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A Definite Need in the Field of New Testament Textual Criticism

W. Arndt

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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(2) What should persuade us willingly to show such loyalty to Jesus: the loyal patience of the Old Testament believers, v. 1a; chap. 11; the loyal service of Jesus in His work of redemption, vv. 2, 3; the knowledge that Jesus is the Author of our faith, enabling us to run the race, and the Finisher of our faith, who will give us the victor's crown, v. 2; the comforting exhortation, vv. 5, 6. — *Through Cross to Glory!* (1) No glory for the child of God without the cross. (The example of the Old Testament believers, v. 1; chap. 11; the example of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, vv. 2, 3; that holds good of every child of God, vv. 4-6). (2) The cross of God's children must lead to glory. (That applies to the Old Testament believers, v. 1a; chap. 11; to the incarnate Son of God, v. 2: "joy set before Him"; "set down at right hand of God"; to all believing children of God, since Jesus, the Savior, is the Author of faith, has made God their Father, whose chastisements are evidences of His love, vv. 5, 6; and is the Finisher of faith, will lead them to their heavenly home. — *Let Us Run the Race God has Set Before Us!* Laying aside every weight, v. 1; patiently suffering its hardships, vv. 1b, 4; looking unto Jesus, our Example and Savior, vv. 2, 3; remembering God's exhortation, vv. 5, 6. — Vv. 1-3 are a very suitable text for an address to a class of confirmands. *Be You Faithful unto the End!* You are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses; your Savior went through shame to glory; this Jesus is the Author and Finisher of your faith.

THEO. LAETSCH

A Definite Need in the Field of New Testament Textual Criticism

(Paper read before the St. Louis section of the American
Philological Association)

There are a number of desiderata that a person who is interested in New Testament textual criticism becomes aware of; and my caption must not be interpreted as signifying that we have arrived at that happy stage of development in this field where all difficulties have disappeared excepting one and all hands can now be summoned to dispose of this one disturbing element. Without much trouble rather many needs that should be supplied could be enumerated. This afternoon I should like to specify one of these. It is, to say it at once, a more accurate classification of the manuscripts containing the Epistles of St. Paul than we possess at present.

The most brilliant work in the field of New Testament textual criticism that was done in our generation pertained to the four Gospels. I shall make that my starting point. To understand it

and the present status of New Testament textual criticism, one has to go back to Westcott and Hort (their edition appeared 1881) who, following in the footsteps of other scholars, had occupied themselves with the grouping and classifying of manuscripts and arrived at definite conclusions which, even if they did not universally satisfy, were, and still are, by all scholars treated with profound respect. The main feature of their textual views was that there are four classes, or families, of New Testament manuscripts, representing four types of text, the Neutral, the Alexandrian, the Syrian, and the Western. What they designated the Neutral text, was in their opinion practically the original text; they called it neutral because in their view it had not yielded to the various tendencies which spell the contamination or corruption of a text.¹⁾ By and by it was discovered that the classification of Westcott and Hort needed some modification. What they termed the Neutral text was seen to be not a separate, distinct type of text, but merely the text of Alexandria, preserved in certain manuscripts in a purer state than that found in other manuscripts of the same area or type. It must not be forgotten that the chief witnesses for the Neutral text of Westcott and Hort are Alexandrian manuscripts as far as their type of text is concerned. You see from this last remark of mine that we call them Alexandrian not because they were necessarily written in Alexandria, but because they represent the Alexandrian tradition.²⁾

1) Cf. *The New Testament in the Original Greek, the Text Revised by Brooks Foss Westcott, D. D., and Fenton John Anthony Hort, D. D.* Introduction and Appendix by the Editors. New York. Harper and Brothers. 1882. It is chiefly pp. 90—178 that contain an elaboration of the principles that were followed. The volume under discussion is usually called the companion volume of the Greek text. On its opening pages the statement is made that the volume was written by Dr. Hort.

2) A brilliant work on this subject is a little book by the renowned Dublin scholar George Salmon, *Some Thoughts on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*. London. 1897. It gives an account of the defense of the *textus receptus* by Burgon and Miller. Westcott and Hort are upheld, but cautiously some questions are raised as to their methods.

