

Just what is Family 35?

I can well imagine that many people are hearing about Family 35 for the first time. It refers to a line of transmission within the broad 'Byzantine' river of MSS, and I gave it that name. So far as I know, the academic world is severely ignoring my work, as they must, to be sure, since I expose the falsehoods they have been purveying for generations. I will begin with a bit of recent history.

When Thomas Nelson Inc. published my first book in 1977, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, the best printed Greek New testament that was readily available was the *Textus Receptus*, the Received Text—it was the Greek Text of the Protestant Reformation. John William Burgon, Dean of Chichester, called it the 'Traditional Text'. Although Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad had started working on a Majority Text, based on the work of Hermann von Soden,¹ it was not published until 1982. In 1977 I demonstrated that the Westcott-Hort critical theory was false at every point, and that demonstration has never been refuted since, that I know of. But when it came to offering an alternative, I was limited to generalities and Burgon's seven "Notes of Truth". They are: 1) Antiquity, or Primitiveness; 2) Consent of Witnesses, or Number; 3) Variety of Evidence, or Catholicity; 4) Respectability of Witnesses, or Weight; 5) Continuity, or Unbroken Tradition; 6) Evidence of the Entire Passage, or Context; 7) Internal Considerations, or Reasonableness.² Thomas Nelson put my book through at least three further printings, including some revision, the last one appearing in 1990. Even then, I had nothing better to offer.

However, in 1988 I helped to start the Majority Text Society, along with Zane Hodges, Art Farstad and Frank Carmichael, and was its first president. At that time I began to seriously work on Majority Text theory, and during the next decade developed what I was pleased to call Original Text theory. I used it as a steppingstone to my present approach to NT textual criticism (that we may call Family 35 Priority Theory). Here is my description of Original text Theory:

- 1) First, OTT is concerned to identify the precise original wording of the NT writings. (Here I reject the allegation that the original wording is lost and gone.)
- 2) Second, the criteria must be biblical, objective and reasonable. (Here I reject the dependence on subjective criteria and a purely rationalistic approach.)
- 3) Third, a 90% attestation will be considered unassailable, and 80% virtually so. (This is now superseded by advances in point 5, although a 90% attestation remains difficult to assail.)
- 4) Fourth, Burgon's "notes of truth" will come into play, especially where the

¹ *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt* (Teil 1, Berlin: Verlag von Alexander Duncker, 1902-1910; Teil 2 Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913).

² Burgon, *The Traditional Text*, p. 29.

attestation falls below 80%. (This is now superseded by advances in point 5, although his 'notes' remain valid, in general.)

- 5) Fifth, where collations exist, making possible an empirical grouping of the MSS on the basis of shared mosaics of readings, this must be done. Such groups must be evaluated on the basis of their performance and be assigned a credibility quotient. A putative history of the transmission of the Text needs to be developed on the basis of the interrelationships of such groups.

Demonstrated groupings and relationships supersede the counting of MSS.

(Please note that I am not referring to any attempt at reconstructing a genealogy of MSS—I agree with those scholars who have declared such an enterprise to be virtually impossible (there are altogether too many missing links). I am indeed referring to the reconstruction of a genealogy of **readings**, and thus of the history of the transmission of the Text. The last sentence has always been emphasized. Once all MSS have been collated and empirically grouped, we can dispense with counting them.)

- 6) Sixth, it presupposes that the Creator exists and that He has spoken to our race. It accepts the implied divine purpose to preserve His revelation for the use of subsequent generations, including ours. It understands that both God and Satan have an ongoing active interest in the fate of the NT Text—to approach NT textual criticism without taking due account of that interest is to act irresponsibly. (Those who exclude the supernatural from their model are condemning themselves to never arrive at the Truth—God and Satan exist, and both have been involved in the transmission of the NT Text.)
- 7) Seventh, it insists that presuppositions and motives must always be addressed and evaluated. (In any scientific inquiry a rigorous distinction must be made between evidence, presupposition and interpretation. Since one's presuppositions heavily influence, even control, his interpretation of the evidence [that should be the same for everyone], any honest scholar needs to state his presuppositions openly. It is doubtless too much to expect sinners to expose their motives to the light of day [John 3:20].)

I use the term 'steppingstone' because I was still thinking in terms of a large majority, and that was because Family 35 had not yet come to my attention (I was still limited to generalities). However, the fifth point above shows the direction in which I was heading; note especially the last sentence, which has always been in bold type, and most especially the term 'demonstrated'. For example, my critical apparatus for Revelation gives the evidence in terms of Hoskier's nine groups, rather than percentages of MSS. (In passing, I would say that Hort did the discipline a considerable disservice by positing theoretical text-types, devoid of evidence, and then treating them as established fact.)

