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TEXT AND MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. Introduction

II. Palaeography
A. Book forms
   1. Papyrus roll
   2. Papyrus codex
   3. Parchment codex
   4. Other forms
B. Handwriting
   1. Uncial
   2. Minuscule
C. Pulses
D. Abbreviations
E. Divisions of the text
F. Catenae
G. Lectionaries

III. Witnesses to the text
A. Greek MSS
   1. Papyri
   2. Uncials
   3. Minuscules
   4. Lectionaries
B. Ancient versions
   1. Syriac
      a. The Diatessaron
      b. The Old Syriac
      c. The Peshitta
d. The Philoxenian
e. The Harkleian
f. The Palestinian
2. Latin
   a. The Old Latin (Itala)
   b. The Vulgate
3. Coptic
   a. Sahidic
   b. Bohairic
c. Middle Egyptian dialects

IV. Transmission of the NT text
A. Before the invention of printing
   1. The rise of textual variants
   2. Types of variants
      a. Unintentional variants
      b. Intentional variants
B. The Greek NT in print
   1. The establishment of the "Revised text" (1516-1633)
   2. The accumulation of textual evidence (1633-1830)
   3. The struggle to overthrow the Textus Receptus (1830-1882)

V. The modern period of textual criticism
A. The theory of Westcott and Hort
B. The work of von Soden
C. Current view of text-types
D. Principles of textual criticism
   1. Internal evidence
   2. External evidence

VI. Conclusion

I. Introduction

No other ancient lit. has affected the Western world so profoundly as has the Bible, and in particular the NT. Nor has any ancient writing or body of lit. been preserved in quantity even comparable to the number of extant MSS of the NT in Gr. and in other ancient VSS. The writings of some ancient authors (e.g., part of the Annals of Tacitus) are represented by only one MS from ancient times. Other writings have survived in a few or a few dozen copies. A few hundred MSS of the works of some authors, including Euripides and Cicero, are known. Of the NT, on the other hand, nearly 3,000 handwritten copies in Gr. are preserved—ranging from fragments of a few verses to the entire NT—plus some 2,000 additional Gr. MSS in which the text is arranged in lectionary form for daily readings, as well as 8,000 MSS in Lat., and 2,000 or more in other ancient VSS.

In another respect, too, the MS tradition of the NT is distinctly superior to that of other ancient lit. The oldest known MSS of the works of some ancient authors date from a thousand years or more after the death of the author. A time interval of several hundred years is not uncommon, ranging downward to a mere three hundred years, as in the case of Virgil. In contrast, two of the most important existing MSS of the NT were written less than 300 years after the NT was completed, and an appreciable amount of the NT is extant on papyrus MSS written from one to two centuries after the Biblical authors wrote. Since classical scholars assume the general reliability of these
secular works even where the time interval is great and where only a few MSS are available, it is clear that with far greater assurance the student of the NT may assume that the presently-available NT text reliably represents what the authors originally wrote.

At the same time, the multiplication of any piece of lit. in ancient times was a very different matter from that of the period since the invention of printing from movable type. It is now possible to print any number of identical copies of a work; but in ancient times, when each individual copy had to be made separately by hand, the only certainty was that no two copies of a book of any length would be identical. This period of handcopying of MSS includes three-fourths of the time from the completion of the NT to the present; and the vast number of copies made of parts or all of the NT during these early centuries means that multiplied thousands of textual variants were introduced into these MSS. The originals (autographs) of the NT books were doubtless lost at a very early date. This means, technically speaking, that it is not possible to determine the exact original wording of the NT from any given MS. Rather, a comparison of MSS must be made and principles established for determining as nearly as possible the exact form of the original text. This process of studying copies of a work whose original is unknown, for the purpose of determining the form of the original text, is called textual criticism. Whereas the NT is the largest and most significant area of this study, textual criticism is necessary for virtually every piece of ancient lit., since in only the rarest instances has the autograph of an ancient work been preserved to modern times.

Textual criticism is a basic discipline, a prerequisite to all further NT studies, for the determination of the text to be used must precede the interpretation of the text.

In making a copy of a book by hand, an ancient scribe—and a modern scribe is as well—would almost certainly introduce errors and changes of various sorts into his copy, accidentally or, at times, intentionally. When his MS was copied, then, most of his variants would be carried over into the next MS along with any additional errors and changes that the next scribe might make. Thus the more copies that intervene between a given MS and the original, the more differences there will generally be between that MS and the original form of the text. Moreover, a MS from a later cent. will usually have more copies between it and the original than a MS from an earlier cent. would have. This is an over-simplification, because in actual fact a MS of a later cent. might have been copied directly from a 4th-cent. MS that was only a few copies removed from the original, whereas an 8th-cent. MS might have been copied from a 7th-cent. MS that was itself twenty copies removed from the original.

In the case of NT MSS, even the relatively large number now known doubtless represent only a small percentage of the total number that were produced during the early centuries. There is no instance of it possible to show that any extant MS is the direct ancestor of another MS, and it is impossible to determine how many copies lie between any given MS and the original. Scholars therefore commonly assume that a later MS is further removed from the original in number of copies intervening than is an earlier MS, but recognize that there are exceptions to the rule.

It must not be supposed, however, that the text of the NT rests upon precarious grounds because of the multitude of copies through which it has passed or because of the great number of variants found in the MSS. There is in fact virtually no question concerning the greater part of the words of the NT. Indeed, the same is true of ancient lit. in general. It is only a relatively small portion of the words of the text that requires the attention of the textual critic. Virtually all MSS of any given part of the NT say essentially the same thing. It has been stated that there is no question at all concerning seven-eighths of the words of the NT; if differences of no significance are disregarded, only about one-sixtieth of the words can be regarded as in doubt; and only about one word in a thousand involves both a substantial question of meaning and serious doubt of the correct text (Westcott and Hort, The NT in the Original Greek, "Introduction" and "Appendix 2). No Christian doctrine rests upon insecure textual evidence.

II. PALEOGRAPHY
A. Book forms. 1. Papyrus roll. In the 1st Christian cent., when the books of the NT were written, the accepted form for a literary work was a papyrus scroll. The papyrus plant was a tall reed that grew along the banks of the Nile River but almost nowhere else. The stalk of this plant was peeled, and its pith center was cut into thin strips, which were laid side by side with another layer over them at right angles. After being pounded to aid adhesion of the layers and left to dry in the sun, the resulting thin sheet served fairly well to receive writing when written upon lengthwise of the papyrus strips with a pen made from a reed. These sheets, measuring from six by nine inches to twelve by fifteen inches, were slightly overlapped and glued together to make a roll of twenty sheets, the form in which papyrus was generally sold. If a work were too long for one roll, several rolls could be fastened together. There were practical limits for the length of a scroll, but a long work could be extended to more than one scroll. The scroll was generally simply rolled on itself; there is little evidence of the use of rollers.

The columns of text of a scroll were usually narrow, so that the scroll need not be un-
rolled widely to read it. Writing was done on the inside surface of the roll. On this side the papyrus strips were laid horizontally. The text of a work was not generally written on the outside surface of the roll, both because of the inconvenience to the reader and the fact that the papyrus strips on this surface would be vertical and writing across the grain of the papyrus would be more difficult. Exceptions occur, however, as in Revelation 5:1, "a scroll written within and on the back."

The scroll form of book had certain disadvantages, including some with which the modern user of microfilms is familiar. The scroll needed to be completely rerolled after being used, although a careless reader might leave this task for the next reader. Moreover, consultation of various passages of a scroll was much more difficult than with the modern book form. This latter factor was one of the principal influences that led, not long after the beginning of the Christian era, to the replacement of the scroll by another book form.

