
MODERN TEXTUAL CRITICISM,
ITS GENESIS AND
RETARDATION

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Textual criticism—as exemplified as that which is practiced upon the text of the New Testament—has for its modern status, roots which began in the late 1600s, during what is now referred to as the "Age of Enlightenment". This Age of Enlightenment is also commonly known as the "Age of Reason". Scholars and historians differ as to its parameters, some date the era as beginning in 1648 and lasting unto the French Revolution (which began in 1789) [Livingston: 5]. Others would include most of the 1600s and terminate it in the early 1800s. [Runes: 92]. Philosophers would see its inception beginning with John Locke and his essay of 1690 (*An Essay on Human Understanding*) and extending to circa 1778, the death of Voltaire. For the purposes of this present essay, I propose dating the Age of Reason as beginning in 1689 (with the publication of Richard Simon's *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament*), and terminating in 1831 with the publication of Karl Lachmann's Greek New Testament. Within these dates (1689-1831) I posit that *most* of the current and modern methods of Biblical Textual Criticism had their origins. Most modern Biblical textual critics, still operate under these centuries-old canons and techniques. Additionally, here in the 21st century, most so-called innovations, [as concerns textual criticism of the New Testament] are not new, but rather resurrected techniques utilized or formulated in the Age of Enlightenment. The validation of these postulations forms the substance of this essay.

As the mid-1600s dawned, Durant summed-up some of mankind's optimism:

...the International of Science was laboring to lessen superstition and fear. It was inventing or improving the microscope, the telescope, the thermometer, and the barometer [Torricelli]. It was devising the logarithmic and decimal systems, reforming the calendar, and developing analytic geometry; it was already dreaming of reducing all reality to an algebraic equation....Soon all the wars and revolutions of the rival states would sink into minor significance compared with that mounting, spreading contest between faith and reason which was to agitate and transform the mind of Europe, perhaps of the world. [Durant: 647]

Not only was Europe affected, America was a participant, particularly after the American revolution. England, France, Germany and most of northern Europe seized the momentum created by the Renaissance and ventured forth, boldly, armed with a critical mind-set. One must recall that certain historical factors greatly enabled the Renaissance itself. With the fall of Constantinople, a large number of Greek manuscripts found their way into European libraries, bequeathing to the western world the great learning of the Greeks and Romans. Scholars too migrated into the northern and western spheres and facilitated the grasp of the Greek language and its dialects. Printing was invented, and suddenly men began communicating across the national boundaries via a semi-universal language, the language of scholarship, Latin. Thus scholars in Germany could easily access works written by French divines, works via printed books in Latin. Paris, the "city of light" became one of many centers of learning. The sciences, arts, mathematics, economics, politics and religion were all circumscribed within this new era of enlightenment.

William Jones (1746-1794) a British orientalist, opened wide the door for the new science of philology. He noted that there was an affinity between the Indo-European languages. They all seemed to be related to some ancient common source. Franz Bopp later developed these basic insights into a more robust reality. This understanding gave much impetus to linguistic researches and observations during and following the Enlightenment.

Thus equipped, with all these potential and realized advances in many fields of study, man evolved and began to reduce the world surrounding him to objects measured and delimited via human reason. One of the most arrogant gestures of this "evolution" was the reduction of the Holy Scriptures to some simple codes of ethics, to a romantic myth which needed historical adjustments or corrections so as to meet the new criteria of accuracy and respectability needed in the new Age of Reason. Viewing the Holy Scriptures as such of course, caused much anxiety amongst the Pietists throughout Europe.

As an example; most folks welcomed the earlier "golden age" of Florence, Italy (circa the 1500s); yet some objected to the influx of pagan (Greek and Roman) sciences and learning. The Dominican Girolamo Savonarola preferred the rebirth of man via the Gospels *as opposed* to that "rebirth" which stemmed from the newly acquired insights gained from Aristotle and Plato and other newly discovered ancients. [NGS: 83]. Savonarola recommended the burning of playing cards, dice, books of poetry, paintings of women, and other vanities. Christians were hesitant to accept the powers and insights of the new "man". However by the mid 1700s the rationalists were gaining ground, skepticism and doubt surrounding the Holy Scriptures began to infiltrate some divines, especially those who sought to be educated. Most of the universities were centers of this new humanism.

Rationalism, after all, was rational. Sanskrit was indeed related to German and English, gases and atmospheres were indeed composed of tiny particles, the earth did rotate around the sun and man was the epitome of creation. So why not also subject the Scriptures to a rational scrutiny? Everything else seemed to benefit from such endeavors. Thus a number of learned Pietists became involved in the rapidly expanding field of Biblical textual criticism. Perhaps like never before, the hand of man was laid upon the Holy Writ; to dissect it, to criticize it. This scrutiny thus brought the Holy Writ down to the level of peccant human understanding, removing its transcendent glory and sublime realities which rose above the abilities of the best of human minds. This loftiness, and some of these sublime truths had continually escaped man's basic comprehensions. How dare such materials exist! How could they exist in the presence of the new "man"? Man alone was "lofty", and therefore could subsume and account for and explain, with study, these so-called transcendent concepts. With the Bible reduced as such, human reason triumphed over such irrational aspects as miracles and resurrections and creation accounts in Genesis. Human generated concepts and understandings, after all, were and are quite rational. The stage was prepared for Darwin's observations years later, prepared during the Enlightenment.

With God in a test tube, man subjected His Word, the Scriptures, to rigorous study and devaluation. With the access provided by the printing presses, copies of the Holy Writ were easily available. Every student could then possess a copy, a copy to critique. Philosophers, politicians, writers, actors, poets, and innumerable teachers thus, with impunity razed the text of God's Word. The text was swaddled in a multitude of theories, some ridiculous, some fanciful, and some quite rational.

