

Final Admonitions

Revelation 22:18-19

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-11-25

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Text

18 “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If any one adds to them, may God add to him the seven plagues written in this book! 19 And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, may God remove his share from the tree of life and out of the Holy City, that stand written in this book!”

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming swiftly!” Oh yes!! Come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Amen.

It may seem hard to believe, but we have come to the very last words of the book of Revelation. I do hope to give one or two thematic sermons, such as seeing Revelation as a War Manual, or the Music in Revelation - we'll see. But I won't be preaching on the interpretive principles that are embedded in this paragraph. Instead, I have added all of them to the web. So those are just some housekeeping details I wanted you to be aware of.

These last words of Revelation give a knock out punch to Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Islam, Mormonism, and other modern heresies. They also give a knockout punch to the modern views of textual criticism that have deviated so far from the Reformation. The Reformers considered these verses to be very important to the issue of textual criticism. And this paragraph also ends with some very encouraging parting words of grace.

I. These words relate to the closing of the canon

So let's dig first of all into the issue of the canon. The idea of canon is simply dealing with which books are included in the Bible. Contrary to the command of God in verses 18-19, Mormons have added the book of Mormon to the canon. You can't do that, and God curses anyone who tries to add any books to the canon after God added this very last book to the canon. Muslims claim to believe in the Bible, but they claim that the Koran was added to the Bible. And when I have talked to these Muslims about these and similar verses, they have been stumped. They claim to believe the Bible, yet these verses make it clear that the Koran should not be added to the Bible, and for sure should not replace the Bible. Roman Catholics claim that they have the authority to add the apocryphal books, and in the process they have elevated the authority of the church above the authority of Scripture. Ellen G. White, the founder of the Seventh Day Adventist cult, treated her writings as a direct word from God. One of her followers said, “WLC believes that

the ministry of Ellen G. White fully meets all of the criteria for being a true prophet and that it is the duty of Yahuwah's people to accept and live by the teachings in her writings."¹ No! Her writings do not meet the criteria for true prophecy and her writings should not be treated as authoritative. How do we know? These and many other verses. These words from the apostle John are a rebuke to anyone (evangelical or not) who claims to have an authoritative revelation from God for the church. These words absolutely rule that out.

Of course, there are many who think that these solemn warnings are simply warnings not to tamper with the book of Revelation and have nothing to do with the closing of the canon. But there are three hints that the solemn warnings are warnings not to add anything to the Scriptural canon once the book of Revelation is complete. I have written a 500 page book on the Canon that gives many other Scriptures that nail down this concept much more tightly than these words do.² But I believe the book of Revelation itself is so clear on this subject, that I have dogmatically labeled the first point, "These words relate to the closing of the canon." How do I know that, and how did the Reformers know that?

A. The small book of Revelation has always been called a "little book" (βιβλιδάριον) while the whole canon of Scripture has consistently been called a big book (βιβλίον). Here βιβλίον is used.

First, the word used for "book" in verses 18 and 19 is βιβλίον, not βιβλιδάριον. βιβλίον is the word we get "Bible" from, and it is what Revelation calls the big book, whereas βιβλιδάριον is what Revelation calls the small book. The big book was the canon of Scripture (the Bible) and the small book was the revelation given to John to later record into the canon. So the specific word that is used for "book" here is the word that was earlier used for canon. If he had just been referring to adding to or taking away from the book of Revelation, he would have used the term βιβλιδάριον. Now of course, the βιβλιδάριον, was immediately included into the bigger book of canon the moment it was being written, so these verses include both. But these verses are finishing a long discussion John has had earlier related to the closing of the canon. You can't interpret these verses in isolation from the rest of the book. Let me give a brief review.

In chapter 5 we saw that the Old Testament, which had been closed for over 400 years, and which the Old Testament prophets had said would remain

1 <https://www.worldslastchance.com/biblical-christian-beliefs/ellen-white-false-prophet-or-heavens-messenger.html>

2 See <https://kaysercommentary.com/booklets.md>

closed until the Messiah came, was finally opened by Jesus. This means He was the prophesied Messiah; the Prophet predicted by Moses; the one who would unleash a flurry of prophesies and prophets. And that Old Testament canon was called by the apostle a βιβλίον - a big book. It was the book that Jesus authorized prophets to once again add small books to. AD 30 was the long awaited time of new prophecy being added to the Book of the Law.

Next, we saw in chapter 10 that in precisely the same way that Ezekiel ate the little book of God's revelation that he would later write down, and just as that little book was sweet in Ezekiel's mouth, John eats the little book of the prophecies that God wanted him to write down and that little book was sweet in his mouth. John's eating of the little scroll parallels Ezekiel's eating of the little scroll in Ezekiel 2-3 on many levels. - Both books were delivered by an angel. - Both prophets are commanded to eat the little book that is given to them. - Both books taste sweet and yet afterwards produce bitter judgments - Both books are connected with a prophetic commission to prophesy judgments - Both scrolls were written on the inside and outside - something otherwise unknown - Both scrolls are little in comparison to the big scroll they are being added to. - And in both situations the eating of the book was the reception of the revelation from heaven that would be written with ink by inspiration.

So I believe that it is crystal clear that the little book of Revelation plays exactly the same role that the little book in Ezekiel played. Before either prophet could prophesy the contents of his prophetic volume, he would need to be inspired (likened to eating an already written book). But what was eaten by both prophets was the content of their respective books that were to be added to the canon. They had to prophetically receive by inspiration what they would prophetically give out by inspiration. In Ezekiel 2:9 the prophet was given what was called the "scroll of a book." In other words, the whole book is not handed to Ezekiel, but only one scroll of that "book" or collection of scrolls (migilath sepher is the Hebrew expression - מגילת ספר). The Jewish translators of the Septuagint rendered that Hebrew expression as κεφαλὴ βιβλίου, or "volume of the book." So Ezekiel's prophecies comprise one of the volumes of a much larger book - the canon. In much the same way, the "little book" of Revelation (the βιβλιδάριον) is the last volume or scroll of this growing book of the canon.

And you might question whether the canon was spoken of as a book (singular). But it was - over and over again. Let me give a few sample Scriptures. The entire Bible is seen as either "the book" (Psalm 40:7), "the book of the LORD" (Is. 34:16), "the book of the Law" (Neh. 8:3; Gal. 3:10),

“the book of this law” (Deut. 28:61), “the book of the covenant” (Ex. 24:27) or other similar titles. But the canon is always referred to in the singular as a “book” even though it is composed of many smaller volumes. We refer to our Bible the same way. The word Bible comes from the word used here in Revelation 22 - βιβλίον. So even our English reflects the difference between Bible (referring to canon) and small books (referring to individual volumes of the canon of the Bible).

In my book on Canon I show how the moment a Scripture was being written, the words being written were added to the canon at that very moment by prophetic authority. This happened moment by moment as Moses wrote out the Pentateuch. For example, God commanded Moses, “write this for a memorial in the book” (Ex. 17:14). Each part of the growing canon was called part of the big book the moment it came off his pen. When Joshua wrote the revelation God was giving him, it says, “And he wrote these words in the book of the laws of God” (Josh 24:26), which everyone agrees was a reference to the Pentateuch. In other words, he wasn’t just writing those words into the scroll of Joshua, but was also writing them into the book of the canon. This means that contrary to Roman Catholicism, the church did not make the books of the Bible canonical thousands of years later. God made them canonical the moment they were written. This is so important to understand - God alone has authority over the Bible. He alone can canonize a book.

