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978-1-108-06774-4 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:

Volume 4: An Introduction to the Textual Criticism, Etc. of the New Testament

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

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INTRODUCTION

TO

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND STUDY OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT.

—◆—

CHAPTER I.

THE OBJECTS PROPOSED IN AN INTRODUCTION TO TEXTUAL CRITICISM
AND STUDY.

A DISTINCT apprehension of the object proposed in any study is a needful preliminary: the definition of terms having been at first made once for all, may render it not necessary to enter into repeated explanations, and may save the trouble of frequently notifying the limitations of the subject under discussion, which may be sufficiently guarded by the broad principles laid down at first.

By *Textual Criticism* it is, then, intended to denote all that relates to the condition of the text of the Greek Testament; to its history during the eighteen centuries through which it has been transmitted to us; to the sources of critical revision which we possess; to the mode in which those sources have been applied, whether wholly or partially, by various editors; and the means by which the Biblical student may use his own judgment with regard to the transmitted sources of criticism, and to their application either to the sacred text at large or to individual passages.

As a general definition, Textual Criticism may be stated to be that species of criticism which has to do with the ascertainment, as far as is practicable, of what it was that the writer of any ancient work actually wrote. The subjects with which a treatise on Textual Criticism is occupied, are those which relate to the communication of such information as shall enable the student to apprehend the principles on which textual evidence may be applied, and the form in which such evidence may be obtained. Many, indeed, there are who study the Bible, and who know its value, as conveying to them the revelation of the truth of God, who never would find it practicable

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for *them* to be *investigators* for themselves in the region of Textual Criticism; but that does not cause the subject to be to them devoid of interest, or (if they view it aright) of profit. For if they use the opportunities of study which are afforded them, they may be enabled, though never aspiring to the rank of critics themselves, to understand intelligently, and to use discriminately, those processes and results of critical study which others may bring before them. They may, by a very moderate exercise of diligence, be saved from either avoiding the subject altogether, as though it were involved to them in hopeless obscurity, or from simply adhering to the results which some real or supposed scholar may have brought forward.

There are, indeed, those who regard textual critics as though their object was to affirm dogmatically that the reading of passages is such, and that this ought to be received *on their assertion*; and who suppose that critical studies are singularly barren of profitable results. This misapprehension is a *fact*, however strange it may seem to those who are better informed.¹ And hence it is of importance to give, if possible, a more accurate and discriminating idea of what this department of criticism proposes. To take a simple illustration: in judicial proceedings in this country *the jury* are those whose business it is to weigh the evidence which may be produced, and to form if possible an accurate and discriminating conclusion. This is not the peculiar prerogative of a few official persons; but it is the function of those who are simply jurors. And it is in such a place that considerate Christian readers and students of Holy Scripture are placed. But the jury must decide according to *evidence*; and so, too, must those who are so intimately connected with the results of Textual Criticism. Now, in judicial inquiries the jury themselves may be very incompetent to *collect* the evidence, and to bring into prominent view the leading features, to show how the different portions are connected, and how link after link conducts to a certain end; and yet practically it is taken for granted that these things can be pointed out to them intelligibly by those who are competent, and that they may thus form a correct conclusion. Be it observed that this conclusion does not depend upon what any authority says that the evidence proves, but it springs from that which is either plain on the face, or which is shown to the jury to be the natural or necessary result. In this, as well as in many other processes of reasoning, moral as well as mathematical, the correctness of the conclusion flows forth by a kind of necessary inference.

Now the real object of Textual Criticism is to enable the student or reader to form such a judgment as in the judicial proceedings referred to is the province of the jury. It is not to lead to blind acquiescence in the dictum of some one of admitted learning and abilities; but it is to lead to an intelligent apprehension *why* he has

¹ Had not this been a *fact*, we should not hear the complaints of the proceedings of textual critics which too often appear, especially in religious periodicals. The name of textual critic is not rightly applied to him who seeks, by mere dogmatism, to require others to adopt *his* view of the reading of a passage.

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arrived at such and such results, and on what evidence the results are supposed to be justified.

It is true, indeed, that the textual critic must *state* his conclusions; he cannot leave them to the reader: but still this does not at all invalidate the supposed judicial illustration, for the critic himself is one of those concerned in drawing the needful conclusion; *he* has an interest in it as well as the students of Scripture who may use the results of his labour; and thus his having arranged (it may even be, having himself *collected*) and marshalled the evidence, can by no means preclude him from doing his part towards drawing a conclusion. But no one would be truly acting the part of a textual critic who did not think that he had so defined principles, and so stated the evidence, as to vindicate the conclusion at which he had arrived, at least in the estimation of competent scholars, who understood and admitted the principles, and who felt the cogency and congruence of the evidence.

