
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

Romance and Tragedy in the History of the New Testament Text.

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There are few subjects with as little popular appeal as the textual criticism of the New Testament. One thinks of musty monasteries, or of the scholarly recluse remote from the life of men with all its struggles and aspirations. But, just as progress in knowledge of the wonders of the stars is linked to exact mathematical calculations and measurements, so the preservation of the N.T. text from the first century till now is marked by heroism and tragedy that challenge our interest and our gratitude. If the Bible is worth half to the world what its sharpest critics admit, it is certainly due a certain amount of consideration for the marvellous way in which it has come down to us.

The human interest starts with the beginning. One can feel Paul's indignation over the effort of some pious cranks in Thessalonica to palm off spurious epistles with his name as author, in order to bolster up their false interpretation of his preaching in Thessalonica (2 Th 2^{1-3}). He was compelled to call attention to his own signature at the close of each Epistle as the proof of its genuineness, just as bankers to-day watch the handwriting of the signature to a cheque (3^{17}). Criticism of the Pauline Epistles began with the beginning, and it has continued until now. In Corinth, Paul's adversaries admitted the power of his letters without trying to forge his name to any, but they ridiculed his personal prowess (2 Co 10^{9-11}). Paul usually dictated his Epistles, and it is interesting to see Tertius, the amanuensis for the Epistle to the Romans, slyly slipping in his own greeting (Ro 16^{22}). There is a pathetic interest in the 'large letters' used by Paul in writing with his own hand in large uncials (like a child's print) the passionate close of the Epistle to the Galatians (6^{11}), if that fact is due to his poor eyes (4^{15}). But if he had an acute eye-trouble, so common in the glaring sun in the East, that trial or 'temptation' (4^{14}) may have been temporary. Certainly Paul had his books, both papyrus and parchment, and used them, and missed them when without them (2 Ti 4^{13}).

It was not easy to preserve books in the first century A.D. Most of them were written on the brittle papyrus of which we now have so many fragments from Egypt. There they have been preserved in the dry sands of the rubbish-heaps or wrapped around mummies in the tombs. But the N.T. autographs probably perished quickly, though fortunately not before copies were made of them. Paul meant his Epistles to be read in public (1 Th 5^{27}), and they were sometimes passed from church to church, as was true of those to Colossæ and Laodicea (our Ephesians), as he expressly directed should be done (Col 4^{16}). Probably each church had a copy made before the Epistle was passed on to another church.

The more important, or more lengthy books were written on parchment, as was probably the case with St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts. At first, books were made on sheets of papyrus or parchment fastened together into a roll. But in the fourth century the codex had supplanted the roll, and parchment had taken the place of papyrus.

The early copies of various books of the N.T. were made separately, one book by itself. By degrees the Gospels were bound together, the Pauline Epistles together, and so on. It was only after the parchment codex came into use, with its leaves like our modern books, that all the N.T. books could be bound into one volume, and finally the entire Greek Bible as in the Codex Sinaiticus (ℵ) and the Codex Vaticanus (B). But it was not merely from carelessness in copying and indifference in the use of books, like losing the outside leaf, as is possible in St. Mark's Gospel, that the N.T. had to suffer. It is amazing how some people to-day misuse books. One of the worst incidents in the repeated persecutions that the early Christians had to undergo was the wholesale destruction of the N.T. books by Imperial command, and by the rage of the pagans. It was like the case of Antiochus Epiphanes in Jerusalem, when he tore down the altar of Jehovah and set up an altar to Jupiter (Zeus), with destruction of all copies of the sacred books of the Jews. Dr. Hort puts the situation with his usual sobriety of state-