2. Papyri s c o d e x . From antiquity, waxed tablets had been used for school exercises and other temporary writings. These tablets were somewhat like a child's slate, with a surface of wax instead of slate, and with a stylus as the writing instrument. As time went on, the practice developed of fastening two or more of these tablets together by thongs tied through holes at the edge of the tablets. Even before the Christian era this led in turn to the development of notebooks composed of folded sheets. These notebooks were used for informal and nonliterary purposes. They also came to be used at times for the first draft of an author's literary works, which would then be copied onto a papyrus scroll for their final form.

At first the number of sheets folded together into a quire varied; each sheet might be folded separately, or several sheets—sometimes even an entire book—might be folded together into one quire. Later, however, a quire of four sheets, which made sixteen pages, became standard.

3. Parchment c o d e x . From antiquity, skins of animals were used in writing. About 200 years before the Christian era, however, a new process was developed whereby the skins were scraped, soaked in quicklime, and rubbed with chalk and pumice stone, which produced a thin, firm, and very durable writing surface. Writing could be done on this surface with a quill pen as well as with the softer reed pen. This material, known as parchment, or vellum (although "vellum" originally referred to the finer grades of calf skin), likewise came to be used for notebooks in codex form.

When the NT books were written, therefore, the codex book form—at least papyrus or parchment—was known, but the recognized book form for literary publications was still the papyrus scroll and continued to be so for some centuries for secular classics. Early in the Christian era, however, the codex form was developed into full book size and began to be used for published works, particularly for the Bible; for even the very oldest MSS of the NT are in codex form, not scrolls. The NT likewise led in the transition from papyrus to parchment for literary purposes; whereas the NT was copied on papyrus codices in the earliest period, beginning in the 4th cent., parchment almost completely displaced papyrus as the writing material for NT MSS.

Even the originals, therefore, of the various NT books may have been written in the modern book or codex form. On the other hand, the books of the NT that were more nearly "literature" as they were published, such as the gospels and Acts, may have been written on scrolls in accordance with the current literary tradition; whereas those that were more nearly personal communications, such as the letters of Paul, may have been written originally in codex form. All of the NT books were probably originally written on papyrus. In any event, whether the autographs were in scroll or codex form, it was not long before the codex was the one form in which NT MSS were copied. Indeed, the habit of the early Christians of consulting their Scriptures may have been a factor in popularizing the codex form and in causing it to replace the scroll as the accepted form for liturgical use.

Of the extant MSS, the oldest are papyrus codices, with the papyrus codex giving way to parchment codex in the 4th cent. Not until shortly before the invention of printing from movable type was parchment displaced by paper in the Western world.

The regular word for a papyrus scroll is βιβλίον, meaning "having to do with βιβλίον, the pith of the papyrus plant." This word occurs in the NT, e.g., in Luke 4:17, 20, and in John 20:3. Revelation 6:14 describes the sky as vanishing "like a scroll that is rolled up." In 2 Timothy 4:13, Paul requested his "scrolls" and his χειρογράφα, this latter word possibly referring to parchment codices (see "The Codex," by C. H. Roberts, Proceedings of the British Academy XL, 174.)

To summarize, NT book forms and materials in the earliest centuries were approximately as follows:

Autographs: papyrus codices (and papyrus scrolls?)
Two pages of the Gospel of Luke, from the Codex Sinaiticus, from Sinai, 4th Century A.D.  
The script is in Greek, in uncial letters on vellum.  
(http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/codexsinai.html)

- 2nd and 3rd centuries: papyrus codices
- 4th century: parchment Codices,
- occasional papyrus Codices are known, however, from as late as the 7th century.

4. Other forms:

Small portions of the NT were occasionally written in two additional forms, although neither their purpose nor their extent entities them to be classified on the same level as MSS. More than twenty portions of the NT, representing six books, are pre-served on broken pieces of pottery, which was used by the poorest people as writing material. These broken pieces, or „ostraka“ when they contain a written text. In addition, brief NT passages were sometimes inscribed on talismans, or good-luck charms, although they were condemned by church authorities (see Metzger, Text of the New Testament, 33). A few of these talismans are extant.

B. Handwriting.

I. Uncials

From before the beginning of the Christian era, two forms of Greek handwriting were current. For letters, business documents, and other nonliterary purposes, a connected „cursive“ style of handwriting was used, somewhat analogous to English longhand writing. For literary purposes, a style known as uncial was used. Uncial letters, corresponding approximately to Eng. printed capital letters, were written separately. Taking into account the respective uses of these two styles of writing, the autographs of the books of the NT that were written for publication, such as the gospels, were presumably written in uncial letters; whereas those that were personal communications, such as the letters of Paul, may have been written in the cursive hand.

Since, however, these letters were very soon being copied for distribution and were being thought of as lit, they too were soon circulating in uncial MSS; and even the very earliest extant MSS of Paul’s letters, as of all of the NT, are written in uncials. For practical purposes, therefore, it may be said that the transmission of the NT was in uncial MSS from the beginning.

II. Minuscule

The two styles of handwriting existed side by side for several hundred years. About the 9th century, a major change occurred by the development of a refined and more formal style of handwriting out of the nonliterary cursive. This „minuscule“ hand, as it is called, produced very attractive MS and could be written much more rapidly than the uncial hand. The oldest known minuscule MS of the NT is dated A.D. 835, which is also the oldest NT MS known that contains a date. The minuscule hand was readily accepted, and by the end of the 10th century it had completely displaced the uncial hand.

Thus a clear division of the history of NT MSS can be drawn: uncial MSS early centuries, uncials and minuscules in the latter part of the 9th and the 10th centuries, and minuscule MSS thereafter.

Within both the uncial and the minuscule periods, certain other characteristics help to establish approximate dates of MSS. The earliest uncials on papyrus are almost entirely devoid of ornamentation. Even a new section is indicated, if at all, by nothing more than i point for punctuation and a small space within the line. The early uncials on parchment have no ornamentation and very few diacritical marks or marks of punctuation.
A new section may be indicated by beginning a new line or by a slightly larger initial letter extending into the left margin. With the passage of time, accents, breathings, and punctuation marks were added. Initial letters of sections were enlarged and ornamented, and illustrations and other adornments were added, although the handwriting itself tended to deteriorate, the letters becoming heavier and less neat.

The minuscule MSS passed through somewhat the same stages. Although diacritical marks and punctuation occur in the minuscules from the beginning, the early minuscules were neatly written and had relatively little adornment, and developed toward more adornment and less neatness in the later centuries (see W. H. P. Hatch, The Principal Uncial MSS of the NT, and Facsimiles and Descriptions of Minuscule MSS of the NT).

One characteristic of Greek MSS that remained constant was the absence of spacing between words, both in uncial and minuscule handwriting. This was simply a Convention of style, not from any attempt to save space. Word division at the end of a line, however, followed definite rules of syllable division.

C. Palimpsests

Although papyrus was a very satisfactory material for writing, it did not lend itself to extensive erasing. Parchment, on the other hand, was so durable that it could be erased and reused. Thus, if the text of a parchment MS were no longer needed, or if the sheets had become worn or torn, the MS would sometimes be taken apart, sheets that were too badly damaged would be discarded, the leaves might be cut in half along the center fold, and the original text would be scraped off. The sheets would then be rearranged into new quires and used to receive a new text. Even MSS of the NT were not exempt from being thus erased, so much so that church authorities were forced to condemn the practice. Such an erased and rewritten MS is called a palimpsest, from palin meaning „again,“ and psáō, „I scrape.‟ Fortunately, Standards of erasure were not too effective for these palimpsests, and it is possible to read much of the erased text under the later writing. One very important NT palimpsest is Codex C, known as Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, because the NT text is written over with writings of the Syriac Church Father Ephraem. In all, some fifty palimpsest MSS are known in which the erased text was an uncial NT text.