And each prophet who wrote after Joshua wrote into the book of the canon. For example, Isaiah 34:16 says, “Seek from the book of the LORD, and read...” and he proceeds to quote his own prophecy (the very chapter he is writing!) as being part of the book of the Lord - in other words, a part of the canon. It was already in the book - the big book; the canon. It didn’t have to wait till some later church council to be decided as Scripture. It was treated as Scripture the moment it was written.

So this distinction that I am making between the big book of the canon (βιβλίον - or Bible) and the small book of revelation being received from heaven to John (βιβλιδάριον) is not an artificial construct. It is embedded in the very heart of the book of Revelation from chapter 5-11, is copied from the scenes in Ezekiel, and follows the pattern of the developing canon throughout Scripture. So that is the first hint - a hint that is much more developed in my book on Canon.³ That means that these words close the βιβλίον - the Bible as a whole; they don’t just close the small volume of

3 Can be obtained in various formats here: <https://kaysercommentary.com/booklets.md>

Revelation.

B. John has already been dealing with the opening of the closed Old Testament canon, the relation of prophecy to the canon, the imminent closing of the canon, and the imminent ending of all prophecy. Here he is merely sewing up loose ends.

Second, when I preached on chapter 10, I gave extensive proof that chapters 10-11 dealt with the closing of the canon being prophesied to occur very soon, and then it gives the precise timing of that very soon event as being AD 70 when Jerusalem fell. Now, Jews would not have been puzzled by that statement since the Old Testament connected the end of the canon with the destruction of Jerusalem over and over again - Isaiah 8, Daniel 9, Zechariah 13, etc. Anyway, in chapter 10, John said that AD 70 was the time when “the mystery of God that He declared to His slaves the prophets would be finished” (Rev. 10:7). The word “finished” in Revelation 10:7 means to be terminated or ended. Then comes John’s eating of the small book just as Ezekiel had, and then a chapter on the last two prophets who would die in Jerusalem in AD 70. I won’t reiterate what I said back then, but those sermons documented in detail that this is not the first reference to closing off of the book. John has already been dealing with the opening of the closed Old Testament canon, prophets adding to that canon, the imminent re-closing of the canon once again, and the imminent ending of all prophecy forever and ever. So these words are merely tying up the loose ends of what has already been thoroughly developed.

C. Only a momentous event such as the closing of the whole canon would warrant such awesome curses (compare Deut 4:2 for finalizing of law in the Pentateuch)

And then, thirdly, only a momentous event such as the closing of the whole canon would warrant such awesome curses. There are two times when similar things were spoken. And the parallels between those two times are interesting.

In Deuteronomy 4:2 God affirms that once the Pentateuch (composed of the first five books of the Bible) was written, no more laws or statutes could be added to the canon. It didn’t prohibit prophecies being added, as this passage does. In fact, it guaranteed that new prophets would bring new revelation. But it absolutely prohibited anyone (whether prophetic or not) from ever adding even one commandment to the commandments of God.

Deuteronomy 4:2 says, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” The focus is on never again adding commandments to the law. So the Jews said that the rest of Scripture was simply an exposition of God’s law, an application of the law, or the bringing of covenant lawsuits against people when they broke God’s law. But they insisted that there is not a single new law added after Deuteronomy.

And people respond, “What about when Jesus said, ‘A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you.’” But as commentators have pointed out, there are three things that make that no contradiction to the principle in Deuteronomy 4:2.

First, the word for “new” is *καινός*, not *νέος*. If the new commandment had been *νέος*, then it could not have existed before. But since the new commandment is *καινός*, it is new qualitatively, but not new as to content.

Second, the apostle goes on to make explicit that this new commandment is not new in content because he says that this new commandment is...

...an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

So the content to love one another was already in the beginning of the Bible. That part was not new. So the content of new commandment was in the bible from the beginning.

And then third, everything is resolved when you realize that the newness of it is in Christ’s last words, “A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you.” For the first time in human history we have a perfect keeper of the old commandments to imitate and model ourselves after - Jesus. It’s not the law that is new, but the tangible expression of it in a perfect human that is new. So again, it does not contradict the historic interpretation of Deuteronomy 4:2. What was being closed off in the Pentateuch was the laws of God. The foundation for ethics was completely closed forever and ever.

Now he once again uses the exact same words to close something off. But what is being closed off in this passage is much broader than simply the law of God. What is being closed off is “the words of the prophecy of this book (*βιβλίον* - Bible).” God was not going to give any more 1) words, 2) of prophecy, 3) for the canon. What Romans 16 calls the prophetic Scriptures would end when the last words of Revelation were written. And the precise date of that was set in chapters 10-11 as being just before the day the temple was destroyed in AD 70.

So the Reformers and the Westminster Confession used these two verses along with many other verses to prove that the 66 books of the canon continue till the end of time to be the only rule of faith and life.⁴ Nothing inside the church or outside the church could add to these Scriptures or take away from them.

Receiving the plagues of this book

Well, let's look at the severe judgments that are pronounced upon Mormons, Muslims, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and any others who dare to add to God's Word. Verse 18 says, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If any one adds to them, may God add to him the seven plagues written in this book!" He appears to refer to judgments written in the smaller book of Revelation. So why use the word βιβλίον or Bible? Because Revelation was part of the Bible already. It didn't have to wait for three centuries to become part of the Bible. As we saw in chapter 10, the moment John ate the small book (the βιβλιδάριον) it of necessity became instantly part of the big book of canon (the βιβλίον), just as it did in Ezekiel, and just as it did with every prophet who wrote Scripture before. So far from disproving the canon view of the early church and of the Reformation, the reference to the seven judgments of Revelation being in the Bible proves the Protestant theory of how the canon developed. Which, by the way, is the same view of canon held to by the vast majority of the church fathers of the first fifteen centuries, as I prove in my book on Canon. It is Rome that left the catholic faith, not the Reformers. It is Eastern Orthodoxy that later left the true orthodox faith, not the Reformers.

But back to our question, what will Muslims and Mormons receive for adding to the canon? They will receive the seven plagues that have just been written into the Bible - plagues that cover such a wide range of afflictions that they could be said to summarize all the plagues of Deuteronomy 27-28. Some of these plagues were delivered by demons. Are Mormons and Muslims afflicted by demons? Yes they are. In fact, I am astounded at the number of Mormons who have told me their personal testimonies of what could be nothing other than demons constantly in their homes. They are

4 See the usage of Revelation 22:18-19 in Westminster Confession of Faith 1.2. This is consistent with the way the Reformers and Puritans used the verse. Just one example from Calvin: "I deny that those assemble in the name of Christ who, disregarding his command by which he forbids anything to be added to the word of God or taken from it, determine everything at their own pleasure, who, not contented with the oracles of Scripture, that is, with the only rule of perfect wisdom, devise some novelty out of their own head, (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18)." Calvin, John, Institutes of the Christian Religion. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Accordance electronic ed. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845. volume 4:9:2

demonically afflicted. Mormonism is an incredibly powerful demonic stronghold.

The demons in these plagues brought incredible abuse to men, women, and children. Do the women in both groups experience abuse and trouble? Yes they do. I feel very sorry for women in the cult of Islam and in the cult of Mormonism. But the same is true of Roman Catholicism. If you've studied the treatment of nuns in the Roman Catholic church, you can see similar abuse in many of their convents. Franco Magioto's wife was involved in rescuing many nuns from sexual slavery in Italy. But I consider the requirements of celibacy itself to be abusive to both men and women, and it has inevitably led to abuse of others.

Do Muslims experience war and some of the other plagues that are written in the Bible? Yes. So plagues are the first judgment mentioned.

