

VI

INTERPOLATION AND ASSIMILATION

SYNOPSIS

THE FALLACY OF THE SHORTER TEXT

Prof. Clark's criticism of the maxim *brevior lectio potior*; in classical authors accidental omission is more common than interpolation, hence the presumption is in favour of the genuineness of the *longer* reading. This principle cannot be applied without reservation to the text of the Gospels. But it has an important bearing on the general discredit attached to the Western text, as interpolated and as at times paraphrasing the true text.

The number of omissions in \aleph through homoioteleuton illustrates the possibility of accidental omissions having occurred in the earliest copy which reached Alexandria. The very conscientiousness of Alexandrian scribes would prevent the restoration at a later date of the omitted passages.

SOME NOTABLE READINGS

Accidental omission would be soon repaired in the place where a book was originally published, more slowly elsewhere; but an insertion found in a local text remote from the place of writing may be suspected as an interpolation. Consideration of some famous readings in the light of this principle.

"Neither the Son," Mt. xxiv. 36; Jesus Barabbas, Mt. xxvii. 17; the spear thrust, Mt. xxvii. 49; "Seek to rise," etc., Mt. xx. 28; "The Light at the Baptism," Mt. iii. 16; "The Bloody Sweat," Lk. xxii. 43 f.; "Father, forgive them," Lk. xxiv. 34.

ASSIMILATION OF PARALLELS

The tendency of scribes to make small verbal alterations in the direction of bringing passages where the Gospels already resemble one another into a still closer resemblance. This assimilation of

parallels the main cause of textual corruption and has affected all lines of transmission. The B text has suffered less in this way than any other but is by no means immune.

“Western non-interpolations,” the name given by Hort to some nine conspicuous readings, found in B, but absent from D or the Old Lat. He regarded these as harmonistic interpolations; but he unduly isolated these nine from a large number of additions in the B text which, though less striking, are much more obviously due to assimilation to parallel passages.

Nevertheless it is fallacious to suppose that every omission by the Western text is right; thus the omission of the words “He was taken up into heaven,” Lk. xxiv. 51, is quite possibly an attempt to harmonise the Gospel with the Acts, and not *vice versa*.

The Voice at the Baptism, Lk. iii. 22, is another case where the Western text is probably original. B and its allies (here followed by T.R.) assimilate the text in Luke to the parallel version in Mark and Matthew. In the main, however, the Western text has suffered most, and the Alexandrian least, from assimilation.

CONCLUSION

A notable set of variants illustrating three principles: (1) the operation of assimilation on different lines of text tradition; (2) the “conflate” character of the Byzantine text; (3) the relative immunity of texts of Mark from later revision.

Although we may think that Hort relied too exclusively upon the B text, and that an “eclectic” text following now one, now another, of the old local texts is theoretically a sounder basis, it in no way follows either (*a*) that we return to Lucian’s text, much less to its degenerate descendant the T.R., or (*b*) that we deny the Alexandrian text, preserved in B⁸, to be the best of the local texts, and therefore the one which, in the main, a critical modern editor must follow.

For most practical purposes Westcott and Hort’s edition is satisfactory; but there is a real need for a new thesaurus of variants to take the place of Tischendorf’s great edition.

In conclusion, the delimitation of local texts shows that our evidence for the substantial integrity of the text of the Gospels as a whole rests on a wide and multiple basis. When, however, fine points of scholarship or the niceties of evidence bearing on the Synoptic problem are at issue, we may have at times to go behind the text found in the best modern printed editions of Greek Testament.

CHAPTER VI

INTERPOLATION AND ASSIMILATION

THE FALLACY OF THE SHORTER TEXT

THE whole question of interpolations in ancient MSS. has been set in an entirely new light by the researches of Mr. A. C. Clark, Corpus Professor of Latin at Oxford, *quem honoris causa nomino*. In *The Descent of Manuscripts*,¹ an investigation of the manuscript tradition of the Greek and Latin Classics, he proves conclusively that the error to which scribes were most prone was not interpolation but accidental omission. It is not too much to say that this conclusion entails a revolution in accepted critical methods. Hitherto the maxim *brevior lectio potior*, that is, that the shorter reading of two readings is probably the original, has been assumed as a postulate of scientific criticism. Clark has shown that, so far as classical texts are concerned, the facts point entirely the other way. "A text," as he puts it, "is like a traveller who loses a portion of his luggage every time he changes trains." Once this is stated, its truth is self-evident; any one who has ever sent his own MS. to a typist knows that the accidental omission of words, lines, or sentences is a constant occurrence, while interpolation is not. Of course marginal notes, various readings, etc., do constantly creep into the text of ancient MSS. But while intentional interpolation is quite exceptional, omission—commonly accidental, but sometimes, it would seem, intentional—is a constant phenomenon.