Realizing the antagonism which such criticism of the Bible produced amongst the masses (especially in the rural areas), scholars were keen to note the need to organize and codify their methods of critiquing the Holy Writ. Allied with this was the need for such principles as applied to the critiquing of any written work. Hence classical texts and Biblical texts were mingled under one rubric, each equally needing criticism. This need, during the Age of Enlightenment, produced canons or laws governing the practice of Biblical criticism. By establishing and formulating this "Biblical criticism" as a science and as a totally rational enterprise, some credibility was attached, it seemed palatable to casual observers, and hopefully to the inquiring masses.

With diminishing hesitancy, preachers did incorporate some of these new observations in their sermons to the common folks in the pews. But not all preachers, in fact a division was clearly apparent, and churches began to divide as well as to develop more engrossing catechisms and defenses to counter the attacks which the humanists or "Enlightened-Ones" proposed. Some religions became more conservative, some more liberal; and even now, in the 21st century, the effects are still evident and progressing.

The faithful tenaciously clung to their faith, even in the midst of this revival of Greek and Roman humanism. The sermons of the preacher and thinker, Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752) perhaps epitomized this tension. As the appointed preacher at Rolls Chapel in London, he delivered a number of sermons which did incorporate the awareness that "Christianity is discovered to be fictitious", [Livingston: 46], and that Christianity was "a principal subject of mirth and ridicule". His sermons, though exposing these Enlightenment-based

observations, also revealed that the skepticism and doubt was not well grounded. As Livingston quotes Leslie Stephen, Butler was "a man honest enough to admit the existence of doubts, and brave enough not to be paralyzed by their existence". [Livingston: 46]. Bishop Butler also produced the famous *Analogy of Reason, Natural and Revealed*, which was a devastating critique of the popular Deist movement and doctrines, so devastating that it ended the debate between genuine Bible-based Christianity and the Deists.

Another side effect of the the Enlightenment's empirical examination of the facts of experience was an implosion, an internal collapse within its own doctrines, especially within the realm of religion. Livingston gives several reasons why this "religion of reason" crumbled during the latter part of the Age of Reason: [Livingston: 40]

- (1) Firstly, it was unable to attract the masses
- (2) It was too abstract, too intellectual, too devoid of feeling
- (3) Deism lacked unity, a bond of faith and worship did not really exist, it was vaporized by its demand for autonomy

In spite of this, the tension/conflict remained, even flourished, between faith and reason. The two opposing sides did become more hardened in their positions, a lasting contribution from the 1700s.

Peter Gay refers to the period of 1300-1700 as the "era of pagan Christianity", and devotes a large section of his book, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism*, to the topic. "Modern Paganism" was the union of rational thought in Christian dress; the amalgamation of human rationalism with Christian truths. Acceptable to the Deists and philosophes of the day, but wholly incompatible to the ardent believers in God's written Word. Incompatible to the ardent

believers, but often necessary for rationalists to continue to exist and develop theories and empirical rules. Gay, perhaps paints with too broad a brush when he declares that the Christians had tried so valiantly to keep reason and religion united [Gay: 325f]. Gay is correct if he means reason expressed as common sense, but probably wrong if he means the cold hard analytical reason exhibited by the scientists and philosophes of the Enlightenment period. Perhaps Gay was thinking of how the natural man longed to reduce God's wondrous revelations to the level of, or to the plane of verifiable human experiences, devoid of the supernatural.

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (I Corinthians 2:14)

But the natural man (i.e. "physical") has evolved, inflated by his new found knowledge and tools of analyses, at least this is how many of the Enlightenment era philosophers and thinkers would respond to this Biblical declaration (not as a typical ardent believer!). The battle between reason and God's transcendent Word continues unto this very day. The primary arena, the main battlefield seems to be revolving around the very text of God's Word, thus *during the Age of Reason, textual criticism emerges as an important and necessary science for the understanding of and indeed as well as for the assault upon God's unparagoned and supernatural Word.*

Textual criticism was thus needed and though it was in a developing state, we can observe some of the methods and techniques developed so as to bring reason, coherency and stability to the subject.

The guidelines developed for the newly emerging science (and craft) of Biblical textual criticism, began as scholars noted common types or classes of errors or problems within the texts under examination. As time passed and scholar after scholar contributed his or her share, a growing corpus of techniques/rules was recognized. In 1808, many of these were put into a convenient publication, which was rather exhaustive in its collection of canons and rules related to textual criticism. But before examining these emerging canons and techniques, perhaps one ought to view the current or "modern" canons as indicated in several well known publications.

THE SO-CALLED "MODERN" CANONS

Kurt and Barbara Aland, in their 1989 publication: *The Text of the New Testament*, present "Twelve Basic Rules for Textual Criticism" [Aland: 280ff]. We shall later refer to a few of these, but a more practical list is found in Wegner's publication: *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*. [Wegner: 179 and 224ff]. Basically Wegner list five items for that of the New Testament texts or manuscripts (his sixth canon is not fully applicable to the entire Bible):

- (1) Manuscripts must be weighed, not counted.
- (2) Determine the reading that would most likely give rise to the others. [basically, the genealogical principle].
- (3) The more distinctive reading is usually preferable.

(4) The shorter reading is generally favored.

(5) Determine which reading is more appropriate in its context (examine literary context, grammatical or spelling errors, historical context).

His number 6, states that the critic should compare parallel passages for differences (applicable largely in the synoptic Gospels the historical books of the Old Testament, and in the quotations).

