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THE THEOLOGICAL RELEVANCE OF TEXTUAL VARIATION IN CURRENT CRITICISM OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT*

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I

IN these days of "Vatican II" an English version of the NT has been produced which is officially acceptable to both Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians. Originally translated by American Protestant scholars as the Revised Standard Version, it was subsequently revised by Catholic scholars as the Catholic edition and designated as the RSV CE. For three and a half centuries the King James and the Douai-Challoner versions have stood side by side, representative of the major divisions of Western Christendom and conveying the implication that the two English texts express distinctive and important theological characteristics for Protestant and Catholic interpretation.

On numerous occasions when new translations into English have been made, someone has risen to allege that a translation is of too conservative a theological interpretation, or reflects a liberal bias, or even that it reveals a communist flair, and indeed all three qualities may be alleged of the very same translation. Recently, the announcement of a "Bible for Evangelicals" credited the RSV with clarity but criticized it for its Christology, and intimated that the newly announced translation would express the true theology. When the RSV appeared various readers alleged that its text was atheistic, or modernistic, or socialistic, or even blasphemous. We are not here concerned with the justice or injustice of such allegations, for effective refutation has long since been offered. We are concerned rather to recognize that in such instances as these there is attested the belief that variation in a text, whether in the Greek original or in translation, involves a difference in interpretation which is important to the church and to the believer. In the light of such a principle, textual criticism would be allied with exegesis and theology and even with the practical tasks in pastoral care.

Quite apart from the integrity and the skill of the editor of a Greek text or the translator of a version, a difference in the form of expression will often create a difference in the sense and may reflect a difference in the thought of the editor or the translator. Furthermore, when textual variation occurs in the Greek NT, we often do find an alteration of

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meaning. It is important to know what the *original* text and the *original* meaning were, but it is also important to recognize the *subsequent* revision of text and thought in the course of the church's history. In the current edition of the Nestle NT, for example, we have more than a single text, for in the *apparatus criticus* we are confronted with thousands of textual variants that involve a difference of form and interpretation. Today, three special factors may increase our concern with, and the importance of, textual difference and its theological import. I refer to the publication of the RSV CE, the recent discovery of third-century papyrus texts in the Beatty and Bodmer libraries, and the unprecedented scope of the International Greek New Testament Project in the preparation of a new *apparatus criticus*. These three developments cast special light upon the relationship of text to interpretation. It is not our primary concern at this time to determine what is original and what is secondary, but rather to demonstrate the variety of reading and of consequent meaning. It has been remarked that "there are no 'spurious readings' in New Testament manuscripts."¹ The intent of such a statement is only to insist that every variation is genuine in its time and place. Although a variant which is a departure from the original text may be described as spurious, yet every intentional and sensible variant has a claim to authenticity in the history of Christian thought. It will be valuable to form a judgment, in the light of all modern textual discoveries and researches, of the extent to which the Greek text of our NT has been subjected to revision and made to carry differences of thought.

About 250 years ago, John Mill, of Oxford, published an edition of the Greek NT.² The text itself was a repetition of the traditional Byzantine "Received Text," but it was further reported that his manuscript sources revealed 30,000 variants.³ This disclosure was shocking to some, and a long and bitter debate ensued. It is most significant, however, that this eighteenth-century debate was not a theological discussion about the variant readings and their meaning; but rather it dealt with a prior issue, whether or not sacred Scripture is a proper subject for critical textual emendation as employed in secular classics.

A hundred years ago Scrivener estimated that the text of the Greek NT showed variance "at least fourfold that quantity," i. e., 120,000.⁴ It was in 1886 that Benjamin Warfield estimated between 180,000 and

¹ Donald W. Riddle, "Textual Criticism as a Historical Discipline," *ATR*, 18 (1936), pp. 220-24. Cf. also M. M. Parvis, "The Nature and Task of New Testament Textual Criticism," *JR*, 32 (1952), p. 172.

² John Mill, *Novum Testamentum . . .* (Oxford, 1707).

³ Gerard Maestricht, "Dissertation on the Collections and Collectors of Variant Readings," in the Prolegomena of his Greek NT (1711). Cf. also Richard Bentley ("Phileleutherus Lipsiensis"), *Remarks upon a late Discourse of Free-Thinking* (London, 1713).

⁴ F. H. A. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, I, p. 3.

200,000 "variant readings."⁵ And in 1937 Vaganay acknowledged a range of 150,000 to 250,000 ("The exact figure matters little").⁶ Now in our time, the International Greek New Testament Project can report on 300 manuscript collations of Luke, and estimate for the entire NT perhaps 300,000 variants. The simple fact of massive textual variations (small and large) is beyond denial or refutation.

