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770TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, MAY 8TH, 1933, AT 4.30 P.M.

The REV. ROBERT KILGOUR, D.D., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed, and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY then announced the election of Walter Baxter Pender, Esq., as an Associate.

The CHAIRMAN then called on Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, K.C.B., D.Litt., LL.D., to read his paper on "Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the Bible" (including the recently discovered Papyri).

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE.

By SIR FREDERIC G. KENYON, K.C.B., D.Litt., LL.D.

THE object of this lecture is to give some account of the present position of research into the true text of the Greek Bible, with special reference to recent interesting discoveries in this field. In order to make these intelligible, it will be necessary to give a brief description of the problems with which the textual critic of the Bible has to deal. I should say at the outset that you are not to expect sensational revelations. I am glad that this is so. If I were to have to tell you that recent discoveries proved that the text of the Bible as we know it is fundamentally inaccurate, it might be sensational, but it would be profoundly disquieting.

Let me say at once that the questions with which we have to deal are questions of detail, not of fundamental beliefs. No doctrine of Christianity is endangered by them; on the contrary, in my judgment the new discoveries confirm the general integrity of our Bible text. It is only because it is a matter of such grave interest to know the exact words of the Scriptures which are

the foundation of our faith, that the textual criticism of the Bible is not merely the business of the specialist, like the textual criticism of Virgil or Sophocles.

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The nature of the problems that make up what is known as the textual criticism of the Bible is best explained to those who are unfamiliar with them by a reference to our own Authorized and Revised Versions. The Authorized Version, so far as the New Testament is concerned (and it is with this that I shall principally deal), was in the main a translation from an edition of the Greek text printed in 1550. This edition (commonly known as the *Textus Receptus*, or Received Text) was based on a comparison of a very small number of manuscripts (only fifteen in all), all but one of which (and that one was but slightly used) were written later than the year 1000. Before the invention of printing, every copy of the Bible was of course written by hand, which means that for nearly 1400 years no two copies of the Bible were exactly alike; for it passes human power to copy such an extent of text without making mistakes. Unless the greatest care is taken to eliminate the mistakes of scribes, the effect of such errors is cumulative. Old mistakes are repeated and new ones are introduced in each copy that is made. Moreover, we have to take into account deliberate alterations made, though they were with the best intentions. Especially in the early days, when the need was to propagate the sacred Scriptures in a readily intelligible form, when edification was the object rather than meticulous accuracy, many alterations were made with a view to removing obscurities, to harmonizing parallel narratives, and to producing a smooth and readable text.

The result of all this is that, speaking very broadly, the later in date a manuscript of an ancient work is, the less likely it is to have escaped corruption, and the Bible is no exception to this rule. It is true that we are now, thanks to the exertions of scholars during the last three centuries, far better situated in respect of the Bible than we are in respect of any other ancient book; for whereas in the case of most of the Greek classics we are dependent on manuscripts written fourteen hundred years or more after the date of their composition, for the New Testament we have manuscripts written within 250 years or even now (as I shall show shortly) less than 200 years later than the original texts. We have also enormously more manuscripts which can

be compared for the elimination of errors. But in 1550 this was not so, and consequently the Greek-printed texts which have been in general use until our own generation, and the Authorized Version which was translated from them, rested on the foundation of a few manuscripts written a thousand years or more after the books of the New Testament were written, and subject to all the chances and changes which beset such handwritten copies through the uncritical Middle Ages.

The Authorized Version had hardly been published (in 1611) when an event occurred which gave the first stimulus to a critical study of the text of the Greek Bible. This was the coming to England in 1627 of the celebrated Codex Alexandrinus, now in the British Museum, a magnificent copy of the entire Greek Bible, written probably in the first half of the fifth century. The study of this ancient MS. set on foot the search for and examination of all the extant copies of the Bible that could be found. For three centuries this search has now continued, until the number of those that have been listed, and at any rate partly examined, amounts to something like 5,000, in place of the fifteen used by Stephanus in 1550, and among these are some that go back to the fourth century (and, as we shall see presently, even to the third), instead of the eleventh century or later.

