

## **The New Testament Manuscripts.**

The Traditional Text. The Traditional text of the New Testament has existed from the time of Christ right down to the present. It has had many different names down through the years, such as Byzantine Text, Eastern Text, Received Text, Textus Receptus, Majority Text, and others. Although no complete Bible manuscripts have survived which would allow us to date the Traditional text to the first century, there is a strong witness to the early existence and use of the Traditional text by the early church in its lectionaries. These lectionaries were portions of the Scripture that were read in the churches on certain days. Because modern printing technology had not yet been invented, many of the early Christians did not have personal copies of the Bible. It was a custom of the early church to read a portion of the Gospels, then a portion from the Epistles each day. This practice is similar to our reading a verse of Scripture from our daily devotional booklet, then starting the day in prayer, the only difference being, it was done in the church house rather than in your own house. Nearly every lectionary in existence contains Traditional readings, attesting to the very early existence and use of the Traditional text. The early Baptist church, called "Waldensians" by their enemies, which can be dated to 120 A. D., was known to have quoted from the Traditional text in many of its writings. Also the vast majority of all existing manuscripts, somewhere around ninety percent, follow the Traditional text. The Greek Orthodox Church used, and still uses, the Traditional text, and they are experts in the Greek language, as it is their native tongue! (Allow me to say here that the attempt by some "scholars" to identify the Traditional Text as being merely the "liturgical text of the Greek Orthodox Church" is hypocritical at best, and deliberately deceptive at worst. Such a pathetically weak attempt to attach the word "liturgical" to the Traditional Text is sophomoric and moronic. It would be like saying the King James Bible is merely the liturgical text of the Anglican Church simply because it was used exclusively by them for over three hundred years. If such condemnation by association is valid, then the Revised Version (which they love so much) is the liturgical text of the Presbyterian Church, the New American Standard Version (which they also seem to love), and the New International Version are the liturgical texts of the New Evangelical Church, and the Living Bible is the liturgical text of the Charismatic Church. Such deliberately deceptive statements have no place in an honest inquiry into the true identity of the preserved text of the Holy Scriptures!)

The earliest translations of the Greek text into a foreign language produced versions that follow the traditional text. The Syriac Peshitta, which I mentioned earlier, bears such strong witness to the antiquity of the Traditional text of the New Testament, the early proponents of the Critical Text had to get it out of the second and third centuries (100-300 A. D.), where it has been historically agreed to have been produced, and make it appear as if it were of later origin. J. A. Hort theorized a late revision to account for it, and F. C. Burkitt went even farther than Hort and specified Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa (411-435 A. D.) as the author of the revision! The complete absence of even one shred of evidence to support any part of this theory has very conveniently been ignored by the proponents of the Critical text. The true evidence of course points in exactly the opposite direction, namely that Rabbula himself used the

Old Syriac text in his earliest writings! Additional strong evidence against this poorly constructed fraud of a theory is found in the fact that one of the early sects, called the Nestorians, used the Peshitta extensively and thought of it as the authoritative Word of God. This would be unthinkable if the Peshitta were the work of Rabbula, who was a great adversary of the Nestorians and openly denounced them as heretics! I seriously doubt they would consider any of their greatest enemy's work as being authoritative!

The Italic church in northern Italy in 157 A. D. was known to use a version based on the Traditional text, and the Gallic Church in what is now southern France was known to have used a Gallic version in 177 that followed the Traditional text. The Gothic Version of the fourth century (300-400 A. D.) was also based upon the Traditional text. The Old Latin texts were texts that were translated into the Latin language, not only in North Africa, but also in the East, possibly even in Antioch. These Old Latin translations, going back in their earliest form to about the middle of the second century (150 A. D.), are very early witnesses to the Greek text from which they were translated. They are very literal translations, and the fact that they are often quoted by the church fathers of these areas, enables us to see which Greek text was generally in use in that area at that time. The vast majority of these Old Latin versions follow, in almost word-for-word format, the Traditional text.