The effect of the variable text upon theological interpretation, however, is still subject to difference of judgment. Richard Bentley, who counseled his generation to welcome the great variety of readings, advised nevertheless that there is not "one article of faith or moral precept either perverted or lost."⁷ His contemporary and opponent, Daniel Whitby, insisted that "Mill's variants are of no importance" because "there are scarcely any variant readings which concern the rule of conduct or even a single article of faith."⁸ Nearly 200 years later, Warfield in America brought Bentley's view up to date by quoting him with approval,⁹ as did also his contemporary in England, F. H. A. Scrivener.¹⁰ Another of their contemporaries was Hort, whose estimate of textual variation has been often repeated, that "substantial variation . . . can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text."¹¹ This classic statement, however, must have been rhetorical rather than mathematical, for a tenth of one per cent would amount to merely twenty lines in Nestle. The estimate is absurd and worthless. Another contemporary authority in America was Ezra Abbot, who judged that only one-twentieth of all variants had sufficient manuscript witness, and of this fraction only one-twentieth carried "appreciable difference in the sense": a fourth of one per cent or about fifty lines in Nestle.¹²

Lest it would seem that we are here merely rattling old bones, let us quickly excerpt typical remarks in contemporary publications: Leo Vaganay of France in 1937: ". . . there is not one [variant] affecting the substance of Christian dogma."¹³ Sir Frederic Kenyon of England in 1940: "No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading."¹⁴ F. C. Grant in America in 1946, commenting on the RSV: ". . . no doctrine of the Christian faith has been affected by the revision,

⁵ Benjamin B. Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 13. Still another estimate was expressed in 1907 by Ira Maurice Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible*, p. 201: "almost 150,000." This estimate is retained in later revisions by Allen K. Wikgren (1949 and 1956, p. 222).

⁶ Leo Vaganay, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 11.

⁷ Richard Bentley, *Remarks . . .*, part 1, § 32.

⁸ Daniel Whitby, "Examen of Mill's Variant Readings," appended to Whitby's *Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament* (1710).

⁹ Warfield, *Introduction . . .*, p. 14.

¹⁰ Scrivener, *Plain Introduction . . .*, p. 7.

¹¹ Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, II, p. 2.

¹² Reported by Warfield, *Introduction . . .*, p. 14.

¹³ Vaganay, *An Introduction . . .*, p. 12.

¹⁴ Frederic G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 23.

for the simple reason that out of the thousands of variant readings in the manuscripts, none has turned up thus far that requires a revision of Christian doctrine."¹⁵ Harold Greenlee in 1964: "No Christian doctrine . . . hangs upon a debatable text."¹⁶ The Kee-Young-Froelich NT introduction in a 1965 edition: ". . . there is no essential historical or theological point that is determined one way or another by textual variants."¹⁷ In the light of this persistent repetition, we may recognize a concern if not fear for the security of the Christian faith and its basis in a variable text.

There has been, of course, a contrary opinion. Hort himself admitted that "it is true that dogmatic preferences to a great extent determined theologians, and probably scribes, in their choice between rival readings"¹⁸ Kenyon too implies a similar judgment when he writes that through textual researches we "are brought so much nearer to the true Word of God."¹⁹ But such a view seems to be kept in a separate compartment of the mind; and has been expressed cautiously and infrequently, and not at all by the modern writers we have mentioned above who exhibit no constructive viewpoint on the criticism of the text. Rendel Harris insisted that "Dr. Hort cannot be right in divesting the various readings of New Testament manuscripts of dogmatic significance, or in assuring us of the *bona fides* of the transcribers."²⁰ More recently, C. S. C. Williams has expressed the judgment that textual alteration derives "no less frequently from dogmatic than from other motivation."²¹

In reality the amount of textual variation is a considerable portion. Of course it is true that the great bulk of text shows little or no record of variation. The latest Nestle is predominantly the text of the *Textus Receptus*. But it is the minimal variation for which we search and which we seek to refine, a principle that applies to all other scientific research. The research on a single chemical need not upset the basic table of formulae or the chemist's "creed" but it is essential to learn more of any single chemical. So in the NT text it is the doubtful portion that stands in need of refinement. Its importance far exceeds its fractional size.

Counting words is a meaningless measure of textual variation, and all such estimates fail to convey the theological significance of variable readings. Rather it is required to evaluate the thought rather than to compute the verbiage. How shall we measure the theological clarification derived from textual emendation where a single word altered

¹⁵ Frederick C. Grant, *Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament* (L. A. Weigle, ed.), p. 42.

¹⁶ J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 68.

¹⁷ Howard C. Kee, Franklin W. Young, and Karlfried Froelich, *Understanding the New Testament*, Introd.

¹⁸ Hort, *op. cit.*, II, p. 283.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

²⁰ J. Rendel Harris, *Sidelights on New Testament Research* (1908), p. 34.