¹ Oxford, 1918.

In a smaller work,¹ Clark applies to the Gospels and Acts the principles which he had worked out in the sphere of classical studies. So far as the Acts are concerned, he goes a long way towards proving his case. But, if I may take it upon me to pronounce upon the work of so eminent an authority, I would say that he underestimates the difference between the textual traditions of the Gospels and of classical literature in two important respects. First, it so happens that the omission of passages found in other texts is specially characteristic of B, and next to B of \aleph , *fam.* Θ , Syr. S., and *k*, *i.e.* of the authorities which *in other respects* preserve good and ancient texts. Secondly, the antecedent probability that some traditions as to the sayings or deeds of Christ, not included in any of the Gospels, would have been in circulation in the early Church is high; and it would be very natural to record them in the margin of a Gospel, from whence they might easily slip into the text. For these two reasons the principle that "the longer text is probably the more original" cannot be applied without considerable reservation to the particular case of the Four Gospels.

This principle, however, has an indirect bearing on the "bad name" given to "Western" readings as such. It was not merely on account of its alleged abundance of interpolation that a general discredit was attached by Hort to the "Western" text. It was even more on account of a supposed tendency to "paraphrase." The text of B \aleph , being held innocent of this free treatment of the original, acquired the credit which always attaches to a respectable witness as against one known to be in some respects disreputable.² But to speak of a passage in one MS. as being a "paraphrase" of the text found in another implies that we know already the answer to the prior question,

¹ *The Primitive Text of the Gospels and Acts*, Oxford, 1914. The main argument of this book is very conveniently summarised and in some ways strengthened in an article in *J.T.S.*, Jan. 1915.

² So far was this preference carried that, even in cases where the "Western" reading, on the face of it, appears more probable, Hort rejects it. Perhaps the clearest example is the preference of the reading $\epsilon\lambda\lambda\eta\mu\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ which makes nonsense, to $\epsilon\lambda\lambda\eta\gamma\alpha\varsigma$ Acts xi. 20.

which of the two represents the original. In the case of the B and D texts this was supposed to be settled in principle by the phenomena of Acts. Here the D text is almost invariably the longer, and, if we accept as a self-evident principle *brevior lectio potior*, it follows that it is a paraphrastic expansion of the shorter text. But ever since Prof. Ramsay wrote his *St. Paul the Traveller*, scholars on purely historical grounds have been emphasising the claims of quite a number of the Bezan additions to be authentic. Clark shows in a large number of these cases, that, if we accept the longer text of D as original,¹ we can explain the origin of the shorter B text. All we need suppose is that one or more ancestors of B had suffered considerably from what is, after all, the commonest of all mistakes of careless scribes, the accidental omission of lines. Wherever the grammar of a sentence was destroyed by the omission, some conjectural emendation of the injured text was made to restore sense. The result of this process would inevitably be the production of a shorter text, by the side of which the original would look like a paraphrastic expansion.

But, if the riot of "paraphrase" supposed to be characteristic of the Western text of Acts is otherwise explained, the accusation of paraphrase in regard to the text of the Gospels must be given a rehearing. In the Gospels the difference between the text of B and D is much less striking. Except occasionally in Luke, there are very few readings to which, without exaggeration, the name paraphrase can be applied. There are variations in the order of words, in the use of tenses, prepositions, conjunctions, there is an occasional substitution of synonyms. But, as we shall see later (p. 328 f.), differences of this sort are to be found even between MSS. as closely related as \aleph B L. The differences between D and any one of these MSS. are far more numerous and more conspicuous than their differences from one another; but they are not such as to entitle us to assert that the D text

¹ Cf. *J.T.S.*, Jan. 1915, p. 226 ff. Intentional omission of details thought unimportant is also likely.

is a paraphrase of the B, while the text of L is not. And if we once admit an element of corruption in B, then both B and D might, though in a very different degree, be described as "paraphrasing" the original text.

