In April 1952 a questionnaire form was sent to all readers of THE BIBLE TRANSLATOR. As a result of this, valuable information was received as to the type of articles of greatest help and interest to our readers. These answers have been carefully classified and in forthcoming numbers the editor hopes to publish a series of articles contributed by experts in various fields directly related to the particular problems which have been raised by translators. In the following article the Rev. A. W. Argyle deals with the first of these and helps the student of the Greek New Testament to evaluate the variant readings given in the Greek New Testament.

The Elements of New Testament Textual Criticism

A. W. Argyle

(NOTE:— This article, being intended for readers without any technical knowledge of the subject, omits discussion of the more controversial issues involved in advanced contemporary textual criticism of the New Testament. It is concerned solely with first principles and their application. — A. W. A.).

No autograph of any of the books of the New Testament has come down to us. We have to depend on MSS which are copies of copies of copies. In the process of copying by hand through the centuries human fallibility has introduced many errors, and it is not surprising that we find discrepancies amongst the MSS. There are over two thousand Greek MSS, apart from numerous versions in other languages (Latin, Syriac, Coptic, etc.).

The earliest extant evidence of the Greek text of the New Testament occurs in fragments of papyri found in Egypt, denoted in an *apparatus criticus* by the letter P followed by a numeral (P1, P2, etc.). These fragments mostly belong to the third and fourth centuries, but one containing five verses of John 18 belongs to the early second century. The Chester Beatty papyri (P45, P46, P47), found in 1931, belong to the third century. The first has about one seventh of what was once a complete codex of the Gospels and Acts. The second has most of the Pauline epistles, but not the Pastorals. The third contains the middle part of the Apocalypse.

We now turn to other kinds of Greek MSS:—

The Uncials, i.e. those MSS which were written on vellum in capital Greek letters. Limitations of space prevent us from naming more than a few of the chief uncials.

(a) Probably the oldest is *Codex Vaticanus,* denoted in an *apparatus criticus* by the letter B. This is a very valuable MS of the fourth century.

(b) Also belonging to the fourth century is the famous *Codex Sinaiticus.* The exciting story of the discovery of this MS by Tischendorf in the

monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai in 1859 is too well-known to need repetition here. It is denoted by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, 'aleph (ℵ), or by S.

(c) *Codex Alexandrinus,* known as A, probably belongs to the fifth century. Unlike the Codex Sinaiticus, this has been the longest and best known of the early uncials.

(d) To the fifth century also we may ascribe *Codex Ephraemi rescriptus* (C). This MS, as *rescriptus* implies, is a palimpsest; that is, the original writing has been more or less completely removed, by washing or scraping, from the surface of the vellum, on which another work has been written. This MS now consists of 209 leaves, of which 64 contain portions of the Old Testament, while 145 belong to the New Testament. Every book of the New Testament, except 2 Thessalonians and 2 John, is represented in it, but none is complete. Since the superimposed script has been arranged in double columns, it is often possible to see the original writing between the two columns, but elsewhere the task of deciphering is very difficult.

(e) *Codex Bezae* (D) probably belongs to the sixth century. It was acquired in 1562 by Theodore Beza from the monastery of St. Irenaeus at Lyons. This MS differs in many respects from the four above mentioned. They were all originally copies of the entire Greek Bible; but D appears never to have contained the Old Testament, and in its present state it includes only the Gospels and the Acts, with considerable mutilations, notably the conclusion of the Acts (c. 22, verses 29 to the end) and a small fragment of 3 John (verses 11-15 in the Latin version) which originally stood between the Gospels and the Acts. The Gospels are arranged in the order which was adopted at an early date in the Western Church (Matthew, John, Luke, Mark). The most important difference in D is that it contains a Latin version as well as a Greek one. The two versions appear side by side, on opposite pages, the Greek on the left and the Latin on the right. The text of D (known as the Western Text) differs remarkably from that of any other Greek MS, especially in the Acts, the variant readings in which have been fully discussed by A. C. Clark *(The Acts of the Apostles).* Some scholars (e.g. Rendel Harris and A. C. Clark) have defended the Western Text; but Westcott and Hort (in their epoch-making critical edition of the Greek New Testament in 1881), followed by the majority of scholars, regarded it as unreliable, except in one respect. Since the general tendency of D is to make additions, if D *omits* words which are found in other MSS, the omission was considered to be sound and primitive. The portions omitted are known as 'Western non-interpolations'. For example, in the account of the Last Supper in Luke, D omits c. 22, verses 19b-20 ('which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. And the cup likewise after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you'). It is thought by many scholars that these words were not originally in the text of Luke.

