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Textual Criticism I

Radical, Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Introduction:

Textual Criticism, commonly known in the past as “lower” criticism in contrast to the so-called “higher” (historical and literary) criticism, is the science that compares all known manuscripts of a given work in an effort to trace the history of variations within the text so as to discover its original form. Textual Criticism is, therefore, of special significance to the interpreter in at least three ways:

1. It helps to determine the authentic words of the author. The first question the exegete asks is, what does the text say? before he asks, What does it mean?

2. The majority of Christians have access to the New Testament only in translation, and the basic consideration in choosing a translation is its accuracy in representing the original text of the author. A translator’s first concern must be that he is translating the actual words of the author before he decides what those words mean.

3. Knowledge of the history of textual variation will also help the interpreter to see how a passage was understood during the early history of the church. In many instances, variant readings are a reflection of a scribe’s or a church’s theological interests, and sometimes such changes put one in direct contact with historical exegesis.

The Hebrew Text of The Old Testament.

The text of the current edition of the Hebrew Bible, known as Kittel’s *Biblia Hebraica*, is based on four hand-copied manuscripts, and primarily on only one of them, the Leningrad Codex. This key manuscript, written about 1008 A.D., is the largest and only complete manuscript of the entire Old Testament. It is written on vellum, a material

prepared from calf or antelope skin.

The Masoretics were Jewish textual scribes who lived from the 5th through the 9th centuries A.D. They standardized the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, which then came to be known as the Masoretic text. The actual number of Old Testament manuscripts from the Masoretic period is very few.

There may be several reasons why there are so few Old Testament manuscripts prior to the invention of the printing press. First, the factor of age or antiquity makes preserving such ancient manuscripts impossible. Second, the vellum or parchment writing materials were very perishable. Third, the Jewish people were under constant persecution. The city of Jerusalem, the Temple, and synagogues throughout the world were destroyed. Fourth, the Jewish textual scribes followed a tradition of carefully destroying manuscripts that contained faulty copying and others which were too aged for practical use.

Although few Masoretic manuscripts are available for study, the text they contain is very good, with few variant readings. These copyists had a reverence for the text of the Scriptures; therefore, they were very precise in their work. They counted the lines and the letters within each line; they had rules for the spacing of words; they could not write from memory; they specified the size of columns, and they specified the ink and writing material to be used.

The accuracy of the textual work by the Masoretics can be verified in several ways; by archaeological discoveries; by the similarity of duplicate passages found in different books; and by the substantial agreement with the textual readings of the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The collection and study of hand-copied Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts has been an ongoing process. Benjamin Endicott (1776-1780) has been credited with the first collection. Published at Oxford in England, his lists included readings from 615

manuscripts and 52 printed editions. Later Giovanni de Rossi (1784-1788) listed citations from 731 manuscripts and 300 printed editions. In 1890, many fragments of Jewish writings were found in an ancient synagogue in Cairo, Egypt. These Cairo fragments (dated from the 6th to the 9th centuries A.D.) include more than 120 Biblical manuscripts.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls during 1947-1956 provided an exciting and fresh impetus to the study of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

Thousands of manuscript fragments, which once constituted 400 books within the library of the Jewish sect of the Essenes, were found in 11 caves. These Essenes had established a monastic community near Qumran, immediately west of the Dead Sea. The manuscripts discovered there had been copied between 100 B.C. and 200 A.D., with a few exceptions.

Before those scrolls were found, the earliest hand-copied manuscript of the Hebrew Old Testament dated from about A.D. 900. The Dead Sea Scrolls included a complete manuscript of Isaiah, dated about 100 B.C. - 1000 years older than any previously known copy. Comparing the two manuscripts, separated by 1000 years, shows a remarkable similarity.

The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah was 95% identical, word-for-word, with the standard Masoretic Text. The 5% variation was in incidental matters, such as spelling differences or obvious slips in penmanship. The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrated that the Jewish scribes were very exact in the transmission of the Old Testament text, especially at a time when there was no established temple worship and priesthood.

The Greek Texts of the New Testament

The Need For Textual Criticism.

The need for Textual Criticism results from a combination of three factors:

1. The originals, probably written on papyrus scrolls, have all perished. The Bible is inspired only in the original writings that the Spirit-filled disciples wrote. The original documents are known as the “autographs,” meaning “the writings themselves.” If the original writings had survived to our present day, there would be no debate over the correct text of the Scriptures. Since they are not accessible to us, the text of the original writings must be determined by studying the copies available.

2. For over 1,400 years the New Testament was copied by hand, and the copyists (scribes) made every conceivable error, as well as at times intentionally altering the text. Such errors and alterations survived in various ways, with a basic tendency to accumulate (scribes seldom left anything out, lest they omit something inspired). There are errors in dates, numbers, and geographical locations. Inerrancy should - and can - be argued *only* for the original writings. A copy is a word for word manuscript, done by hand in the same language as the original. A translation is a manuscript that transfers the language of the original into a different language; for example, from Greek into German.

3. There are now extant, in whole or in part, 5,338 Greek manuscripts. As well as hundreds of copies of ancient translations (not counting over 8,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate), plus the evidence from the citations of the New Testament in the writings of the early church fathers. Moreover, no two manuscripts anywhere in existence are exactly alike.

The task of the textual critic, therefore, is to: (1) to sift through all this material, carefully collating (comparing) each manuscript with all the others, in order (2) to detect the errors and changes in the text, and thus (3) to decide which variant reading at any given point is more likely to be the original.

Sources for constructing a Greek New Testament consist of:

1. The Uncial Manuscripts. (Codices and vellum scrolls written in Block Capital letters).
2. The Cursives. (Referred to sometimes as “minuscule:” lower case Greek writings, as with a flowing motion).
3. The Lectionaries. (Service books for church worship, which would be similar to the “Responsive readings” in the back of some modern Hymnals. These writings contain Scripture “lessons” or “readings”).
4. The Church Fathers. (These are the Christians who left works in writing, after the close of the Canon. They may be classified as the Alexandrian, Eastern, and Western; or Ante-Nicene, Post-Nicene, etc.)
5. Early Translations. (These are translations of the Greek New Testament into other languages, such as Syriac, Old Latin, Coptic, etc.)
6. The Papyrus Fragments. (Small scraps of paper, and occasionally several pages, on perishable paper; they include many writings that have nothing to do with the Bible as well as portions of Scripture).
7. Conjectures of Scholars. (These are the least valuable and amount to practically nothing when one considers that 95% of the scholars got off on the wrong foot when they consented to “pocketing their convictions” for the sake of finding “the originals.”
8. Sermons of early Preachers. (Citations from sermons preached or written around 200-400 A.D. furnish some evidence for the condition of the text at that time.

I. The Greek Uncial Manuscripts:

These comprise 140 copies, dating from the 4th to the 10th century. Recently, about 72 more uncial manuscripts have shown up. The one most “universally esteemed: in this group is the Roman Catholic Vaticanus, titled “B” in the critical apparatus of Greek Testaments.

The **Vaticanus** showed up in the Vatican library in 1481 A.D. It was written around 350-370 A.D., and it survived 11 centuries in excellent condition, due to the fact that the Christians never used it.

The manuscript is written on fine vellum (tanned animal skins) and has 759 pages, 10 inches by 10 ½ inches, each containing three narrow columns of about 41 lines to the column. It also contains the Epistle to Barnabas and the Apocrypha. Vaticanus was written by the same man as the Sinaiticus (according to Tischendorf), but the pope insists that his manuscript must be earlier than the Sinaiticus (Aleph), because of the way that the divisions are placed in the Gospels. The Vatican manuscript omits Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 46:28, Psalms 106 through Psalms 138, Matthew 16:2,3, Romans 16:24, the Pauline Pastoral Epistles, Revelation, and everything in Hebrews after Hebrews 9:14. This convenient dissection speaks worlds for its authors or its preservers; for marvel of marvels, here is a vellum manuscript that can survive 16 centuries with what scholars call “the best text,” “the most perfectly preserved text,” “highly legible,” and yet it takes off *the front of the Bible (Genesis), the middle of the Bible (Psalms), the end of the Bible (Revelation)*, and then drops the chapter in Hebrews that deals with *the one, eternal, effectual sacrifice of Jesus Christ.*”

According to Wescott and Hort, Vaticanus was written in Italy, where the Isidorian Decretals and the Donation of Constantine were written. Is this a good place to look for a “pure” text?

The Vatican manuscript was available at the time of the translation of the A.V. 1611, and was even referred to Erasmus in 1515 and he ignored it.

The **Sinaiticus** Greek Uncial manuscript is designated by the Hebrew letter (Ⲛ), in the critical apparatus of Greek Testaments, and its present home is in London, England. Page | 10

This manuscript is also on vellum, although it is thinner vellum than the Vaticanus. It is the only uncial manuscript containing all of the New Testament entire (according to the “majority of scholars”). It also has the “Shepherd of Hermas” and the “Epistle of Barnabas” into the New Testament, and originally, contained part of the “Didache.” It was written around 350-370 A.D., on 147 ½ leaves of vellum, in four columns of 48 lines each to the page. The pages are 15 inches by 13 ½ inches.

The Sinaiticus manuscript was found in St. Catherine’s monastery, on Mt. Sinai, by Tischendorf, and the man who gave him the “lead” on it, referred to it as “*The Septuagint*.” That is, this man (who was a monk) accepted it as fact that Origen’s Hexapla and subsequent revisions were written 200 B.C., **which they were NOT**.