We might add from Aland:

(6) External considerations (i.e. other manuscripts) have preference over the internal considerations. [Aland's number 3]

(7) When a variant reading exists in only a single witness, it is only a "theoretical possibility". [Aland's number 7]

(8) The reconstruction of a stemma, [i.e. the genealogical principle] for any variant reading, is an important device. [Aland's number 8]

(9) "Variants must never be treated in isolation, but always considered in the context of the tradition". [Aland's number 9]

Wegner also lists various errors seen in the manuscripts, which items must also be resolved by the critic, in short these are:

Mistaken letters

Homophony (similar sounds)

Haplography (visual similarities)

Dittography (accidentally written twice)

Metathesis (words or letters accidentally reversed)

Fusion (two words incorrectly joined as one word)

Fission (incorrect word division, one word written as two)

Homoioteleuton (similar ending lines of texts, or words)

Homoiarchton (similar beginnings of words or lines of text)

Intentional Changes (theological and otherwise)

Harmonizing of passages

Adding words which seem to be missing

Conflated readings (two or more readings joined as one)

Simplification of awkward grammar, or "correction" of grammar which seems incorrect to the copyist

Misunderstood/mistranslated rare word(s)

I might add, from my own experiences and the literature:

Accidental insertion of marginal data

Accidentally misquoting a quoted source

The copyist accidentally and momentarily, follows his/her memory which introduces an alteration

Changes via the influence of a copyist's habits or style
[Metzger: 210]

A logical conclusion from the genealogical principle, would be that the oldest witnesses/readings are more likely to be original.

Most critics believe that the "more difficult" reading is most likely the original.

These then give us a good view of the techniques or axioms and canons which modern textual critics use when assaying the various

variations. Actually, the "techniques" themselves differ from the rules or canons, as I trust the reader understands. For example; one should first gather all data, all manuscripts, and carefully collate each, et cetera et cetera. We are not herein discussing the actual processes, just the essential rules or canons which are typically practiced by the modern critic of the Biblical manuscripts or texts.

Having thus displayed these, I can now state that none of the above canons or axioms are new, they all stem from the Age of Enlightenment. Which by the way, argues for much of their soundness, they are old, classical canons, they have withstood the test of time and repeated use.

In the list above, Wegner's number 3 is not clear, what does he mean by "distinctive": the difficult reading? the more fantastic reading? the more unusual reading? the most singularly reading? When compared to other canon lists, he most likely means, the more difficult reading is the one which is preferable.

CANONS DEVELOPED DURING THE ENLIGHTENMENT

We lack space, in this brief essay, to exhibit all of the canons and rules developed during the Age of Enlightenment. However, we shall illustrate a few. Recall that all of the canons, illustrated above, had their origins in the Enlightenment era.

Prior to the formulation of these canons of textual criticism, most editors simply followed the majority of witnesses supporting such-and-such a variant. Thus they counted the number of supporting witnesses, and generally based their decisions upon the reading with the most support. A few exceptions are noted: the edition of Colinæus

of 1534 deviated somewhat from the slightly earlier edition of Erasmus. However, Colinæus left us no information as to why he followed a certain manuscript, or the Complutensian text. Despite the minor deviations, it was still largely the text of Erasmus. It was Johann Bengel (1687-1762) who seems to be the first scholar who proposed the weighing of the evidence. (That is, he considered the quality of the evidence as opposed to the simple numerical majority). Bengel *always* preferred the more difficult reading [Schaff: 247]. He also was the first scholar to propose the theory of manuscript families or recensions. [Schaff: 247].

In the English translation of Bengel's, *Gnomon*, by Fausset in 1860 (recall that the *Gnomon* was originally published in 1742), in volume one, we can read many of the rules and canons which Bengel established or followed. [Fausset: 13-38]. He also commented upon earlier rules as stated by Gerard von Maestricht, in 1711, a total of 43 critical canons laid down by Maestricht, [Fausset: 20-38]. As well as commenting upon these 43 canons, Bengel also displays them. A few are noteworthy, such as:

Canon 2: (per Maestricht)

Transcribers have frequently erred, through carelessness, fancying, when repetitions of words occurred either in the same or in the following verse, that they had transcribed the preceding or the succeeding words. Hence have arisen *omissions*, or else *variations*, the intervening or following word or sentence having been left out. The same thing might arise when a copy is made from dictation.

Bengel certainly, and correctly critiques each of Maestricht's canons, and vastly improves upon them. An example of one of Bengel's many canons would be:

Canon 12: (per Bengel)

And so, in fine *more* witnesses are to be preferred to fewer; and, which is *more important*, witnesses who *differ* in country, age, and language, are to be preferred to those who are closely connected with each other; and which is *most important of all, ancient* witnesses are to be preferred to modern ones. For, since the original autographs (and they were written Greek), can alone claim to be the well-spring, the amount of authority due to codices, drawn from primitive sources, Latin Greek, etc, depends upon their nearness to that fountain-head. [Fausset: 16, italics per original]

Bengel, also believed that readings not seen in the *Textus Receptus* [3X] should not be introduced immediately into the text, but consigned to the margin. Bengel's marginal readings also exhibited his degree of value attached to each reading, a system very similar if not identical, to the current editions of the *United Bible Societies Greek New Testament!*

Unfortunately Bengel, was somewhat inflexible in some of his rules, such as Canon 12 above; in which case he would not accept a late reading even though it may be the actual original reading! Modern critics, today are also somewhat inflexible, but some are careful to state that the earliest manuscripts, or readings, *may* be the superior one(s), though stated as such they often do not practice this dictum or precaution.

Richard Simon (1638-1712), amongst his four volumes on the text of the Bible, laid down some early observations concerning the text of the Bible, which observations (according to Metzger: 155) were well in advance for his day (published circa 1689, s.v. above). Simon is referred to as: "the father of modern Biblical science" [EA:

vol. 25, page 24] as he carefully examined the origin of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures. His 1689 publication, *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament*, is available on-line via Google Books. (Note the Google copy is the original language edition - in Latin and French). Apparently, many of the "modern" techniques for Biblical studies began in the late 1600s as evidenced in Simon's work, though my French is not strong enough to properly illustrate particular points which Simon elucidates, interested readers can refer to his works.

Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791) expanded and improved upon Bengel's and Simon's classifications of manuscript families [EB: 1911, vol. 24, page 630]. His classification efforts can be seen in: *Apparatus ad liberalem N. T. interpretationem*, published in 1767. Basically Semler recognized three major families of New Testament Greek manuscripts: Alexandrian, Eastern (centered at Antioch and Constantinople), and Western. [Kenyon: 280f]. Semler also "showed that some late manuscripts of the NT contain readings which are closer to the original text than their counterparts in older texts" [Tov: 301f]. Tov is referring to Semler's publication, *Hermeneutische Vorbereitung* in 1765.

Semler's student, Johann Jacob Griesbach (1745-1812), further refined Semler's classifications. Griesbach also viewed the "east-ern" (Griesbach's Constantinopolitan or Byzantine) as a text "flowing from both", that is: a later text flowing from the supposed earlier text-types of the Alexandrian and Western manuscripts. Many critics, today, also view Griesbach's Greek New Testament(s) (ranging from 1775 to 1807) as the first to print a non-Textus Receptus text, indicative of the fact that he based his text upon manuscripts other than Stephen's or Elzevir's editions or their sources.

Karl Lachmann (1793-1851), in my mind, marks the end of the Enlightenment era's contribution to the science of New Testament textual criticism. He made a few refinements in methodology, but was famous for ignoring all of the Byzantine manuscripts in his printed Greek New Testament. Lachmann thus based his Greek New Testament *on only two text-types*. Other than this, his adherence to certain rigid principles (some of the basic canons of criticism, as discussed) greatly limited the value of his work.

Before moving to our next topic we ought to try to grasp the broadness or expanse of the formulated canons developed in the Age of Enlightenment. No better work demonstrates this than the work of a Scottish Professor of Divinity, named Gilbert Gerard. Though rarely mentioned in various histories of textual criticism, he organized and compiled an exhaustive volume of canons and rules of textual criticism. I will refer to his second edition of 1808: *Institutes of Biblical Criticism*. In this work he displays the canons, and lists types of problems encountered when one engages in textual criticism. He also shows numerous examples from the Biblical texts. I am not going to attempt to show all of his revealed canons, only to highlight a few. However, I know of no current procedures he does not document in 1808 as one being known and utilized then.

An example of one of his rules or observations which he shares:

21. Some MSS. show themselves to have been written by persons ignorant of the language ; and, on this very account, have great authority in favour of readings which could not have been introduced without knowledge of the language.

[Gerard: 6]

Gerard also lists his authorities for many of the rules he presents; the above observation stems from the writings of Michaelis. Below are more samples from the nearly 500 page volume:

27. If other considerations be equal, that reading is to be preferred, which is found in the most ancient MSS.

Pfaff, c. 12. can. 1. Walton, ib.

[Gerard: 7]

34. From MSS. we learn what abbreviations have been at any time used; and by knowing this, we are enabled to account for the introduction of many various readings.

Kennicott, Diss. Gen. § 25, 26. Wetst. c. 1. § 7. Michaelis, § 22. Isa. li. 4. Lowth in loco.

[Gerard: 9]

1228. Contradictions of facts related in Scripture, by historians who lived long after the date of them, ought to have no weight.

Justin's account of the Israelites being driven out of Egypt.

[Gerard:418]

1064. If one connexion seems to violate the syntax, and another to violate the sense almost equally, the preference should be determined by the general manner of the writer, or of the Scripture.

[Gerard: 372]

829. Of irregularities regarding the letters, many consist in the defect, the redundance, the transposition, or the change of some of them; and all such are false readings, owing to the blunders of transcribers, though consecrated by the Masora; and ought to be corrected.

Isa. xxx. 5. והנאיש, א is superfluous, and not pointed.—הביש in 8 MSS. and is regular; “they were ashamed.”

Lowth and Ken. in loc.

V. 28. להנפה גוים, the first word is very irregular; ך is wanting, and ה superfluous; it should be להניף הגוים, “to sift the nations.”

Houbig. and Lowth in loc.

Ezek. xiv. 1. ויבוא, irregular.—ויבאו in 2 MSS. which is right; others vary. ויבא in 28 MSS.; ויבואו in 2 MSS.

Ken. in loc. and Diss. Gen. p. 83. n.

[Gerard: 275]

813. One word may be, and has sometimes been, improperly divided into two.

Psalm. cvi. 7. “They provoked **עַל יַם** “at the sea;” this is superfluous. **עַל יָם**.

Ken. Diss. Gen. p. 13. n.

Mark vi. 25. “Give me (*ἐξ αὐτης*, literally, “out of her”) “the head,” &c. So most MSS.; *ἀφ’αυτης* to be supplied. (Beza); but this is an awkward phrase.—*ἐξ αὐτης* “immediately,” all Vers.

Mill. in loc.

814. Two words may be, and have been improperly united into one.

Psal. lxxiii. 4. “No bands (distresses) *into their death*,” **לְמוֹתָם**; this is obscure.—**לְמוֹתָם**, “happen to them; perfect and firm is their strength.” **Merrick, addenda.**

[Gerard: 271]

I trust these few samples shall convince the reader, that Gerard leaves no stone unturned. His canons involve, the Hebrew text and language, the Versions, Greek, grammar, and intentional changes; in all he lists 1,253 rules, canons and types of errors and things which need to be observed. All being canons used in—and refined in—the Age of Enlightenment.

MODERN CRITICISM'S STUNTED GROWTH

Is it no surprise that "modern" textual critics still rely upon the canons established and codified during the Age of Enlightenment; as indeed they are all reasonable and quite logical, and cover most situations which a critic may encounter. Perhaps one of the flaws, noticeable during their establishment and use, was a rigid or mechanical reliance upon the canons, treating them as absolute inviolable rules. In contrast, many "modern" critics state that the rules typically apply and that there are exceptions, thus some flexibility is afforded. However, in practice, as prior indicated, most editors and critics follow the canons without exception.