Being cut off from his share in:

tree of life (communion or heaven?)

Second, verse 19 says, "And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, may God remove his share from the tree of life and out of the Holy City, that stand written in this book!" To be removed from having a share in the tree of life at a minimum refers to being removed from close communion with God, but most commentators indicate that it is being completely cut off from heaven. If you dare to add authoritative words to the 66 books of the Bible, you are in danger of being cut off from heaven. You may be a member of the church outwardly and eat of communion outwardly, but God says you will never eat of the tree of life in heaven. Hostility to the true canon is inconsistent with the nature of true Christianity.

Holy City (visible church or invisible?)

And the next metaphor certainly shows that. To be removed from the Holy City means to be cut off from the bride, since the city symbolizes the bride or the church. And down through history most people with bad views of canonicity and bad views of textual criticism have indeed been in the church at least outwardly. But God protects His canon with such severe judgments that he says you are in danger of being cut off from the body if you add to or take away from the canonical Scriptures.

Some people in the charismatic movement tread dangerously close to the line on this issue. I listened to one local charismatic who used the first person singular as if he were God Himself speaking to an individual in that

room. So for about ten minutes he spoke in a monologue as if He were God speaking from heaven to an individual, and he was speaking with great authority. It sent shivers of fear down my spine. I believe that violates this passage.

II. These words relate to our treatment of textual criticism. How can we tell which Greek manuscripts to trust?

But these same words relate to our treatment of textual criticism as well. And this is where it gets really scary because so many evangelicals are involved in a non-Reformational approach to the text of Scripture. Have you ever wondered why some Bibles add words not found in the Majority Text and remove words that are found in the Majority Text? What is going on with that?

Well, since the time of the Reformation old copies of Scripture have been found by scholars in Egypt, where the dry climate keeps parchments better. The NASB, NIV, ESV, and some other modern translations ignore the text of the 5000 plus Greek manuscripts that have been used by the church over the centuries, and have chosen to follow a smaller handful of what they call the “oldest and the best” manuscripts - manuscripts that were not used by the church. Sometimes the readings followed in these versions are based on one manuscript, sometimes two or three, and sometimes a dozen or more. But they ignore the unified voice of the Majority Text.

Why? Well, they give as their reason that the manuscripts are older - closer in time to the originals. And we all want to get as close to the originals as we can, don't we? Actually, the arguments have gotten more complicated on what exactly the oldest is since many papyri have been discovered that go back to the second and third centuries and which support the Majority Text as well.⁵ So even liberals are beginning to recognize that both texts are equally old. But they still claim that the Egyptian texts are better. And it puts the average Christian in a bind. “How do we know which text to follow? I don't want to disobey John's words here. I want to live by every word of Scripture.” Either way we go we feel we are in danger. So as heavy as this subject is, I do want to be as crystal clear as I can be on how we can all be sure that we do not disobey John's words in verses 18-19.

So how do we know which texts are true? Rome says to trust the authority of the church. They claim to have authority over the Bible.

5 One of the first books to explore this interesting subject is [The Byzantine Text-Type](#) by Harry A. Sturtz.

King-James-Only people say that we should trust God's providential guidance of Erasmus (one person - who by the way was a Roman Catholic) who based his text upon a small handful of admittedly fairly good manuscripts. So if you follow the King James and the New King James, you will be fairly close. But their theory of why to do so is faulty and is not consistent with the Reformation principle. They are still exalting one expert above the Bible in determining the Biblical text. The Bible is not their ultimate authority in determining the text.

So the Romanists tell you to trust the church. The KJV-Only people say to trust Erasmus. The NASB, NIV, ESV, and many modern evangelicals tell us to trust the expertise of modern textual critics who have favored the oldest manuscripts. But that amounts to asking us to trust the vote of five liberal scholars who voted on which text is correct - something that ought to seem odd to any Christian. Why should we trust these five liberal unbelieving scholars just because they are experts?

The Reformers had a different position. They all said that you cannot trust the church, a single man, or a group of men to determine the text. Instead, they said that the Bible must be its own authority. What do they mean by that? How does that work out in practical terms?

Thankfully the Bible gives us sufficient predictions about its own transmission and how heretics would attempt to corrupt it that we can figure out the true text of Scripture - down to the very letter. Let me outline just a few of the Biblical presuppositions that I use in my book on textual criticism. The Reformers all approached this topic presuppositionally. And these Biblical presuppositions give such clear infallible guidance that it is easy to avoid John's rebuke. The point is that we don't determine anything; we just recognize what the rules the Scripture lays out and follow them.

A. The witness of proven false witnesses should not be received (Ex. 23:1; Deut. 19:15-21; Prov. 19:5; 21:28; etc.). When everyone admits that a text is filled with errors, it's testimony should not be trusted. All the Alexandrian and Western texts are documented to be "false witnesses" that are filled with what all consider to be mistakes. In contrast, the Ecclesiastical Text (family 35) has remarkable word-for-word unity in manuscripts all over the two empires.

The first presupposition is that a proven false witness should not be received or trusted. What do I mean by a proven false witness? Well, the falsity of the

witness has to be so clear that even the witness' supporters grudgingly disagree with that witness at many points and do not trust the witness at many points. That's a pretty high bar for me to prove. Can I do it? Yes.

But first take a look at the Scripture references in your outline. I'll just mention one. Deuteronomy 19:15-21 not only says that we should reject the false testimony of a proven false witness, but should no longer allow him to be a witness. And I have given other verses about how the Bible would treat a false witness. Well, every Greek manuscript is spoken of by textual critics as a witness to the original text written by the apostles.

Let me take a few minutes to prove that every critical edition of the New Testament and every modern version based on those critical texts, has by their own admission treated the Alexandrian manuscripts as false witnesses - all of the Alexandrian manuscripts. It's not just us who are treating the Alexandrian texts as false witnesses. These modern textual critics have by their own admission rejected many of the readings of even their own claimed "oldest and best" manuscripts because they recognize those readings to be blatantly false. So I am not painting a straw man here.

Let's start with our own reliable manuscripts first. These are the manuscripts that have been used over the centuries by the church. It's not simply the Majority Text (though it is that), but it is the majority of manuscripts used by the Church. That's why I call it the Ecclesiastical Text. Sometimes it is referred to as Family 35. And there are other names given to it. How reliable is it? Gordon Fee and others have falsely claimed that there are no two manuscripts that are the same even within the Majority Text, but that is blatantly false. I have personally seen (and can give you the specific names of) manuscripts from far-flung regions of Constantinople, London, Trikala, Bologna, Vatican and other regions that are word-for-word and letter-for-letter identical throughout entire books of the Bible.⁶ Because of the geographical spread, it is impossible for these manuscripts to be copies of each other. They are independent witnesses to the Ecclesiastical Text that we have been using.

In contrast, there are only about 200 manuscripts in the Alexandrian tradition - which is the most trusted tradition of modern eclectic textual critics. But

⁶ Just as a small sampling: 204 (from Bologna) and 2587 (Vatican) are identical in Galatians; 928 (Dionysiu) and 2723 (Trikala) are identical in Ephesians; 18 (Constantinople), 444 (London), and 2723 (Trikala) are identical in Colossians; 18 (Constantinople), 1855 (Ivion) and 2723 (Trikala) in 1 Thessalonians; 18 (Constantinople), 35 (Aegean), 204 (Bologna), 1637 (Mt. Lavras) and 2723 (Trikala) in 2 Thessalonians; 35 (Aegean), 1855 (Ivion), 2587 (Vatican), and 2723 (Trikala) in Titus; at least nine MSS in Philemon; 18 and 2723 in James; 35 and 2723 in 2 Peter; at least twelve each for 2&3 John and Jude.

among those manuscripts, there are not even two manuscripts that are alike. Not by a long shot. There are probably not even two pages that are alike. There are certainly no Alexandrian manuscripts that are word-for-word the same as the modern Greek Bibles like the United Bible Society Greek Text or the Nestle-Aland Greek Text. Those editions are purely theoretical texts. These modern texts disagree with even their most favorite Alexandrian Texts numerous times - their favorites being named Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus.

