

# Manuscript Mayhem

## Matt. 17:25-26

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (4<sup>th</sup> edition) defines ‘Mayhem’ as “A state of violent disorder or riotous confusion; havoc.” While we are constantly told how we should rely heavily upon Sinaiticus (N), Vaticanus (B) and “the great uncials” (C, D) we are never informed about the mayhem that exists among these manuscripts (mss.). In this article what I hope to do is take a look at Matt. 17:25-26 and demonstrate just how much confusion there actually is among our supposed “great uncials”. This I propose to do by discussing the various readings of Matt. 17:25-26 as found in the “great uncials”. Lastly, I will show how these mss. have influenced some of our modern versions (mvs.).

As we will be discussing mainly the Greek mss. for these verses it will benefit my readers to see the Traditional reading. I will quote v. 25 since we will be looking at it first.

25 λεγει ναι και **οτε εισηλθεν** εις την οικιαν προεφθασεν αυτον ο ιησους λεγων τι σοι δοκει σιμων οι βασιλεις της γης **απο τινων** λαμβανουσιν τελη η κηνσον απο των υιων αυτων η απο των αλλοτριων

The first reading I wish to discuss is the phrase “ote eishlthen” (in blue). This is the Traditional reading as well as the reading of the vast majority of mss. and is rendered in our Authorized Version (AV) as “when he was come”. As we look at the “great uncials” (the ones we are told are the ‘best’) we encounter a tangled web of various readings. When this happens, and it is quite often, it is interesting to see how the translators of the mvs. pick and choose their reading.

Here our two supposed “oldest and best” mss. disagree as to what the Evangelist wrote. B is for reading “elthonta”, which is the reading of W-H and our modern Critical text, and N is for reading “eiselthonta”, which is the reading adopted by Tischendorf. Both N and B use an accusative, which alters the sentence.

The famed Codex Bezae, commonly called D, has a different reading from the three already mentioned. D uses the dative and reads, “eiselthonti”. Codex C offers us yet another reading as it reads, “ote hlthon”.

There is no doubt that the Traditional reading is what Matthew wrote. With reference to the readings of N and B Herman Hoskier comments, “it must fairly be admitted that NB are improvising”.

In this same verse we have the phrase “apo tinwn” (red letters) or “from whom”. This is the reading of N and every other ms. except B (238 as well). No other uncial reads as does B and only one cursive copy is so disfigured. B reads “apo tinos” and has been

rejected by every Greek text. Though choosing the earlier reading of B (i.e. elthonta) against all others W-H/N-A/UBS now all reject B in favor of N and the Majority of mss.

We will now look at verse 26, which is cited below.

λεγει αυτω ο πετρος απο των αλλοτριων εφη αυτω ο ιησους αραγε ελευθεροι εισιν οι υιοι

Once again we want to first look at the clause in blue. As before I have given the Traditional, as well as the Majority, reading. Literally this would read “He said to him the Peter” or as we would read it in our AV “Peter saith unto him”.

Since D is most like the Traditional Text I shall discuss its reading first. Codex Bezae simply reads, “legei autw” or “He said unto him”. D omits “Peter”.

Now we approach a much wider variation in the Sacred text. In customary Alexandrian text style N and B deviate greatly from the Traditional Text and from each other. These are facts that are not commonly reported by those who worship these two corrupt mss. Hoskier once noted that “our little study would be quite incomplete without a further account of the idiosyncrasies of N. This is best shown by exhibiting the principal places where N and B differ, which in number far exceed what anyone might suppose who does not go deeply into the comparative study of the two documents. As a matter of fact the “shorter” text of the two is found in N (Codex B and Its Allies p. 1 Vol. 2).” Hoskier goes on to state that the ‘major’ differences between N and B amount to “Matt. 656 + Mark 567 + Luke 791 + John 1022 = 3036”. It should be further noted that many of these ‘various’ readings are heretical in nature. And to think we are constantly told that these are the two “best” mss. extant. We are often led to believe that they are in absolute agreement. However, nothing could be further from the truth beloved! As Hoskier and many others have demonstrated these mss. are at constant odds one with another and are certainly at odds with the Traditional Received Text. To proceed!