A few illustrative examples will suffice:

(1) In the popular textual commentary on the Greek New Testament, by Metzger, we may note the remark at Ephesians 1:15 that "the shorter reading appears to be the result of an accident in transcription, occasioned by homoeoarcton." [Metzger (2): 533]. They then argue against the shorter reading. Normally this commentary always follows the shorter reading, but when they do not, they use another canon to override that canon which declares the shorter reading to be the original one. For instance at I Corinthians 3:3, the shorter reading is preferred. The entire commentary bases its conclusions upon the aforementioned canons. In a few instances they will follow the lead set by the early churches - such as at Acts 18:26.

(2) In the United Bible Societies "Hebrew Old Testament Text Project", we also find a treasure chest of current practices of Biblical textual criticism. [OTP: ix -xv]. They list various criteria which they

use in determining the best reading in their minds. Basically they list 15 factors. Below is a sample concerning Leviticus 19:24, [OTP: 194]

19.24

צ יהי

he shall be

il sera

RSV : (all their fruit) shall be

NEB : (all its fruit) shall be

יהיו

they shall be

ils seront

J : (tous les fruits...) seront

L : sollen (alle ihre Früchte... geweiht) werden

Fac.: 4

Rem.: The verb in the singular agrees with the singular subject "פִּרְיוֹ, its fruit". But since this singular is collective, translators should express both subject and verb in the plural unless there is a collective expression meaning the totality of the fruit.

Rem.: Le verbe au singulier s'accorde au sujet singulier "פִּרְיוֹ, son fruit". Mais comme ce singulier est collectif, on doit traduire sujet et verbe au pluriel, là où n'existe pas d'expression collective pour "les fruits".

Transl.: (all its fruits) shall be (holy)

Trad.: (tous ses fruits) seront (consacrés)

They chose their reading per Hebrew grammar, which they indicate in their factor number 4, which states: [OTP: xi]

1. Simplification of the text (easier reading) = Factor 4. When a text was particularly difficult, there was a tendency for ancient scribes and translators to simplify the text by employing contextually more fitting lexical, grammatical, and stylistic forms (these modifications are often spoken of as "facilitating"). This is not the same as adjusting the form of the text to the translational requirements of the receptor language nor is it equivalent to introducing some preferred interpretation. It is only the amelioration of what seemed to be unnecessary difficulties. This tendency toward simplification means, however, that quite often the more difficult text may be regarded as the better, since one may readily explain why a complicated form is made simpler, but find it difficult to explain why a clear, simple text would have been purposely made more complex.

Again all of the factors are quite logical, and all of their decisions seem to be sustainable within the parameters of logic. Another example of current scholarship, comes from an on-line journal, [TC: Williams], concerning Romans 12:2,

12:2 P attests the addition of $\upsilon\rho\omega\nu$.

36. This note is illegitimate because the possessive occurs with the noun ‘mind’, which in this context is an inalienable or inherent possession. Syriac rules for possessives make the presence of a possessive here obligatory.

Dr. Williams, in the above example, is commenting upon the apparatus of the Nestle/Aland 27th edition in its citation of Syriac witnesses in Romans. "P" (Peshitta) translates (or, has) present this genitive pronoun ($\upsilon\rho\omega\nu$) as it is "obligatory" in Syriac; consequently Williams is citing basic Syriac grammar as his proof. Herein, Williams displays his alignment with Enlightenment-based canons, he does so throughout his essay.

This use of grammar, as such, is a prescriptive use, via which Williams betrays his inflexibility regarding grammar: there are translation errors in Syriac manuscripts as regards their renderings of Greek syntax. At times they will (clumsily) follow or allow Greek syntax to dominate. To suggest or intimate that the Syrian scribes always wrote using proper grammar, is quite prescriptive and very typical of Enlightenment-era practices.

89. Criticism presupposes the grammar of the particular languages; and is employed in applying the principles there laid down, to their proper use.

[Gerard: 24]

No further need exists to demonstrate the fact that most "modern" textual critics are using, and rely upon, canons developed or refined in the Age of Reason (the Age of Enlightenment). It also appears clear that the canons are indeed, rigidly followed. Validation of this adherence is obvious when one simply scans the apparatuses of most modern printed critical editions. Adherence to these canons is not the primary reason why modern textual criticism is stunted or retarded. The canons are a factor, yet, the actual retardation is largely the result of another factor, a factor tangential to the canons. The retardation results from the philosophy which engendered the canons: that is—their very existence, their nature, the purposes of their creations, and the weight they bear upon text critical issues.

Consider this variant reading in Matthew 1:25:

Textus Receptus:

ΚΑΙ ΟΥΚ ΕΓΙΝΩΣΚΕΝ ΑΥΤΗΝ ΕΩΣ ΟΥ ΕΤΕΚΕΝ ΤΟΝ ΥΙΟΝ ΑΥΤΗΣ ΤΟΝ
ΠΡΩΤΟΤΟΚΟΝ και εκαλεσεν το ονομα αυτου ιησουν

Nestle/Aland:

καὶ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ἕως οὗ ἔτεκεν υἱόν· καὶ
ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν

In the ⲚⲠ "the firstborn" (τον πρωτοτοκον) is absent in the Nestle/Aland text. A single canon or rule is applied by critics to justify its removal. It is stated that the words are added so as to agree with

the parallel text in Luke 2:7. Other than a few MSS (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and families 1 and 13 with a few MSS of the versions), the vast majority of MSS (thousands) read "the firstborn", manuscripts from every geographical region, from every era, from every version and from most church fathers. So the primary reason—as to why most modern editions and modern translations omit the words—is due to this "possible" inclusion stemming from a parallel passage. Most editions of the Latin Vulgate contain the text, though Jerome seems to have argued against it [Douay: 2]. Reasons against the words' originality, pale in comparison to evidence supporting their originality. The words should be included in all Bibles (and yes, one may add a footnote stating that the words are not found in a few manuscripts). But omitting the words entirely is excessively harsh, hyper-irrational.