A fair and thorough criticism of these methods is contained in the important work of B. D. Streeter, *The Four Gospels, a Study of Origins*, New York, 1925 (2d edition, 1931), which will be dwelt on later. He says (p. 34), "It will frequently be necessary to criticize certain of the views of Hort—by whom that Introduction [the companion volume] was written. I wish, therefore, once and for all, to affirm that this implies no undervaluing of the truly epoch-making character of the work of that great scholar. There is no greater name in the history of textual criticism. But for Hort, no such thing as what I am here attempting would be possible; and such modification of his views as seems to be necessary is mainly due to discoveries made since the time he wrote."

On Westcott and Hort cf. likewise Eberhard Nestle's *Einfuehrung in das Griechische Neue Testament*, 4. Aufl. v. E. v. Dobschuetz, Goettingen 1923, p. 71 f., and A. T. Robertson, *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*. New York, 1925, p. 35 ff.

When von Soden issued (1902—1913) his edition of the New Testament with a critical apparatus of enormous magnitude, he divided all the manuscripts into three groups, or families—the H group representing Egypt, the I group representing chiefly Palestine and the West, and the K group representing the Byzantine tradition. H stands for Hesychius, the name of a man who lived in Alexandria and who is supposed to have made a revision of the New Testament, being responsible for the text we have in Aleph and B. I stands for Jerusalem, which city is close to Caesarea, where there was a famous library. K represents the Greek word *Koine*. It was chosen to designate the manuscripts emanating from Antioch and Byzantium and other codices having a like text, because that became the common text during the Middle Ages. I may add here that while Hesychius, as I said, is supposed to have made a recension of the New Testament text in Egypt, Pamphilus is assumed to have done the same thing in Caesarea and Lucian in Antioch. All three scholars had their *floruit* about 300 A. D.³⁾

We see that von Soden corrected the error of Westcott and Hort consisting in their assumption that there was a special Neutral text as distinct from the text of Alexandria. In another respect, too, he made an advance; he recognized that Jerusalem and Caesarea would have to be given more prominence than was accorded them in the classification of Westcott and Hort. The latter scholars had put the manuscripts which von Soden places into the Jerusalem group largely into the big Western class. Speaking of the commendable features of von Soden's work, one must not forget that he collated a vast number of minuscules which preceding generations of scholars had treated rather niggardly or not used at all. He had generous funds at his disposal, furnished by a certain Miss Koenig, through which he was enabled to engage a large corps of helpers who, in the various parts of the world, studied the manuscripts assigned to them and then reported to von Soden as the general manager and editor. But while von Soden made some progress, there was retrogression in his work, too. He put the Jerusalem group of manuscripts into his classification, but he eliminated the Western group of Westcott and Hort as such from his enumeration. While they had labeled a big box, or basket, "The Western Text," he labeled the same box, or basket, "The Jerusalem Text." Just as theirs, his labeling was only partly

3) On v. Soden's edition (4 volumes), which appeared 1902—1913, see especially Nestle, v. Dobschuetz, p. 75 f. and p. 83. Here the colossal nature of this undertaking is properly recognized; but the shortcomings are not suppressed either. Much in the same vein are the comments of Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

correct. Hence, strictly speaking, this particular feature was no advance at all. If in addition to his Jerusalem group he had enumerated a Western group, there would have been real progress.⁴⁾ In addition von Soden made his work objectionable by the introduction of a new terminology or a new numbering of the manuscripts. His intentions were good, but the plan he adopted was so cumbersome that special study is required merely to become acquainted with his system of numbering and of designating the codices. The system, one must admit, is ingenious. If a manuscript contains the whole New Testament, it is marked with a δ (=διαθήκη). If it contains the writings of Paul only, it is given an α (=ἀπόστολος). If it contains the Gospels only, an ϵ (=εὐαγγέλιον) is supplied in the designation. These letters are followed by a number which, if the manuscript dates from the 11th century or is still younger, in its third last figure indicates whether the document belongs to the 11th, 12th, or a still more recent century. Thus ϵ 1266 is a manuscript containing the Gospels and is dated as coming from the 12th century. But how about the manuscripts dating from the 10th century or earlier? There is no provision made for indicating their age in the number itself. Hence the system is rather imperfect from this particular point of view. Besides, think of the inconvenience or extra labor put on students through this system who, in order to understand the works of former critics, have to learn the old nomenclature and then, besides, have to drill themselves in the use of von Soden's figures. No wonder his new attempt at numbering and designating the manuscripts did not appeal. But this paragraph of mine is merely a little excursus of regret and has no bearing on the subject itself.