(f) *Codex Claromontanus* (D2). This is a sixth century MS containing the Pauline Epistles. Like the previous MS (D) it is Graeco-Latin, and was acquired by the reformer Beza in the sixteenth century.

(g) *Codex Washingtonius* (W), fifth century. This MS was bought in 1906 by Charles L. Freer of the U.S.A. from an Arab dealer in Cairo.
(h) *Codex Regius* (L), not earlier than the eighth century. This is a MS of the Gospels, nearly complete, in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, where it was used by Stephanus in the sixteenth century. It was published in full by Tischendorf.
(i) In 1913 was published an eighth-century MS known as the *Koridethi Gospels (Θ)*. It was once in the Koridethi Monastery on the Black Sea.

Uncial vellum MSS continued to be produced up to the tenth century. But in the ninth and tenth centuries there arose another style of writing, in ordinary (not capital) Greek letters. These MSS are known as 'minuscules' (as opposed to the 'majuscule' or 'uncial' writing). Their notation in an *apparatus criticus* is simply numerical.

In addition, there are early versions of the New Testament in Latin (e.g. the Vulgate version of St. Jerome), Syriac, Coptic, etc., and citations from the New Testament in the early Fathers of the Church.

All these sources confront the textual critic with a multitude of errors and variations. His aim is to try to recover as far as possible the actual text of the autograph of the New Testament writers. How is he to decide which of the variant readings in a given instance is the most likely to be what was originally written by the author?

In dealing with a particular verse in which variants occur, the textual critic will discover which MSS contain one variant, and which another. If one variant is supported by the most ancient MSS, another only by later and inferior ones, the clear probability is that the former is correct. For instance, in Matt. 19 : 17 there are two readings: (a) 'Why dost thou ask me concerning the good?' (b) 'Why callest thou me good?' (= Mark 10 : 18; Luke 18 : 19). A glance at the *apparatus criticus* will show that the MSS evidence for (a), which includes ℵ (or S), B, D, and others, is much stronger than that for (b). A copyist altered (a) into (b) to bring the Matthaean version into harmony with the Marcan and Lucan.

Sometimes it is possible to say that of two or more variants one makes better *sense* than the others (has better 'internal' or 'intrinsic' probability) or is more likely to have given rise to the others (this is technically known as 'transcriptional' probability). Scholars have been able, moreover, to decide that certain MSS usually provide superior readings and are therefore to be regarded as more reliable than others. They have also classified the MSS in groups or families, by noting which of them agree in supporting certain variant readings. These must descend from some common ancestor now lost, and so take us back to a time much earlier than our MSS.

Westcott and Hort found four groups: Syrian, Neutral, Alexandrian, and Western. (1) The Syrian, because of their 'conflate' or 'mixed' readings, appeared to be the result of a revision made in the fourth century, probably at Syrian Antioch. These, therefore, were of little value for discovering the original text. (2) The Neutral included B *(Codex Vaticanus)* and ℵ or S *(Codex Sinaiticus,* hereafter denoted by S). They were called 'Neutral', i.e. 'pure', because they were thought

to show least evidence of corruption. (3) The third group was represented by C *(Codex Ephraemi)* and L *(Codex Regius)*. This group resembled the Neutral group, but seemed to have been subjected to scholarly refinements, which suggested an origin in Alexandria. (4) The Western group was headed by *Codex Bezae* (D) and supported by the Old Latin Versions.

Westcott and Hort decided that the Syrian could be ignored and that the Alexandrian was so like the Neutral that it could virtually be regarded as belonging to the same family. Thus we are left with two main groups—the Neutral and the Western; and, as we have seen, the Western readings (apart from the omissions, or, more strictly, 'non-interpolations') are regarded by most scholars, following Westcott and Hort, as unreliable.

