

# WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?<sup>1</sup>

## THE GREEK TEXT WE ACCEPT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

WILBUR N. PICKERING  
Missionary  
*Valparaiso De Goias, GO, Brazil*

### I. INTRODUCTION

It has been commonly argued, for at least 260 years,<sup>2</sup> that no doctrine will be affected no matter what Greek text one may use. In my own experience, for over fifty years, when I have raised the question of what is the correct Greek text of the NT, regardless of the audience, the usual response has been: “What difference does it make?” The purpose of this article is to answer that question, at least in part.

The eclectic Greek text presently in vogue, N-A<sup>26</sup>/UBS<sup>3</sup> [hereafter NU] represents the type of text upon which most modern versions are based.<sup>3</sup> The KJV and NKJV follow a rather different type of text, a close cousin of the Majority Text.<sup>4</sup> The

---

<sup>1</sup>This article is a revision (considerable) of ‘Appendix G’ in my book, *The Identity of the New Testament Text II*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 3rd ed., 2003. (In the online version it is Appendix H.)

<sup>2</sup>John Bengel, a textual critic who died in 1752, has been credited with being the first one to advance this argument.

<sup>3</sup>*Novum Testamentum Graece*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 26th ed., 1979. *The Greek New Testament*, New York: United Bible Societies, 3rd ed., 1975. The text of both these editions is virtually identical, having been elaborated by the same five editors: Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo Martini, Bruce Metzger and Allen Wikgren. Most modern versions were actually based on the ‘old’ Nestle text, which differs from the 26th edition in over 700 places. UBS<sup>4</sup> and N-A<sup>27</sup> do not offer changes in the text, just in the apparatus—it follows that the text was determined by the earlier set of five editors, not the present five (Matthew Black and Allen Wikgren were replaced by Barbara Aland [Kurt’s wife, now widow] and Johannes Karavidopoulos).

<sup>4</sup>*The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2nd ed., 1985. This text was edited by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad. Very similar to this is *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2005*, Southborough, MA: Chilton

discrepancy between NU and the Majority Text is around 8% (involving 8% of the words). In a Greek text with 600 pages, that represents 48 solid pages' worth of discrepancies. About a fifth of that reflects omissions in the eclectic text (e.g., Mark 16:9-20; John 7:53–8:11), so it is some ten pages shorter than the Majority Text. Even if we grant, for the sake of the argument, that up to half of the differences between the Majority Text and eclectic text could be termed inconsequential, this leaves some 24 pages' worth of differences that are significant (in varying degrees). In spite of these differences it is usually assumed that no cardinal Christian doctrine is at risk (though some, such as eternal judgment, the ascension, and the deity of Jesus, are weakened). *However*, the most basic doctrine of all, the divine inspiration of the text, is indeed under attack.

The eclectic text incorporates errors of fact and contradictions, such that any claim that the NT is divinely inspired becomes relative, and the doctrine of inerrancy becomes virtually untenable. If the authority of the NT is undermined, all its teachings are likewise affected. For well over a century the credibility of the NT text has been eroded, and this credibility crisis has been forced upon the attention of the laity by the modern versions that enclose parts of the text in brackets and have numerous footnotes of a sort that raise doubts about the integrity of the text.

The consequences of all this are serious and far-reaching for the future of the Church. It seems unreasonable that individuals and organizations that profess to champion a high view of Scripture, that defend verbal plenary inspiration and the inerrancy of the autographs, should embrace a Greek text that effectively undermines their belief.<sup>5</sup> Since their sincerity is evident,

---

Book Publishing, 2005. This text was edited by Maurice A Robinson and William G. Pierpont. These differ somewhat from the *Textus Receptus* upon which the KJV and NKJV are based.

<sup>5</sup> For years it has been commonly stated that no two known Greek manuscripts of the NT are in perfect agreement (*however*, for Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 & 3 John, and Jude, I have in my possession copies of at least two identical manuscripts—not the same two for each book). In consequence, claims of Biblical inerrancy are usually limited to the autographs (the very original documents actually penned by the human authors), or to the precise wording contained in them. Since no autograph of the NT exists today (they were probably worn out within a few years through heavy use) we must appeal to the existing copies in any effort to identify the original wording.

one must conclude that they are uninformed, or have not really looked at the evidence and thought through the implications. So I will now set out some of that evidence and discuss the implications. I wish to emphasize that I am not impugning the personal sincerity or orthodoxy of those who use the eclectic text; I am challenging the presuppositions that lie behind it and calling attention to the proof of the pudding.

In the following examples, I give the reading of the Majority Text first,<sup>6</sup> the NU second, followed by any others. (Where NU uses brackets, or some modern version follows Nestle<sup>25</sup>, that will be clearly explained.) Immediately under each variant is a literal equivalent in English. To each variant is attached a statement of manuscript support taken from my edition of the Greek Text of the NT.<sup>7</sup> The set of variants with their respective supporting evidence is followed by a discussion of the implications. First I will present errors of fact and contradictions, then any serious anomalies and aberrations.

---

The text-critical theory underlying NU presupposes that the original wording was ‘lost’ during the early centuries and that objective certainty as to the original wording is now an impossibility. A central part of the current debate is the argument that the text in use *today* is not inerrant—this is a recurring theme in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy 1987* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), for example.

I am prepared to offer objective evidence in support of the contention that the original wording was *not* ‘lost’ during the early centuries. I further argue that it is indeed possible to identify with reasonable certainty the original wording, based on objective criteria—today. (The “objective evidence” to which I refer is available free from <http://www.walkinhiscommandments.com>.)

<sup>6</sup>In the column labeled “Key Manuscripts,” the designation  $\mathfrak{M}$  stands not for a specific manuscript, but for the undivided Majority Text, which includes hundreds of individual manuscripts.

<sup>7</sup>This Greek NT may be downloaded free from <http://www.walkinhiscommandments.com>; the last footnote in Matthew, for example, explains the apparatus and the symbols used.

## II. ERRORS OF FACT AND CONTRADICTIONS

### A. LUKE 4:44

Variant Readings:	Percent of Manuscripts:	Key Manuscripts:
της Γαλιλαιας [in the synagogues] of Galilee	94.7%	Ⲙ, A, D
της Ιουδαιας [in the synagogues] of Judea	4.1%	Ⲡ <sup>75</sup> , Ⲛ, B, C, Q
των Ιουδαιων	0.2%	W
αυτων	0.5%	

Problem: Jesus was in Galilee (and continued there), not in Judea, as the context makes clear.

