

Where Are The Original Writings of The Apostles?

The Ministry of the Written Word in the Early Church

What Are The Oldest and Best Manuscripts?

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Preface

I am not in the least bit qualified to weigh in on this subject. However, I have gathered the comments of others far more qualified, the testimony of Scripture, and the most pertinent historian of the early Church (after Luke) to give an accurate account. My goal is to show a true picture of what actually happened – the when, where, how, and why - after which I pray the truth, to the glory of God, will be revealed.

Mike Burris, 4/2022

Introduction

If the Gospel was to be preached in all the world (Mark 13:10, 16:15), and if God's plan of salvation is hinged on the receiving and obeying of His Word (John 17:6, 14, 17, 20; 12:48; 14:23,24) so much so that Jesus said that His Words bring eternal life (John 3:34; 6:63; 6:68), and if they abide in us He abides in us as well (John 15:4,7; 1John 2:24), then where are the original writings of the apostles? Shouldn't the real words of Jesus be easy to find?

If the earth was to be filled with the knowledge of God (Isaiah 11:9), and the New Covenant to flow like the river from Ezekiel's temple (Ezekiel 47:1-12) then where are the words of God?

Where are the Original Writings of the Apostles?

When we look into the early Church's publication of God's Word, we see massive streams. That is, streams in which God's words were copied massively with the strength, quality and care reflecting the glory of God and the true work of the Holy Spirit.

3 Marks

The work of the Holy Spirit in the publication of God's Word has distinctive marks, and for convenience I will list three:

1. The quality of the work,
2. The accuracy of the work, and

3. The volume of the work.

These three marks will appear as we look into the streams of God's Word.

I. The Historical Record

The disciples were told to go to all nations and make disciples (Matt.28:19), but they had to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of the Word began, and in Acts 6:2-4, we see that the apostles had to appoint deacons so that they could devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.

The Move from Jerusalem

Eusebius, the early Church historian, records that in AD 68, the Church in Jerusalem received a word from the Lord telling them to leave Jerusalem and move to Syria (this was to avoid the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD

(Luke 21:20), and when they moved, they took their manuscripts with them.

What Manuscripts Did They Have?

Eusebius continues,

“We have thus set forth in these pages what has come to our knowledge concerning the apostles themselves and the apostolic age, and concerning the sacred writings which they have left us, as well as concerning those which are disputed, but nevertheless have been publicly used by many in a great number of churches, and moreover, concerning those that are altogether rejected and are out of harmony with apostolic orthodoxy.”

Eusebius. *The History of the Church* (The Church History of Eusebius) (pp. 134-135). Neeland Media LLC. Kindle Edition.

The Church on Fire in Syria

After the Church moved to Syria, they aggressively evangelized the country! The ministry of the Word greatly expanded, and so much so that at least seven Churches (listed in the book of Revelation) were established in the lifetime of the apostle John.

The Language of the Land

The language of the land was Aramaic (the same as Syriac), and according to Eusebius, Matthew was said to have first published his gospel in the Aramaic/Syriac language.

Bruce Metzger, in his book, “The Canon of the New Testament”, refers to Theodor Zahn:

“The gospel is older than the N.T. Between the time when Jesus proclaimed the coming of the rule of God in His kingdom and the emergence from His Church of the earliest document which had come down to us, possible some two decades elapsed; and some seventy years passed before the appearance of the last

of the writings found in the N.T. collection. Even if the investigation of this oldest Christian literature should result in showing that no single part of it originated on the soil of Palestine, or within the Jewish Christianity of the first generation, we should still be unable, without some knowledge of the language in which Jesus taught, and in which His disciples preached the gospel to the Jews in Palestine, to form a correct concept of the beginnings of Christian literature. For, quite independent of the results of all literary criticism, and especially of the answer to the question whether the N.T. writings were composed, as tradition says they were, almost without exception by native Jews, and to no small extent by Palestinian Jews, the fact remains, that the Christian preaching came from Palestine, and that Jews who had no idea of giving up their nationality carried it beyond the limits of their land and nations. This statement, in which Paul (Rom. 15:27), Luke (*Acts 11:19), and Tacitus (Ann 15.44) agree, does not require further proof. ”

Theodor Zahn, Intro to the N.T. 2

F.H.A. Scrivener says this:

“The Aramaean or Syriac, employed to this day in the public service of several Eastern Churches, is a branch of the great Semitic family of languages, and as early as Jacob's age was distinct from the Hebrew: Laban the Syrian called the stony heap of witness "Jegar-sahadutha," but Jacob called it "Galled" (Gen. xxxi. 47). As we now find it in books, it was spoken 'in the north of Syria and in Upper Mesopotamia, about Odessa, the native country of the patriarch Abraham. It is, compared with the Hebrew, which ceased to be vernacular six centuries before Christ, at the time of the Captivity to Babylon, a copious, flexible, and elegant language. It is so near akin to the Chaldea as spoken in Babylon, and brought back by the Jews into Palestine, that the latter was popularly known by its name (2 Kings xviii. 26; Isaiah. xxxvi. 11; Dan. ii. 4). Hence the Syriac of literature, though long since passed away from common use, very nearly represents the dialect spoken by our Lord during his earthly ministry, and by those who then lived in the Holy Land; and was

on that account regarded with the deeper interest by Albert Chancellor to the Emperor Ferdinand I., and by its other first students in modern times. The oldest Syriac version, distinguished from those that followed it by the name of the "Pesto" or "Simple," comprised both the Old and New Testaments, except the second Epistle of S. Peter, the second and third of S. John and the Apocalypse, and seems to have been executed (at least in some portions) as early as the end of the first or the beginning of the second century, from manuscripts which have of course long ago perished: it is cited under the familiar appellation of "the Syrian" by Melton about A.D. 170.