Now the examination of these hundreds and thousands of copies brought scholars before long to make an important observation, namely, that while the great mass of manuscripts showed substantially the same text, with only quite minor variants and scribal errors, a small minority, including most of the earlier ones, showed differences which could not be overlooked. This impression was intensified when, in the nineteenth century, two manuscripts older than the Codex Alexandrinus came to light. One was the Codex Vaticanus, which had long been in the Vatican Library, but had never been properly examined; the other was the Codex Sinaiticus, discovered by Tischendorf in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai in 1844, and brought to St. Petersburg in 1859. Both of these could be assigned to the fourth century; both had texts with many differences from that generally received, and both often agreed with one another in such differences. Their publication greatly strengthened the conviction of scholars that the Received Text of 1550 needed revision if we were to arrive at the original text of the Greek Bible.

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The position, then, at which scholars had arrived in the third quarter of the nineteenth century was that over against the great mass of later manuscripts containing substantially what was known as the Received Text must be set a small number of earlier authorities (with a few later copies which retained, more or less, texts of the same type), which seemed to represent an earlier stage in the history of the Bible. This view was powerfully reinforced when it was shown that the quotations from the New Testament in the earliest Christian Fathers were all in conformity with this minority rather than with the majority. The protagonists in this argument were the English scholars, Westcott and Hort, and when the general perception of the necessity of a revision of the Received Text had led to the formation of a committee to revise the Authorized Version, these two were the leaders in its deliberations. The result was seen in the Revised Version which appeared in 1881 (N.T.) and 1885 (O.T.); and if anyone asks what is the subject-matter of Biblical textual criticism, the best answer is to ask him to compare the Authorized Version with the Revised, taking special note of the further crop of various readings which are given in the margin of the latter. Where the difference is only one of translation, it can for our present purpose be ignored, and I should be far from saying that I think the Revisers were always right; but where the difference is in the Greek text translated, it represents the result of the discovery of the earlier authorities, unknown to the editor of 1550 or the translators of 1611.

Westcott and Hort, in the Introduction to the edition of the Greek New Testament which they produced simultaneously with the Revised Version of 1881, classified the original authorities (consisting of manuscripts in Greek and ancient translations into other languages) into three principal groups, to which they gave the names of *Syrian*, *Western* and *Neutral*. The Syrian group comprised by far the largest number of our manuscript authorities. It is supposed by them to have originated in a revision made early in the fourth century in or about Antioch in Syria, which subsequently spread universally throughout the Byzantine Church, so that it became the accepted text of the Greek world. It is sometimes called the Byzantine text, which is, perhaps, the better term, since the place of origin is not really known. The characteristics of the Syrian text are an attempt to produce a smooth and readable text by the removal of obscurities, the insertion of pronouns and other expletives, and the substitution

of familiar phrases for those less familiar; also, in the case of the Synoptic Gospels, a certain amount of harmonization of parallel narratives, and the transference of phrases from one to another. This revision does not seem to have been accomplished at one time, but rather to have been a process continued over a long period. It is found in an early stage in the Codex Alexandrinus and the Peshitto Syriac version, both of which probably belong to the first half of the fifth century; but the form which finally dominated the Byzantine Church seems to have been reached about the tenth century.

Over against this mass of later authorities is to be set a much smaller number of earlier witnesses, and these fall into the two groups designated by Westcott and Hort as *Western* and *Neutral*. The Western group is so called because its principal representatives are the Codex Bezae, a manuscript of the fifth century with Greek and Latin texts in parallel columns, and therefore probably produced in the West, and the Old Latin version, the origin of which probably goes back to the second century. Its most primitive form appears to have circulated in the province of Roman Africa, and a modified form of it in Europe; and it was by a revision of this with the help of Greek manuscripts that Jerome produced the Vulgate, which from the fifth century onwards dominated the Western world and is still the Bible of the Roman Church. The outstanding characteristic of the Western text is a very free departure from all other authorities. These variations do not appear much in the Vulgate, since Jerome relied largely on Greek texts of another character; but in the Old Latin, the Codex Bezae and certain other manuscripts they are very marked. They include both omissions, such as an abbreviation of the account of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, and the omission of the greater part of the narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper and all express mention of the Ascension in St. Luke; and additions, such as a long passage after Matt. xx, 28, the rebuke to the sons of Zebedee in Luke ix, 55 (which otherwise appears only in quite late authorities), an additional incident of a man working on the Sabbath day in Luke vi, 5, an introductory passage before the Lord's Prayer in Luke xi, 2, and a remarkable phrase in Luke xxiii, 53, where Joseph is said to have laid on the sepulchre a stone which twenty men could hardly move. But still more this text is marked by free variations in phrases, which it is impossible to enumerate. They are most plentiful in Luke and Acts, so much so that some

have thought they must represent a revision by the author himself; but variations of the same kind occur, though less plentifully, in the other Gospels.

