

Textus Receptus vs. The Modern Critical Text

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Erasmus of Rotterdam penned this phrase in 1515, “In both the domains of nature and faith, you will find the most excellent things are the deepest hidden”. When one digs deep into God’s holy word, without doubt that individual will unearth treasures beyond imagination. When the rules of exegesis are studied and followed, one will always be drawn closer to God. The same is true when one looks into the history of the most holy of all books; the Bible. As one filters through texts, manuscripts, and papyri, the conclusion is drawn that even in the midst of decay, degradation, and human error, God’s almighty hand is always at work, keeping His word pure.

How the Bible has come down to us is a story of adventure and devotion. It is a story of toil and faith by those who, sometimes at great cost, passed down from generation to generation the message of salvation. The Bible did not just happen nor has it been preserved through the years by mere chance. Living in a day when books are written and printed by the thousands, we are apt to overlook the fascinating drama that lies behind our Bible. (Lightfoot 11)

This paper intends to deal with just one episode of the exciting drama that lies behind the formation of our Bibles. The episode under consideration has many characters in supporting roles from 2nd century A.D all the way to the year 2007. Although the drama that is the formation of our Bibles has many characters texts and topics, there are two texts that always seem to find center stage. The texts which becomes stars of the show are the Textus Receptus / Received Text and the Modern Critical Text (characterized by the text of Nestle and Aland and the United Bible Societies). These two Greek texts are the base of most of our modern English Bibles. It is the goal of this paper to examine the history that lead up to these texts and then critically review

both of them with the goal in mind to determine which one should be preferred as the base of an English translation.

History of the Attempts to Recover the Original Text

Most of the New Testament books were written during the second half of the first century. These original autographs were written by men inspired by the Holy Ghost, and thus the documents that these men produced were pure and inerrant. These original documents were most likely written on papyrus and have been lost over the years. Nevertheless, many autographs of the New Testament were copied and circulated before they became illegible or lost. These copies were made as early as A.D. 95. If copying had not begun very soon after the autographs were written, there would be no Bible today. Papyrus survives for long periods of time only under exceptional conditions. Just as the autographs were written on papyrus rolls, the early copies were also probably written on papyrus rolls. Soon, however, papyrus codices were produced, with parchment and vellum being employed still later. (Geisler 445). For most of the first and second century, copies of copies were produced and circulated. This one of the many ways God worked providentially to bring the opportunity for salvation to the world. During this time of copying and circulation some variants had worked their way into the text. This would be assumed to be due to the fact that all of the copies were written by the hands of various scribes.

The first scribes to attempt to recover the original text or to endeavor to confirm that the text that they had was an accurate representation of the original were those in the great city Alexandria Egypt. Alexandria was founded in 332 B.C. by Alexander the Great. The city took over the trade of Tyre, which had been sacked by Alexander. Alexandria outgrew the great North African city of Carthage by 250 B.C., and became the largest city in the Mediterranean basin. It is referred to as being the greatest center of Hellenistic civilization and at the same time the

center of Jewish culture. Out of Alexandria came the Septuagint (LXX), a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. Alexandria had two well-known royal libraries, one in the temple of Zeus and the other in a museum. These collections were said to contain 700,000 rolls. A great university grew around the museum and attracted many scholars, including Aristarchus of Samothrace the collector of the Homeric texts; Euclid, the mathematician; and Herophilus, the anatomist, who founded a medical school there (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia).

These Alexandrian scribes were trained philologists, grammarians and textual critics. These men have the honor of being the creators of scholarly textual criticism. (For a more in depth discussion on Textual Criticism, see the chapter by Caleb O'Hara.) The Alexandrian scribes did an excellent job and "Their methods of became canonical in determining the forms of book production and literary analysis in Hellenistic centers. The earlier writings they had so carefully preserved and studied and were handed down to the Romans and thus ourselves" (Grant 259).