It is only a thorough and entire misapprehension of what Textual Criticism proposes, that could lead any to regard it as being in its true application at all connected with peremptory and dictatorial assertion, that *such* is the text of Scripture because a certain scholar judges it so to be.

There may be, indeed, cases in which the student finds difficulty in understanding how certain critical conclusions can legitimately follow the principles laid down and the evidence adduced. But even in such cases it is well for him to remember, that one who is thoroughly conversant with a subject *may* see at once the links of evidence which are not obvious to the unpractised eye; and thus, *perhaps*, the want of connection may be only a misapprehension on the part of the inquirer; or it may be that the critic has failed not in the result, but in distinctly stating the processes of thought leading to that result; or the case may be one of the very many in which minds imperfect in their constitution as ours are, fail in seeing alike the inference which *ought* to follow from certain given premises.

But if any person has shown himself to be correct in the enunciation of principles, competent and accurate in marshalling evidence, and very frequently convincing and satisfactory as to the conclusions at which he arrives, — it then at least behoves every modest student to examine with full attention, and also with some measure of respect, those conclusions which may at first appear doubtful. On further inquiry they may be found to be not merely uncertain, but absolutely erroneous; but this conclusion should be formed not on a mere superficial survey, but on such a full inquiry as is demanded by the importance of the subject.

These remarks may serve to meet the mistake which is still repeated, that the object of Textual Criticism is to lead to an acquiescence in the conclusions of certain critics; instead of being (what it really is) that which has to do with causing the student to possess a competent knowledge of the subject *for himself*, so that *he* may test and examine the conclusions of critics: and if he should

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receive them, that he may know *why*, and if his mind arrive at different results, that he may equally apprehend the grounds for so doing.

The subjects for study in the department of Textual Criticism are pretty extensive; the intention of an "Introduction" is to indicate these in part, and to point out the sources from which fuller information may be obtained; and to communicate on other portions of the subject information as full as may appear requisite. If it be thought that in directing to other sources for part of the information, a responsibility is avoided which ought to have been met, it must be remembered that many of these departments of learning belong to what might be called the preliminary education of him who enters on Biblical Criticism. Thus, it is not a part of such an introduction to give instruction in the *language* in which Holy Scripture has been communicated to us; nor does it belong to *this* department of Biblical learning to discuss the history, authority, contents, or doctrines of the sacred books: these subjects may be referred to incidentally; they may often require to be *assumed* as things previously known; but *here* their minute *discussion* would be thoroughly out of place.

Let not this be misunderstood: no one who is unacquainted with the spirit and nature of an ancient writing can be fully competent to enter upon its Textual Criticism, and especially true is that with regard to Holy Scripture; but this is a mental and moral prerequisite for the critic, a qualification which he needs in order rightly to enter on the subject at all. It has to do with him subjectively rather than with Biblical Criticism objectively.

Some, indeed, have placed Textual Criticism as the first in order amongst theological studies, for how (they have said) can we know *what* the contents of Scripture really are, unless we are first sure as to the genuine text? On this it may be remarked that, although *absolute certainty* as to the text of any ancient author, and therefore as to his doctrines and sentiments, cannot be obtained without a full examination of critical authorities and an accurate deduction of the results of evidence, yet still it may, almost as a matter of course, be taken for granted, that there is in all copies (unless they have been wilfully falsified) at least a general transmission of what the author actually wrote: and thus he who is able to read the original language of an ancient author may proceed at once to acquire *some* knowledge of the contents of his works. In thus forming an acquaintance with the author's style, sentiments, and subject, much may be acquired which is not only useful for application to the department of Textual Criticism, but also much which may be safely said to be essential.

Of course, if at once there is the opportunity of using a text which we have reason to suppose has been carefully revised by a competent scholar, it will be so much the better; for in that case we are able to use the results of the labours of others as our own point of departure; and then it may be that we shall find that our own critical studies justify and confirm, or else modify, those results which have been already used by us in a condensed form: we afterwards learn the

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principles and their application to the evidence on which such a text rests.

If Textual Criticism had been a mere mechanical application of rules and principles, then it would not have been needful to enter into an apprehension of the mind and spirit of the writer to whose works it is applied: it is true that *in general* it has to do with a mere statement of *facts*, but these facts can only be understood in their relation to the work as an organic whole.

And thus to *apply* properly critical evidence to the text of Homer or Demosthenes, it is needful that these authors should be themselves understood and apprehended; not, indeed, that we should thus possess a supposed confidence of asserting what they *must* have written, but that we may regard the *evidence* which relates to the subject from the proper point of view.