Finally, there is the Neutral text, represented principally by the great Codex Vaticanus of the fourth century, largely supported by the Codex Sinaiticus, of about the same date, and by a small group of other manuscripts, mostly imperfect, and by the Coptic versions. This text shows none of the vagaries of the Western type, while it is free from the smoothing and harmonizing process characteristic of the Syrian type. It is generally rather shorter than the others, and less polished. In the eyes of Westcott and Hort (and of other scholars also), it has the characteristics of a text which has suffered little or no editorial revision. Like every other manuscript, the Vaticanus contains many scribal errors, but, if these are removed, it stands out, in their judgment, as by far the best authority for the original text.

Now, if the choice lay only between the Neutral and the Syrian types of text, the problem would be a simple one. The cornerstone of Hort's argument is to be found in the fact that quotations showing the use of the Syrian type are not found in any of the early Christian writers before Chrysostom (about A.D. 350); and no subsequent investigation has invalidated this argument. The Syrian type is therefore shown to be relatively late in origin, and also to have, as compared with the Neutral, many of the marks of editorial revision. As between the Neutral and the Syrian, therefore, the choice must in the main go to the former; and this is, broadly speaking, the difference between the Authorized Version and the Revised. The Authorized Version was made from a wholly Syrian text; in the Revised, primary authority was given to the Neutral. When, therefore, a difference between the A.V. and R.V. is due to a difference in the text translated, it may generally be assumed that this represents a difference between the Syrian and the Neutral types of text.

When, therefore, on the publication of the Revised Version, it was attacked on the ground of the Greek text translated (as it was by Dean Burgon), the controversy was, in the eyes of scholars, quickly decided. It could be shown that the Revisers had only followed the established method of scholars dealing with an ancient text, in preferring a few early witnesses to a multitude of later ones, and that the evidence of the Fathers as to the secondary character of the Syrian type was decisive.

Unfortunately, the matter did not end here; for it was clear

that, so far as the evidence of the Fathers was concerned, the Western text had at least as strong a claim to acceptance as the Neutral. Nearly all the earliest Christian writers show, in their quotations from the Scriptures, readings characteristically Western; not only Cyprian, Justin, Irenæus, and Tertullian in the West, but also Tatian and Aphraates in Syria and Clement of Alexandria in Egypt.

The problem of textual criticism, therefore, during the last fifty years has been the investigation of the Western and Neutral types of text; the great mass of later witnesses being comparatively neglected, except for the search among them for manuscripts which have, to a greater or lesser extent, escaped the general Syrian or Byzantine revision. To this search results of considerable importance are due.

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Now during these fifty years several discoveries have been made of new manuscripts; and it is evidently of the first importance to consider how they fit in with the classifications and theories of Westcott and Hort; for they were unknown to those scholars, and therefore supply a crucial test of the soundness of their views. I will enumerate, quite briefly, the most important of these, and trace the development of textual theory during the last generation.

The first discovery was that of the Sinaitic palimpsest of the Old Syriac Gospels in 1892. Previously the Syriac version of the Gospels which preceded the standard Peshitto version, made by Bishop Rabbula in the first quarter of the fifth century, was known only in the Curetonian manuscript in the British Museum. The Sinaitic MS. plainly contained the same version in a somewhat earlier form, and did much to establish our knowledge of that version. Now the importance of the Old Syriac versions is that it has something of the same character as Codex Bezae and the Old Latin. It is pre-Syrian and non-Neutral; in a number of passages it agrees with these Western authorities; and it has a number of other additions, omissions and variations of the same character. On the one hand, therefore, it seemed to be an additional witness to the Western text; but on the other it showed that the Western text was not solely Western in distribution, and that it was very far from being homogeneous. These are very important elements in the problem with which we are dealing.