ment when he says: 'Destruction of books, which had played so considerable a part in textual history at the threshold of the Constantinian Age, was repeated again and again on a larger scale, with the important difference that now no reaction followed. The ravages of the barbarians and Muhammadans annihilated the MSS of vast regions, and narrowly limited the area within which transcription was carried on. Thus an immense number of the MSS representing texts farthest removed in locality from Antiochian (or Constantinopolitan) influence perished entirely, leaving no successors to contribute readings to other living texts or to transmit their own texts to the present day' (Introduction, pp. 142 f., vol. ii. of *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, 1882). One must let his imagination fill out this picture. One would go to the stake with a precious copy of Paul's Epistles or of the Gospel of St. John. A whole family, house and all, would be burned up by the ruthless Goths and Vandals. The wonder is that anything remained. Constantine about A.D. 331 ordered fifty MS. copies of the Greek Bible prepared for the churches of Constantinople by Eusebius of Cæsarea. Caspar René Gregory thought that B and ℵ were two of these fifty. That is quite possible, though there is no evidence that either of these MSS was ever in Constantinople. But it is certain that the hatred against Christianity and Christians included the books of the N.T. For a while it did look as if these priceless books might perish from the face of the earth. What the result would have been to the world one can contemplate only with horror.

We may be grateful for the early translations of the Greek N.T., for they helped to circulate the book in the language of the people and to preserve it for us to-day. It would make a fascinating story in itself to tell how the Diatessaron of Tatian has been rediscovered from two Arabic MSS of the eleventh century. This Diatessaron or Harmony of the Four Gospels in connected narrative was long lost, but it is now accessible in several good English translations. It is not known whether it was made first in Greek or in Syriac, but it played a large part in the history of the N.T. in Syriac. Von Soden holds that this Diatessaron of Tatian, dating from the second half of the second century, was the main disturbing factor in the text of the N.T., as Origen's Hexapla was in the text of the O.T. Dr. J. Rendel Harris thinks that Tatian's Encratism appears in his reading that John the Baptist ate 'milk and honey.' The recovery of two MSS of the Old Syriac has thrown new light on the Syriac versions and made it plain that the Peshiṭta version was not early, but late. It was Dr. W. Cureton, of the British Museum, who in 1848 edited the Syriac version of the Gospels now known as Curetonian Syriac. In 1892 Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson, the distinguished twin-sisters of Cambridge, found another Syriac Gospel MS. in the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. It is a palimpsest and is another Old Syriac document of great value. These discoveries whet one's appetite for more research.

New MSS of the Egyptian versions are throwing fresh light on the various Coptic versions, of which three are known (the Sahidic, the Bashmuric, the Bohairic). Only this year Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie has told of the discovery of a Coptic MS. of the Gospel of St. John older than any now known, and of a different dialect also. The oldest Latin translation was made in North Africa, where Greek was little understood, and, later, one was made in Europe. It was in A.D. 405 that Jerome finished his thorough revision of the previous translations. Jerome made the translation at the request of Pope Damasus, but all the same he knew and wrote in advance that the people would not like it. He had some better Greek MSS than lay behind the Old Latin versions, but he lost his temper at the abuse heaped upon him by those who preferred the Old Latin to which they had become accustomed. He termed them *bipedes asellos*, and probably some of them were. 'Dean Burgon's opposition to the English revision of 1881 seemed to us serious, but it was mere child's play beside the antagonism shown in the fourth century' (Gregory, *Canon and Text of the New Testament*, p. 411). It was literally centuries before Jerome's work came into general use, not before the ninth century, and the Anglo-Saxons copied the Old Latin instead of the Vulgate. The name 'Vulgate' does not seem to have been attached to the work of Jerome till the Council of Trent, April 8, 1546, and then only as an adjective in the sense of 'current' or 'common.' It was not till 1590 that Pope Sixtus v. called his edition the Vulgate of the Council of Trent: 'By the fulness of apostolical power, we decree and declare that this edition of the sacred Latin Vulgate of the Old and New Testaments, which has been received as authentic by the Council of Trent . . . be received and held as true, legitimate, authentic, and unquestioned, in all public and private disputation,

reading, preaching, and explanation.' But the Pope died August 27, 1590, and, in spite of his anathemas, a new edition had to be issued in order to correct the multitude of errors found in the book. Gregory makes merry over the fate of Bellarmin, who was refused canonization because he suggested the 'pious fraud' of recalling the volume, making the corrections, and re-issuing it as if the deceased Sixtus had ordered it. They condemned Bellarmin, but did the very thing that he had suggested. The new edition appeared in 1592, and is called the Clementine Vulgate. And scholars are still at work on the 'immaculate' text of the Latin Vulgate. Professor G. Henslow in 1909 published a volume entitled *The Vulgate the Source of False Doctrines* in which he undertakes 'to show that it is in the Latin Vulgate that we shall discover the original source of most of the still remaining errors' (pp. 1 and 2). In particular (p. 4) he laments that sacerdotal terms are brought over into the N.T. from the O.T.

