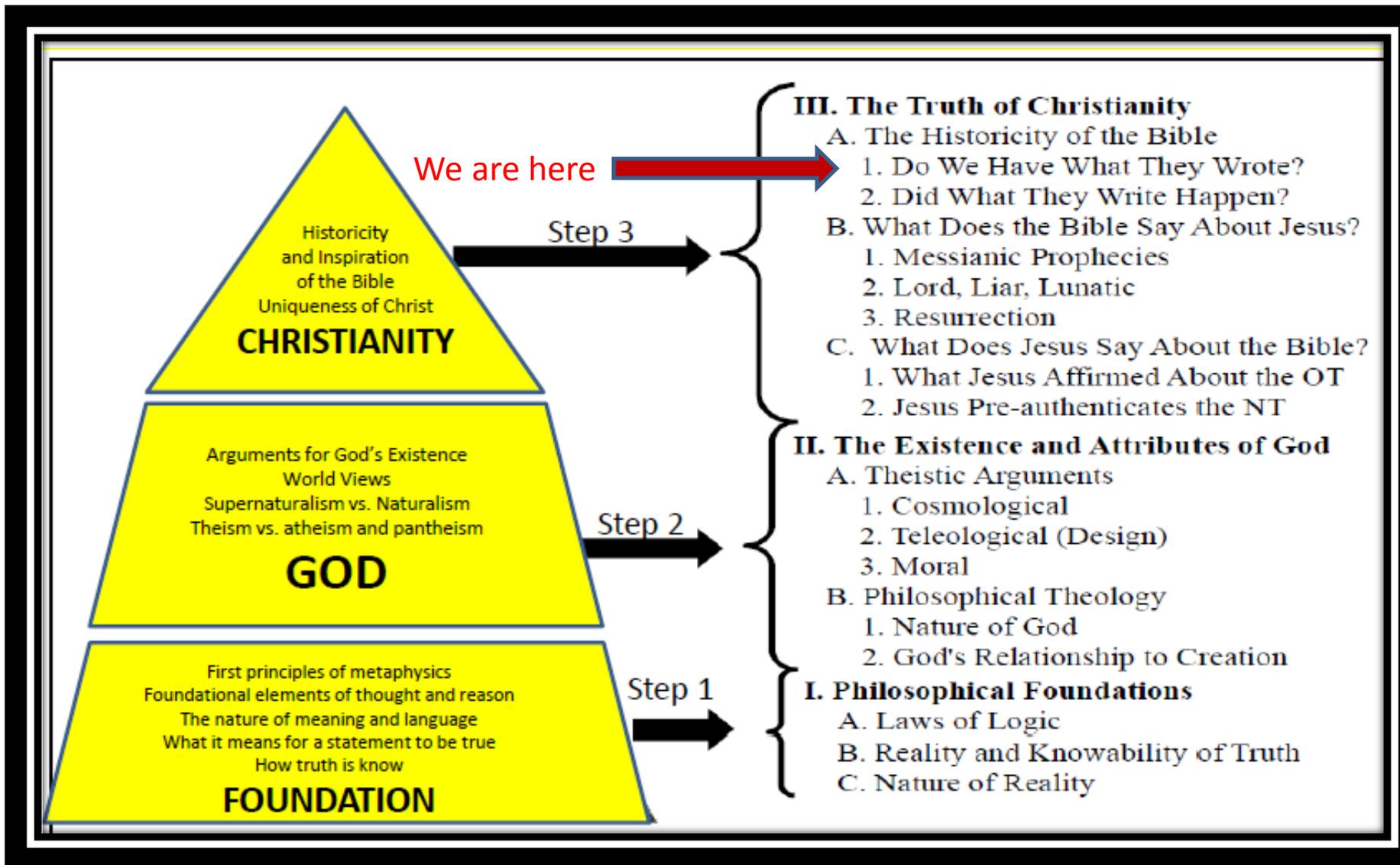


APOLOGETICS 60
Summary of the Five Greek New Testament Texts
(DDR #609)



In our last DDR, we noted the vast superior evidence for the authenticity of the New Testament manuscripts over all other ancient historical records.

The reason the New Testament is rejected has more to do with spiritual and psychological reasons than objective historical reasons.

I would add that we should expect to see this rejection because the NT predicts rejection of God and His revelation, Rom 1:18-25. The Bible actually accounts for and predicts that there would be atheists and skeptics.

Do We Have What They Wrote?

The Importance of the Time-Gap

F.F. Bruce

“The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And **if the New Testament were collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt.**”

F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988) 15.