In the light of the foregoing exposition, let us now see how textual criticism works in a number of examples. In Matt. 1 : 25, both B and S, our two oldest uncials omit 'firstborn', which we find in the English A.V. The R.V. rightly omits it, although it is read by C and D. In Matt. 5 : 44, both B and S omit 'bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you' (found in D and others), and are followed by the R.V. in contrast to the A.V. In Matt. 6 : 13, B, S, and D all omit the doxology of the Lord's Prayer, which is found in L and W. The R.V. relegates it to the margin. B, S, and L, and a few minuscules and versions agree in omitting Matt. 12 : 47, though an early corrector of S inserts the verse, which is found also in C and D and in many minuscules and versions. A decision in regard to this verse is difficult to make. The R.V. includes it in the text, but notes in the margin its omission by some ancient authorities. In Matt. 27 : 49, B, S, C, L add the incident of the piercing of the Lord's side; but it is omitted by A and D and numerous minuscules and versions, and by some early Fathers, and was probably inserted from John 19 : 34 into this verse.

In the first verse of Mark, S omits 'the Son of God', as do several minuscules, versions, and some passages in the Fathers. In Mark 6 : 20, B, S, and L read 'he was much perplexed' *(πολλὰ ἠπόρει)*, where most authorities have 'he did many things' *(πολλὰ ἐποίει)*, which makes poor sense, and is most probably a corruption of the reading in B, S, and L, which is adopted in the R.V. text. Verses 44 and 46 of chapter 9 are omitted by B, S, C, L: the words are: 'where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched', which have been introduced by A, D, and others, from verse 48. In verse 49b, B, S, and L omit 'and every sacrifice shall be salted with fire', which are given in A, C, D, and other authorities, and are recorded in the R.V. margin. B and S omit 16 : 9-20, the last twelve verses of Mark, which are given in A, C, D, and other authorities. L *(Codex Regius)* and others give, after verse 8, first the shorter conclusion ('And all that had been commanded them they briefly reported to Peter and those who were with him. And after this Jesus himself [appeared to them, and] from the East and as far as to the West sent forth through them the sacred and incorruptible proclamation of eternal salvation') and then the longer conclusion (the ordinary last twelve verses) as an alternative. Neither conclusion is authoritative. W adds

yet another ending after verse 14 in the longer conclusion (The Freer Logion).[1]

In Luke 2 : 14, B, S, A, D, and some versions and Fathers read *εὐδοκίας* for *εὐδοκία* (i.e. 'peace among men of his good pleasure' instead of 'peace, good-pleasure among men'. *εὐδοκία* is read by correctors of B and S, and by L and other authorities, including a number of Fathers, but scholars rightly prefer the strongly attested *εὐδοκίας*. (Compare the R.V. text and margin). In Luke 3 : 22, D, followed by some Latin versions, and supported by some Fathers, reads 'this day I have begotten thee', where most authorities give 'in thee I am well pleased'. The variant which the Western Text (D) gives here is not found in the parallel accounts of the baptism of Jesus in the Western Text of Matthew and Mark. The origin of the Western variant in Luke 3 : 22 is Psalm 2 : 7. The motive of the alteration was to complete the quotation from the Psalm, and possibly to give support to adoptionist Christology. Those scholars are correct who retain the accepted text, which we find in both A.V. and R.V., and which combines the Messianic words 'thou art my son' from Psalm 2 : 7, with a phrase which echoes descriptions of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42 : 1, 44 : 2.

In place of Luke 6 : 5, D inserts the words: 'On the same day, having seen someone working on the Sabbath, he said to him, Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the law'. This passage is rightly rejected as a Western interpolation.

In Luke 22 : 43-44, S, D, L, numerous minuscules, versions, and Fathers, give the incident of the Bloody Sweat, and although these verses are omitted by B, A, and other uncials, including W, they are rightly regarded as possessing the strongest authority, despite the fact that a corrector of S has enclosed the passage with marks of omission.

In Luke 23 : 34, the word from the Cross, 'Father, forgive them...' is recorded by S, A, C, and other uncials, but is omitted by the Western text, and by B, W, and an early corrector of S. As a 'Western non-interpolation' it is highly suspect, though it is given by a corrector of the Western text.

