurs because p. 46 virtually alone is supposed to compromise the great majority of uncials as well as cursives.

Worse, in I Cor. 3:17, “Him Shall God destroy,” they give a C rating to destroy, where p. 46 itself agrees with the uncials, including Aleph and B.

Philippians 1:14, “. . . are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

The Aland text gives a D rating to logon lalein (to speak the word). This reading is supported by p 46 apparently, D's third corrector, K, and a few numbered manuscripts. The reading logon tou theou lalein is supported by Aleph, A, B, P, Psi, and more than twice as many numbered manuscripts. Here

the critics rejected their strong preference for the Aleph-B combination, plus a larger number of others, in favor of considerably weaker evidence. Metzger admits it. But “because the position and wording of the genitive modifiers (tou theou and kuriou) vary, a majority of the Committee preferred” the shorter form. In other words, objective evidence is inferior to the critics' subjective taste in word order. For the benefit of those who know no Greek, the case endings in Greek allow several different word orders that are impossible in ordinary English, some even impossible in artificial poetry. And Paul was no poet. Now, indeed, the shorter form here is probably correct, but the point is that the critics' methodology is inconsistent.

Hebrews 3:6, “If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end.” Metzger defends the reading, “if the boldness and the boasting of hope we hold firm.” There is very slim evidence for this reading, only p 13 and 46, B, and Psi. Metzger's rejected reading is, “if the boasting and the boldness of hope until the end certain we hold firm.” This reading is based on Aelph, A, C, D, K, P, and about twenty two numbered manuscripts both uncial and cursive. Metzger's rejection of “the certain hope until the end” depends on the word certain being feminine in agreement with the feminine hope. Instead of neuter in agreement with the word boasting. But in Greek genders, as well as cases, are sometimes attracted to an adjacent word, as English does not permit. Notice that in Col. 3:14 the neuter O refers to the feminine agapen. The supposition that a copyist transferre the words of verse 14 back into verse 6 is highly improbable and has nothing but subjective prejudice to support it. With more verisimilitude I can suppose that by the time the copyist had reached verse 14, he had quite forgotten verse 6.

But however peculiar or even suspicious bebaias (certain) may be, it furnishes no good reason for dropping rechri telous (until the end). Furthermore, we could 'conjecturally emend bebaias to the adverb bebaics of the half dozen numbered manuscripts.

Hebrews 8:8 has an accusative pronoun in some manuscripts and its dative in others. In English the choice is between 'Finding fault with them, he said,' and 'Finding fault he said to them.' There is virtually no difference in sense or in theology. But as purely a case of determining between two readings we must choose either the dative or the accusative. Both fairly well attested, but the dative seems to have the better of it. The accusative has the original Aleph, A, D, I, K, P, Psi, and seven numbered manuscripts. The dates has p 46, Aleph's third corrector, B, D's third corrector, and a long list of numbered manuscripts. Yet Metzger defends the accusative on the ground that copyists more frequently change an accusative to a dative than the reverse. I have no statistics on such changes between the two cases, but even if Metzger's are correct, and this would depend on how he determined which way the change want in many instances, it is still guesswork that the change here was one of the (how much unbalanced?) majority.

I Timothy 3:16, “ \* \* \* was manifest in the flesh.” These examples of textual criticism have so far been selected mostly at random. Here is one definitely selected for theological reasons. The Textus Receptus reads, “God was manifested in the flesh.” The modern text read, “Who was manifested in the flesh.” This is, they make it a relative clause minus an antecedent. That is, they make nonsense of the verse.

The textual evidence given in the Aland apparatus is: Os (Greek, who) the original Aleph, apparently A, then C, G, two numbered manuscripts, and one lectionary. The Metzger Commentary adds two more numbered manuscripts. Only D reads o (which). Theos (God) occurs in a later correction of Aleph, corections of A, C, and D, and lettered uncials K, F, Psi, plus nineteen numbered manuscripts. Mere arthithmetic favors the Textus Receptus.

But mere arithmetic is not always conclusive. Other considerations must sometimes be weighed. Metzger's argument against the Textus Receptus begins by asserting that an original os can account for an alteration to Theos, but that an original Theos could not account for an alteration to os. This is plausible. It must be remembered, however, that os, the relative pronoun and the commonly used abbreviation for Theos look very much alike. Hence an original abbreviate Theos could give rise to os, contrary to Metzger's assertion. In addition to the numerical preponderance of evidence favoring the Textus Receptus is another very important, objective factor. As mentioned above, the reading who, without an antecedent does not make sense. Metzger's Commentary has no answer to this essential consideration.

The textual and grammatical evidence therefore rather definitely favors God. The subjectivity of Metzger's method, so well documented in the score of examples given here, seems to require the explanation that Metzger and his group were motivated by theological assumptions. Their work is definitely not objective.