D. Abbreviations

In the oldest NT MSS, abbreviations were almost entirely limited to fifteen words, such as „God,“ „Lord,“ „heaven,“ and certain words with sacred associations. Abbreviations for these words were contractions — i.e., the first and last letter or letters — with a horizontal line above to indicate the contraction.

In addition, the letter ny at the end of a line was sometimes indicated by a raised horizontal line instead of the letter.

Picture: A portion of John from the Codex Sinaiticus in uncial letters. Please compare with the minuscule cursive writing of a private letter on papyrus, below, dated first century A.D.!

In the minuscule period, various other words came to be abbreviated by suspension, which consisted in writing the first part only of the word.

In addition, ligatures, in which two or more letters were combined into one unit, were introduced, as well as symbols, which were a sort of shorthand of forms representing certain endings or words.
E. Divisions of the text.
Many Greek MSS of the NT contain numbers (indicated by Greek letters) in the margin that indicate the Am-monian sections and the Eusebian canons. At a very early date the four gospels were divided into sections of greatly varying extent. These sections are attributed to a certain Ammonius. In the 4th century, the Church Father Eusebius constructed a gospel harmony based on the Ammonian sections. Using the Ammonian numbers, he made tables listing the passages in which parallels occurred in all four gospels, in the various combinations of three gospels and two gospels, and of the passages that occurred in one gospel. He then added the table number to each Ammonian section number throughout the gospels. This System made it easy to find parallels between any of the gospels. These numbers are also used in some printed editions of the Greek New Testament.

F. Catenae.
In addition to NT MSS with a continuous text, two other MS formats are of interest. One of these is the MS with a catena, in which the Biblical text is accompanied by a series of selections from the writings of Church Fathers, to form a commentary on the NT text. MSS with catenae took various forms: the patristic commentary might be written in the outer margins, with the Biblical text occupying a smaller part of the page; the Biblical text and the commentary might be written in alternate sections; or the text and commentary might be written in parallel columns. In the oldest MSS with catenae, the authors of the passages of the catena were usually indicated. In later MSS, the names were often either abbreviated, indicated by Symbols, or omitted. A symbol or number was often placed at the beginning of a passage in the catena and in the body of the NT text to indicate the NT passage to which the commentary referred.

G. Lectionaries
A second variation from a straight-text MS is the lectionary, in which NT passages are arranged in the order in which they are to be read in church services during the year. A reflection of lectionary usage is likewise found in many regular NT MSS, in which the word archon, „beginning,“ and telos, „end,“ or their abbreviations, are found.

III. WITNESSES TO THE TEXT
The text of the NT is known from three basic sources: Greek MSS, ancient translations or VSS, and quotations from ancient writers.

A. Greek MSS
When early editors began to refer to Greek MSS, they were cited in various ways, such as by name or by other designations associating the MS with its owner or the library in which it was located.
With a citation of increasing numbers of MSS, it became necessary to use a less cumbersome System. Various attempts were made in this direction before the System now in use was perfected. Under the present system, papyrus MSS (referred to as „papyri;“ all of which have an uncial text) are indicated by a capital or Gothic „P“ followed by a superscript number to designate each MS. Currently listed are 76 papyri. Uncial MSS on parchment (called simply „uncials“), some of which had already been designated by capital letters of the English and Greek alphabets, are also designated by a number preceded by a zero (02, 056), because of the limitations of the alphabetical designations. Minuscule MSS are designated by number (33, 565, 2065). Lectionaries are designated by a number preceded by „Lect.“ or an italic ℓ (Lect. 299, ℓ 1301).

1. Papyri

All of the very earliest extant MSS of the Greek NT are papyri. They date from the middle of the 2nd century through the 4th century, although one (P74) is as late as the 7th century. Although most are fragmentary, together they include a considerable portion of the NT. In spite of their early date, the reliability of the papyri is reduced by the fact that many of them were copied by nonprofessional scribes and show a consequent lack of attention to small details.

Two collections of New Testament papyri are especially significant. The Chester-Beatty collection, acquired in 1930–1931, includes the following:

- a) P45, containing approximately 1/7 of the text of the gospels and Acts, dating from the early 3rd century.
- b) P46, which includes a large portion of the Pauline epistles (except the pastorals), plus Hebrews, dating from the early 3rd century.
- c) P47, comprising roughly 1/3 of the text of Revelation, dating from the 3rd century.

Most of the leaves of the Beatty papyri are in the Beatty collection in Dublin, although 30 of the 86 leaves of P46 are in the University of Michigan collection, and some fragments of one leaf of P45 are in Vienna. These three papyri were published by Sir Frederic Kenyon, in fascicles containing the printed text as well as photographs.

The second and perhaps even more significant collection of NT papyri is that of the Bodmer Library in Geneva. Little is known of the actual source of these MSS. The collection includes the following MSS of the Greek NT:

- a) P66, containing a large part of the gospel of John, dated by some authorities as early as the middle of the 2nd century and thus the oldest extensive MS of any part of the NT.
- b) P72, which includes the Epistle of Jude and the two Epistles of Peter together with numerous other writings, dating from the 3rd century.
- c) P73, a small fragment of Matthew.
- d) P74, noteworthy in that it is a papyrus MS although written in the 7th century, containing Acts and the Catholic Epistles in fragmentary form.
- e) P75, which contains much of Luke and John, dating from near the end of the 2nd century or slightly later.

Except for P73, these Bodmer Papyri have been published, with text and photographs.

f) The oldest known fragment of the Greek NT, possibly even older than P74, is a small fragment in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England, designated P1. It contains a few lines from John 18. Dated in the first half of the 2nd century by its editor and by other paleographers, it furnishes evidence that prior to the date when the Tübingen critics claimed the fourth gospel was written (c. 160), it had actually been in circulation long enough to reach into the interior of Egypt.

Other papyri, individually or parts of collections, are located in libraries in various parts of Europe, the United States, and the Middle E.
2. Uncials

Extant uncial MSS (on parchment) number 250, varying from small fragments of a few verses to the complete NT. Dating from the 4th through the 10th centuries, and thus later than most of the papyri, their significance is greater than that of the papyri because they are so much more extensive in content. In addition, by the uncial period, the Christian religion had gained official recognition, and consequently most uncial MSS give evidence of having been professionally copied. The following are some of the more significant or representative uncials:

a) א (Aleph, 01). Codex Sinaiticus, from the 4th Century, containing both OT and NT complete, in the British Museum in London. Its discovery by Konstantin von Tischendorf in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai (hence its name) is a fascinating story (see Tischendorf, Codex Sinaiticus, 8th ed. [1934]). It is one of the most important MSS of the NT in existence. Its text is arranged in four columns to the page, in a neat hand with little adornment. The pages are about fifteen by thirteen inches. Brought from Mt. Sinai to Russia in 1859 by Konstantin von Tischendorf, who considered it so important that he was unwilling to have it assigned to an obscure place in the then-current alphabetical listing of MSS, he assigned to it instead the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In 1933, it was purchased by the British government from the Soviet government for £ 100,000.

b) A (02), Codex Alexandrinus, a 5th-century MS, containing most of both Testaments (lacking, in the NT, almost all of Matthew, part of John, and most of 2 Corinthians), is displayed in the British Museum alongside Codex Sinaiticus. It was presented in 1627 to King Charles 1 of England by the Patriarch of Constantinople, who had obtained it in Alexandria. Its pages are approximately ten by thirteen inches. The text, two columns to the page, has somewhat more ornamentation than Codex Sinaiticus.