Next, in 1906, Mr. Charles L. Freer, of Detroit, acquired in Cairo a group of four Biblical manuscripts on vellum, two of the Old Testament and two of the New. For our present purpose the important one is a copy of the four Gospels, written apparently in the fifth or late fourth century, with the first quire of John added (no doubt to replace a lost or damaged sheet) in the seventh. This at once attracted attention through its inclusion, after Mark xvi, 14, of a plainly apocryphal passage, partially known already through an allusion by Jerome; but its whole text proved worthy of study. It was not of one character throughout, and had plainly been copied from different manuscripts. This is very natural, for in the first two or three centuries of the Church books were written, not in volumes of the kind with which we are familiar, but on rolls of papyrus; and a papyrus roll could not contain more than an amount of text equivalent to one of the Gospels. Hence the Gospels must for some time have circulated in separate rolls, and when a scribe in the fourth or fifth century came to transcribe rolls of the four Gospels into a single codex (as the modern book-form is called), he might easily have four rolls of different textual character. So it evidently was with the Freer or Washington Codex. In Matthew, and in Luke from viii, 13, to the end, its text is of the ordinary Syrian or Byzantine form; in John (except for the supplementary quire at the beginning) and in Luke i, 1 to viii, 12, it is Neutral in character; in Mark i, 1 to v, 30, it is akin to the Old Latin version, *i.e.* it is Western; and in the rest of Mark it is something different from all of these. Now in the course of the intensive study of the minuscule manuscripts of the Gospels (*i.e.* manuscripts in the small current script which from about the ninth century onwards superseded the large uncial or capital writing previously in use in vellum manuscripts), two small groups had been isolated as containing texts of a rather unusual character. The first of these was known as the Ferrar group, from the name of its discoverer, or Family 13, from the number of the first manuscript of the group in the current register of Bible manuscripts. The second was similarly known as Family 1. Each group consisted of four manuscripts, though other relatives were identified later. All of these had been partially brought into conformity with the standard Byzantine text, but only partially; they retained, in greater or less measure, readings which were not of the Byzantine type, but showed affinities, especially in Mark, with the Old

Syriac. In other cases they show interesting agreements with Neutral or Old Latin authorities. So long as they stood alone, a parcel of relatively late manuscripts did not appear to carry much weight, or to add much to the authority of the earlier witnesses with which they agreed ; but it was decidedly interesting to find that the Washington Codex in the greater part of Mark appeared to belong to the same class.

Then, in 1913, the text was published of a manuscript from an out-of-the-way part of the world, known as the Koridethi Codex, from the name of a monastery in the Caucasus, to which it had once belonged, or Θ, from the letter assigned to it in the register of uncial manuscripts. It was late in date, probably not earlier than the ninth century, and uncouth in appearance ; but it aroused interest when it appeared that its text had much in common with Families 1 and 13. This fact, taken in conjunction with what has been said about the Washington MS., shows that a number of separate lines of investigation were appearing to draw together, and to constitute a new element of some importance in the textual history of the New Testament.

The time was now ripe for an interpretation of these new facts and combinations. This was supplied in 1914 by Canon B. H. Streeter, in his remarkable book, *The Four Gospels*, which brought together and interpreted a good deal of work that had been done by textual scholars in the previous generation. It showed that Θ and Families 1 and 13 constituted a distinctive group, with affinities to the Old Syriac version, and also with the Georgian and Armenian versions, which themselves were originally derived from the Syriac. But his important discovery was that the great scholar Origen, in the latter years of his life, which he spent at Caesarea in Palestine, habitually used a text or texts of this character. He claimed, therefore, that this type of text might rightly be called Caesarean and associated with the great name of Origen, which would at once give it great weight in the field of textual criticism. Streeter went even further than this. An examination of Origen's *Commentary on St. John* showed him that in the first ten books of this work (which contains many quotations from the other Gospels) Origen used a text of Mark of the Neutral type, while in the remaining books he used one of Caesarean type. Now it is known from an express statement by Eusebius that Origen began this work in Alexandria and finished it at Caesarea, to which place he migrated in A.D. 231. Hence he concluded that at Alexandria the MSS.

at his disposal were of Neutral type, while at Caesarea they were of this new type, to which the name of Caesarean could rightly be given.