Another 'Western non-interpolation' is to be found in Luke 24 : 51, where D omits 'and he was carried up into heaven'. As these words are omitted also by S, they cannot be regarded as part of the original text, in spite of their inclusion by B, A, C, L, and a corrector of S. The words in verse 52 'worshipped him' are also omitted by D, and, although these words are given by B, S, A, C, and many authorities, they should probably be rejected. They were not likely to be omitted if they were part of the original text, but their insertion would be quite easily accounted for.

In John 1 : 13, the Western reading substitutes *ὃς ... ἐγεννήθη* for *οἳ ... ἐγεννήθησαν*, thereby making the fourth Gospel assert the Virgin Birth of Christ ("who was born" instead of "who were born"). The

[1] For 'The Freer Logion' see B. H. Street, *The Four Gospels*, pp. 337-8, and A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, pp. 248-249.

Western reading, although found also in a version known as 'b', and although quoted by Irenaeus three times and Tertullian twice, must be rejected. Its doctrinal motive is obvious, and 'transcriptional probability' as well as the weight of MSS authority, favours the accepted text.

In John 1 : 18, B, S, C, L, and other authorities, have *μονογενὴς Θεὸς* (R.V margin) for *ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός*, read by A, by a corrector of C, and by others. The former reading ('only begotten Divine One') is to be preferred, both on the grounds of superior MSS attestation, and also on the time-honoured and generally sound principle of textual criticism that the more difficult reading is to be preferred *(praestat lectio difficilior)*. A difficult reading is more likely to be changed to an easy one than vice-versa.

In John 2 : 3, S has 'they had no wine, because the wine of the marriage-feast had been finished'; but as there is very little support from other authorities for this reading, and an early corrector of S gives *ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου* with the majority, the reading in S is rightly rejected as being probably due to a 'gloss' (a copyist's comment, inserted in the margin, and eventually finding its way into the text.).

In John 3 : 13, B, S, L, and various minuscules, versions, and some Fathers, omit 'who is in heaven' (see R.V. margin). The words are found in A and N (sixth-century), in other authorities, and some Fathers. But so strong is the combined attestation of B, S, L, that the words should probably be rejected.

In John 5 : 3, B, S, A, C, L omit the words 'waiting for the movement of the water' which are found in the Western text (D) and in various other authorities, and in the A.V, but should be rejected as an insertion. The following verse in the A.V., concerning the angel, is omitted by B, S, C, D, and others. It is found in A and L and in a corrector of C, and in some other authorities, but should be rejected.

In John 6 : 69, B, S, C, D, L, read 'the holy one of God' (rightly followed by the R.V.) instead of 'the Christ, the Son of the living God', given by inferior MSS and adopted by the A.V. A glance at the *apparatus criticus* will show that the saying is found in many different forms in various MSS, but the combined authority of the earliest uncials is decisive.

In the Acts of the Apostles the most remarkable textual feature, as we have seen, lies in the many additions made by the Western text. In this brief article it is impossible to give more than a few examples. Verse 37 of chapter 8 in the A.V. is given in part by D, which reads: "and Philip said to him, If thou believest with all thine heart, it is possible: and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God". The verse is contained in some minuscules, and is quoted in part by Irenaeus and Cyprian. But it is difficult to see why it should have been omitted if it was in the original text. It is easier to understand its insertion, as an explanation of the principles and practice of Christian baptism in the early Church.

In chapter 15, D adds verse 34 in the A.V., and here it is supported by C and some minuscules and versions; but the weight of MSS is against the insertion (B, S, A, and others). D also adds to this verse:

μόνος δὲ Ἰούδας ἐπορεύθη followed by various Latin versions. Thus D reads in this verse: 'But Silas chose to remain there, and only Judas went'. Actually the narrative requires the statement that Silas stayed at Antioch, in order to make sense; for, if Silas had gone to Jerusalem instead of staying at Antioch, Paul could not have taken him from Antioch instead of Mark (see verse 40). It is easier to see why a scribe should have felt it necessary to add the verse than to see how it can have been omitted if it was originally in the text.

Some of the additions made by the Western text are surprisingly circumstantial in their details. For instance, D tells us in 12 : 10, that Peter and the angel 'walked down the seven steps'. In 20 : 15, after the words: 'we crossed over to Samos', it adds: καὶ μείναντες ἐν Τρωγυλίῳ. In 27 : 5, after πέλαγος it adds: δι' ἡμερῶν δεκαπέντε. To the last verse of Acts it adds: 'that this is Jesus, the Son of God, through whom the whole world is about to be judged'. In spite of many attractive features in the Western text of Acts, it should be regarded as an early commentary on the book rather than its original text.

