

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

the argument of the book is that the attempt to bring about the right social attitude by legislation is a hopeless task. 'This external substitution for the monitions of the spirit brings with it such a weakening of the spiritual social stimulus that it does not succeed.' The supreme need is for character and personal action. 'We want a Society of Apparently Little Deeds to get really going, and to impose on ourselves a Sabbath of rest from industrial reorganization and social schemes.' It is not the part of Christian sociology to devise and enforce any form of social structure, but to supply social impetus to the individual. Even those who disagree with the arguments in this book will find much that is stimulating both in its criticisms and suggestions.

The Ascending Life, by the Rev. Richard Roberts, D.D. (S.C.M. ; 2s. 6d. net), is a rare combination of strong Christian thinking with a passionate spirit

of devotion. The book consists of a series of five addresses delivered in America in May 1924. 'They represent an attempt to discover the secret of more life and fuller from a study of the last stage of the public ministry of Jesus and its sequel.' The study is thoughtful and penetrating, and the writer knows how to be practical. 'The way of the Upper Room is still the only way of life and more life. . . . The prayer-meeting is dead because we have talked it to death, being unable or unwilling to keep silence before God ; and if it is to be raised from the dead, we must make up our minds to come there and keep silence unless and until the Spirit of God puts us under an irresistible constraint to speak. We moderns do not know how to be quiet before God and to wait for His word. We become uneasy, restless, nervous and strained unless someone is speaking. And we shall have to get over that folly if we are to recover this lost grace of fellowship in prayer and of prayer in fellowship.'

When the Western Text is Right.

BY PROFESSOR THE REVEREND A. T. ROBERTSON, LITT.D., SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, LOUISVILLE, KY.

THERE is no problem connected with the textual criticism of the New Testament more perplexing than the value of the Western type of text. It was not difficult for Hort to show that all purely Syrian readings were wrong. Burgon and Miller argued vigorously in defence of the Syrian type of text as preserved in the *textus receptus*, but the verdict among New Testament scholars has gone to Hort by the sheer weight of the facts. A purely Syrian reading with no pre-Syrian witnesses stands convicted of being erroneous. The same line of argument applies to the purely Alexandrian readings. There are no documents that always give Alexandrian readings. Mixture marks all these documents. They show (often) now a Neutral and Alexandrian reading, now and then a Western and Alexandrian reading, occasionally a purely Alexandrian reading, or one supported also by the Syrian class which here followed the Alexandrian class. A reading of the Alexandrian class supported by the Neutral or the Western class has to be decided at bottom on the relative

merits of the Neutral and Western classes and by internal evidence. A purely Alexandrian reading is certain to be wrong, a mere scholarly correction to remove a difficulty. The support of the Syrian class in such a reading counts for nothing against the Neutral and Western classes. So far the theory of Westcott and Hort is accepted by the great majority of modern scholars, certainly in Britain and America. It remains to be seen how far the new method of Von Soden will win a hearing in Germany. It has won little favour elsewhere because of its over-refinement and complications.

Westcott and Hort pinned their faith to the superior worth of the Neutral type of text as the nearest approach to the original text of the New Testament now available. They did not claim that in all respects it corresponded with the autograph text. Hort himself pointed out some sixty-five cases where he thought emendation was necessary to restore the original text now lost from all known documents. The name 'Neutral' is unfortunate, for it seems to beg the questions in

dispute. But the name has been accepted in lieu of a better one.

Objection can also be made to the term Western, which applies to the Old Syriac of the East as truly as to the Old Latin of the West. But names do not carry one very far in a question like this. As a matter of fact, about the beginning of the third century A.D. traces of the use of the Western text can be found in all parts of the Christian world of which we possess literary remains. The Western text seems to be dominant. But Hort warns us against thinking that there was no other type of text in existence. Barnard (*Clement of Alexandria's Biblical Text*, 1899) has shown that Clement of Alexandria used the Western type of text, as did Origen after him sometimes. But Origen more frequently employed manuscripts that corresponded to the Neutral or Alexandrian type of text. The wholesale destruction of Christian manuscripts by Imperial persecution, by the Goths and Vandals, by the Saracens, compels one to be cautious about the evidence for the early types of text.