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So far, so good; but further investigation modified and complicated the story. Professor Kirsopp Lake, formerly of Oxford and now of Harvard, showed that Streeter's history was not quite accurate. It is true that the first ten books of Origen's commentary show the use of a Neutral text; but only the first five of these, according to Eusebius' explicit statement, were written at Alexandria. Moreover, in these five books the quotations from Mark are so few that it is difficult to be sure what text he is using; according to Lake, it may quite as well have been Caesarean as Neutral. Therefore the actual facts are that Origen may have used a "Caesarean" text in Alexandria; that he certainly used a Neutral text at first in Caesarea; and that he subsequently reverted to, and thenceforward habitually used, a Caesarean text. It is therefore quite legitimate to use the term "Caesarean"; but the question arises, Did Origen know this text already in Alexandria, and did he perhaps himself bring it to Caesarea? Did the Caesarean text actually originate in Alexandria, or, at least, were there elements there from which the Caesarean text was formed?

It was at this interesting stage in the discussion that the last great discovery of new evidence was made, that which is known as the Chester-Beatty papyri, the existence of which was made public towards the end of 1931. They consist of portions of twelve manuscripts, eight of which contain parts of nine books of the Old Testament, while three contain parts of ten books of the New, and one has the last eleven chapters of the lost Greek original of the apocryphal book of Enoch and part of an unidentified Christian homily. They are interesting on account of their early date, their external form, and their contents. Most of them are probably to be assigned to the third century; one is almost certainly of the second; three, or perhaps four, seem to be of the fourth. Though all are written on papyrus, they are not rolls, but codices, and therefore are a final proof of what was previously coming to be realized, that the Christian community made preferential use of this transitional form of book, the papyrus codex, at a time when the papyrus roll was still predominantly employed for pagan literature. This is a fact of some importance; for among them are extensive remains of a

codex which contained all the four Gospels and the Acts. Consequently we now know that in the third century the four Gospels could at any rate sometimes be known as a single unit in a single volume, instead of circulating only in separate rolls. Such a practice, of course, facilitated the marking off of the four Gospels as the accredited record of our Lord's life, as distinct from the various apocryphal Gospels which are known also to have been in existence. Another manuscript apparently contained all the Pauline Epistles (including Hebrews), except the Pastorals.

There is not time to describe all the manuscripts in detail, and my main subject is the Gospels. Of the Old Testament I will therefore only say that all the manuscripts are more or less mutilated, but that all except one (half a leaf of Jeremiah) are sufficiently extensive to give us an idea of the character of their text. Two of them contain Genesis, one having about two-thirds of the book, the other about one-third. One contains large portions of Numbers and Deuteronomy; one, some scattered fragments of Isaiah; one has eight leaves each of Ezekiel and Esther; one, thirteen imperfect leaves of Daniel; and one a leaf and a half of Ecclesiasticus. Of these the most important are the Numbers and Deuteronomy, which seems certainly to be of the second century, and therefore is the earliest extant manuscript of any portion of the Greek Bible, and the first example of the use of the codex form of book; and the Daniel, which contains the original Septuagint form of this book, previously known only in a single much later copy, all other copies of Daniel in Greek having the version of Theodotion, which at an early date superseded the Septuagint in general use.

Of the three New Testament manuscripts, one, as already mentioned, originally contained the four Gospels and the Acts. The second contained the Pauline Epistles; of this ten leaves survive, containing a considerable quantity of Romans and smaller portions of Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians. The pages are numbered, and thereby the other contents of the manuscript can be calculated. The third, consisting likewise of ten leaves, is the middle third of Revelation. Naturally it is the Gospels and Acts MS. which attracts the most attention. It is here that the textual problem is most important and most intricate. Here is a manuscript, or at any rate a substantial portion of a manuscript, about a century older than the oldest authority on which we have hitherto depended, the Codex

Vaticanus. What light does it throw on the problems which I I have been trying to state to you ?

The manuscript consists of thirty leaves (that is, sixty pages), all more or less mutilated, out of an original total of 110. All five books are represented, but Matthew only by small portions of four pages. Of Mark there are twelve, far from complete, though six are of substantial size. Luke is in better case, for there are fourteen pages, in nearly all of which the full width of the writing is preserved, though some lines are imperfect or lost on the top or bottom of the page. Of John there are two pages complete in width and about two-thirds complete in height, and two of which only about half is preserved. Of Acts there are twenty-six pages, though none is so complete as the best of Luke and John. All in all, one is able to say that, except in the case of Matthew, enough of the text is preserved to enable us to determine the character of the text.