The omission of these words reveals a certain mind-set. A mind-set which was formed by John Locke, formed by Tindal, by David Hume, by Lessing, by Eichhorn, and most notably by Voltaire (François Marie Arouet); it is a frame of mind which denies Divine Inspiration to the Biblical text, it is a frame of mind which cannot grasp how Luke could write his gospel completely independent of Matthew or Mark. It is that mental disposition which cannot explain how Moses could write of his own death, or how Moses could record the actual dialogue existing between God and Adam. It is the same mind-set which cannot grasp the truth of a Virgin birth, or of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Some of these gentlemen, mentioned in the above paragraph, all purveyors of Enlightenment-era philosophy, had the audacity to remove words from the Holy Writ; not only to remove words but to add words, to alter words and to generally treat the Scriptures as equivalent to any man-made text, stripping it of all of its supernatural

qualities and of its transcendent revelations. The depraved human mind quivered with ecstasy as it experimented upon the Holy Writ. The fact, that mere men could do so, gave them a prominence, a status: a status which elevated them to a level at least equal to the God of the Heavens. Man soared to new heights during the Age of Reason, fueled with boldness and daring, while all the while, their naïveness became all the more apparent. Apparent at least to those who trusted the Bible, who spoke daily with God, who experienced His care and blessings. A silent (or so they seemed) majority of on-lookers watched the philosophes mock their own Creator. It was this frame of mind which used rational canons of textual criticism to support blasphemous fantasies. To support rational attacks upon the revealed Word from God.

In my estimation, folks today would be very naïve to suppose that there is no connection between the philosophy of knowledge developed during the Age of Reason, and the impact of this new reasoning upon the minds of those who were moved to free mankind from the clutches of the so-called "obsolete" *Textus Receptus* text. Most of the editors of new Greek editions of the New Testament were men schooled in this Age of Enlightenment, they attended the universities and institutions which produced the thinkers of the age. They were obviously influenced, some became skeptics themselves, questioning the veracity of the Biblical accounts.

Richard Bentley (1662-1742) Master of Trinity College of Cambridge, seemed dismayed with the 30,000 textual variations presented in Fell's edition of the Greek New Testament. So he began a work to remove or to reduce this number. He proposed to produce a text which was extant circa A.D. 325. He was aware of the extravagant use made by "atheists" and others of these variants.

Below is a portion of one of his letters, dated 1720:

Dr Bentley to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

“MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,

“’TIS not only your Grace’s station and general character,
“but the particular knowledge I have of you, which encourages
“me to give you a long letter about those unfashionable topics,
“Religion and Learning. Your Grace knows, as well as any,
“what an alarm has been made of late years with the vast heap
“of Various Lections found in MSS. of the Greek Testament.
“The Papists have made a great use of them against the Pro-
“testants, and the Atheists against them both. This was one of
“Collins’s topics in his Discourse on Freethinking, which I took
“off in my short answer; and I have heard since from several
“hands, that that short view I gave of the causes and necessity
“and use of Various Lections, made several good men more easy
“in that matter than they were before. But since that time I
“have fallen into a course of studies that led me to peruse many
“of the oldest MSS. of the Greek Testament and of the Latin
“too of St. Jerom, of which there are several in England, a full
“thousand years old. The result of which has been, that I find
“I am able (what some thought impossible) to give an edition
“of the Greek Testament exactly as it was in the best exemplars
“at the time of the Council of Nice; so that there shall not be
“twenty words, nor even particles, difference; and this shall carry
“its own demonstration in every verse, which I affirm cannot be
“so done of any other ancient book, Greek or Latin; so that
“that book, which, by the present management, is thought the
“most uncertain, shall have a testimony of certainty above all
“other books whatever, and an end be put at once to all
“Various Lections now or hereafter.

[Bentley: xii]

Bentley never published his proposed edition. But it is clear that he thought that the text of Erasmus (and the 39) was inaccurate, and

therefore needed to be corrected and or replaced. He was convinced by the newly revealed variations which existed between the \aleph and the recent and freshly collated manuscripts (especially Codex Alexandrinus) that therein was proof that the \aleph was not accurate. Herein we note that he was placing his faith in archeology, in the new estimations formulated by paleography. He became a skeptic as concerns the text of Erasmus. He was led to believe that Erasmus relied upon inferior manuscripts *because they were not extremely ancient manuscripts*.

The same motivation which moved Bentley, so moved J. Bengel of Germany. J. S. Semler, however, was cut from a different cloth. A student of the rationalist S. J. Baumgarten [EB: 1911, vol. 24, page 630]. Semler, rejected the doctrine of Inspiration, and rejected the view that the Old and New Testaments were truthful and accurate. He despised the idea that the book of Revelation be included in the N.T. canon! He called into question many portions and books of Scripture. A true rationalist, he was often called "the father of German rationalism". [EB: 1911, vol. 24, page 630].

H. S. Reimarus, (1694-1768) a prominent German Deist, greatly promoted the view that the Holy Writ was unreliable. [Livingston: 30f]. He called into question the historical accuracy of both the New and Old Testaments, and set the foundation upon which F. C. Baur, Strauss, Lessing, R. Bultmann, Marcus Borg, Schweitzer, Bart Ehrman and Sponge were to base their attacks upon the integrity of Scripture.

The mind-set which sees the \aleph as unable to bear the scrutiny of reason, in the face of many supposedly true variations, is one of the enlightened skeptic. It is one wherein human reasoning is beguiled with tempting data which serves to distract, to confuse, to lead one

on a thousand different paths, always moving away from the center.