Discussion: In the parallel passage, Mark 1:35-39, all texts agree that Jesus was in Galilee. Thus NU contradicts itself by reading Judea in Luke 4:44. Bruce Metzger makes clear that the NU editors did this on purpose when he explains that their reading “is obviously the more difficult, and copyists have corrected it...in accord with the parallels in Mt 4.23 and Mk 1.39.”<sup>8</sup> Thus the NU editors introduce a contradiction into their text which is also an error of fact. This error in the eclectic text is reproduced by LB, NIV, NASB, NEB, RSV, etc. NRSV adds insult to injury: “So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.”

### B. LUKE 23:45

Variant Readings:	% of Mss:	Key Mss:
εσκοτισθη [the sun] was darkened	96.8%	Ⲙ, A, D, Q, W
εκλιποντος [the sun] being eclipsed	0.4%	Ⲡ <sup>75</sup> , Ⲛ, C

---

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, New York: United Bible Societies, 1971, pp. 137-38.

εκλειποντος	0.4%	B
εσκοτισθεντος	0.7%	
conflations	1.2%	

Problem: An eclipse of the sun is impossible during a full moon. Jesus was crucified during the Passover, and the Passover is always at full moon (which is why the date for Easter moves around). NU introduces a scientific error.

Discussion: The Greek verb *εκλειπω* is quite common and has the basic meaning *to fail* or *to end*, but when used to describe the sun or the moon it refers to an eclipse (*eclipse* comes from that Greek root). Indeed, such versions as Moffatt, Twentieth Century, Authentic, Phillips, NEB, New Berkeley, NAB, and Jerusalem overtly state that the sun was eclipsed. While versions such as NASB, TEV, and NIV avoid the word *eclipse*, the normal meaning of the eclectic text that they follow is precisely *the sun being eclipsed*.<sup>9</sup>

### C. MARK 6:22

Variant Readings:	% of Mss:	Key Mss:
αυτης της Ηρωδιαδος [the daughter] herself of Herodias	96.5%	℞, A, C, N
αυτου — Ηρωδιαδος his [daughter] Herodias	0.4%	ℑ, B, D
— της Ηρωδιαδος	1.3%	
αυτης — Ηρωδιαδος	0.7%	W
αυτου της Ηρωδιαδος	0.9%	

Problem: NU in Mark 6:22 contradicts NU in Matthew 14:6.

Discussion: Matthew 14:6 states that the girl was the daughter of Herodias (Herodias had been the wife of Philip, King Herod's brother, but was now living with Herod). Here NU

---

<sup>9</sup> Arndt and Gingrich (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 242, referring to this passage, state: "Of the sun grow dark, perh. be eclipsed." One suspects that this statement was designed specifically to defend the reading of the eclectic text. Metzger dismisses the reading of over 97% of the manuscripts as "the easier reading" (p. 182).

makes the girl out to be Herod's own daughter, and calls her "Herodias." Metzger defends the choice of the NU Committee with these words: "It is very difficult to decide which reading is the least unsatisfactory" (p. 89). Do the NU editors consider that the original reading is lost? If not, the original reading must be 'unsatisfactory,' but are those editors really competent to make such a judgment? What is 'unsatisfactory' about the reading of over 98% of the manuscripts which creates no problem? The modern versions that usually identify with NU part company with them here, except for NRSV that reads, "his daughter Herodias."

#### D. 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
ονομαζεται is named	96.8%	℣
—	3.2%	Ɑ <sup>46</sup> , ⑆, A, B, C

**Problem:** It was reported that a man had his father's wife, a type of fornication such that not even the Gentiles would talk about. However, the NU text affirms that this type of incest did not even exist among the Gentiles, a plain falsehood. Every conceivable type of sexual perversion has existed throughout human history.

**Discussion:** Strangely, such evangelical versions as NIV, NASB, Berkeley, and LB propagate this error. I find it interesting that versions such as TEV, NEB, and Jerusalem, while following the same text, avoid a categorical statement.<sup>10</sup>

#### E. LUKE 3:33

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
του Αμιναδαβ, of Aminadab	του Αραμ of Aram	95% ℣, A, (D)
του Αμιναδαβ of Aminadab	του Αδμιν of Admin	0% none!
	του Αρνι of Arni	

---

<sup>10</sup>The UBS apparatus gives no inkling to the user that there is serious variation at this point (but N-A does); in consequence Metzger doesn't mention it either.

	του Αδμειν του Αρνει	B
του Αδαμ	του Αρνι?	syr <sup>s</sup>
του Αδαμ	του Αδμιν του Αρνει	Σ
του Αδαμ	του Αδμειν του Αρνει	cop <sup>sa</sup>
του Αδμειν	του Αδμιν του Αρνι	cop <sup>bo</sup>
του Αμιναδαβ	του Αδμιν του Αρνει	Σ <sup>c</sup>
του Αμιναδαβ	του Αδμιν του Αρηι	f <sup>13</sup>
του Αμιναδαβ	του Αδμη του Αρνι	X
του Αμιναδαβ	του Αδμειν του Αρνι	L
του Αμιναδαβ	του Αραμ του Αρνι	N

Problem: The fictitious Admin and Arni are intruded into Christ’s genealogy.

Discussion: UBS has misrepresented the evidence in their apparatus so as to hide the fact that no Greek manuscript has the precise text they have printed, a veritable patchwork quilt. In Metzger’s presentation of the UBS Committee’s reasoning in this case he writes, “the Committee adopted what seems to be the least unsatisfactory form of text” (p. 136). The UBS editors concoct their own reading and proclaim it “the least unsatisfactory.” What is “unsatisfactory” about the reading of over 95% of the manuscripts except that it doesn’t introduce any difficulties?

There is complete confusion in the Egyptian camp. This confusion must have commenced in the second century, resulting from several easy transcriptional errors, simple copying mistakes. APAM to APNI is very easy (in the early centuries only upper case letters were used); with a scratchy quill the cross strokes in the A and M could be light, and a subsequent copyist could mistake the left leg of the M as going with the A to make N, and the right leg of the M would become I. Very early “Aminadab” was misspelled as “Aminadam,” which survives in some 25% of the extant Manuscripts (in the minuscule manuscripts the beta was frequently written like a mu, only without the tail). The “Adam” of Aleph, syr<sup>s</sup>, and cop<sup>sa</sup> arose through an easy instance of homoioarcton (the eye of a copyist went from the first A in “Aminadam” to the second, dropping “Amin-” and leaving

“Adam”). Α and Δ are easily confused, especially when written by hand—“Admin” presumably came from “AMINαδαβ/μ,” though the process was more complicated.