Each book must be examined separately; for, as already explained, each may have had a different textual lineage. One turns first to Mark; for on the text of this book more work has been done in recent years, and more manuscripts exist in which pre-Syrian texts, or traces of them, have survived. This is probably due to the fact that Matthew and Luke, being fuller and containing more of our Lord's teaching, were more frequently read and copied, and were therefore more liable to be affected by the mistakes of scribes, by deliberate assimilation, and by alterations which aimed at producing a full and readable text. Now in Mark the striking fact emerges that the papyrus ranges itself distinctly with the Caesarean text rather than the Neutral or the Western, and decidedly more than with the Syrian or Received Text. The manuscript with which it shows the greatest amount of agreement is the Washington MS.; next to this, Families 1 and 13 and the Koridethi MS. After these come, in order of agreement, the Alexandrinus and Codex Bezae, and last of all the champions of the Neutral text, the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus.

The other Gospels show different results. In Luke the papyrus agrees predominantly with the Vaticanus and its later adherent known as the Codex Regius or L. Next to these comes Codex Bezae, then the Sinaiticus and Families 1 and 13. The Washington and Koridethi MSS. in this Gospel are mainly Byzantine in character, and consequently get much less support. Whether the papyrus represents the Caesarean text is uncertain,

and must await a comparison of it with the quotations in Origen and Eusebius. All that can be said provisionally is that it stands about midway between the Neutral and Western texts. On the whole it is rather nearer the former, but it has a considerable number of readings characteristic of the latter. It is, however, significant that while it has many readings for which the main support is Western, it has none of the more striking and serious Western variants, which are so numerous in this Gospel. In John the position is much the same; the papyrus is again about midway between Neutral and Western, but this time the evidence is slightly in favour of the latter. In Acts the papyrus is definitely more Neutral than Western, and has none of the marked variants which are particularly characteristic of the Western text in this book.

The general result would therefore seem to be that the papyrus gives no support to the Syrian or Received Text; that is strongly Caesarean in Mark, possibly also in Luke and John, but that is uncertain for the present; that its support is about equally divided between Neutral and Western, but that it gives no countenance to the more strongly marked variants of the latter.

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What conclusions, then, may we draw from this new evidence as to the character and history of the Neutral and Western texts? In what sense is the former really Neutral, and in what sense is the latter really Western? Let us take the problem of the Western text first. The papyrus seems to show that readings of the type called Western were current at an early period in Egypt, as well as in other parts of the world, and that in this sense the Western type was not confined to the Latin Churches, but was prevalent also in those of Syria and Egypt. But it would be a great mistake to extend this admission to those wider divergences which most attract attention in the Codex Bezae and the Old Latin version, or again those which are found in the Old Syriac. The truth is that the term "Western" is wholly misleading. As used to cover all early readings which are not in the Neutral text, it is not a unity at all. There is no uniformity in the support given to the readings which are lumped together as "Western." Sometimes the support is Latin, sometimes it is Syriac; often both Latin and Syriac witnesses are divided. The extremists, as they may be called, Codex Bezae and the African Old Latin, often stand alone. In twenty-

seven important readings of the Old Syriac, it agrees sixteen times with the Vaticanus and only five times with Codex Bezae; it agrees five times with the Old Latin, but disagrees seventeen times; in seven instances the Old Syriac evidence is divided; in five instances the same happens with the Old Latin evidence. Again, in a single chapter of Luke in which readings of the "Western" type are rather numerous, the principal variants are found only in Codex Bezae and the African Old Latin; the European Old Latin has several variants of a less pronounced kind; the Old Syriac almost always agrees with the Neutral.

All this shows that the so-called Western text is not a text at all, in the sense that the Neutral and the Caesarean, and even the Byzantine, may be called texts. It is a mistake to try to subsume under a single head the various forms of Old Latin, the Old Syriac, and the non-Neutral readings found in Egypt. It may be possible to envisage a truly Western text, preserved (though with much variation) in the Latin authorities; but it would often be opposed by the Syriac authorities, and while it would receive sporadic support for certain of its readings from the Egyptian evidence, this would very seldom occur in respect of its more important variations. And some other explanation or designation must be found for a large number of readings for which there is early support, which have hitherto been swept together under the category of "Western."