²¹ C. S. C. Williams, *Alterations to the Text of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (1951), p. 7.

affects the major concept in a passage? Did Paul write *θεός* in Rom 8 28? This emendation modifies the conception of God who "works for good with those who love him." Should *αὐτόν* be accepted or rejected in I John 4 19? If accepted, then love characterizes the Christian because of God's initial love for man. By calculating words it is impossible to appreciate the spiritual insights that depend upon the words. We would not contend that even the most theological of variants create a doctrine or cancel out a doctrine, but it is defensible to maintain that variants do "affect" or "alter" or "modify" doctrine. These are the terms used by those who would minimize the importance and the number of variants. Indeed, the only objective and justification of textual criticism is that its emended text should give access to a clearer insight and a deeper faith. Textual variation does not imperil belief in God but it can and does contribute to elucidation of the character of God and of his relation to man. Doctrine consists of a multitude of insights which give meaning to every affirmation. There is far more in Christian doctrine than a brief creedal summation, and the exegesis of variant texts contributes to the enrichment of doctrine.²²

Many of the denials that textual variation is harmful to the faith are truly denials of allegations never made. We can agree with Hort that "perceptible fraud" is not evident in textual alteration, that "accusations of wilful tampering . . . prove to be groundless," and that dogma has not motivated "deliberate falsification."²³ But these are heinous faults such as we should never allege, and these are not the terms that we should employ. Willful and deliberate, yes. But not tampering, falsification, and fraud. Alteration, yes; but not corruption. Emendation, yes; but not in bad faith. These denials of evil or unethical intention can well be sustained, but such intention is not a proper allegation by the textual critic. He must analyze the text constructively to understand the theological value of any variation, and its place in historical theology.

It is also a false assurance, offered by many, that textual criticism can have no effect upon Christian doctrine. This insistent comfort implies that the text, in any form, deals only with the periphery of doctrine. It also implies a fear that emendation of the text might have evil, but never good, theological consequences. And yet it is impossible for any scholar to provide assurance to any Christian that textual studies will not affect his beliefs, even for the better. Furthermore, the intelligent believer does not ask or want such assurance. His maturity and self-reliance may well be offended by such a surprising counsel as that of Kenyon: "The Christian student can approach the subject

²² C. S. C. Williams (*op. cit.*, p. 5) has made the judicious comment that whereas "the essence of the Christian gospel remains unaffected by textual variants . . . every such variant . . . has significance for the scholar."

²³ Hort, *op. cit.*, pp. 282 f.

without misgiving, and may follow whithersoever honest inquiry seems to lead him, without thought of doctrinal consequences."²⁴

Let us no longer implant the belief that Christian doctrine is unaffected by textual emendation, whether for better or worse. The earliest intentional changes in the text of the Gospel of Mark are still to be seen recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, revising the sense: for example, the definition of adultery in Mark 10 11 was revised in Matt 19 9 (cf. also 5 32) by the insertion of *μη ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ*. The conception deals with more than sociology and law, and has to do with the unity of husband and wife as creatures and their relationship to the Creator.

It has been demonstrated that Marcion made revision of the text of Luke at many points, for the sake of reinterpretation.²⁵ For example, at 10 21 he omitted *πάτερ* and *καὶ τῆς γῆς*, so that the Lukan address "Father, Lord of heaven and earth" became simply "Lord of heaven." Again in Luke 18 19 he adds *πατήρ* to distinguish between the Creator and the Christians' Father in the statement: "No one is good except God the Father." Although Origen also adds this word, Epiphanius makes clear the deliberate motivation on the part of Marcion. It is Jerome who explains Marcion's omission in Gal 1 1 of the phrase "and God the Father," so as to read: ". . . through Jesus Christ who raised himself from the dead." In Rom 1 16 Marcion excised *πρῶτον*, thus repealing the priority of the Jews: "the gospel is the power of God for salvation . . . to Jew and Greek" — a reading followed even by Tertullian and later preserved in Vaticanus and in the Sahidic version.

So also Origen revised the primitive text at points, although with greater caution and restraint. In John 2 15 there is the frank statement in the episode of the cleansing of the temple that Jesus made for his use a scourge. In Origen's quotation, a delicate *ὡς* stands before *φραγέλλιον*, slightly softening the picture of physical violence to "something like a whip." Soon after Origen this little *ὡς* appears in the gospel text itself as is now newly attested for us in the third-century Bodmer papyri P⁷⁵ and P⁶⁶. In John 11 25, Jesus speaks: "I am the resurrection and the life"; but Origen dropped the latter term, recording rather: "I am the resurrection," and his revision is retained by Cyprian and in P⁴⁵ and also in the Sinaitic Syriac codex.

In the late second century, Tatian also made revision in the NT text. An example is seen in Mark 1 41, in the response of Jesus to the leper who challenged: "If only you will, you can cleanse me." The text continues: "Jesus was moved with pity (*σπλαγχνισθείς*)." Tatian re-

²⁴ F. G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*², p. 7.

