THE NEW ECLECTICISM

An essay in appreciation of the work of Professor George D. Kilpatrick

by

PETER R. RODGERS

New Haven, CT

It was a great privilege some years ago to study at Oxford under the guidance of Professor G.D. Kilpatrick. His recent death is a great loss to the community of biblical scholarship, and this essay is offered in appreciation of his work. Exercising characteristic independence of mind, Kilpatrick pioneered the eclectic method in New Testament textual criticism. He stressed the importance of giving full weight to internal criteria in judging the merits of variant readings in the New Testament text. His special emphasis on the style of the New Testament writers (in which he followed C.H. Turner) and his study of the influence of Atticism on the early transmission of the New Testament have made a vital contribution to our understanding of the text.

Five decades of careful attention to the text of the New Testament enabled Kilpatrick to lay the groundwork for a lively debate on method in New Testament textual criticism. In 1943 he published an eclectic study of the text of the Gospels and Acts,\(^1\) and the following year he offered a similar article of the text of the Epistles.\(^2\) He made a more thorough study of the text of Revelation and of Acts in his contributions to the *Festschriften* for Josef Schmid\(^3\) and R.P. Casey.\(^4\) His judgments on individual readings have been pub-

\(^1\) "The Western Text and the Original Text of the Gospels and Acts", *JTS* XLIV (1943) 24-36.

\(^2\) "Western Text and Original Text in the Epistles", *JTS* XLV (1944) 60-5.


lished in fascicules by the British and Foreign Bible Society entitled
*A Greek English Diglot for the Use of Translators.* These volumes were
issued "for private circulation only" over several years. They give
an indication of how the New Testament looks when the principles
of "rational eclecticism" are applied to the text.

Some scholars have been critical of Kilpatrick's dependence on
Atticism and other internal criteria for determining the original
text. E.J. Epp, while asserting that "every encouragement should
to be given to exploring the eclectic approach now being pursued so
ardently by Professor Kilpatrick," cautioned that "external aspects
and qualitative evaluations of MSS and text-type have perhaps
been disregarded." E.C. Colwell challenged the method in that it
"relegates the manuscripts to the role of supplier of readings. The
weight of the manuscript is ignored. Its place in the manuscript
tradition is not considered." Colwell criticizes Kilpatrick's choice
of a reading found only in one late Vulgate manuscript. G.D. Fee
has also questioned Kilpatrick's work as representing a faulty
tory of textual corruption and transmission and leaving "textual
judgments to the whims of individual practitioners."

Bruce Metzger has offered a detailed critique of Kilpatrick's
dependency on internal criteria for judging readings. Assessing *A
Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators*, Metzger wrote of "his
general disregard for the age and quality of external evidence," and
continues:

The extent to which Kilpatrick is prepared to go in adopting readings which have
the most meagre external support, if he is convinced that internal considerations
require it, may be illustrated by the following readings in the *Greek-English Diglot*:

Matt. xx. 30 ἐραζων is supported by 118 209 Syr. pal.
Matt. xxii. 7 ἀκούσας ἔδε ο βασιλεὺς έκτις is supported by 33.
Mark v. 11 ἢ δη is supported by 372 485 Syr. p.
Mark ix. 17 ἀνεξαρτησι αὐτοῦ is supported by C.

5 Mark (1958); Matthew (1959); John (1960); The General Letters (1961); Luke
(1962); Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians (1964); The Pastoral Letters and Hebrews
(1963).
7 "Hort Redivivus, A Plea and a Program", in Studies in Methodology in Textual
8 "Rigorous or Reasoned Eclecticism. Which", in Studies in New Testament
Language and Text, Essays in Honour of George D. Kilpatrick on the Occasion of his sixty-