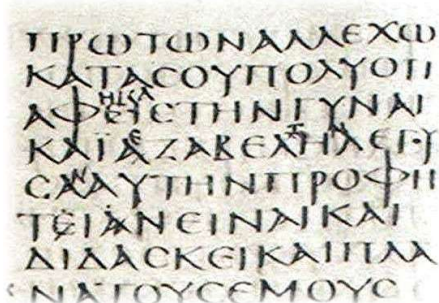# History of the Reformation
The Development of Textual Criticism

- Discovery of Ancient Texts
    - Mid 1800's - Discovery of the most significant copy of the Bible
    - Question – How do we know that what we read as God's Word is really God's Word?

- Definitions
    - **Verbal plenary inerrancy**
        - Plenary – full; complete, unqualified
        - One believes all of the Bible is inspired down to the very words of Scripture.
        - It is the *Autographa* (the original document penned by the original author) which is "breathed out by God".
    - **Non-verbal plenary inerrancy**
        - One believes all the Bible is inspired, but only as to its concepts—not all the words—meaning that it might contain historical errors
    - **Higher Criticism**
        - Secular approach questioning origins, purposes, influences, composition of the Biblical text
        - Arises from 19th Century Rationalism
    - **Lower (Textual) Criticism**
        - Manuscript and textual evaluation and comparison
        - Christian approach concerning preservation and transmission of the Biblical text in its varying manuscripts
        - Attempts to prioritize the 1,000's of copies of Greek manuscripts to get as close as possible to the *Autographa* (Original Text)

- Need to Examine the Greek Text
    - The original autographs no longer exist, so extant (known, existing) copies must be used to make a determination.
    - Various copies of surviving ancient manuscripts differ in their actual wording due to scribal errors that crept in through the process of copying and re-copying.
    - Many manuscripts only contain incomplete sections of the original.
    - Thousands of extant manuscripts (of varying textual content) dating from the 3rd century to the 16th century must be considered.
    - Manuscript evidence suggests different textual traditions that developed geographically over time, which must also be factored into the process.

- Types of Greek Text

UNCIAL   Minuscule (cursive)

- Reformation Era Texts
  - Rush to use movable type to publish Greek Texts
  - Computensian Polyglot – 1514
    - First printed
    - Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin
    - Catholic sponsored
  - Deserius Erasmus – 1516
    - Produced Greek text to prove his Latin
    - First published (put on market)
    - Haste in production; 100's of typographical errors
    - Used relatively few texts
    - Occasionally had to translate from Latin back into Greek for completeness
    - Inserted 1 John 5:6-7 into later editions
    - 1527 – 4th ed. – used "superior texts" to correct his work
  - Robert Estienne (Stephanus) – 1551
    - Published texts with marginal notes for alternate readings (Critical apparatus)
    - 4th ed. – first to use numberings for verses
  - Theodore de Beza – 1588
    - Had many more texts available to him, but only made annotations concerning the differences
    - Differed little from the 4th Ed. Stephanus text
    - Basis for the translation of the King James Bible (1609)
  - Textus Receptus
    - **Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir – 1624**
    - Published a small, convenient Greek NT
    - Mainly from Beza's 1565 edition
    - Advertising blurb – "[the reader has] the **text** which is now **received** by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted"
  - **Basis for all principal Protestant translations prior to 1881**.
    - "So superstitious has been the reverence accorded the Textus Receptus that in some cases attempts to criticize or emend it have been regarded as akin to sacrilege. Yet its textual basis is essentially a handful of late and haphazardly collected minuscule manuscripts, and in a dozen passages its reading is supported by no known Greek witness." Bruce Metzger

- Search for Manuscripts
  - Scholars "ransacked" museums and libraries to gain "old copies" of the Greek NT.
    - Variant readings from Stephanus + 15 other sources
    - Yet, they still reprinted the time-honored, but corrupt TR.
  - 1675 – Dr John Fell – published a small Greek NT using the Elzevir text, but supplied noted (apparatus) listing variants from more than 100 manuscripts and ancient versions.
  - 1707 – John Mill – reprinted Stephanus' text
    - 3,041 of almost 8,000 NT verses had some form of variation
  - 1719 – Dr. Edward Wells – 1st to edit a complete NT which abandoned the TR in favor of readings from the more ancient manuscripts.

- Phase Two
  - 1729 – Richard Bentley – confident that he could restore the NT to the state is was in the 4th century.
    - "by taking 2,000 errors out of the Pope's Vulgate and as many out of the Protestant Pope Stephen's, using no text under the age of 900"
    - Edited by Daniel Mace – attacked or just ignored
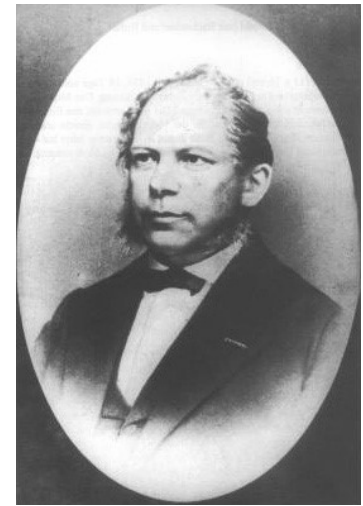 - By this time, more than 30,000 variant readings had been collected.