What has this accomplished? A neo-nihilism now pervades the attitude of many Bible scholars. Confidence seems diminished on a universal scale: God's Word is not accurate, it has been fabricated, it cannot be recovered, it is hopelessly lost in a mountain of confusing textual variations. What on earth could have prompted these exclamations from an Episcopalian Bishop:

The narratives in the Bible which under gird the superstructure of doctrine and dogma, have had their literal power cut to the bone by the advent of critical scholarship...the word *God* now rings with a hollow emptiness...Christianity is increasingly difficult for any of us to accept or believe. I would choose to loathe rather than to worship a deity who required the sacrifice of his son. But on many other levels as well, this entire theological system [i.e. evangelical Christianity], with these strange presuppositions, has completely unraveled in our postmodern world. It [i.e. the Atonement of Jesus Christ] now needs to be removed quite consciously from Christianity. [Spong: 45, 95]

Spong is a modern day spawn of Reimarus. Yet the skepticism has spread. Powered by the liberal media, liberal publishers and institutions of "higher learning". With this assault, universal as it is in the modern world, rarely do we find the view that we do indeed, possess all of God's Word in full and accurate translations. What has been accomplished in the world of textual criticism? Consider this:

If we count all of the words in the Greek text of Luke 1:1-3, (chosen randomly) we count a total of 34 words in the $\text{3}\mathfrak{R}$. When we count the words in the Greek text of Lachmann, we count 35. When we count the words in the 27th edition of Nestle/Aland (NA), we

count 34. As far as a word count is concerned, the NA text is closer to the TR than Lachmann. When we compare the actual words, we note two minor changes in the text of NA and the TR, see if you can find the differences:

the TR: Luke 1:1-3

Epeidhper polloi epexeirhsan ahatacasqai dihghsin perii twh
pepl hroforhmewn eh hmih pragmatwn, 2 kaqwv paredosan hmih oi ap'
arxhj autoptai kaii uphretai genomenoi tou= logou, 3 edocen kamoi
parhkol ouqhkoiti ahwqen pasin akribwv kaqechj soi grayai, kratiste
Qeofil e,

NA:

Epeidhper polloi epexeirhsan ahatacasqai dihghsin perii twh
pepl hroforhmewn eh hmih pragmatwn, 2 kaqwv paredosan hmih oi ap'
arxhj autoptai kaii uphretai genomenoi tou= logou, 3 edoce kamoi
parhkol ouqhkoiti ahwqen pasin akribwv kaqechj soi grayai, kratiste
Qeofil e,

Lachmann, read Epeidh/per (as two words), thus the difference in word count. *If* the above serves as an example, we can unequivocally state that; *the modern text of NA generally reproduces the text of the TR!* After centuries of emendation, the modern science of textual criticism has done little to move the actual text from its true moorings. For this I am grateful, yet the media and the critics would want us to believe that the current Greek editions are vastly superior to that of Erasmus and the editions of Robert Stephens. They usually

refer to passages which really confuse them (such as the long ending of Mark, or of the "Woman Taken in Adultery" in John, et al). No, textual criticism has not advanced our production of a "better" text. It has instead served other purposes. It has remained a platform upon which the rationalists continue to assault the Word of God, it has become a place, a haven, where theories and trifling amusements are shared by the lofty philosophes of the 21st century. How can textual critics account for the agreement of a parchment roll of Isaiah, written in circa 350 B.C. with the modern Masoretic text of Isaiah in the Hebrew? They would rather not discuss this impressive agreement, as it is counter to their theory that, over time, copyists increasingly alter the texts, which effect multiplies. Overall, our current NT texts (the Greek texts) agree quite well with that of Erasmus' third edition, you count the words and compare the texts. You should see *more* than a 90% agreement! Consider this rational observation: No growth equals retardation.

Conspicuously missing from much of the above, missing in the various editors' prolegomena, missing in the rules of reason, is simple God-given faith, faith in His precious, revealed written Word. In the Age of Enlightenment, simple faith was often disdained, it should not exist unless verified via experiment. Such thinking still contributes to the stunted growth of any science which claims to mold the Scriptures and refine them in the furnaces of human reason.

AN OPTIMISTIC FUTURE FOR TEXTUAL CRITICISM?

I am optimistic, I believe a **USEFUL** need exists for textual criticism of the Bible. When Jean Mabillon examined documents under

the lens of paleography, he did so so as to verify or validate the genuineness of the documents, to reveal those which were forgeries. A good and edifying use. However, today, when textual critics examine the manuscripts of the Bible, they do not do so so as to edify or to increase one's confidence in the Holy Writ. Instead of stressing the tremendous and miraculous agreements amongst thousands of Greek, Latin, Armenian, Coptic, Gothic, Ethiopic, Syriac, Georgian, and Old Church Slavonic manuscripts, an inordinate amount of space is given to the minor errors of transcription, or to the few intentional changes, or to the minor translational errors. By focusing on the statistically few errors, others/observers are led to believe that the minor errors are of great concern. When indeed, and truthfully, they are not. This tactic, magnifying the significance of the various errors, began in the Age of Reason, it became the battle cry for reform, a reason for Satan to attack the Scriptures. For certainly, it is Lucifer who asked and who *continues to ask*:

"Did God say...?"

Modern textual criticism can however, serve to examine the many manuscripts. To examine the beliefs of the scribes who may have tampered with them and why. Textual criticism can serve to clearly display all known variations, in an apparatus. They (critics) can offer suggestions and display the variants, but they should never be allowed to alter the printed text. Keep the variants in the apparatuses, or in the prolegomena, but not inserted into the Greek or Hebrew texts. Continue to print the venerable אר, (or the Masoretic) and use it as the primary text, as a collation base, but do not disturb it.

Such was the wisdom demonstrated by Bengel and Bentley; show the \aleph as text, yet keep the variations properly in the apparatus. The International Greek New Testament Project (IGNTP) did just this with their spectacular production of *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, of 1984. The IGNTP printed the text of the \aleph , and below it a fine set of variations was displayed, a credit to the diligence of many textual critics and collators. This text, and its publication, truly moved us out of the Age of the Enlightenment, *it gave each user liberty*; freedom to decide for themselves what they choose to accept, or reject from amongst the variations. Variations which are seen not only in the Greek witnesses, but per the versional and patristic ones as well. What a wonderful tool, and when the variants are examined under the eyes of the faithful, reasonable choices can be made, or not. If this freedom reflects reason, or enlightenment, then it can become the reason of the masses, *reason grounded upon faith*. This is an advance-ment, indeed!