A real advance, the importance of which I hold will be recognized more and more as the years roll by, was made by Dean Burnett Hillman Streeter in his brilliant and learned work *The Four Gospels — a Study of Origins*, 1925, a second edition of which appeared in 1931. Streeter (†1937) naturally built on the foundations laid by his eminent predecessors, especially Westcott and Hort and von Soden. He introduced a new idea; he advocated that the Gospel manuscripts should be more carefully classified as to the locality where they originated or whose text they represent. Five cities or territories should be considered focal points: Alexandria, Caesarea, Antioch, Rome (together with Gaul) and North-west Africa (Carthage). Some new or comparatively new dis-

4) Streeter (l. c.): "I am informed by one of the leading scholars in Germany that Soden's theories, in so far as they are original, are universally rejected in that country and that his grouping of MSS. is considered arbitrary." V. Dobschuetz (*op. cit.*, p. 75): "Man sagt — leider — schwerlich zu viel, wenn man behauptet, dass das Ganze noch einmal gemacht werden muss."

coveries bringing to light hitherto unknown manuscripts were of important aid to him in the elaboration of his system. The chief authorities for Alexandria naturally were codices B and Aleph; for Caesarea, the newly found manuscript Theta;⁵⁾ for Antioch, two Syriac manuscripts, giving the translation made about 175 A. D., manuscripts known as the Sinaitic Syriac and the Curetonian Syriac; for Rome, codex D, the famous Bezan manuscript; for Africa, the old Latin manuscripts k and e. Besides these primary witnesses, Streeter lists in descending order, according to their importance, the other codices which definitely represent the type of text that was current in the respective locality. His system aids greatly when one is compelled to choose between variant readings. The principle followed may be stated thus: the reading which was most widespread in the early Church is likely to be the original one. Suppose a certain reading is found in no group of manuscripts excepting those that are assigned to Caesarea. That means four groups are on the one side, and only one on the other. The presumption at once is that the reading is not genuine, and must be rejected. The groups are not of equal importance, to be sure. Naturally a person will be inclined to give greater weight to the readings found in the Alexandrian group than in the others, because at Alexandria scholarship was cultivated and critical acumen had been highly developed. But while everybody must be cautioned against a merely mechanical use of the critical method that suggests itself, that is, accepting as correct the reading found in the majority of the five localities listed, it must be clear at once that the aid which is furnished the textual critic through Streeter's classification is very considerable. To me it seems that his method has given us one of the chief criteria on which the textual critic has to rely in doing his important work.

Now we finally come to the desideratum which I have in mind. For the writings of St. Paul, as far as I know, no one has as yet done the work which Streeter did for the Gospels. Perhaps the necessary materials are lacking. We have no uncial manuscript like codex Theta to give us the Caesarean form of text of St. Paul's Epistles, for codex Theta contains only the Gospels. We have no Ante-Nicene Syriac manuscripts giving us the early text of Antioch for these Epistles, because the two celebrated Syriac manuscripts mentioned before are Gospel codices. There is, then, a paucity

5) This MS., discovered in an out-of-the-way place in the Caucasus, is known to have been kept once upon a time at a monastery in Koridethi, a town located in the Caucasus region east of the Black Sea. Its text was published by G. Burman and C. R. Gregory in Leipzig, 1913. It contains the Gospels only. Streeter (*op. cit.*, p. 79) says: "It probably belongs to the eighth century." Its type of text, however, is definitely early.

of material with which to work. But think of what it would mean if for the Pauline Epistles we had the same classification of codices as for the Gospels, how our textual work would be facilitated and our assurance of having arrived at correct conclusions increased!

