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I reproduce without change the following article from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, revised edition, vol. 5 (Chicago, 1929), pp. 2950-57. It is in some ways dated, having been written prior to 1915; but in general it represents opinions which are still held by most textual scholars. I have added a [footnote](#) concerning the textual affinities of the Peshitta version, in which the opinions of more recent scholars are noted. —M.D.M.

Text and Manuscripts of the New Testament

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The literary evidence to the text of the New Testament is vastly more abundant than that to any other series of writings of like compass in the entire range of ancient letters. Of the sacred books of the Hebrew Bible there is no known copy antedating the 10th century AD. Of Homer there is no complete copy earlier than the 13th century. Of Herodotus there is no manuscript earlier than the 10th century. Of Vergil but one copy is earlier than the fourth century, and but a fragment of all Cicero's writings is even as old as this. Of the New Testament, however, we have two splendid manuscripts of the fourth century, at least ten of the fifth, twenty-five

of the sixth and in all a total of more than four thousand copies in whole or in part of the Greek New Testament. To these copies of the text itself may be added the very important and even more ancient evidence of the versions of the New Testament in the Latin, Syriac, and Egyptian tongues, and the quotations and clear references to the New Testament readings found in the works of the early Church Fathers, as well as the inscriptions and monumental data in Syria, Asia Minor, Africa, Italy, and Greece, dating from the very age of the apostles and their immediate successors. It thus appears that the documents of the Christian faith are both so many and so widely scattered that these very facts more than any others have embarrassed the final determination of the text. Now however, the science of textual criticism has so far advanced and the textual problems of the Greek Testament have been so well traversed that one may read the Christian writings with an assurance approximating certainty.

Professor Eberhard Nestle speaks of the Greek text of the New Testament issued by Westcott and Hort as the "nearest in its approach to the goal." Professor Alexander Souter's student's edition of the Revisers' Greek New Testament, Oxford, 1910, no doubt attains even a higher watermark. It is the purpose of the present article to trace, as far as it can be done in a clear and untechnical manner, the process of connection between the original writings and this, one of the latest of the editions of the Greek New Testament.

I. Sources of Evidence for the Text of the New Testament

1. Autographs of the New Testament Writers

Until very recent times it has not been customary to take up with any degree of confidence, if at all, the subject of New Testament autographs, but since the researches in particular of Dalman, Deissmann, Moulton (W. F.) and Milligan (George), the task is not only appropriate but incumbent upon the careful student. The whole tendency of recent investigation is to give less place to the oral tradition of Christ's life and teaching and to press back the date of the writing of the Synoptic Gospels into the period falling between Pentecost and the destruction of Jerusalem. Sir William M. Ramsay goes so far as to claim that "antecedent probability founded on the general character of personal and contemporary Greek of Greek-Asiatic society" would indicate "that the first Christian account of the circumstances connected with the death of Jesus must be presumed to have been written in the year when Jesus died" (*Letters to the Seven Churches*, 7). W. M. Flinders Petrie argues to the same end and says: "Some generally accepted Gospels must have been in circulation before 60 AD. The mass of briefer records and Logia which the habits and culture of that age would produce must have been welded together within 10 or 20 years by the external necessities" (*The Growth of the Gospels*, 7).

The autographs of the New Testament writers have long been lost, but the discovery during the last few years of contemporary documents enables us to form fairly clear notions as to their general literary character and condition. In the first place papyrus was probably the material employed by all the New Testament writers, even the original Gospel of Matthew and the general Epistle of James, the only books written within Palestine, not being excepted, for the reason that they were not originally written with a view to their liturgical use, in which case vellum might possibly have been employed. Again the evidence of the writings themselves witnesses to the various literary processes followed during the first century. Dictation was largely followed by Paul, the names of at least four of his secretaries, Tertius, Sosthenes, Timothy, and Sylvanus, being given, while the master himself, as in many of the Egyptian papyri, appended his own signature, sometimes with a sentence or two at the end. The method of personal research was pursued, as well as compilation of diverse data including genealogies, together with the grouping of cognate matters in artistic forms and abundant quotation in writings held in high esteem by the readers, as in the First and Third Gospels and the Book of Acts. The presentation copy of one's works must have been written with unusual pains in case of their dedication to a patrician patron, as Luke to "most excellent Theophilus." For speculation as to the probable dimensions of the original papyrus rolls of New Testament books, one will find Professor J. Rendel Harris and Sir F. G. Kenyon extremely suggestive, and from opposite viewpoints; compare Kenyon, *Handbook of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*; Harris, *New Testament Autographs*.