Christianity, as we know, spread early from Antioch, the Greek capital (Acts xi. 19—27; xiii. 1, into the native interior of Syria, where the Apostle Thaddeus is alleged to have preached the Gospel to Acarus, to parch of Odessa. The Pesto would be readily conceded to be by far the chief of all versions of Scripture, but for certain appearances of revision undergone by its text in ancient times, which slightly impair its critical value; although we have copies of it which bear date in the sixth century, and, even as it

stands, in weight and authority it is exceeded by none, while for perspicuity of style, for ease and freedom combined with precision and correctness—but these qualities make little for our immediate purpose—it is quite without a rival. The first printed edition of the New Testament, out of many that succeeded, was put forth at Vienna in 1555 by at the expense of his Imperial master; the Old Testament was first published in 1645' by the Maronite Gabriel in the magnificent Paris Polyglot.”

Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener. *Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament and the Ancient Manuscripts which Contain it: Chiefly Addressed to Those who Do Not Read Greek* (Kindle Locations 1109-1129). Deighton, Bell. Kindle Edition.

2. The First Great Publication of the Early Church

**The first great publication
containing the original writings of the
apostles was a book called,
“The Pesto,” or, “The Peshitta”**

(The name, “Peshitta”, is from the Aramaic word, “*pšittā*”, and is from the verb “*pšaṭ*”, meaning ‘to stretch out’ or ‘to extend’)

The Peshitta contained the Old and the New Testament, except for the books 2nd and 3rd John, 2nd Peter, Jude, and Revelation. These books were added later but were missing in the initial Peshitta because the canon was not yet established.

(Note, the Latin, “**Muratorian Fragment**”, contains a discussion about what books should be canonized, and it is dated around 170 AD)

Around 1000 copies of the Peshitta exist today, which represent many more thousands that were painstakingly copied by primitive methods. This shows the resolve of the early Church in the pooling of their resources to produce what they knew to be the true gospel.

The Massive Publication of the Peshitta

The massive publication of the Peshitta was for

- 1. Evangelism.**
- 2. Edification, and**
- 3. The Refutation of Heresy.**

On the refuting of heresy, John Burgon writes,

“Gaius, an orthodox Father who wrote near the end of the second century, named four heretics who not only altered the text but had disciples multiply copies of their efforts. Of special interest here is his charge that they could not deny their guilt because they could not produce the originals from which they made their copies.³ This would be a hollow accusation from Gaius if the originals could not be accessed.”

Cf. Burgeon, *The Revision Revised*, p. 323.

By the end of the second century,

1. The original writings of the apostles were available, and
2. As stated, the multiple copies were used to refute heresy.

The early Church created a “*mainstream*” publication to weed out the false and affirm the true teachings of the apostles (Note the practice of the Church in Acts 16:4ff).

In the writings of Irenaeus we find this note:

"I adjure you who may copy this book, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by his glorious advent when he comes to judge the living and the dead, to compare what you shall write, and correct it carefully by this manuscript, and also to write this adjuration, and place it in the copy." 3. These things may be profitably read in his work, and related by us, that we may have those ancient and truly holy men as the best example of painstaking carefulness."

Eusebius. The History of the Church (p. 112).

Also from Eusebius,

“But that those who use the arts of unbelievers for their heretical opinions and adulterate the simple faith of the Divine Scriptures by the craft of the godless, are far from the faith, what need is there to say? Therefore they have laid their hands boldly upon the Divine Scriptures, alleging that they have corrected them. 16. That I am not speaking falsely of them in this matter, whoever wishes may learn. For if any one will collect their respective copies, and compare them one with another, he will find that they differ greatly.”

Eusebius. The History of the Church (p. 118)

Again, the massive publishing of the original writings of the apostles was used to refute heresies, and these original writings were published by the early Church in The Peshitta.

The Dating of the Peshitta

This from the Peshitta symposium,

“The most thorough and innovative discussion of the origin of the Peshitta is that of the late Michael Weitzman. In his *Introduction* to this Syriac version, he first explains that the categories of ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’ as they were used in the debate do not take account of the diversity within both religions which research of the last decades has revealed (see Judaism, Syriac contacts with). It would be better, he argues, first to establish the ‘theological profile’ of the translation. Only then can we compare the version with what we know of the Jewish and Christian communities of the time. Weitzman’s own position is that the Peshitta was translated in [Edessa](#) from 150 onwards by a non-rabbinic Jewish group that clearly identified themselves with Judaism, but neglected some elements of ritual in favour of a more personal belief, in which prayer played an important role. They emphasized faith and hope rather than observance. As they shared these values with

Christians, they might have adopted Christianity. This would then explain how a Jewish translation came to be transmitted by the Eastern Churches, and why it was not received among rabbinic Jews. The evidence for the presence of Jews in Edessa may lead to a modification (Romeny 2005). As far as we can tell on the basis of the funerary inscriptions found close to Edessa, it appears that Edessan Jews did use more or less the same dialect of Aramaic, but did not use the same script as the local pagans. They chose the square Jewish Aramaic script that was also used for Hebrew. On the other hand, Classical Syriac as we know it from the earliest Christian sources suggests that Edessan Christians adopted the Old Syriac dialect and script that were used by the pagans, rather than the Jewish script. This confronts us with the paradox of a translation that supposes a knowledge of Hebrew found only among very learned Jews but that was not written in the Jewish script. Was the Peshitta a gentile project, after all, or should we assume that, perhaps together with an update of the language, the translation was recast in Syriac script? The alternative is that the translators

were Jewish Christians (in the sense of: Jews who had come to believe that Jesus Christ brought salvation) from the start. It is certain that either some of the Jews of Edessa or one of its Christian groups felt the need for a version in the dialect of the town. What Weitzman calls the ‘theological profile’ of the translators is compatible with either possibility, as long as we do not think in terms of the ideal types of rabbinic Judaism and later Christianity. The use of the Syriac script, however, points solely in the direction of Christians. Whatever the case may be, it should be granted that the actual translation work was done by Jews, be they converted to Christianity before (Romeny) or after (Weitzman) the production of the Peshitta: we cannot assume that pagans who converted to Christianity commanded sufficient knowledge of Hebrew. Weitzman connects the Peshitta with the city of Edessa. The Peshitta introduces references to Mabbug, [Harran](#), and [Nisibis](#) as additions to the text or substitutions for other names. These names suggest an origin in Osrhoene, the province around Edessa. The dialect and script of the Peshitta also accord well with that of the