It is now a disputed point whether in point of fact the Western type of text is not older than the Neutral, whether the Neutral is not a revision of the Western. These two points are not necessarily connected. Our oldest uncials only go back to the fourth century A.D., Codex Vaticanus (B) and Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ), but these prevailing give the Neutral type of text, especially B, save in the Pauline Epistles, where even B has Western readings. But there are papyri fragments that go back to the third century, like ⲑ¹ (Mt 1¹⁻⁹. 12. 14-20) and ⲑ⁵ (Jn 1²³⁻³¹. 33-41 20¹¹⁻¹⁷). These fragments support the Neutral type of text like Ⲛ and B. But, on the other hand, the Old Syriac and the Old Latin Versions seem to antedate these early documents, and both of these versions support, as a rule, the Western text. But k of the African Latin, fourth or fifth century A.D., follows a Greek text that agrees now with D and now with B. That is to say, the Codex Bobiensis is Neutral nearly as often as it is Western. Besides, the Sinaitic Syriac (syr^{sin}) and the Curetonian Syriac (syr^{cu}) often disagree with each other. Hence it seems clear that the Western text at first was not homogeneous, but more or less local and varied with different strata. The evidence for the Neutral text may not be as old as some forms of the Western text, but it represents a more consistent text. With the evidence before us one is disposed to say

that the Neutral text is probably a careful revision of an earlier text now lost to us, while the Western is a corruption of the same earlier text.

It follows, therefore, that neither the Neutral nor the Western is always right. Bornemann did argue that the Western is always right and the best text, but he gained no following. Hort is the stoutest defender of the Neutral text, but he does not contend that it is always right. On the other hand, Hort admits that Western non-interpolations are often correct. That is simply another way of saying that there are Neutral interpolations, where the Western text represents the original against some additions in the Neutral text. The number of these is comparatively small in comparison with the additions and corruptions in the Western text. Hort gives the list of the more important or exceptional instances on p. 176 of *The New Testament in Greek*, vol. ii. Some of these additions to the Neutral text Hort considers spurious, as in Mt 27⁴⁹, Lk 22^{19b}. 20 24³. 6. 12. 40. 52. 53. And yet Westcott and Hort print these additions in their Greek text, though with double brackets to indicate serious doubt. But why print them at all if they are not genuine? The purpose of Westcott and Hort is not to print the Neutral text, but the true text so far as it is possible to find it. It looks a bit like slavery to B or ⲚB or to the Neutral text to print these readings which Hort holds to be interpolations. He would not print them if they were Western interpolations. It is plain that Hort is very reluctant to admit that the Western is right against the Neutral, even in these Western non-interpolations.

Most of the instances are small additions in the Neutral text, except in the case of Mt 27⁴⁹, Lk 22^{19b}. 20 24¹². 40, where whole sentences are involved. In Mt 27⁴⁹ the spurious addition is derived from Jn 19³⁴, where it is a genuine part of the text. It makes nonsense of the text in Mt 27⁴⁹, because v.⁵⁰ adds that Jesus spoke in a loud voice and gave up the spirit. That is to say, He died after the piercing of His side by the soldier. This scribal blunder gained such a grip that it appears in Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, besides being in Ⲛ B C L U Γ and some of the cursives 5. 48. 67. 115. 127* gat mm (of the Vulgate) syr^{hr} ^{semet} aeth. This reading of the Neutral (and Alexandrian) class is clearly wrong on both transcriptional and intrinsic grounds. The Western class rejects it, as does the Syriac. Certainly the

text of Westcott and Hort should not have this blunder in it. It is true that Von Soden inserts it with brackets, but he follows his own textual theory, not that of Hort. W agrees with the Western documents against the passage. The Old Latin is against it, but the Old Syriac fails us here. Either this passage was omitted by the Western text, or added by the Neutral. Hort (vol. ii., *Notes on Select Readings*, p. 22) seems unable to act decisively: 'We have thought it on the whole right to give expression to this view by including the words within double brackets, though we did not feel justified in removing them from the text, and are not prepared to reject altogether the alternative supposition.' That lame conclusion seems to be due to overmuch deference to the Neutral class.