There were publishers of books and great libraries before the days of Jerome. Pamphilus gathered a great ecclesiastical library in Cæsarea and was able to take an order from the Emperor Constantine for fifty fine Greek Bibles. Eusebius of Cæsarea carried on the work of Pamphilus. But in Alexandria there existed the greatest centre of theological interest. Here Clement, a convert from Stoicism, succeeded Pantænus as head of the Catechetical School. He had a wide and rich literary culture, and quoted in his *Miscellanies* freely from Greek and Latin authors, Jewish and Christian. Mr. P. M. Barnard in *The Biblical Text of Clement of Alexandria* (1899) has shown that Clement used the type of text very much like that of Westcott and Hort.

Clement of Alexandria was succeeded by a much greater scholar and critic, Origen. 'In textual scholarship, indeed, Origen has no rival among ancient writers, and no single individual has exercised so wide an influence upon the Biblical text as he' (Kenyon, *Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 213 f.). He was only eighteen when he undertook this great task. He was driven out of Alexandria in 215, went to Cæsarea, and then returned to Alexandria in 219; and again in 231 he had trouble with his ecclesiastic overlords and made his home in Cæsarea till his death in 253. Thus Cæsarea had Origen, Pamphilus, Eusebius. Origen tells us why he preferred 'Bethabara' to 'Bethany' in Jn 1^{28}. He admitted that practically all the documents read 'Bethany,' but he could not find a Bethany beyond Jordan in his travels in Palestine, hence he preferred 'Bethabara.' That is subjective criticism with a vengeance. It is clear that such whimsical criticism existed very early. All the more do we wonder that we can restore a competently correct text of the N.T.

We pass by many centuries, silent and dark to us, but full of turmoil and labour for the patient monks who copied Greek and Latin MSS in the East and the West. Parchment (vellum), as we have seen, took the place of papyrus, and the codex supplanted the roll. Many of the vellum books are highly ornamented, and some are written in silver or gold on purple parchment. The minuscule or cursive hand displaced the beautiful but tedious uncial style. Finally, paper came into use, and printing. The first book to be printed was the Latin Vulgate at Mayence in 1455 (the Mazarin Bible). This was a significant fact, for Latin was now supreme in the West, and Greek was largely confined to the East. But the Renaissance came to the West with its revival of interest in Greek learning. The barbarians had nearly destroyed Greek culture and letters. The Arabs had kept the torch alive in the Far East. Now the West woke up with the Greek N.T. in its hands.

The hero of this epoch is Erasmus, the foremost classicist of his time. He did not indeed print the first Greek N.T. That honour belongs to Cardinal Francis Ximenes de Cisneros, Archbishop of Toledo and Prime Minister of Spain. This great Inquisitor was at work on a Polyglot Bible, called the Complutensian Polyglot, which was published in 1522 by the aid of Stunica, for Ximenes died in 1517. The N.T. text was printed in 1514, four hundred years ago, though not published till 1522. But Frobenius, of Basle, had offered to pay Erasmus as much as anybody if he would get out a Greek N.T. before Ximenes published his polyglot. So Erasmus began to print his first edition of the Greek N.T., September 11, 1515, and finished it March 1, 1516. He won the race by six years, but at great cost to accuracy, and with lamentable results upon the history of the Greek N.T. He had five late minuscules at Basle. The best one (1) belonged to the eleventh century, and was so different from the others that Erasmus used it very little. Its text is very much like that of B and ℵ unknown to Erasmus. He had 2 (fifteenth century) for the Gospels, 2^{ap} (thirteenth or fourteenth century) for Acts and