inscriptions found in this province. Weitzman's main argument for dating the OT Peshitta is formed by quotations of the Peshitta in other texts. On the basis of such quotations, a latest possible date can be established. If the Peshitta was indeed the basis for the OT quotations in the [Diatessaron](#), at least the books actually cited, that is, the Pentateuch, the Latter Prophets, and the Psalms, already existed and had attained some status by around 170. On the other hand, the fact that [Bardaisan](#), born in 154, quotes Gen. 9:6 in a form that stands closer to the Jewish Targum Onqelos could still indicate some reserve towards the Peshitta. This is a warning against adopting a much earlier date, and makes Weitzman propose the date of ca. 150...Burkitt (1904) attributed the Peshitta to [Rabbula](#), the bp. of Edessa (411–35) who had vigorously suppressed the use of the Diatessaron in the Syriac Church. While Rabbula may have enforced the dissemination of the Peshitta version, the theory that he was responsible for its creation was convincingly challenged by Vööbus (1951) who illustrated how Rabbula's own writings

contained quotations from the Old Syriac Version and the Diatessaron.”

Bas ter Haar Romeny and Craig E. Morrison , “Peshitta,” in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage: Electronic Edition*, edited by Sebastian P. Brock, Aaron M. Butts, George A. Kiraz and Lucas Van Rompay, <https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Peshitta>.

(Note: Dr. Hort in the 19th century asserted that the Peshitta was a fabrication of Rabulla.)

3.A Second Wave of Publication

Another massive stream of the Peshitta came in the year 313 AD after the issue of what was known as, “The Edict of Milan.”

The Edict of Milan

Thousands of Christians were martyred under the persecutions of the Roman (Diocletian) government. Fortunately, these persecutions ended when a ruler named Constantine came into power.

In 311 AD, Constantine, with an army of 40,000, was outnumbered 4 to 1 in a battle against Maxentius for the supremacy of the western empire. Constantine received in dream a vision of victory prior to the battle. He was victorious, and as a result was converted to Christianity (although he refused baptism because he felt it inappropriate as a result of having to execute people as emperor).

Upon his victory, Constantine issued “The Edict of Milan”, which stopped the persecution of Christians, and restored their rights and property. Constantine also enforced this edict battling and executing two emperors underneath him - including his own brother in law.

Constantine, though not perfect in other respects, at the government’s expense rebuilt Churches and houses of

prayer that had been destroyed, and also commissioned at the government's expense the copying of the Church's sacred Scripture. Here is Constantine's letter to Eusebius requesting the copy of Scripture:

“Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Eusebius. 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 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, portable form, by professional transcribers thoroughly practiced in their art. The catholicus of the diocese has also

received instructions by letter from our Clemency to be careful to furnish all things necessary for the preparation of such copies; and it will be for you to take special care that they be completed with as little delay as possible. You have authority also, in virtue of this letter, to use two of the public carriages for their conveyance, by which arrangement the copies when fairly written will most easily be forwarded for my personal inspection; and one of the deacons of your church may be entrusted with this service, who, on his arrival here, shall experience my liberality. God preserve you, beloved brother!”

Eusebius responded:

“Such were the emperor's commands, which were followed by the immediate execution of the work itself, which we sent him in magnificent and elaborately bound volumes of a threefold and fourfold form. This fact is attested by another letter, which the emperor wrote in acknowledgment, in which, having heard that the

city Constantia in our country, the inhabitants of which had been more than commonly devoted to superstition, had been impelled by a sense of religion to abandon their past idolatry, he testified his joy, and approval of their conduct.”

Eusebius Of Caesarea. Life of Constantine .

Notice this statement in the letter of Constantine to Eusebius:

“...to be written on prepared parchment in a legible manner, and in a convenient, portable form, by professional transcribers thoroughly practiced in their art.”

The Quality of the Copy

Here, not only do we see the true copies of the original autographs in the possession of the Church (to which Eusebius had access), but we also see the hand of the Holy Spirit in the quality of the work as Constantine is asking for the use of professional transcribers thoroughly

practiced in their art, and in a convenient portable form for the spread of it.

This quality of work in the copying of Scripture was not only requested by Constantine, but also by the early Church itself, and is reflected in just about all of the Peshetta copies today.

Wilbur Pickering in, “The Identity of the New Testament”, says this,

“...a school emerged in the city of Antioch (Antioch or Antiochia was an ancient city located on the Orontes River near the Amanus Mountains in Syria), and Theophilus, a bishop there, began insisting upon the literal interpretation of Scripture. The point is that a literalist was obliged to be concerned about the precise wording of the text since his interpretation or exegesis hinges upon it. It is reasonable to assume that this "literalist" mentality would have influenced the churches of Asia Minor and Greece and encouraged them in the careful and faithful transmission of the pure text that they had received.

For example, the 1,000 MSS of the Syriac Peshitta are unparalleled for their consistency...”

Pickering, Wilbur. *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV* (p. 107)

In Bruce Metzger’s book, “The Text of the New Testament”, he has this to say about the Peshitta:

“The text of the Peshitta has been transmitted with remarkable fidelity, so that very few significant variants exist among the witnesses. The textual complexion of the Peshitta version has not yet been satisfactorily investigated, but apparently it represents the work of several hands in various parts of the New Testament. In the Gospels it is closer to the Byzantine type of text than in Acts, where it presents many striking agreements with the Western text.”

Bruce Metzger, “The Text of the New Testament”, page 70.

*

What is meant by “Byzantine”?

Byzantine: refers to that type of text which characterizes the majority of the later Greek uncial, semi uncial and minuscule manuscripts of the KJV New Testament. It is also the type of text found in the Syriac Peshitta and Gothic versions and in the extant quotations of Church Fathers. This text derives its name from the provenance (origin) of most of its manuscripts, the Byzantine Empire. It has, in addition to Byzantine, been called: Antiochian, after the supposed place of its origin...”