The Alexandrians were concerned about preserving the original text of many different literary works. Their methods of textual criticism were applied to Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey* because these ancient texts also existed in many manuscripts. The scribes would make text-critical decisions concerning the original wording and then produce an archetype, a manuscript produced officially, which would then be deposited in the library. Whenever necessary, further manuscripts were copied from and collated against this archetype (Birdsall 312).

The methods of textual criticism formed by the Alexandrians were applied to the New Testament text, and from the second to the fourth century, the Alexandrian scribes worked to purify the text from textual corruption. Gunther Zuntz writes concerning the efforts of the Alexandrian scribes:

The Alexandrian correctors strove, in ever repeated efforts, to keep the text current in their sphere free from the many faults that had infected it in the previous period which tended to crop up again in even after they had been obelized (i.e., marked as spurious). These labors must time and again have been checked by persecutions and the confiscation of Christian books, and counteracted by the continuing currency of manuscripts of the older type. None the less they resulted in the emergence of a type of text (as distinct from a definite edition) which served as a norm for the correctors in provincial Egyptian scriptoria. The final result was the survival of a text far superior to that of the second century, even though the revisers, being fallible humans, rejected some of its correct readings and introduced some faults of their own (271-72).

The text type produced by the Alexandrian scribes (the Alexandrian Type) was carried on in a few manuscripts such as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. Sadly, most of the Alexandrian-type manuscripts disappeared for centuries awaiting their discovery almost 1600 years later. At the same time the Alexandrian text type was being formed the Western text was fashioned. The Western text was the popular text during the second and third centuries. This would be the text that was not produced by any Alexandrian influences. Most scholars agree that this text is not as trustworthy as the Alexandrian text type. Phillip Wesley Comfort writes: "...the Alexandrian text is known as a polished text, the Western text sometimes preserved the original wording. When a variant reading has the support of both the Western and Alexandrian texts, it is very likely original; but when they are divided the Alexandrian witnesses more often preserve the original wording" (Comfort 23).

In the beginning of the fourth century we have a new text being introduced. This new text was created by Lucian of Antioch.

Lucian's text was a definite recession (i.e., a purposely created edition)—as opposed to the Alexandrian text type, which came about as the result of a process wherein the Alexandrian scribes, upon comparing many manuscripts attempted to preserve the best text (thereby serving more as textual critics than editors). Of course the Alexandrians did some editing (what we would call today copy editing) (Comfort 23-4).

It is concluded by many that Lucian text is “characterized by smoothness of language, which is achieved by the removal of barbarisms, obscurities, and awkward grammatical constructions, and by the conflation of variant readings” (ibid).

Lucian's text was most likely produced during the time of the Diocletian persecution. During this persecution many copies of the New Testament were confiscated and destroyed and Christians were forced to worship God in secret.

Diocletian's reign of terror subsided and Constantine came to power. Because of Constantine the threat of persecution died down due to his Edict of Milan (313). Since Christians were then free from persecution their influence was felt on the copying of the Bible manuscripts. “This period was marked by the introduction of parchment and vellum codices, and paper books toward the close of the Middle Ages. During the medieval period, the Greek uncials gave way to minuscules, and printing gave way to cursive writing” (Geisler 447).

During his reign Constantine penned a letter to Eusebias instructing him to make fifty copies of the Christian Scriptures. The letter read:

It happens through the favoring providence of God our Saviour, that great numbers have united themselves to the most holy church in the city which is called by my name. It seems, therefore, highly requisite, since that city is rapidly advancing in its prosperity in all other respects, that the number of churches should also be increased. Do you, therefore, receive with all readiness my determination on this behalf. I have thought it expedient to instruct your Prudence to order fifty copies of the sacred Scriptures, the provision and use of which you know to be most needful for the instruction of the Church, to be written on prepared parchment in a legible manner, and in a convenient and portable form, by professional transcribers thoroughly practiced in their art (Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 549).

These fifty copies produced by Eusebius ushered in a new time of standardization for the Greek Text. Many copyists worked on copying and circulating these texts commissioned by Constantine. Hence, in A.D 330, when Constantine moved the seat of the Roman Empire to Constantinople, and it being the dominant city in the Greek-speaking world, it was only reasonable that the text in that city would become the dominant text in the religious world (Geisler 447).