- Phase Three
  - 1725 – Johann Bengel – Pietist – became disturbed about the "thousands of errors" in the text and its implications in his faith in plenary inspiration.
    - "After extended study, he came to the conclusion that the variant readings were fewer in number than might have been expected, and that they did not shake any article of evangelical doctrine"
  - Recognized that the witnesses to the text must not be counted but weighed
    - Classified in 'companies, families, tribes, groups or nations'
  - 1734 – published a copy of the TR without change, but in the margin, gave his views as to the relative value of the variant readings
    - α – most likely original reading
    - β – this reading is better than the printed reading
    - γ – this reading and the printed reading are of equal value
    - δ – this reading is inferior to the one printed in the text
    - this reading is very inferior and should be rejected

- Textual Evaluation
  - 1751 – Jacob Wettstein from Basel – produced a Greek NT with Bentley's philosophy (weight of witness, not number)
    - 1st to assign short-hand for different texts
    - Capitol Roman letters for uncials
    - Arabic numerals for minuscule manuscripts
  - Johann Semler adopted Bengel's system of classifying manuscripts by groups
    - Alexandrian – derived from Origen, preserved in Syriac
    - Eastern – current in Antiochian and Constantinopalitan Churches
    - Western – embodied in Latin versions and the Fathers

- Advent of Textual Criticism
  - Johann Griesbach – d. 1812
    - Ventured to abandon the TR at many places and to print the text of the NT in the form to which his investigations had brought him.
  - Developed principles to determine which text is "better"
    - More ancient texts are preferred
    - The shorter reading is generally preferred (scribes are more likely to add than to omit)
    - Homoeoteleuton – copiest's eyes clearly skipped from one line to another
    - A longer reading clearly "smacks" of an editorial comment
  - Karl Lachmann – d. 1851 – published the 1st edition of the Greek NT which relies on textual criticism in the evaluation of variant readings.

- Constantin von Tischendorf
  - Published more critical editions than any other single scholar
    - 8 editions between 1841 & 1872
  - Discovered Codex Sinaiticus
    - 4th Century complete NT (oldest complete NT in uncial script)
  - 1846 – visited monastery of St. Catharine in Sinai desert
    - Discovered monks with leaves of old books for the ovens
    - Tischendorf took them back to Russia and discovered that they were copies of the Septuagint (Greek OT)
    - Portions of I Chronicles, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and Esther
  - Returned 1853 to get other portions – no success
  - 1859 – he returned under patronage of Czar Alexander II
    - As he left, he presented the steward a copy of the published leaves he had gotten in 1846
  - The steward replied that he also had an "old copy of the Septuagint" in his room
    - Tischendorf casually asked to see it
    - Seeing it, he asked to look at it more fully that night
  - "It seemed a sacrilege to sleep"
  - Tischendorf tried to purchase it
    - The steward refused
    - In Cairo, the Abbot sends for the manuscript and allows Tischendorf to copy it 8 leaves at a time.
  - Through much "ecclesiastical diplomacy", the monks donated it to the Russian Czar
    - Of course, the Czar gave a substantial gift to the monastery
  - 1933 – the Soviet government, not caring for religious things, sold it to the British Museum in London for £ 100,000
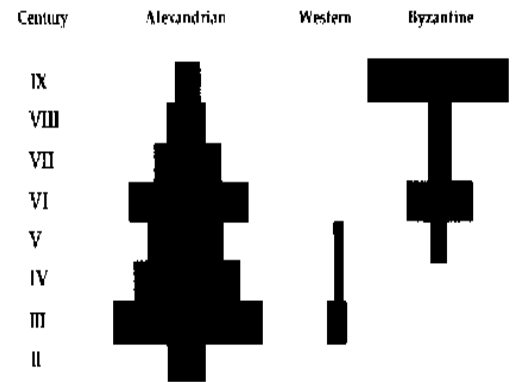
- Wescott and Hort
  - 1881 – the most noteworthy critical edition of the Greek Testament ever produced
  - Brooke Wescott and Fenton Hort, Professors of Divinity at Cambridge, culminated 28 years of research
  - *The New Testament in Original Greek* (2 vol)
    - 2nd volume Introduction and Appendix set forth the principles they followed:
    - Internal Evidence of Readings
      - Intrinsic Probability – having reference to the author
      - Transcriptional Probability – differences by copying
    - Internal Evidence of Documents – "weight of document"
    - Internal Evidence of Groups
      - (Text types: Syrian (Byzantine), Western, Alexandrian, Neutral)

- Current NT Greek Editions
  - 1898 – Eberhard Nestle combined the readings of Tischendorf, Wescott & Hort, and Weymouth
  - 1952 – Kurt Aland became editor of 21st edition
  - Today, Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* is in its 28th Edition
  - United Bible Societies – 5 Rev Ed.
    - Almost identical with differences in the critical apparatus (identifying different manuscripts)

- KJV Only Controversy
  - Mid '70's – with the proliferation of new translations and paraphrases, a resurrected issue surfaced.
  - King James Preference
  - TR was declared to be superior
    - The term Majority Text was used
    - Created in 1989
    - The numerical number of texts supporting a variant should be used.
  - The TR group believe that the Nestle-Aland text is influenced too much by "a few Alexandrian text-types"
    - After all, Alexandria was where Origen and his mystical interpretations came from

Century	Alexandrian	Western	Byzantine
IX			
VIII			
VII			
VI			
V			
IV			
III			
II			

- Bottom Line
  - In 62.9% of all New Testament verses, all versions are identical.
    - 4,999 out of 7,947 verses
    - Gospels, Acts, and Revelation are slightly less
    - Pauline and General Epistles are more in harmony
  - Copies of the NT exist which are less than 100 years between copy and time written at 99.5% accuracy (total of 5600 manuscripts)
    - The shortest time between writing and earliest copy is Homer's *Illiad* at 500 yrs at 95% accuracy (643 manuscripts)
  - While there are many variations that have crept into the original Greek text over the centuries, we can be more sure that we have God's Word than we are that we will not be involved in a car accident on the way home today.