But the question whether *in other respects* the B or the D text is the purer has really very little to do with the value of their evidence for insertions or omissions. Take a MS. like \aleph . In this, in the Gospels alone, there are no less than 46 instances of accidental omission, which probably formed one or more complete lines of the exemplar from which it was copied, due to homoioteleuton. There are other omissions, presumably of lines in the exemplar, where homoioteleuton cannot be invoked in extenuation of the error. And there are innumerable omissions of single words. Almost all the longer and many of the shorter omissions have been added in the margin, by the first corrector or sometimes by the original scribe. If one glances through the photographic facsimile of \aleph , there is hardly a page without such correction. But \aleph is a handsome expensive copy produced in a regular scriptorium, written by a professional scribe and corrected by a careful διορθωτής. Now let us suppose that the original text of Acts was something like D, and that the first copy which reached Alexandria was separated from the autograph by half a dozen ancestors. And suppose that two or three of these ancestors had been copied by scribes neither better nor worse than the scribe of \aleph , but had not been gone over by a διορθωτής. At each stage where the omission made nonsense or bad grammar the owner would make the minimum of conjectural emendation that would make the construction grammatical or restore what from the context appeared to be the sense intended. This process of omission and correction repeated two or three times would result in a copy of the Acts with a text like that of B.¹ If this was the first copy of the book

¹ The hypothesis that accidental omission was supplemented by intentional omission of what seemed unimportant detail is not to be entirely excluded. Probably a longer period elapsed before the Acts was regarded as inspired scripture than was the case with the Gospels.

to reach Alexandria, the original, being on papyrus, would soon be worn out; but all the earliest copies known in Alexandria would be derived from it. It follows that the more scrupulously subsequent scribes copied these, and the more anxious Alexandrian scholars were to go back to the earliest copies, the less chance would there be of the original omissions being repaired from MSS. brought in from outside. Even if a copy of the more complete text was brought from Rome, the Alexandrian scholar, like Hort, would condemn it as a corrupt and paraphrastic text.

SOME NOTABLE READINGS

This leads me to suggest a principle of criticism which, so far as I am aware, has not hitherto been formulated. Accidental omissions are most likely to be made good in the place where a book was first given to the world; for there more than one copy made from the autograph will be in circulation. On the other hand, in a city far removed from the place of publication the higher the local standard of textual purity, the greater the likelihood that an accidental omission in the earliest copy which had arrived there would remain unrepaired. The principle, of course, must not be pressed too far. Indeed it only applies to omissions which contained something of a more or less interesting character. Omissions of words that added little to the sense, or which people would prefer to think spurious, would be as likely to remain unrepaired in the Church where a Gospel was first published as in any other. The omission, for example, by Syr. S. of the words *οὐδὲ ὁ υἱὸς* Mt. xxiv. 36, cannot be defended, even if proof positive was produced that this was the old text of Antioch and that Matthew was written there. But the principle does give a new importance to the identification of local texts. If, as I think probable, Luke and Acts were written either at Rome or Corinth, omissions in B \aleph will carry less weight than those which occur in the Western text. In that case, we shall be inclined to follow Hort in suspecting what he calls the

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“Western non-interpolations” of Luke, on the ground that they are absent from the Roman text of Luke; but we shall hesitate to agree with him in rejecting passages for which Western evidence is good, simply because they are absent from B. Again, if Matthew, as I believe, was written in Antioch, passages found only in Alexandrian or geographically Western authorities will be regarded with suspicion, but we shall look with special favour on any insertion attested by Syr. S.; and so far as this Gospel is concerned we shall not be in too great a hurry to reject readings which are only attested by the Lucianic text.

This principle works out well in practice. The most interesting addition in Syr. S. is in Mt. xxvii. 17. Pilate says to the Jews, “Whom will ye that I release unto you? Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus whom they call Christ?” Thus phrased the alternative offer made by Pilate has an extraordinarily original look. The omission of the name “Jesus” before Barabbas might easily be accidental. *Ἰησοῦν* in Θ is written YMINĪN—the omission of the second IN would be an instance of an error so common in ancient MSS. that a technical term “haplography” has been invented to describe it. Once omitted, motives of reverence would come into play; and the dislike of the idea that a brigand bore the sacred name, would lead to the preference of the shorter text. This is not mere conjecture; Origen, we have seen, found it in the text of Caesarea, but tries to reject it on the ground that the name Jesus could not have belonged to one who was a sinner.¹ And the weight of his opinion would lead to its wholesale excision in other texts.