When the scholars say that the Sinaiticus manuscript contains the “complete New Testament,” this is not true. It contains all of the New Testament except John 5:4; 8:1-11, Matthew 16:2,3, Romans 16:24, Mark 16:9-20, I John 5:7, Acts 8:37, and a dozen other verses.

Sinaiticus, as Vaticanus, has survived the storms of the centuries because it was in a monastery; and who in the world in a Greek Orthodox or Roman monastery ever used the Bible for soul-winning and personal work? Patrick 389-461, Columban 543-615, and Martin Luther 1483-1546 did; but they used the Old Latin and the Greek of Erasmus, *not the revised Latin of Jerome and the Greek of Origen*.

Very often the Sinaiticus will agree with the readings of the A.V. 1611 against the

readings of the Vaticanus, but on the whole, the scribe has relied heavily on North African scholarship for a correct text and has paid very little attention to the Holy Spirit or the Holy Bible.

The third uncial manuscript is the “**Alexandrinus**” (noted in the critical markings as “A”). It is written on 773 leaves of vellum of about 10 3/8 inches by 12 5/8 inches, with two columns of Scriptures running 41 lines to the page. It omits John 6:50 through 8:52, 2 Corinthians 4:13 through 12:6, I Kings 12:20 14;9, Matthew 1:1-25, Genesis 15:1-5, Genesis 14:14-17, and Genesis 16-19. It contains the remnants of the two Epistles of Clement (supposedly 95 A.D. and 100 A.D.).

Manuscript “A” (written in the 5th century) bears a strong resemblance to the Byzantine text of the A.V. 1611, and it must be remembered that any set of manuscripts (genuine or counterfeit) must contain 90% of the A.V. 1611 text in order to pass off as “Bibles.”

There are other uncial manuscripts, but these need only the briefest mention, for the majority of the uncial manuscripts will bear witness to the A.V. 1611 text time and time again, and even “B”, Aleph, and “A” must go along to keep up with the pack.

There is “C” (Codex Ephremi Rescriptus), a 5th century “twice written” manuscript, which was brought to Italy in the 16th century. There is the Codex “D” (Bezae Cantabrigiensis), a 5th-century uncial manuscript, now at Cambridge. There is “W” (Codex Washingtoniensis), a 4th-century manuscript, which bears a strong witness to the A.V. 1611 readings. In addition to these will be found the “E”, “F”, “G”, “H”, “K”, etc. and right on down the line, manuscripts written in block Capital Greek Letters. A list can be found in any edition of Nestle’s, after 1952. Uncial manuscripts are found in the 10th and 11th centuries (“H” Seidelianus II, “K” Cyprius, “X” Freerianus, “H” Mutinensis, etc).

The uncial manuscripts run from A through Z with the omission of any manuscript “J”, “R”, or “Z.” Nine Greek letters have been adopted for manuscripts from the 6th to

the 10th century.

Γ, Δ, Θ, Λ, Ξ, Π, Σ, Φ, Ψ

There are many other uncial manuscripts that are seldom cited because they agree with the Receptus so many times. They are usually listed by numbers such as 046, 047, 048, 049, 050, 051, etc, up to numbers as high as 0250.

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II. The Greek Cursives.

There are manuscripts using lower case letters that make up the texts and they are referred to as “minuscule” in distinction from “majuscules” (Uncials). These number around 2,429 manuscripts dating from the 9th to the 16th century. In Nestle’s critical apparatus they are listed by thin, slanting numbers. They make up the vast majority of New Testament manuscripts and bear witness (99% of the time) to the text of the A.V. 1611. The cursive style is the style adopted by all of the critical Greek editions (Nestle, 1898; Alford, 1849; Westcott and Hort, 1881; Tischendorf, 1869; Tregelles, 1857, etc.), and is the style used in the Greek textbooks used to teach Greek Grammar.

The Greek minuscule (cursives) which are usually cited, are cited only if they differ from the Byzantine text; they are outnumbered three to one by the minuscule which agree with the Byzantine Textus Receptus.

III. The Lectionaries

There are about 1,678 of them available for use, which contain extracts from the New Testament. They are indicated in the critical apparatus of Nestle’s as “lect.”

IV. The Church Fathers

There are the “Western Fathers” - Irenaeus (180), Tertullian (150), Cyprian (200),

Jerome (345), Augustine (354); and the “Alexandrine Fathers” -Clement (200), Origen (184-254), Didymus (313), Athanasius (297), and Cyril (380); and the “Antiochan Fathers” - Ignatius (35-107), Polycarp (69-155), Lucian (250-312), Diodorus (died 394), Chrysostom (345-407), and Theodoret (397-457). The “Cappadocian Fathers” should be added to these, as connected with the church of Asia Minor and Greece.

The Church Fathers make up three groups which match the three families of manuscripts suggested by Griesbach, in 1796.

No matter how subtle the refinements and “overlaps,” and syntheses, and conflating, and interpolating of future scribes, three things are evident at once, to anyone who knows Church History.

1. The Alexandrian group is going to be a group of dead Orthodox Bible revisers. Athanasius is present to ensure Orthodoxy of *profession*, Clement is present to insure *Greek education*, and Origen is present to produce one version *per church*. Any system of determining the “purity,” “value,” or “quality,” of manuscripts from Alexandria, Egypt, that doesn’t take the above into account, is an impotent system.

2. The Roman Group (Western Fathers) is going to be a group of Catholics who worship traditions and look to an authoritative Hierarchy instead of an authoritative Bible. Irenaeus (130-202) is there, with his baby sprinkling to ensure that members of the family won’t leave the church. Cyprian (200-258) is present to make the Bishop into a god, and Augustine (354-430) is there to teach that the sacraments are the “means to salvation.”

3. The Syrian Group (Antiochan Fathers) is plainly a group of Bible-believing, Bible-preaching people who were first called “Christians” at Antioch, and were the first to send out missionaries with the Gospel (Acts 13:1-5). Any “neutral approach” which refuses to give precedence to THIS type of text (in order to appear scholarly) must ignore *the facts of Church History* while searching for the “original manuscripts.”

Most often the church fathers cited the New Testament from memory, so one can never be sure that their memory reflects the actual wording of their Greek text. Moreover, a father may have used several - and differing - copies of the New Testament. The available texts of the patristic writings also are copies, usually very late ones, and in some cases have suffered extensive corruption.

V. The Early Translations

The first of these would be the Syrian and Latin translations.

The history of these translations parallels that of the Greek text. There were scores of Latin and Syrian New Testaments circulating all over Asia Minor, Africa, and Palestine, and these Bibles were revised by Jerome (382-470), and Bishop Rabulla (411-435). Where Rabulla and Jerome followed the corrupt Hesychian (Alexandrian) scholarship of Origen, nearly two centuries before, they mutilated the New Testament text. Errors in the Peshitta and in the Vulgate can be traced to the Vatican manuscript and its ancestors.

The Old Latin manuscripts date from the 2nd century, and those used by the Waldensians (1170-1600) do not contain the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha was added to many Old Latin manuscripts by admirers of Origen and Augustine. Tertullian speaks of a complete Latin Bible which was circulating all over North Africa as far back as 190 A.D., and this Bible was from manuscripts far superior to anything Rome had in 350 A.D. This "Old Latin" was constantly being brought back into European Bibles and used instead of Jerome, and Cassiodorus (540) had it revised to bring it in line with the corrupt "LXX" of Origen.

As the "original Greek Bible" is judged by Origen's Hexapla, in Vaticanus, so the "majority of scholars" judge the first Latin Bible by Jerome's Vulgate where it went by Vaticanus. Thus, Origen has a hand in corrupting all three Bibles - the Old Testament

Hebrew, the New Testament Greek, and the Latin Vulgate.

The first Latin version was circulating before 210 A.D. and it (as the Byzantine Greek Receptus) was the work of the spontaneous efforts of African Christians. Jerome's version is an official revision of this text, exactly as the ASV and RSV are official revisions of the Received Greek text. The real "Bible" is copied by hand from 100-400 A.D. by common ordinary Christians, who recognized at sight the corrupt Bibles when they saw one. The Albigenses continued to use this "Old Latin" long after Jerome's Vulgate came out, and their preservation of this text is attributed to the fact that they were "heretics."

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There are 38 codices which comprise the Latin manuscripts for these Latin versions. A great deal of argument has surfaced over the European and African types found among them; and there has been considerable discussion as to whether or not the "Itala," the Old Latin, and the Vulgate are the same families.

Jerome's attitude toward the Old Latin is quite clear. He brags about exclusive "vellum scrolls" which the "scholars" have, that are "far superior to the Bibles used by the common people." Augustine agrees with Jerome that the common people didn't know what they were doing, and needed a little help with the "archaic words," etc. In his letters, Jerome refers not only to the "Original Greek," but also to the "*Greek original*," and tells us that he will use this "Greek Original" to correct the unskillful scribes! What Greek "Original" did he have outside of Origin's Hexapla?