There is a slight controversy concerning what text type made up these fifty copies. It is asserted by some that the Vatican and Sinaitic codices are survivors of these copies. F.F Bruce does not agree he believes that there is no evidence to assume that the Vatican and Sinaitic codices were ever even circulated in that region. In fact Bruce goes on to say that “apart from some indications that the Vatican codex may have been produced in Egypt, they are our two chief witnesses to what is called the Alexandrian text type, and there is no indication that this

text type was current in Constantinople and its neighborhood in the period following 330” (Bruce 204). F.F Bruce came to the conclusion and so has this writer, that the fifty copies are most likely a representation of the Lucian Text. He writes:

If a guess may be hazarded, it is more likely that the fifty copies exhibited the text of recent editions of Lucian of Antioch (martyred in 312), the ancestor of the Byzantine or “majority” text. If they did, this would help to explain the popularity of this form of text in Constantinople and the whole area of Christendom under its influence from the late fourth century on, a popularity which led to its becoming in fact the majority text and to its being called by many students nowadays the Byzantine text (Ibid).

It is important for the reader to note that these fifty copies of Lucian’s text were copied and propagated throughout churches in the east. Henceforth, Lucian’s quickly became the standard text for the Eastern church and later became the basis of the Byzantine text. The Byzantine text is the ultimate authority for the Textus Receptus (Comfort 25).

From this point on, more and more Byzantine manuscripts were produced, and less Egyptians continued to read Greek, (except for those in St. Catherine’s Monastery, the site of the Codex Sinaiticus discovery). The rest of the Mediterranean world turned Latin. Only the Greek speaking churches in Greece and Byzantium continued to make copies of the Greek text. “For century after century – from the sixth to the fourteenth – the great majority of New Testament manuscripts were produced in Byzantium, all bearing the same kind of text” (Ibid).

The drama that is the formation of our English Bibles continues to unwind into the 15th century, where thanks to Johann Gutenberg the movable type printing press was invented. The

printing press ushered in a new age for textual criticism that began during the reformation era, because now a Greek New Testament could be printed, published, and easily circulated.

The man who holds the honor of editing the first Greek New Testament to actually be published is the Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. In the year 1516 in the Swiss city of Basle a well-known printer by the name of John Froben invited Erasmus to come and oversee what was to be a epoch making publication (Lightfoot 106). Erasmus was already at the time a recognized scholar, having not only learned Greek but also producing his own Latin translation. On October 2, 1515, printing was begun, and on March 1, 1516 it was completed. Even with the scholarship of Erasmus and his associates, this was considered to be a short amount of time to complete such a monumental work. “This edition contained numerous errors, including hundreds of typographical and mechanical errors” (Geisler 450). Many other theologians and scholars attest to the hurriedness in which Erasmus Greek New Testament was produced and the many errors that it contains. Bruce Metzger in his book *The Text of the New Testament* writes: “Since Erasmus could not find a manuscript which contained the entire Greek Testament, he utilized several for various parts of the New Testament. For most of the text he relied on two rather inferior manuscripts in the university library at Basle, one of the Gospels and one of the Acts and the Epistles, both dating from about the twelfth century” (99-100). What amount of textual criticism that was employed by Erasmus is unknown. He would usually compare his manuscripts with two or three others of the same books and he would then enter occasional corrections for the printer in the margins or between the lines of the Greek script. When it came to the book of Revelation Erasmus ran into more problems. Metzger writes:

For the book of Revelation he had but one manuscript, dating from the twelfth century, which he had borrowed from his friend Reuchlin. Unfortunately, this

manuscript lacked the final leaf, which had contained the last six verses of the book. For these verses, as well as numerous passages throughout the book where the Greek text of the Apocalypse and the adjoining Greek commentary with which the manuscript was supplied are so mixed up as to be almost indistinguishable, Erasmus depended upon the Latin Vulgate translating it into Greek. As would be expected from such a procedure, here and there in the Erasmus' self-made Greek text are readings which have never been found in any known Greek manuscript but which are still perpetuated today in printings of the so-called Textus Receptus of the Greek New Testaments (100).