On the other hand there are three striking additions in Matthew found in the non-Antiochene types of text represented by B and D Old Latin respectively, which do not commend themselves as genuine. The spear-thrust at the Crucifixion (Mt. xxvii. 49) in B s, etc., is easily explicable as an attempt at harmonising Matthew and John. The saying “Seek to rise, etc.,” found in D Φ Syr. C. after Mt. xx. 28 is a feebler and, I

¹ Cf. the discussion by Burkitt, *Evangelion da Mepharreshē*, vol. ii. p. 277.

would add, less Christian way, of putting the maxim "take the lowest place" as found in Lk. xiv. 8 f. The Light at the Baptism, inserted by the Old Lat. MSS. *ag* (Mt. iii. 16), which was known to Justin and Tatian (and therefore may be early Roman), is obviously legendary embellishment.

Similar results appear when we compare and contrast the additions made to Luke in the Western and Alexandrian texts respectively. We have already noted that a study of the Acts tends *on the whole*—there are exceptions in all statements with regard to MSS.—to confirm the originality of the longer Western text. Of the additions to the Gospel, the longest and the best attested outside is the incident of the Bloody Sweat and the comforting angel in Gethsemane, Lk. xxii. 43-44: Justin Martyr, *c.* 153, alludes to this and expressly says that it occurs "in the memoirs," his term for the Gospels. It was in the text known to Irenaeus, Tatian, and Hippolytus. Thus it must have stood in the Roman text at a very early date. The fact that it was known to Dionysius of Alexandria, *c.* 250, and occurs in \aleph L suggests that it may have belonged to that very early state of the Western text which had invaded Alexandria at the time of Clement *c.* 200. True it is omitted by Syr. S., but it occurs in Syr. C., and in the oldest MS. of the Armenian there is a note saying that it occurred in the "first translations" but was omitted in the "newly issued translations." Since the oldest Armenian seems to have been made from the Syriac, it is not impossible that it has been "revised out" in Syr. S. Linguistically, as I think Harnack was the first to point out, the passage, short as it is, betrays several characteristically Lucan expressions. Lastly, we gather from Epiphanius, who defends the reading on account of its antiquity, that it caused serious perplexity to some orthodox persons as seemingly derogatory to the full Divinity of our Lord. Presumably it seemed beneath the dignity of the Uncreated Word Incarnate to evince such a degree of *πάθος*; and still more to require a created angel as a comforter. Hence there was every reason, if not for excising it

from the text, at least for regarding MSS. in which it had been accidentally omitted as original. We conclude then that B W 579, etc., which omit the words, though they may possibly give the earliest Alexandrian text, do not preserve the original words of Luke.

Another famous omission attested not only by B W 579 but also by *fam.* Θ and Syr. S. is the cry from the Cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," Lk. xxiii. 34. Here we cannot be quite sure that the reading stood in the earliest form of the Roman text; for, though found in *ce* and known to Irenaeus and Tatian, it is omitted by *Dab*. But *ce*, though mixed MSS., probably represent the African Latin, which on the whole seems nearer than *ab* to the oldest Roman text. And the reading is found in Origen (Lat. trans.) as well as \aleph L Syr. C. Arm. Some years ago the suggestion was made, I think by Dr. Rendel Harris, that the passage had been deleted because some Christian in the second century found it hard to believe that God could or ought to forgive the Jews, since they were the chief instigators in all the persecutions, and, unlike the Gentiles, had no excuse for their villainous conduct—being originally called to be the chosen people and the possessors of the scriptures that spoke of Christ. One might add, it would have appeared to a second-century Christian that, as a mere matter of fact, God had not forgiven the Jews. Twice within seventy years Jerusalem had been destroyed and hundreds of thousands of Jews massacred and enslaved. It followed that, if Christ had prayed that prayer, God had declined to grant it. How much simpler to surmise the words to be an interpolation? And, if even a single copy could be found lacking the words, the surmise would become a certainty. From the MS. evidence we must infer that the omission, if it be an omission, must have been made at an earlier date than that of the Bloody Sweat. The words, of course, may well have been handed down in a genuine tradition, even if they were not recorded by Luke. But their claim to be an authentic part of the text of the Third Gospel

deserves serious consideration ; and, whatever may be the final verdict, it will be worth while to have stated the case, if only to illustrate the fact that absence from certain MSS. is not necessarily evidence of interpolation.