We shall not have space for more than a few examples from the Epistles. In the first verse of Rom. 5 we have to choose between the indicative ἔχομεν and the subjunctive ἔχωμεν. The overwhelming weight of MSS authority (including B, S, C, D^2, L, and others) is in favour of the latter, which is followed by the R.V., the former reading being given in the margin. A similar choice confronts us in 1 Cor. 15 : 49, between the indicative φορέσομεν ('we shall bear') and the subjunctive φορέσωμεν ('let us bear'). The latter is supported by S, A, C, D, and others, while the former is supported by only one uncial, B. Yet it is the indicative which is followed by the R.V., the latter being relegated to the margin. From this judgment we may infer how high a value scholars have attached to the *Codex Vaticanus*.

In 1 John 4 : 3, the accepted reading is: 'And every spirit which does not confess Jesus' (ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν). There is evidence that instead of μὴ ὁμολογεῖ Irenaeus and Tertullian read λύει ('annuls', see R.V. margin). Irenaeus writes 'solvit Jesum' (Adv. Haer. 3. 16. 8), and Tertullian 'solventes Jesum' (Adv. Marc. 5. 16). The Vulgate has 'solvit'. The idea of 'loosing' Jesus refers to the heresy of Cerinthus who 'sundered' the human Jesus from the Divine Christ, saying that the former came 'in the flesh' (i.e. in humanity, as a man) but the latter did not, thus denying the reality of the Divine Incarnation. However, the Greek MSS authority for μὴ ὁμολογεῖ is decisive. (cf. 2 John 7). The *Codex Sinaiticus* has after ὁμολογεῖ the words Ἰησοῦν Κύριον ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα. This gives the right sense, but the addition has crept into the text from the preceding verse.

In 1 John 5: 6a, the Sinaitic and Alexandrian MSS add to the words 'through water and blood', the words 'and spirit', and this reading is supported by some minor authorities, but not by the MSS (led by B) upon which the A.V. and R.V. are based. Moffatt, however, accepts it. If genuine, it would presumably refer to Pentecost. In verses 7 and 8 the A.V. is based on later and inferior MSS. Verse 7 was inserted into a Latin translation, and thence much later found its way into some

Greek MSS. The words 'in earth' in verse 8 (A.V.) were added by the inserter of verse 7 to answer to 'in heaven'.

In this article we have not been able to do more than touch the fringe of a vast subject. Those who desire to pursue the study further will find the following books helpful:

Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Text, Introduction, Appendix,* 2 vols.

F. G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (1926 edition).

F. G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and Ancient Manuscripts* (revised edition, 1939).

B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels.*

A. C. Clark, *The Primitive Text of the Gospels and Acts.*

A. C. Clark, *The Acts of the Apostles.*

A. M. Hunter, *Interpreting the New Testament, 1900—1950.*

C. S. C. Williams, *Alterations to the Text of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts.*

Have You A Suggestion?

When a word has been borrowed from another language and has become very well known and greatly used, despite the fact that there is an equally good word in the original dialect, are we in translation work advised to revert to the original word, even against the desire of the local people?

Literal Translation!

Under the most propitious circumstances translation is never easy work. Glaring instances of mistranslation serve as a perpetual warning. A book of detachable picture postcards, of the Little Trianon at Versailles—where Queen Marie Antoinette and her ladies played at farming—contained an introduction in French and English. This was the French version: "Pour se divertir à jouer à la fermière elle fit élever un hameau en miniature, d'un grâce un peu maniérée où la tourmente révolutionaire la surprit et l'enleva à jamais". This sentence was rendered as follows: "To take one pleasure of diversion she amused her self at the farmer wife a miniature hamlet been raised up with grace and affected which the disturbance revolutionist surprised her and swept her for ever".

Upon this, *Punch* (in whose pages this gem appeared) remarked: "Among the things that one has never understood is the unwillingness of foreigners who are preparing documents in English to ask any assistance from English residents".

Might not the same criticism, *mutatis mutandis* be fairly levelled at some missionary translators who neglect the right and proper use of the native informant?