The Alexandrian text comes from Egypt and is oldest in part because the climate was very dry and in part because those manuscripts were not used very much. What does it say about a book that you rarely use? It says that you don't value it. The Bibles I use every day are getting worn out. Oldest does not make a manuscript the best, and in their better moments, modern textual critics will agree. For example, everyone agrees that P66 (that's one of the old papyri) is probably the oldest almost complete copy of the Gospel of John, dating to around AD 200. It is much older than Vaticanus. But almost everyone agrees that it has on average about two mistakes per verse. It is an atrociously inaccurate copy. Or to use the language of witness, it is a false witness over and over again; utterly untrustworthy. Yet on occasion the critical text will follow even P66.

Get a load of this: of the approximately 200 Alexandrian or Egyptian manuscripts, the manuscripts differ from each other in 28,500 places. That's a lot of times for 200 manuscripts to disagree with each other. The figure is actually much worse if you throw in the so-called Western Text. Since there are about 200,000 words in the New Testament, that amounts to about one in seven words that the Alexandrian witnesses contradict each other on. And yet, they are the best witnesses?!!

Of course, they have a response. These modern textual critics will remind you that even they don't give much credence to most of the Alexandrian manuscripts since they are so obviously and hopelessly messed up. But they give the illusion that the Alexandrian text is the purest as a group. It is not. Even their supposedly best and most accurate two manuscripts, Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (A) differ from each other 3000 times in the Gospels alone. By all counts, these witnesses are completely discredited and should not be trusted.

In only 7% of the times that Vaticanus and Sinaiticus disagree, do they side with Sinaiticus. In 2.5% of the variants they side with Alexandrinus over against Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. In less than half a percent of the time do

they go with other Alexandrian manuscripts over against Vaticanus. The bottom line is that one manuscript is their chosen best one - Vaticanus. Yet they deviate from Vaticanus 9% of the time. That means that they are treating their very, very, very best witness as being a false witness 9% of the time. That's not a very good record.

But Wilbur Pickering gives many more reasons why they are the most corrupt witnesses and least to be trusted. I'll just mention a couple of his reasons. Where do all the Alexandrian manuscripts come from? The very place that the early church fathers said was plagued by heresies. This was the very region that several church fathers claimed that heretics were deliberately changing the text of Scripture or were careless in copying manuscripts. And they ought to know, because as late as the third century, church fathers claimed to know where the originals were located and told people that they could know the accuracy of their copies by comparing them to the originals.⁷ There is a reason why the Majority Text used by the church for the first 1500 years was so unified. The church wanted to preserve every letter that God gave to them. And church fathers quoted these last words of Revelation to put the fear of God into copyists to keep them from even accidentally changing the text. They had a high honor for the text and they sought to preserve every word. But the first presupposition is that if everyone agrees that a witness has deliberately perjured himself, he should not be trusted on any of his testimony. And the fact of the matter is that everyone agrees that even the best of the best of the Alexandrian witnesses are treated as false witnesses by even their most fierce advocates.

In contrast, it is easy to tell what the precise wording of the Ecclesiastical Text is. Despite the fact that there are so many of those manuscripts, any minor deviations can be immediately spotted. And there is a whole society of Biblical textual critics who have been collating manuscripts and showing the absolute trustworthiness of these witnesses. The church manuscripts labeled F-35 are incredibly faithful witnesses.

7 Tertullian (AD 160-220) says, "I hold sure title-deeds from the original owners themselves ... I am the heir of the apostles. Just as they carefully prepared their will and testament, and committed it to a trust ... even so I hold it." He obviously had access to the autographs of at least some New Testament books in his day. Though Pickering thinks this may be an exaggeration, I see no reason to doubt Tertullian's word. In "On Prescription Against Heretics" 36, he tells people that if they want to know the exact wording of some other epistles, the original autographs could still be found. He said that Corinthians could be found in Achaia, Philippians and Thessalonians in Macedonia; Ephesians in Asia and Romans in Italy. Therefore, at least five New Testament books had autographs still in existence.

B. God said that a single witness was not enough to settle an issue (Numb. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28; etc). Yet modern Bibles have many readings based on a single manuscript. Not so the Majority Text.

Related to this issue of witnesses is another principle. 2 Corinthians 13:1 says, “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” And I have given other Scriptures that show that a single witness is never enough to settle a question. That should be a presupposition that should be obvious to every believer. Paul said, “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.”

Yet the NIV, NASB, ESV, and many other modern versions follow the UBS or the Nestles text in leaving out words or adding words based on the witness a single Greek manuscript. For example, only Vaticanus leaves out the word “Jesus” in Matthew 4:23, whereas over 1800 manuscripts leave it in. That’s how many manuscripts of Matthew we have. So these versions are ignoring 1800 witnesses, and following one witness (Vaticanus) in leaving out the name Jesus despite the fact that even they agree that Vaticanus is obviously wrong in many places on their own theory.

How often does this happen? Far more often than you would guess by looking at the UBS apparatus. In fact, sometimes they make up a reading out of thin air with not a single Greek witness. Pickering says,

We have over 1800 Greek MSS of Matthew, but in 34 places in Matthew UBS3 prints a text not found in any MS used by the editors. Codex W alone is followed once, Codex P alone once, D alone twice, C alone four times, L alone four times, Aleph alone 18 times, and B alone over 40 times.⁸

This means that of the 104 times in the book of Matthew in which the 3rd edition of the UBS Greek N.T. prints a reading that it makes the reading up out of thin air 34 times with zero Greek witnesses and follows one manuscript 70 times.⁹ Acts 16:12 is another example where there is not a single Greek manuscript in existence that adds the words “chief” or “first” to city, yet the UBS and Nestle’s text has that conjectural emendation and is followed by the ESV, NIV, and NASB. I find it astounding that evangelicals would follow no witnesses and come up with a reading out of thin air, but it happens. But even one witness should not be sufficient.

⁸ Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD, “Some Relevant Considerations for New Testament Textual Criticism.”

⁹ Another example would be Matthew 8:18 where “great” is left out of Vaticanus and UBS accepts it as the accurate reading. This is followed by NIV, ESV, NASB, which all leave out “great.”

C. God predicted that every word of Scripture would be perfectly preserved in every age till the end of history (Matt. 5:17-19; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; 21:33; Psa. 12:6-7; cf. also Deut. 29:29; Psa. 19:9; 102:18; 111:7-8; 119:89-91,152,160; Is. 40:8; 59:20-21; Dan. 12:4; Matt. 4:4; Rom. 15:4; 1Cor. 9:10; 10:11; 1Pet. 1:25). Only one view of textual criticism adequately lives by this presupposition - the Majority Text view.

But this also contradicts the third presupposition, which says that God predicted that every word of Scripture would be perfectly preserved in every age till the end of history. Though our text and other texts warn that there will be evil people who will try to add to and take away from the text of Scripture, the Bible verses in your outline promise that they will not succeed. For example, Psalm 12:6-7 says,

The words of the LORD are pure words... You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever.