c) B (03), Codex Vaticanus, written about the middle of the 4th century, and located in the Vatican Library since the 15th century or longer, is perhaps the single most important extant MS of the NT. It originally contained both Testaments and part of the Apocrypha; the MS now lacks most of Genesis and part of the Psalms in the OT, and part of Hebrews and all of Titus, Timothy, Philemon, and Revelation in the NT. The pages are approximately eleven by eleven inches in size. The text, very neat and without adornment, is printed in three columns to the page.

d) C (04), Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, is the most important palimpsest MS of the Greek NT. It is located in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. Written in the 5th century, it evidently originally contained both Testaments. In the 12th century its Biblical text was scraped off, most of the leaves were discarded, and the remaining ones were written over with some of the writings of Ephraem. Tischendorf read and published the Biblical text, but the use of chemicals in an attempt to restore the erased text have further defaced the MS. The extant portions of the MS include parts of almost all of the NT books. .

e) D (05), Codex Bezae, is a 6th-century MS of the gospels and Acts, which has been in the Cambridge University library since it was presented to the university by Theodore Beza in 1581. The text is written in one column to the page, but in lines of greatly varying length. It is a bilingual MS, with Greek and Latin on facing pages. The gospels are in the order — Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark. The chief representative of the so-called „Western text“ (see discussion of text-types below!) has many textual peculiarities, and its text of Acts is about one-tenth longer than the common form of the text.

f)  dropped (06), Codex Claromontanus, of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, is a 6th-century MS containing the Pauline epistles and Hebrews. By remarkable coincidence, both MSS designated „D“ are bilingual, both have Greek and Latin on facing pages (Greek on the left), both have the text in „sense lines“ of irregular length, and both are representatives of the peculiar „Western text.“
g) N (022), Codex Purpureus Petropolitanus, is written in silver letters on purple vellum, as are also Codex O (023), 2 (042), and * (043). All four of these MSS are from the 6th century. Most of Codex N is in Leningrad, but parts of it are in several other locations.

h) W (032), Codex Freerianus, or Washingtonensis, is a 4th or 5th century MS of the Freer Art Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Like Codex D, it contains the gospels in the Western order.

i) 14 (040). Codex Zacynthius, in the library of the British and Foreign Bible Society in London, is a palimpsest of the gospel of Luke from the 8th century. It is the oldest known NT MS with a catena and the only such MS in which both the NT text and the catena are in uncial.

3. Minuscules

Minuscule MSS outnumber uncial ten to one. Although a larger percent-age of uncials than minuscules may have per-ished because of the greater antiquity of the uncial, the disparity in numbers of the surviving MSS. doubtless points to the fact that the minuscule handwriting made the copying of MSS a much more rapid and less expensive process. The following minuscule MSS should be mentioned:

a) 1 is a 12th-century MS containing the NT except Revelation, in Basel. It was one of the MSS Ersamus used in the preparation of the 1st published edition of the Greek NT. “Family I” is the term given to a group of minuscules (1, 118, 131, 209, 1582), all dating from the 12th to the 14th centuries, whose text is closely related and is significantly different from the type of text current in the minuscules in general!

2. Latin vulgata

Jerome’s revision has been revised numerous times through the centuries (basis of the Catholic Church!). Some 8000 MSS of the Latin Vulgata are extant, twice as many as the number of Greek MSS, which suggests that the Vulgata Bible was the most frequently copied work of ancient literature. Manuscripts of the Vulgata are commonly designated by abbreviations of their names (am, cav, ft, harl), or by their capital initial letters.

3. Coptic

Early in the Christian era an alphabet was developed for the Egyptian language using Greek letters with some additional forms taken from the older demotic Script that, with the hieratic, were derivatives of the hieroglyphic writing of more ancient times. From the Nile delta to the southern part of the country, some six dialects of the language existed. The most significant for NT study are from each end of this geographical area.

a. SAHIDIC.

Part of the NT was translated into Sahidic, the dialect in use from Thebes and S, by the beginning of the 3rd cent, and the complete NT was available within a century. Al-most the entire NT is preserved in the extant MSS, the oldest of which is from the 4th or the 6th century.

b. BOHAIRIC.

The dialect of Alexandria and Lower Egypt, Bohairic, seems to have received the NT later than Sahidic; perhaps in the region of the literary capital of Egypt, it was sufficiently well-known that a translation was not needed until later. Some one hundred MSS of the NT in Bohairic are extant, but the oldest known of these, until recently, was written in the 12th century, which caused some scholars to postulate a very late date for the origin of the VS. The recent publication, however, of a 4th-century papyrus MS of John in Bohairic, from the Bodmer Library, makes it clear that the VS originated in the 4th century or earlier.

c. Middle Egyptian Dialects

Between the regions of the Sahidic and the Bohairic dialects, at least part of the NT was translated into other dialects of Coptic. In Fayumic and sub-Achmimic most of John is extant. Manuscripts in Achmimic include parts of the gospels and Catholic Epistles dating from the 4th or 5th century.
4. Gothic
The NT was translated into Gothic at the middle of the 4th century by Ulfilas, whom Metzger and others credit with having reduced the language to writing as well. This VS survives in about six MSS, all from the 5th and 6th centuries and all fragmentary. One, Codex Argenteus, in the University Library of Uppsala, Sweden, containing portions of the gospels, is written in silver ink on purple vellum (hence its name). All of the other MSS are palimpsests.

5. Armenian
The NT was translated into Armenian in the first half of the 5th century. It was translated directly from Greek by St. Mesrop, who also created the Armenian alphabet, with the help of St. Sahak; or, according to another tradition, it was translated by St. Sahak from Syria. A revision appeared later, which became the dominant form of the VS by the 8th century and is the basis of the Armenian text still in use. Not only is the Armenian VS regarded as a very beautiful and accurate translation, but there are also more extant MSS — more than 1,500 — of this VS than of any other NT VS except the Vulgata. Almost all of the MSS, however, are later than the 9th century and represent the revised form of the VS.

6. Georgic
Christianity was introduced into Georgia, situated between the Black and Caspian Seas, in the 4th century. The origin of the Georgian VS of the NT is uncertain, but it is attributed by some to the same St. Mesrop who is associated with the Armenian VS, and its origin placed in the early 5th century. It was evidently either translated from or influenced by the Armenian VS. The last of several revisions, which was made by about the 11th century, is the basis of the Georgian VS still in use. Extant MSS are numerous, although three that date from the late 9th and 10th centuries are believed to retain more elements of the Old Georgian.

7. Ethiopic
Although some one hundred MSS of the Ethiopic VS are known, the fact that none of them are earlier than the 13th century has added to the difficulties of establishing a date for the origin of the VS, with extreme views of the 2nd century and the 14th century having been suggested. Most likely it originated near the 6th century, although possibly earlier, translated either from Syrian or directly from Greek.

8. Slavonic
The NT in Old Slavonic is credited to two brothers, St. Cyril and St. Methodius, who seem to have originated the two forms of the Slavonic alphabet, the Cyrillic and the Glagolitic. These brothers, who became missionaries to the Slavs, translated the NT in the second half of the 9th century. The VS may originally have been in lectionary form, which is the form of the text in most of the extant MSS.

9. Other versions
After the rise of Islam, numerous translations of the NT into Arabic were made, including one in the rhymed prose style of the Koran, and made or corrected from several different language VSS. The Persian VS is known from a few MSS from the 14th century and later. A Frankish VS, a language of west-central Europe, is known from one 8th-century MS of part of Matthew in Frankish and Latin. Fragments are extant of a Sogdian VS, a trade language of south-central Asia prior to the 10th century. A fragment of a 10th-century lectionary attests to the existence of a VS in Nubian, spoken in a region between Egypt and Ethiopia. A VS in Anglo-Saxon is known from nine MSS of the 11th to the 13th centuries. Although appreciable work has been done in some of the NT versions far more remains to be done in order that the versions may make their full contribution to NT textual research.

