

SPECIAL STUDY NO. ONE

In our Introduction to the *Gospel of John, Volume I*, page 13, we made brief mention of the papyrus, Bodmer II (P 66). This special study is a digest of some of the recent reviews of this codex as to its importance in exegesis of the fourth Gospel.

The first portion of the codex was published in 1956 by Victor Martin, Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Geneva. The codex now resides in the Bodmer Library in Geneva, Switzerland.

Significance of the Codex

One reviewer says it is "of the greatest importance." It is classified by others as even more significant to Biblical philology (language study), though less publicized, than the Qumran (Dead Sea Scroll) discoveries.

The Chester Beatty papyri, comprising some of our most ancient manuscript fragments of the New Testament text, offer only a very few fragments from John's Gospel. Conservative scholars were, until Papyrus Bodmer II, able to call to witness for the antiquity of John only the small fragment called Rylands Papyrus 457 (P52) which contained not even one complete verse. Now conservative scholars have the Gospel of John complete through chapter fourteen, verse twenty-six, except for the loss of one sheet in the sixth chapter plus portions of each of the remaining chapters (15 through 21) in a codex which dates from about 200 A.D. This means that the Bodmer manuscript (P66) dates from within only about one hundred years of the original manuscript written by John the Apostle himself!

As a witness to the text of the Fourth Gospel this codex is second only to the Vaticanus (B). Most reviewers are amazed at its legibility. The writing is so clear that there has been no question, so far, as to the identity of any Greek letter.

The Type of Text in P66

The textual scholars say the most important testimony of this codex is its amazing confirmation of the Neutral or Alexandrian text (the type of text which conservative scholars regard as the most accurate text—the text most likely to represent the original mss.). In eighty-seven percent of the cases where the important manuscripts disagree (such as Aleph, B, C, D, etc.), Bodmer II has the Neutral reading. We are more assured than ever before that we have in the Neutral text the type of text actually used by the early church. All of this technical jargon simply means that this manuscript brings forth an-

other very reliable testimony that the New Testament as we have it today is the same New Testament that the apostles wrote, except for some minute errors made by copyists in centuries of copying by hand.

One review says, "we seem to have (in P66) what might be called a people's copy of a portion of the New Testament . . . there is no ornamentation of any kind . . . legibility seems the one aim." This is very significant for it shows that in the second or third century A.D., the common believers, not just the scholars, had the Neutral text in their hands.

In John 7:8 the Bodmer II has *hupo* rather than *ouk* which gives the context the better reading, "I go not yet up to the feast," rather than the present ambiguity, "I go not up unto this feast."

In John 7:52, P66 adds the definite article before *prophetes* causing it to read, "Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth not *the* Prophet." The belief that *no* prophet at all arises out of Galilee conflicts with the Old Testament in II Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1.

In John 9:27 the Bodmer II omits *ouk* before *ekousate* causing it to read "I told you already and you heard," which eliminates another ambiguity and makes the phrase more agreeable with the context.

The most significant of all variants, however, is the fact that it omits all of the story of the adulteress, John 7:53 through 8:12, without a break in the continuity of the manuscript and without the slightest hint that it was ever included in John's Gospel.

Conclusion

It is easy to see that this has been one of the most significant discoveries in Biblical philology since Tischendorf's discovery of the great manuscript Sinaiticus in 1834. The Bodmer II papyrus dates from about 200 A.D. and verifies again that we have uncorrupted, except for a few minor scribal errors, the text of God's Word as it was delivered by the Holy Spirit unto the apostle John.

Postscript

Very recently a Coptic (Egyptian) version of the Gospel of John was found and also placed in the Bodmer Library. This manuscript has been dated somewhere between 300 and 400 A.D. It is of interest that passages in John which textual scholars have previously recognized as critically suspect (John 5:3b-4; John 7:53—8:11) are not present in this manuscript.

Some Variant Readings

The Bodmer II papyrus omits the explanatory glosses in John 2:3; 3:13 and 6:56 as they are now found in the King James Version. In John 1:18 it has the better attested reading "God only-begotten" rather than "only begotten Son."

It omits the reference to the angel troubling the waters of the pool of Bethesda, John 5:3b-4.

MAP NO. 5—THIRD YEAR, LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY (about 3 months)

1. Temple; Feast of Tabernacles; Sermons on Light of World; Freedom; Abraham's Children; Man born blind healed; Good Shepherd; 70 sent out to evangelize, Jn. 7-8-9-10 & Lk. 10
2. Bethany; Jesus, Mary & Martha, Lk. 11
3. Place of Prayer; Discourse on Prayer, Lk. 11
4. Place unknown; charged with being in league with Satan, Lk. 11
5. Dining in Pharisee's home; denounces Pharisaism, Lk. 11
6. Before multitudes of 1000's Great evangelistic appeals on Hypocrisy, Anxiety, Covetousness, Lk. 12-13
7. In a Synagogue; heals woman bowed double; controversy over healing on the Sabbath, Lk. 13
8. Feast of Dedication (December); Jews seek to kill Jesus, Jn. 10