In Luke 16:17 Jesus said, "...it is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for one tittle of the law to be deleted." A tittle was the smallest stroke of the pen in forming a letter. And I have given several other Scriptures that promise that there will never be a time when the Scriptures are not available to the church in their entirety.

If we believe this presupposition, then we are forced to adopt the Majority Text. Liberals don't believe these presuppositions, but they would likely agree that if these presuppositions were true then you would only have one choice. I don't know of a single modern textual critic who follows the Alexandrian Text who claims to know for sure what the original text of the entire New Testament might be. They speak of various degrees of probability and guesswork, and many admit that upwards of 4% of the New Testament may be in question. But more importantly, they believe that God preserved the text by burying it out of sight in the sands of Egypt for 1700 years.

D. God holds us accountable to live by every word of Scripture in every age (Matt. 5:17-19; Luke 16:17-18; Deut. 29:29; Psa. 19:7-11; 102:18; Isa. 59:20-21; Matt. 4:4; Rom. 15:4; 1Cor. 9:10; 10:11). How could he hold us accountable if he preserved the text only by burying it in the sands of Egypt for 1700 years?

BB Warfield and others who bought into modern textual critical theory

claimed they could subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith by saying that God preserved the text by hiding the text for 1700 years. But the next point completely rules out that mode of preservation. The next point says that God holds us accountable to live by every word of Scripture in every age. How could He hold us accountable to live by every word if He didn't preserve every word in every age? For example, Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Romans 15:4 says, "everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (NIV). Isaiah 59:21 holds the covenant people accountable to read every word from this time forth and forever. We can't exactly read what God has not preserved. There is only one theory of Textual Criticism that claims that God has preserved every word of the New Testament in every age in such a way as to make it possible to live by every word. It is the Majority Text theory that I hold to and that the Reformers and Puritans held to.

E. God promised to have a protective providence over the Bible (Deut. 29:29; Psa. 12:6-7; 111:7-8; 119:160; Isa. 40:8; 59:21; Dan. 12:4; Matt. 4:4; 5:17-18; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; Heb. 2:2; 1Pet. 1:25; cf. also Psa. 102:18; cf. eg. Rom. 15:4; 1Cor. 9:10; 10:11)

The next presupposition is that God had a special protective providence over the Bible that makes it completely different from His providence over other ancient books. Psalm 119:160 says, "The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever." Psalm 12:6-7 says, "The words of the LORD are pure words... You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever." And the rest of the Scriptures in your outline show a providence that protects God's Word in ways that cannot be said of other books.

In contrast, the books on modern textual criticism claim that we should treat the transmission of the text of Scripture in exactly the same way that we treat the transmission of the ancient secular texts of Homer, Chaucer, or Shakespeare. That is a clear violation of this presupposition. The Bible is not just any book copied by any people. It is a supernatural book supernaturally preserved in a very special way. And the Majority Text theory shows that special way.

F. God promised to preserve the truth within the church (1 Tim. 3:14-15), not outside the church, and He gave careful warnings to care for the Scriptures (Rev. 22:18-19, Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6 and 2Pet. 3:16) and to watch out for heretics who would corrupt the text (Rev. 22:18-19; 2Pet. 3:16).

The next presupposition is based on the fact that God ordained the church to be the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:14-15) and committed the care of the Scriptures to the church over and over. He also warned the church about heretics who would try to change the text of Scripture. I've laid out the Scriptures in your outlines, which should be fairly straightforward.

But there are three logical conclusions we could draw from this. The first is that (knowing these admonitions) one would expect that the church would be hyper careful about how they copied the Scriptures. Second, heretics would be less careful because they were demonically driven and didn't believe the Scriptures. Third, it is thus not at all unreasonable to assume that the Ecclesiastical Text (in other words, the church text or the Majority Text) is superior to the text not used by the church. And it also makes sense of the relative unanimity that can be found among the Majority of manuscripts.

The modern school of eclectic criticism stands in diametric opposition to this presupposition. They presuppose that godly, devout scribes would be very motivated to change the text!!! It's weird, but they are forced to believe this in order to explain away the Majority of manuscripts. For example, evangelical scholar Gordon Fee says, "For the early Christians it was precisely because the meaning was so important that they exercised a certain amount of freedom in making that meaning clear [ie. by changing words in the text]" (p. 406). That makes absolutely no sense. They honor the text by changing the text??? I don't think so.

Kurt Aland says that devotion to Christ might make them add words and phrases to give a more polished effect. Devotion to Christ is going to make them disobey Revelation 22:18-19?! I don't think so. He insists that pious scribes would be troubled by problems in the Scriptures and would seek to minimize such problems by trying to harmonize apparent conflicts in Gospel accounts, by alleviating Scriptural difficulties, by replacing unfamiliar words with familiar ones, etc. Thus Aland (who, by the way, is a rank liberal, whom evangelicals strangely honor) explains away the smoothness of the Greek in the Ecclesiastical text by saying that church scribes must have been offended by the coarse and faltering Greek of the original and sought to change the word usage to make the poor Greek sound better. You can tell

that he is an unbeliever with attitudes like that, and yet he is revered by evangelicals.

But church history falsifies the ridiculous views of these critics and substantiates the Biblical presupposition. The church fathers were very zealous to guard against even the slightest deviation from Scriptural usage. Polycarp said, “Whoever perverts the sayings of the Lord ... that one is the firstborn of Satan.” (7:1). Justin Martyr claimed that the heretic Marcion had changed the text of both Luke and Paul’s epistles. He was outraged with these changes. As a result of this perverting of Scripture, the church was even more careful to compare and check the manuscripts for accuracy (Apol. i.58). Gaius in the later 100’s named four heretics who altered the text and then had multiple copies of these altered texts prepared by their disciples. In my book I give examples from church history of fathers comparing copies to the original and being very zealous to guard every word of Scripture. They believed this presupposition. And Pickering does a nice job of tracing this history of the care taken by church fathers.¹⁰

G. Scripture claims to be pure and beautiful in language (Psa. 12:6; 19; Prov. 30:5-6; Heb. 12:27; Gal. 4:9; Gal. 3:16; John 8:58; Matt. 5:18) whereas the Alexandrian texts are coarse and filled with grammatical mistakes.

The next presupposition is that Scripture claims to use pure and beautiful language that clearly communicates. For example, Psalm 12:6 says, “The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” You can’t get more pure and free of dross than that. Psalm 19 describes the words of the Bible as “perfect,” “sure,” “clean,” “true,” “pure,” “right.” Proverbs 30:5 says, “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.” Adding any words to His Words would take away the purity. Grammar is in large part convention, it is true, but Scripture indicates that God supervised the very details of grammar when the Bible was written.

Thus there is significance to a phrase (Heb. 12:27 makes a theological point over “yet once more”) and the voice of a verb (Galatians 4:9 makes a big point of the passive voice versus the active voice - “now after you have known God, or rather are known by God”). Scripture makes a big deal over

¹⁰ He shows how Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Dionysius, Irenaeus, Tertullian— “authenticae”, etc insisted that scribes be scrupulously careful in transcribing the text of Scripture. [Identity IV61dab01f-b832-4840-a037-11831e26b278](#), pp. 98-101).

the tense of a verb in John 8:58 (“before Abraham was I AM”), and in the number of a noun in Galatians 3:16 (“not seeds as of many, but as of one, and to your seed, who is Christ”), and to the individual letters of a word (Matt. 5:18 – “one jot or one tittle”). Scriptures like these would lead one to believe that the Bible would not be grammatically awkward, garbled, or careless since every letter counted.