Epistles, and 1 (twelfth century) for the Apocalypse. The last one had a leaf missing at the end, and Erasmus retranslated the last six verses from the Latin Vulgate. 'Some words of this re-translation from the Vulgate, which occur in no MS. whatever, still linger in our Textus Receptus to the present day' (Kenyon, *Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 229). Erasmus felt proud of his work, but confessed that it 'was done headlong rather than edited.' He corrected many misprints in the edition of 1519, but in that of 1522 he actually inserted the forged passage about the Trinity in 1 Jn $5^{7,8}$, made to order from Vulgate MSS, and put in a sixteenth-century minuscule now in Dublin. Erasmus did not believe at the time that it was genuine, but he had promised Stunica that, if he saw it in any Greek MS. of the N.T., he would put it in the next edition. It was already in the Vulgate as a result of Cyprian's interpretation of the real text. Certainly the doctrine of the Trinity does not hinge upon a spurious passage like this, but it took over three hundred years to get it out, once it was in. Erasmus made a translation of the Greek into Latin, side by side with his Greek, and added sharp notes that greatly angered the ecclesiastics of Europe (see 'The Romance of Erasmus's Greek Testament' in my *The Minister and his Greek New Testament*, 1923). The Greek N.T. of Erasmus sold like hot cakes, and laid the foundation of the Reformation of Luther and of Luther's German Bible and, sooth to say, of the Authorized English Version (King James). In the fourth edition of Erasmus (1527) he made some use of the Complutensian Polyglot, especially in the Apocalypse. But Erasmus remained technically a Roman Catholic, though denied honour at his funeral, and his body lies buried in the Protestant Minster at Basle.

If Erasmus had known that he was working for the ages, instead of getting ahead of Ximenes, he might have taken more pains to edit his Greek N.T. All his documents were late, and some of the poorest of the late ones. But soon Stephanus or Stephens (Estienne of Paris) issued his Greek N.T., which was mainly a reprint of the last edition of Erasmus (1527, 1535). His 'royal edition' (*editio regia*) of 1550 became the main source for the Textus Receptus of England. In this edition of 1550 Stephens inserted the verse divisions which he had made on horseback (*inter equitandum*) from Paris to Lyons. What a tragedy for the interpretation of the N.T. was that horseback ride! For centuries thereafter the sentences were to be rudely torn asunder without rhyme or reason and to the obscuration of the meaning. Even now, with our modern paragraphs, few editions in any language dare to omit these verses, though most of them put them on the margin. They are convenient for reference, but they have on the whole done untold harm.

Beza prepared four editions (1565 to 1598) of the text of Stephens. He had the use of D and D_2, but 'the time had not yet come for the safe operation of textual criticism' (Schaff, *Companion to the Greek Testament and English Version*, 1889, p. 238). So Beza let his chance slip to get back to an older text, but certainly D (Codex Bezæ) raises problems that trouble us still. The two last editions of Stephens, and the four of Beza, were those chiefly relied on for the Authorized English Version of 1611. It is impossible, therefore, to overestimate the importance of what Erasmus did in 1516.

But this is not all the story. The Holland publishers, Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir, republished Beza's edition of 1565 with the bald and bold claim: '*Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus.*' This edition became the Textus Receptus for the Continent, as that of Stephens did for England. Schaff (*op. cit.* p. 241) puts the outcome pointedly: 'The *textus receptus*, slavishly followed, with slight diversities, in hundreds of editions, and substantially represented in all the principal modern Protestant translations prior to the present century, thus resolves itself essentially into that of the last edition of Erasmus, formed from a few modern and inferior manuscripts and the Complutensian Polyglot, in the infancy of biblical criticism.' That is tragedy indeed, for the original Greek text, which had travelled so long and so far, to become fixed in this form! Souter (*Text and Canon of the New Testament*, p. 96) laments that 'already there seems to have arisen a fictitious worship for the letter of Erasmus's last edition.' It has taken nearly four hundred years of the hardest kind of work to break that spell, and to go back to the older and the truer text.