*

The copies of the Peshitta that we have today represent many thousands more of accurately hand copied manuscripts that have survived not only time, but also heavy use, and destruction from various elements and persecutions. From the comments above, we can see the following marks of the Holy Spirit in the publication of God’s word as being that of,

1. Quality, 2. Accuracy, and 3. Volume.

The Peshitta is the representation given to us by the early Church. This is the first and greatest evidence that we have today of God's authentic Word.

“Jacob Geerlings, who has done extensive work on certain branches of the "Byzantine" text-type, affirms concerning it: "Its origins as well as those of other so-called text-types probably go back to the autographs".

Pickering, Wilbur. *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV* (p. 85). Kindle Edition.

4. The Travels of the Peshitta

Bruce Metzger again, in his book, “The New Testament Cannon”, says this about the Peshitta:

“The fact that during the first six centuries of the Christian era five or six separate versions of the Scriptures in Syriac were produced is testimony to the vitality and scholarship of Syrian

churches. Indeed, as Eberhard Nestle has reminded us, ‘No branch of the Early Church has done more for the translation of the Bible into their vernacular than the Syriac-speaking. In our European libraries we have Syriac Bible MSS from Lebanon, Egypt, Sinai, Mesopotamia, Armenia, India (Malabar), and even from China.’”

Metzger, Bruce M.. *The Canon of the New Testament (Its Origin, Development, and Significance)* (pp. 218-220).
Clarendon Press

Note the travel of the Peshitta:

“In our European libraries we have Syriac Bible MSS from Lebanon, Egypt, Sinai, Mesopotamia, Armenia, India (Malabar), and even from China.”

The Peshitta in Egypt

F.H.A. Scrivener:

“Next to Syria in geographical position stands Egypt...By the Coptic versions of the Bible, therefore, we mean those made for the use of the primitive Christians of Egypt, possibly as early as the second century, when the Gospel had already spread from Alexandria far into the interior...The small fragments of a translation of both Testaments in a third dialect, the which seems to have been vernacular either in the Oasis of Ammon in the west, or among certain rude tribes in the Delta of the Nile...”

Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener. Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament and the Ancient Manuscripts which Contain it: Chiefly Addressed to Those who Do Not Read Greek (Kindle Locations 1180-1203). Deighton, Bell. Kindle Edition.

The Peshitta in Early Egyptian Papyri.

In his book, “The Byzantine Text-Type” Dr. Harry A. Sturz, says this on page 55,

“Francis Crawford Burkitt...has noted that the (then) recently discovered Sinaitic Syriac, though often supporting the Alexandrian text, occasionally agrees with the Syrian text in “distinctive readings. Later, in an article on the newly discovered Chester Beatty Papyri, Burkitt comments on Byzantine agreements in these manuscripts (“The Chester Beatty Papyri, : Journal of Theological Studies, XXXIV, October 1933) as do C.C. Tarelli and others in Journal of Theological Studies, XL 19-25: “Some Further Linguistic Aspects of the Chester Beatty Papyrus of the Gospel,” 1942. Gunther Zuntz in 1946 in the Schweich Lectures on “The Text of the Epistles (The lectures were published in 1953, London, Oxford University Press), and E. C. Colwell in 1961 in his article on “The Origin of Text-types of New Testament Manuscripts.” (Early Christian Orinis, ed. A. Wikgren).

Also from Dr. Sturz,

“Bruce Metzger in “ The Lucianic Recension of the Greek Bible”, gives a list of seven examples of papyrus-supported Byzantine readings. (“Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism”, page 38), and in a footnote, he lists some sixteen other references of “distinctively Byzantine readings which are also found in p66.”

(Note: Dr. Sturz has about 152 Byzantine readings in the Egyptian papyri.)

Dr. Wilbur Pickering said this:

“...Eldon Epp's study of P45 and Gordon Fee's study of P66. With reference to 103 variation units in Mark 6-9 (where P45 is extant) Epp records that P45 shows a 38% agreement with D, 40% with the TR, 42% with B, 59% with f13, and 68% with W. 2 Fee records that in John 1-14 P66 shows a 38.9% agreement with D, 44.6% with Aleph, 45.0% with W, 45.6% with A,

47.5% with the TR, 48.5% with C, 50.4% with B, and 51.2% with P75.3

Does 40% not constitute a "trace"? The picture is similar to that offered by the early Fathers. If we plotted these papyri on a chart with the same headings there would be a significant number of variants in each column—"Egyptian", "Majority" and "other" were all important players on the scene in Egypt at the end of the second century. Mention should be made of the study done by Harry A. Sturz.⁴ He himself collated P45,46,47,66,72 and 75, but took citations of P13 and P37 from apparatuses in Nestle texts (p. 140). He compared these papyri with the Byzantine, Alexandrian and Western texts throughout the NT.

Pickering, Wilbur. *The Identity of the New Testament Text* IV (p. 151).

The Peshitta or Byzantine readings in the Egyptian papyri has major implications:

1. That whatever is represented by the Peshetta was shared to surrounding nations resulting in other versions and translations (Antioch being ground zero for the spread of the gospel), and

2. As represented in the papyri, the scribes in Egypt had their choice of readings from either their local version or the earlier Syriac or Peshitta.

Dr. Sturz relays a finding in the study of the papyri by Gunther Zuz, which he says is amazing,

“...the Byzantine readings had to originate in the east and not the west.”

Dr. Harry Sturz, “The Byzantine Text Type”, chapter 6.

Greek communities were established in Egypt under the conquest of Alexander the great, and as a result there were Greek translations of the Peshitta in Egypt by the middle or possibly even before the beginning of the second century as seen in the papyri (again, Antioch being ground zero for the outreach of the Church, and the papyri

itself representing what was already in existence (*the Scripture had to arrive in Egypt long before the papyri*).