The Latin versions are referred to on page 71 of Nestle's Introductory notes, and the manuscripts are enumerated by the small, slanting, lower case letters, a,b,c,d,e,k, etc. They bear witness to the Syrian type text of the Receptus and they bear witness to Origin's Hexapla (commonly mis-called "The Septuagint"), where Alexandrian scribes got their hands on them. Both Augustine (354-430) and Tertullian (160-220) testify that the scribes in Africa couldn't keep their hands off Bible manuscripts and everybody there messed with them constantly. This explains satisfactorily the confused condition of the

“Itala” and the “Old Latin” by the time of Jerome. It also indicates who the real “revisers” and “conflates” of the originals were - they were certainly not the disciples called “Christians,” at Antioch (Acts 11:26).

The Syrian versions are far more interesting than the Latin versions, for two reasons:

1. The majority of autographs of the original New Testament writers were in Asia Minor and Syria.
2. Since this was in the closest proximities to Syria, the early Syrian manuscripts may have been copied from the originals themselves.

The standard approach toward this text is to judge the early Syrian manuscripts by the Peshitta. The word “Peshitta” means “simple” - (easy to be understood). In its original form, it contained the Old Testament as it stands in the A.V. 1611, and the New Testament as it stands in the A.V. 1611. Corruptions did not enter the text until the middle of the third century, at the time when Origen moved from Alexandria to Caesarea (bringing his publishing company with him). From then on, and especially during the time of Eusebius and Pamphilus (260-340), the Peshitta disintegrated into its present condition and into the types known today as the Philoxenian (485-519), the Harclean (616), and the Jerusalem Syriac (a lectionary of the Gospels, date unknown).

The keenest analysis of the Peshitta problem and its relation to the Byzantine Receptus has been given by Dr. Edward Hills, in his work on the subject. He proves conclusively that the Syrian text which bears witness to the A.V. 1611 readings is older, by 100 years than either the Vaticanus or the Sinaiticus.

“Tatian’s Diatessaron,” by Tatian of Assyria (110-172), still survives in the publications of Zahn (1881), Giasca (1888), and Mosinger’s introduction (Ephraem’s Com. Venet. 1876). Theodoret (390-458) found more than 200 copies of it circulating in

Asia Minor, and they were there before 160 A.D. Students will be surprised to find that Tatian reads with the King James Bible on Luke 2:33 and John 9:35, upholding the Deity of Christ and the Virgin Birth. This gives a definite Syrian witness to the A.V. readings *200 years older than Vaticanus or Sinaiticus*.

The "Curetonian Syriac" consists of fragments of the Gospels brought in 1842 from the Nitrian Desert in Egypt, that are now in the British Museum. The fragments are from the 2nd to the 5th century A.D.

The Sinaitic Syriac was found in 1892, as a text of the four Gospels. It was found in the monastery of St. Catherine, where Tischendorf found the Sinaiticus manuscript.

Syriac translations are indicated in Nestle's apparatus by "sy," followed by other designations which indicate whether they are Curetonian, Philoxenian, Sinaitic, Jerusalem, Harclean, or Peshitta.

Besides the early Latin and Syrian translations are the Egyptian translations - Sahidic, and the Northern - Bohairic. The Sahidic has about 5 manuscripts for purposes of reconstruction and the Bohairic have about 80 manuscripts. Being closer to Alexandria than the Syrian translations (or even the Latin, as some Latin, becomes European), the Coptic usually agrees with Origen's corrupt "LXX."

Other than the Coptic versions, the Latin versions, and the Syriac versions, the most important one was the one produced by the "little wolf" (Ulfilas), a missionary bishop to the Goths. This Bible was in circulation before the Vaticanus was written (350 A.D.), and according to Kenyon, the text in it is for the most part that which is found in the Textus Receptus of the A.V. 1611.

The Coptic translations, from the 3rd to the 6th century (in addition to the Sahidic and Bohairic), are the Fayyumic, the Achmimic, and the Sub-Achmimic.

In addition to these basic ancient versions, one might include 3 Ethiopic versions from the 6th century, the Georgian version from the 5th century, the Nubian from the 6th century, and the Arabic, Old High German, Persian, Provençal (Old French), and the Old Slavonic.

Any study of the ancient versions will reveal a pattern that is unmistakable. The Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Gothic versions were originally true and trustworthy copies of the original New Testament documents. Then, in “the tunneling period” (ie. During the Roman persecutions), someone (or some group of people) convinced certain Christians that these translations were “archaic,” “corrupt,” and not based on the “best manuscript evidence.” The only basis for “correcting” could have been a *pre-Christian text*, and the only pre-Christian text was the *Old Testament*, and the only Latin, Syrian, Coptic, and Gothic Old Testaments available were *available in Hebrew, unless....!* Unless some scholar, who represented a great “Cultural Center of Scientific Exegesis” professed to have a *Greek Old Testament superior to the Hebrew!* Since no such Greek Testament appears, anywhere before 120 A.D., it is absolutely certain that the corruptions found in the ancient translations are due to incorporations from Origen’s Hexapla, or the Apocrypha, written between 200 B.C. and the time of Christ. Since the fifth Column of Origen’s Hexapla is substantially Vaticanus, *which includes the Apocrypha*, there is no longer any doubt about errors in the ancient versions.

In all the ancient versions we see corrupting influence operating between 150 A.D. and 400 A.D. What survives this period is two sets of manuscripts. One of these contains the Book of Revelation, omits the Apocrypha (as part of the O.T.), and upholds the Deity of Jesus Christ. The other set often omits the Book of Revelation, includes the Apocrypha as part of the O.T., and attacks the Deity of Jesus Christ.

VI. The Papyrus Fragments

The papyrus is obviously the source of our word “paper.” Herodotus (484-425) calls the papyrus “parchment.” it was made from the Byblos plant and constituted a

cheap paper, similar to modern-day “Newsprint.” It was the “poor man’s” writing material and before it was used in Codex form (like a modern book), it was used as a roll, written on both sides.

It is highly probable that the Codex was invented by soul-winning personal workers, who carried New Testaments with them. It is certain that no real 2nd century Christian would have been caught dead with “vellum scrolls” on him, or the high-class “revised versions” put out by Alexandria. Rather, the first and second-century Bible-believing Christians used papyrus rolls and codices which they copied by hand from one another. This explains why few papyrus copies of the Receptus survived the first three centuries of Roman persecution. The majority of papyrus fragments that survived were fragments like P66 and P75, which Christians refused to copy because they recognized Origen’s handwriting when they saw them.

However, like with any other set of manuscripts, many readings in the papyrus from the 2nd and 3rd centuries agree with the readings of the A.V. 1611.

The Papyri were numbered 1 through 19, at the time of Kenyon’s list, published in 1912 (The Hand Book of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament). Most of them were found at Oxyrhynchus, 120 miles south of Cairo, in the Libyan Desert. The average roll was 30 inches long and 9 to 10 inches wide.

P1 has portions of Matthew 1, from the 3rd century.

P2 has portions of John 12 and Luke 7 in Sahidic and Greek, from the 5th and 6th centuries.

P3 has parts of Luke 7 and 10, from the 6th century.

P4 has parts of Luke 1,5, and 6, from the 4th century.

P5 has parts of John 1, and 20, from the 3rd century.

P6 has John 11:45

P7 has Luke 4:1,2,

P8 has portions of Acts 4, 5, and 6, from the 4th century.

P9 has portions of I John 4, from the 4th and 5th centuries.

P10 has part of Romans 1, from the 4th century.

P11 has parts of I Corinthians 1,6, and 7, from the 5th century.

P12 has Hebrews 1:1 from the 3rd or 4th century.

P13 has parts of Hebrews 2,5,10,11, and 12, from the 4th century.

P14 has portions of I Corinthians 1,2, and 3 from the 5th century.

P15 has parts of I Corinthians 7, Philippians 3 and 4 from the 4th century.

P16 has Romans 12:3-8 from the 6th and 7th centuries.

P17 has Titus 1:11-15, and 2:3-8, from the 3rd century.

P18 has Hebrews 9:12-19 from the 4th century.

P19 has Revelation 1:4-7 from the 3rd century.

In addition to this collection, we have the Chester Beatty fragments, published in 1933-37, and the Bodmer papyri published in 1956-62. With the Bodmer papyri, the Beatty papyri, and the Rylands papyri, a considerable number of Biblical fragments have been assembled. They are listed in the critical apparatus of Nestle's with the letter "P" followed by a small raised number.

There are about 54 papyrus fragments now available and they are numbered from 1 up to 75. Only 23 were published by 1939, but since then the number has increased.

Additionally, here are some of the more important (generally non-Byzantine) New Testament manuscripts and their characteristics:

P45 Chester Beatty Papyrus 1. Third-century papyrus of the Gospels and Acts, now very defective. Thought for a time to have a "Caesarean" text, but Hurtado has given strong evidence against this, and Colwell has shown that the text has been extensively rewritten and often shortened. The text may have been Alexandrian.

P46 Chester Beatty Papyrus II. Papyrus of the Pauline Epistles (with assorted lacunae; missing the beginning of Romans and all of 2 Thessalonians; includes

Hebrews, but probably never contained the Pastoral Epistles). Usually dated c. 200, although much earlier dates have been suggested. The text is rather free, especially in Romans, and contains very many singular readings. It stands closer to “B” than any other manuscript, however, and the two probably form their own text-type or sub-text-type.