If then the new papyrus makes a material contribution towards the disintegration of the Western text, it does not leave the position of the Neutral unaffected. It confirms the conclusion, to which previous discoveries of small fragments of early papyrus manuscripts had pointed, that the texts circulating in Egypt were by no means wholly of the Neutral type. A similar conclusion may also be drawn from the Sahidic or Old Coptic version. While the later Coptic version, the Bohairic, may be definitely classed as Neutral, the Sahidic has a considerable sprinkling of readings which have been regarded as Western, but may perhaps be more truly interpreted as non-Neutral readings current in Egypt. It is also now fairly clear that the Caesarean text had at least strong roots in Egypt. The Neutral text is therefore only one of the texts of Egypt; it may be the best, but it does not represent the uniform testimony of a country. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to regard it, and the Codex Vaticanus in particular, as a text untouched by editorial revision, as was held by Hort and others. Its very uniformity is against

it. It is improbable that, except by careful selection, a number of distinct papyrus rolls, all of the same textual character, could have been brought together to serve as its ancestors. A single editorial mind, judging between alternative readings in an austere critical spirit, seems to be required to account for this uniformity.

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What, then, is the picture which this new evidence, or, rather, the application of this new evidence to the old material, seems to give us of the history of the New Testament books, and especially of the Gospels, during the century or two that followed their composition? We must bear in mind the circumstances of the time, and the methods of book-production. There were no complete New Testaments. There was no Christian book-trade, issuing from an authoritative centre certified copies of the Christian Scriptures. Each Gospel, the Acts, the Apocalypse, each Epistle or small group of Epistles, circulated separately in separate rolls. Not every local church would possess a complete collection; it had not indeed been determined what a complete collection was. We must imagine a local church, hearing that a neighbouring community had got a copy of a certain book, borrowing it and making a copy of it, as best it could, without much guarantee of precise accuracy and with little or no opportunity for comparison with other copies.

Nor is it reasonable to expect a high standard of literary conscientiousness or scholarship. The Gospels were not regarded as the literary compositions of Mark or Luke, but as the records of the life of the Saviour. A copyist might have qualms about altering or adding to the words of Sophocles or Plato, but he would not be thinking of the literary style of Mark or Luke. If he could smooth away roughnesses or obscurities of phrase, if he could make the meaning clearer by the insertion of a name or a pronoun, if he could harmonize different descriptions of the same event, even if he could add a detail to the narrative, he could do so in the belief that he was doing, not harm, but good service. The Gospels have come down to us, in their earliest stages, not, as the classics have, through the tradition of great libraries, but from the uncorrelated efforts of a multitude of copyists in small places as well as large, over the face of the earth, working with little opportunity of comparison, and with much danger from time to time of the destruction of copies, and

especially of the official copies belonging to churches, in periods of persecution.

During the first century or so, therefore, after the original production of the books of the New Testament, it is reasonable to suppose a large production of copies in conditions which led to the creation of a large number of variants, mostly minor ones, but some major. Such control as came gradually to exist would be local, not central or general. It would principally exist in the larger centres, the seats of bishoprics, which might be expected to exercise some influence over the surrounding districts. Hence local texts would spring up, and different types of text might become characteristic of different districts, between which there would be no great amount of communication. In the principal centres, such as Alexandria, Antioch, Edessa, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Rome, Carthage, and so on, there would be more opportunity of comparison and revision, and copies would be sought from them by the surrounding churches. In this way it is easy to envisage the emergence of types of text which would be identified with Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Italy, Africa and perhaps Greece and Asia Minor, though we know at present of no text that can be identified with these latter countries.

As time went on, we can suppose that more systematic attempts would be made to reduce the variety of texts to some sort of order. Here we reach the stage of deliberate editorial revision. But editors might quite naturally proceed on very different lines. One editor might aim at making his text as full as possible, incorporating all readings that he found, perhaps including incidents or phrases for which he found some evidence, adding words from one evangelist to the narrative of the same event in another, and so on. Another, without treating his text so freely, might aim at making his text as easy and as edifying as possible, and would either make minor stylistic alterations himself, or at least select from the alternative readings before him those which he thought would give the smoothest and most intelligible text. A third, with more of the training of a scholar, would aim at getting as near as possible to the original words of the authors, applying the same canons of textual criticism as he would if he were dealing with the text of Plato or Thucydides. Such an editor would produce an austere text, pruning away just those additions which an editor of the other type would insert, and tending to choose the rougher and less obvious readings, as

more likely to represent an original which scribes or editors had sought to improve.