Yet modern textual critics affirm the exact opposite of this Biblical presupposition. They assume that the apostles would not have been capable of beautiful Greek (after all, they were peasants), and that it is more likely that scribes polished the Greek much later than that they made good Greek into bad Greek. One of the oft-repeated proofs that the Majority text (in other words, the text that we use) is an impostor is the beauty, smooth flow, and polished nature of its Greek. They think it is obviously the corrected work of embarrassed scribes! They have no evidence of it, but they can’t imagine that the real Scriptures would be that good. As one example, evangelical textual critic, J. Harold Greenlee says,

Byzantine readings are characteristically smooth, clear, and full. A conjunction or an appropriate word may be added to smooth out a rough transition ... The text may be changed to clarify a meaning ... A difficulty of meaning or a reading harder to understand may be alleviated ... The theology or the meaning in general may be strengthened ... One of the most common characteristics of the Byzantine text is the harmonization of parallel passages...¹¹

Greenlee intends this as a proof that editors must have changed the text because of embarrassment with its crude character and its weak theology. But is it not possible that the crudities and roughness of the Egyptian texts came as a result of non-Greek heretics butchering the text, and non-caring heretics making theological changes? And Pickering in his marvelous book on Biblical textual criticism¹² gives evidence that the copyists of those texts did not know Greek well and were indeed the heretics that the church fathers warned against. Kurt and Barbara Aland are liberals who admit that the Majority Text is stylistically polished, conforms to the rules of Greek grammar whereas the Alexandrian Text has numerous examples of stylistically embarrassing Greek.¹³ Which text meets this presupposition of

11 J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 91.

12 Wilbur N. Pickering, [The Identity of the New Testament Text](#)61dab01f-b832-4840-a037-11831e26b278

13 “Not only does the text tend to grow, it also becomes more stylistically polished, conformed to the rules of Greek grammar. In Mark 1:37, for example, there is a typically Marcan construction: *καὶ εὐρον αὐτον καὶ λεγουσιν*. The overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts replace this with the better Greek expression: *εὐροντες αὐτον λεγουσιν*. Only a few manuscripts such as Codex Sinaiticus (ⲛ), Codex Vaticanus (B), L, and a small number of other manuscripts withstand the temptation and preserve the stylistically embarrassing text.” *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 285.

Scripture? It is clearly the Majority Text that the church used.

H. Summary thoughts

I'll skip over the other presuppositions in my book, but let me quickly add a couple of other summary thoughts. Why are there fewer Greek Texts in the Alexandrian tradition? For two reasons. First, no book was written by an apostle or prophet to churches in that region, so they would receive copies of the book much later. The copying process had a huge head start in the regions where the epistles were originally sent. Well, that's where the Majority Text dominates. Statistically that makes sense.

But second, if the texts dug up in Egypt were copied by heretics, they would tend to be shunned by the church and would tend not to get copied. No wonder there are so few. There was a good reason those texts never got copied by the church and eventually died out. It's weird that evangelicals resurrect what God has successfully killed. In fact, Sinaiticus was being used in a waste basket to start fires. That's how little that monastery regarded it. And Tischendorf rescued it out of the kindling. It should have stayed in that wastebasket.

But there is one more point that I would make. Modern versions don't even follow the bulk of the 200 or so Alexandrian manuscripts that have been found in the last 200 years. And you can verify this by reading Metzger's commentaries on the decisions made by his committee of liberal scholars that the evangelicals blindly follow. In 90% of the passages that the modern versions deviate from our Majority Text, they do so based on the weight of one manuscript - Vaticanus (B). In another 7% of the time, their disagreement with the Majority Text is based on a reading from Sinaiticus (Ⲛ). 2.5% of the time they follow the reading of Alexandrinus (A). And less than half a percent of the time do they base their readings on the other 200 Alexandrian texts. This means that they are not always following the consensus of the oldest Alexandrian manuscripts. This means that it is ridiculous to speak of the UBS or Nestle's Greek Texts as being the Alexandrian Text. It is not. It deviates from the consensus of Alexandrian manuscripts over and over. It is a purely theoretical text that was formed by the vote of five liberal scholars with liberal presuppositions. Yet Evangelicals follow this messed up theoretical text. You'd be much better off following the King James or the New King James.

Modern textual criticism is a mess that adds words here and takes away words there - contrary to the warnings of John. Certainly no major doctrine is affected. That's what evangelicals always say - "No major doctrine is

affected.” Well, that is true, but minor doctrines are affected. And certainly people can get saved and holy with any version. Certainly only 4% of the New Testament is affected, but Jesus called us to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, not 96% of His Words. Textual critics will have a lot to answer for before God for adding to and taking away from God’s Words.

The bottom line is that modern versions have been created by people who no longer believe the Reformed creeds on the doctrine of the preservation of the text of Scripture. This is not a Phil Kayser doctrine; this is a Reformation doctrine. If you look at the discussions made by those who wrote the Westminster Confession and the Scripture proof texts that they provided to prove their statements, it is clear that they believed every jot and tittle of God’s Word has been preserved in every age and not one word has been lost. The Westminster Confession of Faith says,

The Old Testament in Hebrew... and the New Testament in Greek... being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them (Confession 1:8)

Notice that it wasn’t kept pure for our age by being hidden from the church for 1700 years in the sands of Egypt. The Confession says that it has been kept pure in all ages. What does the church appeal to according to our Confession? Not to some theoretical autograph that we can never find and do not know about because it was lost in Egypt. An unpreserved text does the church no good. Rather the Reformers insisted that we are to appeal to the manuscripts that have been kept pure in every age. The Savoy Declaration (1648), the London Confession of Faith (1689), and the Philadelphia Confession (1742) all affirm the same statement. The Puritan Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists were all agreed. The Reformers on the Continent were also agreed. For example, the Helvetic Consensus Formula (1675) of the Continental church says,

God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have His word, which is the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16), committed to writing by Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care ever since it was written up to the present time, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore the Church justly ascribes it to His singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world, a “sure word of prophecy” and “Holy Scriptures” (2Tim. 3:15), from which, though heaven and earth perish, “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass” (Matt. 5:18).

I don’t know how you could get a more clear statement than that. There is no wiggle room. The modern evangelical and even the modern Reformed church has abandoned this reformation principle on textual criticism, and

that is the reason they lose so many debates with the Roman Catholic Church. Evangelicals put their trust in five liberal scholars and Rome puts their trust in a supposedly inspired church. The Reformers said that the church merely recognizes the text that fits the authoritative presuppositions of Scripture. We don't determine the text; we recognize what fits the statements of the Bible itself.

If you want to delve into this subject more and have confidence that we have every single word of the New Testament, read my booklet, *Has God Indeed Said?*¹⁴ or read Pickering's book, *The Identity of the New Testament Text, Edition IV.*¹⁵ This is not a trivial issue. Just to reiterate John's admonitions again, this time translating the word βιβλίον as "Bible" rather than "book" to make it clear what book he is referring to:

18 "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this Bible: If any one adds to them, may God add to him the seven plagues written in this Bible! 19 And if anyone takes away from the words of this Bible prophecy, may God remove his share from the tree of life and out of the Holy City, that stand written in this Bible!"

III. These words relate to the authority of Scripture ("words of the prophecy of this book") over the church (everyone...anyone...anyone) rather than the authority of the church over Scripture.

Next point: these words relate to the authority of Scripture over the church (the Protestant position) rather than the authority of the church over Scripture (Rome's position). Rome claims to be the mother of the Bible and the creator of the Bible and therefore to have authority above the bible. But notice the absolute wording of this prophecy which claims to have authority over everyone.