C. Patristic quotations
In addition to actual MSS of the NT in Greek and other ancient versions, Scripture quotations in the works of the early ecclesiastical writers form an important

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1 Text of the New Testament, 82
source of information concerning the text of the NT. Most of the works of these Church Fathers are in Gr. and Lat., with a lesser amount in Syr. and some other languages. These quotations are so extensive that the NT could virtually be reconstructed from this source alone.

As in the case of the VSS, there are limitations in the use of the writings of the Fathers as aids in determining the text of the NT. The original of the patristic work is not extant, so the textual critic must first study the known MSS of the work in question to determine as nearly as possible its original wording, in particular the NT quotations in the work. The NT quotations within a Father’s writings are the very parts that a scribe would most likely change intentionally—if, for example, the quotation did not agree with the form of the NT text with which the scribe was familiar. Even when the original form of the NT quotation in the patristic work has been determined as nearly as possible, if the author is merely giving the general sense of the passage instead of a verbatim reference, or if he (or his amanuensis) is quoting from memory instead of copying the quotation from a NT MS, the value of the passage for textual criticism will be limited. For example, the 4th cent. St. Cyril of Jerusalem bases an argument concerning the Lord’s Supper on what he himself says is the precise statement of St. Paul; yet his quotation concerning the institution of the Holy Communion is neither 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 nor any one of the parallel accounts in the gospels, but is rather a conflation from the various accounts, evidently quoted from memory (see Greenlee, The Gospel Text of Cyril of Jerusalem, pp. 19, 20). In general, however, longer quotations are more likely to have been copied from a MS than are shorter quotations.

As with the VSS, the goal for the patristic quotation is the information it gives concerning the NT text. To the extent to which the NT text that a Church Father used can be determined, that particular form of the text can be assumed to have been known and used at the time and in the general location in which that church father lived. In other words, the NT quotations of a writer’s works form, so to speak, a fragmentary MS of the NT from his date and region. In addition, ancient writers at times refer to alternative readings of which they are aware in MSS of the NT, and may even give their opinion of these readings.

For an extensive survey of the ecclesiastical writings and their works, reference must be made to a volume of patrology. The following are a few of the more significant of the Fathers:

Irenaeus (c. 140-210), Bishop of Lyons.
Tertullian (c. 150-240) of Carthage, one of the most prolific of the Lat. Fathers.
Origen (c. 185-254) of Alexandria and later of Caesarea, author of significant exegetical writings and other works.

Eusebius Pamphili, Bishop of Caesarea (c. 313-340), author of an ecclesiastical history, commentaries, and other works.
Athenagoras, Bishop of Alexandria (282-373), author of apologetic works and writings against the Arians.
Gregory of Nazianzus in Cappadocia (c. 330-389), author of forty-five orations and other works.
Gregory of Nyssa in Cappadocia (d. 394), author of exegetical, dogmatic, and ascetic writings.
Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (374-397), author of an exposition of Luke and other writings.
John Chrysostom (c. 344-407), Patriarch of Constantinople, brilliant preacher (hence, his title “golden mouth”), whose extant works are the most extensive of any patristic writer.
Jerome, or Hieronymus (c. 331-420), who produced the Lat. Vul. Bible, author of Lat. commentaries and other writings.
Augustine (354-430), Bishop of Hippo, author of philosophical, dogmatic, and exegetical works.
Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria (412-444), author of apologetic, dogmatic, and extensive exegetical works.

Although the potential value of the patristic quotations for NT textual criticism is very great, much work remains to be done both in preparing critical ed., of the works of the Church Fathers and in making analyses of their NT quotations.

IV. TRANSMISSION OF THE NT TEXT
A. Before the invention of printing. 1. The rise of textual variants. When the books of the NT were first written, they were largely "private" works rather than "literature" in the ordinary sense. This was esp. true of most of the NT epistles, which were simply correspondence between individuals and groups. Even the gospels were written for a purpose that was different from that of ordinary literature: a book of the NT was copied in this very earliest period, therefore, it was generally copied privately for personal use rather than by a professional scribe. Furthermore, since the manuscript book or letter was the important thing, a person making such a copy of a NT book might not necessarily feel obligated to strictly duplicate the word order or details that did not affect the sense. In the case of the narrative books, moreover, the earliest copyists apparently sometimes felt free to add small details of information. Moreover, in the earliest period of the NT, the status of the Christian religion in the political situation would not encourage widespread comparison of NT MSS. In addition, variants and errors are almost inevitable, even with a scribe's best intentions of verbal exactness. All these factors, therefore, combined to produce divergence of MSS during the earliest period after the NT was written. This period continued until Christianity gained official recognition in the early 4th cent.,
TEXT AND MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

although almost all of the variants that are significant in textual criticism may well have arisen during the first half of this period.

In the same light, the significance of this divergence between the MSS must not be exaggerated. The books of the NT doubtless came to be considered as "literature" soon after they began to be circulated, and those who copied the MSS would then have a double reason for copying with care: the preservation of the exact words of the divine message as well as the common requirements for copying a literary work.

The differences between MSS that arose by repeated copying led to the development of "families" of MSS, or what is known as "local texts." Copies of the NT, each with its own peculiarities, have been carried by Christians to various lands and localities. As each MS was copied and further copies multiplied, these copies, to a large extent, shared a common group of variants that were descended from their common ancestor and in varying degrees differed from the variants of the MSS that had been carried to other localities. In this way, the common peculiarities of a group of MSS serve to indicate their common ancestry as distinct from other groups of MSS. In some instances, a certain group of such MSS can be traced back to a specific region and a definite period of time by the fact that these MSS contain a variety of variants characteristic of writings of a certain Church Father, or of other MSS that are found in a VS that originated at a certain time and place.

When Christianity gained official recognition under the emperor Constantine, MSS of the NT no longer needed to be concealed for safety. Soon the emperor himself ordered new copies of the Scriptures for the churches of Constantinople. It was evidently not long before comparison was being made between MSS and it was being discovered that there were many differences, esp. between MSS of different localities. During the next three centuries or so, then, whether deliberately and officially, or unintentionally and informally, there occurred a period of convergence of MSS. During this period the MSS that were produced tended more and more to conform to the same standard. This standard could now be better maintained, since the copying of MSS was to a larger extent the work of trained scribes. In addition, there was evidently some degree of editing, in the course of which the wording of parallel accounts in the gospels were harmonized to some extent, grammatical irregularities were corrected, and a text was produced that was in general smooth and easy to read.

More than nine-tenths of all extant MSS of the NT are from this period of convergence of the MSS or later. Thus only a small percentage of the MSS preserve a form of the text that antedates the late standardized text. Although copying of MSS by hand continued to mean that virtually no two MSS were complete-

ly identical, nevertheless from the 8th cent. on almost all MSS represented in a general way the standardized form of text, and this form of the text was still current when the printing press revolutionized the world of lit.

2. Types of variants. The changes that scribes introduced into the NT MSS are of several types, which may be classified as either (1) unintentional, or much less frequently (2) intentional variation (see Metzger, Text, 186-206, for a much fuller discussion).

a. Unintentional variants. Unintentional, or accidental, variants include errors of seeing, of writing, and of judgment.

Errors of seeing include esp. the confusion of letters or pairs of letters that look much alike in uncial writing such as ΕΩΕΕ, ΑΑΑ, ΩΝ, ΝΛΙ, and ΝΙΝrolled. Occasionally, an abbreviation might be mistaken for a full word of similar appearance or vice versa (e.g., ΕΩΕΕ and ΕΩΕΕ—"God" and "who"—in 1 Tim 3:16); a scribe's eye might skip from the first to the second occurrence of the same word, causing omission of the intervening material; he might read the same word or phrase twice; or he might confuse a word for a word of similar appearance (e.g., ΙΩΑΙΔΟΣ and ΙΩΑΙΔΟΣ—"they took" and "they cast").