The ι of “Admin” and “Arni” is corrupted to ει in Codex B (a frequent occurrence in that manuscript—perhaps due to Coptic influence). Codex Aleph conflated the ancestor that produced “Adam” with the one that produced “Admin,” etc. The total confusion in Egypt does not surprise us, but how shall we account for the text and apparatus of NU in this instance? And it is surprising that the editors of NASB, NRSV, TEV, LB, Berkeley, etc. would embrace such an egregious error.

## F. MATTHEW 19:17

Variant Readings:	% of Mss:	Key Mss:
Τι με λεγεις αγαθον ουδεις αγαθος ει μη εις ο Θεος Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, God.	99%	Ⲛ, C, W
Τι με ερωτας περι του αγαθου εις εστιν ο αγαθος Why do you ask me about the good? One is good.	0.9%	Ⲛ, (B, D)

Problem: NU in Matthew 19:17 contradicts NU in Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19 (wherein all texts agree with the Majority here).

Discussion: Presumably Jesus spoke in Hebrew, but there is no way that whatever He said could legitimately yield the two translations into Greek given above.<sup>11</sup> That the Latin versions offer a conflation suggests that both the other variants must have existed in the second century—indeed, the *Diatessaron* overtly places the Majority reading in the first half of that century. The Church in Egypt during the second century was dominated by Gnosticism. That such a nice Gnostic variant came into being is no surprise, but why do modern editors embrace it? Because it

---

<sup>11</sup> In His teaching on general themes the Lord presumably repeated Himself many times, using a variety of expressions and variations on those themes, and the Gospel writers preserve some of that variety. In this case we are dealing with a specific conversation, which presumably was not repeated.



is the “more obscure one” (Metzger, p. 49). The NU Committee then printed another patchwork quilt—taking the young man’s question and this first part of the Lord’s answer together. The precise text of NU is found only in the corrector of Codex B; further, with reference to the main Greek manuscripts given as supporting the eclectic text here (Ⲛ, B, D, L, Θ, *f*<sup>1</sup>), no two of them precisely agree. On what basis, then, are they considered reliable witnesses? Most modern versions join NU in this error also.

### G. ACTS 19:16

Variant Readings:	% of Mss:	Key Mss:
αυτων them	90%	Ⲛ
αμφοτερον both of them	5%	Ⲛ, A, B, D

Problem: The sons of Sceva were seven, not two.

Discussion: To argue that “both” can mean “all” on the basis of this passage is to beg the question. An appeal to Acts 23:8, “For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both,” is likewise unconvincing. “Angel” and “spirit” if not intended as synonyms at least belong to a single class, spirit beings. The Pharisees believed in “both”—resurrection and spirit beings. There is no basis here for claiming that “both” can legitimately refer to seven (Acts 19:16).<sup>12</sup> Still, most modern versions do render “both” as “all.” NASB actually renders “both of them,” making the contradiction overt.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Arndt and Gingrich’s note (p. 47) seems designed to protect the reading of the eclectic text here. Metzger’s discussion is interesting: “The difficulty of reconciling [seven] with [both], however, is not so great as to render the text which includes both an impossible text. On the other hand, however, the difficulty is so troublesome that it is hard to explain how [seven] came into the text, and was perpetuated, if it were not original, . . .” (pp. 471-72). Notice that Metzger assumes the genuineness of “both” and discusses the difficulty that it creates as if it were fact. I would say that his assumption is gratuitous and that the difficulty it creates is an artifact of his presuppositions.

<sup>13</sup> Editor’s Note: The 1978 version of the NASB corrected this error. It and later versions read, “all of them.”

**H. MATTHEW 1:7-8**

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
Ασα Asa	98%	℞, W
Ασαφ Asaph	2%	ℑ <sup>iv</sup> , ℑ, B, C

**Problem:** Asaph does not belong in Jesus' genealogy.

**Discussion:** Asaph was a Levite, not of the tribe of Judah; he was a psalmist, not a king. It is clear from Metzger's comments that the NU editors understand that their reading refers to the Levite and should not be construed as an alternate spelling of Asa; he overtly calls Asaph an "error" (p. 1). In fact, "Asaph" is probably not a misspelling of "Asa." Not counting Asa and Amon (see v 10), Codex B misspells thirteen names in this chapter, while Codex Aleph misspells ten, which undermines their credibility. However, their misspellings involve dittography, gender change, or a similar sound (*z* for *s*, *d* for *t*, *m* for *n*)—not adding an extraneous consonant, like *f*, nor trading dissimilar sounds, like *s* for *n*.

In response to Lagrange, who considered "Asaph" to be an ancient scribal error, Metzger writes: "Since, however, the evangelist may have derived material for the genealogy, not from the Old Testament directly, but from subsequent genealogical lists, in which the erroneous spelling occurred, the Committee saw no reason to adopt what appears to be a scribal emendation" (p. 1). Metzger frankly declares that the spelling they have adopted is "erroneous." The NU editors have deliberately imported an error into their text, which is faithfully reproduced by NAB (New American Bible) and NRSV. The RSV and NASB offer a footnote to the effect that the Greek reads "Asaph"—which is true of only a tiny fraction of Greek manuscripts. The case of Amon vs. Amos in verse 10 is analogous to this one. Metzger says that "Amos" is "an error for 'Amon'" (p. 2), and the NU editors have duly placed the error in their text.

**I. MATTHEW 10:10**

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
μηδε ραβδους neither staffs	95%	℞, C, N, W
μηδε ραβδον neither a staff	5%	ℑ, B, D

**Problem:** In both Matthew 10:10 and Luke 9:3 NU has “neither a staff,” thus contradicting Mark 6:8 where all texts have “only a staff.”

**Discussion:** In Luke and Matthew the Majority Text reads “neither staffs,” which does not contradict Mark—the case of the staffs is analogous to that of the tunics; they were to take only one, not several. A superficial reader would probably expect the singular; that some scribe in Egypt should have trouble with “staffs” and simplify it to “a staff” comes as no surprise, but why do the NU editors import this error into their text? Almost all modern versions follow NU both here and in Luke 9:3.