Churches all down through the ages have used the Traditional text. The churches of the reformation period all used versions based on the Traditional text. Martin Luther's German Bible was based on the Traditional text. The French version of Oliveton was based on the Traditional text. The Czech Version and the Italian version of Diodati were based on the Traditional text. All of the early English versions including William Tyndale's Bible, The Coverdale Bible, The Matthews Bible, the Taverners Bible, The Great Bible, The Geneva Bible, and the Bishops' Bible were all based on the Traditional text. When the Roman Catholic cleric Jerome was commissioned by the Bishop of Rome to produce a new Latin version, he wrote a letter in 383 A. D. to the person commissioning the translation stating: "Thou compellest me to make a new work out of an old so that after so many copies of the Scriptures have been dispersed throughout the whole world I am as it were to occupy the post of arbiter, and seeing they differ from one another am to determine which of them are in agreement with the original Greek. If they maintain that confidence is to be reposed in the Latin exemplars, let them answer which, for there are almost as many copies of the translations as manuscripts. But if the truth is to be sought from the majority, why not rather go back to the Greek original, and correct the blunders which have been made by incompetent translators, made worse rather than better by the presumption of unskillful correctors, and added to or altered by careless scribes." It was Jerome's contention that in his day a number of manuscripts existed that had been "altered," "corrected," and otherwise corrupted by "careless scribes" and "incompetent translators," and the only way to insure the new Latin translation was to be accurate was to allow him to go to the majority of the Greek manuscripts that were in common usage in his time. Unfortunately, his Roman masters did not allow him to do so, and his Vulgate was simply a revision of the already existing corrupt Latin versions.

The Greek manuscripts. There are at present about 5,255 manuscripts of the New Testament in existence, and approximately 90% of those manuscripts follow the Traditional text. Let's take a closer look at these manuscripts to see what they are.

1. The Papyrus fragments are small pieces of papyrus, which is a type of paper made from the papyrus plant which grows in Egypt. This paper is very brittle, and crumbles easily when handled. Most of these fragments are broken pieces with a few verses on them. The oldest existing manuscripts are these papyrus fragments, or papyri. These manuscripts date from the second century (100-200) A. D., to the seventh century (600-700). Frequently the earliest papyri support the distinctive Traditional readings. These Traditional readings caused a problem for those who hold to the Critical text, providing a strong witness for the early existence of the Traditional text. One of the oldest, the fragment called P66, which dates to the second century (100-200) A. D., gives strong support for the Traditional text in over 25% of its readings, thus destroying the theory of the proponents of the Critical text that states the Traditional text did not originate until the mid- fourth century (350 A. D.). However, care should be taken not to overstate the evidence of the papyri as they will often side with the Critical text against the Traditional text.

2. The Uncials are Greek manuscripts that are written in all capital letters. These uncials or majuscules as they are sometimes called have no punctuation or spaces between the letters. As of this writing there are 274 uncials dating from between the third century (200-300 A. D.) to the tenth century (900-1000 A. D.). Over 85% of the readings from these uncials follow the Traditional text.

3. The Cursives, sometimes called minuscules, are Greek manuscripts written in what we would call "longhand", or cursive writing. During the ninth century (800-900 A. D.) the scribes who were responsible for the copying of the New Testament abandoned the uncial (all capital letters) script in favor of the small-lettered cursive (minuscule) script. There are about 2800 of these cursive manuscripts, and the overwhelming majority of these (90%) side with the Traditional text. The textual implication of this change of writing style has often been overlooked in the textual debate. Jakob van Braggen says: "It is assumed that after this transliteration process the majuscule was taken out of circulation.... The import of this datum has not been taken into account enough in the present New Testament textual criticism, for it implies, that just the oldest, best, and most customary manuscripts come to us in the new uniform (cursive style)." (From "The Ancient Text of the New Testament", pages 26, 27; as cited in "The Identity of the New Testament Text," Wilbur Pickering, Nelson Publishing Company, 1980, page 131.)

It seems only logical and reasonable to understand that the scribes of the ninth century would be in a better position to decide on what constitutes the "oldest and best" manuscripts than the textual critics of the twentieth century! Why, during this period of change-over from the uncial to cursive style, did the scribes decisively reject the Critical text in favor of the Traditional text, if they did not realize the

Traditional text represented the best readings available. It becomes obvious to any honest researcher that the scribes of the ninth century knew the Traditional text was the inspired, inerrant, preserved text of the New Testament Scriptures!