Errors of hearing might arise when a group of scribes copied MSS by dictation. Since very early in the Christian era several Gr. vowels and diphthongs came to be pronounced alike (e.g., ι and ι, α and α, ο and ο, η and η), numerous confusions of spelling from dictation were possible. Some of these confusions resulted in obvious misspellings, but others produced a different word—e.g., the confusion of η and ι would change any form of the pl. pronoun "you" to the corresponding form of "us."

Errors of memory might result in a mere change of word order in a series, substitution of one synonym for another, or the accidental inclusion of a word or phrase from a parallel passage.

Errors of writing might include the addition or omission of a letter or letters (e.g., ΕΤΕΥΔΗΜΟΣ χρησι, "we became infants," and ΕΤΕΥΔΗΜΟΣ χρησι, "we became gentle"; cf. 1 Thess 2:7), or the omission of an indication of abbreviation.

Errors of judgment, in addition to some of the preceding errors, might cause a scribe to include a marginal note, thinking that it was a part of the text itself. This may be the origin of the explanation of the troubling of the water in John 5:3, 4.

b. Intentional variants. Intentional changes are the result of scribes' attempts to correct what they thought were errors, to make the text less ambiguous, or to strengthen the theology. On the other hand, there is virtually no evidence of a scribe's intentionally weakening the theology or purposely introducing heresy into his MSS.

Probably the most common type of intentional variant is the harmonization of parallel ac-
counts in the gospels. To mention only two such instances, the much shorter VS of the Lord’s Prayer in Luke 11:2-4 has been amplified by scribes in accordance with the longer form of Matthew 6:9-13; and the form of the conversation between the rich young ruler and Jesus in Matthew 19:16, 17 has been modified to agree with the form of the parallels in Mark and Luke.

Scribes also attempted to resolve apparent difficulties in the text. In Mark 1:2, the original reference to “Isaiah the prophet” was modified to “the prophets,” since the first part of the following reference was from Malachi (Mal 3:1). Since the Prodigal Son says in Luke 15:19 that he will say to his father, “Make me as one of thy hired servants,” scribes of several good MSS have added these words in v. 21.

Scribal changes in the interests of a strengthened theology or piety sometimes occurred. The most notable of these is the reference to the three heavenly witnesses of 1 John 5:7, 8 in the KJV, which is found in no Gr. MS earlier than the 15th cent.; although this variant may have originated as a marginal comment in a Lat. MS rather than as an intentional addition to the Biblical text. Other instances include the addition of “and fasting” to “prayer” (Mark 9:29), and the word “openly” following “shall reward you” in Matthew 6:6 to provide a happy contrast with the earlier words “in secret.”

Although all sorts of variants may be found among the thousands in the extant MSS, these are minutiae in the total text of the MSS. The scribes generally copied the text with great care, even when the text may not have seemed to make sense (see Metzger, Text of the NT, 206, and G. D. Kilpatrick, “The Transmission of the NT and Its Reliability,” Proceedings of the Victoria Institute LXXXIX, reprinted in The Bible Translator 9, 3 [July 1958], 127-136).

8. The Greek NT in print. 1. The establishment of the “Received Text” (1516-1633). Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of printing from movable type, in the middle of the 15th cent., had the most far-reaching consequences for the entire world of lit. and culture. For the first time it became possible not only to produce books more cheaply than ever before but also to produce any number of identical copies of a work. Paper had come into common use in the Western world by this time, having displaced parchment by the beginning of the 15th cent. Although some handwritten MSS continued to be produced for another cent. or so, with the invention of printing the age of MSS was at an end.

The first major publication of Gutenberg’s press was a beautiful Lat. Vul. ed. of the Bible in folio size, produced in 1456, appropriately known as the Gutenberg Bible, of which forty-seven copies are still known. Not until half a cent. later, however, was the first Gr. NT printed. For one reason, the Bible of the scholars was the Lat. Bible, with comparatively little concern being given to the Gr. text. A second reason may have been the problem and expense involved in preparing Gr. type in imitation of the current minuscule style, which involved several forms of a given letter as well as numerous ligatures.

Eventually, in 1502, the preparation of a Gr. Bible was begun, under the direction of Cardinal Ximenes of Spain, and ed. by several scholars. The NT was printed in Lat. and Gr., the OT with the Heb., Vul., and Gr. LXX in parallel columns. The project was undertaken in the town of Alcalá (known as Complutum in Lat.); hence, the Bible is known as the Complutensian Polyglot. The NT was completed in 1514, the OT volumes in 1517, but the approval of the pope was not given until 1520, and for some reason the work was not actually “published” until 1522.

In the meantime, the Swiss printer Froben, doubtless having heard of the Spanish cardinal’s project, urged the scholar Erasmus to undertake the editing of a Gr. NT. In July 1515, Erasmus hastily obtained a few Gr. NT MSS, which happened to be available in Basel, none of which contained the entire NT, and the only MS that was not essentially the late standardized form of text he used sparingly because of its differences from the others. His one MS of Revelation lacked the final six verses, and at some other points the Biblical text was confused with the accompanying catal.

In these passages he therefore inserted his own Gr. tr. from the Lat., resulting in a Gr. text that in some passages agrees with no known Gr. MS. This ed., accompanied by Erasmus’ own Lat. tr. (which differed at numerous points from the current Vul.), was published in March, 1516, the haste of the work being reflected in its many typographical errors. Thus, whereas the Complutensian was the first Gr. NT to be printed, Erasmus’ edition was the first to be published—i.e., actually placed on the market.

Altogether Erasmus published five edd. of his NT, but the subsequent edd. included little additional consultation of MSS and few changes. One change, however, was significant. When one of the editors of the Complutensian protested to Erasmus the omission of the reference to the three heavenly witnesses in 1 John 5:7, 8, which was included in the Vul., Erasmus rashly agreed to include it in his next ed. if it could be found in any Gr. MS. When such a MS (Codex 61) was shown to him (prob. prepared for the purpose), he dutifully included the passage in his third edition (1522). He again omitted it from his subsequent edd., yet somehow it was his third ed. that most largely influenced the textual tradition, and thus this passage found its way into the works of other editors and into the accepted tradition of the text for more than three centuries.
In this way, the subsequent tradition of the printed Gr. NT was based on the uncritical use of a very few MSS, which for the most part represented a late stage in the development of the text rather than adequately representing the original.

Four edd. of the Gr. NT were published by Robert Estienne (Stephanus), between 1546 and 1551. His third ed., which indicated the variant readings of a number of MSS and of the Complutensian, was the first Gr. NT to contain something like a critical apparatus. This third ed. became the generally-accepted form of the text for Great Britain and the United States. In the fourth edition, Stephanus introduced the verse numeration, which is still in use.

Theodore Beza, Protestant scholar and successor to John Calvin at Geneva, published nine edd. of the Gr. NT, between 1565 and 1604, five of which are merely small reprints. Beza’s reputation helped to popularize the form of the text of the Erasmus and Stephanus tradition.

Two brothers of the Elzevir family, publishers of many edd. of the classics, published seven edd. of the Gr. NT, between 1624 and 1678, primarily as a commercial enterprise. The Lat. preface to their second ed. (1653) assured the reader, “You have therefore the text now received by all, in which we give nothing altered or corrupt.” The words “received text” (textum receptum) of this advertisement passed into common use, and the phrase “Received Text” (Textus Receptus) described the printed form of the Gr. text of the Erasmus tradition. It was specifically the Elzevir ed. of 1633 that became the Textus Receptus for continental Europe, as the third ed. of Stephanus was for Great Britain and the United States.