Preceding the Peshitta, however, we have the initial travels of the apostles:

Andrew is said to have gone to Scythia, which would have included Kazakhstan, Russia and Eastern Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Georgia, Belarus and the Baltic regions;

Bartholomew went to India (modern day Yemen) where he is said to have handed out parts of the gospel of Matthew, also Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, Laconia (Greece), and Phrygia (central Asia Minor).

Jude, known as Thaddeus, went to Judea, Samaria, Idumea, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Iran, and was also accompanied by Simon the Zealot.

Thomas is said to have gone to the Kerala area of India,

Mark to Alexandria in Africa,

Peter presided over the Church at Antioch before going to Rome where he was martyred,

John, after his exile on the island of Patmos, retired in Ephesus.

The tomb of **Phillip** is in Hierapolis (lit. "Holy City") located in **Phrygia**,

Matthew, also known as Levi, after preaching his gospel in Judea for 15 years, is said to have gone to Ethiopia on the Caspian Sea (not Africa), Persia, Syria, and Macedonia.

Matthias is said to have gone to Ethiopia.

Simon the Zealot, is said not only to have accompanied Bartholomew, and later Jude, but also preached along the Black Sea, and into Egypt, northern Africa, and Britain.

All were martyred on the mission field except for John.

Source: "A Light in Darkness", Rick Renner

5. Major Transitions of the Peshitta

Scrivener writes,

“About four other translations of Scripture into Syriac, but of a later date, are extant, either complete or in a fragmentary shape, two of which have considerable worth as instruments of criticism.

The Greek Translation of The Peshitta

Scrivener continues,

The Herculean Syriac is the principal, and includes the whole New Testament. At the end of the manuscript from which the printed text is derived (and we find independent testimony to the fact in another quarter), a colophon or subscription by the first hand declares that the

translation was made A. D. 508 (by one Polycarp, a Ural or Suffragan Bishop, as we learn elsewhere) for Xenakis or Philoxenus, Bishop of Ma bug or of the communion, the chief of those semi-heretical sects into which the Syrian Church has been divided from the fifth century to this day. The subscription goes on to state that this version was collated by the writer, Thomas of Harrell, A. D. 616 (who subsequently became himself Bishop of Ma bug), by the help of two approved Greek manuscripts (perhaps of three, for the reading varies), belonging to the convent of Antonia, in Alexandria. We have here, therefore, a version of the sixth century, diligently corrected a hundred years later by venerable Greek copies found in Egypt, whose variations are set in the margin. It is this margin which renders the version as valuable as it is to textual critics, for the body of the work consists of a servile accommodation of the noble and free Pesto, the vernacular Bible of all Syria, to the very letter of the Greek. ... Two manuscripts of the translation were sent to England from in

1730, and made known by a tract published by Dr. Gloucester Riley in 1761. He bequeathed them to New College, Oxford, whose library they now adorn, and several other copies of the Gospels only have been since discovered elsewhere. The version was published at Oxford by Professor Joseph 'White in 1788—1803.”

The Vulgate

Scrivener says this about the Vulgate:

13. The literary history of the Vulgate is a vast study by itself, on which we have fortunately no need to enter now. In its purest form that version appears in the Codex a noble copy of the whole Bible, written (p. 69) by the hand of the Abbot Servants, A. D. 541. It was brought from the great monastery of Monte into the Laurentian Library at Florence, and has been edited more than once. Only five years younger is the Codex in the famous Abbey of Fulham in Hesse Case,

first applied to the recension of the text by Eichmann in 1839. Since the Vulgate was the sole Bible of Western Europe for above one thousand years, it is not surprising that more copies of it exist in public libraries than of almost all other books put together; many of them being of much use for elucidating Jerome's text, but the greater part more remarkable for the illuminations and embellishments which have been lavished upon them by skilful or pious hands. The noble volume exhibited open in the Manuscript Room of the British Museum as Charlemagne's Bible, is probably some fifty years later than his reign, although it may possibly contain certain corrections made about A.D. 797 at his request by our learned countryman Alcuin. The first printed book, as we had occasion to mention before (p. 3), was the Latin Bible of the Vulgate version; and after the Council of Trent in 1546 had stamped this translation with its sanction, in terms however ambiguous, it became the obvious duty of the Church of Rome to provide an authorized

standard for general use. Sixths V. in 1590, and after him Clement VIII. in 1592, put forth separate editions, each executed with anxious care, yet the former at least so full of errors both textual and typographical, as to have exposed the Popes and their confident yet purblind criticism to the derision of zealous polemical writers (such as Dr Th. James in his *Vellum Pa pale, dice Concordia Discord*, 1600), who could not let slip what appeared to them a suitable occasion for vexing the enemies they had failed to convince. We profess no sort of sympathy with this gibing spirit, especially when exercised upon topics so sacred; yet it is only right to state that neither Sixths nor Clement's Bible, the latter of which is adopted for "authentic" in the Roman communion, can be relied upon in the least for critical purposes. They are constructed in a loose and unintelligent fashion, on manuscripts too recent to be trustworthy. If Codex was consulted for Pope Sixths, as has been stated, it had little or no influence in forming the text. The true readings must still be sought for in the older

copies among which it is paramount. 14. The Syriac, the Coptic and the Latin :—these are the principal versions, the rest being quite subsidiary or of slight consideration.

More Languages

Scrivener continues,

To us of the Teutonic stock the Gothic is the most interesting, although more so on linguistic than critical grounds. It was made by Uphills, a about B.C. 350, while the Goths still inhabited now called Bulgaria, and its dialect is marvellously akin to that of modern Germany. Besides some fragments from Bob bio discovered by Mai in 1817, and others in the library in the same volume as the fragments C odd. SQ of the Gospels (p. 76), there is extant the superb but incomplete Codex Argents in the University of Upscale, on purple vellum vita silver and gold letters. It was taken by the Swedes at the siege of Prague in 1648, and has

been several times edited. Ten leaves, stolen about 1821, were given up by the penitent thief, more gracious than (p. 68), on his death-bed, to who published them in 1857. The remaining versions might do us better service, if we knew better how to use them. The Armenian and Ethiopia, composed, in or about the fifth century, in languages known to few, labour under the suspicion of having been conformed in later times to the Latin Vulgate, and, considered as versions, they have been alleged to possess little merit. The Georgian, which is said to date from the sixth century, pertains to the Armenians of the orthodox faith, and we know of no one in England who can read it, except Prebendary Malian of The Georgian is even stated to have been corrupted from the Slavonic, the version of the sister communion in Russia, made from the Greek as late as the ninth century. A secondary translation, not made from the Greek at all, can be applied only to the criticism of its own primary. Such are the Frankish and the Anglo Saxon or Old English, various modifications of

which are derived from what were considered the best copies of the Vulgate between the eighth and eleventh centuries; such too are the Persia in Walton's Polyglot t and several Arabic versions, which are translated from the Pesto Syriac.