**J. MARK 1:2**

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
εν τοις προφηταις [as it is written] in the prophets	96.7%	℞, A, W
εν τω Ησαια τω προφητη [as it is written] in Isaiah the prophet	1.3%	ℑ, B
Ησαια τω προφητη	1.8%	D

**Problem:** The NU text ascribes extraneous material to Isaiah.

**Discussion:** The rest of verse 2 is a quote from Malachi 3:1 while verse 3 is from Isaiah 40:3. Once again Metzger uses the harder reading argument, in effect (p. 73), but the eclectic choice is most probably the result of early harmonizing activity. The only other places that Isaiah 40:3 is quoted in the NT are Matthew 3:3, Luke 3:4, and John 1:23. The first two are in passages parallel to Mark 1:2 and join it in agreeing with the LXX verbatim. The quote in John differs from the LXX in one word and is also used in connection with John the Baptist. The

crucial consideration, for our present purpose, is that Matthew, Luke and John all identify the quote as being from Isaiah (without manuscript variation). It seems clear that the “Alexandrian-Western” reading in Mark 1:2 is simply an assimilation to the other three Gospels. It should also be noted that the material from Malachi looks more like an allusion than a direct quote. Further, although Malachi is quoted (or alluded to) a number of times in the NT, he is never named. Mark’s own habits may also be germane to this discussion. Mark quotes Isaiah in 4:12, 11:17 and 12:32 and alludes to him in about ten other places, all without naming his source. The one time he does use Isaiah’s name is when quoting Jesus in Mark 7:6. In the face of such clear evidence the ‘harder reading’ canon cannot justify the forcing of an error into the text of Mark 1:2. Almost all modern versions agree with NU here.

### K. LUKE 9:10

Variant Readings:	% of Mss:	Key Mss:
εις τοπον ερημον πολεως καλουμενης Βηθσαιδα(ν) into a deserted place belonging to a town called Bethsaida	98%	Ⓜ, (A), C, (N), W
εις πολιν καλουμενην Βηθσαιδα into a town called Bethsaida	0.5%	(ⓕ <sup>75</sup> ), B
εις κωμην λεγομενην βηδσαιδα		D
εις τοπον ερημον		Ⓝ

Problem: NU has Jesus and company going into Bethsaida, but in verse 12 the disciples say they are in a deserted area; thus a contradiction is introduced. NU here is also at variance with NU in the parallel passages.

Discussion: In Matthew 14:13 all texts have Jesus going to a deserted place, and in verse 15 the disciples say, “the place is deserted... send the crowd away to the towns.” In Mark 6:31-32 all texts have Him going to a deserted place, and in verse 35 the disciples say it is a deserted place, etc. So NU not only makes Luke contradict himself, but sets him against Matthew and Mark. The modern versions do not surprise us.

**L. JOHN 18:24**

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
απεστειλεν [Annas] had sent [Him bound to Caiaphas]	90%	Ⓜ, A
απεστειλεν ουν then [Annas] sent [Him bound to Caiaphas]	9%	B, C, W
απεστειλεν δε	1%	Ⓝ

Problem: The NU variant sets up a contradiction within the immediate context. Verse 13 says Jesus was taken first to Annas, but all four Gospels are agreed that Peter’s denials and the judging took place in the house of Caiaphas. Here in John, verses 15-23 happened there. The NU variant puts verses 15-23 in the house of Annas, making John contradict the other three Gospels.

Discussion: Only John records that Jesus was taken first to Annas; the other three go directly to Caiaphas, so for them the difficulty of changing houses does not arise. After penning verses 15-23, John saw that his readers could get the idea that Jesus was still with Annas, so he wrote verse 24 to avert that misunderstanding. Verse 24 should be translated in parentheses: (Annas had sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest).

**M. JOHN 6:11**

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
τοις μαθηταις οι δε μαθηται to the disciples, and the disciples...	97%	Ⓜ, D
—————	3%	Ⓝ <sup>66,75v</sup> , Ⓝ, A, B, W

Problem: The NU text contradicts itself. In Matthew 14:19, Mark 6:41, and Luke 9:16, parallel passages, NU agrees with the Majority that Jesus handed the bread to the disciples, who in turn distributed it to the people. Here in John NU omits the disciples and has Jesus Himself distributing the bread to the people.

Discussion: This variant may be explained as an easy transcriptional mistake, a case of homoioarcton, a similar beginning—in this case jumping from one τοις to the next. There is no need to appeal to the ‘harder reading’ canon. If this were the only instance, it could be explained away, but when added to the others it has a cumulative effect.

I am well aware that the foregoing examples may not strike the reader as being uniformly convincing. By dint of ingenuity and mental gymnastics it may be possible to appear to circumvent one or another of these examples (including those that follow), but with each added instance the strain on our credulity increases. One or two circumventions may be accepted as possible, but five or six become highly improbable; ten or twelve are scarcely tolerable.

### III. SERIOUS ANOMALIES/ABERRATIONS

#### A. JOHN 7:8

Variant Readings:	% of Mss:	Key Mss:
ουπω not yet	96.5%	ℳ, ℞ <sup>66,75</sup> , B, N, T, W
ουκ not	3%	ℝ, D

Problem: Since Jesus did in fact go to the feast (and doubtless knew what He was going to do), the NU text has the effect of ascribing a falsehood to Him.

Discussion: Since the NU editors usually attach the highest value to P<sup>75</sup> and B, isn't it strange that they reject them in this case? Here is Metzger's explanation: "The reading ["not yet"] was introduced at an early date (it is attested by ℞<sup>66,75</sup>) in order to alleviate the inconsistency between ver. 8 and ver. 10" (p. 216). They rejected ℞<sup>66,75</sup> and B (as well as 96.5% of the manuscripts) because they preferred the inconsistency. NASB, RSV, NEB and TEV stay with the eclectic text here.

**B. ACTS 28:13**

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
περιελθοντες tacking back and forth [we reached Rhegium]	95%	ℳ, A, 048
περιελοντες taking away (something) [we reached Rhegium]	5%	ℵ, B

Problem: The verb chosen by NU, *περιαιρω*, is transitive, and is meaningless here.

