

History of the Received Text

**The Transmission of the Received Text
The Chain of Thirty-Seven
*Study Pak 6B***

Dr. Phil Stringer

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The Traditional Text can be traced to the present day through a chain of 37 lines.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF WHAT WE MEAN BY THE RECEIVED TEXT

The definition or explanation of the Greek Received Text (Textus Receptus, TR) of the New Testament has been confused, diluted, and twisted by the modern discipline of textual criticism. The definition is really quite simple (q.v.).

Dean John William Burgon (1813-1888) clearly presents the facts necessary for understanding the origin of the TR and 'what it is.' He preferred to call the Greek inspired text, which originated with the apostles and prophets, the Traditional Text, but he quickly explains that the same text is called by many different names. He said:

"The one great Fact, which especially troubles him [HORT] and his joint Editor [WESTCOT],--(as well it may)--is The Traditional Greek Text of the New Testament Scriptures. Call this Text Erasmian or Complutensian,--the Text of Stephens, or of Beza, or of the Elzevirs,--call it the 'Received,' or Traditional Greek Text, or whatever-other name you please;--the fact remains, that a text has come down to us which is attested by a general consensus of ancient Copies, ancient Fathers, ancient Versions."¹

And he said:

"The Traditional Text,...has been traced back to the earliest ages in the existence of those sacred writings...It is evident that the turning-point of the controversy between ourselves and the Neologian² school must lie in the centuries before St. Chrysostom. If, as Dr. Hort maintains, the Traditional Text not only gained supremacy at that era but did not exist in the early ages, then our contention is vain. That Text can be Traditional only if it goes back **without break or intermission to the original autographs**, because if through break or intermission it ceased or failed to exist, it loses the essential feature of genuine tradition...I claim to have **proved Dr. Hort to have been conspicuously wrong, and our maintenance of the Traditional Text in unbroken succession to be eminently right.**"³ [HDW, my emphasis]

Dean Burgon also said the following about the Traditional text (TR):

"Variety distinguishing witness massed together must needs constitute a most powerful argument for believing such Evidence to be true. Witnesses of different kinds; from different

countries; speaking different tongues:--witnesses who can never have met, and between whom it is incredible that there should exist collusion of any kind:--such witnesses deserve to be listened to most respectfully. Indeed, when witnesses of so varied a sort agree in large numbers, they must needs be accounted worthy of even implicit confidence... Variety it is which imparts virtue to mere Number, prevents the witness-box from being filled with packed deponents, ensures genuine testimony. False witness is thus detected and condemned, because it agrees not with the rest. Variety is the consent of independent witnesses,... It is precisely this consideration which constrains us to pay supreme attention to the combined testimony of the Uncials and of the whole body of the Cursive Copies. They are (a) dotted over at least 1000 years: (b) they evidently [Burgon means by evidence, there is no doubt here, HDW] belong to so many divers countries,--Greece, Constantinople, Asia Minor, Palestine, Syria, Alexandria, and other part of Africa, not to say Sicily, Southern Italy, Gaul, England and Ireland: (c) they exhibit so many strange characteristics and peculiar sympathies: (d) they so clearly represent countless families of MSS., being in no single instance absolutely identical in their text, and certainly not being copies of any other Codex in existence,--that their unanimous decision I hold to be an absolutely irrefragable evidence of the Truth."⁴ [my addition, HDW]

In conclusion, Dean Burgon said:

"... it will be perceived that a three-fold security has been provided for the integrity of the Deposit:--Copies,--Versions,--Fathers."⁵

A few additional comments should be made concerning the origin of **the term** "Textus Receptus" (Received Text), not the **text**.

"The origin of the term "Textus Receptus" comes from the publisher's preface to the 1633 edition produced by Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir, two brothers and printers at Leiden: *textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum, in quo nihil immulatum aut conuictum damus*, translated "so you hold the text, now received by all, in which nothing corrupt." The two words, *textum* and *receptum*, were modified from the accusative to the nominative case to render *textus receptus*."⁶

It should be pointed out that the Elzevir brothers were most likely influenced by the following Scripture:

John 17:8 (KJV) 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

John 12:48 (KJV) 48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Lastly, many modernistic textual critics will invariably try to claim that the TR began with Desiderius Erasmus. The TR began with the apostles and prophets. Erasmus formatted the first printing of the TR from many MSS that he examined. Furthermore, there are numerous false claims concerning the MSS Erasmus used to format the first printed TR. Contrary to many modern authors, he did **not** use "only four or five" MSS. He used MSS from every country and many libraries, including the Vatican. He refused to use the variants found in the corrupted MSS favored by modern textual critics.

