

New Testament Survey

Textual Criticism

- I. Definition
 - A. Higher Criticism
 - 1. Deals with the authorship, genuineness, and unity of a book.
 - 2. Deals with matters of interpretation and purpose for writing.
 - 3. Deals with the date and location of a book.
 - B. Lower Criticism
 - 1. Deals with the manuscript evidence for a book.
 - 2. Deals with the recovery of the original text of a book.
- II. The Purpose of Textual Criticism¹
 - A. To determine the original text.
 - 1. The original autographs were inerrant, copies are not.
 - 2. God inspired the original text but did not inspire copies or translations.
 - B. To discover and correct transmission errors and alterations.
 - 1. Intentional Alterations
 - a. Updating spelling or syntax.
 - b. Eliminate apparent discrepancies.
 - c. Harmonize one Gospel with another.
 - d. Attempt to correct a supposed error in a manuscript.
 - e. Addition of extra details.
 - 2. Unintentional Alterations
 - a. Mistaking one Greek letter for another.
 - b. Misspelling homonyms.
 - c. Skipping lines due to same word endings in the original manuscript.
 - d. Inverting words or letters.
 - e. Writing a passage from memory as opposed to copying it.

¹ James Borland, *A General Introduction to the New Testament*, (Lynchburg: University Book House, 1986), pp. 144-145.

III. The Objects of Textual Criticism²

A. Papyri Manuscripts

1. Discovered fairly lately.
2. Number is about 40.
3. Date from the fifth century.
4. Identified by a capital P followed by a superscript number.
5. Some of the more notable papyri manuscripts are:
 - a. John Rylands Papyrus - P⁵²
 - 1). Earliest papyrus dated from A.D. 125.
 - 2). Contains a few verses of John's Gospel (18:31-33, 37-38).
 - b. Chester Beatty Collection - P⁴⁵ - P⁴⁷
 - 1). P⁴⁵ contains 13 pages of Acts 5:30-17:17.
 - 2). P⁴⁶ consists of 90 leaves which contain most of Romans, Hebrews, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians.
 - 3). P⁴⁷ contains about one-third of the book of Revelation (9:10-17:2).
 - c. Bodmer Collection - P⁶⁶, P⁷², P⁷⁴, P⁷⁵
 - 1). P⁶⁶ contain two-thirds of John's Gospel and dates from about A.D. 200.
 - 2). P⁷² contains 1 and 2 Peter and Jude.
 - 3). P⁷⁴ contains fragments of Acts.
 - 4). P⁷⁵ is a much-used copy of Luke and John.

² Ibid, pp. 146-153.

B. Uncial Manuscripts

1. Consist of about 270 manuscripts.
2. Identified by names, capital letters, plus Arabic numerals preceded by a zero.
3. Some of the more prominent uncial manuscripts are:
 - a. Aleph (a, 01, Sinaiticus)
 - 1). Obtained by Tischendorf in 1859 from the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai.
 - 2). Dates from about A.D. 340.
 - 3). Contains 147 pages of the New Testament and 199 leaves of the Old Testament.
 - b. Alexandrinus (02, A)
 - 1). Dates from the fifth century.
 - 2). Given to Charles I of England in 1627.
 - c. Vaticanus (03, B)
 - 1). Dated from the fourth century.
 - 2). Lacks the pastoral epistles, Philemon, Revelation, and Hebrews 9:14-13:25.
 - d. Ephraemi Rescriptus (04, C)
 - 1). Is a palimpsest. The Greek text was scraped off the parchment and written over with sermons by Ephraemi.
 - 2). Contains parts of almost all NT books.
 - 3). Dated from the fifth century A.D.
 - e. Bezae (05, D)
 - 1). Bilingual manuscript containing Greek and Latin.
 - 2). Contains most of the Gospels plus Acts.
 - f. Washingtonianus (032, W)
 - 1). Dated from the fourth century.
 - 2). Contains the Gospels.

C. Miniscule or Cursive Manuscripts

1. Number is nearly 3,000.
2. Numbered from 1 on up.

3. Most date from the ninth to the sixteenth century.
 4. Two major families:
 - a. f¹ - consists of 1, 118, 131, 209, and 1582
 - b. f¹³ - consists of 13, 69, 124, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, and several others.
 - 1). Woman taken in adultery passage is found between Luke 21 and 22.
 5. KJV Bible was translated from manuscripts in this large body of cursives.
- D. Lectionaries
1. Number about 2,200.
 2. Date from the sixth to the eighth century.
 3. These manuscripts are what the Church used for the public reading of the text and for instruction.
- E. Versions
1. Syriac Version
 - a. Date to the second century with the Sinaitic and Curetonian Syriac texts.
 - b. Noted by "Syr" following by the various translations.
 - 1). Syr^P - Peshitta Syriac version - standard for the others.
 - 2). Syr^S, Syr^C - Sinaitic and Curetonian respectively.
 2. Old Latin
 - a. Dates to the middle of the second century, A.D. 150.
 - b. Two major versions, Vercellensis (it^a) and Bobiensis (it^k).
 3. Vulgate
 - a. Dates to around A.D. 400.
 - b. Translated by Jerome.
 - c. Two major versions, Wordsworth and White (Vg^{WW}) and Clementine (Vg^{Clem}).
 4. Coptic
 - a. Translation of the NT used in Egypt.
 - b. Denoted by "Cop" followed by the version, e.g. Cop^{sa} for the Sahidic Coptic version.

