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"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name
under
heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
Acts 4:12
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EARLY WITNESSES TO THE RECEIVED TEXT

Compiled by Dr. David L. Brown, Ph.D.

Papyrus Bodmer II (p66) - 125 A.D. "

This papyrus codex contains most of the Gospel of John and consists of 75 leaves and 39 unidentified fragments. The leaves are nearly rectangular measuring 6.4 inches high and 5.6 inches wide. The written pages are numbered consecutively from 1 to 34, 35 - 38 are missing, and then from 39 to page 108.

" **Early Witnesses To The Received Text**

Textual critics like D. A. Carson assert that, "*there is no unambiguous evidence that the Byzantine Text-type was known before the middle of the fourth century.*" However, the just is not true. **Edward Miller** was an accomplished textual historian living at the end of the nineteenth century. His exhaustive research showed that portions of Scripture distinctive to the Received Text were quoted extensively by notable church leaders as early as the second century and onward. (*The Cause of The Corruption of The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels*; John Burgon and Edward Miller; P.64). Here are just a few specific examples of the leaders of the early church who support the readings or the Traditional or Received Text. I am indebted to Thomas M. Strouse, Ph.D. for the primary source material below.

The KJV -- **Mark 1:1-2** "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; 2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

In Sinaiticus and Vaticanus it ways "*In the Prophet Isaiah.*" The RV, ASV, RSV, NIV and 95% of all of the New Bibles read this way. But there is a problem. While Mark 1:3 is a quotation of Isaiah 40:3, verse 2 is a reference to Malachi 3:1. Therefore the KJV is right.

But what about the early church; is there any evidence that indicates whether the (erroneous) reading of the modern versions or the reading of the King James (which is based on the received text) is correct? The answer is yes. Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.) said this - "*Mark does thus commence his Gospel narrative 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus, Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in the prophets.'* . . . Plainly does, the commencement of the Gospel quote the words of the holy prophets, and point out Him., whom they confessed as God and Lord. " (Against Heresies III: 10:5, :11:4, :16:3)

Let's move on to another example. In my booklet called "*The Great (?) Uncials*" I told you that both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus omit Mark 16:9-20. Is there any support in the Early Church for this so called "longer ending" of Mark 16? Again we look to a sermon of Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.). The longer reading must have been in the New Testament he was using because he references **Mark 16:19**, So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. KJV. This is what Irenaeus writes - "*Also towards the conclusion of his Gospel, Mark says: 'So then, after the Lord Jesus had spoken to them., He was received up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.'*" (*Against Heresies* 111:10:6)

Consider **Luke 22:44**, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." There is the claim by those who hold the Critical Text Position that verses 43-44 did not exist before the Byzantine Era (the 4th or 5th centuries). Is that true? The answer has to be NO! Why? Because Justin (100-165 A.D.), says, "*For in the memoirs which I say were drawn up by His Apostles and those who followed them, it is recorded that His sweat fell down like drops of blood while He was praying, and saying, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass...'*" (*Trypho* 103:24)

Next, I turn your attention to **John 1:18** in the KJV. The verse says, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." However, the NASB (New American Standard Bible) says "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

The "older manuscripts" give us the reading of the NASB. This is a Gnostic perversion. They taught there were various levels of spiritual beings or lesser Gods between God and man. J. P. Green clearly identifies the problem. He says, Vaticanus "in John 1:18 refers to Christ as the 'only begotten God.' How can anyone claim that one that is begotten is at the same time essential God, equal in every aspect to God the Father, and to God the Holy Spirit? This makes Christ to be a created Being. And it is a Gnostic twist given to the Bible by the heretic Valentinus and his followers, who did not regard the Word and Christ as one and the same; who thought of the Son of God and the Father as being one and the same Person. Therefore, they determined to do away with '*the only begotten Son*' in order to accommodate their religion. (*Unholy Hands on the Bible* edited by Jay. P. Green, Sr.; Sovereign Grace Publishers; p.12).