Comparatively few papyrus fragments of the New Testament are now known to be extant, and no complete book of the New Testament has as yet been found, though the successes in the field of contemporary Greek writings inspire confidence that ere long the rubbish heaps of Egypt will reward the diligent explorer. Of the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) somewhat more has come to light than the New Testament, while the papyrus copies and fragments of Homer are almost daily increasing.

The list below is condensed from that of Sir Frederick G. Kenyon's *Handbook of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, second edition, 1912, 41 ff., using Dr. Gregory's method of notation.

2. Papyrus Fragments of the Greek New Testament

- P¹ - Matthew 1:1-9,12,14-20. 3rd century. Found at Oxyrhynchus in 1896, now in the University of Pennsylvania.
- P² - John 12:12-15 in Greek on the verso, with Luke 7:18 in Sahidic on the recto. 5th or 6th century. In book form, at the Museo Archeologico, Florence.

- P³ - Luke 7:36-43; 10:38-42. 6th century. In book form. In the Rainer Collection, Vienna.
- P⁴ - Luke 1:74-80; 5:3-8,30-6:4. 4th century. In book form. Found in Egypt joined to a manuscript of Philo; now in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.
- P⁵ - John 1:23-31,33-41; 20:11-17,19-25. 3rd century. An outer sheet of a single-quire book. Found at Oxyrhynchus and now in the British Museum.
- P⁶ - John 11:45. University of Strassburg.
- P⁷ - Luke 4:1,2. Archaeological Museum at Kieff.
- P⁸ - Acts 4:31-37; 5:2-9; 6:1-6,8-15. 4th century. In the Berlin Museum.
- P⁹ - 1 John 4:11-13,15-17. 4th or 5th century. In book form. Found at Oxyrhynchus; now in Harvard University Library.
- P¹⁰ - Romans 1:1-7. 4th century. Found at Oxyrhynchus; now in Harvard University Library.
- P¹¹ - 1 Corinthians 1:17-20; 6:13-18; 7:3,4,10-14. 5th century. In the Imperial Library at Petersburg.
- P¹² - Hebrews 1:1. 3d or 4th century. In the Amherst Library.
- P¹³ - Hebrews 2:14-5:5; 10:8-11:13; 11:28-12:17. 3rd or 4th century. Found at Oxyrhynchus; now in the British Museum.
- P¹⁴ - 1 Corinthians 1:25-27; 2:3-8; 3:8-10,20. 5th century. In book form; at Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai.
- P¹⁵ - 1 Corinthians 7:18-8:4; Philippians 3:9-17; 4:2-8. 4th century. Found at Oxyrhynchus.
- P¹⁶ - Romans 12:3-8. 6th or 7th century. Ryland's Library, Manchester.
- P¹⁷ - Titus 1:11-15; 2:3-8. 3rd century. Ryland's Library, Manchester.
- P¹⁸ - Hebrews 9:12-19. 4th century. Found at Oxyrhynchus.
- P¹⁹ - Revelation 1:4-7. 3rd or 4th century. Found at Oxyrhynchus.

3. Greek Copies or Manuscripts of the New Testament Text

Greek copies or manuscripts of the New Testament text have hitherto been and probably will continue to be the chief source of data in this great field. For determining the existence of the text in its most ancient form the autographs are of supreme value. For determining the content or extent of the text the versions are of highest worth. For estimating the meaning and at the same time for gaining additional data, both as to existence and extent of usage of the New Testament, the

quotations of its text by the Church Fathers, whether as apologists, preachers, or historians, in Assyria, Greece, Africa, Italy or Gaul, are of exceeding importance. But for determining the readings of the text itself the Greek manuscripts or copies of the original autographs are still the principal evidence of criticism. About 4,000 manuscripts, in whole or in part, of the Greek New Testament are now known. These manuscripts furnish abundant evidence for determining the reading of practically the entire New Testament, while for the Gospels and most important Epistles the evidence is unprecedented for quantity and for clearness. They are usually divided into two classes: Uncial, or large hand, and Minuscule, or small hand, often called Cursive. The term "cursive" is not satisfactory, since it does not coordinate with the term "uncial," nor are so-called cursive features such as ligatures and oval forms confined to minuscule manuscripts. The uncials comprise about 140 copies extending from the fourth to the tenth centuries. The minuscules include the remaining manuscripts and fall between the ninth century and the invention of printing. Herewith is given a brief description of a few of the chief manuscripts, both uncial and minuscule, of the New Testament.

4. List of Manuscripts of the Greek New Testament

(1) Uncials.

- Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲙ) found by Tischendorf at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai and now in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg; fourth century. This is the only uncial which contains the New Testament entire. It also has the Epistle of Barnabas and part of the Shepherd of Hermas and possibly originally the Didache. The marks of many correctors are found in the text. It is written on 147 ½ leaves of very thin vellum in four narrow columns of 48 lines each. The pages measure 15 X 13 ½ inches, and the leaves are arranged in quaternions of four sheets. The open sheet exposing eight columns resembles greatly an open papyrus roll. There is but rudimentary punctuation and no use of accent or initial letters, but the Eusebian section numbers are found on the margin of the Gospels.
- Codex Alexandrinus (A), so named since it was supposed to have come from Alexandria, being the gift of Cyril Lucar, at one time Patriarch of that Province, though later of Constantinople, to Charles I, through the English ambassador at the Turkish court in 1627, and in 1757 presented to the Royal Library and now in the British Museum. It doubtless belongs to the fifth century, and contained the entire New Testament (lacking now only portions of Matthew, John, and 1 Corinthians) as well as the two Epistles of Clement of Rome and the Psalms of Solomon. It is written on thin vellum in two columns of 41 lines to the page, which is 12 5/8 X 10 3/8 in.; employs frequent initial capitals, and is divided into

paragraphs, but has no marginal signs except in the Gospels. Several different hands are discovered in the present state of the manuscript.

- Codex Vaticanus (B), since 1481, at least, the chief treasure of the Vatican Library, and universally esteemed to be the oldest and best manuscript of the Greek New Testament; fourth century. Written on very fine vellum, the leaves nearly square in shape, 10 X 10 ½ in., with three narrow columns of 40-44 lines per column and five sheets making the quire. A part of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation are lacking. It is without accents, breathings or punctuation, though corrected and retraced by later hands. In the Gospels the divisions are of an earlier date than in Codex Sinaiticus. The theory of Tischendorf that Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus were in part prepared by the same hand and that they were both among the 50 manuscripts made under the direction of Eusebius at Caesarea in 331 for use in the emperor Constantine's new capital, is not now generally accepted.
- Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C). This is the great palimpsest (twice written) manuscript of the uncial group, and originally contained the whole New Testament. Now, however, a part—approximately half—of every book is lacking, and 2 Thessalonians and 2 John are entirely gone. It belongs to the fifth century, is written on good vellum 9 X 12 ½ inches to the page of 41 lines, and of one column in the original text, though the superimposed writings of Ephraem are in two. Enlarged initials and the Eusebian marginal sections are used and several hands have corrected the manuscript. Brought to Italy from the East in the sixteenth century, it came to France with Catherine de' Medici and is now in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.
- Codex Bezae (D). This is the early known manuscript which Theodore Beza obtained in 1562 from the monastery of Irenaeus at Lyons and which he gave in 1581 to the University of Cambridge, where it now is. It is a Greek-Latin text, the Greek holding the chief place on the left-hand page, measuring 8 X 10 inches, and dates probably from the end of the fifth century. Both Greek and Latin are written in large uncials and divided into short clauses, corresponding line for line. The hands of no less than nine correctors have been traced, and the critical questions arising from the character of the readings are among the most interesting in the whole range of Biblical criticism and are still unsettled. It contains only the Gospels and Acts with a fragment of 3 John.
- Codex Washingtoniensis (W). The United States has now in the National Library (Smithsonian) at the capital one of the foremost uncial manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. It is a complete codex of the Gospels, in a slightly sloping but very ancient hand, written upon good vellum, in one column of 30 lines to the page, and 6 X 9 inches in size. By all the tests ordinarily given, it belongs to the period of the earliest codices, possibly of the fourth century. Like

Codex Bezae (D), it has the order of the Gospels: Matthew, John, Luke, Mark, and contains an apocryphal interpolation within the longer ending of Mark for which no other Greek authority is known, though it is probably referred to by Jerome. It has been published in facsimile by Mr. C. L. Freer of Detroit, who obtained the manuscript in Egypt in 1906, and is edited by Professor H. A. Sanders for the University of Michigan Press, 1911.

(2) Minuscules.

Out of the thousands of minuscule manuscripts now known only the four used by Erasmus will be enumerated.

- 1. This is an 11th-century codex at Basel. It must have been copied from a good uncial, since its text often agrees with Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus.
- 1^r. Of the 12th century, and now at Mayhingen, Bayaria. This is the only manuscript Erasmus had for Revelation in his *editio princeps*, and being defective at the end, 22:16-21, he supplied the Greek text by retranslating from the Latin. Generally speaking, this manuscript is of high quality.
- 2. This is a fifteenth-century manuscript at Basel, and was that on which Erasmus most depended for his first edition, 1516. It reflects a good quality of text.
- 2^{ap}. Some have assigned this manuscript to the 12th century, though it was probably later. It is at Basel, and was the principal text used by Erasmus in the Acts and Epistles.