ASSIMILATION OF PARALLELS

Jerome in his preface to the Vulgate Gospels mentions assimilation of the texts of the Gospels to one another in parallel passages as one of the chief sources of corruption of the text. The remark was an acute one, and a study of the existing MSS. shows that it is the commonest of all forms of error. The best known example is the Lord's prayer, which in the oldest MSS. occurs in a shorter form in Luke ; in the Byzantine text it is assimilated to Matthew. As a textual phenomenon assimilation is not peculiar to the Gospels. It occurs to a small extent in Homer, where it is found that recurrent phrases tend to resemble one another more closely in the inferior than they do in the better MSS. It has also operated as a corrupting influence on the text of the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. But the Gospels are a special case, since such a large proportion of their total contents, expressed in language often all but identical, occurs in more than one of them, so that the opportunity they afford for assimilation of parallel passages is quite unique. The danger of this particular form of corruption would be still further increased by the fact that, not only would most scribes know the Gospels almost by heart, but a scribe who was copying Mark or Luke was usually one who had just refreshed his memory by copying out the text as it stands in Matthew. With the words of one Gospel running in his head it would be exceedingly difficult to copy accurately passages in another Gospel which were almost but not quite the same.

But assimilation is not only the commonest source of corruption of the text of the Gospels, it is also the one most difficult to check. Other forms of corruption would result in

each separate local text having its own special set of wrong readings; these can be detected by comparison with other texts. But assimilation of parallels, being a process which must have gone on independently in all local texts, might easily result in identical errors along different lines of transmission. Hence, though each text will have its own special set of assimilations, there is no security that occasionally, especially in certain striking passages, all texts may not have coincided upon the same assimilation. This is a possibility that neither textual critics nor students of the Synoptic Problem have ever really faced.

Now the strongest argument for the general purity of the B text is that it is free from so many of the assimilations that are found in the Later Alexandrian, the "Western," or the Byzantine texts. But, though far freer from assimilation of parallels than any other text, B is not entirely immune. And there are quite a number of cases where the Western text—though on the whole it has suffered far more than any other in this way—is free from particular assimilations which have infected B. Detailed evidence on this point I shall reserve for the chapter on the Minor Agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark. In this place I propose merely to call attention to the importance in regard to this particular issue of the set of readings called by Hort "Western non-interpolations," and to connect it with the previous discussion of the Roman and Alexandrian texts of Luke.

Eight of the nine readings to which Hort gave the name "Western non-interpolations" occur towards the end of Luke, no less than seven being in the last chapter (the ninth is the spear thrust, Mt. xxvii. 49). These are omitted by D and the Old Latin, but, with two exceptions, by no other MS. Hort coined the complicated title "Western non-interpolation," in order to avoid smirching the fair name of the "Neutral" text by speaking of these readings as "Neutral interpolations"; but, assuming them not to be genuine, that is what they really are. All the same I believe he was right in rejecting at any rate the majority

of them. Firstly, if Luke was written in the West, it is hard to suppose that the omission of so many passages, all of an interesting character and all crowded into the same context, would have escaped notice at Rome, where presumably other copies from which the gaps could be refilled would be available. Secondly, as Hort saw, most of these additions are of the nature of harmonisations between Luke and other parts of the New Testament. But Hort was, I think, mistaken in his emphasis on these nine out of a large number of omissions by the same Western authorities.