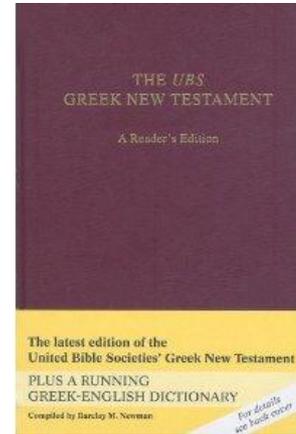
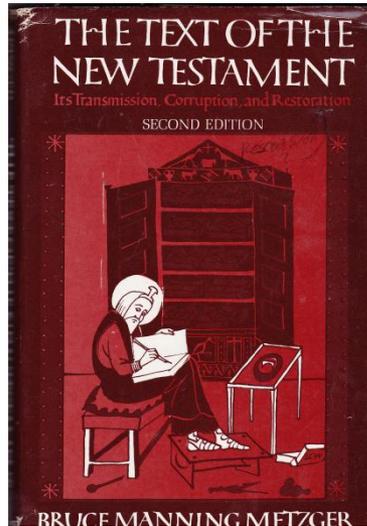
THE FIVE GREEK TEXTS

Before we move from the vast amount of manuscripts and into the evidence that what the writers of the New Testament wrote was true, we need to be aware of the five types of Greek manuscripts that are selected and form the basis for the various English translations.

Critical theory



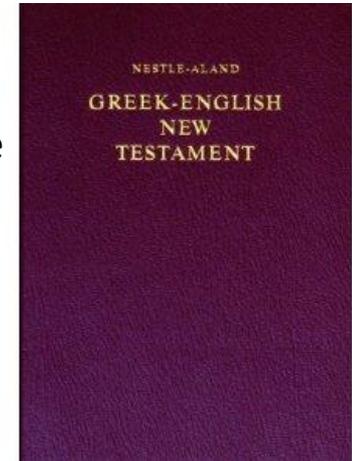
#1 - UBS



Same type



#2 - NESTLE



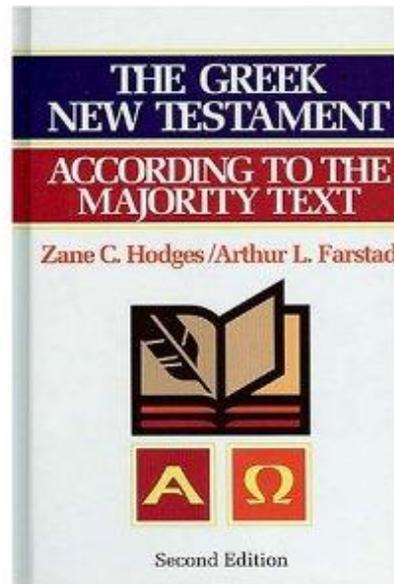
#3 - Textus Receptus
Received Text
(Erasmus – 1516 text)
Basis of KJV



Much closer to #4 and #5



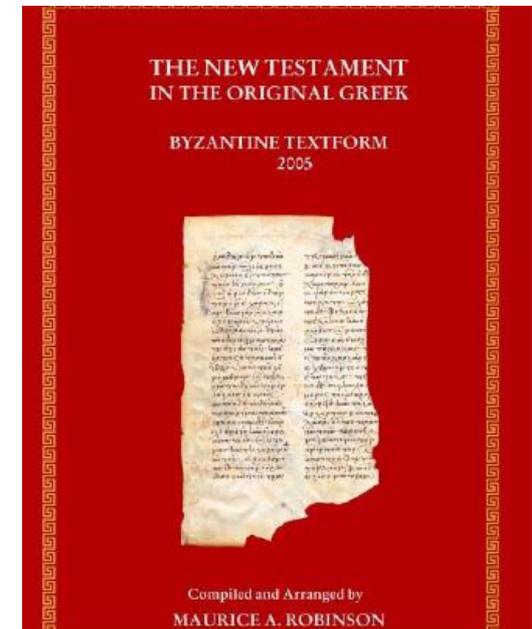
#4



Same type



#5



#1 – Critical Theory

Metzger was sort of the father of NT textual criticism (the science of comparing choosing between the various manuscripts). The problem is that he propounded a theory that has now been called into question. You can see the theory in the subtitle of his book: “its transmission, corruption, and restoration.”

For a long time the scholars were at a lost as far as explaining why it is that the overwhelming majority of manuscripts read almost identical. The explanation that was given was that in some point in church history there was a recension where scholars got together and unified the text. However, there is no evidence that there ever was a recension---except that this serves as an explanation as to why it is so uniform.

The contrary view was that the reason that the manuscripts read so much alike each other is that they all reflect the original. However, one would expect the original to be reflected in more copies.

#1 - THE UBS (United Bible Societies) TEXT

#2 - The Nestle's Text

Products of
Westcott &
Hort theory.

These two are used in many universities and seminaries across the country. The difference between the UBS and the Nestle's text is mainly how they format their apparatus at the bottom. If you look at the names of the scholars involved, you will see many of the same names in both works.

Because these two texts are so similar to each other, they are lumped together and called the "Critical Text." Although there is not a single critical text. The term is just shorthand for UBS/Nestle's text---even though these texts are two different books published by two different companies. There really is not a significant difference between the two. The same scholars are behind both books.