Nonetheless, in 2003, Wipf and Stock Publishers published *The Identity of the*

New Testament Text II, as an academic reprint. It contained further revision, but it still used Burgon's 'Notes of Truth', although I introduced a Family 18, that I soon changed to Family 35. By 2002 I had become aware of Family 35, but my development of a theory surrounding it was still tentative and incomplete. By the time Wipf and Stock published *The Identity of the New Testament Text III* in 2012, I had done sufficient work on that theory to replace Burgon's 'Notes of Truth' with it.

It was the Hodges-Farstad Majority Text's representation of the evidence for the *Pericope Adulterae* that caught my attention, being based on von Soden's supposed collation of over 900 MSS. (In passing, we may note that Maurice Robinson's collations show that Soden 'regularized' the data.) As stated in their apparatus, there were three main streams: **M⁵**, **M⁶** and **M⁷**. **7** was always in the majority [except for one five-way split where there is no majority] because it was always accompanied by either **5** or **6** [5 + 6 never go against 7]. This looked to me like three independent streams, where seldom would more than one go astray at any given point. Being the common denominator, **7** was clearly the best of the three, and presumably also the oldest.

Then I went to Revelation (in H-F) and noticed three main streams again: **M^{a-b}**, **M^c** and **M^{d-e}**. The picture was analogous to that of the *PA*. Revelation represents a very much larger corpus than does the *PA*, but even so, there are only 8 cases where **a-b** and **d-e** join against **c** (+ 6 others where one of the four is split), compared to over 100 each for **a-b** and **c** against **d-e** and for **c** and **d-e** against **a-b**. Again, being the common denominator, **c** was clearly the best of the three (see the apparatus of my Greek Text of the Apocalypse).

Now then, it so happens that **M⁷** in the *PA* and **M^c** in Revelation equal Soden's **K^r**, so I began to smell a rat. (Why 'smelled a rat'? Because **M⁷** is clearly older than **M⁵** and **M⁶** in the *PA*, and **M^c** than **M^{a-b}** and **M^{d-e}** in Revelation, but von Soden claimed **K^r** was a revision of **K^x** [how could it be a revision if it was older?].) Then the *Text und Textwert* series proved that **K^r** is independent of **K^x** throughout the NT. It follows that **K^r** cannot be a revision of **K^x**. Then there are hundreds of places where **K^r** has overt early attestation, against **K^x**, but there is no pattern to that early attestation. If there is no pattern, there is no dependency. There being no pattern then **K^r** must be early, as the picture in the *PA* and in Revelation has already implied. If **K^r** is early and independent, then it must be rehabilitated in the practice of NT textual criticism. If it is the best line of transmission in the *PA* and Revelation, it just might be the best elsewhere as well.

But there is an ingrained disdain/antipathy toward the symbol **K^r**, so I have proposed a new name for the text-type. We should substitute **f³⁵** for **K^r**—it is more objective, and will get away from the prejudice that attaches to the latter. Minuscule 35 contains the whole NT and reflects **K^r** throughout, and it is the MS

with the smallest number that meets those qualifications Minuscule 18 has a smaller number and also contains the whole NT, but it defects from the text-type in Revelation. (For example, cursives 1 and 13 are the smallest number in their families; and like them, 35 is not always the best representative [it is generally excellent]—but it is 11th century [and it is a copy of an older exemplar, not a new creation], so the text-type could not have been created in the 12th, Q.E.D.—this is an abbreviation for the Latin *quod erat demonstrandum*, the point to be proved has been proved.)

Family 35 represents about 16% of the total of extant (known) Greek MSS, but it is almost never entirely alone. However, the roster of other MSS is almost never the same, and this throughout the NT. Does not this indicate that \mathfrak{f}^{35} is the common denominator? Because the roster of other MSS is almost never the same, it is possible to factor out the MSS that represent \mathfrak{f}^{35} . As I stated at the end of Part I (or the eleventh video), the Original Text is the ultimate archetype, so any candidate must also be an archetype—a real, honest to goodness, objectively verifiable archetype; there is only one—Family 35. Most of the words in the NT have virtually 100% attestation (from the extant Greek MSS), but where there is disagreement, it is the mosaic, or profile, of shared readings that define a family, or line of transmission. I have published the profile that defines Family 35 throughout the NT. It is included in two of my books, *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV* and *God Has Preserved His Text!* (both editions)—they may be purchased from Amazon.com or downloaded from my site: www.prunch.org.