We have also witnessed the advancement of techniques associated with textual criticism. Color photography, Multi-Spectral-Imaging, and digital imaging have greatly facilitated the sharing, on an international level, of the actual surviving manuscripts. Advances in the grouping of manuscript families have also occurred, the computer has improved statistical analyses and the communications between specialists. Other advances in paleography, linguistics, DNA analyses, and archaeological insights have all improved. Opinions do vary but in my estimation, very few truly textual advances have occurred since Wetstein's or Scholz's editions.

Perhaps, the most notable textual advancements would be the production of two Greek New Testaments: (1) *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, by Hodges and Farstad, in

1985: and (2) *The New Testament in the Original Greek: According to the Byzantine/Majority Textform*, by Robinson and Pierpont in 1991. The value of these two works was that they made clear the fact that the venerable \aleph did represent the majority of manuscripts which were preserved by the Byzantine scribes. It is true that the \aleph represents a slice of the Byzantine manuscript tradition, but it is equal to any other slice which can be produced. This proof gives increased assurance to the classical texts produced by Erasmus and Robert Stephens and slightly modified by the Elzevir's.

Today we need more men and women of faith to enter the field of textual criticism, and to carry on the responsibility of clarifying, preserving and validating God's written Word. We do not need men and women whose intent is to change the text, or to try to create some form of the text as it existed in the second century A.D..

The effort to reproduce the original text (word for word) of the New Testament is a vain endeavor, at least amongst groups. A mature, individual believer, operating under the guidance of the Holy Spirit can "recreate" the original text, but proving it to another individual can be challenging. In reality, there are only about a total of 500 variants of any doctrinal importance; this reflects a variation of only point 0028 percent or about a 1/4 of one percent!! (dividing the total number of words in the KJV New Testament [181,253] into 500). However, groups and committees probably cannot ever produce an original text: for one, without the originals, they can never be certain that they have thus recreated them (assuming that not all group members are Spirit-filled). Secondly, our oldest witnesses are all from Egypt, and they are very unreliable copies, which copies many neo-critics prefer (even those of the Enlightenment era!). Most Egyptian papyri reflect vastly altered or corrupted texts, only a few are

somewhat trustworthy (the Beatty papyri, and Bodmer materials); their trustworthiness has been verified by comparing them with later manuscripts. Instead of trying to create/exhibit some sort of a second century text, Greek New Testaments need to display the world recognized standard—a standard since the 800s, (some portions date back even to the 400s), the Byzantine text-type—represented by the classic \aleph . Then, to reflect both ancient and modern manuscript discoveries, provide a very full and accurate apparatus. This removes the changes supplied by scholars (some of whom were/are pagan), and it gives freedom of choice to all students, preachers, scholars, translators, pastors, and those who read Greek. This would be an advancement!

By maintaining as text the \aleph , students can focus upon the displayed variations in the apparatus. No need to worry about deviations from the known \aleph ; hence, understanding and genuine classical comparison can ensue. Working with knowns (the standardized classical \aleph text), facilitates comprehension, an obvious advantage. If the base text was not an established one such as the \aleph , then students would always have to readjust to whatever text may be printed. In the case of the Nestle/Aland editions, that text is one formed via a mechanical method; E. Nestle simply chose the reading which was supported by two out of three texts compared. The three texts Nestle used were themselves products of an eclectic process, one which also used the typical canons of textual criticism. After this eclectic process (by Tischendorf, Westcott/Hort and Weiss [or Weymouth]), the text was then, as stated, mechanically established by Nestle. During the 1950s onward the text was then altered by the readings which Kurt Aland added, often from Egyptian papyri. The result of all of this activity is the current NA text. A highly convoluted

fabrication! This current edition may yet experience more changes; such a fantastic text presents a rather poor standardized base for a critical edition, when the text itself is a critical catastrophe, a chaos of emendations. It seems to me, to be more reasonable, and much more efficient to use a world-recognized standard, such as the \aleph as the base text.

Objectors to my views of advancement and or retardation might claim that by returning to the \aleph , I am actually guilty of a retardation. Notice that "retardation" means "stunted" in that growth was arrested. Since the 1700s this is true of textual criticism, as we today rely upon the methods and canons of the 1700s as well as the mind-set of the scholars in the 1700s and 1800s. Returning to the \aleph is not a regression, but resurrecting the \aleph and properly using it is an advancement which many of those in the Age of Enlightenment failed to do. (Bentley, Bengel and Mill, et al, being the exceptions). Most scholars of the Age of Reason chose to leave behind the \aleph and to try to create a new text based upon human reason and manuscripts which they thought were somehow more accurate. (Though accuracy did not seem to be a criteria, it was the apparent age of the manuscripts which seemed to fool the scholars into thinking that the older MSS must equal a superior text). One could form an argument that they had no concept of, or way of determining how "accurate" a manuscript was, as none mentioned reliance upon the indwelling Holy Spirit. My suggested new resurrection and new use is not a retardation; it is going back to the pristine \aleph , but via a proper perspective, alloying it with the new manuscript discoveries and insights in a new and ever growing apparatus. Let the translators choose which variant they prefer, let faithful readers choose, the textual critics' job is to accurately present the data, **not** to remove the

readers' freedom, or to make decisions for each reader; that should not be their business! They should even reproduce odd morphological and orthographic variants seen in in the Textus Receptus, perhaps adding a footnote per each instance. (Their theories or researches belong in other works, in prolegomena or introductions, but not imposed upon the base text of the Greek New Testament publications).

Whatever one wishes to believe, it would seem that Divine Providence moved Erasmus to use the manuscripts which he did. Late as they were, nevertheless, they preserved for us today a very sound text. Perhaps not perfect, but very sound nonetheless. We would do well to maintain it, and to continue its heritage.

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