"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If any one adds to them, may God add to him the seven plagues written in this book! 19 And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, may God remove his share from the tree of life and out of the Holy City, that stand written in this book!"

Nothing could be clearer than that the authority and judgment of this book stand over everyone and anyone who might add to the canon. Rome claimed to have the authority to add the apocrypha to the book of the canon at the council of Trent in 1563. They have to claim that authority because it is clear that prior to that time, Rome did not treat the apocrypha as being inspired Scripture. A radical change occurred at the Council of Trent in 1563 by a vote of 24 in favor, 15 opposed, and 16 uncertain and abstaining. So 24

14 Available in various formats here: <https://kaysercommentary.com/booklets.md>

15 https://smile.amazon.com/Identity-New-Testament-Text-IV/dp/0989827356/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1543078353&sr=8-1&keywords=identity+of+the+new+testament+text+pickering

voted in favor and 31 did not vote in favor. Even Rome's so-called inspired vote to include the apocrypha was a minority vote.

The translator of Rome's Latin Vulgate, Jerome, was crystal clear that though the apocryphal books had helpful history in them (and we agree), they were not inspired and were not part of Scripture. My book shows how the vast majority of church fathers said that the apocrypha had never been treated by the universal church as Scripture. The official notes of the Latin Vulgate Bible, called the *Glossa Ordinaria*, said the same. And what is significant about this is that this study bible compiles the church's official positions on subjects and constitutes a commentary by church fathers from Jerome to the fifteenth century. David Ortiz says of those marginal notes,

The Ordinary Gloss, known as the *Glossa Ordinaria*, is an important witness to the position of the Western Church on the status of the Apocrypha because it was the standard authoritative biblical commentary for the whole Western Church. It carried immense authority and was used in all the schools for the training of theologians.¹⁶ Since the *Glossa Ordinaria* explicitly rejects the Apocrypha, it was the church's official position to reject the Apocrypha until the Council of Trent changed that. Here's a representative sample of what the Prologue to that study Bible said. It says,

Many people, who do not give much attention to the holy scriptures, think that all the books contained in the Bible should be honored and adored with equal veneration, not knowing how to distinguish among the canonical and non-canonical books, the latter of which the Jews number among the apocrypha. Therefore they often appear ridiculous before the learned; and they are disturbed and scandalized when they hear that someone does not honor something read in the Bible with equal veneration as all the rest. Here, then, we distinguish and number distinctly first the canonical books and then the non-canonical...¹⁷

16 David Ortiz, unpublished comments

17 Translation by Dr. Michael Woodward. The latin text is as follows: "Quoniam plerique eo quod non multam operam dant sacrae Scripturae, existimant omnes libros qui in Bibliis continentur, pari veneratione esse reverendos atque adorandos, nescientes distinguere inter libros canonicos, et non canonicos, quos Hebraei a canone separant, et Graeci inter apocrypha computant; unde saepe coram doctis ridiculi videntur, et perturbantur, scandalizanturque cum audiunt aliquem non pari cum caeteris omnibus veneratione prosequi aliquid quod in Bibliis legatur: idcirco hic distinximus, et distincte numeravimus primo libros canonicos, et postea non canonicos, inter quos tantum distat quantum inter certum et dubium. Nam canonici sunt confecti Spiritu sancto dictante non canonici autem sive apocryphi, nescitur quo tempore quibusve auctoribus autoribus sint editi; quia tamen valde boni et utiles sunt, nihilque in eis quod canonicis obviet, invenitur, ideo Ecclesia eos legit, et permittit, ut ad devotionem, et ad morum informationem a fidelibus legantur. Eorum tamen auctoritas ad probandum ea quae veniunt in dubium, aut in contentionem, et ad confirmandam ecclesiasticorum dogmatum auctoritatem, non reputatur idonea, ut ait beatus Hieronymus in prologis super Judith et super libros Salomonis. At libri canonici tantae sunt auctoritatis, ut quidquid ibi continetur, verum teneat firmiter et indiscusse: et per consequens illud quod ex hoc concluditur manifeste; nam sicut in philosophia veritas cognoscitur per reductionem ad prima principia per se nota: ita et in Scripturis a sanctis doctoribus traditis veritas cognoscitur, quantum ad ea quae sunt fide tenenda, per reductionem ad Scripturas canonicas, quae sunt habita divina revelatione cui nullo modo potest falsum subesse. Unde de his dicit Augustinus ad Hieronymum: Ego solis eis scriptoribus qui canonici appellantur, didici hunc timorem

The Prologue then gives an authoritative list of every book that belongs in the canon (which equals the Protestant canon) and lists those books which are non-canonical (which includes the Apocrypha found in Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy).¹⁸ Throughout the official study Bible, when an apocryphal portion begins, there is a note that says, “Here begins the book of Tobit which is not in the canon,” or “Here begins the book of Judith which is not in the canon,” etc.¹⁹

So it is crystal clear that the Protestant canon was followed by the church for 15 centuries and then got changed by Rome. We are the small c catholics. Rome abandoned the catholic position. And interestingly, the Roman Catholic Encyclopedia admits that this is the case, but they don’t care. They

honoremque deferre, ut nullum eorum scribendo errasse firmissime teneam; ac si aliquid in eis offendero quod videatur contrarium veritati, nihil aliud existimem quam mendosum esse codicem, vel non esse assecutum interpretem quod dictum est, vel me minime intellexisse, non ambigam. Alios autem ita lego, ut quantalibet sanctitate doctrinave polleant, non ideo verum putem quia ipsi ita senserunt, sed quia mihi per illos auctores canonicos vel probabiles rationes, quod a vero non abhorreat, persuadere potuerunt (Biblia cum glosa ordinaria et expositione Lyre litterali et morali (Basel: Petri & Froben, 1498), British Museum IB.37895, Vol. 1, On the canonical and non-canonical books of the Bible.”

18 “These are the books that are not in the canon, which the church includes as good and useful books, but not canonical. Among them are some of more, some of less authority. For Tobit, Judith, and the books of Maccabees, also the book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, are strongly approved by all. Thus Augustine, in book two of *De Doctrina Christiana*, counts the first three among canonical books; concerning Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, he says they deserved to be received as authoritative and should be numbered among the prophetic books; concerning the books of Maccabees, in book 18 of the *City of God*, speaking of the books of Ezra, he says that, although the Jews do not consider them canonical, the church considers them canonical because of the passions of certain martyrs and powerful miracles. Of less authority are Baruch and Third and Fourth Ezra. For Augustine makes no mention of them in the place cited above, while he included (as I have said) other apocryphal works among the canonical. Rufinus as well, in his exposition of the creed, and Isidore, in book 6 of the *Etymologies*, where they repeat this division of Jerome, mentioned nothing of these other books. And that we might enumerate the apocryphal books in the order in which they appear in this Bible, even though they have been produced in a different order, first come the third and fourth books of Ezra. They are called Third and Fourth Ezra because, before Jerome, Greeks and Latins used to divide the book of Ezra into two books, calling the words of Nehemiah the second book of Ezra. These Third and Fourth Ezra are, as I have said, of less authority among all non- canonical books. Hence Jerome, in his prologue to the books of Ezra, calls them dreams. They are found in very few Bible manuscripts; and in many printed Bibles only Third Ezra is found. Second is Tobit, a very devout and useful book. Third is Judith, which Jerome says in his prologue had been counted by the Nicene Council in the number of holy scriptures. Fourth is the book of Wisdom, which almost all hold that Philo of Alexandria, a most learned Jew, wrote. Fifth is the book of Jesus son of Sirach, which is called Ecclesiasticus. Sixth is Baruch, as Jerome says in his prologue to Jeremiah. Seventh is the book of Maccabees, divided into first and second books. . . Further, it should be known that in the book of Esther, only those words are in the canon up to that place where we have inserted: the end of the book of Esther, as far as it is in Hebrew. What follows afterward is not in the canon. Likewise in Daniel, only those words are in the canon up to that place where we have inserted: The prophet Daniel ends. What follows afterward is not in the canon (Biblia cum glosa ordinaria et expositione Lyre litterali et morali.” (Basel: Petri & Froben, 1498), British Museum IB.37895, Vol. 1. Translation by Dr. Michael Woodward. See also Walafrid Strabo, *Glossa Ordinaria, De Canonicis et Non Canonicis Libris*. PL 113:19-24)