Discussion: Metzger's unsupportable explanation is that a majority of the NU Committee took the word to be "a technical nautical term of uncertain meaning" (p. 501). Why do they choose to disfigure the text on such poor evidence when there is an easy transcriptional explanation? The Greek letters O and Θ are very similar, and being side by side in a word it would be easy to drop one of them out, in this case the *theta*. Most modern versions are actually based on the 'old' Nestle text, which here agrees with the Majority reading. NRSV, however, follows NU, rendering it as "then we weighed anchor".

**C. MARK 16:9-20**

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
(retain)	99.8%	every extant Greek manuscript (about 1,700) except three
(omit)	0.2%	ℵ <sup>c</sup> , B, 304

Problem: A serious aberration is introduced—it is affirmed that Mark's Gospel ends with 16:8.

Discussion: UBS<sup>3</sup> encloses these verses in double brackets, which means they are "regarded as later additions to the text," and they give their decision an {A} grade, "virtually certain." So, the UBS editors assure us that the genuine text of Mark ends with 16:8. But why do critics insist on rejecting this passage? It is contained in every extant Greek manuscript (about 1,700) except three (really only two, B and 304—Aleph is not

properly extant because it is a forgery at this point).<sup>14</sup> Every extant Greek Lectionary (about 2,000?) contains them (one of them, 185, doing so only in the Menologion). Every extant Syriac manuscript except one (Sinaitic) contains them. Every extant Latin manuscript (8,000?) except one (k) contains them. Every extant Coptic manuscript except one contains them. We have hard evidence for the inclusion from the II century (Irenaeus and the Diatessaron), and presumably the first half of that century. We have no such hard evidence for the exclusion.

In the face of such massive evidence, why do the critics insist on rejecting this passage? Lamentably, most modern versions also cast doubt upon the authenticity of these verses in one way or another (NRSV is especially objectionable here). As one who believes that the Bible *is* God's Word, I find it to be inconceivable that an official biography of Jesus Christ, commissioned by God and written subject to His quality control, should omit proofs of the resurrection, should exclude all post-resurrection appearances, and should end with the clause "because they were afraid." If the critics' assessment is correct we seem to be between a rock and a hard place. Mark's Gospel as it stands is mutilated (if it ends at v 8), the original ending having

---

<sup>14</sup>Tischendorf, who discovered Codex Aleph, warned that the folded sheet containing the end of Mark and the beginning of Luke appeared to be written by a different hand and with different ink than the rest of the manuscript. However that may be, a careful scrutiny reveals the following: the end of Mark and beginning of Luke occur on page 3 (of the four); pages 1 and 4 contain an average of 17 lines of printed Greek text per column (there are four columns per page), just like the rest of the codex; page 2 contains an average of 15.5 lines of printed text per column (four columns); the first column of page 3 contains only twelve lines of printed text and in this way verse 8 occupies the top of the second column, the rest of which is blank (except for some designs); Luke begins at the top of column 3, which contains 16 lines of printed text while column 4 is back up to 17 lines. On page 2 the forger began to spread out the letters, displacing six lines of printed text; in the first column of page 3 he got desperate and displaced five lines of printed text, just in one column.

In this way he managed to get two lines of verse 8 over onto the second column, avoiding the telltale vacant column (as in Codex B). That second column would accommodate 15 more lines of printed text, which with the other eleven make 26. Verses 9-20 occupy 23.5 such lines, so there is plenty of room for them. It really does seem that there has been foul play, and there would have been no need for it unless the first hand did in fact display the disputed verses. In any event, Aleph as it stands is a forgery (in this place) and therefore may not legitimately be alleged as evidence against them.



disappeared without a trace. But in that event what about God's purpose in commissioning this biography?

#### D. JOHN 1:18

Variant Readings:	% of Mss:	Key Mss:
ο μονογενης υιος the only begotten Son	99.6%	ℳ, A, C, W
— μονογενης θεος an only begotten god	0.3%	℞ <sup>66</sup> , ℑ, B, C
ο μονογενης θεος the only begotten God	0.1%	℞ <sup>75</sup>

**Problem:** A serious anomaly is introduced—God, as God, is not begotten.

**Discussion:** The human body and nature of Jesus Christ was indeed literally begotten in the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit; God the Son has existed eternally. “An only begotten god” is so Gnostic that the apparent Egyptian provenance of this reading makes it doubly suspicious. It would also be possible to render the second reading as “only begotten God,” emphasizing the quality, and this has appealed to some who see in it a strong affirmation of Christ's deity. However, if Christ received His Godhood through the begetting process, then He cannot be the eternally pre-existing Second Person of the Godhead. Nor is “only begotten” analogous to *firstborn*, referring to priority of position—that would place the Son above the Father. No matter how one looks at it, the NU reading introduces a serious anomaly, and on the slimmest of evidence.

Presumably μονογενης is intended to mean something more than just μονος, “only.” In Luke 7:12, even though for reasons of style a translator may put “the *only* son of his mother,” we must understand that he is her own offspring—he could not be an adopted son. The same holds for Luke 8:42 and 9:38. In Hebrews 11:17, with reference to the promise and to Sarah, Isaac was indeed Abraham's “only begotten,” even though he in fact had other sons with other women. Note that in Genesis 22:12, 16 God Himself calls Isaac Abraham's “only” son. John uses μονογενης five times, always referring to the Son of God (John 1:14,

18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). I see nothing in NT usage to justify the rendering “unique.”

That  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  should have a conflation of the first two readings is curious, but demonstrates that the discrepancy arose in the second century. (Articles modify nouns not adjectives, when in a noun phrase such as we have here, so the article is part of the same variation unit.) Most modern versions avoid a straightforward rendering of the NU reading. NIV offers us “but God the only [Son].” (A subsequent revision has “God the One and Only”—a pious fraud since none of the variants has this meaning.) TEV has, “The only One, who is the same as God”—only slightly better. NASB actually renders “the only begotten God” (the reading of  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ ). The Amplified Bible serves up a conflation, “the only unique Son, the only begotten God.”

### E. JOHN 7:53–8:11

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
(retain)	85%	$\mathfrak{M}$ , D
(omit)	15%	$\mathfrak{P}^{66,75}$ , $\aleph$ , B, N, T, W

Problem: UBS<sup>3</sup> encloses these verses in double brackets, which means they are “regarded as later additions to the text,” and they give their decision an {A} grade, “virtually certain.” The omission introduces an aberration.