²⁵ J. Rendel Harris especially has marshaled the evidence of dogmatic alterations by Marcion and his followers. See *Sidelights on New Testament Research* (1908), lect. 1 and appx., pp. 1-35; also "New Points of View in Textual Criticism," *Expositor* Ser. VIII, (1914), pp. 316-34. Later works are: John Knox, *Marcion . . .*, esp. pp. 44-49; and E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*.

ports however that "Jesus was moved with anger (*ὀργισθεῖς*)," and the exegetical problem here is reflected in the theologically cautious NEB phrasing: "In warm indignation Jesus stretched out his hand, and touched him . . ." Once again, Tatian introduced a different interpretation at Matt 17 26. When Jesus asks whether it is sons or strangers who pay tax, Simon affirms that strangers do. "Then," replied Jesus, "sons are free"; and (according to Tatian) he further directs, "you too are to pay the collector, as a stranger." This indicates a theological conception different from the original explanation that a Christian should give no offense to an officer of the state.²⁶

In the recently acquired gnostic Christian documents of the second century there are instances of textual alteration which revises the meaning in highly important aspects; for example, in the Gospel of Thomas²⁷ (logion 55) "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother . . ." etc. In the Lukan report of Jesus' words (14 26) there is the intensive sequel: ". . . and his wife and his children . . . and even his very life . . ." but this is omitted in the quotation in the Gospel of Thomas. Again, logion 109 is a paraphrase of Jesus' parable of the treasure hidden in a field (Matt 13 44), with important changes. In Matthew, a nonowner discovers a cache and covers it over until he is able to raise funds to buy the field. In Thomas, the owner himself is not aware of the treasure nor is the son who inherits the field and sells it. When the new owner was plowing he found the buried money, and with his new capital he became a lender. Here in the Gospel of Thomas the simile of seeking the kingdom above all is entirely lost. This particular passage does not help us to re-edit or to interpret the original parable recorded of Jesus, but it does illustrate the freedom with which the account in Matthew was treated from the beginning. Such freedom has been further illustrated by Gärtner²⁸ and also by Ernest Saunders in his recent discussion of three of the logia.²⁹ The latter concludes that such usage in the Gospel of Thomas often "assists the NT scholar to determine . . . the earliest form . . . and the meaning of certain NT texts."

Thus far we have recalled only a few of the many examples of textual revision within a century after the recording of the gospel — revision made by fellow evangelists, in patristic interpretations of second-century fathers, and in a pseudonymous gospel of gnostic color. These revisions clearly were made with deliberate intent and, furthermore, they do alter the sense of the text and affect the interpretation. The earliest stage of transmission was marked by an attitude of freedom in theological interpretation. Dogmatic purposes were in view, and constituted the basic attitude in the use of the gospel text.

²⁶ Illustrations from Tatian are selected from Williams, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Cf. R. McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas*, esp. pp. 133–41.

²⁸ Bertil Gärtner, *The Theology of the Gospel of Thomas*.

²⁹ Ernest W. Saunders, "A Trio of Thomas Logia," *Biblical Research*, 8 (1963), pp. 3–19.

II

A most significant event of our day is the publication of the NT in English bearing the mutual approval of the Protestant National Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.³⁰ We know it as the RSV with certain revision to meet the approval of Catholic officials. It was wise that the alterations have been set forth in an appendix which is most helpful in interpreting the change that has been made. In view of the long period in which Catholic and Protestant have been served by different English versions, this revised edition throws light upon our major theme.³¹ What theological distinction lies in such a text and, further, what theological differences have been resolved in the new RSV CE?

It is clearly recognized that this English translation as originally produced by Protestant American scholarship is basically acceptable to Catholic scholarship as well. The extent of revision in the CE is minimal, amounting to only forty-five changes in the entire NT: thirty-three occurring in the gospels and twelve in the Pauline epistles. Eighteen instances are accounted for by the single change to "brethren" instead of "brothers," all instances intended in the original RSV to refer to blood brothers of Jesus.³² The singular *ἀδελφός* is in itself ambiguous, and both the RSV and the CE translate by "brother." In Matt 5 47, where the plural is used to refer to fellow Jews, the RSV is retained in the CE also: "If you salute only your brethren . . ." The theological distinction in the use of the plural forms "brothers" and "brethren" is clearly implied in the CE note on Matt 12 46, the initial occurrence of *ἀδελφοί*: "The Greek word or its Semitic equivalent was used for varying degrees of blood relationship."³³ This is indeed a true statement, and beyond it there is the implication that the alteration of the text to "brethren" carries a major theological interpretation, without the necessity to seek any emendation of the Greek original.

Another alteration which affects only the English text is the translation of *ἀπολύσαι* in Matt 1 19. Instead of the anachronistic RSV phrase "divorce her," the CE translates (with Knox) "send her away" — which is at once more literal and sociologically better, although in this context

³⁰ *The New Testament . . . Catholic Edition* (1965).

³¹ The Introduction of the CE (p. ix) observes that "for four hundred years . . . Catholics and Protestants have . . . suspected each other's translations of the Bible of having been in some way manipulated in the interests of doctrinal presuppositions . . . not always without foundation."

³² In this use of "brethren" the CE follows the lead of the late Ronald Knox. The passages are Matt 13 55, Mark 12 31 ff. *et par.*, John 2 12, 7 3 ff., Acts 1 14, I Cor 9 5.