There is more doubt about the true text in Lk 22^{19b. 20}, for the documents of the Western class differ very much among themselves. W here goes with the Neutral and Alexandrian classes in having the passage. Some of the Western documents (c f g vg) omit the passage altogether. D a ff² i l omit the passage, but transpose vv.^{17. 18}. The Old Latin b e do not omit, but transpose vv.^{17. 18} to the end of v.¹⁹. Syr^{cu} omits v.²⁰, but has v.^{19b}. Syr^{sin} has v.¹⁹ and part of v.²⁰: 'after they had supped, he took the cup' and 'this is my blood, the new testament,' but with v.¹⁷ in between. The order of the verses in syr^{sin} is 18. 19. 20a. 17. 20b. 18. 21. The same order appears in syr^{cu}, except that v.²⁰ does not appear. In b (Codex Veronensis) the order is 18. 19. 17. 18. 21. 22. Those that omit avoid the repetition of the cup. The argument from transcriptional evidence is hard to catch. It might seem to be an effort to reproduce the language of Paul in 1 Co 11^{24. 25}. And this was done in successive stages as the variations in the Western manuscripts show. But the repetition of the cup may have led a scribe to omit, as it did some to transpose, the order of the clauses to get rid of the repetitions. There were four cups in the observance of the passover, but scribes may have come to refer both cups in Luke to the Supper. Hence one would be dropped. It is a nicely balanced question. Intrinsic evidence gives no decided argument. In the light of the whole evidence it is not clear why Hort felt so certain about it, while so uncertain about Mt 27⁴⁹. He concludes (*op. cit.* p. 64) that the difficulties 'leave no moral doubt that the words in question were

absent from the original text of Luke, notwithstanding the purely Western ancestry of the documents which omit them.' To me the problem is more complicated here than in Mt 27⁴⁹. Von Soden prints Lk 22^{19b. 20} without brackets. The balance of evidence is slightly in favour of the genuineness of this passage, though it is by no means certain.

In Lk 24¹² both W and syr^{sin} agree with syr^{cu} et sch et v c f ff² vg along with the Neutral, Alexandrian, and Syrian classes in retaining this verse against D a b e l fu. Hort calls this verse 'a Western non-interpolation' (*op. cit.* p. 71). He considers it a condensation of Jn 20³⁻¹⁰. But the junction of syr^{sin} with syr^{cu} makes the passage very early and shows that the omission is purely Western geographically. The problem is not so clear now. The omission has only partial support from the Western documents. Von Soden prints it without brackets.

In Lk 24⁴⁰ both syr^{cu} and syr^{sin} join D a b e ff² l in rejecting the verse, while W goes with the Neutral, Alexandrian, and Syrian classes in retaining it. Here the Western documents include the Old Syriac and some of the Old Latin, including e of the African Latin, a pretty clear case. Besides, the verse seems to be 'a natural adaptation' (Hort) from Jn 20²⁰. Von Soden brackets this verse.

The other Western non-interpolations with double brackets in Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament are short clauses or phrases in Lk 24^{3. 6. 36. 51. 52}. Von Soden prints τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ in Lk 24³ without brackets. Hort considers this a clear case of Western non-interpolation, and the first of a series in this chapter. But only D a b e ff² l Eus omit all three words, geographical Western again, while 42 f sah syr^{cu} et sch have τοῦ Ἰησοῦ without κυρίου. The Western documents are divided, and the question arises whether the name was added or accidentally dropped. The other classes have all three words. The Western class does not seem indubitably right in this omission. Hort objects to it also because the words 'the Lord Jesus' do not occur in the Gospels outside of Mk 16¹⁹.

In Lk 24⁶ the case is not quite so clear as Hort seems to think. He calls it an antithetic form of Mk 16⁶ (=Mt 28⁶) and a Western non-interpolation. But both syr^{cu}, and syr^{sin} have the words: 'He is not here, but is risen.' Again the Western documents are divided, while W also has it, reading

ἀνάστη instead of ἠγήθη. It is omitted only by D a b e ff³ l. One at any rate has proof of a common document for these readings that was used by this group of Western manuscripts in the West. Von Soden prints the words without brackets.