5. Vernacular Versions

Vernacular versions, or translations of the Scriptures into the tongues of western Christendom, were, some of them, made as early as the second century, and thus antedate by several generations our best-known Greek text. It is considered by many as providential that the Bible was early translated into different tongues, so that its corruption to any large extent became almost if not altogether an impossibility, since the versions of necessity belonged to parts of the church widely removed from one another and with very diverse doctrinal and institutional tendencies. The testimony of translations to the exact form of words used either in an autograph or a Greek copy of an author is at best not beyond dispute, but as evidence for the presence or absence of whole sections or clauses of the original, their standing is of prime importance. Such extreme literalness frequently prevails that the vernacular idiom is entirely set aside and the order and construction of words in the original sources are slavishly followed and even transliterated, so that their bearing on many questions at issue is direct and convincing. Although the Greek New Testament has now been translated into all the principal tongues of the

earth, comparative criticism is confined to those versions made during the first eight centuries.

6. Patristic Quotations

Patristic quotations afford a unique basis of evidence for determining readings of the New Testament. So able and energetic were the Church Fathers of the early centuries that it is entirely probable that the whole text of the Greek New Testament could be recovered from this source alone, if the writings of apologists, homilists and commentators were carefully collated. It is also true that the earliest heretics as well as the defenders of the faith recognized the importance of accurately determining the original text, so that their remains also comprise no mean source for critical research. It is evident that the value of patristic quotations will vary according to such factors as the reliability of the reading, as quoted, the personal equation or habit of accuracy or looseness of the particular writer, and the purity or corruption of the text he employs. One of the marked advantages of this sort of evidence arises from the fact that it affords additional ground for localizing and dating the various classes of texts found both in original copies and in versions. For general study the more prominent Church Fathers of the second, third and fourth centuries are sufficient, though profitable investigation may be made of a much wider period. By the beginning of the fifth century, however, the type of text quoted almost universally was closely akin to that now known as the *Textus Receptus*.

7. Lectionaries and Service-Books

Lectionaries and service-books of the early Christian period afford a source of considerable value in determining the general type of texts, together with the order and contents and distribution of the several books of the Canon. As the lectionary systems both of the eastern and western churches reach back to post-apostolic times and all are marked by great verbal conservatism, they present data of real worth for determining certain problems of textual criticism. From the very nature of the case, being compiled for a liturgical use, the readings are often introduced and ended by set formulas, but these are easily separated from the text itself, which generally follows copy [sic] faithfully. Even the systems of chapter headings and divisions furnish clues for classifying and comparing texts, for there is high probability that texts with the same chapter divisions come from the same country. Probably the earliest system of chapter divisions is preserved in *Codex Vaticanus*, coming down to us from Alexandria probably by way of Caesarea. That it antedates the codex in which it appears is seen from the fact that the Pauline Epistles are numbered as comprising a continuous book with a break between Galatians and Ephesians and the dislocated section numbers attached to Hebrews

which follows 2 Thessalonians here, though the numbers indicate its earlier position after Galatians. Another system of chapter divisions, at least as old as the fifth century, found in Codex Alexandrinus, cuts the text into much larger sections, known as Cephalia Majora. In all cases the enumeration begins with the second section, the first being considered introductory. Bishop Eusebius developed a system of text division of the Gospels based upon an earlier method attributed to Ammonius, adding a series of tables or Canons. The first table contained sections giving events common to all four evangelists, and its number was written beneath the section number on the margin in each Gospel, so that their parallels could readily be found. The second, third and fourth Canons contain lists of sections in which three of the Gospels have passages in common (the combination Mark, Luke, John, does not occur). The fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth contain lists in which two combine (the combination Mark, John, does not occur). Canon 10 contains those peculiar to some one of the Gospels.

II. Necessity of Sifting and Criticizing the Evidence

Criticism from its very nature concerns itself entirely with the problems suggested by the errors of various kinds which it brings to light. In the writings of the New Testament the resources of textual evidence are so vast, exceeding, as we have seen, those of any other ancient literature, sacred or secular, that the area of actual error is relatively quite appreciable, though it must be remembered that this very abundance of textual variety ultimately makes for the integrity and doctrinal unity of the teaching of the New Testament books. Conjectural emendation which has played so large a part in the restoration of other writings has but slight place in the textual criticism of the New Testament, whose materials are so abundant that the difficulty is rather to select right renderings than to invent them. We have catalogued the principal sources of right readings, but on the most casual investigation of them discover large numbers of wrong readings mingled with the true, and must proceed to consider the sources of error or various readings, as they are called, of which approximately some 200,000 are known to exist in the various manuscripts, versions, patristic citations and other data for the text.