Besides the eight striking readings in the last three chapters of Luke and the one in Matthew to which Hort gives the special title "Western non-interpolations," there are a large number of smaller omissions in the Old Latin, sometimes supported by D, of words or sentences found in the B text. To some of these Hort himself calls attention (ii. p. 176), and he puts them in single brackets in his text—whereas the selected nine are distinguished by double brackets.¹ But there are other omissions consisting only of a word or two which he ignores. But, if Hort was right in definitely rejecting as assimilations the major "non-interpolations" in Matthew and Luke (which merely reproduce the *general sense* of something found in another Gospel), he ought to have rejected more than twenty other passages in most of which the insertion reproduces in one Gospel the *actual words* of a parallel passage in another. To the student of the Synoptic Problem these minor omissions in the Western text are all important, though it would be unsafe to assume that the omission is in every case original; D is no more infallible

¹ The "Western non-interpolations" in double brackets are in Lk. xxii. 19-20, xxiv. 3, 6, 12, 36, 40, 51, 52; also the mention of the spear thrust not found in the T.R., Mt. xxvii. 49. Those in single brackets, sometimes consisting of only a few words, occur in Mt. vi. 15, 25, ix. 34, xiii. 33, xxi. 44, xxiii. 26; Mk. ii. 22, x. 2, xiv. 39; Lk. v. 39, x. 41 f., xii. 19, 21, 39, xxii. 62, xxiv. 9; Jn. iii. 32, iv. 9 (cf. W.H. ii. p. 176). Among those not noted in Hort's text are Mt. xxi. 23 διδάσκοντι (om. a b c e Syr. S. C.); Mk. ix. 35 (om. D k); Mk. xiv. 65 καὶ περικαλύπτειν (om. D a f); Lk. viii. 44 τοῦ κρασπέδου (om. D Lat.); Jn. xii. 8 (om. D Syr. S.); others are discussed below, Chap. XI.

when it omits than when it inserts. I emphasise this point because Hort's isolation of these nine passages very much obscures the extent to which the B text has suffered from assimilation, not only as between Matthew and Luke, but also between the Synoptics and John.

Nevertheless it is worth while to protest against a too ready inference that, in regard to genuineness, the whole series, whether of major or minor "non-interpolations," must stand or fall together. This is a fallacy. What the MS. evidence proves is that these passages were, as a matter of fact, absent from the ancestor of D and the Old Latin, but present in an ultimate ancestor of all other texts. The tacit assumption that either the one or the other of these ancestors was in *every* case correct is quite unwarranted. No MS. or group of MSS. is even approximately infallible; and all have suffered from some accidental omissions. It is more probable that in some cases B is correct in retaining the words, even if in the majority D is right in omitting them. The real case against the genuineness of these readings rests, I must repeat, not on their omission in one line of the MS. tradition, but in the fact that they look like attempts at harmonisation, especially between the Synoptics and John.

But there is one of Hort's nine passages where the argument from assimilation seems to me to cut the other way. Can the sentence, "and he was taken up into heaven," Lk. xxiv. 51, really be regarded as due to "assimilation" from the story of the Ascension in the Acts? If so, it is an assimilation of an incredibly unskilful kind; for it makes the Ascension take place on Easter Day instead of forty days later as the Acts relates. Besides, the words "he was taken up into heaven" seem required to explain the back reference in Acts i. 2, which implies that the Gospel contained an account of what Jesus began to do and to teach "until the day when he was taken up." This is rather pointless unless the Gospel contained an account of the Ascension. On linguistic grounds it is probable¹ that a con-

Cf. Hawkins' *Hor. Syn.* p. 177 ff.

siderable interval elapsed between the writing of the Gospel and Acts. In the interval the author may have come across a fresh cycle of tradition. If so, Acts i. 2 should be read as an attempt by the author to recall his former statement with the object of correcting it in favour of the account of the Ascension forty days later which immediately follows. In that case the omission of the words in Lk. xxiv. 51 is an attempt to remove a contradiction between the Gospel and the Acts; it is the text which omits, not that which inserts, that has suffered harmonistic correction.

Another clear example of the avoidance by the Roman text of Luke of an assimilation found in the Alexandrian is the Voice at the Baptism, Lk. iii. 22. In B⁸, etc., the words are practically identical with those in Mark and Matthew, *i.e.* "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." But *D a b c ff*², etc., with the notable support of Clement of Alexandria, read "Thou art my [beloved] Son, this day have I begotten thee." Now this reading is quite definitely that cited by Justin and was therefore current in Rome *c.* 155. Again, on grounds of internal probability it is clearly to be preferred for two reasons. (a) The tendency of scribal alterations would be to make the text of Luke agree with Matthew and Mark, as in B; with this reading, on the contrary, there is a discrepancy between the Gospels. (b) The Lucan reading could readily be quoted in favour of the view, afterwards regarded as heretical, that Christ only became the Son of God at his Baptism. Once, therefore, the assimilation with the other Gospels had been made in any MS., it would be preferred as more orthodox, and would rapidly be taken up into other texts.

