

## How We Got the Bible

### Lesson 7 - Restoring the New Testament Text & Manuscripts from the Sand Teacher's Notes

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Aim: To discuss the task of making sure we have the most accurate text.
2. 2 Tim. 4:13 “Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come--and the books, especially the parchments.”
3. The New Testament is the best-documented book in the world
4. The question of how to restore the ancient text: two choices
  - a. Select one manuscript to become the standard text; however, no manuscript is free from scribal mistakes
  - b. Compare manuscripts and authorities to reconstruct the text; thus we have an edited text that is more ancient than any one manuscript

#### Discussion

#### **I. Authorities for restoring the text**

##### A. Manuscripts

1. The first and primary source of information
2. Regarding the N.T., the manuscripts are in Greek
3. Their classifications, or text type, according to value
  - a. Alexandrian (from Alexandria in Egypt)
  - b. Syrian or Byzantine (from Antioch of Syria)
  - c. Western (from western Europe)
4. Note: the textual certainty of several text types agreeing

##### B. Versions

1. Ancient translations of the N.T.
  - a. Syriac
  - b. Latin

- c. Coptic
  - d. Armenian
  - e. Gothic
  - f. Ethiopic
  - g. Georgian
2. Provide an independent witness to the Greek texts that they represent

### C. Early Christian writers

1. Lived and wrote from the end of the first century into the third
2. Quoted extensively from the Scriptures; obviously from texts older than our manuscripts today
3. Bruce M. Metzger: "So extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament" (The Text of the New Testament, 3rd ed., p. 86)
4. Note: Using the aids of textual criticism, we can reconstruct the original N.T. with virtual certainty

## II. The Greek New Testament in Print

### A. Erasmus of Rotterdam [Netherlands]

1. Edited and was first to publish a printed Greek New Testament
2. In 1516, invited by John Froben, well-known Swiss printer in Basle to publish
3. Parallel N.T. with Greek on the left and Latin on the right
  - a. Latin, an independent translation instead of Jerome's Latin Vulgate
  - b. Included many notes and essays

4. Rushed to print in five months
  - a. Why the rush?
    - (1) In Spain there was under way a Bible. They wanted to get their's first.
    - (2) It was The Complutensian Polyglot, i.e., a Hebrew, Greek and Latin Bible, being completed in Alcalá (Complutum), Spain was in the works
    - (3) They had plenty of time because it was 6 years later that it was printed.
  - b. The Greek N.T. was first printed (1514) but not the first published
  
5. Summary about Erasmus
  - a. The first to publish the N.T. in Greek
  - b. Edited his text based on a few late Greek manuscripts that were available at the time.
  - c. Its mistakes of hasty publication were corrected in later editions, however repeated by later editors
  - d. Reformation in the air
  - e. Valued Greek manuscripts over Latin
  - f. Wrote strongly against the wrongs of the Catholic church
    - (1) For this he was much denounced
    - (2) But in the eyes of others he was much praised
  - g. Reformation was in the air.

**B. Robert Estienne**

1. Latinized name: Stephanus
2. Published several editions of the Greek N.T. in 1546-1551
  - a. 3rd and 4th editions most valuable
  - b. 1551 ed. divided N.T. into verse divisions used today
3. Notes on the Stephanus 3rd ed.
  - a. Known as “the Royal Edition” for its folio size (9 by 13 inches)
  - b. A beautiful edition
  - c. Virtually the complete text of Erasmus
  - d. With slight modification, became the “Received Text”

**C. Theodore Beza**

1. Protestant French Reformer
2. Published several editions of the Greek text (1565-1604)
3. Essentially the text of Stephanus

**D. The Textus Receptus**

1. The Greek text had been standardized
2. The Elzevirs, a Dutch printing family, assured their readers in their 1633 edition, “You have the text now received by all” (textus receptus)
  - a. The “Textus Receptus” was not a divine designation but used to sell books!
  - b. Cf. the “Authorized Version”: who authorized it?
3. It was the text of Beza which was the text of Stephanus which was the text of Erasmus based on a few late Greek manuscripts

4. However, older evidence was newly coming to light
  - a. The Alexandrian Manuscript (700 years older than manuscripts used by Erasmus)
  - b. Collations of other manuscripts were accumulating
  - c. The gathering of the evidence of versions and quotations from early Christian writers

#### E. The work of John Mill and Richard Bentley

1. Dr. John Mill of Oxford
  - a. In 1707, reprinted the Stephanus text of 1550
  - b. The result of thirty years of work, gathering and producing numerous collations [comparing] of manuscripts, versions and early Christian writers
  - c. Charged by Daniel Whitby with making the text uncertain by publishing nearly 30,000 variants
  - d. Unfortunately, Mill's work was used by Anthony Collins in Discourse of Free-Thinking (1713) to deny the authority of Scripture
  