P47 Chester Beatty Papyrus III. Third-century papyrus of the Apocalypse, containing (with lacunae, empty space or missing parts) 9:10-17:2. The text is closest to the Sinaiticus; it is considered to be more “wild” and less valuable than the mainstream Alexandrian witnesses “A” “C.”

P66 Bodmer Papyrus II. Second or third-century papyrus containing most of the Gospel of John. The manuscript was written in a beautiful hand, probably of a professional scribe, but very carelessly; there are literally hundreds of casual errors corrected by the scribe himself and in all likelihood many more that he did not catch. The resultant text is mostly Alexandrian, and closest to P75 and “B,” but with very many singular readings and readings associated with other types.

P72 Bodmer Papyri VII, VIII. Third or fourth-century papyrus containing, along with assorted non-Biblical works, 1 and 2 Peter and Jude. As mentioned above, P72 is the only papyrus to contain Biblical books without lacunae. In the Petrine Epistles, its text appears good and early, being closest to “B.” In Jude the text has been regarded as “wild” - not unusual for manuscripts of Jude, which was not highly esteemed in the early church.

P75 Bodmer Papyri XIV, XV, early third-century papyrus of Luke and John, containing the majority of Luke 3, John 15. The text is regarded as extraordinarily good and carefully written. It is very close kin to “B,” although not a direct ancestor.

0/1 Codex Sinaiticus, Uncial of the fourth-century, and unique in many ways. It is the only uncial to contain the complete New Testament along with large portions of the

disputed LXX, and certain apocryphal books. It is the only New Testament manuscript written with four columns per page. The story of its “discovery” and transportation from Sinai to Europe is also unique and involved, and cannot be detailed here; although romantic, it is not really significant for textual criticism.

0/1 is textually very good (although only one of the three scribes was an accurate speller, and this one wrote only a handful of leaves in the New Testament). In the Gospels, it is generally Alexandrian (although the text is something else - perhaps “Western” - in the first third of John). It is considered second only to P75 and “B” as a representative of this type. The same is true in Acts and the Catholic Epistles. In Paul, where the textual character of “B” changes somewhat, the Sinaiticus is actually the best Alexandrian witness. In the Apocalypse it is somewhat different; it belongs with P47, with a text considered inferior to “A” “C.”

A/02 Codex Alexandrinus. An Uncial of the fifth-century. The first of the great uncials to come to the attention of European scholars. It once contained the entire Old and New Testaments; in its current state, most of Matthew and smaller portions of John and 2 Corinthians are missing. In the Gospels, the manuscript goes primarily with the Byzantine text, although it has a number of non-Byzantine readings, most of which are also found in good manuscripts such as “B.” In the Acts and Epistles, the text is much better, mostly Alexandrian with only a few Byzantine and mixed readings. In the Apocalypse, it (along with “C”) is considered the best surviving witness.

B/03 Codex Vaticanus. Uncial of the fourth-century, and widely regarded as the most important surviving Biblical manuscript. Originally probably contained the entire Greek Bible (except the books of Maccabees). However, the final pages of the manuscript have been lost, taking with them Hebrews 9:14-end, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and probably the Apocalypse (although it is possible that the latter was never part of the manuscript).

In the Gospels in particular, “B” is considered almost to define the Alexandrian text,

and - since the Alexandrian is considered the best text-type - by implication the original text. Both the Westcott/Hort and the United Bible Societies' editions are strongly dependent on it. (Let the student note that many scholars are against the Vaticanus, a Catholic manuscript from Rome).

“B” retains its high quality in the Acts and General Epistles. Its nature in Paul is more uncertain. Hort viewed it as mostly Alexandrian with some Western mixture. However, it appears that it actually belongs in its own group with P46.

C/04 Uncial of the fifth century, and the most important New Testament palimpsest. It originally contained the whole Greek Bible; about three-fifths of the New Testament and fragments of the Old Testament survive. The upper writing is a series of sermons by Ephraem. The text-type of “C” varies. In the Gospels, it is a mixture of Alexandrian and Byzantine elements, though some parts are more Byzantine than others. In Acts, it is somewhat more Alexandrian. In Paul it is almost purely Alexandrian, being very nearly as good as “A” although perhaps not quite as pure as the Sinaiticus. In the Generals, it seems to show a mixture of Alexandrian and Family 1739 readings, with more of the latter than the former. In the Apocalypse it stands close to “A,” and is one of the best manuscripts of the book.

D/05 Codex Bezae. The most controversial of all New Testament manuscripts. It is a Greek/Latin diglot, with the versions on facing pages. The manuscript is usually dated to the fifth or sixth century. It now contains most of the Gospels and Acts, but many pages have been lost. The lost pages contained the Johannine Epistles and Acts, but there were probably other writings as well, and it is not certain where they were.

On the above scholars agree. On all other things, there is a debate. For instance, the Greek and Latin sides of “D” (denoted D and d respectively) are very similar and have obviously been edited so as to agree. But was “D” conformed to d, or d conformed to “D.” or both? There is no consensus. Nor is there agreement about the

peculiar nature of the text of “D.” It clearly falls closest to the so-called “Western’ witnesses such as the Old Latin versions and fathers such as Irenaeus. But it also has important differences - e.g. “D” is the *only* manuscript to transfer Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus into Luke 3:23f. This transfer is obviously the result of rewriting. Is the rest of “D’s” text rewritten, or is this an aberration? Again, scholars do not agree.

This is a particularly serious problem in that “D” is the only substantial Greek witness to the “Western’ text of the Gospels. Assessing its readings is a perennial problem of textual criticism. All we can say here is that its readings should be used with caution, especially when they do not have support from a large number of Latin witnesses.

D/06 Codex Claromontanus. Uncial of the sixth century, containing almost all of the Pauline Epistles (the first few verses of Romans are missing). Like Codex Bezae, it is a Greek/Latin diglot, with the two texts on facing pages. Also, like Bezae, it is “Western.” The “Western” text of Paul, however, does not diverge as far from the Alexandrian text as does the text in the Gospels. Also, in Paul, there are other Greek witnesses to the type “F” and “G.”

E/07 Uncial of the ninth century, containing the Gospels with minor defects. Noteworthy only as the earliest, full-blown witness to the Byzantine text.

E/08 Codex Laudianus. Sixth century uncial of Acts. Greek/Latin diglot, with the two languages in very narrow parallel columns on the same page. This manuscript was almost certainly consulted by Bede in his commentary on Acts. It is largely Byzantine but also has many “Western” readings (some perhaps from the Latin, but not all) and some Alexandrian readings.

F/010 and G/012 Ninth century uncials of Paul. Both are Latin diglots; “F” has the Latin (a mixed Old Latin/Vulgate text) in a facing column; “G” has a Latin interlinear that appears based on an Old Latin text but which has been conformed to the Greek. Both

appear to derive from a common ancestor at a distance of no more than two generations. This common ancestor lacked Hebrews and probably had some other gaps that appear in both manuscripts. The text of the two sister uncials is “Western,” with perhaps more minor alterations in the text than even D/06. Of the two, “F” is the more attractive and legible, but “G” is more complete and seems to have preserved the ancestral text better.

L/019 Codex Regius. Eighth century uncial of the Gospels, with some slight gaps. The most Alexandrian of the late uncials, falling closer to “B” than the Sinaiticus. The combination “B” “L” was considered very strong by Hort, “L” is mostly Byzantine in the early parts of Matthew, but Byzantine readings are rare in Mark through John.

P/025 Ninth century uncial palimpsest of the Acts, Epistles, and the apocalypse. “P” is more noteworthy for its relative completeness than its text; it is everywhere more Byzantine than anything else. “P” is almost purely Byzantine in Acts, and has the “Andreas” text in the Apocalypse; in Paul and the Catholic Epistles, however, it has many Alexandrian readings among the Byzantine.

W/032 Fifth century uncial of the Gospels, with some light lacunae (Blank space, or missing part). “W” is unusual in that its text is heavily “block mixed”; Byzantine in Matthew, “Western” and/or “Caesarean” in Mark; Byzantine and Alexandrian in Luke, mostly Alexandrian in John. Its early date makes it important, but the student should always be sure to know what to expect from it in any particular passage.

0/038 The Koridethi Codex. Uncial of the Gospels, missing parts of the first five chapters of Matthew. Its date is uncertain (there are no other manuscripts that use the same writing style; it seems to have been written by a scribe who had very little Greek knowledge), but the ninth century is often suggested. The earliest and most important witness to the so-called “Caesarean” text, although in fact, it has many Byzantine readings as well.

1. Minuscule of the twelfth century, containing the entire New Testament except for the Apocalypse. In the Acts and Epistles, the text is mostly Byzantine, but in the Gospels, it is the head of a family known as the Lake Group (usually symbolized as f1), which also contains 118, 131, 205 (a probable descendant of 209), 209, and 1582 (the closest relative of 1). The Lake Group is usually listed as “Caesarean,” although the Group seems slightly closer to the Alexandrian text than the other witnesses to this type.

13. Minuscule of the thirteenth century, containing the Gospels with some lacunae (blank space or missing parts). It is the best-known member of the family known as the Ferrar group (symbolized as f13), which also contains 69, 124, 174, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, and 1709. Like the Lake Group, the Ferrar Group is listed as “Caesarean,” though it has more Byzantine readings than the Koridethi Codex or family 1.