³³ At Matt 12 46 Knox notes: "Since it is impossible for anyone who holds the Catholic tradition to suppose that our Lord had brothers by blood, the most common opinion is that these "brethren" were his cousins; a relationship for which the Jews had no separate name . . ." No variant for *ἀδελφός* is found in any NT ms.

there are theological overtones.³⁴ Once again, in Luke 1 28 the CE translates (with Knox) *κεχαριτωμένη* "full of grace," and it relegates to a footnoted alternative the RSV text "O favored one." Neither of these forms clearly expresses the theological conception of a unique, divine attitude toward Mary inherent in the cognate of *χάρις* and in the general context.

Besides the alterations in the English text, the CE introduces nineteen new footnotes. Eleven of these refer to the value of money. Instead of the RSV note at Matt 18 28 ("The denarius was worth about twenty cents") the CE explains, "The denarius was a day's wage for a laborer." Such equations are more realistic, and the change is a welcome one. Another footnote is found six times in I Corinthians, to the effect that *παρθένος* means "virgin." The CE text itself remains unchanged, retaining the various RSV translations: "unmarried" (7 25), "a girl" (7 28, 34), "betrothed" (7 36 ff). The theological implication of this consistent footnote lies under the surface, but finds support at Matt 1 23, where the RSV does translate the LXX (Isa 7 14) *παρθένος* with "virgin."

It is of greater importance, however, to comment on those alterations in the CE which involve change in the critical Greek text itself. There are only sixteen such places, all of them in the gospels. Eight of these readings are in Luke, of which six are found in the account of the resurrection. All sixteen variants represent the same textual attitude; that is, they are restorations of passages which were present in the King James and Rheims-Douai versions but have been omitted from the RSV. They are all present in the *Textus Receptus* but were rejected by Westcott-Hort and Nestle. All sixteen variants require a fine discrimination in assessing the balance of testimony, and the CE must summon us to a fresh review of these readings. The formula used in both the RSV and the CE is similar, but the textual judgment is reversed. The RSV omits the passage from the text and in the footnote reports its presence in "some ancient authorities"; whereas the CE returns each passage to the text (as does Knox), and a footnote reports that "other ancient authorities omit." Notably these sixteen restorations include the traditional ending of Mark and the Johannine *pericope adulterae*; and both these textual phenomena are fully and accurately explained in footnotes. To restore the *pericope adulterae* to its traditional position within the Gospel of John would appear to be erroneous, especially against the fresh testimony for omission by both P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵. The CE note on p. 239 acknowledges that the passage "is not by St. John" but is held to be inspired and canonical. On the other hand, the restoration of the traditional ending of Mark is a wholesome challenge to our habitual assumption that the original Mark is preserved no further than 16 8. Before the middle of the second century, Justin in his "first" *Apology* (45) writes

³⁴ Note that in the CE *ἀπολελυμένην* is translated "a divorced woman" at Matt 5 32, 19 9, and Luke 16 18.

a short passage notably verbatim with Mark 16 20 (οἱ ἀπόστολοι αὐτοῦ ἐξεληθόντες πανταχοῦ ἐκήρυξαν) which looks like a direct quotation. Similarly, Irenaeus quotes from Mark 16 19.³⁵ Tatian's text had the long ending. The earliest translations — Latin, Syriac, and Coptic — all possess it. Witnesses both for and against the CE restoration as genuine are early and impressive, and we should consider the question still open and perhaps "insoluble at present."³⁶

Of the remaining fourteen restored readings in the CE, eleven are "Western noninterpolations."³⁷ I would consider that all of these were actually in the original text and that Hort was misled by his principle that where B and D differed and the latter omitted the reading the omission represents the true text.³⁸ Seven of these readings at the end of Luke are preserved in B and Aleph and now also in P⁷⁵. Such external testimony outweighs the "noninterpolation" theory, and therefore the restoration of all eleven passages in the CE gives a superior critical text.

What theological relevance is to be recognized in the textual alteration of the CE? First, it may be said that few Catholic-*vs.*-Protestant issues are apparent. Rather, the difference is one of scholarly judgment. Further, there is no consistent theological tendency in the textual revision.³⁹ Passages restored to the text on the basis of Greek manuscript support are, for example: ". . . and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matt 19 9); "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on anyone, it will crush him" (21 44).

Shorter restorations are: the word "righteous" in Pilate's disavowal of "this righteous man's blood" (Matt 27 24); the words "and fasting" where Jesus speaks of effective exorcism "by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9 29); the words "and pray" in Jesus' instruction "take heed, watch and pray" (Mark 13 33). The "second cup" passage in Luke 22 19b-20 is restored, a "Western noninterpolation" now attested also by P⁷⁵ about a century after the composition of the gospel and surely a part of the original text despite the RSV omission.

There are two other restorations in the CE which, on the other hand, probably were interpolations into the original text. The first is the phrase in Mark 10 24: "for those who trust in riches." It is a true interpretation of the context but alters the sense with the result that Jesus makes a general observation, "How hard it is to enter the kingdom of God." With the added phrase, there is repetition of the preceding verse. The other probably ill-advised restoration is at Luke 8 43, of the

³⁵ Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.* iii, 10,6.