At the time Erasmus' Greek New Testament was completed, he had employed no more than six manuscripts, and his only non-Byzantine manuscript of any antiquity was Codex 1. He does not seem to have leaned very heavily upon its text (Greenlee 63). Erasmus' text was part of the basis for what would be known as the Received Text or after 1633 the Textus Receptus.

The Greek New Testament produced by Erasmus saw several revisions due to the mixed reception that it received upon its release. It went through five revisions, and in 1535 its fifth and final revision was published. This revision "was still based on the Byzantine text-type, contained readings from very late manuscripts, and included the spurious reading of 1 John 5:7-8 as well as his translation back in to Greek from Latin of the verses in Revelation" (Geisler 451).

Following Erasmus was the Royal printer of Paris, Robert Estienne, who Latinized his name to Stephanus. In the year 1546-51, he brought out several editions of the Greek text, the most noteworthy of which are his third and fourth editions (Lightfoot 107). Estienne's first two editions of the Greek New Testament combined readings from the Complutensian Polyglot and Erasmus's editions. The third edition was the first work to contain a textual apparatus with

various readings from the margins of fourteen Greek manuscripts, as well as many readings from the Complutensian Polyglot and Codex Bezae (Wegner 269). Stephanus' Greek New Testament, formed from Erasmus's text and the Complutensian Polyglot by Theodore Beza later became the for the Textus Receptus.

Theodore Beza (mentioned in the preceding paragraph) was the successor to John Calvin. He published nine editions of his Greek New Testament. Beza used the text of Erasmus and Stephanus, and also included a few readings from the Codex Beza and the Codex Claromontanus. In 1611 the translators of the King James Version relied for the most part on Beza's and Erasmus's Greek Text. Later the Elzevirs, Bonaventure and his nephew Abraham, published a compact Greek New Testament (1624), which was largely that of Beza. In 1633 a second edition of the Elzevir text was published, this text was known as, and still is referred to today as the Textus Receptus or Received Text.

The Textus Receptus is named as such do to a phrase in the preface that reads "*Textum ergo habes, nunc ad omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus*" (Metzger 106). This publishers advertisement became the catchword (Textus Receptus, "Received Text"). This text was almost identical to that of Stephanus text, which is about the text of Erasmus – a text based on a small amount of late Greek manuscripts (Lightfoot 108).

Beginning in the 17th century many earlier manuscripts began to be discovered. These manuscripts were found to differ from some of the readings in the Textus Receptus. It is, however, important for one to note that all the variants between all of the significant Greek Texts do not affect any direct teaching of the New Testament. A German scholar names Johann Bengel (1687-1752) was so disturbed by the numerous variants in the Greek text, he devoted himself to studying the transmission of the Greek text. "He collected as many editions, manuscripts, and

early versions as were available and pored over them. His work showed that there were far fewer variants than originally thought, and no variant affected any article of evangelical doctrine” (Wegner 217). As mentioned during this period there were many significant manuscript discoveries. Around 1630, Codex Alexandrinus was brought to England. This was an early fifth-century manuscript containing the entire New Testament. About two hundred years later, a German scholar named Constantin von Tischendorf discovered Codex Sinaiticus in St. Catherine’s Monastery (located near Mt. Sinai). This manuscript is dated around 350-375, is one of the two oldest vellum manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. The other earliest Greek manuscript is the Codex Vaticanus, which is dated slightly earlier (350) than Sinaiticus. These manuscripts are what most conclude are the most accurate and reliable witnesses to the original text (Comfort 25-6).

After more manuscripts were discovered and made public, a few scholars labored to compile a Greek text that more closely represented the original text than the Textus Receptus did. One of the scholars to embark upon this project was John Mill. In 1707 John Mill of Oxford produced a critical apparatus for the Textus Receptus. In his textual apparatus he outlined several principles of textual criticism that would be later employed by textual critics.