The UBS and Nestle's texts are products of a school of textual criticism that has dominated the field for a little over one hundred years---until the late 19th century. This school of thought it called the Westcott-Hort (WH) theory. Westcott and Hort were two scholars of the 19th century who formulated principles of textual criticism that forged the template from which most of textual criticism was done throughout the 20th century.

However, in the latter part of the 20th century some prominent scholars took exception to WH assumptions. They thought WH assumptions were philosophically flawed. An example: WH would say if you have variants on a certain text, that the more orthodox the text read, the later it was. Their assumption was that scribes would always tend to make the text be more and more orthodox as Christian theology got more refined. This assumption was challenged by noting that why couldn't it be that some scribes were influenced by the unorthodoxy of Gnosticism. How do we know that they did not try to make it more unorthodox? (Philosophical assumptions get people in more trouble than anything else, not only here but in evolution as well.) Let's note an example of orthodoxy verses unorthodoxy: in the UBS Jesus is referred to in more than one occasion as the son of Joseph. However, in most of the manuscripts (mss) He is referred to as the son of Mary. Of course, what is lurking underneath all of this is the virgin birth. WH assumed that the virgin birth was invented by scribes and theologians, and so they expunged references to Jesus being the son of Joseph and put in the son of Mary. The oldest mss have him as the son of Joseph, but the majority mss (about 80%) have him as the son of Mary. However, the oldest mss happened to be the papyri mss out of Egypt, the hotbed of heretical Gnosticism. Those who challenge the WH theory make the assertion that the majority mss are actually from the original and hence based on superior and older Greek texts.

#3 TEXTUS RECEPTUS – Basis of KJV translation

This was the received text of 1511. Supposedly, it was overthrown by the Westcott and Hort critical theory. It is based on fewer and more recent manuscripts (both Hebrew and Greek), but it does agree more with the following two majority texts (which include many more mss). The KJV is not based on the best or the most numerous manuscripts, but I still consider it much better in several places than the WH (Gnostic texts). You should know that there are “KJV only” people out there who are very sensitive to any criticism of the KJV--- and are likely to respond with a few “prophecies” of Hell and brimstone for you, if you challenge them on the fallibility of the KJV. The fact is that no English Bible is inerrant. That is why the pastor must know the original languages and work through these various issues, if he truly loves his sheep and wants to see them grow in Truth.

#4 THE FARSTAD AND HODGES TEXT

What came out of the rather rejection of the WH text/theory was the Majority Text. Zane Hodges was professor of Greek at Dallas Theological Seminary. Their text came out in the early 1980s and was the result of deciding which reading occurs most of the time. Their argument is that all things being equal, the best way to explain why that reading got into that many manuscripts is because it is the oldest reading there is. Hodges, was a first rate Greek scholar, and his conclusions are solid. This text is simply result of the most mss.

#5 THE MAURICE ROBINSON TEXT

Note the title, “The New Testament in the Original Greek.” Keep in mind that they all think that theirs is the original. Note his subtitle, “Byzantine Text Form.” The Byzantine text form was the name given to a certain *style* of Byzantine (7th-9th Century) writing. If Robinson would have his way, he would not have called his Byzantine because it makes it sound like it is very late. And of course everyone wants his earlier. He finally accepted the term and argued that the Byzantine text form is actually based on texts that are closer to the original. I agree. This is the superior text. Text #4 and #5 are the best and closest to the original. They are basically the same like Nestle and UBS are alike. The principal difference is that Maurice Robinson gives better philosophical reasons why his text is closer to the original.

A WORD OR TWO ON TRANSLATIONS

The bottom line is that while there are differences in mss, and theories of textual criticisms, at the end of the day no critical doctrine is ever effected in the original languages---especially when logic and the rest of the Bible are used.

Given the fact that most of the mss agree, I think the most important thing is the theory of translation into English. I would stay away from loose, free, or paraphrased translations of the Bible where they use what they call “dynamic equivalents.” While there are no Greek mss that are clearly heretical, there are many Bible translations and study Bible notes that are without a doubt dangerously heretical.

For someone who does not know the original languages, I would recommend something like a Ryrie New King James Study Bible. The only problem is that for some reason Thomas Nelson publishing will not put Ryrie study notes in their NKJV.

I would like to close by noting that it is so important for the pastor-teacher to know the original languages, and be a real biblical scholar---if he hopes to serve the Lord by teaching His sheep absolute Truth. He is called to love the Lord and love His people, and to express that love by teaching Bible doctrine to the people of God. Thanks to all for your support as we all, as a church family, seek to grow in Bible doctrine and thus gain greater capacity to love God and thus fulfill the mission of our lives and of Christ’s church.

Another Day Closer to Christ---it’s going to be Great (understatement of the day?)!

Pastor Don