33. Minuscule of the ninth century, containing the entire New Testament except for the Apocalypse (with some small gaps in the Gospels and many places where dampness has made the manuscript difficult to read). Called “the Queen of the Minuscules,” and generally worthy of the title. In the Gospels it is Alexandrian, though with much Byzantine mixture. The Byzantine mixture is less in the rest of the New Testament; in Paul it is second only to the Sinaiticus as an Alexandrian witness (except in Romans, which has a Byzantine text written by another hand).

81 Minuscule of the year 1044, containing the Acts (with lacunae) and Epistles. Often and with some justice, regarded as having the best text of Acts among the minuscule. It agrees generally with the Alexandrian text, although with the somewhat more Byzantine mixture and a few more late readings than the Alexandrian uncials.

579 Minuscule of the thirteenth century, containing the Gospels with lacunae. One of the more strongly Alexandrian minuscule witnesses in the Gospels, although it also has many Byzantine readings (especially in Matthew, where the Byzantine element

is stronger than the Alexandrian).

892 Minuscule of the ninth century, containing the Gospels with some insertions from a later hand. Although 892 is a minuscule, it was copied from an uncial, and still displays some of the characteristics of its parent (e.g. the same page breaks). 892 is probably the most Alexandrian of all the minuscule of the Gospels, although there is (as always) a significant Byzantine element. The supplements (which occupy most of the second half of John) are almost purely Byzantine.

1175 Minuscule of the eleventh century, containing the Acts and Epistles (with significant lacunae in the final part of Paul). Considered one of the best and most Alexandrian minuscule, but with a curiously mixed text. Romans and the Johannine Epistles are Byzantine. The rest of the Epistles are Alexandrian with some Byzantine readings. Acts is mostly pre-Byzantine, but the amount of “Western” influence seems to vary from insignificant to rather large.

1241 Minuscule of the twelfth century, containing the entire New Testament, but with some lacunae and assorted supplements. Carelessly copied and with many peculiar readings as a result. A curiously mixed text, mostly Byzantine though with some Alexandrian readings in Matthew and Mark; perhaps the most Alexandrian minuscule witness to Luke; Alexandrian and Byzantine mixed in John; mostly Byzantine in Acts; most Byzantine in Paul, but with supplements containing some earlier readings; highly valuable in the Catholics, where it goes with 1739.

1506 Minuscule of 1320, now containing only the Gospels (with some lacunae) plus the beginning of Paul (Romans and the first three and a fraction chapters of I Corinthians). It is of no value at all in the Gospels, but in Paul its text is strongly Alexandrian. 1506 is most noteworthy in that, alone among New Testament manuscripts, it omits chapter 16 of Romans.

1739 Tenth century minuscule of the Acts and Epistles, complete that the first

chapter and a fraction of Acts come from a later hand. The single most important minuscule known. Space does not permit us to describe it in detail. Suffice to say that 1739 and its allies contain a very old text - which, however, is not part of the Alexandrian text and so has great value in its own right.

2138 Minuscule of the year 1072, containing the Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse. 2138 is of value only in the Acts and Catholic Epistles. It is, however, the earliest member of a fairly large group of manuscripts (e.g. 614 in the Acts and Catholics, 630 in the Catholics, and 1505 in the Acts, Paul, and Catholics) which contain a text neither Alexandrian nor Byzantine (some have called it “Western”; but this is open to debate).

The above list shows that we know quite a bit about certain manuscripts. Even so, the matter of manuscript classification remains highly uncertain. Perhaps as a result of this uncertainty, Textual Criticism in the 21st century has placed increased emphasis on internal evidence. All textual critics balance internal and external evidence to some degree, but the 21st century has seen a new class of critics. Often called “Radical” or “Thoroughgoing Eclectics,” they decide readings almost entirely on the basis of internal evidence; manuscripts are simply the sources of the readings to be examined.

The “documentary” methods of Hort, meanwhile, have been almost completely abandoned. The most common method today is “Reasoned Eclecticism,” which attempts to give both internal and external evidence full voice.

(An interesting thing about the papyrus is that they indicate the Alexandrine scholars perverted the original Receptus from the Papyrus in order to manufacture the Vatican text. This is proved by Porter’s study on the readings of Papyrus 75, which was carried further by Edward Hills (1967), in his work on “Believing Bible Study.” Comparisons of P66, Aleph (Sinaiticus), P75, and “D” (representing the Western family of manuscripts), show that the Alexandrine scribes took papyrus Bibles (used by common ordinary Christians), and manufactured the “official Alexandrine” text, which survives today in the ASV (1901) and the RSV (1952).

A complete list of the Biblical papyri from No. 1 through 76 can be found on pages xi-xiii of the Greek New Testament (1966), published by the “United Bible Societies.” Some of them - P74, P68, and P41 - run as late as the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. Many of the other papyri which have been discovered are NOT Biblical. They contain everything from Homer to grocery lists, and the Bible believer must not be deceived into thinking that just because someone yells, “Papyrus!” that this means he is going to get the Original Greek.”

The student will observe that very often in the critical apparatus of Nestle’s New Testament the testimony of early papyri is rejected *because it agrees with the A.V. 1611 readings.*

The most interesting thing about the papyri is the fact that several of them have texts on Revelation - P47 for example. This brings up a very interesting question. How is it that “Vaticanus” (written in 350 A.D.) doesn’t have the Book of Revelation in it, while the A.V. 1611 (Written 1230 years later) does?

Can one explain how Erasmus’ “late manuscripts” contained *a whole book* missing in the “pure, neutral, Vatican text?”

How does one explain the A.V. 1611 containing the text of a 3rd century Greek papyrus manuscript, while the *4th century Vaticanus is lacking it?* Didn’t the writer of Vaticanus have access to the book? Didn’t he have access to P47?

How did Erasmus know the book of Revelation should be in the canon when the “best manuscript” *doesn’t even have it?*

Some say It was lost. How could it have gotten lost when it was written on a thick tanned animal hide which to this day is called “the best-preserved text” available. P46, written even earlier, has survived with a complete text of I Corinthians. How is it that the

carefully guarded and well-preserved text, written on imperishable material, could not preserve the book which speaks of, "**Mystery Babylon the Great....the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth...and the woman is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth**"!!

Isn't that the most expedient thing you ever saw for a Vatican manuscript, kept in the Vatican?

VII. The Conjectures of Scholars

Those referred to most often are either the church fathers or the editors of the critical editions themselves; these would include Alford (1810-1871), Weiss (1913), Von Soden (1852-1914), Origen (184-254), Irenaeus (130-202), Wescott and Hort (1884), etc. A 'conjecture' is a "guess." It is called a "theory" or "hypothesis" in Scientific circles, to give it prestige, but it is still a guess.

VIII. The Sermons of Early Preachers

These are valuable as they usually contain dozens of quotations from the New Testament. The "Church Fathers" (listed under IV) are the ones whose sermons are usually referred to when an effort is being made to establish a text. This is not entirely satisfactory as it leads the investigator into the booby-trap if what might be called "The Pauline Obsession." This is a peculiar obsession that affects writers. Briefly, it may be stated as that feeling that the "great men" of Christian History are the *writers* or men who left *written works*. The psychology behind this is the fact that men *wrote the Bible*, therefore a certain prestige surrounds that branch of Christendom which *writes*. But this is a false lead. Anyone familiar with church history is aware of the thousands of Christian men and women who lived, loved God, stood by His Word, and suffered and died for it, *without putting anything on paper*. To judge true Christianity, then (or the text of a true Bible), by the *writings of men whose motives for writing may be mixed, in an error*. This is why Martin Luther referred to the "Church Fathers" as the "Church

Babies,” and thundered, “**What saith the Scriptures?!**”

The Pauline obsession is most manifest in the way by which writers, after Paul’s time, like to classify dead Orthodox theologians and apologists with him. It is assumed because Paul wrote and defended the Christian faith, that this puts him in brackets with Calvin, Augustine, Cyprian, Origen, Aquinas, Irenaeus, Jerome, Westcott and Hort, and Berkhof; but this assumption is a false consumption. Paul was a *street preacher* who was thrown in jail for preaching I Corinthians 15:1-4. He did not hammer out his apologetics in an air-conditioned office, and he would quote from heathen poets before he would mention Bel and the Dragon, the wisdom of Ben Sirach, Tobit, or Judith. Scholars and church historians are mistaken when they *swallow the writings* of Cyprian (200-258), Clement (30-100), Irenaeus (130-202), Augustine (354-430), and Origen (184-254), as true representatives of Biblical Christianity.

The **Sermons**, therefore, of the early preachers may help somewhat to establish an early text, but if that text does not turn out to be the text of John Huss (1369-1415), Martin Luther (1483-1546), Tyndale (1494-1536), the Waldensians, the Huguenots, the Albigenses, and the martyrs and missionaries of the ages, it is a *counterfeit*, which God will not honor.

All the materials we presented beforehand, have been lumped into “families.” This idea came from Griesbach (1796) who was seeking to elevate his own critical edition to the pre-eminent place. The “Emphatic Diaglott” which he published (1774, 1796, 1806) gave the Pope’s manuscript the first place. From this time on, the Vatican manuscript was given all the publicity it needed and Griesbach was hailed as the “saviour from corrupt Bibles,” *such as the Bibles of the Reformation!*

In order to magnify the Vatican manuscript and make it appear to be more authentic than the Receptus, he hit upon the idea of dividing the manuscripts into three families - Western, Syrian, and Alexandrian. Having done this, he assigned *all the early manuscripts to the Alexandrian family*, leaving the Syrian text standing like a cold dog in

the snow, with nothing but *late manuscripts to support it*. Thus, the gullible 21st-century student is faced with the formidable array of “Aleph,” A, B, and C, as opposed to the A.V. 1611, and even “D” (Western) in the line-up against it.