This point is very well put by Alfred Martin in his article John William Burgon, A Memorial (Bibliotheca Sacra, April 1966, pp. 150 – 157.) Unfortunately the first sentence to be quoted contains the indefensible word “always” but the remainder makes his meaning clear. “No matter how great a Greek scholar a man may be, his conclusions must always be open to suspicion if he does not accept the Bible as the Word of God.” This is untrue because Christian and liberal alike may be correct, or may alike be mistaken, in report that ms. 1066 reads moron in Philadelphians 17:76. Martin's rue meaning comes in the following sentence: “While the textual critic is merely collecting and comparing readings . . . it does not matter particularly what his theological views are; but when he begins to theorize upon the data he has assembled, then it matters greatly.” If the Aland textual footnotes and Metzger's Commentary says that K, L, M read os, and T, W, A, read on, it is most unlikely that they are mistaken. But when it comes to their inconsistent and subjective evaluations of the readings, they may be wrong, and if the point in question is very important, they may be wrong more often than they are right.

Hebrews 10:38. The NAS follows Metzger in its translation: “My righteous one shall live by faith.” The TR and KJ omit the word my. The LXX has the my in Hab. 2:4, though apparently some LXX manuscripts omit it; and Hebrews often quotes the LXX. But the Hebrew Bible does not have the my. Neither does Paul in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11. Metzger then argues that the MSS underlying the TR altered Heb. 10:38 to make it conform with Romans and Galatians. Of course this is unfounded supposition. Then he adds, “But it [the word my] undoubtedly belongs to the text, being strongly supported by early and reliable witnesses.” Actually there are very few manuscripts that have my, chiefly P 46, Aleph, an A. The great majority omit it.

The two readings may not, and I would say do not, give the same meaning. If my is used, the verse would seem to refer to Christ himself. Now, Christ is in the preceding context, but we cannot admit that Christ found like or was justified by faith. Without the my the verse must refer to the regenerate, and this very well fits the remainder of verse 38 plus verse 39.

Revelation 5:9, 10 is a rather complicated case. The Aland text, followed by the NAS and RSV, and most modern versions, have “did purchase for God with thy blood men from every tribe . . . and has made them to be a kingdom . . . and they shall reign . . .” The KJ has, “hast redeemed us to God by thy blood . . . and hast made us . . . kings. . . and we shall reign . . .”

Before considering the textual evidence, one should note that the words quoted are a part of a paean of praise sung by the twenty-four elders in heaven. This context makes us and we shall reign far more plausible than men, them, and they. But though the sense of the passage is important, one must also examine the evidence. Maybe a different reading will also make good sense. But if it makes poor sense — well, sometimes the critics accuse the copyists of altering the original poor sense into something more easily understood — at any rate let us examine the evidence first.

The facts according to the critics own statements are these: one uncial, A, is the only Greek manuscript that omits us. An Ethiopic version also omits it. No cursive omits us. Aleph, one numbered uncial, and many cursives have us. They shall reign, or they are reigning, have the support of Aleph, P, one numbered uncial, and about fifteen miniscules. We shall reign is supported by the one cursive 24:32. If these pieces of evidence seem fewer than usual, the reason is that the Apocalypse has been preserved in a lesser number of manuscripts. Nor does any reading from Revelation occur in the Greek lectionaries.

Such is the evidence. Metzger's argument is that in spite of the evidence the omission of us best accounts for the origin of the other readings. "Wishing to provide egorasas [thou hast bought, or redeemed] with a more exactly determined object than is found in the words [of every tribe, etc.] some scribes introduces emas [us] either before [God] or after [God] . . . while others replaced [God] with emas. Those who made the emendations, however, overlooked the unsuitability of emas with autous [them] in the following verse (where indeed the Textus Receptus] reads emas, but with quite inadequate authority)."

One must acknowledge that the evidence in verse 10 for "they shall reign" is much stronger than the skimpy evidence for "we shall reign." But the evidence for us in verse 9 is too strong to be rejected on the basis of speculation as to what so many scribes conspired to alter. Why could not an equal number of scribes have conspired to alter we shall reign to they shall reign? If speculation be used, cannot we conservatives speculate that the elders in heaven expanded their scope in the last line so as to include the redeemed of all ages? Verse 13 at least seems to carry such a hint, for it includes every created being, not only in heaven, but on the earth also. The problem is, however, insoluble because so few manuscripts of Revelation have survived. My rough count is two papyri, nine uncials, and 17 cursives, apparently only three before the twentieth century.

Revelation 13:1, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having . . ." (KJ). The RSV has "And he stood on the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast rising . . ." The NEB similarly. The the NIV makes it, "And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea, and I saw a beast coming. . ."

The Alanad text has estathe, HE stood." This makes very little sense. It is a very awkward conclusion for chapter 12, nor does it fit chapter 13 at all, as the critics admit by making it 12:18, and then beginning chapter 13 in the middle of what used to be 13:1.

The manuscript evidence is as follows. "He stood" receives the support of p 47, Aleph, A, C, and about 25 miniscules. "I stood." estathen, has in its favor some number uncials, and a great many cursives. Metzger dismisses them by arbitrarily asserting that these latter "have arisen when copyists accommodated estathe to the first person of the following eidon." Metzger sure knows how these unknown scribes thought and what they did.