Discussion: The evidence against the Majority Text is stronger than in any of the previous examples, but assuming that the passage is spurious (for the sake of the argument), how could it ever have intruded here, and to such effect that it is attested by some 85% of the manuscripts? Let’s try to read the larger passage without these verses—we must go from 7:52 to 8:12 directly. Reviewing the context, the chief priests and Pharisees had sent officers to arrest Jesus, to no avail; a ‘discussion’ ensues; Nicodemus makes a point, to which the Pharisees answer:

(7:52) “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.”

(8:12) Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world...”

What is the antecedent of “them,” and what is the meaning of “again”? By the normal rules of grammar, if 7:53-8:11 is missing

then “them” must refer to the “Pharisees” and “again” means that there has already been at least one prior exchange. But, 7:45 makes clear that Jesus *was not there* with the Pharisees. Thus, NU introduces an aberration. And yet, Metzger claims that the passage “interrupts the sequence of 7.52 and 8.12 ff” (p. 220). To look for the antecedents of 8:12 in 7:37-39 not only is contrary to the syntax but also runs afoul of 8:13—“the Pharisees” respond to Jesus’ claim in verse 12, but “the Pharisees” are somewhere else, 7:45-52 (if the pericope is absent).

Metzger also claims that “the style and vocabulary of the pericope differ noticeably from the rest of the Fourth Gospel”—but, wouldn’t the native speakers of Greek at that time have been in a better position than modern critics to notice something like that? So how could they allow an extraneous passage to be forced into the text? I submit that the evident answer is that they did not; it was there all the time. I also protest their use of brackets here. Since the editors clearly regard the passage to be spurious they should be consistent and delete it, as do NEB and Williams. NIV, NASB, NRSV, Berkeley and TEV also use brackets to question the legitimacy of this passage.

### F. 1 TIMOTHY 3:16

Variant Readings:	% of Mss:	Key Mss:
θεος God [was manifested in flesh]	98.5%	Ⓜ, A, C <sup>v</sup>
ος who [was manifested in flesh]	1%	Ⓝ
ο that [was manifested in flesh]		D

Problem: A grammatical anomaly is introduced. “Great is the mystery of godliness, who was manifested in flesh” is worse in Greek than it is in English. “Mystery” is neuter in gender while “godliness” is feminine, but “who” is masculine.

Discussion: In an effort to explain the “who,” it is commonly argued that the second half of verse 16 was a direct quote from a hymn, but no evidence for this is offered. Without evidence

the claim begs the question.<sup>15</sup> That the passage has some poetic qualities says no more than that it has some poetic qualities. “Who” is nonsensical, so most modern versions that follow NU here take evasive action: NEB and NASB have “he who;” Phillips has “the one;” NRSV, Jerusalem, TEV, and NIV render “he.” Berkeley actually has “who.” The Latin reading, “the mystery...that,” at least makes sense. The true reading, as attested by 98.5% of the Greek manuscripts, is “God.” In the early manuscripts “God” was written ΘΣ (with a cross stroke above the two letters to indicate an abbreviation), “who” was written ΟΣ, and “that” was written Ο. The difference between “God” and “who” is just two cross strokes, and with a scratchy quill those could easily be light (or a copyist could be momentarily distracted and forget to add the cross strokes). The reading “who” can be explained by an easy transcriptional error. The reading “that” would be an obvious solution to a copyist faced with the nonsensical “who.” Whatever the intention of the NU editors, their text emasculates this strong statement of the deity of Jesus Christ, besides being nonsensical—what is a ‘mystery’ about any human male being manifested in flesh? All human beings have bodies.

## G. 2 PETER 3:10

Variant Readings:	% of Mss:	Key Mss:
κατακαησεται [the earth...] will be burned up	93.6%	Ⲙ, A, 048
ευρεθησεται [the earth...] will be found	3.2%	(Ⲣ <sup>72</sup> ), Ⲛ, B

---

<sup>15</sup> A pronoun normally requires an antecedent, but quoted material might provide an exception. Thus, 1 Corinthians 2:9 is sometimes offered as an instance: the quote from Isaiah 64:4 begins with a pronoun, without a grammatical antecedent (although “mystery” in verse 7 is presumably the referential antecedent). However, the words from Isaiah are formally introduced as a quotation, “as it is written,” whereas the material in 1 Timothy 3:16 is not, so there is no valid analogy. Colossians 1:13 or 1:15 have been suggested as analogies for “who” in 1 Timothy 3:16, even claimed as “hymns,” but there is no objective support for the claim. The antecedent of the relative pronoun in Colossians 1:15 is “the son” in verse 13, and the antecedent of the relative pronoun in verse 13 is “the father” in verse 12. Again, there is no valid analogy.

**Problem:** The NU reading is nonsensical; the context is clearly one of judgment.

**Discussion:** Metzger openly states that their text “seems to be devoid of meaning in the context” (p. 706). So why did they choose it? Metzger explains that there is “a wide variety of readings, none of which seems to be original”—presumably if “shall be burned up” were the only reading, with unanimous attestation, he would still reject it, but he can scarcely argue that it is meaningless. The NU editors deliberately chose a variant that they believed to be “devoid of meaning in the context.” NASB abandons UBS here, giving the Majority reading; NEB and NIV render “will be laid bare;” TEV has “will vanish.”

## H. JUDE 15

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
παντας τους ασεβεις [to convict] all the ungodly [among them of all their ungodly deeds]	97.8%	ℳ, A, B, C
πασαν ψυχην [to convict] every soul [of all their ungodly deeds]	2.2%	℞ <sup>72</sup> , ℵ (only one other manuscript)

**Problem:** NU introduces a serious anomaly.

**Discussion:** Certain very evil persons have been rather graphically described in verses 4, 8 and 10-13. In verse 14 Jude introduces a prophecy “about these men,” the same ones he has been describing, and the quotation continues to the end of verse 15. Verse 16 continues the description of their perversity, but verse 17 draws a clear distinction between them and the believers that Jude is addressing. So, Enoch cannot be referring to “every soul”—the NU reading is clearly wrong. In fact, Nestle<sup>25</sup> and UBS<sup>2</sup> stayed with the Majority, reading “all the ungodly.” UBS<sup>3</sup> changes to “every soul,” without comment. It is curious that the UBS editors reverse an earlier position, following just three manuscripts and the Sahidic version, and do not even mention it in their apparatus. This is especially unfortunate, given the serious nature of the change. Most modern versions are with the Majority here, but NRSV has “convict everyone.”