³⁶ This judgment was expressed also by F. C. Grant in *IntB, in loco*.

³⁷ Matt 19 9, 21 44, 27 24; Mark 13 33; Luke 22 19b-20, 24 8, 12, 36, 40, 51, 52.

³⁸ Cf. Hort, *op. cit.*, pp. 175 f.; and B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 134.

³⁹ For example, one does not find the translation "penance" and "do penance" as in the Douai version: Matt 3 2, 8, 11; Mark 1 4, 6 12; Luke 3 8, 13 3, 5, 15 7, 16 30, 24 27, where the RSV has "repentance" and "repent."

woman who "spent all her living upon physicians." That the original text did not contain this is now attested by P⁷⁵, in addition to B (D) sy^a (sa) arm; as against the testimony of **NO** sy^c.

The most impressive alteration in the CE which involves the Greek critical text is the series of six readings in the account of the resurrection in Luke (24 6, 12, 36, 40, 51, 52). The passages added are:

- 6 . . . he is not here, but has risen
 12 Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home wondering at what had happened.
 36 . . . and said to them, "Peace to you."
 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.
 51-52 . . . and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and

These are all valid scholarly alterations, in which no theological tendency is to be found. Analysis, therefore, of the textual difference between the Protestant RSV and the CE indicates that theological distinction today does not rest upon these modern versions of the NT. We are aware, however, that just as the Protestant has moved from Erasmus to Nestle so the Roman Catholic has changed from Douai to the RSV CE. In both cases, substantial theological change has come about and yet such change is reflected more in exegesis than in textual criticism itself. Both of these statements are illustrated in the "Explanatory Notes" of the CE (Appx. 1, pp. 235-46). On Matt 16 19: "Peter has the key to the gates of the city of God. This power is exercised through the church" On Matt 19 11-12: "Jesus means that a life of continence is to be chosen only by those who are called to it for the sake of the Kingdom of God." As for the text of the CE, it has found little to alter in the RSV and that little is chiefly scholarly gain.

III

Another major undertaking currently in progress is the International Greek New Testament Project, whose objective is the publication of a new *apparatus criticus*, more adequate for our time than the Tischendorf work of 1869-72.⁴⁰ In the preparation of the initial volume, on the Gospel of Luke, the texts of approximately 300 mss have been collated completely, and this is the most massive attack ever made upon the problem of textual variation. Consequently, it is possible now to estimate more accurately the scope and character of the textual condition of the

⁴⁰ A description of the project was given in the *Crozer Quarterly* of 1950 (pp. 301-08), by M. M. Parvis. It is not to be confused with a later proposal of the ABS to publish a Greek text with selected variants, especially for missionary translation. The ABS committee overlaps in personnel with the IGNT executive committee, although the ABS plan is short-term and limited in scope.

Greek NT. The 300 MSS collated include all extant papyri and most uncial copies, as well as Byzantine texts representing known families and recensions, and in addition numbers of early Byzantine copies whose text remains unclassified.

The master file for the Gospel of Luke contains, it is estimated, about 25,000 variants of all sorts. Combing through such a file to select variants of substantial alteration in the text is like extracting a valuable metal from an ore mass, and the yield is about 2 per cent, much higher than the earlier estimates of Hort, Ezra Abbot, and others. But the effect upon exegesis is hardly to be measured by such statistics, when we consider the theological implication of a single letter as in *εὐδοκίας* of Luke 2 14; or the addition of *θεόν* in 2 12, where Gregory Thaumaturgus speaks of the "swaddled God"; or the omission of a full verse at Luke 23 34, thus losing the prayer of Jesus: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." How shall one compute such various alterations? In view of the availability of these comprehensive data on the Gospel of Luke, it will be more representative to consider textual alteration in this gospel. We have culled out about 500 variants of more substantial character, from which again to select representative illustration. Rather than to point out a series of single variants, it would seem to be more meaningful to consider longer passages which contain clusters of textual alterations, albeit from different times and sources.

Take, for example, the annunciation in Luke 1 26-35. "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee"; although Sinaiticus *et al.* state that this city was in Judea, and Bezae *et al.* omit to name Nazareth in particular. In some manuscripts the person of the angel is transformed into a voice only, which declares "the Lord is with you" (apparently the original text). Attested in the fifth century (ACD) is, however, an extension of this angelic message: "blessed are you among women." And from the eighth century (L) we learn that the angel further pronounced: "blessed is the fruit of your womb."⁴ The incredulity of Mary, since she had no husband, is excluded from some fifth-century copies; whereas other copies of the same date substitute her acquiescent reply: "Lo, the servant of the Lord; so be it as you say." Other changes are to be seen in the angel's words: ". . . the child to be born will be called holy"; or, according to some manuscripts: "the holy one of God"; or, again, simply: ". . . shall be called pure."