The more important prerequisites which a treatise on Textual Criticism may *point out*, but which it does not profess to supply, are, a competent knowledge of the *language* of the work under discussion, and a proper acquaintance with the work itself. Many of those who decry the labours of Textual Criticism in connection with Holy Scripture, do so either from the want of one or the other of these qualifications.

It would be a great mistake in the criticism, if the text of the Greek New Testament were regarded as something completely *sui generis*, as though the common rules could not apply. It would be just as reasonable to expect that in language, in material, and in mode of diffusion, it should differ essentially from all other writings. The only difference which the peculiar character of Holy Scripture can occasion, is, that its *value* impresses an *importance* on the application of criticism to its text, incomparably greater than is the case with regard to any profane writings.

Many have, indeed, undertaken the critical examination of the Greek New Testament without being properly and competently furnished with the preliminary acquaintance with criticism in general, or with the original language as found in its best and truest form. They have thus come to the sacred text without the needful preparation, and thus the results are in themselves imperfect; and even though the range of Biblical scholarship which they may afterwards master may be considerable, the original defect will often prove a hindrance to the obtaining of satisfactory results.

The student of the New Testament, who approaches it with the one desire of knowing the revealed truth of God in the very tongue in which it was given forth by inspired apostles and evangelists, will not find that his time is misemployed which is occupied in gaining a satisfactory groundwork of classical Greek; and this can hardly be insisted on too fully; otherwise, indeed, he may know all the words and sentences of the Greek New Testament, but he will only know them in themselves, and not as a part of that language in which grammatical form and the structure of sentences were so remarkably developed as giving precision to thoughts expressed in words.

Indeed, it may truly be said that all that has been done in the

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more accurate ascertainment by scholars of the laws and usages of the Greek tongue, has a direct importance in enabling us to know with more exactitude (with a precision which often cannot be expressed in translation) what we are taught in the inspired record of the New Testament. In this point of view it is interesting to see the spirit and manner in which some of the scholars of former years regarded their studies. Isaac Casaubon may be taken as an instance. He was one who deservedly occupied a high place as a Greek scholar, and who, in the classical texts, did much to establish sound Greek learning. In his Diary he shows the spirit with which his mind was filled; for he made these labours and studies subjects of continual *prayer*. And surely those men who established a definite apprehension of the force and usage of the language of the New Testament Scriptures, were led of God in a remarkable manner to render abiding service to his Church. It may be that they but dimly apprehended what would, in application, be the result of their seemingly indirect studies; but they were led to pursue them in a devout spirit; and beautiful is it to see the simple utterance of thanksgiving on their part when any difficulty was satisfactorily explained, or any point was established. We now know to *what*, in the providence of God, all this was tending, and how classical studies have placed divine truth in a clearer and more apprehended light.

One lesson may be profitably learned by Biblical students of the present day from these classical scholars of former years. Let their devout spirit be borne in mind, and let it be distinctly apprehended that it is the place of every one who studies God's word, even though it be but as to its criticism, and as to what some might term its secular aspects, to look to Him in prayer for that blessing which He alone can impart, and without which there can be no real profit. A right apprehension of the value of Scripture as containing the revelation of God, and of His mercy in the atonement and redemption wrought out by Christ His Son, and of the need of His Spirit to illumine our minds, must lead to a habit of prayer as a prerequisite to the study of the word of God in any of its aspects. This is not to take the place of careful investigation, but it is thus that we may seek that our inquiries may be rightly directed, and that the needed diligence, patience, and application may be maintained.

In the following pages it is not presupposed that the readers are other than those who value Holy Scripture, and prize its doctrines as commonly held and taught amongst Protestant Christians, who maintain the principles on which the Reformation was based. No apology is needed for *assuming* this, even though doctrinal questions are not professedly discussed, and the authority and interpretation of Holy Scripture belong not to this branch of Biblical study.

The prerequisites of a competent knowledge of Greek, and an acquaintance with the New Testament itself, having been laid down, an Introduction to Textual Criticism has its proper province before it. The subjects of which a knowledge is to be communicated will then be, the peculiarities of the language employed in the work itself, so far as they affect criticism; the *history of the text*; the

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nature and origin of various readings ; the sources of criticism as found in MSS. versions and early citations ; and then the application of the evidence so furnished.

To these subjects may properly be added, remarks on the bearing of the results of Textual Criticism on questions of Scripture authority and interpretation, on the citations from the Old Testament found in the New, and on various points, which may seem to be affected by the principles of criticism or their application. Such remarks will serve as materials from which a judgment may be formed *how far* criticism of the text affects the New Testament as a record.