Another Persia version, edited by (1653-7), and perhaps some out of the many Arabic versions extant (especially the Gospels in the excellent one published by in 1616 and called from a province in Egypt), were rendered from Greek manuscripts too modern to be of much account.

15. The advantage we derive from versions such as most of those we have been describing, as making known to us the contents of manuscripts of the original older than any at present existing, is too great not to be held in constant remembrance. In other respects important deductions must be made before we apply their evidence to the criticism of the sacred books. It may prove as difficult to arrive at the primitive text of the version, as of the Greek itself: the variations subsisting in the copies are sometimes quite as considerable, and suspicions of

subsequent correction from other sources are easily raised and hard to refute. Even so late a version as the of has been thought to be revised from the Coptic. Then again, if we take into our reckoning the genius of the language into which the Greek is turned, the skill, the care, the peculiar habits of the translator, and our own defective knowledge of the special dialect of the version, we shall perhaps never feel so secure in the application of this kind of testimony as when we come to determine the genuineness of whole sentences or clauses inserted in some Greek copies and omitted in others. "Scripture, by being translated into the tongues of many nations, assures us of the falsehood of additions," as Jerome writes to Pope Damasus in his Preface to the Vulgate Gospels. This is even now the surest benefit which versions can render to the critic.

Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener. *Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament and the Ancient Manuscripts which Contain it: Chiefly Addressed to Those who Do Not Read Greek* (Kindle Locations 1303-1357). Deighton, Bell. Kindle Edition.

The Textus Receptus

This Greek translation of the Peshitta resulted in many thousands of copies of both capital (Uncial) and small letter cursive and minuscule Greek manuscripts. Around 525 of the capital scripts, and 2500 of the small letter scripts have been found (as well as 10k of the Latin and 9k others). However, the most notable transition of the Peshitta is the use of it's Greek text for the Textus Receptus:

In Christianity, the term Textus Receptus (Latin for "received text") refers to all printed editions of the Greek New Testament from Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum omne* (1516) to the 1633 Elzevir edition. It was the most commonly used text type for Protestant denominations.

The biblical Textus Receptus constituted the translation-base for the original German Luther Bible, the translation of the New Testament into English by William Tyndale, the King James Version, the Spanish Reina-Valera translation, the Czech Bible of Kralice, and most Reformation-era

New Testament translations throughout Western and Central Europe. The text originated with the first printed Greek New Testament, published in 1516, a work undertaken in Basel by the Dutch Catholic scholar, priest and monk Desiderius Erasmus.

The Textus Receptus, (TR or RT for “Received Text”) has been used for the following Bibles:

Tyndale New Testament 1526–1530

Coverdale Bible 1535

Matthew Bible 1537

Taverner's Bible 1539

Great Bible 1539

Geneva Bible 1560-1644

Bishops' Bible 1568

Douay-Rheims Bible 1582, 1610, 1749-52. Base translation is from the Vulgate but 1749-1752 editions

onwards (Challoner revisions) contain major borrowings from the Tyndale, Geneva and King James versions.

King James Version 1611, 1613, 1629, 1664, 1701, 1744, 1762, 1769, 1850

English Dort Version 1657, English translation of the Statenvertaling by Theodore Haak

Quaker Bible 1764

Webster's Revision 1833

Young's Literal Translation (YLT) 1862, 1887, 1898

Rotherham's Emphasized Bible (EBR) 1872 edition.

Cambridge Paragraph Bible 1873 edition of the KJV in paragraph format, edited by F.H.A. Scrivener.

Julia E. Smith Parker Translation 1876

New King James Version (NKJV) 1982 (New Testament 1979). With an anglicized version originally known as the "Revised Authorized Version".

Green's Literal Translation 1985. Included in The Interlinear Translation 1986.

Third Millennium Bible 1998

New Cambridge Paragraph Bible 2005 edition of the KJV, paragraph format with modernized spelling; edited by David Norton.

Modern English Version 2014.

Source: Wikipedia

Summary

In closing, Scrivener says:

“We are thus compelled by the force of truth to admit that a wide space of little less than three centuries separates the lost autographs of Apostles and Evangelists from the earliest manuscripts of their works in full yet remaining to us. A vital question is yet to be answered, how this yawning gulf is to be bridged over, and the continuity restored between what they wrote and what we receive? We are thankful to know that our reply to this reasonable enquiry is at once brief, simple, and wholly satisfactory. **We have**

two.., other distinct sources of information, besides the evidence of Greek manuscripts, whereby the condition of the inspired text during the first three centuries can be readily ascertained, not indeed in complete detail, as manuscripts would have enabled us to do, but to an extent amply sufficient for all practical ends, quite enough to assure us of their general integrity, and of the reverence in which they were held in the first ages of the Faith:—and these are primitive versions of their text, and quotations made from them by ecclesiastical writers whose productions yet remain with us.