Before continuing, let me interrupt to say it must not be overlooked that the lately discovered Chester Beatty papyrus manuscript for the letters of St. Paul, dated about 200 to 230, has suddenly thrown a remarkable opportunity for new work in the text of Paul's Epistles into the lap of scholars. The careful study of this highly interesting early manuscript has only begun. A facsimile edition is available, and we may hope to see some real progress made in this field.* This codex has not yet, as far as I am aware, been definitely identified as to place or country where it originated, although it seems it was Egypt. On its general character, Kenyon (*Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the Greek Bible*, 1932, p. 61) says, after a partial examination, because when he wrote the words I shall quote, he had seen but a small section of the codex: "With regard to the text of the Pauline Epistles, all that can be said at present is that the manuscript is certainly not of the Byzantine type and is definitely nearer to the Aleph and A B group, and especially to B, than to the Western group D, F, G. It shows, however, several agreements with F G in small groups, though fewer than with B. The order of agreement after B is A, Aleph, C, D, F, G, with the *textus receptus* a long way behind. There are a considerable number of singular readings, but none of much importance." At any rate, the codex antedates the three great recensions, and we may have to use it as constituting a unit by itself beside the five local text groups.

A few general remarks made by von Soden with regard to the manuscripts for the Pauline Epistles may be of interest here. He holds that the differences between the three recensions are less in the Pauline Epistles than in Acts and the Catholic Epistles. Their significance, he thinks, is not so great either. His view is that the transmission of the text which antedates the recensions must have been more uniform in the Pauline Epistles than in the other books. Besides, so he states, the number of variant readings is smaller here than in the other New Testament writings. As a result, the various types of text are less recognizable in this part of the New Testament than elsewhere. With respect to the K text of Paul's letters, he holds that it has been transmitted more uniformly than that of the other recensions. Perhaps all this helps to

* The Pritzlaff Library of Concordia Seminary owns a copy of this edition.

186 **Need in the Field of New Testament Textual Criticism**

explain why in their textual studies scholars have given less attention to the Pauline Epistles than to the Gospels and Acts.

Will it be possible without further discoveries to distinguish five groups of local texts for the Pauline codices? I think so. The minuscules will have to be studied with more penetrating analysis than has been brought to bear on them thus far. Some work has been done in this direction, especially by Kirsopp Lake and by Ferrar and Abbott, who have succeeded in identifying a number of minuscules as forming a special group. On the basis of their labors, scholars have arrived at the conclusion that these groups belong to the Caesarean circle of manuscripts. Kirsopp Lake has written an important investigation having the title "Codex One of the Gospels and Its Allies" (1, 118, 131, 209, 1582). Ferrar and Abbott studied and edited the so-called Ferrar group of minuscules containing manuscripts 13, 69, 124, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, 1709. The interest of these men when they made their researches, however, had to do with the Gospels. Most of the manuscripts belonging to the groups which they were able to establish contained only this part of the New Testament. To what extent the text of St. Paul's Epistles as contained in some of these manuscripts could be proved to be Caesarean apparently has not yet been sufficiently determined. It seems that here there is not only a need, but, for patient and industrious scholars devoted to this type of study, likewise the means of meeting the need. Will our utilitarian age produce scholars of this kind? Kenyon said in 1932 (*op. cit.*, p. 86): "It is very regrettable that the textual criticism of the New Testament does not appear to appeal to the younger generation of scholars so strongly as it did to their predecessors in the nineteenth century. There seem to be lamentably few of the younger scholars who are carrying on the tradition of Lachmann and Tregelles and Tischendorf and Hort and Scrivener and Wordsworth and others of the earlier generation who are still alive. Yet it is a fascinating subject in itself, and one in which much good work remains to be done. It is to be hoped that the discovery of the Chester Beatty papyri, with its mass of new material, may do something to revive interest in a subject of such profound importance as the authentic texts of the original documents of our Christian religion."

W. ARNDT