The present writer may mention in this place that he is personally responsible for the statements in the following pages relating to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament. In acting on the liberty that was accorded him he has endeavoured to give a clear and correct statement of those subjects which are of real utility in this department to the Biblical student. He has not sought to give any undue prominence to his own opinions, but has rather desired to gather together the *facts*, and to place them in such a light as may give the reader the grounds on which opinions may be formed.

Although questions of interpretation and of Scripture authority are not formally discussed here, it is proper for the writer to state distinctly that he believes that the true point of view in which Holy Scripture ought to be regarded is, that it is such a record as God has willed should be given forth for our instruction in all ages ; and that as it proceeded from the original writers, it was in all its parts, whether such parts be *revelations* or the record of *known facts*, so inspired by the Spirit of God as to be His Holy Word, even as He in His infinite wisdom saw fit that it should be. This authority it claims : and it is right that those who treat but of the external facts relating to its text should be definite in informing those for whom they write, how far they maintain the plenary authority and inspiration of the Scripture.

Biblical study is a field in which the labour bestowed is amply rewarded : and as discussions are continually arising which can only be met satisfactorily by a competent acquaintance with Textual Criticism, it behoves those who really love and value Holy Scripture as the record of God, that they be not mere perfunctory students in this department. This country was once the field in which such studies pre-eminently flourished :—the names of Usher, Walton, Mill, and Bentley hold an honoured place in the history of the Biblical labours of that century in which Textual Criticism found *here* its cherished home. If we value the labours of those who have preceded us, and honour their memory, it should be an incentive to us to attend ourselves to this same department of Biblical knowledge.

“ — χαίρει' ακούοντες, όταν τις ἐπαίνη τοὺς προγόνους ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ πεπραγμένα ἐκείνοις διεξή και τὰ τρόπαια λέγη· νομίζετε τοῖνυν ταυτ' ἀναθεῖναι τοὺς προγόνους ὑμῶν οὐχ ἵνα θαυμάζητ' αὐτὰ θεωροῦντες μόνον, ἀλλ' ἵνα και μιμησθε τὰς τῶν ἀναθέντων ἀρετάς. (Demosth. ὑπὲρ τῆς Ῥοδίων ἐλευθερίας, *sub fin.*)

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CHAP. II.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE first subject to be considered in the critical study of the New Testament is the *language* in which it is written; and those points of resemblance and contrast which are found between the Greek of the Evangelists and Apostles, and that of other writers in the same or previous ages.

The reason *why* the New Testament writers should have, under divine guidance and inspiration, employed the Greek tongue is sufficiently manifest. The intention of God now was to give forth a revelation, not confined in an especial manner to one particular people, who were peculiarly the depositaries of divine truth, but that which was intended for the lost children of men whether Jews or Gentiles. Just as the gospel was commanded to be preached, as God's message of salvation to sinners through faith in the Saviour's sacrifice, to all nations beginning at Jerusalem, so too the written Scripture of the New Testament was equally intended to go forth for the instruction of all whose ears and hearts should be opened to receive the teaching thus communicated and thus recorded for after ages.

Thus then it was in accordance both with the divine wisdom and even with what man would have felt to be fitting, that a language of wide extent as to use should be employed. For thus the written record of God's truth became so much the more accessible to the many. And thus GREEK was the language to be employed; for this tongue was at the time of our Lord's advent diffused far more than any other throughout the civilised earth. There was also a fitness in the language, being one of high cultivation and flexibility, in which shades of thought were well and accurately defined, and which had been so cultivated that it would ever demand attention amongst the civilised races of men. These qualities were so peculiarly combined in the Greek language, that the means by which it had become diffused throughout the eastern and central portions of the civilised earth must be regarded as specially ordered by God, with reference to His own purpose in the mission of Christ, and the subsequent preaching of the gospel and the giving forth of this part of the written Word.

How had this been accomplished? How had the Greek tongue burst the narrow limits in which it had once been confined, on the western shores of the Ægean Sea, and spread itself in Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, and other eastern lands; and how, even in Italy in general, and Rome itself, had it become amongst all the educated well known and familiar? A few words in reply to those questions will bring the subject clearly before us, and will show that before the New Testament had been written in Greek, nations of

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Greek readers had been prepared, by whom it should be read and used.