The precise character of the proof afforded us from these sources will most conveniently be dwelt upon in another Lecture; all I now seek is to impress upon your minds their exceeding value for illustrating the literary history of those remote ages, for which direct documentary evidence has failed us. Nor is the great general service they render us in this respect materially impaired by certain peculiarities to be detailed hereafter, which render it peculiarly necessary to

sift their testimony before implicitly receiving it on every point: still less by the fact that manuscripts of the translations of Scripture into Syriac, Coptic, Latin and other ancient tongues, like those of the original Greek and of the Fathers of the Church, themselves bear no higher date than the fourth century, and in the great majority of cases are considerably later. It is enough to know that their evidence is entirely independent of the later Greek copies, and has never been assimilated to them since each primitive version was first made or each Patristic work first published. Hence it arises that manuscripts of the Old Latin or Syriac, though themselves of the fourth or fifth century express, and unmistakable quotations made by in the second, by Origin in the third century, present us for the passages actually before us with a representation of the readings known to them, as reliable as if the Greek text which they used had survived to this day.”

Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener. *Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament and the Ancient Manuscripts which Contain*

it: Chiefly Addressed to Those who Do Not Read Greek (Kindle Locations 139-157). Deighton, Bell. Kindle Edition.

It is clear that the oldest and best manuscripts (as well as the most copied and most qualitative) are those of the Peshitta and its close derivatives. The Peshitta, even though it has often been miscopied, displays the glory and faithfulness of God in the provision of His Word.

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Appendix A

More on the Peshitta

In the 3rd century, churches in Edessa began to use local Aramaic dialect as the language of worship. Early literary efforts were focused on creation of an authoritative Aramaic translation of the Bible, the Peshitta (ܦܫܝܬܐ Pšīttā).^[82] At the same time, Ephrem the Syrian was producing the most treasured collection of poetry and theology in the Edessan Aramaic language, that later became known as Syriac. In 489, many Syriac-speaking Christians living in the eastern reaches of the Roman Empire fled to the Sasanian Empire to escape persecution and growing animosity with Greek-speaking Christians.^[citation needed] The Christological differences with the Church of the East led to the bitter Nestorian Schism in the Syriac-speaking world. As a result, Syriac developed distinctive western and eastern varieties. Although remaining a single language with a high level of comprehension between the varieties, the two employ

distinctive variations in pronunciation and writing system, and, to a lesser degree, in vocabulary.

The Syriac language later split into a western variety, used mainly by the Syriac Orthodox Church in upper Mesopotamia and Syria proper, and an eastern variety used mainly by the Church of the East in central and northeastern Mesopotamia. Religious divisions were also reflected in linguistic differences between the Western Syriac Rite and the Eastern Syriac Rite. During the 5th and the 6th century, Syriac reached its height as the lingua franca of Mesopotamia and surrounding regions. It existed in literary (liturgical) form, as well as in vernacular forms, as the native language of Syriac-speaking populations. Following the Arab conquest in the 7th century, vernacular forms of Syriac were gradually replaced during the next centuries by the advancing Arabic language.^[12] Having an Aramaic (Syriac) substratum, the regional Arabic dialect (Mesopotamian Arabic) developed under the strong influence of local Aramaic (Syriac) dialects, sharing significant similarities in language structure, as well as having evident and stark influences from previous (ancient) languages of the region.^{[83][84]} Syriac-influenced Arabic dialects developed

among Iraqi Muslims, as well as Iraqi Christians, most of whom descend from native Syriac speakers. Western Syriac is the official language of the West Syriac Rite, practiced by the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, the Maronite Catholic Church, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, the Malabar Independent Syrian Church, the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. Eastern Syriac is the liturgical language of the East Syriac Rite, practised in modern times by the ethnic Assyrian followers of the Assyrian Church of the East, the Assyrian Pentecostal Church, the Ancient Church of the East, the Chaldean Catholic Church, as well as the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in India. Syriac literature is by far the most prodigious of the various Aramaic languages. Its corpus covers poetry, prose, theology, liturgy, hymnody, history, philosophy, science, medicine and natural history. Much of this wealth remains unavailable in critical editions or modern translation. From the 7th century onwards, Syriac gradually gave way to Arabic as the spoken language of much of the region, excepting northern Iraq. The Mongol invasions and conquests of the 13th century, and the religiously motivated massacres of

Syriac Christians by Timur further contributed to the rapid decline of the language. In many places outside of Upper Mesopotamia, even in liturgy, it was replaced by Arabic.

Appendix B

THE WESTCOTT-HORT CRITICAL THEORY

“Although Brooke Foss Westcott identified himself fully with the project and the results, it is generally understood that it was mainly Fenton John Anthony Hort who developed the theory and composed the Introduction in their two volume work.² In the following discussion I consider the W-H theory to be Hort's creation. At the age of 23, in late 1851, Hort wrote to a friend: “I had no idea til I saw the last few weeks of the importance of texts, having read so little Greek Testament, and dragged on with the villainous Textus Receptus... Think of that vile Textus Receptus leaning entirely on late MSS.; it is a blessing there are such early ones.”

Pickering, Wilbur. The Identity of the New Testament Text IV (p. 17).

It appears that the problem with Dr. Hort (and with many seminaries today), is that they have what may be called, an analytical approach in which they try to apply the common principles of textual criticism to the sacred writings of the Church (and without a willingness to hear the Church!) Many who have dominated this field are atheist or atheistic in their approach (Note: none of the Greek manuscripts preferred by Dr. Hort were ever in the mainstream of the Church or consistent with the quality of the Holy Spirit).

1 Corinthians 2:14, The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. NKJV

In the case of Dr. Hort, he harbored an animosity toward the sacred text, and lopsidedly used or formulated such principles (most false) to degrade or discredit the

sacred text and remove it (and all of its manuscripts) from study. Bruce Metzger, a member of the United Bible Society quoted this:

“More recently Brevard S. Childs has discussed ‘The Hermeneutical Problem of New Testament Text Criticism’, The canonical mode of textual criticism proposes a continuing search in discerning the best received text **which moves from the outer parameters of the common church tradition found in the textus receptus to the inner judgment respecting its purity.**”

Metzger, Bruce M.. The Canon of the New Testament (Its Origin, Development, and Significance) (p. 268). Clarendon Press. Kindle Edition.

Also Wilbur Pickering,

“When we turn to the cursives, Aland offers summaries for 150, chosen on the basis of their "independence" from the Byzantine norm. He lists 900 MSS only by number because "these minuscules exhibit a purely or predominantly Byzantine text",

and therefore he considers that "they are all irrelevant for textual criticism" (The Text, p. 155).”