**I. MATTHEW 5:22**

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
εικη without a cause	96.2%	Ⲙ, D, W
—	1.9%	Ⲣ <sup>64</sup> , Ⲛ, B

**Problem:** The NU omission has the effect of setting up a conflict with passages like Ephesians 4:26 and Psalm 4:4, where we are commanded to be angry, and even with the Lord's own example, Mark 3:5.

**Discussion:** God hates injustice and will judge it; but He also hates evil and commands us to do likewise (Ps 97:10). The NU variant has the effect of forbidding anger, which cannot be right. Again, if this were the only instance, it could be explained away, but when added to the others it has a cumulative effect.

**J. MARK 10:24**

<b>Variant Readings:</b>	<b>% of Mss:</b>	<b>Key Mss:</b>
τουφ πεποιθοταφ επι χρημασιν for those who trust in riches	99.5%	Ⲙ, A, C, (D), N
— — — — —	0.4%	Ⲛ, B
πλουσιον		W

**Problem:** The NU variant has Jesus saying: “How difficult it is to enter the Kingdom of God!” Within the context this is a stupidity, besides having the effect of making Him contradict Himself, since in other places He gives an open invitation: “Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

**Discussion:** Within the context the Majority reading is clearly correct. Taking into account all that Scripture offers on the subject, being rich in itself is not the problem; the problem is precisely one of trust—are you really trusting in God, or in your wealth? Most modern versions follow NU here, and some offer a footnote that says, “some (later) manuscripts add, ‘for those who trust in riches’.” It is their way of referring to 99.5% of the manuscripts; and the Latin and Syriac versions take the Majority reading back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

There are many further examples, some of which, taken singly, may not seem to be all that alarming. But they have a cumulative effect and *dozens* of them should give the responsible reader pause. Is there a pattern? If so, why? But for now enough has been presented to permit us to turn to the implications.

#### IV. IMPLICATIONS

How is all of this to be explained? I believe the answer lies in the area of presuppositions. There has been a curious reluctance on the part of conservative scholars to come to grips with this matter. To assume that the editorial choices of a naturalistic scholar will not be influenced by his theological bias is naive in the extreme.

To be sure, both such scholars and the conservative defenders of the eclectic text will doubtless demur. "Not at all," they would say, "our editorial choices derive from a straightforward application of the generally accepted canons of NT textual criticism" ["generally accepted" by whom, and on what basis—that is, what are the presuppositions behind them?]. And what are those canons? The four main ones seem to be: 1) the reading that best accounts for the rise of the other reading(s) is to be preferred; 2) the harder reading is to be preferred; 3) the shorter reading is to be preferred; 4) the reading that best fits the author's style and purpose is to be preferred. It could be said the first canon distills the essence of them all, and therefore should be the ruling canon, but in practice it is probably the second that is most rigorously applied. From B.M. Metzger's presentation of the NU Committee's reasoning in the examples given above it appears that over half the time they based their decision on the 'harder reading' canon (for four of them he has no comment because the UBS apparatus does not mention that there is any variation; for two of them he says that all the variants are unsatisfactory). But, how are we to decide which variant is 'harder'? Will not our theological bias enter in?

Let's consider an example: in Luke 24:52 the Nestle editions 1-25 omit "they worshipped him" (and in consequence NASB, RSV, and NEB do too). UBS<sup>3</sup> retains the words, but with a {D} grade, which shows a "very high degree of doubt." Only one solitary Greek manuscript omits the words, Codex D, supported

by part of the Latin witness. In spite of the very slim external evidence for the omission it is argued that it is the 'harder' reading—if the clause were original, what orthodox Christian would even think of removing it? On the other hand, the clause would make a nice pious addition that would immediately become popular, if the original lacked it. However, not only did the Gnostics dominate the Christian church in Egypt in the second century, there were also others around who did not believe that Jesus was God—would they be likely to resist the impulse to delete such a statement? How shall we choose between these two hypotheses? Will it not be on the basis of our presuppositions? Indeed, in discussing this variant set, along with Hort's other "Western non-interpolations," Metzger explains (p. 193) that a minority of the UBS committee argued that "there is discernible in these passages a Christological-theological motivation that accounts for their having been added, while there is no clear reason that accounts for their having been omitted." Had they forgotten the Gnostics?

#### **A. PROBLEMS WITH USING SUBJECTIVE CANONS**

It is clear that the four canons mentioned above depend heavily upon the subjective judgment of the critic. But why use such canons? Why not follow the manuscript evidence? It is commonly argued that the surviving manuscripts are not representative of the textual situation in the early centuries of the Church. The official destruction of manuscripts by Diocletian (AD 300), and other vagaries of history, are supposed to have decimated the supply of manuscripts to the point where the transmission was totally distorted—so we can't be sure about anything. (Such an argument not only seeks to justify the eclectic proceeding, it is used to claim its necessity.) But, the effectiveness of the Diocletian campaign was uneven in different regions. Even more to the point are the implications of the Donatist movement which developed right after the Diocletian campaign passed. It was predicated in part on the punishment that was deserved by those who betrayed their manuscripts to destruction. Evidently some did *not* betray their manuscripts or there would have been none to judge the others. Also, those whose commitment to Christ and His Word was such that they withstood the torture would be just the sort who would be most careful about



the pedigree of their manuscripts. So it was probably the purest exemplars that survived, in the main, and from them the main stream of transmission derives.

Since the Byzantine (Majority) textform dominates over 90% of the extant manuscripts, those who wish to reject it cannot grant the possibility that the transmission of the text was in any sense normal. (If it was then the consensus must reflect the original, especially such a massive consensus.) So it is argued that the ballot box was stuffed, that the Byzantine text was imposed by ecclesiastical authority, but only after it was concocted out of other texts in the early fourth century. But, there is simply no historical evidence for this idea. Also, numerous studies have demonstrated that the mass of Byzantine manuscripts are not monolithic; there are many distinct strands or strains of transmission, presumably independent. That at least some of these must go back to the third century (if not earlier) is demonstrated by Codex Aleph in Revelation, in that it conflates some of those strands. Asterius (d. 341) used manuscripts that were clearly Byzantine—presumably most of his writing was not done on his deathbed, so his manuscripts would come from the third century. There are further lines of evidence that militate against the eclectic position, not least the very nature of their canons.