Since several of the oldest manuscripts like Vaticanus read "*only begotten God*" and since these are before the Byzantine era, that must be the correct reading, right? My answer again is no! Twice Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.), in referring to the passage says "*the only begotten Son of God, which is in the bosom of the Father.*" (*Against Heresies* 111:11:6, (IV:20:6).

John 3:13 is the next passage to be considered. The KJV reads "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." I checked the NASB, NIV and the CEV leave this underlined phrase off. Others may as well. I did not check the other translations. But is there an early witness for the phrase the Son of man which is in heaven? Yes! **Hippolytus** (170-236 A.D.) in his sermon *Against the Heresy of One Noetus* says, *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.* (*Against the Heresy of One Noetus* I: 1:4)

John 5:3-4 in the KJV reads "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." These verses are omitted in the NIV, again on the basis that they are only in the "less important manuscripts." By that they mean again the "older" ones. However, **Tertullian** (160-221 A.D.) in one sermon On Baptism makes it clear that the passage was in the early manuscript that he was using for he says, *"If it seems a novelty for an angel to be present in*

waters, an example of what was to come to pass has forerun. An angel, by his intervention, was want to stir the pool at Bethsaida. They who were complaining of ill-health used to watch for him; for whoever had been the first to descend into them, after his washing ceased to complain." (On Baptism I: 1:5)

The list goes on and on. The critical scholars claim there is no early manuscript support for the verses and portions they delete and yet a study of the sermons of the pastor in the early church quote the verses and portions the "scholars" omit as they are in the Byzantine or received text. Below are more examples.

John 6:69 KJV – "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." This is supported by **Irenaeus** (130-202 A.D.) *"By whom also Peter, having been taught, recognized Christ as the Son of the living God."* (Against Heresies III: 11:6)

Acts 8:36-37 KJV – "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." **Cyprian** (200-258 A.D.) supports the inclusion of verse 36-37 Textus Receptus when he says, *"In the Acts of the Apostles: Lo, here is water; what is there which hinders me from being baptized? Then said Phillip, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest."* (The Treatises of Cyprian I: 1:17)

Again, I assert, that since the reading of early church leaders match the Received or Byzantine text, that this text existed and was in use from a very early time!

1 Timothy 3:16 KJV – "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." This passage is supported by **Ignatius** (35-116 A.D.) *"God was in the flesh."* (To the Ephesians 1:1:7), by **Hippolytus** (170-236 A.D.) *"God was manifested in the flesh."* (Against the Heresies of Noetus I: 1:17), and **Dionysius** (3rd cent.) *"For God was manifested in the flesh."* (Conciliations I: 1:853)

1 John 5:7-8 KJV – "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." This passage is supported by **Cyprian** (200-258 A.D.) who wrote *"The Lord says, 'I and the Father are one, ' and again it is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 'and these three are one. '"* (The Treatises of Cyprian I:1:6)

Revelation 22:14 KJV – "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." **Tertullian**

(160-221) wrote, "Blessed are they who act according to the precepts, that they may have power over the tree of life, and over the gates, for entering into the holy city." (*On Modesty* I: 19:2)

Allow me to conclude with a pertinent statement from **Tertullian** (160-221 A.D.). He wrote, *Now this heresy of yours does not receive certain Scriptures; and whichever of them it does receives it perverts by means of additions and diminutions, for the accomplishment of its own purposes.* ' (*On Prescriptions Against Heresies* 1:17:1)

Why do the modern textual critics ignore the quotes of the early Church leaders?

Do not their quotes demonstrate the existence the Traditional Text or Received Text? Indeed they do! And what of the ancient translations that reflect that text? Why are they ignored? For the most part, advocates of the critical text have **confined themselves to debating over existing Greek manuscripts of the New Testament**. However, they have largely ignored ancient translations of the New Testament which support the Received Text. **The logic at this point is simple. If these early translations of the New Testament reflect the Received Text, they must have been translated from it.** The manuscripts underlying these translations therefore must be very early copies of the Received Text—maybe even the autographs themselves. Do such translations exist? Yes! But let's look at one Greek Codex before we move on to these other old manuscripts.