I would not, however, leave the reader with the impression that the D text has suffered less from assimilation than that of B. Quite the contrary. In D assimilation is, not only more frequent, but more thoroughgoing. Take, for example, *μὴ φοβοῦ· ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἀνθρώπους ἔση ζωγρῶν*, Lk. v. 10. Here D, with the partial support of *e*, reads *δεῦτε καὶ μὴ γένεσθε*

ἀλιεῖς ἰχθύων ποιήσω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων, which is very much closer to the language of Matthew. But it is unnecessary to labour this point, since everybody admits that, not only the "Western" and the Byzantine texts as a whole, but each different sub-group of MSS. of these texts, have in different ways and in different places suffered assimilation. The text of B alone has been placed by critics on a pedestal by itself, and, because it has undoubtedly suffered less than any other MS., has been supposed to be immune. And this unfounded supposition has played havoc with the scientific study of the Synoptic Problem.

CONCLUSION

The history of the text of the Gospels is, as it were, concentrated into a single passage in the set of variants in the lists of the Twelve Apostles (Mt. x. 2-4, Mk. iii. 16-19, Lk. vi. 14-16). It would appear that in the first century local traditions varied as to the twelfth name; and each of the Synoptics embodies a different tradition. Origen remarks,¹ "The same man whom Matthew calls Lebbaeus and Mark Thaddaeus, Luke writes as Judas of James." It appears, then, that in the text he used, obviously in this instance the correct one, each Gospel gave a different name. In Syr. S. Judas, in *abh* (but not in *Dk*) Judas Zelotes is substituted for Lebbaeus in Matthew, though not in Mark. For this part of Matthew *e* is missing, but in this MS. the name Judas is substituted in Mark also. If we remember that Judas, not Iscariot, is mentioned as one of the Twelve by John, we understand why the list which contained his name should be supposed the more authentic. Clearly the discrepancy troubled scribes. We turn to the Greek uncials and what do we find? There is no variant in Luke; but B \aleph read Thaddaeus in both Matthew and Mark; ² D reads Lebbaeus

¹ *Com. in Rom. praef.*

² 124 (probably also the Ferrar ancestor) supports B \aleph . Other members of *fam.* Θ have the Byzantine conflation.

in both Gospels; while the Byzantine text reads "Lebbaeus who is called Thaddaeus" in Matthew, but is content to follow B κ in Mark. We notice three points. (1) The tendency to assimilation is seen at work everywhere—in κ B, in D, and in the Old Latin and Old Syriac—but in each case operates somewhat differently. (2) The Byzantine text is "conflate"; it ingeniously combines the readings of two ancient traditions each of which had good support. (3) Editors and scribes are less concerned to correct the text of Mark.

Hort, we have argued, was right in regarding the Textus Receptus as a descendant of the revision made by Lucian of Antioch about A.D. 300. And he was right in his contention that in the main this revision was based on earlier texts which we can still identify. We group these earlier texts into an Egyptian, admirably preserved in κ B L; an Italian and Gallic, represented, with many corruptions, in D *abff*²; an African (perhaps = earlier Roman), found in *k, e, (W^{Mk})*; an Antiochene, less adequately known to us through the Old Syriac; a Caesarean, fairly well preserved in the non-Byzantine readings of *fam. Θ (W^{Mk})*. This grouping of the older texts differs radically from Hort's, but not in a way that seriously affects his view of the methods of Lucian's revision, though we may feel a little less confident than he that Lucian possessed no MS. containing ancient and possibly correct readings not found in our surviving authorities. But then comes the really fundamental question: was Hort right in reprinting almost in its entirety the oldest Egyptian text? Or was Lucian right in the principle, if not in its detailed application, of framing an eclectic text, adopting readings now from one text, now from another, presumably on the combined grounds of extent and antiquity of attestation and of "internal probability"?

To this question one must, I think, answer that the eclectic principle of deciding in each separate case on grounds of "internal probability" what appears to be the best reading is, in spite of its subjectivity, *theoretically* sounder than the almost slavish following of a single text which Hort preferred.