Following the work of John Mill, more progress continued to be made in the realm of textual criticism. Men such as Richard Bentley (1662-1742), Johann Jakob Wettstein (1693-1754), Johann Jakob Greidbach (1745-1812), and Christian Fredrich Mattaei (1744-1811), all made huge strides and formulated great principles that would be employed by many in the future. Even with all of the improvements being made concerning textual criticism the first complete break with the Textus Receptus did not occur until 1831, with the text produced by the classical philologist Karl Lachmann.

Karl Lachmann (1793-1851) published the first Greek New Testament edition to rely completely upon textual criticism and variant evaluation, instead of an existing text. Wegner writes concerning Karl Lachmann: “He was the first to publish a Greek New Testament based entirely upon the textual critical principles, abandoning the *Textus Receptus*, or in his own words: ‘Down with the late text of the Textus Receptus, and back to the text of the early fourth century church!’” (218-9).

Although Karl Lachmann made great accomplishments, his editions of the Greek New Testament did not fulfill the hope of the suppression of the Textus Receptus. The task of replacing the Textus Receptus was first completed by a German Protestant theologian and textual scholar, Constantin von Tischendorf (1815-1874). Tischendorf spent a large amount of time preparing as many manuscripts and fragments as possible for publication. It has been said about Tischendorf that in his lifetime, “he discovered and published more manuscripts and fragments of the New Testament than did any other scholar. Tischendorf examined manuscripts, versions, and writings of the church fathers available in his day; even though these sources were a fraction of what are available today, his comprehensive and accurate work paved the way for those to follow” (ibid).

The work of Tischendorf on the whole paved the way for two British scholars by the name of Brook A. Westcott and Fenton J. A. Hort. Westcott and Hort worked together for 28 years to produce a volume titled *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, this was completed in 1881. “Along with this publication, they published in 1882 their theory (which was chiefly Hort’s) that Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus (along with a few other early manuscripts) represented a text that most closely replicated the original writing” (Comfort 27-8). This perceived text, Westcott and Hort called the Neutral Text. “According to their studies, the Neutral

text described certain manuscripts that had the least amount of textual corruption. It is this text that Westcott and Hort relied upon in compiling their edition” (Ibid).

Westcott and Hort’s text was the precursor to what would later be referred to as the Modern Critical Text. In the same way as Erasmus’ paved the way for the Textus Receptus, Westcott and Hort paved the path for the Nestle and Aland and the United Bible Societies modern critical Greek text. Westcott and Hort “broke new ground in the study of the Greek New Testament; while their classifications have been corrected and expanded, they continue in use” (Wegner 220).

With the Greek Text of Westcott and Hort another chapter in the drama of restoring the New Testament text comes to a close. The 1800’s were a magnificent century for sound textual criticism. Westcott and Hort were a high-point of an era which ushered in the twentieth century, which would be another great century for manuscript discovery. Phillip Comfort writes:

The nineteenth century was a fruitful era for the recovery of the Greek New Testament; the twentieth century, no less so. Those living in the twentieth century have witnessed the discovery of the Oxyrhynchus papyri, the Chester Beatty papyri, and the Bodmer papyri. To date, there are nearly one hundred papyri containing portions of the New Testament – several of which date from the late first century to the early fourth century. These significant discoveries, providing scholars with many ancient manuscripts, have greatly enhanced the effort to recover the original wording of the New Testament (Comfort 28).

After Westcott and Hort many other editions of the Greek text appeared on the scene. It was, however, Eberhard Nestle’s Greek text, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, published in 1898 that became the final blow to the popularity of the Textus Receptus. Eberhard Nestle used the

best editions of the Greek New Testament produced in the nineteenth century to compile a text that represented the majority consensus along with the finest methods of textual criticism. This text has seen many revisions and is now under the care of Kurt Aland.