" **Bodmer II – P66**

"A prevailing chorus of the critical text position is that there is no historical record of the Byzantine Text (i.e., Received Text) to be found prior to the last half of the fourth century." (*Touch Not The Unclean Thing* by David H. Sorenson; p.76) However, nothing could be further from the truth. **There is enormous support for the Traditional Text found in Armenian, Ethiopic, Gothic, Old Latin, Anglo-Saxon and Syriac translations, many of them predating the earliest Greek manuscripts we possess.** But despite this fact, textual critics in the nineteenth century, following the texts of the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus, have altered many passages of the New Testament. Further, I find it very encouraging that more recently discovered papyrus fragments have confirmed the Majority Text. "Nineteenth-century biblical scholars claimed that much of the first fourteen chapters of the Gospel of John was corrupted by scribes in the later Byzantine Era. **This claim was shown to be utterly false by the discovery of Papyrus Bodmer II** (also called P66). Dated about A.D. 200, (now by many at 125 A.D.) prior to the commencement of the Byzantine Era, this Papyrus verified many of the disputed passages attributed to late Byzantine copyists and demonstrated that these passages were present in very early manuscripts." (*Modern Bible Translations Unmasked* by Russell & Colin Standish; p.37-38).

Dr. Gordon Fee has shown that in John chapter 4, P66 agrees with the Traditional Text (and thus the King James Bible) 60.6% of the time when there are textual variations (*Studies in the Text and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism*, by Epp and Fee). While P66 is a mixed text it does demonstrate so called "Byzantine readings well

before that era. Here are some examples –

Referen P66
ce

Sinaiticus

John 4:1 κυριος (Lord)

Ιησους (Jesus)

John 5:9 και ευτηεος (and immediately)

omitted

John 5:17 δε Ιησους (but Jesus)

δε Ιησους Κυειος (but Jesus Christ)

John 6:36 με (me)

omitted

John 6:46 και τον μετερα (and the mother).

omitted

John 6:69 ο Χριστος (the Christ)

omitted

John 7:10 αλλ ος (but as)

αλλ (but)

John 7:39 πνευμα αγιον (Spirit Holy; πνευμα (Spirit) Holy Ghost)

(From <http://members.aol.com/User192905/photos/P66.htm>)

I should note that though this manuscript was originally dated to about 200 A.D, numerous scholars have updated it to 125 A.D.

" **The Old Syrian Text or Peshitta**

Brook Foss Westcott (1825-1903) and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828-1892) alleged that the Alexandrian text, or the neutral text as they called it, was that which most closely followed the originals. This false allegation is still repeated by so called Fundamentalists such as Edward Glenny, of Central Baptist Theological Seminary but no at a Northwestern College, a New Evangelical School. However, **you should be aware that Fenton John Anthony Hort conceded that there might be some evidence of the Syrian text** (i.e., Received Text) **as early as middle of the third century.**

So, let's take a look at the translation called the Old Synrian Peshitta New Testament, which is in the Aramaic language. First, the word Peshitta comes from the Syrian word **peshitla**, which means "common." It carries with it the implication that it was the version commonly used by the people.

The record of the Syrian versions is an important one. You will remember that Antioch in Syria is the birthplace of the word Christian. We read in **Acts 11:26** "And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." In fact, the church at Antioch was the home and sending church of the apostle Paul. In the mid and latter portion of the first century, the church at Antioch no doubt was one of the pre-eminent churches in the Christian world. This church

undoubtedly was the mother church for numerous other churches of Syria during that early period of church history. What I find interesting is that the tradition of the Syrian church is that the Peshitta was the work of St. Mark while others claim the Apostle Thaddeus (Jude) translated it.