Such freedom of treatment is quite incongruous with a traditional conception of Scripture. With many of the variant forms, it is easy to recognize primary and secondary text, and yet all the variant forms become part of the narrative in the history of the church. It is the total narrative with all its tangents that constitutes the theological interpretation of the annunciation.

⁴ Both additions to the angel's message in 1 28 were drawn from Elizabeth's exclamation in 1 42.

Let us look now at the birth story in Luke 2 1-7. "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus." An Old Latin MS of the fifth century (e) omits the explanation "that all the world should be enrolled." The Protevangelion reports instead that the residents of Bethlehem must register, whereas Bezae reports the residents of Jerusalem, and Codex Bezae the residents of Judea. Continuing the account, everybody went to enroll, each to his own πόλις; a statement that historians have debated over. Codex Bezae and the Sin. Syr. speak rather of a man's πατρις; Codex Ephrem Syrus, of his χῶρα; and an Old Latin MS (gat), of his *regionem*. So Joseph went up to Bethlehem, but some Byzantine MSS omit the explanation that "he was of the house and lineage of David," while still others include both Joseph and Mary in this lineage (sy^a *et al.*). The Old Latin and Old Syriac versions here call Mary his wife rather than his betrothed. The child was born, and she wrapped him, say some late MSS, "in pieces of the Lord's garments." The "manger" becomes in Epiphanius "a cave." We make no effort here to reconstruct an original form of the event. Least of all does it seem feasible to recover what is valid as historical. The entire story breathes of *traditio theologica* in which numerous theologians have had a hand to produce the composite form.

The account of homage paid to the infant Jesus is found in Luke 2 16-22. The shepherds "went hurrying": cf. the sixth-century reading (Ξ) "went believing." "They found Mary and Joseph and the infant": but some Byzantine MSS drop Joseph out of this picture. "And when the time for their purification arrived . . .": yet here D and the Old Latin and Old Syriac all read "his purification," and one MS refers to "her purification," while Irenaeus and others omit the pronoun completely. And Irenaeus omits also the explanatory phrase "in accordance with the Law of Moses."

In the presentation in the temple (Luke 2 33-35) we read: "His father and his mother marveled at what was said." This reading obviously has the strongest attestation and appears in our critical texts. But Origen protests that Joseph is not properly called father, and accordingly a second-century variant (itAΘ) would remove the earthly father and refers instead to "Joseph and his mother." On the other hand, some Byzantine scribes simply wrote "his parents." In the statement of Simeon that follows, some manuscripts omit the prediction: "this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel." Retained in other manuscripts, it is altered to refer to "many nations" (Or *et al.*) and to speak of the rising (ἀνάστασις) or "resurrection of the dead" (Cyr). "The thoughts of many hearts" to be revealed are interpreted in some manuscripts as "the evil thoughts" to be exposed (N* *et al.*).

Let us look at one more passage, the confession at Caesarea Philippi: "It happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him" (Luke 9 18-23). Here Codex Bezae says nothing of praying,

and Vaticanus reports that the disciples rather came up to join him. Jesus asks them: "Who do the people identify as the Son of man?" at least, that is the record in Justin's *Dialogue*. When the direct question is put to the disciples, Peter's response is variously reported: "the Messiah" (sy Jus Or); "God's Messiah" (majority); "Messiah God" (Cop); "Messiah, Son of God" (D e); "Messiah, Son of man"; "Son of the Living God" (Or); or simply "Son of God" (Or). A patristic omission is the clause: "rejected by elders, chief priests, and scribes." It is D it Mcion that omit "and be raised on the third day," whereas other witnesses read "on the third day" or "after three days." Bezae omits "let him take up his cross daily," and numerous others omit the term "daily"; but in some witnesses Jesus invites, "Follow me daily" (a most attractive variant homiletically).

So our inquiry could be greatly extended, passage by passage, to demonstrate the freedom of alteration and interpretation, the substantial portion of the text involved in variation, and the theological quality of many textual alterations. Instead of spot readings in eclectic choice, we have reviewed the larger unit in more comprehensive variation and so have shown the doctrinal play within an episode. Extended analysis could demonstrate the theological quality of each individual witness and distinguish the threads woven into the larger pattern. It is particularly the variation from the common text which provides the clue to distinctive doctrinal tendency, in a manuscript, in a version, in a father, or in a recension.⁴²

If we should now concentrate upon one MS, Papyrus 75, we find further evidence that variation in the text and alteration in the sense appeared early. Since P⁷⁵ adds a second copy of the Gospel of John from the third century, it is now possible to make direct comparison with P⁶⁶.⁴³ More than a thousand differences between the two manuscript copies are found, and about a hundred of these are of greater importance. A few readings in P⁷⁵ will illustrate. In John 4 14, because of the simple change from ἀλλά to ἄλλο, we get the striking saying of Jesus: "Other water I shall give him . . ." In 6 5, Jesus asks, not "Where can we buy bread?" to feed the multitude but rather, "Where can they buy bread?" In 6 69 Peter's declaration, "You are God's holy one," omits the identification "Messiah." In 8 57, the Jews do not query, "Have you seen Abraham?" but rather, "Has Abraham seen you?" In 9 17 the Jews ask the formerly blind man, not "What do you say about him?" but, "What do you say about yourself?" In 12 8 Jesus speaks of the ever-present poor but does not say, "You do not always have me." Such alterations are early, and many, and are

⁴² Such a study has been made of Codex Bezae by Eldon Jay Epp (Harvard Ph.D.): "Theological Tendency in the Textual Variants of Codex Bezae . . ." (1961).