2. Richard Bentley
  - a. Defended Mill in his work "Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free-Thinking", published under the pseudonym, Phileleutherus ("lover of truth") [A fictitious doctor from Leipzig] P. 109-110
    - (1) "...No truth, no matter of fact fairly laid open, can ever subvert true religion"
    - (2) "'Tis competently exact even in the worst MS. now extant; nor is one article of faith or moral precept either perverted or lost in them; choose as awkwardly as you can, choose the worst by design, out of the whole lump of readings"

- b. Planned an entire new edition of the Greek N.T., but never completed it - it was fulfilled in the next century.

#### F. The Westcott-Hort text

1. Important to note: The Greek text is the basis for all our N.T. translations
2. Two extraordinary events of the 19th century
  - a. Constantin Tischendorf's discovery of the Sinaitic Manuscript
  - b. Tischendorf's successful collation and publication of the Vatican Manuscript
  - c. These wonderful manuscripts were now available for a new edition of the Greek text
3. In 1881, Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort published two monumental works
  - a. *The New Testament in the Original Greek*: A completely new, revised and reconstructed text following the lead of Lachmann and Tischendorf [Published on May 12, 1881]
  - b. *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Introduction and Appendix* [Published on Sept. 4, 1881]
    - (1) Introduction is a detailed explanation of the principles used to derive their edition of the Greek N.T.
    - (2) Appendix contains their notes on selected passages
  - c. The primary values reflected in their Greek text
    - (1) Thorough consideration of all evidence
    - (2) The wholesale rejection of the mass of authorities: they are the farthest removed from the 1st cent.
    - (3) The acknowledged dependence on the Sinaitic and Vatican Manuscripts as the oldest complete N.T.'s in Greek

- (4) Modern editions of the Greek N.T. reflect the tremendous contributions of Westcott and Hort
  - (5) The English Revised Version (1881) utilized the scholarship of Westcott and Hort
4. The Westcott-Hort text and English Revised Version deposed the “Received Text” used to translate the N.T. of the KJV

#### G. Summary

1. The N.T. text is a reconstructed or restored text.
2. Modern scholars have used three lines of witnesses:
  - a. The manuscripts
  - b. The versions,
  - c. And the writings of early Christians.
3. In 1516 Erasmus published the first N.T. in Greek.
4. In 1550 Robert Estienne or Stephanus published a beautiful edition of the Greek text that became called “The Received Text” or Textus Receptus.
5. This received text was accepted for more than 300 years.
6. In 1881 Westcott and Hort gave us the updated Greek N.T.

### **III. MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE SAND**

#### A. Searching for papyri

1. The modern quest for texts began with the discovery of 2,000 papyrus rolls and fragments from the “Villa of the Papyri” in Herculaneum on the slope of Mount Vesuvius
2. Few papyri manuscripts were found early in the 19th cent.; however, a flood of manuscripts were discovered late in the century, mostly from dry Egypt

3. Discoveries from Fayum, 70 miles SW of Cairo
  - a. 1889 -1890: Flinders Petrie discovered papyri used as wrappings for 30 mummies
  - b. 1891: Frederic G. Kenyon of the British Museum, published a recently acquired papyrus of Aristotle's Athenian Constitution
  - c. Kenyon's work inspired B.P. Grenfell to study Greek papyri
  - d. 1895: the Egypt Exploration Fund sent D.G. Hogarth and Grenfell to Fayum; Grenfell sent for A.S. Hunt to join them
4. Discoveries from Oxyrhynchus by Grenfell and Hunt
  - a. In 1896-97 chosen because it was a leading Christian town in the 3rd and 4th cent.
  - b. First few weeks unproductive until they turned their attention to the town garbage dumps
  - c. Quickly found basketsful of papyri, including a "sayings" document; they published it as the Logia Iesu: The Sayings of Our Lord
  - d. Other quests began based on Grenfell and Hunt's labors
  - e. Published The Oxyrhynchus Papyri containing:
    - (1) Tax receipts, leases, deeds, bills of sale, personal letters, etc.
    - (2) 27 manuscripts of portions of the N.T., dating from 2nd early 4th cent.