Now according to scholars, when was the Peshitta translated from Greek? A translation of the New Testament into Syrian was made about 150 A.D. according to Kenyon in his book *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*. This early translation of the New Testament agreed with the Traditional Text or the Received Text. And in fact there is little question, even by proponents of the critical text, that the Peshitta Version was translated from a Greek text rooted in the Received Text. (*The King James Version Defended*; Dr. E. V. Hills' p.172). John Burgon noted that the churches of the region of Syria have always used the Peshitta. There has never been a time when these churches did not use the Received-Text-based Peshitta. The greater point, however, is that one of the earliest churches of the Christian era used a translation of the New Testament based upon the Received Text. That is a clear indication that the Received Text was the true text of the New Testament with roots leading back to autographa.

" **The Old Latin, Italic or Itala Version**

Don't make the mistake that many people make. When they hear the word Latin used in conjunction with the Bible or church, automatically assume that it is to be associated with the Roman Catholic Church. However, that is not true because in northern Italy, the Italic Church had begun in A.D. 120 according to Theodore Beza, the associate and successor of John Calvin and the great Swiss reformer. Its remoteness isolated it from the influence of the Church at Rome. The Italic Church was the forerunner of churches in this same region, which would later be called the Vaudois, or, the Waldenses. Both of these names simply mean "peoples of the valleys." The Italic or pre-Waldensian Church produced a version of the New Testament, which was translated from the Received Text by the year 157 A.D. The noted church historian Frederic Nolan confirms this. This date is less than one hundred years after most of the books of the New Testament were written. The greater point is that the Itala (or Old Latin) was translated from the Received Text, indicating its existence to the earliest days of the New Testament church. Therefore, the Received Text clearly existed and was used by churches in early church history.

" **The Gothic Version**

Another early translation of the New Testament in a European language was what has come to be known as the Gothic Version. The Gothic language was used by Germanic tribes in central Europe in the fourth century. In about 350 A.D., a missionary to the Goths named Ulfilas or Wulfilas translated the New Testament into the Gothic language. Textual critic Frederic Kenyon wrote in 1912 that the Gothic

Version "is for the most part that which is found in the majority of Greek manuscripts."(*Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*; Frederick Kenyon). In other words, Kenyon conceded that the Gothic Version was based upon the Received Text because we know that the vast "majority of manuscripts" are that which support the Received Text. The point of logic here again is simple. When the missionary Ulfilas translated the Gothic Version from the Received Text in about A.D. 350, it must have been in existence long before that date. When a missionary on the field had the Received Text with him, it certainly implied that it was the well-established, common text.

" **The Ethiopic Version**

This version dates to the beginning of the fourth century. While it does contain a mixed reading at times it is classified as being basically Byzantine in origin. Thus the witnesses to Africa were also of the Traditional Text. Geisler and Nix state, "This translation adheres closely, almost literally, to the Greek text of the Byzantine type." They also classify the Armenian Version, Georgian Version, and the Slavonic Version of the same textual family, that of the Traditional Text. (*A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968); Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, 324-327).

"The clear historic indication is that the Received Text was the common text of the New Testament used throughout the civilized world from the earliest times of Christianity. Though we live in an age of relatively-rapid editing, publishing, and distribution of new Bible translations, that was not the case in the first millennium of Christianity. For translations of the Bible to exist in the second to fourth centuries based upon what is distinctively the Received Text is *prima facie*, historic evidence that the Received Text was the commonly used, commonly translated, and commonly copied text of the New Testament. This is apparent.

"The critical-text-position view that there is no record of any historic usage of the Received Text prior to the fifth century is simply wrong. There is a substantial historic record to the contrary. **The text used by the churches of Jesus Christ in the first five centuries was primarily the Received Text.** To be sure, there were localities which used the Alexandrian text, but they were limited largely to Alexandria and Rome." (*Touch Not The Unclean Thing*; David H. Sorenson; p. 82)

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