

Intro:

Our lesson is called “Methods of Textual Criticism” There are five points and one section of “Concluding Observations”. We will deal with final points today.

Textual criticism: (1) “the scholarly study of manuscripts, esp of the Bible, in an effort to establish the original text”¹

(2) “the technique of restoring texts as nearly as possible to their original form. Texts in this connection are defined as writings other than formal documents, inscribed or printed on paper, parchment, papyrus, or similar materials.”²

I. The Wealth of Material**II. Types of Evidence****III. Working with External Evidence****IV. Working with Internal Evidence****V. A Brief History of Textual Criticism**

A. The beginning of the printed Greek New Testaments

B. Erasmus and the Greek New Testament

C. Erasmus’ Editions: Publication history

D. The Greek behind the King James Version

E. Continuing work in the Greek NT

F. The contribution of Tischendorf

G. Westcott & Hort

1. Anglican scholars – late 1800s

2. F. J. A. Hort, 1828-1892 – fairly ‘High Church’ in his personal views

3. B. F. Westcott, 1825-1901 – more orthodox, wrote several valuable commentaries

H. Major contribution: the idea of ‘families’ of texts

1. The Syrian family

2. The Neutral family

¹ textual criticism. Dictionary.com. *Collins English Dictionary - Complete and Unabridged 10th Edition* (HarperCollins Publishers, n.d.) [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/textual criticism](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/textual%20criticism) (accessed: June 15, 2013).

² textual criticism. Dictionary.com. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., n.d.) [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/textual criticism](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/textual%20criticism) (accessed: June 15, 2013).

3. The Alexandrian family

4. The Western family

The idea of ‘families’ was to group texts that shared similar characteristics together for better understanding of their contribution to the whole.

I. Syrian texts

1. Latest manuscripts (majority text, Byzantine text)

2. Readings supported only by the late fathers

3. “No purely Syrian reading that is earlier than the late third or early fourth century.” Thiessen, p. 70

J. Neutral texts

1. Regarded by W & H to be closest to the original text of the NT.

2. Appeared mostly at Alexandria, but also found in many other places.

3. “Free from the corruptions found in the other classes.” Thiessen, p. 70

4. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus both fall in this category

K. Alexandrian texts

1. Found mainly within manuscripts that otherwise belonged to one of the other groups.

2. “Regarded this text as a scholarly revision of the form and syntax in certain readings of the other classes of texts.” Thiessen, p. 71

L. Western texts

1. Early corruption of the original text

2. “Verses and sometimes longer passages are found in this class that are entirely absent from all the other copies.” Thiessen, p. 71

3. W & H “held that this text developed during the non-critical second and third centuries, when the books of the New Testament were copied for immediate edification rather than for the preservation of the original text.” *Ibid.*

M. Opposition of Burgon and Scrivener

1. Advanced the views that older mss. inferior to newer

2. Burgon: *Revision Revised*, et al

3. Scrivener: created a Greek text that exactly agreed with the KJV (but did not exist before)

N. Modification of W & H

The theories of Westcott and Hort have been somewhat modified, although their general principles are still followed.

1. Syrian family = Byzantine family
2. Neutral family = Alexandrian family
3. - - - = Caesarean family (new class)
4. Western family = Western family
5. - - - = Syriac family (new class)

O. Byzantine family

1. Great majority of later manuscripts
2. First appears in quotations of Chrysostom (357-407 AD)
3. Practically universally used in Greek speaking church by 8th c.
4. Smooth and easily understood text
5. Some speculation that the readings were “smoothed out” by the scribes
6. Basis of *Textus Receptus*, although *TR* disagrees with the Byzantine (majority) on various occasions

P. Alexandrian family

1. Not held to be 100% correct, although held to be best by “early manuscript” supporters
2. Linked to Alexandria as a main source for manuscripts of this type
3. Vaticanus and Sinaiticus belong to this class

Q. Caesarean family

1. Between the Alexandrian and the Western
2. Greek text behind the Old Syriac
3. Found in manuscripts from the region of Caesarea and Syria, generally

R. Western family

1. Found in the Latin areas of the Empire
2. Has most peculiar readings of any type
3. Used and quoted by Cyprian, et al

S. Syriac family

1. Old Syriac version and quotations that are in harmony with it
2. Has some similarities with the Western text, but may have been influenced by Tatian's Diatessaron
3. Eventually revised into the Peshitta Syriac, which is basically Byzantine

VI. Concluding observations

- A. 90 - 95% of the time all of these different "types" of texts agree with each other
- B. "It should be emphasized ... that concerning the great bulk of the words of the New Testament there is complete agreement among textual critics." Thiessen, p. 77
- C. "If comparative trivialities, such as changes of order, the insertion or omission of the article with proper names, and the like, are set aside, the words in our opinion still subject to doubt can hardly amount to more than a thousandth part of the whole New Testament." Westcott & Hort, quoted in Thiessen, p. 7
- D. "This (thousandth part) would be a total of a little more than a half page of the Greek Testament from which this statement is taken. Truly, this is not very much!" Thiessen, p. 77