4. The Lectionaries. The word lection means "to read," and the Lectionaries were portions of Scripture that were read in the churches on certain days. Of the 2,143 Lectionaries, every one attests to the Traditional text. 100% of the evidence from the Lectionaries supports the Traditional text as being the text used by the early churches.

What about the other texts of the New Testament? It is generally agreed among textual critics that accept the "critical" viewpoint that there are four basic types of texts represented in the manuscript evidence. However, upon closer careful examination, we find that the evidence for the existence of these so-called "text types" is very thin, if not non-existent! Although J. A. Hort claimed the results of his genealogical evidence proved to an absolute certainty that the manuscripts could be grouped into four basic "families" or "types," it is now clear to the careful researcher that Mr. Hort's "results" were either wishful thinking at best, or pure fabrication at worst. How could there be a "result" if his method for gathering of genealogical evidence was never applied to the manuscripts? Yet, Hort's "results" have been accepted as fact by many of the so-called textual scholars of today, without the slightest thought being given to his rules of evidence, and the non-application of those rules to the manuscripts! M. M. Parvis, in his article "The Nature and Task of New Testament Textual Criticism," ("The Journal of Religion," XXXII, 1952, Page 173) states. "We have reconstructed text-types and families and sub-families and in so doing have created things that never before existed on earth or in heaven. We have assumed that manuscripts reproduced themselves according to the Mendelian law. But when we have found that a particular manuscript would not fit into any of our nicely constructed schemes, we have thrown up our hands and said that it contained a 'mixed text'."

Bruce Metzgar (no friend to the Traditional text) stated in his book "Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism," (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1963, page 67) the "Caesarean" text-type is disintegrating. By this he did not mean the material upon which the text was written was crumbling, but rather, the concept of a "Caesarean text-type" was itself now largely understood to have been a false assumption. He went on to ask: "Was there a fundamental flaw in the previous investigation which tolerated so erroneous a grouping?" The evidence says there is indeed a fundamental flaw in the theory concerning the existence of "text-types." Those men who have done the most extensive collating of manuscripts, as a rule, have not accepted the idea of such groups or families. Let's look at the so-called "text-types" themselves and see what we can discover.

1. The Western Text is now generally agreed, even among the proponents of the Critical Text, to have been the result of the over-active imagination of Hermann von Soden, and did not, in fact, ever exist.

2. The Caesarean Text, as we have already seen, is now understood to have been based on less than ideal scholarship.

3. The Alexandrian Text. E. C. Colwell, in his article entitled "The Significance of Grouping of New Testament Manuscripts," (New Testament Studies IV," 1957-1958, pages 86, 88) stated, "After a careful study of all alleged Beta Text-type (Alexandrian) witnesses in the first chapter of Mark, six Greek manuscripts emerged as primary witnesses: Aleph, B, L, 33, 892, and 2427. Therefore, the weaker Beta manuscripts C, delta, 157, 517, 579, 1241, and 1342 were set aside. Then on the basis of the six primary witnesses an "average," or mean, text was reconstructed including all the readings supported by the majority of the primary witnesses. Even on this restricted basis the amount of variation recorded in the apparatus was dismaying. In this first chapter, each of the six witnesses differed from the "average" Beta Text-type as follows: L, nineteen times (Wescott and Hort twenty-one times); Aleph, twenty-six times; 2427, thirty-two times; 33, thirty-three times; B, thirty-four times; and 892, forty-one times. These results show convincingly any attempt to reconstruct an archetype of the Beta text-type on a quantitative basis is doomed to failure. The text thus reconstructed is not reconstructed but constructed; it is an artificial entity that never existed."

So then we now see that it is generally agreed, even among those who hold to the Critical text position, that the so-called "text-types" were (1) the result of over-active imaginations, (2) the result of very poor scholarship, and (3) the result of constructing an artificial entity that never existed! There are only two types of texts, the correct text, and the corrupt text! The overwhelming majority of the evidence indicates the correct text is best represented by the Traditional text that has been preserved by God, and all others represent the corrupt, heretical text that has been decimated by the attacks of Satan and his unbelieving hoards.