Here in Matt. 17:26 we find that N reads, “O de ephe apo twn allotriwn” or “When (he) said, Of strangers” instead of “Peter saith unto him, Of strangers”. Additionally N continues with the interpolation “eipontos de, apo twn allotriwn” which would read “When he said, Of strangers”. For the sake of clarity it is needful for me to give the reading of N in its entirety. For verse 26 N reads, “**Which said**, Of strangers. **When he had said, Of strangers**, Jesus said unto him, Then are the children free.” The words in **RED** having been changed and the words in **GREEN** having been added. We now move on to codex C.

Codex C retains the Traditional reading “legei autw o petros”----“Peter saith unto him”. But also contains the “unauthorized clause” found in N. However, C adds yet another word and reads, “Eipontos de AUTOU, apo twn allotriwn” or “Now when he said, Of strangers”. In passing, it may be of some interest to note that our modern Critical Greek

texts have rejected the reading of C and N. Even Tischendorf, who rescued N from the flames and revered its text above all mss, has forsaken N in favor of our next variant.

Unlike any of the variants we have seen thus far B ventures out on its own with the singular reading “Eipontos de” or “When he said”. This again is in place of “Peter saith unto him”. After this erroneous reading B continues just as the Traditional text.

Since Westcott-Hort believed the text of B was the ‘neutral’ text and all others had been corrupted to some extent it should come as no surprise that W-H adopt as their reading “When he said”. As mentioned above, even Tischendorf was taken in by B and so too were N-A and UBS. This has caused a wide range of translations in the modern versions. Several examples are listed below to show the utter mayhem that has been created by our ‘scholars’.

RSV- And when he said, “From others,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free.”

**Notice now the shift in the NewRSV---**

NRSV- When Peter said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the children are free.”

ASV- And when he said, From strangers, Jesus said unto him, Therefore the sons are free.

**Again, notice the change in the NASV---**

NASV- When Peter said, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are exempt.

Holman Standard- "From strangers," he said. "Then the sons are free," Jesus told him.

NIV- "From others," Peter answered. "Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him.

NWT- When he said: “From the strangers,” Jesus said to him: “Really, then, the sons are tax-free.”

Rotherham- And, when he said, From the aliens, Jesus said unto him, Well then, free, are the sons! (aliens??? I just threw this one in for a laugh!)

If all this has gotten you totally confused don't be alarmed. An atmosphere of confusion surrounds modern ‘scholarship’ and the modern versions despite the fact that we are constantly assured that the “great uncials” should be trusted at all cost. These mss. are seldom in agreement one with another and as has been shown above some of the variants can differ greatly. The fact is we cannot trust modern translators or ‘scholars’ because it has been repeatedly shown that they routinely misconstrue the facts. They will vouch for one ms. in one instance and reject another only to turn around in the very next sentence or verse and follow the ms. they just rejected and ignore the ms. they just vouched for. Their

methods are total “riotous confusion and havoc” and can be described in no other way but “mayhem”.

Just look back over the two verses discussed in this essay if you doubt whereof I speak. In our first instance W-H and N-A follow the reading of B (i.e. elthonta); while Tischendorf believes N contains the original reading (i.e. eiselthonta). However, on our next occasion W-H and N-A abandon B (apo tinos) and go with N and the Majority (apo tinwn) of mss. In verse 26 Tischendorf this time deserts his famed N and follows the (very) minority reading of B (i.e. eipontos de). He is followed in his folly by W-H and N-A.

I hope that this short essay has in some way made you more aware of the deception that is going on among our ‘scholars’ and modern translations. I could’ve multiplied these examples hundreds of times over. Perhaps in the near future I will give more examples like the two listed above. But for now I will close with the words of John Burgon, “Is not a superstitious reverence for B and N betraying for ever people into error?”