“The shorter reading is to be preferred.” Why? Because, we are told, scribes had a propensity to add bits and pieces to the text. But that would have to be a deliberate activity. It is demonstrable that accidental loss of place results in omission far more often than addition—about the only way to add accidentally is to copy part of the text twice over, but the copyist would have to be really drowsy not to catch himself at it. So, any time a shorter reading could be the result of parablepsis it should be viewed with suspicion. But even when deliberate, omission should still be more frequent than addition. If there is something in the text that you don’t like it draws your attention and you are tempted to do something about it. Also, it requires more imagination and effort to create new material than to delete what is already there (material suggested by a parallel passage could be an exception). Further, it is demonstrable that most scribes were careful and conscientious, avoiding even unintentional mistakes. Those who

engaged in deliberate editorial activity were really rather few, but some were flagrant offenders (like Aleph in Revelation).

“The harder reading is to be preferred.” Why? The assumption is that a perceived difficulty would motivate an officious copyist to attempt a remedy. Note that any such alteration must be deliberate; so if a harder reading could have come about through accidental omission then this canon should not be used. But in the case of a presumed deliberate alteration, how can we really ascribe degrees of hardness? We don’t know who did it, nor why. Due allowance must be made for possible ignorance, officiousness, prejudice and malice. In fact, this canon is unreasonable on the face of it—the more nonsensical a reading is, whether by accident or design, the stronger is its claim to be original since it will certainly be the hardest. It does not take a prophet to see that this canon is wide open to manipulation, both in the ancient creation of variants and in their contemporary evaluation. But in any case, since it is demonstrable that most copyists did not make deliberate changes, where there is massive agreement among the extant manuscripts this canon should not even be considered. Indeed, where there is massive agreement among the manuscripts none of the subjective canons should be used—they are unnecessary and out of place. Of the 6,000+ differences between NU and the Majority Text, the heavy majority of the readings preferred by the NU editors have slender manuscript attestation.

## **B. THE MYTH OF NEUTRALITY**

We need to lay to rest the myth of neutrality and scholarly objectivity. Anyone who has been inside the academic community knows that it is liberally sprinkled with bias, party lines, and personal ambition. Neutrality and objectivity should never be assumed, and most especially when dealing with God’s truth. In Matthew 12:30 the Lord Jesus said: “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters abroad.” God declares that neutrality is impossible; you are either for Him or against Him. Jesus claims to be God. Faced with such a claim we have only two options, to accept or to reject. (Agnosticism is really a passive rejection.) The Bible claims to be God’s Word. Again our options are but two. It follows that when dealing with the text of Scripture neutrality is impossible.

Furthermore, there is a pervasive satanic influence upon all human culture. First John 5:19 states that “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.” The picture is clearly one of massive influence, if not control—NASB, RSV, NEB and Jerusalem render “in the power of,” TEV has “under the rule of,” NIV has “under the control of.” All human culture is under pervasive satanic influence, including the culture of the academic community. Ephesians 2:2 is even more precise: “in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.” Satan actively works in the mind of anyone who rejects God’s authority over himself. Materialism has infiltrated the Church in Europe and North America to such an extent that what the Bible says on this subject has been largely ignored. But I submit that for someone who claims to believe God’s Word to accept an edition of the Bible prepared on the basis of rationalistic assumptions is really to forget the teaching of that Word.

Interpretation is preeminently a matter of wisdom. A naturalistic textual critic may have a reasonable acquaintance with the relevant evidence; he may have knowledge of the facts, but that by no means implies that he knows what to do with it. Anyone who edits or translates the text of Scripture needs to be in such a spiritual condition that he can ask the Holy Spirit to illumine him in his work as well as protect his mind from the enemy.

In Jesus’ day there were those who “loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43), and they are with us still. But, the “praise of men” comes at a high price. To accept the world’s value system is basically a type of idolatry. Those conservative scholars, who place a high value on academic recognition, on being acknowledged by the academic community, etc., need to ask themselves about the presuppositions that lie behind such recognition. Please note that I am not decrying true scholarship—I have three earned graduate degrees myself—but I am challenging conservatives to make sure that their definition of scholarship comes from the Holy Spirit, not from the world, that their search for recognition is godly, not selfish. I rather suspect that were this to happen there would be a dramatic shift in the conservative Christian world with reference

to the practice of NT textual criticism and to the identity of the true NT text.

## V. CONCLUSION

To sum it up, I return to the opening question: “What difference does it make?” Not only do we have the confusion caused by two rather different competing forms of the Greek text, but one of them (the eclectic text) incorporates errors and contradictions that undermine the doctrine of inspiration and virtually vitiate the doctrine of inerrancy; the other (the Majority Text) does not. The first is based on subjective criteria, applied by naturalistic critics; the second is based on the consensus of the manuscript tradition down through the centuries. Because the conservative evangelical schools and churches have generally embraced the theory (and therefore the presuppositions) that underlies the eclectic text (UBS<sup>3</sup>/N-A<sup>26</sup>),<sup>16</sup> there has been an ongoing hemorrhage or defection within the evangelical camp with reference to the doctrines of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy (especially). The authority of Scripture has been undermined—it no longer commands immediate and unquestioned obedience. As a natural consequence there is a generalized softening of our basic commitment to Christ and His coming kingdom. Worse yet, through our missionaries we have been exporting all of this to the emerging churches in the third world.

So what shall we do, throw up our hands in despair and give up? Indeed no! It is better to light one candle than to sit and curse the darkness. With God’s help let us work together to bring about a reversal of this situation. Let us work to undo the damage. We must start by consciously trying to make sure that all our presuppositions, our working assumptions, are consistent with God’s Word. When we approach the evidence (Greek manuscripts, patristic citations, ancient versions) with such presuppositions we will have a credible, even demonstrable, basis for declaring and defending the divine preservation, the inspiration and the inerrancy of the NT text. We can again have a compelling basis for total commitment to God and His Word. The present printed Majority Text (whether Hodges-Farstad or

---

<sup>16</sup>UBS<sup>4</sup> and N-A<sup>27</sup> have changes in the apparatus, but not the text, so the text is still that of the prior editions.

Robinson-Pierpont) is a close approximation to the original, free from the errors of fact and contradictions discussed above. (All modesty aside, I consider that my Greek Text is even closer.)