⁴³ Kenneth W. Clark, "The Text of the Gospel of John in Third-Century Egypt," *NT*, 5 (1962), pp. 17-24.

neither errors nor heresy. Many of them are mild changes, but they all form a cumulative exegetical mood.

Now returning to the Gospel of Luke in P⁷⁵: we have selected about 125 substantial variants out of about 1,500 differences from the *TR*. A few of these will illustrate more important alterations of text and some will show a theological interest. In Luke 11 11 there appears a unique reading heretofore unreported: "If a son should ask his father for bodily strength (*ἰσχύιν* instead of *ἰχθύν*), the father will not give him a serpent in place of a fish." In the story of the Prodigal Son (15 24) another unique reading appears. The usual translation has been "They began to make merry," which suggests a rousing party. But P⁷⁵ has the singular *ἠρξαστο* instead of the plural, and the result seems very different as the father exults: "My son was dead and has come alive, he was lost and then was found"; and the father became joyous." Still another unique reading is found in 17 14, after the ten lepers cry, "Have mercy upon us." At this point the scribe of P⁷⁵ borrows from Matt 8 3 the reply of Jesus: "I will. Be cleansed, and immediately they were cleansed."

In the account of the arrest of Jesus, Luke 22 62-23 23, the passage shows several textual choices, in which P⁷⁵ agrees with our present critical text. The papyrus includes the statement: "Judas went out and wept bitterly," and also that his captors "beat Jesus." These statements are omitted in the Old Latin version and in early uncials 0171 and D. The papyrus, however, omits the statements: "They struck him in the face"; "It was required to release one man to them at festival time"; and the attribution to the high priests of the outcry for crucifixion. One more example is also a unique reading (24 26): "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his kingdom?" The last word is the unique term, and it was later altered by a corrector to the term now usual to us: his "glory." In general, P⁷⁵ tends to support our current critical text, and yet the papyrus vividly portrays a fluid state of the text at about A. D. 200. Such scribal freedom suggests that the gospel text was little more stable than an oral tradition, and that we may be pursuing the retreating mirage of the "original text."

IV

We would finally conclude that the selective data reviewed above form a consistent picture of theological relevance within the area of textual variation. The amount of textual change that involves theological alteration is a small proportion but it is a nugget of essential importance for interpretation. It is this smaller portion for which textual criticism must search especially. In the course of transmission thousands of textual alterations have appeared in the legitimate lineage of theological interpretation, and all of these must be taken into account in exegesis and doctrinal exposition.

It is of particular interest to realize that many textual alterations first appeared in Byzantine copies of the NT. It has been widely held and often repeated that the important alteration of text occurred before A. D. 200, but this view is considerably modified by the panoramic research of the IGNT Project. It is true that every additional copy collated yields new readings of exegetical consequence.⁴⁴

We may well begin to ask if there really was a stable text at the beginning. We talk of recovering the original text, and of course every document had such a text. But the earliest witnesses to NT text even from the first century already show such variety and freedom that we may well wonder if the text remained stable long enough to hold a priority. Great progress has been achieved in recovering an early form of text, but it may be doubted that there is evidence of one original text to be recovered.

In the past we have been accustomed to treat individual readings in isolation, balancing the testimony pertaining to any reading by itself apart. But there is much to be said for a different method as well, of treating a longer passage in a full episode to observe the consistency and play of the witnesses. The textual critic must recognize the fluidity and theological vitality in Scriptural accounts, and move on from isolated words to the broader context. The scrutiny of manuscript support for a word here and a word there should be overarched by the consistent performance and interpretation of an entire parable or discourse. Furthermore, our attention to original text must not eclipse the valuable theological insight in textual deviation early and late.

The recognition that a textual critic must be also historian and theologian has obvious corollaries. There must be co-ordination between all three: the investigation of textual data, the study of theological history, and research in ecclesiastical history. This threefold alliance is advantageous, even essential, to each field of research, as it serves to extend and to inform each specialization with greater comprehension and refinement. Collaboration of the three fields would make more comprehensive the scholarship of each.

Many new vistas of research await such joint exploration. The NT text and the theology of each church father, of each regional text such as fam. 13, or of each major recension such as the Caesarean text — especially where departures from the common text are notable. In any case, we should not fear but rather should welcome the light that may be cast by textual criticism upon the history, upon the theology, and indeed upon the current faith of scholar and layman alike.

⁴⁴ E. g., Luke 1 28, 34, 2 1, 4, 7 *bis*, 16, 36 (Duke ms 5 = Greg. 2612), etc.