In Lk 24³⁶ syr^{sin} and syr^{cu} again combine with W, giving the words: 'And he says to them, Peace unto you.' W adds before Εἰρήνη the words Ἐγὼ εἰμει, μὴ φοβείσθαι as do G P 88. 127. 130 Gk^{ci} L^{ai} c f g^{1.2}. vg etc. The words about 'Peace' are rejected by the same group of Western documents D a b e ff³ l. Von Soden brackets these words. Hort considers this Neutral interpolation an adaptation from Jn 20¹⁹. But the Western documents are again divided, and there are three readings. Clearly the addition in W and the others agreeing with it is from Jn 6²⁰. That fact throws doubt also on the other clause as a like addition from Jn 20¹⁹, where it is undoubtedly genuine.

In Lk 24⁵¹ the same Western group D a b e ff², with the help of κ and Aug reject the words καὶ ἀνεφέρτε εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν. The syr^{sin} here has only the words 'he was lifted up from them.' All the documents have δέστη ἀπ' αὐτῶν, which practically means the Ascension, which is plainly stated in Ac 1³. 9-11. Hort is confident the addition is due to the assumption that the separation of Jesus from the disciples meant the Ascension. Von Soden brackets the words. Probably the words were added from Acts, unless, forsooth, they were inadvertently dropped. One feels that the last word has not been said about the agreement of D a b e ff³ l in Lk 24.

In Lk 24⁵² the syr^{sin} joins D a b e ff² l and Aug in rejecting προσκυνήσαντες αὐτόν. Von Soden brackets the words. Hort thinks that this addition is a natural sequel to καὶ ἀνεφέρτε εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν in v.⁵¹ by the same documents in each case, probably due to Mt 28⁹. 17. The dodging of syr^{sin} et^{cu} back and forth on these Western non-interpolations is interesting. But clearly Hort has shown that the Western class can be right as against the Neutral. He feels 'more doubtful' about the omission of ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου (Lk 24⁹), though supported by the same documents D a b e ff² l, with the addition of c arm. Hence Hort uses only single brackets here. But the sense seems to call for ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου. So one is compelled to wonder what sort of a document explains these interesting readings in Lk 24. Was it the original copy of

Luke, or was it a sleepy scribe that fell down in his work in this closing chapter?

The most important remaining Western non-interpolations where Westcott and Hort use only single brackets because not certainly wrong are Mt 6¹⁵ τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν; 6²⁵ ἢ τί πίητε; 9³⁴ οἱ δὲ φαρισαῖοι . . . δαιμόνια; 13³³ ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς; 21⁴⁴ καὶ ὁ πεσὼν . . . λικμήσει αὐτόν; 23²⁸ καὶ τῆς παροψίδος; Mk 2²² ἀλλὰ οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς κινούς; 10² προσελθόντες φαρισαῖοι; 14³⁹ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον εἰπὼν; Lk 5³⁹ οὐδεὶς . . . χρηστός ἐστιν; 10^{41f}. μερμυγᾶς . . . ἢ ἐνός; 12¹⁹ κείμενα . . . φάγε, πίε; 22⁶² καὶ . . . ἔκλαυσεν πικρῶς; Jn 3³¹ ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν; 3³² τοῦτο; 4⁹ οὐ γὰρ . . . Σαμαρείταις. If each of these cases be examined in detail, it will be found that the evidence varies in each instance, as we found to be true in those printed by Westcott and Hort with double brackets. Some of them will be acknowledged by almost any scholar to be right, cases where the Western represents the true text and the Neutral an interpolation. But each reading stands or falls on its merits according to the evidence. The problem cannot be handled by a blanket phrase like Western non-interpolations, though it is true that the Western type is more frequently right in such cases than in Western additions. But some Western so-called non-interpolations may be simply Western omissions.

An instance of Western addition that Hort prints with double brackets appears in Lk 22⁴³. 44, the passage about the visit of the angel and the sweat like drops of blood. The Neutral Class (A B R T W 13* syr^{sin}) rejects the passage. It is significant that both W and syr^{sin} join B here. The manuscript evidence against the genuineness is visibly strengthened. The Western, Alexandrian, and Syrian classes have it, though some of the Greek manuscripts and versions have obelisks or asterisks indicating doubt, and some of the Fathers express doubt about it and note its absence in many early documents. It looks as if this passage stands on a par with the addition in Jn 5⁴, except that κ is against Jn 5⁴, but supports Lk 22⁴³. 44. But a corrector of κ (κ*) erased it here. Transcriptional evidence is against it. Von Soden brackets it. Hort (*op. cit.* p. 67) considers it a true incident and a precious remnant of evangelic tradition.