From the day that Griesbach invented this arbitrary classification, to this day, the “majority of scholars” think that A., B, C, etc. are *one family*, and E, F, G, etc are *another*. Has anyone noticed that Aleph, B, A, and C are 90% the text of the A.V. 1611? What made them different from the Receptus Greek manuscripts was not a “family difference.” The difference was that the Receptus manuscripts exalted Jesus Christ in about 10 passages and the “Alexandrian family” of manuscripts low-rated Him. The total doctrinal corruptions are about 152 out of 8000 verses, otherwise, the ASV and the RSV have copied the A.V. 1611 90% of the time.

The criteria for the “family” setup is: “the type of text which built up in a certain area.” This may be true, but it cannot change the fact that one true text could have existed from 50 A.D. to 1519 A.D., with different localities altering certain verses, in line with Origen’s corrupt Hexapla. This may be seen, immediately, when one examines “A” (Alexandrinus). Whereas it has been classified as an “Alexandrian type” manuscript (Hesychian or Egyptian), it plainly bears witness to the Reformation Bibles over and over again. The same is true of “C” (Ephraemi Rescriptus), and the same is true of “Aleph” (Sinaiticus).

The families of manuscripts are said to be constructed on the basis of:

1. “Are a manuscript’s readings characteristic of that family?”
2. “Do manuscripts from that area (Western, Alexandrian, Syrian) contain the same readings?”

Let the student observe that the *characteristic readings* of the Alexandrian family are that they “characteristically” *low-rate the Lord Jesus Christ*.

From the “Family” idea, Westcott and Hort (1884) agreed with Griesbach (1796) that “B” (Vaticanus) was a “remarkable pure text,” written somewhere in the West.

By diverting everyone’s attention to the “families,” Griesbach and Westcott and Hort were able to focus attention on the corrupt 5th column of Origen’s Hexapla. When this was done, the arguments in the Seminaries no longer revolved around the Syrian text at all but were continually revolving around the Western, or Alexandrian authority.

Clark (1926), said that the Western-type was first and the Alexandrian scholars copied it, omitting some of the Western readings. Ropes (1926), said that the Alexandrian type was first and that the Western copied it and *added* to it.

There is a third theory, propounded in 1881 by Dean Burgon of Chichester (1813-1888), which evidently no one remembers. This theory, which matches *all the facts of history, all the evidence of the papyrus, all the evidence found in the Uncials, and all the evidence of soul-winning and revival, and all the evidence of common sense and reason, is that the SYRIAN TEXT was FIRST, and the Alexandrian scribes SUBTRACTED FROM IT (ASV, RSV) and the Roman scribes ADDED TO IT (Vulgate, Douay-Rheims)*. This theory supported by Scrivener, Burgon, Miller, and Hills, tallies perfectly with everything.

While Rome and Alexandria were arguing about textual criticism and manuscript evidence, God was using His Holy Bible all over Africa and Asia *and is still doing it*. Why would any “authoritative” text come from *Rome or Alexandria*? What does the Bible say about Rome and Egypt? Is this the proper place to bring the matter up? If not, since when did a Christian scholar abandon what the Bible said about *Egypt and Rome, when examining the “bibles” that came from these places?*

Is not the Bible more authoritative than any of the men who revised it?

THE LINE OF CORRUPTION

The Apocrypha (300-50 B.C.)
Philo (20 B.C.-50 A.D.)
Clement of Alexandria (150-215)
Origen of Alexandria (184-254)
Maricon the Heretic (120-160)
Valentines (125-160)
Hesychius of Alexandria (250-300)
Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340)
Pamphillus (270-309)
Irenaeus (130-202)
Augustine of Hippo (354-430)
The Popes (Leo: 440-Paul: 1970)
J.J. Griesbach (1774)
Carl Lachmann (1842)
Tregelles (1857)
Casper Gregory (1881)
Tischendorf (1869)
Westcott and Hort (1881)
Weiss (1901)
Eberhard Nestle (1898)

THE MIDDLE OF THE ROADERS

Demas (70 A.D.)
Diotrophes (90 A.D.)
Tatian (150)
Clement of Rome (120)

Papias (140)
 Lucian (300)
 Jerome (340-420)
 The Old Catholic Church (500-1900)
 Erasmus (1456-1536)
 Brian Walton (1657)
 John Bengel (1734)
 John Mill (1707)
 John Calvin (1509-1564)
 J.J. Wetstein (1751)
 Von Soden (1852-1914)
 Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921)
 J.G. Machen (1881-1937)
 A.T. Robinson (1863-1934)
 Henry Alford (1849)
 E. Schuyler English (1968)

THE BIBLICAL LINE

The Massoretic Text.
 Peter, James, John, Paul, etc. (30-90 A.D.)
 The Syrian manuscripts in Asia Minor (100-200 A.D.)
 The Old Latin and Old Syriac of the Originals (100-200 A.D.)
 The Papyrus readings of the Receptus (150-400 A.D.)
 The Uncial readings of the Receptus (Codices) (500-1500 A.D.)
 The Gothic Bible of Ulfilas (310)
 Martin Luther's German Bible (1522-1534)
 The Latin Bibles of the Waldensians (1100-1300)
 The Latin Bibles of the Albigenes (1300-1500)
 The Latin Bibles of the Lollards (1382-1550)

The Russian, French, Norwegian, Spanish, Italian, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Swiss, Swedish, Austrian, and Czech Bibles that came from Luther's version (1540-1900)

The Receptus of 1516, Beza's Receptus of 1565, Stephanus' Receptus of 1550, Colinaeus' Receptus of 1534, Elzevir's Receptus of 1624.

The King James Authorized Version, 1611

The Chinese, Burmese, Malayan, Indian, Japanese, African, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, American, and other Bibles that came from the A.V. 1611, preached through missionary translators in over 500 languages (1620-1940).

The evangelistic preaching of Wesley, Whitefield, Finney, Spurgeon, Moody, Torrey, Sunday, Frank Norris, Bob Jones, Charles Fuller, etc. for three centuries (1700-2000)

The Bible of the third group is the product of thousands of Christians preserving ONE BOOK, through 20 centuries, *in spite of Christian Education and Greek Scholarship.*

Both of the other columns display the efforts of individual men (who sat in Judgment on the Bible) as they sought to replace it with their own private texts or private opinions.

Where any version or text contradicts the A.V. 1611, or the King James Version, DISPOSE OF IT IMMEDIATELY.

The Text In History

In order to understand the "how" of New Testament Textual Criticism, it is necessary to understand something of the history of the transmission of the text, as well as to have some knowledge of the history of Textual Criticism itself.

A. Period of Confusion (to 400 A.D.)

The vast majority of the errors in the New Testament manuscript took place during the period that is also the most difficult to reconstruct - the first four Christian centuries.

Much of the difficulty stems from the work of the earliest Christian copyists. In a time when the majority of the people were illiterate and when Christianity periodically underwent severe persecution, there were probably few professional trained scribes in the service of the church. Moreover, seldom were the scribes possessed by the spirit of the scribes of later times who worked according to the instructions of the Lord given in Deuteronomy 12:32: "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom." In fact, the opposite seems to have been true of the scribes in the first two centuries. They introduced thousands of changes into the text. To be sure, the majority of their errors were unintentional and are easily discernible slips of the eye, ear, or mind. Hundreds of changes in the text were made intentionally. Yet we should not think of these scribes as having acted from evil motives. If they often took many liberties in copying their texts, apparently, they did so in most cases in an attempt to "help out." They were more interested in making the message of the sacred text clear than in transmitting errorless manuscripts.

Thus, early scribes (and sometimes later ones) often "smoothed out" the Greek of the Biblical writer by adding conjunctions, changing tenses of verbs, and changing the word order. They also tended to clarify ambiguous passages by adding nouns or pronouns, by substituting common synonyms for uncommon words, and sometimes even by rewriting difficult phrases. One of the most common causes of error was the tendency to conform one passage to another. This harmonizing tendency is particularly frequent in the Gospels. It also occurs in parallel passages in Paul and Acts. There are also some instances - and these are usually very important ones - where the scribes have added (or less often, subtracted) whole sentences or narratives in the interest of doctrine or completeness.

During the second century in particular, when each New Testament book was being transmitted independently of the others and when there was wide geographical distribution of these documents with little or no "control," such scribal errors proliferated. Once an error was introduced into the text, it was then copied by the next scribe as his

“received” text. Quite often a scribe “corrected” what he thought to be errors and doing so created errors of his own. If, as did the scribe of P66, he had a chance to check his copy against another, he may have corrected his text by adding still other variants from that copy. So, errors were created and compounded and so they tended to accumulate.

B. Period of Transmission (400-1516).

Two significant events affected the history of the New Testament after A.D. 400. The Alexandrian text, which by 450 was already greatly influenced by the Byzantine, generally disappeared from use. The major causes for this was the demise of the patriarchate in Alexandria and the subsequent rise and spread of Islam.

