

NEW TESTAMENT TEXT-TYPES?

As individual New Testament books were received and circulated in the early Christian church, various copies were made and deployed throughout the ancient world. As manuscripts were circulated within particular geographical regions they began to take on particular characteristics / readings, unique to their location, resulting in localized text-types or textual families.

ALEXANDRIAN

The Alexandrian text-type is the form of Greek New Testament that predominates in the earliest surviving documents, as well as the text-type used in Egyptian Coptic manuscripts.



Codex Sinaiticus - 01 N
330-360 AD



Codex Vaticanus - 03 B
300-325 AD

*Although major portions of B are Alexandrian, its text realistically has examples of the other text-type forms within

The two oldest and closest to complete copies of the New Testament, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus,* are representations of the Alexandrian Text Type



Other early manuscripts of note are P66 and P75.



P66
150-200 AD



P75
175-225 AD



Alexandrian manuscripts are characteristic by its majuscule or uncial texts. Above is John 1:1 in Codex Sinaiticus in its upper case majuscule texts



WESTERN

The Western text-type is the form of the New Testament text witness in the Old Latin and Peshitta translations from the Greek, and also in quotations from the 2nd and 3rd century Christian writers, including Cyprian, Tertullian, and Irenaeus.

Only one Greek uncial manuscript is considered to transmit a Western text for the four Gospels and the Book of Acts, the fifth century Codex Bezae; the sixth century Codex Claromontanus is considered to transmit a western text for Paul's letters and is followed by two ninth century uncials: F and G.



Codex Bezae - 05 D^{ea}
c. 400 AD



Codex Claromontanus - 06 B
c. 550 AD

Many, if not most, textual critics today believe that there were two major early text-types that can be ascertained, the Alexandrian and Western. A number of scholars see the Alexandrian and Western text-types as being equally early, with both having their origins in the 2nd century.



These four categories are admittedly somewhat of a misnomer. There are many examples of mixed manuscripts that combine typical Alexandrian / Byzantine, and Byzantine / Caesarean characteristics



CAESAREAN

The Caesarean text-type was identified as such first by Burnett Hillman Streeter in 1924. Streeter's theory of local texts, identified five different text-types, each in a physical location of which this was one.



Minuscule 565 - 93 ε
800-900 AD



Codex Koridethi - 038 θ
800-900 AD

The closest examples of the Caesarean text would be Minuscule 565, Codex Koridethi, and those of Family 1 and Family 13.



Jerome seems to imply that Caesarea offered a distinctive local text (as a result of Origen's studies) only for the Greek Old Testament. If a distinctive text of the New Testament had also been developed in Caesarea (whether by Origen or by Eusebius, it should be possible to identify it in the writings of one of these Fathers, or preferably of both. But research has not yet been able to establish any such identification.



Larry Hurtado has argued that the Caesarean text at best is a secondary (or derived) and not a primary text-type,¹ and so most textual critics no longer recognize it and do not treat it as one of the three major or distinct text-types.²

In the past it had been posited that earlier texts such as P45 and Codex Washingtonianus, within their Markan text, were Caesarean. This however, has been questioned by most if not all.³



P45 - P. Chester Beatty I
250-300 AD



Codex Washingtonianus*
- 032 W
300-500 AD

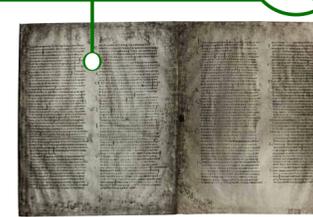
*W is block-mixed and has some significant Alexandrian readings.

BYZANTINE

AKA Majority Text, Traditional Text, Ecclesiastical Text, Constantinopolitan Text, Antiocheian Text, or Syrian Text, is one of several text-types that is used in textual criticism to describe the textual character of the Greek New Testament manuscripts

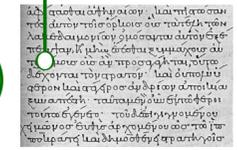
There are six manuscripts* earlier than the 9th century which conform to the Byzantine text type of which Codex Alexandrinus, in its Gospel texts, is the oldest; the rest of the text is Alexandrian.

* This list could also realistically include Codex Ephraimi (Alexandrian/Byzantine mix); Codex Basilensis (Alexandrian/Byzantine mix); N 022, O 023, P 024, R 027, Σ 042, Φ 043, and Guelferbytanus B.



Codex Alexandrinus- 02 A
400-450 AD

Earliest example of minuscule writing from a 10th century copy of Thucydides



As the latest of the four text-types, Byzantine manuscripts are mostly written in minuscule (lower case) style and in Polytonic orthography handwriting.

The Byzantine Text-Type makes up the largest number of surviving manuscripts, though not in the oldest. It also underlies the Texts Receptus or "received" Greek text.



"Although the theory of text types still prevails in current text-critical practice, some scholars have recently called to abandon the concept altogether in light of new computer-assisted methods for determining manuscript relationships in a more exact way. To be sure, there is already a consensus that the various geographic locations traditionally assigned to the text types are incorrect and misleading. Thus, "Western text" is not the only misnomer: the geographical labels of the other text types should be considered with suspicion, too. Some scholars prefer to refer to the text types as "textual clusters."

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1. Larry W. Hurtado, *Text-Critical Methodology and Pre-Caesarean Text: Codex W in the Gospel of Mark*, SD 43 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 85-89.
2. Kurt and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 336.
3. Hurtado, Larry W. "P45 and the Textual History of the Gospel of Mark." Pages 132-48 in *The Earliest Gospels: The Origins and Transmission of the Earliest Christian Gospels--the Contribution of the Chester Beatty Gospel Codex P45*. Edited by Charles Horton. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 258. London: T & T Clark Intl, 2004.