At first, men who wanted to get behind the Textus Receptus, like Fell and Mill, published the Elzevir or the Stephens text with variations of important MSS. Richard Bentley planned a new text on the basis of the oldest Greek and Latin MSS. He published his proposal, and it roused the hostility of

all who were used to the Textus Receptus. Bentley was a fighter, but he died in 1742, before he published his text.

Bengel was afraid to publish a text of his own. No publishers would risk the rage of the public. He made some changes in his text that had already appeared previously, but he made fine use of the margin with five classes of variants. Even this plan stirred so much hostility that he published in German and in Latin a 'Defence of the Greek Testament' (1737). Wettstein (1751–2) did not dare to change the text of the Textus Receptus, but he published a fairly full critical apparatus, which is still important for its numerous quotations from the early writers. He was also the first scholar to use capital letters for the uncial Greek MSS, and Arabic numbers for the minuscules. He was a poor critic, but a prodigious worker, and his N.T. is still indispensable as a storehouse of parallel passages from the Rabbinical writers and the classics. But he had a long and bitter controversy with two orthodox, but intolerant men, Iselin and Frey. His *Prolegomena* is full of this painful story.

Griesbach cut loose from the fetters of the Textus Receptus, and made the beginning of a really critical text. The edition of his N.T. ran from 1775 to 1807. He took hold of Bengel's system of families, and classified them as Western, Alexandrian, and Byzantine or Constantinopolitan. Hort revered Griesbach more than any of his predecessors, and many of his canons of criticism are still used. He did not arouse as much antagonism as Bentley and Bengel had done.

But Lachmann's *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine* (2 vols. 1842–1850) did meet with much opposition from the professional theologians. He was Professor of Classical Philology in Berlin, and even De Wette thought that he wasted his time and strength in trying to reproduce the text of the fourth century. He paid no attention to the late documents (Byzantine) and confined his attention to the Western and Alexandrian classes. 'Such is the power of habit and prejudice that every inch of ground in the march of progress is disputed, and must be fairly conquered' (Schaff, *op. cit.* p. 256).

Tregelles supplied a fairly full critical apparatus that followed in the line of Lachmann, but he was stricken with paralysis in 1870 while finishing the last chapters of Revelation. His *Prolegomena* was published four years after his death, in 1875.

The work of Tischendorf is full of romance and tragedy. He was smitten with a stroke of apoplexy on May 5, 1873, and died December 7, 1874. He did not live to write the *Prolegomena*, which was completed by Dr. Caspar René Gregory, an American scholar who gave himself to the task in Leipzig and completed it (1894). It is impossible to exaggerate the toils and travels of Tischendorf in behalf of a better text for the Greek N.T. His discovery of the Sinaitic MS. (ℵ) in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai is one of the most thrilling in all the range of research. He chanced in 1844 to notice in a waste-basket there some leaves of a codex that attracted his attention. They were ready to light the fire for the monks, as others had done. It took him fifteen years of patient diplomacy before he got hold of the rest of the precious ℵ, as he named it, a wonderful Greek Bible like B. This discovery and the publication of the *Facsimile* of B revolutionized Tischendorf's text in his eighth edition. That edition still has the best critical apparatus for the modern student. Gregory spent his life in getting ready to issue a new and up-to-date edition of Tischendorf's *Novum Testamentum Graece*, and then went to the front on behalf of Germany, though seventy years old, and fell in the firing line. That is tragedy indeed! And now we shall have to wait another generation for another young man to master this great field of research and make a new critical apparatus that will include all the new discoveries.

There is no tragedy about the work of Westcott and Hort, but only painstaking and triumphant success. They met the bitter opposition of able men like Burgon and Miller; and even Scrivener leaned to the Textus Receptus. But Hort was sure that he was on the right track, as the event has shown. Their principles still stand the test, though the new discoveries, like the Washington Codex and the Sinaitic Syriac, have given more value to the Western Text than Hort allowed. The Neutral Text still holds the field as the best that we know. Besides the critical text of Westcott and Hort, we have to-day the very similar text of Nestle and also of B. Weiss.