The Nestle Aland text has seen several revisions since its inception, the last of which being the 27th edition released in 1993. The Nestle Aland text is also the same text that is found in the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament (UBS). The only differences between these two are the textual apparatuses. Wegner writes:

... the text for both is the same even though the textual apparatuses differ as follows: the textual notes of the Nestle-Aland text list more of the textual history, whereas the former lists only those that substantially affect the reading of the text; and the Greek New Testament (UBS 4th ed.) gives graded evaluations for each textual note so that the reader can determine how certain a variant reading is, whereas the Nestle-Aland text does not. (Wegner 222).

The twenty-seventh edition of the Nestle-Aland and the fourth edition of the UBS text (Both are referred to as the modern critical text) are regarded by many as representing the latest and best in textual scholarship. But to many, the questions still remains; what text better represents the original, the Textus Receptus or the Modern Critical Text?

Textual Families

Westcott and Hort were the first to classify different New Testament texts into textual families. Their classifications were later expanded and modified by modern textual critics. The idea of a textual family is very simple: manuscripts that are copied from one another bear strong similarities to each other and are thus classified as a textual family (ibid). Textual families are named for the area where they developed. (See Wegner 22 for map of locations).

Most scholars have categorized manuscripts into four main families. These families are then evaluated to see which are more accurate. As one can assume once an error has been made, it usually stays within that family. Different Greek New Testaments such as the Modern Critical Text and the Textus Receptus favor different textual families. The four main textual families in order of believed accuracy are as follows.

1. Alexandrian

2. Caesarean

3. Western

4. Byzantine

Occasionally errors in certain manuscripts may be corrected through comparison with other texts outside of its textual family. It is however more likely that the new errors will continue to be incorporated into later manuscripts with each time that it is copied. This paper will now briefly examine each of the four main textual families.

Alexandrian

This textual family arose in Egypt and is generally conceded to be the most accurate of them all. Westcott and Hort, who named this the Neutral Text, thought that Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus had preserved a pure form of the Alexandrian type of text. It is now evident that these manuscripts had been corrected by later scribes, but they are the most ancient uncials and preserve the Alexandrian text at an early stage. Some of the important papyrus manuscripts also represent this family. Although Westcott and Hort classified the Neutral Text (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) as a different text type, it is classified by most scholars as an Alexandrian text because of a believed common ancestor of the two.

Caesarean

This family of texts was widely used in Caesarea from which it derives its name. It seems to have arisen out of the Alexandrian text, but was also mixed with the Western text. To many, however, its value is limited. Metzger suggests that it is necessary to distinguish between two stages in its development, the pre-Caesarean and the Caesarean (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* 215). Some of its more prominent representatives are W (Washington Codex, fifth century), P45, and two groups of minuscules and lectionaries.

Western

This family of texts was closely related to the church in the west, particularly in North Africa. Although it can probably be traced to the second century, its value has been disputed. It was used by the early church fathers. Its age would seem to suggest great importance, but there are clear indications that it was not carefully preserved. It is best represented by the Old Latin translations, by the Syriac versions, and the church fathers. Its most famous representative is manuscript D (Codex Bezae) for the book of Acts.

Byzantine

This family has been designated by many names. It is called Byzantine because it was adopted in Constantinople and used as the common text in the Byzantine world. It was produced in Antioch, Syria, under the direction of Lucian near the beginning of the fourth century and has been called the Syrian or Antiochene text. It was used almost universally after the eighth century. Erasmus, who created the first printed Greek text used this type of text, as did those who developed the Textus Receptus and the translators of the King James Version of the Bible. It was produced by combining earlier texts and has less value than the Alexandrian text. A (Codex Alexandrinus, fifth century) and C (Codex Ephraemi, fifth century) are the oldest representatives of the Byzantine family. A great majority of late uncials and minuscules belong to this group.

After observing these different textual families one can easily deduce what family they would want their Greek text based on. One would much rather have their Greek New Testament formed from an Alexandrian Text which is based upon the oldest manuscripts as opposed to the Byzantine Family which arose from the Lucian Recession.