## B. The Chester Beatty papyri

1. Article published: Sir Frederic Kenyon, "The Text of the Bible. A New Discovery," The Times [London] (Nov. 19, 1931) re: papyri discoveries by Mr. A. Chester Beatty
2. 11 Greek manuscripts
  - a. 8 contain portions of Genesis, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Esther, Ezekiel and Daniel

- b. 3 contain portions of the N.T.
  3. The manuscripts were bought from various dealers, though now thought to come from the same area as the Bodmer papyri
  4. Housed in the Chester Beatty Library and Gallery of Oriental Art, Dublin, Ireland
- C. The Bodmer papyri
  1. Discovered in 1952 in an area to the north of the ancient city of Thebes
  2. Most of the texts bought by Mr. Martin Bodmer of Geneva, Switzerland
  3. Largely Greek and Coptic papyri
  4. Contain most of John's Gospel, 1 and 2 Peter and large portions of Luke and John
- D. New Testament papyri
  1. P1
    - a. 15 verses of Matt. 1
    - b. Folded leaf found by Grenfell and Hunt
    - c. Alexandrian text type
    - d. 3rd cent.
    - e. Located in the University of Pennsylvania Museum
  2. P2, P64, P67
    - a. 3 fragments that belong to the same codex
    - b. Many verses from Matthew and Luke
    - c. Like Vaticanus
    - d. Dating from late 2nd cent.
    - e. Possibly the oldest known codex of the four Gospels

3. P5
  - a. Parts of John's Gospel
  - b. 3rd cent
  - c. Alexandrian text type
  - d. Located in the British Museum
  
4. P38
  - a. A leaf from a codex
  - b. Portions of Acts 18-19
  - c. Along with P48 resembles Codex Beza
  - d. Close of the 3rd cent.
  - e. Located in the University of Michigan Library
  
5. P45
  - a. With P46 and P47 comprise the N.T. portion of the Chester Beatty papyri
  - b. 30 leaves of the codex survive containing the Gospels and Acts
  - c. Text type is a mixture of Alexandrian and Western; Acts is more Alexandrian
  
6. P46
  - a. Earliest text of most of the letters of Paul; early 3rd cent.
  - b. 86 of an original 104 leaves
  - c. Order of Paul's letters: Rom., Heb., 1 & 2 Cor., Eph., Gal., Phil., Col., 1 & 2 Thess.
  - d. Portions of Rom. and 1 Thess. missing; 2 Thess. not present
  - e. Significance of 1 & 2 Tim., Tit. and Philem. missing; Heb. with Paul's letters

7. P47
  - a. 3rd cent. codex containing about 1/3 of Rev.
  - b. Alexandrian text-type
  
8. P52
  - a. From the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England
  - b. 3 ½ by 2 ½ inch fragment of John 18
  - c. 1st half of 2nd cent. (ca. A.D. 125)
  - d. Dispels the view that John's Gospel was written late in the 2nd cent.
  
9. P66
  - a. Leading manuscript of the Bodmer papyri
  - b. Contains almost all of the first 14 chapters of John's Gospel
  - c. Dated ca. A.D. 200
  - d. Though many self-corrected mistakes, text is very similar to Vatican (Alexandrian text type)
  
10. P72
  - a. Bodmer manuscript of miscellaneous texts, including 1 & 2 Pet., Jude
  - b. Mostly Alexandrian text type
  
11. P75
  - a. Bodmer manuscript
  - b. Dated A.D. 175-225
  - c. Large portions of Luke and John
  - d. Earliest copy of Luke
  - e. Points to Codex Vaticanus as the text of the 2nd cent.

## Conclusion

1. The Greek papyri in general have had a far-reaching effect on our knowledge of the Greek (Koine) in which the New Testament was written
2. The New Testament papyri in particular have thrown much light on the text of the New Testament
3. Even fragments of papyri are important
4. Recent discoveries of papyri, taken as a whole, confirm the Westcott-Hort type of text and stand opposed to the other type of text (Received Text)
5. The text of the New Testament, therefore, rests on solid foundations
  - a. Westcott and Hort: "...the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text. Since there is reason to suspect that an exaggerated impression prevails as to the extent of possible textual corruption in the New Testament ... we desire to make it clearly understood beforehand how much of the New Testament stands in no need of a textual critics labours"
  - b. Sir Frederic Kenyon: "The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries"
6. Review questions
  - a. What three main sources are available in restoring the New Testament text?
  - b. Where did the "Textus Receptus" come from?
  - c. What did Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort do?
  - d. What is the oldest known fragment of a New Testament text?
  - e. How recent would a translation have to be to benefit from the work of Westcott and Hort and from the discoveries of this century?

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**Sources Consulted**

1. How We Got The Bible 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition by Neil R. Lightfoot
  2. Rocky Whitely Oldham Lane church of Christ Abilene, TX
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