'But what shall one say of Lk 23³⁴? Here again Westcott and Hort print this precious passage

with double brackets. Hort (*op. cit.* p. 68) says: 'We cannot doubt that it comes from an extraneous source.' It is, according to Hort, not a part of Luke's Gospel, but he thinks it a genuine saying of Jesus and that 'it has exceptional claims to be permanently retained, with the necessary safeguards, in its accustomed place.' That strikes one as a curious conclusion for a scholar with positive conviction of its lack of genuineness. The only proper place for it, if not genuine, is in an explanatory footnote. Hort calls it 'a Western interpolation of limited range in early times.' It is absent from B D W 38. 435. a b d syr^{sin} sah cop^{dz}. The case against it is strengthened by the evidence of W and syr^{sin}, which Hort did not know. But, if B were absent, Hort would call its absence a Western non-interpolation instead of its presence a Western addition. The earliest evidence for it is Western also, as African Latin e and syr^{cu}, both East and West and hence not of 'limited range.' B here deserts its usual company, ⳨ A C L Δ, and one wonders if it really represents the Neutral reading or a sporadic Western omission, though W reinforces B and is sometimes Neutral. It does not appear that the evidence against Lk 23³⁴ is quite so positive as Hort seems to think. Von Soden does not bracket it. Hort is open sometimes to the charge of standing by B, right or wrong. No single document, not even B, is always right. A similar difficulty arises in Lk 15²¹ about the addition of *ποίησόν με ὡς ἓνα τῶν μισθίων σου*, which is rejected by ⳨ B D U X al²⁰ gat mm cat^{xx} 119. The Old Syriac is wanting here, but the Old Latin has it and W also. Here again D appears in company with B (and ⳨) and away from the other Western documents. Transcriptional evidence is for its omission, because of appearance in v. 19; but it is a nicely balanced point, and the balance of evidence is against it. Westcott and Hort print it with single brackets. Von Soden rejects it outright. If B did not have it, Hort would not hesitate a moment in rejecting it. Intrinsic evidence rather opposes it as a finer trait for the son to be interrupted before he finishes his speech.

It is clear, then, without attempting to examine all of the distinctive Western readings, that the Western class is sometimes right as against the Neutral class. It is probably more frequently

right than Hort admitted or knew. Turner (*The Study of the New Testament*, 1920, p. 58) is sure that the Western text has something to contribute toward the reconstruction of the original text of the New Testament and that its contribution must be weighed on its merit, not merely on its age. Souter ('Progress in Textual Criticism of the Gospels since Westcott and Hort,' in *Mansfield College Essays*, 1909, p. 363) thinks that 'the combination of Syr^{sin} and k would now generally be regarded as sufficient to upset the combination B ⳨ or, in other words, the versions may sometimes have retained the correct text, where all known Greek MSS have lost it.' He thinks, however, that the alteration of the text of Westcott and Hort would be small if they had known the new manuscripts now accessible to us. In particular, when the Old Syriac combines with the Old Latin, a strong presumptive case is made out. Valentine-Richards (*Cambridge Biblical Essays*, p. 534) thinks that 'a further discrimination of the different types of Western, or rather of second century, text is one of the most pressing needs of the present day.' It is a great advance to see that. A reading can no longer be condemned because it is Western. But we must not go to the other extreme. The Western documents differ widely and radically in many readings. The simple truth is that we are not yet in a position to lay down a definite procedure for deciding the merits of Western readings. There is here a rich field for study and research. It will have to be attacked in detail and as a whole. A fresh study of the whole problem is called for by competent scholars.

Only a word can be given to the special Western readings in Acts. These are mainly additions and are very numerous. Blass proposed the theory of two editions of both Gospel and Acts by Luke, to explain the Western non-interpolations in the Gospel and the Western additions in the Acts. But his theory has not won a strong following. The text of Acts is still a matter of debate. Ramsay, Harnack, Chase, Rendel Harris, Burkitt, and others have contributed their quota to the discussion. In general, it may be said that the Western additions in Acts do not stand in as favourable a light as the Western non-interpolations in the Gospel of Luke.