H. Von Soden adds another tragedy to the story by reason of his accidental death in a Berlin tube. He gave unremitting toil to a new system of notation that is very cumbersome, and not likely to displace that of Tischendorf as revised by Gregory. He also worked out a new system of families that challenges that used by Westcott and Hort, only

much more complicated, and less satisfactory. But his Greek text (1913) does not differ radically from that of Westcott and Hort. It is an independent effort to find the best text, the one closest to the original.

It remains only to say that England was slow to take up the problem of printing the Bible for the people, but, once she did take hold, she has led the world. The ashes of Wycliff, and then of Tyndale, made a powerful appeal for the Bible in English. It is a sorrowful fact that the ecclesiastics of Britain brought the blood of these martyrs on their heads. God heard the prayer of Tyndale as he was burned to death, October 6, 1536: 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes.' He did. The Authorized Version in 1611 was made at the request of King James. This wonderful translation was made from the Textus Receptus, with some help from the Latin Vulgate. It had a poor text, but it is marvellous English, and it lies at the foundation of Anglo-Saxon civilization. The Revised Version of 1881 is made from a better text, more like that of Westcott and Hort, but it can never play the part in Anglo-Saxon life that the Authorized Version has already performed.

Surely one is bound to thank God for the heroes who have struggled and triumphed through the centuries to give modern men an adequately correct text of the N.T. as we do have it to-day. With all the copyings, translations, and printings there is no heresy of moment in any MS. or edition of the N.T. The Word of the Lord has run and been glorified through the ages, as Paul urged the Thessalonians to pray for his own preaching (2 Th 3[1]).

Recent Foreign Theology.

Roman Catholicism in Germany.

THE question of the future relations of Protestantism and Catholicism in Germany presents a problem which has been vigorously discussed since the War. There is general agreement as to the growth of pro-Catholic sentiment in some Protestant circles which, before the War, were anti-Catholic. In October 1921, Pfarrer Rittelmeyer, of Nuremberg, struck a note of alarm in *Christentum und Gegenwart* —the monthly magazine of which he is an editor. Attention was called to the fact that the population of post-war Germany is more than one-third Catholic, and examples were given of Romanist propaganda which seemed to the writer to threaten the undoing of the work of the Reformation.

On the other hand, Dr. Friedrich Heiler, of Marburg, cherishes the hope of a future synthesis in an 'Evangelical Catholicism,' but the realization of his ideal is contingent on the practicability of the shaping and transforming of Catholicism by the Evangelical spirit. In January 1922 a summary was given in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES of Professor Heiler's *Das Wesen des Katholizismus*; attention may now be called to a new and greatly enlarged edition of this work, published under the title *Der Katholizismus, seine Idee und seine Erscheinung*. The response to this truly catholic-spirited Protestant by Dr. Engelbert Krebs, Roman Catholic Professor of Dogmatic Theology in Freiburg, has been quite justly described by another Marburg Professor as 'anti-Christian,' for Krebs denounces Heiler as 'consciously or unconsciously a Pantheist, and therefore from the ecclesiastical point of view "a heathen" (Mt 18[17]).' In polemics, Professor Krebs throws into the shade the ecclesiastic of whom it was said that he discharged his eirenicon as from a catapult, for the Marburg eirenicon, gracious alike in contents and expression, is distorted and then flung back as a railing accusation.

Dr. Hermelink, who is Professor of Church History in Marburg, and, therefore, one of Dr. Heiler's colleagues, has recently published a comprehensive and judicial survey of the present situation. His pamphlet[1] may be described as mediating between Rittelmeyer and Heiler, and although it refers especially to Germany, it abounds in information which is of universal interest. At the outset, evidences of Catholic advance are frankly recognized, but the pessimistic utterances of alarmists are held to be unwarranted.

In *Hochland*, a Roman Catholic journal which

[1] *Katholizismus und Protestantismus in der Gegenwart, vornehmlich in Deutschland*, von D. Dr. Heinrich Hermelink, Professor der Kirchengeschichte in Marburg (Perthes Verlag, Gotha; 1923).