"Not," as Dr. Warfield says, "that there are 200,000 places in the New Testament where various readings occur, but that there are nearly 200,000 readings all told, and in many cases the documents so differ among themselves that many various readings are counted on a single word, for each document is compared in turn with one standard and the number of its divergences ascertained, then these sums are themselves added together and the result given as the number of actually observed variations." Dr. Ezra Abbott was accustomed to remark that "about nineteen-twentieths of the variations have so little support that, although there are various readings, no one would think of them as rival readings, and nineteen-twentieths of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection would cause no appreciable difference in the sense of the passages in which they occur." Dr. Hort's view was that "upon about one word in eight, various readings exist supported by sufficient evidence

to bid us pause and look at it; about one word in sixty has various readings upon it supported by such evidence as to render our decision nice and difficult, but that so many variations are trivial that only about one word in every thousand has upon it substantial variation supported by such evidence as to call out the efforts of the critic in deciding between the readings." The oft-repeated dictum of Bentley is still valid that "the real text of the sacred writings is competently exact, nor is one article of faith or moral precept either perverted or lost, choose as awkwardly as you will, choose the worst by design, out of the whole lump of readings." Despite all this, the true scholar must be furnished rightly to discriminate in the matter of diverse readings.

From the very nature of the case it is probable that errors should be frequent in the New Testament; indeed, even printed works are not free from them, as is seen in the most carefully edited editions of the English Bible, but in manuscripts the difficulty is increased in direct proportion to the number of various copies still extant. There are two classes of errors giving rise to various readings, unconscious or unintentional and conscious or intentional.

Of the first class, that of unconscious errors, there are five sorts:

1. *Errors of the eye*, where the sight of the copyist confuses letters or endings that are similar, writing e.g. E for Σ; O for Θ; A for Λ or Δ; Π for TI; ΠAN for TIAN; M for ΛΛ. Here should be named *homoeoteleuton*, which arises when two successive lines in a copy end in the same word or syllable and the eye catches the second line instead of the first and the copyist omits the intervening words as in Codex Ephraemi of John 6:39.
2. *Errors of the Pen*. Here is classed all that body of variation due to the miswriting by the penman of what is correctly enough in his mind but through carelessness he fails rightly to transfer to the new copy. Transposition of similar letters has evidently occurred in Codices E, M, and H of Mark 14:65, also in H₂ L₂ of Acts 13:23.
3. *Errors of Speech*. Here are included those variations which have sprung from the habitual forms of speech to which the scribe in the particular case was accustomed and which he therefore was inclined to write. Under this head comes "itacism," arising from the confusion of vowels and diphthongs, especially in dictation. Thus, ι is constantly written as ει and vice versa; αι for ε; η and ι for ει; η and οι for υ; ο for ω and ε for η. It is observed that in Codex Sinaiticus we have scribal preference for ι alone, while in Codex Vaticanus ει is preferred.
4. *Errors of Memory*. These are explained as having arisen from the "copyist holding a clause or sequence of letters in his somewhat treacherous memory between the glance at the manuscript to be copied and his writing down what he saw there." Here are classed the numerous petty changes in the order of

words and the substitution of synonyms, as *ειπεν* for *εφη*, *εκ* for *απο*, and vice versa.

5. *Errors of Judgment*. Under this class Dr. Warfield cites "many misreadings of abbreviations, as also the adoption of marginal glosses into the text by which much of the most striking corruption which has entered the text has been produced." Notable instances of this type of error are found in John 5:1-4, explaining how it happened that the waters of Bethesda were healing; and in [John 7:53-8:12](#), the passage concerning the adulteress, and the [last twelve verses of Mark](#).

Turning to the second class, that of conscious or intentional errors, we may tabulate:

1. *Linguistic or rhetorical corrections*, no doubt often made in entire good faith under the impression that an error had previously crept into the text and needed correcting. Thus, second aorist terminations in *α* are changed to *ο* and the like.
2. *Historical Corrections*. Under this head is placed all that group of changes similar to the case in Mark 1:2, where the phrase "Isaiah the prophet" is changed into "the prophets."
3. *Harmonistic Corrections*. These are quite frequent in the Gospels, e.g. the attempted assimilation of the Lord's Prayer in Luke to the fuller form in Matthew, and quite possibly the addition of the words "of sin" to the phrase in John 8:34, "Every one that doeth sin is a slave." A certain group of harmonistic corruptions where scribes allow the memory, perhaps unconsciously, to affect the writing may rightly be classed under (4) above.
4. *Doctrinal Corrections*. Of these it is difficult to assert any unquestioned cases unless it be the celebrated Trinitarian passage (King James Version, [1 John 5:7,8a](#)) or the several passages in which fasting is coupled with prayer, as in Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29; Acts 10:30; 1 Corinthians 7:5.
5. *Liturgical Corrections*. These are very common, especially in the lectionaries, as in the beginning of lessons, and are even found in early uncials, e.g. Luke 8:31; 10:23, etc.