On the other hand, Latin had meanwhile become the predominant language in the West, so that production of Greek texts ceased there. The great number of discrepancies found in the Old Latin manuscripts had finally resulted in an “authorized” translation, the Latin Vulgate, made by Jerome c. 384. But it took about 200 years before it superseded the more popular older translations. Meanwhile, as it was being copied and carried from one part of the West to another, the Vulgate was variously conformed to the Old Latin and developed local textual histories. Several attempts were made through the Middle Ages to purify Jerome’s text, but each of these recessions eventually resulted in further corruption. As a result, the over 8,000 extant Vulgate manuscripts reflect enormous cross-contamination of text-types.

The result of these two factors was that the transmission of the Greek New Testament was generally limited to the Eastern church, where the majority of copies reflected the standardized text used at the capital, Constantinople. Thus, the history of the Greek text during this period, with a few notable exceptions, is simply the history of a thousand years of copying manuscripts of the Byzantine text-type.

C. Establishment of the *Textus Receptus* (1516-1633)

Johannes Gutenberg's invention of printing by use of movable type was the next major factor in the history of the New Testament text. For now, many copies of a book, all identical, could be produced. Although the first Greek New Testament actually to be printed was edited by Cardinal Ximenes in 1514, the first text to be published appeared in 1516 and was edited by the great Dutch humanist, Erasmus.

Unfortunately, these first editions, which were to serve as a base for all subsequent editions until 1831, were themselves based on late medieval manuscripts of inferior quality. In fact, Erasmus's only manuscript of Revelation lacked the final leaf, which had contained the last six verses. For these verses he used the Vulgate, translating its text into Greek, with the result that his Greek text has readings that have never been found in any Greek manuscript.

Of subsequent editions, three have special significance for the history of the New Testament text: (1) Robert Stephanus's third edition (1550), which was based on Erasmus's third edition, became the standard text in England and served as the base for the King James Version of 1611. His fourth edition (1551) is also noteworthy in that it is the first text to be divided into numbered chapters and verses - the system still in use today.

(2) Theodore Beza, John Calvin's successor in Geneva, published nine editions between 1565 and 1604, and this tended to stamp an imprimatur on the text of Erasmus. His editions of 1588-9 and 1598 were also used by the King James translators.

(3) A Greek text very much like those of Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza, edited by Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir (1633), became the standard text used in the continent. The term *Textus Receptus* ("received text") derives from the preface of this edition, in which the editors declared, "You therefore have the text which is now

received by all, in which we give nothing altered or corrupted.” This boast was to hold good for over 200 more years.

D. Period of Discovery and Research (1633-1831).

The next period in the history of the New Testament text was one in which scholars made great efforts to amass new information from Greek manuscripts, the versions, and the fathers. Yet the texts published during this period continued to print the time-honored Textus Receptus; the new evidence, especially that from much earlier manuscripts, was regulated to variant readings in the apparatus (i.e. the critical notes). Among the large number of scholars who made contributions during this period, especially noteworthy are J.A. Bengel (1734), who was the first to suggest a classification of manuscripts into text-types and to devise a system of evaluating variants according to merit; J.J. Wetstein (1751-2), who set forth extensive principles of textual criticism and began the device of designating the manuscripts by symbols; and J.J. Griesbach, whose editions from 1774 to 1807 laid the foundation for all subsequent textual criticism. Griesbach modified Bengel’s classifications of textual groups into the basic three, which are still recognized. He elaborated and carefully defined the principles of textual criticism and showed great skill in evaluating the evidence for variant readings. Although his own text was not so divergent from the Textus Receptus as those that would follow, his pioneer efforts paved the way for what was to come.

E. Period of Constructive Criticism (1831-1881).

The period that followed Griesbach was to see the overthrow of the Textus Receptus and the rise of new critical editions based on the more significant manuscript finds and the principles of criticism pioneered by Wetstein and Griesbach.

The first important break from the Textus Receptus came in 1831 with the Greek text published by the German classicist Karl Lachmann. His was the first systematic

attempt to produce a text using a scientific method rather than the mere production of the text of the Middle Ages.

More significant still was the voluminous and monumental work of Constantine von Tischendorf. Besides bringing to light many hitherto unknown manuscripts, he published eight critical editions of the Greek New Testament, the last of which (1872) contained a critical apparatus giving all the variant readings of the known uncials as well as readings for many cursives, the versions, and the church fathers. This volume is still an indispensable tool for New Testament textual criticism.

Although many others made contributions during this period (especially S.P. Tregelles), the Greek text edited by B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort (1881) was to supersede all others in significance. So thoroughly and well did they do their work that almost all subsequent textual criticism is defined in relation to it. Their forte was the refinement and rigorous application of a scientific methodology to the New Testament text. The result was issued in two volumes as *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. Volume 1 contained their resultant Greek text; volume 2 comprised a lengthy Introduction, written by Hort, and an Appendix, in which certain problem passages were discussed.

In the Introduction, Hort set out in full detail what has become a classic statement of the methodology of textual criticism. Especially significant are his careful analysis and evaluations of the relative merits of the various text-types and their leading representatives. Hort offered three main arguments against the Byzantine text-type (he called Syrian), which subsequent discoveries and researches have generally validated: (1) The Syrian text-type is filled with conflate readings, i.e., readings that combine the elements found in the earlier two text-types; (2) the readings peculiar to the Syrian text-type are never found in the ante-Nicene Fathers, neither East nor West; and (3) when the readings peculiar to this text-type are compared with rival readings on the principles of internal evidence, "their claim to be regarded as the original readings is found gradually to diminish, and at last to disappear." (Introduction p. 116).

Westcott and Hort were thus left with a choice between the two earlier text-types. At this point, internal considerations became the final arbiter, and they felt that a careful analysis of variants over many pages of text revealed the text of Egypt, or Alexandria, (which they presumed to call “Neutral”) to be far superior in almost every case. Thus, their resultant text was an edition of the Neutral text-type, except in those instances where internal evidence was clearly against it.

F. Since Westcott and Hort (1881 to the present).

As one might expect, such a radical departure from the “received text” was not immediately accepted by all. This is particularly true of the English-speaking world, where the Textus Receptus had long been in the hands of the majority of Christians throughout the KJV. The reaction to Westcott and Hort was led especially by J.W. Burgon, Edward Miller, and H.C. Hoskier.

Most scholars found their affirmation of the Alexandrian manuscripts as neutral to be too ambitious. In spite of such disavows, however, all subsequent critical texts look far more like Westcott and Hort than like the Textus Receptus or the Western manuscripts. Therefore, it is fair to say that, whether intentionally or not, the mainstream of New Testament textual criticism since Westcott and Hort has moved toward modifying and advancing their work. The following are some of the important advances:

1. New Discoveries

Probably the most important advance since Westcott and Hort is the discovery of large quantities of new textual data of all kinds. Among these, the most significant are the papyri, because for the most part they represent evidence earlier than that available to Westcott and Hort.

Many of the first discoveries of earlier evidence showed such a textual mixture that Westcott and Hort's theories of text-types were seriously called into question. But later discoveries, especially P46, P72 and P75, have tended to verify the basic positions of Westcott and Hort. Furthermore, the papyri have generally confirmed their opinion as to the late character of the Byzantine text-type. One does find an occasional variant in the early papyri that supports the later text-type, but none of the early papyri is even remotely related to the Byzantine manuscripts.

2 Other Researches.

Besides the discovery of new manuscripts, other researches of various kinds have also greatly advanced the science of textual criticism since Westcott and Hort.

Especially noteworthy has been the work done that sheds more light on the versions and on Tatian's Diatessaron (an arrangement of the four Gospels to form a single narrative) and the collecting and editing of the citations of the early fathers. The usefulness of this work is now far greater than in 1881.

In recent years, methodology in establishing textual relationships has also been greatly improved, not only for text-types in general but also for a clearer definition of relationships within the great mass of Byzantine manuscripts. Such refinements of method have greatly increased the ability of textual critics to group manuscripts into their proper families and text-types.

Of particular interest to the exegete has been the work of such scholars as C.S.C. Williams and E. J. Epp, who have studied the theological tendencies of certain groups of variants. Such studies have made clear that not all textual variation is accidental or theologically unbiased. They further aid the exegete by throwing light on how certain passages were understood, or misunderstood, in the early church.

Two projects of large dimensions involving broad international cooperation are also of interest both to the scholar and to the interpreter: (1) The International Greek New

Testament Project, composed of a team of American and British scholars, is preparing a critical apparatus of the Gospels that will include all known papyri and uncials, extensively representative cursives and lectionaries, all early versions, and citations of all church fathers to 500 A.D. (2) a team of German and French scholars, under the auspices of the Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung in Münster, is at work on a new major critical edition, including a full critical apparatus. The General Epistles are the first scheduled for publications.

3. Critical Editions.

These discoveries and researches have resulted in a spate of critical texts since Wescott and Hort. A few should be noted because of their broad significance.

In 1913 H. von Soden, published a long-awaited and massive work that included a critical text, a large and complicated apparatus, lengthy descriptions of manuscripts, and his own textual theory. This work, however, turned out to be a great disappointment. His textual theory never gained acceptance, his classifications of manuscripts have often proved to be wrong, and some of his collations are completely untrustworthy. Nevertheless, his accumulation of evidence goes beyond that of Tischendorf and is helpful to the expert when used with care.