Pickering, Wilbur. The Identity of the New Testament Text IV (p. 124). Unknown. Kindle Edition.

How, in any science, can one reach an accurate conclusion if 80% of the evidence is excluded? This is what so many seminaries practice today in their rejection of the “Byzantine Text”.

Appendix C

The Woman Caught in Adultery, John 8:3-11

This passage is commented on by Ambrose at Milan (AD 374) quotes at least nine times. Augustine in North Africa (AD 396) quotes 18 times. Also quoted by Pacian in the north of Spain (AD 370); by Faustus the African (AD 400) by Rufinus at Aquileia (AD 400); by Chrysologus at Ravenna (AD 433); by Sedulius a Scot (AD 434); by Victorius or Victorinus (AD 457); by Vigilius of Tapsus (AD 484) in North Africa; by Gelasius, bishop of Rome (AD 492); by Cassiodorus in Southern Italy; by Gregory the Great, and by other Fathers of the Western Church. It is in the Pehitta, in Codd b,c,e, g, h, j, Jerome (A.D. 385) after a careful survey of older Greek copies put it in the Vulgate (Jerome was familiar with later copies than B or A). It is also in the Ethiopic Version (5th Century); the Palestinian Syriac (5th Century); the Georgian (5th or 6th); the Slavonic, Arabic and Persian Versions, which are of later date, the Armenian Cod D; Uncial U, 18 cursives of John; cursives, 13, 69, 124, 346, the verses in question are found tacked on to the end of Lk 21, however, these cursives were copied from from a corrupt script and are

known as “The Farrar Group,” (they also have other problems). Both Augustine and Ambrose warned of the tendency to eliminate this text - it was expunged from some Armenian and Boharic scripts.

Source: Bergon, “Unholy Hands on the Bible” section F. This account quoted universally from one major publication, The Peshitta.

Westcott and Hort, as a result of eliminating the Byzantine scripts, and refusing to carefully consider the testimony of the Church, arrived at a wrong prototype for the Bible.

Appendix D

1 John 5:7,8

A Vulgate reading in the Textus Receptus, not in the Peshitta. Erasmus was urged to add the text from a Latin manuscript. This text is also in the Latin Vulgate.

From Scrivener,

9. The Latin versions of Holy Scripture demand and will reward our special attention. Although we know that a branch of the Christian Church existed at Rome "many years" before S. Paul's first visit to the city (Rom. xv. 23), and already flourished there in the first century, it probably was not for the use of converts in the capital that the earliest Latin translation was made. To them S. Paul wrote his noble Epistle in Greek; the earliest Bishops of that Church were mostly Greek: even Clement their first or one of their first Bishops, and Caius the presbyter at a later period, whose names intimate a pure Roman origin, yet chose to write in Greek, a language more or less familiar even to the lowest

classes in that great centre of the civilized world. In the provinces, especially at a distance from the chief seats of commerce, Latin was the only language generally spoken, and in such places the necessity must have first arisen of rendering at least the New Testament into a tongue to be "understood of the people."

Scrivener continues,

...Since truth obliged us to speak slightly of Cardinal Mai when he tried his Prentice hand on the famous Cod. B (p. 30), we should be the more forward to acknowledge his services with reference to the Latin version, wherein he possessed the skill and knowledge of a master. To him we owe not only Cod. h. in the Vatican, of which had given some specimens, but what is one of the most valuable and interesting of all documents of this class, a Speculum or Book of Quotations, from almost every part of the New Testament (being all the more prized, inasmuch as our main Old Latin authorities contain the Gospels alone), edited in 1843 from a manuscript of the sixth century (cod. m. of our

critical notation) in the monastery of S. Croce at Rome, and conspicuous for being the earliest in which the clause about the Three Heavenly Witnesses (1 John v. 7, 8) is contained: it is here found in two different places.

Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener. *Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament and the Ancient Manuscripts which Contain it: Chiefly Addressed to Those who Do Not Read Greek* (Kindle Locations 1265-1281).

Walter Thiele cites evidence for the Comma:

Walter Thiele (1959) suggested that this passage gives evidence that the comma was already present in the text known to Cyprian. Most modern scholars before Thiele had argued that Cyprian's invocation of Pater, Filius, Spiritus Sanctus rather than Pater, Verbum, Spiritus Sanctus—the form usually encountered in the comma—suggests that he did not know the comma, but Thiele showed that several Fathers (ps.-Augustine, Eugenius of Carthage, Cassiodorus) also cite the comma with Filius, as does the León palimpsest, the Theodulfian recension

and the Vulgate ms Dijon, Bibl. munic. 9bis.

Furthermore, Thiele pointed out that the comma was one of a number of interpolations in the Catholic Epistles found in a type of text quite close to that used in North Africa (Jas 1:1, 2:16, 2:25, 4:1; 1 Pt 1:16, 1:19, 2:23, 3:22, 5:4, 5:14; 1 Jn 2:5, 2:17, 2:26, 5:7-8, 5:9, 5:20; 2 Jn 11; Jud 11), which often draw their material from parallel passages elsewhere in the New Testament. Several of these interpolations are of a dogmatic nature (1 Pt 1:19, 3:22; 1 Jn 5:9, 20). Thiele to suggest that these interpolations, including the Johannine comma, may derive from a very early form of the Greek text.

Source: XenForum

Walter Thiele - Cyprian - Beobachtungen zum Comma Iohanneum (I Joh 5,7f.)

Other Notable Publications of the Comma,
John Mills, *Novum Testamentum Graecum*
Karl Schaaf, *Lexicon Syricum concordantiale, omnes Novi Testamenti syriaci voces...* (not mentioned by Bruce Metzger). Karl Schaff, was a Syriac scholar
Horne, Richard Porson claims 29 Latin MSS , the oldest and most correct contain the Comma

Source: Michael Maynard

The Historical Defense of 1 John 5:7-8