But this in no way means that we return to the *Textus Receptus*. Lucian's canons of "internal probability" differed fundamentally from ours. For example, his eye would be inclined to look with most favour on that one of two readings which attributed to an evangelist a more smooth, graceful, and stately style. To us, roughness, within limits, is a sign of originality. Again, to him it would seem more likely that a reading, supposing it was found in MSS. sufficiently numerous and ancient, which brought two evangelists into closer agreement with one another was more likely to be original than one which enhanced the difference between them. We should judge otherwise. Hence, even if we accept the necessity of an eclectic text, the selection of readings admitted to it would differ very considerably from that made by Lucian. On the other hand, while realising that B has more wrong readings than Hort was ready to admit, due weight must be given to Hort's principle that the authority of a MS., which in a majority of cases supports what is clearly the right reading, counts for more than that of others in cases where decision is more difficult. Hence a critical text of the Gospels (though not, I think, of Acts) will, like that of Hort, be based mainly on the text of Alexandria as preserved in our two oldest MSS. B &. But a future editor will be on the look out for evidence that will enable him to detect instances where these, like all other MSS., have been corrupted by assimilation of parallels or grammatical touching up, and he will be ready to accept a far larger number of readings from authorities which represent the local texts of other churches. In particular he will give special weight to the readings of *fam.* ©.

The rejection, however, of a theory which enabled Hort to attribute supreme authority to the B text complicates *in practice* the task of the textual critic. Textual criticism is not the only department of life where an infallible guide, if such existed, would save us trouble and uncertainty. No purely external mechanical test of the genuineness of readings has yet been devised. Where important variants exist, and can be shown to have existed as

early as the third century, we can in the last resort only fall back on the exercise of insight and common sense to make our choice. Those qualities being rare, or, at any rate, hard to recognise by any objective test in a matter of this kind, there will always remain a difference of opinion on many points. It follows that, if by a "scientific" text is meant one reached by some mechanical and objective principles which completely rule out the subjective vagaries of the individual editor, such cannot be attained. In this department of knowledge the appeal is in the last resort to the insight, judgement, and common sense of the individual scholar, which are necessarily "subjective."

What, however, is most wanted at the present moment is not a new critical text—for most purposes Westcott and Hort is good enough. The real need is for an edition of an entirely different character—a thesaurus of various readings to bring up to date Tischendorf's large edition of 1869. von Soden attempted this and failed; his edition is not only full of inaccuracies, it is often actually unintelligible. But, I would insist, in such an edition, it is of quite fundamental importance that the text printed above the Apparatus Criticus should be, not an eclectic text constructed by the editor himself, but the Byzantine text.¹ The reason is obvious. The number of MSS. which have altogether escaped revision from the Byzantine standard is extremely small, yet the readings which the critic most wants to know are those of older texts which *differ* from the Byzantine text; if, then, the Byzantine text is printed above the Apparatus Criticus, the readings the critic first wants are those which first strike the eye. Again the Apparatus itself would be enormously simplified; for it need only contain readings which differ from that text. Any MS. not cited in the Apparatus would be understood, either to agree with the text printed at the top of the page, or not to be extant for that passage; and accordingly

¹ For this purpose the Byzantine text should be determined by some purely objective criterion, such as the agreement of two out of the three MSS. S V Ω , or, perhaps better, E S V.

the extent of hiatus in important MSS. should be noted on each page. MSS. should be cited in separate groups, according as they habitually agree with the Alexandrian, Eastern or Western type of text. Lastly, since textual criticism under the most favourable circumstances involves great strain on the eyesight, small print and small numbers and letters above the line, such as von Soden delights in, should be resolutely eschewed.

In conclusion it is worth while to note that those same investigations which have compelled us to reject Hort's theory have shown that the authorities available for determining the text are more numerous and more independent of one another than that theory would allow. It follows, therefore, that, though on minor points of reading absolute certainty may often be unobtainable, a text of the Gospels can be reached, the freedom of which from serious modification or interpolation is guaranteed by the concurrence of different lines of ancient and independent evidence. For the historian, as well as for the ordinary Christian reader, a text like that of Hort or Tischendorf, or that used in preparing the Revised Version, may be taken as reliable for all ordinary purposes. But for fine points of scholarship, or when dealing with the Synoptic Problem, where the settlement of a question of great import may depend on the minutest verbal resemblances or differences between the Gospels, it is vital to realise that in our search for the original reading we must, on occasion, go behind the printed texts.