The Present Situation

As stated earlier, presently there are two Greek Texts that carry a serious scholarly following, these being the Nestle-Aland and the Textus Receptus. In the proceeding paragraphs arguments in favor and against both of these texts will be presented before concluding which text is to be preferred.

Arguments Presented in Favor of the Textus Receptus

1. The acceptance of the church for the last 1500 years. God would have not allowed the only available text to truth seekers to be corrupted.
2. It is unscholarly that the testimony of hundreds of later manuscripts, and witnesses should be set aside in favor of a very few supposedly earlier witnesses.
3. Many take the position that the Textus Receptus is based on older and superior manuscripts. (This author cannot find any real evidence for this).

Arguments Presented Against the Textus Receptus

1. It does not come from the earliest (most accurate) manuscripts being based upon the Byzantine Text.
2. There are several readings that have no textual evidence in their favor (ie. 1 John 5:7-8)
3. It was hastily formed and not critically reviewed.

Arguments Presented For the Critical Text

1. From better / older manuscripts. (Alexandrian Type)
2. The procedure used in the formation of the text had precise rules that were consistently followed.
3. Because of advances in archeology, ancient manuscripts were more readily available for comparison.

Arguments Presented Against the Critical Text

1. Does not come with the testimony of time.
2. Basis its text on a few early manuscripts as opposed to several late manuscripts that are in agreement with each other.
3. The scholars that form the critical text often practice higher criticism and such their text cannot be trusted. (ie. priority of the Gospel according to Mark).

When comparing these two different Greek Texts it benefits the student to know the criteria employed by the creators of these texts when dealing with variant readings. We do not have a list of what criteria was used in the formation of the Textus Receptus, but we do, however, have the rules employed by Aland in the formation of his text. It behooves one to know these rules before choosing one text over another.

Twelve Basic Rules of Aland/Aland

1. Only one reading can be original, however many variant readings there may be.
2. Only the readings which best satisfies the requirements of both external and internal criteria can be original.
3. Criticism of the text must always begin from the evidence of the manuscript tradition and only afterward turn to a consideration of internal criteria.

4. Internal criteria (the context of the passage, its style and vocabulary, the theological environment of the author, etc.) can never be the sole basis for a critical decision, especially when they stand in opposition to the external evidence.
5. The primary authority for a critical textual decision lies with the Greek manuscript tradition, with the version and Fathers serving no more than a supplementary and corroborative function, particularly in passages where their underlying Greek text cannot be reconstructed with absolute certainty.
6. Furthermore, manuscripts should be weighed, not counted, and the peculiar traits of each manuscript should be duly considered. However important the early papyri, or a particular uncial, or a minuscule may be, there is no single manuscript or group or manuscripts that can be followed mechanically, even though certain combinations of witnesses may deserve a greater degree of confidence than others. Rather, decisions in textual criticism must be worked out afresh, passage by passage (the local principle).
7. The principle that the original reading may be found in any single manuscript or version when it stands alone or nearly alone is only a theoretical possibility. Any form of eclecticism which accepts this principle will hardly succeed in establishing the original text of the New Testament; it will only confirm the view of the text which it presupposes.
8. The reconstruction of a stemma of readings for each variant (the genealogical principle) is an extremely important device, because the reading which can most easily explain the derivation of the other forms is itself most likely the original.
9. Variants must never be treated in isolation, but always considered in the context of the tradition. Otherwise there is too great a danger of reconstructing a "test tube text" which never existed at any time or place.

10. There is truth in the maxim: *lectio difficilior lectio potior* ("the more difficult reading is the more probable reading"). But this principle must not be taken too mechanically, with the most difficult reading (*lectio difficilima*) adopted as original simply because of its degree of difficulty.
11. The venerable maxim *lectio brevior lectio potior* ("the shorter reading is the more probable reading") is certainly right in many instances. But here again the principle cannot be applied mechanically.
12. A constantly maintained familiarity with New Testament manuscripts themselves is the best training for textual criticism. In textual criticism the pure theoretician has often done more harm than good. (Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 275-6)

Relation of Greek Texts to English Translations

Controversy arises when discussing these two Greek Texts, when one finds out what text their English Translation is based upon. The question arises "if one text is better than the other does that mean that if my translation is not based upon the best Greek Text, that my translation is not the best?"