H. D. Williams, M.D., Ph.D.

1 Dean John William Burgon, *The Revision Revised* (The Dean Burgon Society Press, Collingswood, NJ, originally published, 1883, reprinted 2000) 269.

2 Neologian is the term coined by Dean Burgon and Edward Miller for the Alexandrian or 'new' Greek text constructed by textual critics that culminated with Westcott and Hort who were Burgon's contemporaries.

3 Dean John William Burgon, *The Causes of Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Being the Sequel to the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels, Vol. II* (Dean Burgon Society Press, Collingswood, NJ, 1986, reprinted 1998) 1-3.

4 Dean John William Burgon, *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels, Vol I* (The Dean Burgon Society press, Collingswood, NJ, 1998) 50-51.

5 Dean John William Burgon, *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels* (Dean Burgon Society press, Collingswood, NJ, Originally published 1896, republished 1998 by the DBS) 23.

6 Bruce M. Metzger, Bart D. Ehrman, "The Text Of The New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration", *Oxford University Press*-, 2005, p. 152.

- I. The Apostles used the received text.
- II. The Palestinian churches used the TR.
- III. The Syrian church (Antioch, _____) used the TR.
- IV. The Peshitta Syriac Version _____ was TR.
- V. Papyrus #66 (Chester Beatty Papyri) contains many TR readings.
- VI. The Old Latin Bible of 157 A.D. is TR.
- VII. The Gallic church of 177 A.D. used the TR.
- VIII. The Celtic Christians used the TR. "The Old Latin Versions were used largest by the western Christianity who would not bow to the authority of Rome – e.g. the Donatists, the Irish of Ireland, Britain, and the continent etc."

_____ the influence of the Bible on civilization.

"Differences of Bible text had something to do with the pitiful struggle which arose between the churches and ended in the devastation of the older one."

~~ Benjamin Wilkinson, *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated*, p. 29 ~~

- IX. Church of Scotland before the Reformation used the TR.
- X. The Pre-Waldensian churches of the Alps used the TR.

- XI. The Waldensian churches of the Alps used the TR during the Middle Ages.
- XII. The Goths used a TR Translation done by Ulfilas in the Fourth Century.
- XIII. Codex W of Matthew from the Fourth Century uses TR.
- XIV. Codex A – the Gospels was TR in the Fourth Century.
- XV. The vast majority of Greek New Testament Manuscripts from the Middle Ages (5,220 of 5,260) are TR.
- XVI. The Greek Orthodox Church has always used the TR and still does.
- XVII. The Erasmus Greek Text of 1516 used the TR.
- XVIII. The churches of the Reformation used the TR – _____.
- XIX. The Complutensian Polyglot used the TR.
- XX. Early German Bibles used the TR.
- XXI. Luther’s German Bible used the TR.
- XXII. The French Olivetan Bible of 1555 used the TR.
- XXIII. The Tyndale Bible of 1535 used the TR.
- XXIV. The Coverdale Bible of 1535 used the TR.
- XXV. The Matthews Bible of 1537 used the TR.
- XXVI. The Great Bible of 1539 used the TR.
- XXVII. The Stephanus Greek New Testament of 1546 used the TR.
- XXVIII. The Geneva Bible of 1557 used the TR.
- XXIX. The Bishops Bible of 1568 used the TR.
- XXX. The Spanish Bible of 1569 used the TR.
- XXXI. The Beza Greek New Testament of 1598 used the TR.
- XXXII. The Czech Bible of 1602 used the TR.
- XXXIII. The Italian Diodati Bible of 1607 used the TR.

- XXXIV. The King James Bible of 1611 used the TR.
- XXXV. The Elziver Greek New Testament is based on the TR.
- XXXVI. The over _____
were based on the TR.
- XXXVII. There is a current revival of TR based missionary translations today!

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