More important to most exegetes are the smaller “pocket” editions. The most common of these is a series of editions begun by Eberhard Nestle in 1898. The 25th edition of this text was published in 1963, now under the supervision of Kurt Aland. This text was not a new critical text but was rather based on the majority reading of the critical texts of Tischendorf, Westcott, and Hort, and B. Weiss. The great usefulness of this edition has been its extensive but abbreviated, textual apparatus.

In 1966 the United Bible Societies published a new “handbook” edition, edited by K. Aland, M. Black, B.M. Metzger, and A. Wikgren. This text has been prepared especially for Bible translators and therefore has the following distinctive: (1) The critical apparatus is restricted primarily to meaningful variants, i.e., variants that may make a

difference in the translation of the text; (2) each variant adopted in the text is given a notation as to the degree of certainty the editors felt it had; (3) each variant has a full citation of carefully selected representative evidence; and (4) there is a second apparatus giving meaningful alternatives in punctuation. A commentary on each variant, written by Metzger, was published in 1973.

A comparison of this text with Westcott and Hort and Textus Receptus shows a significant consensus of modern scholarship stands. For example, in Luke 10 the United Bible Society edition varies from Westcott and Hort only eight times (plus six spelling differences) while it differs from the Textus Receptus fifty-six times (plus twenty spelling differences). The reason for the differences between Westcott and Hort and the United Bible Society, or among any of the modern critical texts, is fundamentally a matter of emphasis in methodology.

4. The Method

For a full discussion of the method and practice of New Testament textual criticism, one should consult the manuals by Greenlee or Metzger.

One criterion above all others superintends the scholar's choice at any point of textual variation: the variant that best explains the origin of all the others is most likely to be original. In order to "best explain the origin of the others," there are two factors that scholars must consider: external evidence (the manuscripts themselves), and internal evidence (having to do with the authors or scribes).

A. External Evidence.

The first thing one must do at any point of variation is to weigh the manuscript evidence supporting each variant. Thus one usually asks the following questions: How old are the witnesses supporting each variant or how old is their text? How good is the general quality of the manuscripts? How wide is the geographical distribution of the

witnesses? This latter question is especially important because the early and widespread geographical distribution of reading points to an original parent much further back before the document in question was widely scattered throughout the early church. With few exceptions, however, scholars are agreed that knowing the age or the geographical distribution of early witnesses in no way guarantees finding the original text.

B. Internal Evidence.

Internal evidence is of two kinds: transcriptional probability (what kind of error or change the scribe probably made) and intrinsic probability (what the author was most likely to have written).

1. Transcriptional probability has to do with scribal errors and is based on certain inductively derived criteria. For example, it is usually true that the more difficult reading is probably the original one because it was the tendency of scribes to make the text easier to read. Again, the shorter reading is often the original one, because the scribes tended to add to the text. This criterion must, however, be used with great caution because scribes sometimes made omissions in the text either for smoothness or to remove what might be objectionable. Finally, a textual variant differing from quoted or parallel material is almost always original, since the tendency of scribes was to harmonize.

2. Intrinsic probability is the most subjective element in the methodology of textual criticism. It has to do with the style and vocabulary of the author, his ideas as they are elsewhere known, and the probabilities based on the immediate context.

Not all the criteria mentioned above are equally applicable in every case; in fact, the more difficult one, or the reading most in accord with the author's style may be a harmonization with that style. In such stalemates, the textual critic is usually forced back to the external evidence as final arbiter.

It is noteworthy that for most scholars over 90 percent of all the variations to the New Testament text are resolved because in most instances the variant that best explains the origin of the others is also supported by the earliest and best witnesses.

C. The Debate Over Method.

With the rejection of Hort's genealogical method, by which the reading of the Alexandrian witnesses was adopted except where internal evidence proved it secondary, there has emerged a method that may properly be called "eclectic." Essentially, this means that the "original" text of the New Testament is to be chosen variant by variant, using all the principles of critical judgment without regarding one manuscript or text-type as necessarily preserving that "original."

Despite a few notable exceptions, most of the differences that remain among critical texts result from a varying degree of weight given the external evidence.

On the one hand, there is a kind of eclecticism that, when all other criteria are equal, tends to follow Hort and to adopt the readings of the Alexandrian witnesses. These may be observed to a greater degree in the United Bible Society edition and to a somewhat lesser degree in the Greek texts behind RSV and NEB, where early Western witnesses are given a little more consideration.

Another kind of textual theory was advocated by M.E. Boismard and was used in D. Mollat's translation of John in the Jerusalem Bible. This is a kind of "eclectic Western" method in which great emphasis is placed on preference for the shorter readings as they are found in various Western witnesses, especially early versions and citations from certain fathers. The difficulty with this method seems to lie in the preference for the versions and fathers over against the whole Greek tradition, especially since many shorter readings may be shown to be a translational paraphrase or untrustworthy citations apparently made from memory.

On the opposite side is the method of “rigorous eclecticism” practiced by G.D. Kilpatrick and his student J.K. Elliott. They advocate placing no weight on the manuscripts at all but making every choice solely on the basis of internal principles. The difficulty with this method is that the results depend on the scholar’s preference of internal criteria, which in the case of Kilpatrick and Elliott seems to be for variants in an author’s style as over against the questions of transcriptional probability.

While, as has already been said, we may grant that not all of the principles of textual criticism are applicable to each variant, contemporary critics generally agree that questions of internal evidence should usually be asked first and that the weight of the manuscript evidence should be applied secondarily. What becomes obvious, however, is that on the grounds of internal evidence certain manuscripts tend to support the “original” text more often than others and that those manuscripts are the early Alexandrian. Therefore, when internal evidence cannot decide, the safest guide is to go with the “best” manuscripts.

5. The Significance.

What difference does all of this make to the expositor? Much in every way. On the one hand, it provides him with confidence that for the most part the text he is interpreting, whether it be from a modern Greek text or a contemporary translation, truly represents what the Biblical author actually wrote.

Nevertheless, and more significantly, there are places where the original text is not so certain. At such points, textual criticism becomes an integral part of exegetes. In some instances, such as in John 7:1, whether the original text says that Jesus “did not wish” to go about in Galilee or “did not have the authority” to do so, or as in verse 8, whether Jesus said He was not, or was not yet, going up to the feast, the textual choice will affect the interpretation of the passage.

In other instances, exegetes and textual choice go hand in hand. In John 1:34, did

John the Baptist say, “This is the Son of God” (KJV, RSV) or “This is God’s Chosen One” (NEB, JB)? The manuscript evidence is divided, even among the early text-types. “Son” is found in the key Alexandrian witnesses as well as in several Old Latin and the later Syriac witnesses, while, “Chosen One” is supported by the Alexandrians P5 as well as the Old Latin manuscripts and the Old Syriac.

The question must finally be decided on internal grounds. As to the transcriptional probability, one thing is clear: the variant is intentional, not accidental. But did a second-century scribe alter the text to support a kind of adaptationist Christology, or did an Orthodox scribe sense the possibility that the designation “Chosen One” might be used to support adoptionism, and so alter it for Orthodox reasons? In terms of possibilities, the latter seems far more likely, especially since “the Son” is not changed elsewhere in the Gospel to fit adaptationist views.

But the final decision must involve exegetes. Since what John the Baptist said was almost certainly intended to be Messianic and not a statement of Christian theology, the question is whether it reflects the Messianism of such a passage as Psalm 2:7 or that of Isaiah 42:1. In light of the suffering or paschal, lamb motif of John 1:29, it is surely arguable that “Chosen One” fits the context of the Gospel.

What finally points to “Chosen One” as the original is the use the evangelist makes of the many confessions in the Gospel. All of them pick up different Messianic motifs (1:29, 41, 49; 4:42; 6:14; 6:69; 11:27) and all of them “fit” their specific context (e.g., the “true Israelite” confesses Him as “King of the Jews;” in the bread (manna) from heaven context He is called the Mosaic “prophet who is coming into the world”). Since “Chosen One” fits the context and gives the evangelist yet another Messianic confession of Jesus, it seems to be preferred as the original. But in either case, the interpreter must also do textual criticism.

Thus, textual criticism, rather than being simply an exercise for the expert preceding exegesis, is also an integral part of the interpretation of the Word of God.

Summary:

I want to close this lesson on Textual Criticism and say that I have only presented a few facts on this subject. There is obviously a lot more detailed study on early manuscripts. I do not endorse any one version of the Bible over the other, however, I am an avid user of the King James Version Bible of 1611 A.D.

No one has ever proved yet that the King James Bible is not the perfect exact translation of the original manuscripts, nor can anyone prove this as the originals have never been found and the variations in how to say a thing differ from one language to another.

The text of the King James Bible can be found in SOME manuscripts clear back to 90 A.D. (papyrus 52, containing part of John 18), and it is only the conceit of the scholars to assume that the Textus Receptus is a late text. Taitian's "Diatessaron" (190 A.D.), contains readings from the King James Text that are NOT found in the Westcott and Hort text - which was taken from manuscripts written in A.D. 330-350.

It is interesting to note also that the Geneva Bible (1599) printed in England was the Bible brought to America by the pilgrims on the Mayflower (1620), the King James Version was "too modern" for their tastes. It was the Geneva Bible that helped settle America as a Christian nation.

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