Most of our modern translations are based upon the Nestle-Aland text. Some of these translations include the NASB, NRSV, NLT, and the NIV. While the KJV and the NKJV are still based upon the Textus Receptus. It is important for one to note that a inferior translation can arise from a superior text, this author believes this to be the case with the New Living Translation (NLT) and others.

Which should I choose?

This question can only be answered by an individual who has weighed all the evidence and without bias or personal opinion accepts the facts for what they are. After reviewing all the evidence it appears that one should choose the Modern Critical Text because it is based upon older readings, it has employed recent archeological discoveries, and the scholars used the most accurate forms of textual criticism.

It has been mentioned previously and it will be mentioned again, that the differences between these two texts are not significant and both texts can lead one to heaven. There are however those who hold to the Textus Receptus as being a text chosen by God and thus to use any other text would be blasphemy. Concerning this D.A Carson concludes that tying the adoption of the Textus Receptus to verbal inspiration is logically and theologically fallacious. Arguments attempting to draw textual conclusions from a prejudicial selection of not immediately relevant data, or from a slanted use of terms, or by slurring appeal to guilt by association, or by guilt by association, or by repeated appeal to false evidence, are not only misleading but ought to be categorically rejected (Carson, 43-78, Geisler 463-4).

Summary and Conclusion

As previously quoted, Neil Lightfoot wrote

How the Bible has come down to us is a story of adventure and devotion. It is a story of toil and faith by those who, sometimes at great cost, passed down from generation to the message of salvation. The Bible did not just happen nor has it been preserved through the years by mere chance. Living in a day when books are written and printed by the thousands, we are apt to overlook the fascinating drama that lies behind our Bible. (Lightfoot 11).

The journey from manuscript to text, and text to translation, is one that becomes all the more exciting every time it is studied. From the first printed Greek New Testament by Erasmus, to the Textual Criticism employed by Westcott and Hort, all the way to the accuracy of the United Bible Societies 4TH edition Greek Text, it truly is an exciting drama.

This author does not want to leave the reader in anyway doubting the accuracy of whatever Greek text he or she uses, whether it be the Nestle-Aland or the Textus Receptus. Geisler and Nix write “In the final analysis, there is no substantial difference between their texts. Their differences are mainly technical and methodological, not doctrinal, for the textual variants are doctrinally inconsequential. ... Thus, for all practical purposes, both texts convey the *content* of the autographs, even though they are separately garnished with their own minor scribal and technical differences” (Geisler 464).

Does what text my translation is based upon matter? Most assuredly it does! As people who hold to the plenary verbal (word for word) inspiration of scripture, we should desire a text that most accurately represents the inspired original autographs. Does it really matter concerning our salvation what text our translation is based upon? No it does not! Are the variations between the two texts something that should trouble me? No they are not! J.W McGarvey wrote:

In regard to the great bulk of the words of the New Testament, there is no variation, and no other ground of doubt. He estimates the number of words admitted on all hands to be above doubt, at not less than seven-eighths of the whole. When, of the remaining one-eighth, we leave out mere differences of spelling, the number still left in doubt is about one-sixtieth of those which in any sense can be called substantial variations, their number he says, can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text. That is, only about one thousandth

part of the New Testament is so variously expressed in the various copies, as to make any substantial difference of meaning (McGarvey 13).

God has preserved His word through different manuscripts, texts, and translations for about 2000 years. He preserved it so that we might learn it, teach it, and apply it to our lives. The fact that even through failed attempts to destroy it and the possibility of great human error, knowing that the Bible has remained pure should motivate all to share it with others. God's word has been preserved for us, whether in the form of the Textus Receptus or the Modern Critical Text, it is up to use to take God's enduring word into all the world so that all may obey.

...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, But the Word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word which was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:23-25 NASB)

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