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This seems, in briefest outline, to be the most probable explanation of the various types of text with which we have been dealing. The Western text seems to be the result of the freest method of editorial handling, in which sentences have been added, omitted or altered according to the judgment of an editor who was not afraid of taking liberties. The Neutral text, on the other hand, appears to be the work of a more scholarly and conscientious editor, who has aimed, to the best of his ability, at putting together an accurate and authentic text. It is in Egypt, and above all in Alexandria, that we should naturally expect to find such a text, since Alexandria was the home of scholarship, where the principles of textual criticism were better known and respected than elsewhere in the Greek world. Hence it is natural that the principal representatives of the Neutral text, the Codex Vaticanus, the Codex Sinaiticus, the Bohairic and Sahidic versions, should all be referable to Egypt. It was not the only text known in Egypt, as the evidence of the papyri shows; but it may well be the result of conscientious editorship working on the materials which Egypt could provide, in a great centre of scholarship.

The Caesarean text also, so far as it is yet known to us, would seem to be the result of scholarly work. It has none of the extravagances of the Western text, but its choice among the various readings that lay before its editor has sometimes fallen on readings which the Neutral editor rejected but the Western editor retained. Which is right in such cases it is impossible to say with certainty. In trying now, in this twentieth century, to recover the authentic form of the sacred books, an editor in the last resort has to depend to some extent on his own judgment. He may select one manuscript (such as the Vaticanus), or one family of text, as generally to be preferred; but all our evidence, in respect of classical as well as sacred literature, goes to show that it is not permissible to depend on one witness alone, and that the best manuscript is not right in every case. While, therefore, I believe that Hort's conclusion is in the main right, that the Neutral is on the whole the best type and the Vaticanus the best single manuscript, I believe also that a more open mind must be kept with regard to other early readings, such as occur

in the Caesarean text, and that in dealing with the Latin and Syriac texts, while their wilder variations have no sufficient authority, we may yet find readings worthy of acceptance. The minor variations, if in themselves acceptable, do not accredit the more extreme ones; but neither should the inacceptibility of the major variations altogether discredit the minor ones. We have to try to see our way back to the materials which lay before the Western editor, and to separate the grain from the chaff.

To sum up, therefore, the main results of the discovery of the Chester-Beatty papyri, and especially of the Gospels MS., I would say that in the first place it materially advances the disintegration of the Western text, showing that it includes both a specifically Western edition, in which the text of the Gospels and Acts was handled very freely, and a large number of minor early variants which are not Western more than they are Eastern or Southern, but are due to the conditions under which the sacred books were copied in the earliest generations of their existence. Next, it materially strengthens our knowledge of the Caesarean text, and shows that it is both early in date and sober in character. Finally, it strengthens our confidence, by evidence of an earlier period than we hitherto possessed, that the text of the New Testament, while still open to doubt as to many minor details, has yet come down to us in a trustworthy and substantially authentic form. The providence of God, while not exempting it from the conditions which attended the transmission of all ancient literature, and while leaving to us the duty of using our best faculties to ascertain its correct form and its true interpretation, has yet guarded it from serious loss and corruption; and the result of all criticism is to assure us that we can use it with the fullest confidence in its authenticity.

I would only warn you, in conclusion, that, in speaking of the Chester-Beatty MSS., I have been giving you only the results of the study of a single individual. The texts of these MSS. have not yet been published, though I hope that the publication of the Gospels and Acts papyrus is imminent. Other scholars, therefore, have not yet been able to examine them, and it may be that they will modify or extend my interpretation. All that I have been able to do is to give you, to the best of my ability, a first survey of the new material which has so fortunately been brought to light.

The CHAIRMAN (Dr. R. KILGOUR) moved that the best thanks

of the meeting be given to Sir Frederic Kenyon for his very instructive lecture; and the same was seconded by Mr. Sidney Collett and carried with acclamation. Mr. W. Hoste, B.A., followed with a few remarks on the classification of well-known uncial MSS. and related questions.