The Guardians of the New Testament. Just as God appointed the Jews to be the guardians of the Old Testament, so also He has appointed guardians of the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 3:14, 15, the Bible says, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth", and in John 17:17, the Lord Jesus Christ identifies what exactly that truth is, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." The Bible clearly teaches that the local church is the pillar and ground of the truth, and that the truth is the Word of God. Therefore, the local church is the pillar and ground, the guardian, of the Word of God, the Bible. Unfortunately, in this modern age when even so-called fundamentalists have adopted the methodology of the New Evangelicals, and do not practice the primacy of the local church, the God-given guardianship of the Bible has passed by default to the so-called scholars in the Colleges and Seminaries that are not under the authority of the local church, or the leader of the local church, the God-called, God-gifted, and God-ordained pastor! These men may be members of a good local church, but their work done in the

schools is not under their pastor's authority and control, and these so-called scholars have usurped the responsibility and authority away from the God-ordained repository of the truth of His Word, the local church.

When we look at the gifts that the Lord has given to the local church for the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ, we see in Ephesians 4:11-12, "And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." There are a couple of things I would like to point out here. First, the gifts of these specially equipped men is given to the local church, for the work of the local church ministry, and for the building up of the local church. Nowhere is the so-called para-church organization, or College, or Seminary mentioned, and nowhere is the "Scholar" mentioned as a specially equipped man who has been given the guardianship of the oracles of God! Second, when you read the description of the last specially gifted man who is given to the local church for its benefit, you will see that man is called a pastor/teacher. There is no semicolon between pastor and teacher, as there is between all of the other titles, because it is all one gift, vested in one man. Therefore the scholars may not usurp the title "teacher" in this context unless they are also bearers of the title and office of pastor. I am of the opinion that we must guard very carefully the office and title of pastor. I have heard camp directors and nursing home chaplains referred to as "pastor" so-and-so. A pastor is a pastor only if he is the shepherd of a flock of born-again, baptized believers, organized, and assembled together, having the ordinances, and officers of a true New Testament Church. In reference to that term "scholar", don't get me wrong, I have no problem with scholarly thinking. The men that I studied under, Dr. Richard V. Clearwaters, and Dr. George W. Dollar were, and still are, two of the most scholarly men who have ever lived. Dr. Dollar is, in my opinion, the worlds foremost expert on Church History, especially as it pertains to fundamentalism in America. However, both of these good and Godly men also held the office of pastor. Dr. Clearwaters was pastor of Fourth Baptist Church in Minneapolis for over forty years, and Dr. Dollar was co-pastor of that same great church during his entire tenure at Central Baptist Seminary. The "scholar" that I am referring to is the man who does not hold the office of pastor, but usurps the duties of that office, and often looks down upon the mere pastor from the lofty heights of academia, thanking God he is not like other men, such as this lowly pastor!

Getting back to our subject, we see that the preponderance of the evidence clearly points to the antiquity and superiority of the Traditional Hebrew and Greek texts. These Traditional texts are the only texts that have been in uninterrupted use from the time of the close of the canon of Scripture (about 100 A. D.) until the present, thus fulfilling the requirement of being "preserved" for every generation.

Why is it, then, that so many otherwise good pastors do not take the Traditional text position? I believe there are two reasons for this. The first is ignorance. Many pastors have been educated in the Critical text position in Bible College and Seminary, and almost every College and Seminary in the country has been infected with the

Modernist position that the Scriptures are somehow less than God says they are. Almost every school today has bowed the knee to a Modernistic Baal in the area of Manuscript Evidence, and joined hands with the enemy of our souls in his attempt to continue asking his lying question "Yea, hath God said?" These deceived men have accepted all that they have been taught as if it were the Gospel itself. They may have heard of the other position, but have not given it any serious thought, nor have they investigated for themselves to find the truth. They have put their faith in their College and Seminary professors, and that is that! The second reason is less wide spread, but much worse. There are men who are aware of the other position, and even have much of the evidence available to them, but because of their pig-headed stubbornness and sinful pride they are incapable of admitting that they may have been wrong. There are none so blind as they who will not see.

So, we may conclude, based upon the evidence, that any translation, in order to be a correct and accurate rendering of the inspired words of God must be based on the Traditional texts of the Old and New Testament, which brings me to my next point.

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