Revelation 13:18, "Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the

number of a man; and his number is Six hundred three score and six.”

The difficulties in Revelation are so numerous and so enormous that an elementary study such as this could be immediately excused from considering any one of them. However, with unbecoming boldness and the held of others, I venture upon this one.

First, notice that the apostle John expects that some in his own day can figure out the meaning. Indeed, it would be easier for them to do so than for us because their knowledge of such numbers was greater and more commonplace than ours. At any rate, 666 designates a man, and the verse virtually implies that John's first century readers knew that man.

One difficulty we moderns face, and which the early Christians did not, is the date of the book. If John wrote the Apocalypse about A.D. 90, as many believe, he could not have been referring to someone who had lived about the year 60. There is one piece of evidence that seems to date John's writing in the nineties. Though this remains as a possible refutation of what is about to be concluded, it can hardly be regarded as an absolutely unquestionable factor. The exegesis of the verse may prove enough to discount it.

The important bit of evidence is the fact that one manuscript gives the number as 616. Obviously this is an incorrect reading, but it raises the question as to why one copyist changed 666 to 616. The most plausible answer is that the copyist knew John's meaning and knew also, in his manner of counting, that the person's number was 616. He then 'corrected' his incorrect source.

Who then can fit the two numbers? The answer is easy. The evil emperor's name was spelled two ways: Nero or Neron. The letter N meant 50. If the copyist was familiar only with the form Nero, he would add it up and get 616. It is most difficult to think of any other reason for 616.

Those who have patiently read these pages now to the end may be disappointed at the paucity of theological implications. Of course there have been some, beginning with the dishonest attack on the Virgin Birth, and later Heb. 10:38, with a few in between. For the most part the examples have had little relevance, not merely to the major Christian doctrines, but to the subsidiary doctrines as well. The reason was that thus the inadequacies of the liberal methods could be emphasized without running the risk of attracting an irrelevant accusation of bigotry. Even so, such a small thing as 666 sometimes can entail a greater mass of exegetical and theological interpretations than anyone would antecedently suppose. Consider the following verses, not for any textual problem in them but for the effect 666 imposes on them.

Revelation 17:9, 18 provide some corroboration for identifying 666 as Nero, and by a reciprocal relation 666 aids greatly in understanding this following passage. To begin with, the city in which the evil ruler resides is a city built on seven hills. Even today that description attaches to the only one city in the world; and in John's day what other city could be called “that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth”? Designating it as Babylon is entirely metaphorical, for the historical Babylon was a waste land.

Not only do a few verses in Rev. 17 help in understanding 13:8, but their reciprocal relationship bears on the meaning of chapters two and three, away back at the beginning. And this controls the view of Revelation in its entirety. The main point is that 13:18 and 17:9 prevent us from supposing that the letters to the churches in the early chapters describe conditions that were to arise between A.D. 100 and A.D. 2000 or so. We must vigorously object to Scofield's view that chapters two and three outline “the

spiritual history of the church from, say, A.D. 96 to the end” (the Scofield Bible, footnote 3 on Rev. 1:20). He believes that “it is incredible that . . . there should be no such foreview.” But what seems incredible to him does not seem so to others. There is not the least hint in the letters that they refer to anything other than the congregations addressed.

Nor are Scofield's details at all convincing. Aside from the fact that the language in any case is usually broad enough to fit many ages, there is one case where there is no fit at all. Scofield asserts that “these messages do present an exact forview of the spiritual history of the church in their precise order.” Instead of Scofield's italics for the word spiritual, I prefer to emphasize his words exact and precise; for this is exactly and precisely what the messages are not. The startling justification for this criticism comes only a few lines below: “Sardis is the Protestant Reformation.” Now, the revealing angle directs John to write to Sardis, “I know that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” a verse below exhorts repentance and threatens disaster. Only a few names have not been defiled. In other words the Protestant Reformation was apostasy!

On the contrary, the chapter refers only to the actual churches of the first century. Then from chapter four to eleven John describes the Jewish persecutions of the Christians; from twelve to eighteen he predicts the Roman persecution; and nineteen to twenty-two describe history's final scene.

But between now and those final scenes, what the church needs is not a precise and exact schedule of events. What the church needs most is Bible study. It has frequently been said that the in Scotland about the year 1600, lads of fourteen knew the Bible doctrines better than the twentieth century candidates for the ministry. Of course there are exceptions in both groups; but in general and by witnessing many examinations in Presbyteries, I rather imagine that the condemnation is basically true. On a lower level, for the last ten years of my academic life, my students in a Christian college have excelled in Biblical ignorance. Not only have they never memorized the Shorter Catechism, which all teen-agers should know backwards and forwards, but their view of the Person of Christ, in agreement with that of a most prominent evangelist, is Apollinarian rather than Chalcedonian. They never, certainly almost never, hear a sermon on the Trinity, doubtless because the ministers are either ignorant or think it unimportant. And here I have written this study in textual criticism, while communicant members by and large know no text to criticize.

Is not the final apostasy upon us?