19 See a facsimile of the commentary on Judith, see:
<http://lollardsociety.org/glor/Glossa_vol2h_Tobias.pdf

claim that since the church has authority over the Bible, it can take away from or add to the Bible at any time.²⁰

But these verses assert the opposite. It is Scripture that has authority over everyone - including the leaders of the church. We are slaves to Scripture and must not add or take away. By adding the apocrypha, Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy stand under the condemnation of these words, and anyone that joins those communions stands in dread risk of receiving those same judgments. Of course, this judges Mormonism, and Islam, and anyone else who claims to have the authority to take away or add to Scripture.

So these verses help to settle the issue of the canon. They help to settle the issue of textual criticism. They help to settle the question of authority.

IV. These words show that the plagues of this book are not unique to the first century but act as a paradigm for how God will continue to judge in history

Next, these words help to settle whether or not we live beyond the age of God's law and judgments. I know people who think that God no longer holds people accountable to His law and thus no longer judges people or nations. But since the warnings here are warnings of people adding to the canon after the canon is closed, logic tells us that the judgments or plagues that it speaks of are plagues God will bring after AD 70. The only conclusion you can come to is that exactly the same plagues God brought against Israel and Rome are plagues God will continue to bring against people that refuse to bow to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it makes sense since Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Again, that makes the book applicable for all time. Yes, most of the things written in it were fulfilled in the first century, but individuals, families, churches, and nations are still subject to God's law and can still be judged by Christ.

²⁰ "St. Jerome distinguished between canonical books and ecclesiastical books. The latter he judged were circulated by the Church as good spiritual reading but were not recognized as authoritative Scripture. The situation remained unclear in the ensuing centuries...For example, John of Damascus, Gregory the Great, Walafriid, Nicolas of Lyra and Tostado continued to doubt the canonicity of the deuterocanonical books. According to Catholic doctrine, the proximate criterion of the biblical canon is the infallible decision of the Church. This decision was not given until rather late in the history of the Church at the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent definitively settled the matter of the Old Testament Canon. That this had not been done previously is apparent from the uncertainty that persisted up to the time of Trent (The New Catholic Encyclopedia, The Canon).

V. These words indicate that the coming and the closing of the canon are contemporaneous (v. 20)

Next, verse 20 indicates once again that the coming of Christ and the closing of the canon were contemporaneous.

He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming swiftly!” [literally, “I am coming soon!”] Oh yes!! Come, Lord Jesus!

Because I spent an entire sermon on the same phrase earlier in the chapter, I won't comment on it much here. But this is the third time that Jesus has promised to come in judgment soon in this chapter. And the Amen or the “Oh yes!! Come, Lord Jesus!” shows the eager anticipation that the church had for the beginning of the kingdom in AD 70, the first resurrection, the first judgment, the binding of Satan, and the beginning of a long process of binding demons to the pit, advancing the Gospel, and fulfilling of the Great Commission. They were at the stage of conquest that Joshua symbolized when he crossed the Jordan river and began possessing his possessions. Did Joshua have war successfully before the crossing of the Jordan? Yes. Many times - just like the church had successes in the 40 years prior to AD 70. But the first generation of Israelites was not eager to cross the Jordan into Gentile land and they ended up wandering in the wilderness for forty years. But the second generation eagerly embraced their calling of conquering Canaan. And that was true of the 144,000 survivors in the Israel and the rest of the remnant around the empire. They were eager to take the conquest of the world for King Jesus. May we have the same enthusiasm for Christ's kingdom that they did.

VI. These words indicate that the curses only apply to fake Christians (tares) rather than the elect (“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Amen.”)

And finally, these words indicate that the curses only apply to fake Christians or tares, not to the elect. He ends the book with this pronouncement: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Amen.” Amen means, “So be it.”

This benediction is one of many proofs that Revelation is not apocalyptic literature. Many commentators are puzzled over its inclusion in an apocalypse, and this blessing is so incongruous with apocalyptic literature that one commentator says, “These verses appear to come from the hand of the redactor...”²¹ In other words, even though there is no evidence that it is

21 J. Massyngberde Ford, Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary, vol. 38, Anchor Yale

not in Scripture, he refuses to recognize it as part of Scripture. But if this whole book is as I have said it is - a prophetic covenant lawsuit in the style of Old Testament prophetic covenant lawsuits, then this benediction fits perfectly. The book is not apocalyptic literature, but is prophetic covenant lawsuit literature. And thus it is perfectly appropriate to begin the book with a blessing of grace and to end the book with a benediction of grace.

And notice that the grace comes not just from the Father. Here it comes from Jesus, because Jesus is Himself God the Son and Jesus is the one who purchased that grace for us. Here that grace is guaranteed to all the elect. The grace that the Father ordained and that Jesus purchased will be infallibly applied by the Holy Spirit to all the elect.

And what does grace encompass? Everything. It is the reversal of the curse. Horatius Bonar points out that in this book grace pardons, liberates, enlightens, strengthens, purifies, comforts, conquers, and brings us into eternity safe and secure. It is such a fitting way to end the book of Revelation and to end the Canon.

Interestingly, the last word of the Old Testament was the opposite. Malachi ends with the word “curse.” And it was the Hebrew word *cherem* (כֶּרֶם) that refers to Israel being wiped off the face of the map just as Canaan had been previously wiped off the face of the map by Israel. It predicted the very curses that the book of Revelation has already pronounced, but it also predicted that after the Messiah cursed Israel, the Messiah would be the Sun of Righteousness who would then rise with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). Without Jesus there is nothing but “curse.” But where the Old Testament ended with the word “curse,” the New Testament ends with an “Amen” being pronounced upon the grace of Jesus which would gradually reverse that curse in history. I love the comments of H. E. Dana on this last verse. He says,

This ritual refrain that closes the book of Revelation is a fitting climax to the New Testament; indeed, to the whole Bible. It reveals the living and triumphant Christ as he enters the halls of time to bless with his dynamic presence the succeeding generations of men. Christian hope sweeps forward on the pinions of faith to a holy moment when the promise heralded here shall be fulfilled in tangible reality, but it has already been for many hundreds of years a glorious spiritual fact. The living, triumphant Christ of the Apocalypse did indeed “come quickly,” to begin his irresistible march toward that universal conquest, which shall be the triumphant realization of the vision of hope which

Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 424. Krodel points out what dozens of commentaries state: “No other apocalypse ends with a benediction like that.” Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 378.

inspired the celestial choirs to sing: “The kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of our Lord, and his Christ: and he shall reign forever and ever” (11:15). To this angelic anthem the Christian heart responds in antiphonal refrain:

“All hail the power of Jesus name,
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all.”

To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.²²

And all God’s people said? “Amen.”

²² H. E. Dana, *The Epistles and Apocalypse of John: A Brief Commentary* (Kansas: Central Seminary Press, 1947), 161.