III. Methods of Critical Procedure

Here as in other human disciplines necessity is the mother of invention, and the principles of critical procedure rest almost entirely on the data connected with the errors and discrepancies which have consciously or unconsciously crept into the text. The dictum of Dr. George Salmon that "God has at no time given His church a text absolutely free from ambiguity" is true warrant for a free and continued

inquiry into this attractive field of study. The process of textual criticism has gradually evolved certain rules based upon judgments formed after patiently classifying and taking into account all the documentary evidence available, both internal and external.

1. An older reading is preferable to one later, since it is presumed to be nearer the original. However, mere age is no sure proof of purity, as it is now clear that very many of the corruptions of the text became current at an early date, so that in some cases it is found that later copies really represent a more ancient reading.
2. A more difficult reading, if well supported, is preferable to one that is easier, since it is the tendency of copyists to substitute an easy, well-known and smooth reading for one that is harsh, unusual and ungrammatical. This was commonly done with the best of intentions, the scribe supposing he was rendering a real service to truth.
3. A shorter is preferable to a longer reading, since here again the common tendency of scribes is toward additions and insertions rather than omissions. Hence arose, in the first place, the marginal glosses and insertions between the lines which later transcribers incorporated into the text. Although this rule has been widely accepted, it must be applied with discrimination, a longer reading being in some cases clearly more in harmony with the style of the original, or the shorter having arisen from a case of *homoeoteleuton*.
4. A reading is preferable, other things being equal, from which the origin of all alternative readings can most clearly be derived. This principle is at once of the utmost importance and at the same time demands the most careful application. It is a sharp two-edged-sword, dangerous alike to the user and to his opponents.
5. A reading is preferable, says Scrivener, "which best suits the peculiar style, manner and habits of thought of an author, it being the tendency of copyists to overlook the idiosyncrasies of the writer. Yet habit or the love of critical correction may sometimes lead the scribe to change the text to his author's more usual style as well as to depart from it through inadvertence, so that we may securely apply the rule only where the external evidence is not unequally balanced."
6. A reading is preferable which reflects no doctrinal bias, whether orthodox on the one side or heretical on the other. This principle is so obvious that it is accepted on all sides, but in practice wide divergence arises, owing to the doctrinal bias of the critic himself.

These are the main Canons of internal evidence. On the side of external evidence may be summarized what has already been implied:

1. A more ancient reading is usually one that is supported by the most ancient manuscripts.
2. A reading which has the undoubted support of the earliest manuscripts, versions and patristic writers is unquestionably original.
3. A disagreement of early authorities usually indicates the existence of corruption prior to them all.
4. Mere numerical preponderance of witnesses (to a reading) of any one class, locality or time, is of comparative insignificance.
5. Great significance must be granted to the testimony of witnesses from localities or times widely apart, and it can only be satisfactorily met by a balancing agreement of witnesses also from different times and localities.

These rules, though they are all excellent and each has been employed by different critics with good results, are now somewhat displaced, or rather supplemented, by the application of a principle very widely used, though not discovered, by Westcott and Hort, known as the principle of the genealogy of manuscripts. The inspection of a very broad range of witnesses to the New Testament text has led to their classification into groups and families according to their prevailing errors, it being obvious that the greater the community of errors the closer the relationship of witnesses. Although some of the terms used by Westcott and Hort, as well as their content, have given rise to well-placed criticism, yet their grouping of manuscripts is so self-convincing that it bids fair, with but slight modification, to hold, as it has thus far done, first place in the field. Sir Frederick G. Kenyon has so admirably stated the method that the gist of his account will be given, largely using his identical words (*Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, second edition, London, 1912). As in all scientific criticism, four steps are followed by Westcott and Hort: (a) The individual readings and the authorities for them are studied; (b) an estimate is formed of the character of the several authorities; (c) an effort is made to group these authorities as descendants of a common ancestor, and (d) the individual readings are again taken up and the first provisional estimate of their comparative probability revised in the light of the knowledge gained as to the value and interrelation of the several authorities.