2. The accumulation of textual evidence (1633-1830). With the publication of the Elzevir ed., some one hundred edd. of the Gr. NT had been printed, and it was generally available. Next, scholars turned their attention to the text of the ancient MSS. To see whether the text could be improved. During this period of two centuries, the dominance of the Textus Receptus was not broken, but evidence was gradually collected that was to lead to a better text.

John Mill’s ed. of 1707 cited the evidence of nearly a hundred MSS as well as numerous patriotic writers and several VSS. Even his presentation of variant readings, however, was attacked as undermining the Scriptures.

Richard Bentley published no NT, but was an influential scholar who defended the study of the MSS against those who opposed Mill’s work.

Johann Albrecht Bengel published a Gr. NT in 1734, in which he altered the Textus Receptus in a limited number of instances, generally only where other edd. had previously done so. He included a critical apparatus with variant readings classified as to the degree of their superiority or inferiority to the text of his ed. Most importantly, Bengel recognized that the witnesses to the text must be classified into groups, not merely counted individually. By dividing the witnesses into two or three groups and by formulating the principle, which is now recognized as being fundamental, that a more difficult reading is generally more likely to be original than an easier reading, Bengel came to be called the father of modern textual criticism of the NT.

Johann Jakob Wetstein published a two-volume ed. of the Gr. NT in 1751-1752, using the Textus Receptus but indicating in his apparatus the readings that he believed were correct. He held, however, to the superiority of the later MSS. His unique contribution was his system of citing uncial MSS by capital letters and minuscules by Arab. numerals, a system followed until the present.

Johann Salomo Semler’s contribution to textual criticism was his development of Bengel’s classification of MSS into three main groups: Alexandrian, Western, and Eastern.

Johann Jakob Griesbach, a student of Semler, carried forward and popularized this professor’s work. He identified three families of witnesses in the gospels, which he designated Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine; and two families in the Pauline epistles—Alexandrian and Western. He also elaborated fifteen principles of textual criticism, which are generally sound. Using these principles in his three edd. of the NT, he abandoned the Textus Receptus in numerous instances. His work and method made him one of the most important textual scholars.

3. The struggle to overthrow the Textus Receptus (1830-1882). Until well into the 19th cent., the printed NT continued to be basically that of Erasmus and Stephanus-Elzevir. There were departures from the received text, but not a basically different text. The first editor to set aside the Textus Receptus completely and edit a text on the basis of ancient witnesses and principles of textual criticism was Karl Lachmann, whose first ed. appeared in 1831. At best such an ed. would have been violently attacked by those who regarded the Textus Receptus as sacrosanct; but by failing to make clear his principles—merely referring readers to an article that he had published in an obscure periodical—even scholars of a more liberal point of view took issue with him. In his second ed. (1842-1850), however, he included a full statement of his principles, which won appreciable support for his text.

In England, the critical text of Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, published in 1857-1879 subsequent to publication of a careful statement of his principles of criticism, did much to influence British opinion toward the acceptance of a “critical text”—i.e., a text based upon
principles of textual criticism. His principles, arrived at independently, closely paralleled those of Lachmann. He also examined most of the then known uncial MSS and a number of important minuscules.

The greatest single name in NT textual criticism is doubtless that of Constantin Tischendorf. His publications of texts and collations of MSS and of critical edd. of the Gr. NT exceed those of any other scholar. He published the text of twenty-one uncial MSS, including the famous Codex Sinaiticus, and collated, or copied, the text of more than twenty others. The first of his edd. of the NT was published in 1841. His eighth and final ed. (1869-1872), published in two vols. includes a critical apparatus that is so comprehensive in its citation of MSS, VSS, and patristic writings that it is still, a cent. later, indispensable for serious study of the NT text. A volume of prolegomena, edited by Caspar René Gregory, was published in 1894 as the third volume of Tischendorf’s eighth ed.

The triumph for a NT text based upon critical principles was climaxed in the publication in 1881-1882 of an ed. that was the joint labor of two scholars of Cambridge University—Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort. Their ed. contained no critical apparatus as such. On the other hand, their text was accompanied by an entire volume in which they carefully set forth their principles. The thoroughness of their work, the handy form of their NT ed., and the extensive use of their text in the ERV of the NT, contributed to the success of their ed. Virtually all subsequent work on the NT text looks back to the work of Westcott and Hort. With their publication, the reign of the Textus Receptus was ended.

There was, of course, a reaction against the critical text, notably by J. W. Burgon and Edward Miller. They argued that God would not have permitted the Church to follow a corrupt text for fifteen centuries. The answer was that the TR is not a bad or misleading text; that, moreover, before the invention of printing there was no rigidly fixed text at all. They also argued that the critical text amounted to rejecting the testimony of the vast majority of the (later) MSS. The reply was that any number of MSS that can be traced to a common ancestor indicates only one witness, not many; and that this procedure is commonly followed in textual criticism of the secular writings of antiquity.

Their argument that the readings of the late MSS are intrinsically superior is subjective; the consensus of scholarly opinion is to the contrary.

V. THE MODERN PERIOD OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

A. The theory of Westcott and Hort. The principles that WH set forth may be examined in detail elsewhere (e.g., their own volume, The NT in the Original Greek, Introduction and Appendix, or Metzger’s excellent presentation in his Text of the NT, 129-135). Basically, in addition to using valid principles of criticism to decide the correct reading in a given variant, they pointed out that the degree of reliability that a given MS exhibits in a large number of instances should also be taken into account in deciding other instances. Further assurance of conclusions may be gained if, instead of considering the characteristics of individual MSS, the witnesses are grouped with others whose text is similar. Then, if individual peculiarities are eliminated and the consensus of the group is determined, the variants may be studied in terms of these groups of MSS instead of individual MSS.

WH recognized four principal groups, or text-types:

1) The Syrian text is the latest, and is found in most of the later witnesses. It represents a revision, produced in Syria (hence its name) about the 4th cent., which characteristically smoothed out rough grammar and harsh transitions, clarified obscurities, harmonized parallels, and is generally smooth, clear, and theologically safe.

2) The Western text, which was in existence in the 2nd cent., is most notable for its extensive paraphrases and additions (esp. in Acts), substitution of synonyms, and occasional significant shorter readings, although it has many less spectacular variants as well. Among its chief witnesses are Codices D and D* (05 and 06) and the Old Latin.

3) The Alexandrian text originated in Alexandria, the seat of scholarly criticism of the Gr. classics. Its witnesses include Codices C, L, 33, the Coptic VSS, and certain Alexandrian fathers. This text-type WH believed to be characterized not by variants of content and substance but by corrections of grammar, syntax, and similar matters of the sometimes unsophisticated style of NT Gr., as might be expected in the scholarly environment of Alexandria.

4) The Neutral text, generally represented by the consensus of codices B* and B, WH felt represented a textual tradition that preserved the original text with a minimum of change. They believed that readings in which these two MSS agreed could rarely be rejected, and that frequently B alone preserved the original text. On the other hand, they did not automatically accept the B* text, rejecting it when they felt that textual principles so dictated.

WH theorized that from the original text (substantially preserved in the Neutral text) the Western text was developed by extensive alteration. From the Neutral text, modified by philological alterations and slight admixture from the Western, the Alexandrian text was produced. When the Christian Church became recognized and MSS could be openly produced and compared, a revision incorporating these
three texts—but significantly less Western elements—plus editorial and theological refinements, produced the Syrian text, which in turn became the general form of the text of MSS until the invention of printing, and the TR of printed edd.