Many centuries before the birth of our Lord, the Æolian, Ionian, and Dorian colonies had spread the Hellenic language far beyond the regions in which it had previously been spoken: and as these colonies were commonly, if not invariably, planted in lands inferior in all the arts of civilisation to the Hellenic race, each became a spot not only preserving its Grecian tone of feeling and tongue, but also a centre from which in some measure these things were diffused. Thus it was that in Asia Minor the Grecian cities might well be deemed the rivals of those which had been their elder sisters on the European shores. And even in literary eminence, it must be remembered that Herodotus, "the father of history," as his own race termed him, was an Asiatic Greek, Dorian by birth and citizenship, but Ionian by dialect.

In the literary eminence of Greece in the fourth and fifth centuries B. C., Athens took the first place; and this fact had this measure of importance, that it caused the dialectic forms of Athens to be imitated in a general manner in the more diffused period of the history of that tongue. Thucydides, Æschylus, and the other dramatists, the Attic orators, and Plato impressed a character on the tongue which they employed, which afterwards had an effect on the minds of those who used it, and which may still be observed in the language which the Greeks *now* speak after all the changes of two thousand three hundred years.

It was important that Attic supremacy of dialect should have preceded the wide diffusion of the language; for had this not been so, the outflowing of the Grecian population and the Grecian tongue would have resulted in dialectic distinctions of various kinds, taking root in various regions; and thus, those who adopted the Hellenic speech, instead of possessing a common dialect, would have used forms differing at first, and differing still more in each successive generation. This would certainly have been the result; for the Greek tongue, adopted in its varying forms of dialect as spoken at home, by peoples of less keen perceptions, and less exercised tones of thought, would, of necessity, have diverged more and more; producing, not the diffusion of one noble language, but the formation of a family of languages, bearing merely such traces of their origin as would, to the ear of the polished scholar, contrast painfully with the refined exactness of that from which they had sprung.

After Athens had gained and maintained her literary preeminence, the Macedonian supremacy over Greece arose. The kings of Macedon were themselves of Hellenic blood, and this was, on many occasions, a subject of boast to them when brought into connection with the Grecian states in the days of their independence. The Greeks regarded the Macedonians as being beyond the Hellenic pale, and thus, the claim of the ruling house was one which separated them as to race and feeling from their subjects. There are instances, before the days of Philip, of Macedonian sovereigns patronising the

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literary men of Greece; and there can be no reasonable doubt that they sought to lead the Macedonians to the enjoyment of those arts of civilisation which in Greece proper were so intimately connected with their cultivated language. The Hellenic feeling of the Macedonian rulers was in the case of Philip materially strengthened by his Grecian education at Thebes; and thus the fashionable dialect of his court was formed on the model of that which had become the popular literary dialect.

Thus, before the conquests of Alexander, the Macedonians of the higher classes at least had learned from Athens: and even if some of the elegancies and proprieties had been impaired, it was patent to all in what school they had studied. The conquests of Alexander gave a new extension and energy of life to this speech; and wherever his successors bore sway, the Greek tongue, in a form based on the Attic dialect, obtained a footing, firmly established and long continued. In the capitals of states, and other large cities, amongst the educated classes, and with the officials of government, Greek, in the form of the *common dialect*, had become the proper and habitual language. No doubt that Egypt, Syria, and other countries retained their own languages also; but this does not impugn the fact that Greek had established itself, not as a temporary sojourner, but as a settled occupant of the same regions.

The Attic *origin* of the COMMON DIALECT has been already mentioned; wherein it differs from pure Attic, has been thus described:—

“Its staple was of Attic texture, but it differed from that variety of the language in several main respects: it was divested of certain forms, especially Attic, such as might be termed provincialisms, if the idea of vulgarity were not associated with the word; it employed certain words, where the speech of Athens would, with the same meaning, have substituted others, either quite distinct, or differing from them in some point of structure; and it admitted some forms or words belonging to other dialects, or which, though of ancient use, had for a time disappeared, at least in Attic Greek. Besides, it should be observed that the classical type could not be sustained in rigid purity; because it came in collision with people who, taken in the mass, possessed not the exquisitely acute perception and severe taste of the extraordinary community among whom it had its birth. . . . The Common Dialect, technically so called, was that of the courts of the Seleucidæ and the Lagidæ, of the schools of Alexandria and Tarsus, of the educated Roman, of Philo, Polybius, Plutarch, Origen, Chrysostom.”¹

Thus, by the supremacy of Macedon in Greece, and then by the conquests of Alexander, the diffusion was effected of such a tongue as should facilitate the first preaching of the gospel amongst Gentiles, and which should cause that the new revelation of divine truth, which God was about to give forth for a permanent record, should be the

¹ A Treatise on the Grammar of the New Testament Dialect, by the Rev. T. S. Green, M. A., pp. 3—5.