Applying these methods, four groups of texts emerge from the mass of early witnesses:

1. The Antiochian or Syrian, the most popular of all and at the base of the Greek Textus Receptus and the English King James Version; in the Gospels the great uncials A and C support it as well as Codex N, Σ and Φ, most of the later uncials and almost all minuscules, the Peshitta-Syriac version ⁽¹⁾ and the bulk of the Church Fathers from Chrysostom;

2. the Neutral, a term giving rise to criticism on all sides and by some displaced by the term Egyptian; this group is small but of high antiquity, including \aleph B L T Z, A and C, save in the Gospels, the Coptic versions (especially the Bohairic) and some of the minuscules, notably 33 and 81;
3. the Alexandrian, closely akin to the Neutral group, not found wholly in any one manuscript but traceable in such manuscripts as \aleph C L X, 33, and the Bohairic version, when they differ from the other members headed by B;
4. the Western, another term considered ambiguous, since it includes some important manuscripts and Fathers very ancient and very Eastern; here belong D D² E² F² G² among the uncials, 28, 235, 383, 565, 614, 700, and 876 among the minuscules, the Old Syriac and Old Latin and sometimes the Sahidic versions.

Of these groups by far the most superior is the Neutral, though Westcott and Hort have made it so exclusively to coincide with Codex Vaticanus that they appear at times to have broken one of the great commandments of a philologist, as quoted by Dr. Nestle from a German professor, "Thou shalt worship no codices." Now, the only serious dispute centers on the apparent slight which this system may have put upon the so-called Western type of text in group four. The variants of this family are extensive and important and appear due to an extremely free handling of the text at some early date when scribes felt themselves at liberty to vary the language of the sacred books and even to insert additional passages of considerable length.

Although this type of text is of very early origin and though prevalent in the East was very early carried to the West, and being widely known there has been called Western, yet, because of the liberties above referred to, its critical value is not high, save in the one field of omissions. In Egypt, however, and especially Alexandria, just as in the case of the Old Testament, the text of the New Testament was critically considered and conserved, and doubtless the family called Neutral, as well as the so-called Alexandrian, springs up here and through close association with Caesarea becomes prevalent in Palestine and is destined to prevail everywhere. The Westcott-Hort contention that the Antiochian text arose as a formal attempt at repeated revision of the original text in Antioch is not so convincing, but for want of a better theory still holds its place. Their objections, however, to its characteristic readings are well taken and everywhere accepted, even von Soden practically agreeing here, though naming it the Koine text. It is also interesting to find that von Soden's Hesyhian text so closely parallels the Neutral-Alexandrian above, and his Jerusalem family the Western. And thus we arrive at the present consensus of opinion as to the genealogical source of the text of the New Testament.

IV. History of the Process

Abundant evidence exists and is constantly growing to show that critical opinion and methods were known at least from the very days of the formation of the New Testament Canon, but in such a sketch as the present the history can only be traced in modern times. The era of printing necessarily marks a new epoch here. Among available manuscripts choice must be made and a standard set, and in view of the material at hand it is remarkable how ably the work was done. It began in Spain under Cardinal Ximenes of Toledo, who printed at Alcala (Complutum) in 1514 the New Testament volume of his great Polyglot, though it was not actually issued until 1522. Meanwhile the great Erasmus, under patronage of Froben the printer of Basel, had been preparing a Greek New Testament, and it was published early in 1516 in a single volume and at low cost, and had reached its third edition by 1522. His fourth edition in 1537 contains Erasmus' definitive text, and, besides using Cardinal Ximenes' text, had the advantage of minuscule manuscripts already named. The next important step was taken by Robert Estienne (Stephanus), whose third edition, "Regia," a folio published in Paris in 1550, was a distinct advance, and, though based directly upon the work of Ximenes and Erasmus, had marginal readings from 15 new manuscripts, one of which was Codex Bezae (D). The learned Theodore Beza himself worked with Stephanus' son Henri, and brought out no less than nine editions of the New Testament, but no great critical advance was made in them. The same may be said of the seven Elzevir editions brought out at Leyden and Amsterdam between 1624 and 1678, the second, that of 1633, in the preface of which occurs the phrase, "Textum ergo habes nunc ab omnibus receptum," becoming the continental standard, as the 1550 edition of Stephanus has for England. Thus, we arrive at the Textus Receptus, and the period of preparation is closed.