B. The work of von Soden. The most notable attempt to reach the original NT text on a basis radically different from that of WH is the work of Hermann von Soden a professor in Berlin. Between 1902 and 1913, von Soden published a critical text with a very extensive critical apparatus, together with a large volume detailing his textual theory. His apparatus utilized a completely new system of MS designation, which was intended to indicate something of the date and contents of each MS. As a result of its complicated nature and the fact that his theories have not generally been accepted, his system has not been adopted. A published key to his nomenclature is generally used to read his apparatus.

Von Soden theorized the existence of three ancient text-types, designated by the Gr. letters: K for Kerygma, which approximated the WH Syrian; A for ‘Ieviyn, which compares to the WH Neutral plus Alexandrian; and I for ‘Iepowlra, which includes the WH Western plus other elements. Von Soden felt that the agreement of two of these three groups, qualified by certain other principles, could lead to their common ancestor “I-H-K,” which was current in the 3rd cent. By then eliminating the corrupting influence of Tatian, the text of the mid-2nd cent. could be determined, which von Soden believed was essentially the original text.

Von Soden’s work made significant contributions to certain aspects of textual study. His basic textual theory, however, has largely been rejected on the grounds that his evaluation of text-types is faulty, that his estimation of the corrupting influence of Tatian on the text is unwarranted, and that even the NT text of the mid-2nd cent. prob. already contained virtually all of the variants that are significant in textual study. It is noteworthy, however, that von Soden’s text, based upon principles so different from those of WH, agrees largely with that of WH.

C. Current view of text-types. It is now generally agreed that WH were too optimistic in their evaluation of a “Neutral” text, and that the Neutral witnesses are in fact representatives of the same basic text-type as their “Alexandrian” text. These two are now commonly combined under the designation Alexandrian. The Alexandrian is the best of the individual text-types, but its readings must nevertheless be submitted to the canons of criticism and compared with the other text-types.

The Western text has been subject to much study since WH, and a few scholars have even maintained that it best represents the original. Its actual origin is perhaps even more of an enigma now than at the time of WH. As were WH, however, the majority of scholars are still reluctant to accept most readings of the typically Western type.

The “Syrian” text of WH is now called the Byzantine, or Antiochian. Much more is now known of this text-type, its subdivisions, and its stages of development, thanks to the work of von Soden and others. This late text may occasionally preserve an ancient reading lost from the other texts. Generally speaking, however, readings typical of the Byzantine text do not commend themselves as being original.

Since the time of WH, a number of MSS have come to light that agree sufficiently to warrant grouping them as an additional text-type (at least in the gospels) known as the Caesarean, so named because Origen seems to have used it during his residence in Caesarea. Its characteristics place it midway between the Alexandrian and the Western, but without the major deviations of the Western text.

Some of the more important witnesses to each of the text-types are as follows: Alexandrian: P4, 534, 75. K. Outside the gospels, B, C, L, 33, Bohairic, Cyril of Alexandria, and Origen in part; Western: P46, 58, 61, 48-D (05), Dura (06), a few minuscules, Old Latin, Old Syriac, Tertullian, and Irenaeus: Byzantine: most later uncials, most minuscules, Gothic and later VSS, later church fathers; Caesarean: p73, 437, 6, W in most of Mark, family 1, family 13, 565, 700, Old Georgian, Old Armenian, Palestinian Syriac, Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebius, and Origen in part.

D. Principles of textual criticism. 1. Internal evidence. In deciding between variant readings, the basic principle is that the reading at first sight seems more difficult in the context is likely to be original, unless it is an accidental error that makes no sense. The point is that an ancient scribe, faced with two or more readings, would generally choose the one easiest to understand at first glance. Thus in John 1:18, “the only God . . . .” is preferred over “the only Son . . . .”

A second principle, which is in part a corollary of the above, is the principle that a shorter reading is more likely to be original than a longer reading, if the difference is the result of an intentional alteration. In other words, a scribe was more likely to add an explanatory comment than to omit a phrase intentionally. On the other hand, if an accidental alteration is involved, the longer reading may be original and the shorter reading an accidental omissions—e.g., if the same word or syllable occurs twice in a passage, and the scribe’s eye skipped from the first occurrence to the second, as in Matthew 5:19 where some MSS omit the second part of the v. by skipping from the first occurrence of “shall be called . . . . in the kingdom of heaven” to the second.

A third principle, likewise in part related to the first, is that the reading from which the
other readings could most easily have developed is likely to be original. For example, in Mark 9:49, the original text was doubtless the rather enigmatic, “For everyone shall be salted with fire,” which a prosaic scribe altered to the innocuous “For every sacrifice shall be salted with salt”; and the Byzantine text then characteristically combined both readings, as in the KJV. By the same token, a reading that has a definitely heightened theological or devotional emphasis is likely to be a scribal alteration rather than the original; e.g., St. Paul’s exhortation, “So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:20) led a scribe to make the pious addition, “and in your spirit, which are God’s” (KJV).

An important application of the above principle relates to parallel passages, as between the gospels. Since scribes would be tempted to harmonize parallels, a reading that is not thus harmonized is generally to be preferred. For example, after the words, “salute it,” in Matthew 10:12, some MSS add, “saying, Peace be to this house,” from the parallel in Luke 10:5. Similar harmonization is common in the synoptic gospels.

2. External evidence. The application of the above principles of internal evidence to a large number of variants will make it possible to evaluate the degree of reliability of individual witnesses and, more importantly, of groups of witnesses or text-types. It then becomes possible to decide between readings of a variant by considering the general reliability of the text-types that support each reading as well as by the principles of internal evidence, since the latter are to some extent subjective. The combination of internal and external evidence produces a more balanced judgment than reliance on either one alone.

The Alexandrian is the best individual text-type, but either the Western or Byzantine, when standing alone, are generally the least reliable. On the other hand, since evidence of a wide geographical distribution of a reading suggests its originality, support by good witnesses of more than one text-type is preferable to support by one text-type exclusively.

VI. Conclusion

The evangelical view of inspiration relates to the Scriptures in the form in which they were originally given. No addition or modification of the original, therefore, no matter how long enshrined in MSS or trs., partakes of this inspiration. The determination of the original form of the text as nearly as possible is, therefore, a solemn responsibility. At the same time, the precise original wording of the NT cannot be determined with finality in every instance. Consequently, the best form of the text that can be reached will be, from a technical point of view, only an approximation to the original. From a practical view, however, the difference involved in most variants is so slight that little or no difference of meaning is involved.

One may safely conclude, then, that when sound principles of textual criticism are judiciously followed, a NT text may be constructed of which it may be said, in the words of Sir Frederic Kenyon, that “we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable word of God” (Story of the Bible, 113).


J. H. GREENLEE

THADDAEUS θαδᾶος (Thadaios). One of the twelve apostles (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18). In Matthew 10:3 KJV the reading is “Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus.” Omitted from the lists of Luke 6:14-16 and Acts 1:13, the name of Judas, “son” (RSV) or “brother” (KJV) of James is inserted instead. Luke Prob. gives the true name. Thaddeus (Aram. “breast-nipple?”) and Lebbeus (Aram. “heart”) may be descriptive designations of Judas introduced in the gospels to avoid confusion with the traitor and because of the odium attached to his name. Judas (not Iscariot) of John 14:22 is possibly this disciple. See JUDAS.


A. M. Ross

THADDEUS, ACTS OF θαδηδ existence (Thadaios). A 6th cent. Gr. VS and development of the Syrian. Legend of Abgar, wherein is recorded a supposed exchange of correspondence between Abgar V, king of Edessa (A.D. 9-46), and Jesus, the outcome of which is a mission to Edessa by Addai (Thaddeus) who performs