The second period, or that of discovery and research, was ushered in by the great *London Polyglot* of 1657, edited by Brian Walton (later Bishop of Chester) with collations by Archbishop Ussher of 15 fresh manuscripts, including Codex Alexandrinus and Codex 59. But Dr. John Mill of Oxford was the Erasmus of this period, and in 1707 after 30 years of labor brought out the Greek Textus Receptus with fresh collations of 78 manuscripts, many versions and quotations from the early Fathers. His manuscripts included A B D E K, 28, 33, 59, 69, 71, the Peshitta, Old Latin and Vulgate, and his *Prolegomena* set a new standard for textual criticism. This apparatus was rightly appreciated by Richard Bentley of Cambridge and a revised text of the Greek and of the Vulgate New Testament was projected along lines which have prevailed to this day. The work and wide correspondence of Bentley had stirred up continental scholars, and J. A. Bengel published in 1734 at Tubingen a Greek New Testament with the first suggestion as to genealogical classification of manuscripts. J. J. Wetstein of Basel and Amsterdam, though a very

great collector of data and the author of the system of manuscript notation which has continued ever since, made little critical advance. J. S. Semler, taking Wetstein's material, began rightly to interpret it, and his pupil J. J. Griesbach carried the work still farther, clearly distinguishing for the first time a Western, an Alexandrian and a Constantinopolitan recension.

With Carl Lachmann began the last epoch in New Testament criticism which has succeeded in going behind the *Textus Receptus* and establishing an authentic text based on the most ancient sources. He applied the critical methods with which he was familiar in editing the classics, and with the help of P. Buttmann produced an edition in 1842-50 which led the way directly toward the goal; but they were limited in materials and Tischendorf soon furnished these. Constantine Tischendorf, both as collector and editor, is the foremost man thus far in the field. His 8th edition, 1872, of the Greek New Testament, together with his *Prolegomena*, completed and published, 1884-1894, by C. R. Gregory, set a new standard. Dr. Gregory's German edition of the *Prolegomena*, 1900-1909, supplemented by his *Die griechischen Handschriften des New Testament*, 1908, marks the further advance of the master through his master pupil. Meanwhile, S. P. Tregelles was doing almost as prodigious and valuable a work in England, and was thus preparing for the final advances at Cambridge. F. H. A. Scrivener also ranks high and did extremely valuable, though somewhat conservative, work in the same direction. In 1881 "the greatest edition ever published," according to Professor Souter, was brought out in England coincident with the Revised Version of the English New Testament. This, together with the introduction, which the same writer characterizes as "an achievement never surpassed in the scholarship of any country," was the joint product of B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, friends and co-workers for many years in the University of Cambridge. Thus with the end of the nineteenth century the history of the process may be said to close, though both process and progress still advance with ever-increasing triumph.

Von Soden's edition of the New Testament appeared during the summer of 1913 and is of first importance. It differs from all others in the extreme weight laid on Tatian's *Diatessaron* as the source of the bulk of the errors in the Gospels. This theory is not likely to command the assent of scholars and the text (which does not differ greatly from Tischendorf's) is consequently of doubtful value. Nevertheless, for fullness of material, clearness of arrangement, and beauty of printing, von Soden's edition must inevitably supersede all others, even where the text is dissented from. Dr. Gregory promises a new edition at some day not too far in the future which, in turn, will probably supersede von Soden's.

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Charles Fremont Sitterly

1 Regarding Sitterly's statement that the Peshitta belongs to the "Antiochian or Syrian" type of text, a correction is needed. Bruce Metzger in his book *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission and Limitations* (Oxford, 1977) writes as follows: "Finally, some attention must be given to problems involved in determining the textual affinities of the Peshitta version of the New Testament. It has been frequently stated that the type of text represented by the Peshitta is what Hort designated the Syrian text and Ropes the Antiochian—a form of text which also appears in the writings of John Chrysostom and which eventually developed into the Byzantine Textus Receptus. Nevertheless, in a considerable number of readings the Peshitta agrees with one or other of the Pre-Syrian Greek texts, against the Antiochian Fathers and the late Greek text. In a detailed examination of Matt. chaps. i-xiv, Gwilliam found that the Peshitta agrees with the Textus Receptus 108 times and with codex Vaticanus (B) sixty-five times, while in 137 instances it differs from both, usually with the support of the Old Syriac and/or the Old Latin, though in thirty-one instances (almost one-fourth of the whole number) it stands alone. From these data he concluded that the unknown author of the Peshitta 'revised an ancient work by Greek MSS. which have no representatives now extant, and thus has transmitted to us an independent witness to the Greek Text of the New Testament.'" (Metzger, p. 61.) "In the case of the Acts of the Apostles, Hatch found that the Peshitta 'contains many "Western" readings, but its text is mainly that of the Old Uncial family.' According to the evaluation made by Ropes, the rendering is often very free, somewhat after the manner of the Western text; the translator has a habit of expressing one Greek word by two Syriac ones. With regard to its relation to

the later type of text, Ropes declares: "The readings which depart from the Old Uncial text and follow the Antiochian are usually also found in "Western" witnesses, and there seems no trace of the peculiar and distinctive selection of readings which is the chief recognizable characteristic of the Antiochian text." (Metzger, p. 62.) —M.D.M.

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