IV. The Principles of Textual Criticism³

A. Textual Evidence

1. The reading which best explains the rise of all others in a given passage is preferred.
2. Generally, the shorter reading is preferred.
3. Generally, the most difficult reading is preferred.

B. Total Consideration

1. Antiquity

Generally, the older the mss, the more preferred the mss since less transmissions errors are likely to have happened.

2. Number of Copies

Generally, the greater the number of mss that support a given reading, the more probably that reading is correct.

3. Variety

Generally, the greater the variety of witnesses to a given reading, the greater the probability that reading is correct.

4. Weight or Respectability

If a mss proves itself to be unreliable in several places, it loses its respectability.

5. Continuity

Does a particular reading have evidence down through the ages or was it abandoned long ago or did it arise very recently.

³ Ibid, pp. 158-164.

6. Context

Does a particular reading fit the overall context in which it is contained. An example is Codex D which varies considerably from all other mss in Luke 22-24.

7. Reasonableness

If a passage is geographically, historically, grammatically, or scientifically impossible, then it is not correct. For example, codices Aleph, I, I, N, and give the distance from Jerusalem to Emmaus as 160 furlongs instead of the correct 60 furlongs.

V. Translations

A. Major Historical Translations⁴

1. Tyndale

- a. Became available in England in 1526.
- b. Used as a basis Erasmus' Greek Text of 1522.
- c. Tyndale was burned at the stake in 1536 on charges of heresy. His heresy was making the Bible available to the average English person.

2. Coverdale Bible

- a. Produced by Miles Coverdale in 1535.
- b. Assisted Tyndale in his work of translation.
- c. The Coverdale translation was heavily dependent on the Tyndale Bible.
- d. Produced the first complete English translation of the Bible.

3. Matthew's Bible

- a. Consisted of a merging of Tyndale's work and Coverdale's work.
- b. It's author, John Rogers, was burned at the stake in 1555.

4. The Great Bible

- a. Miles Coverdale was commissioned to produce the Great Bible officially.
- b. The basis of this translation was Matthew's Bible.

5. The Geneva Bible

- a. Produced by Miles Coverdale, John Knox, and William Whittington while in Geneva escaping the persecutions of Mary, Queen of Scots.

⁴ Robert L. Thomas, *An Introductory Guide For Choosing English Bible Translations*, class notes for the Master's Seminary, Panorama City, CA.

- b. This was the Bible of William Shakespeare and the one brought over on the Mayflower.
 - c. It existed through some 180 printings, the last of which was in 1564.
6. The Bishop's Bible
- a. Authorized by the Church of England in response to the widespread acceptance of the Geneva Bible with its strong, Calvinistic notes.
7. The King James Bible
- a. Started by a suggestion by John Reynolds to King James that a new translation of the Bible would be a good idea.
 - b. Most popular Bible of all times because of its literary beauty and widespread acceptance.
8. English Revised Version (ERV)
- a. Produced in 1881-1885.
 - b. First translation to make extensive use of the textual criticism of Westcott and Hort.
 - c. Major texts underlying this translation is Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.
9. American Standard Version (ASV)
- a. Completed in 1901.
 - b. An "Americanized" version of the ERV.
10. Revised Standard Version (RSV)
- a. A revision of the ASV.
 - b. First protestant version accepted by the Catholic Church.
11. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
- a. A revision of the ASV of 1901.
 - b. Produced from a more conservative viewpoint than the RSV.
 - c. Translators were men who ascribed to a conservative theological viewpoint.
12. New King James Version (NKJV)
- a. A revision of the KJV in modern language.
 - b. Translators stuck with the wording of the KJV unless it was to update language.
 - c. Basic texts used were the same as those used to translate the KJV.

13. Douay Bible
 - a. Translated from the Latin Vulgate.
 - b. The English Bible of the Catholic Church.
14. New International Version (NIV)
 - a. A contemporary translation of the Bible.
 - b. Uses “dynamic equivalence” to give the sense of a phrase as opposed to the actual language of the phrase.
 - c. Was produced to replace the KJV as the major Bible of the English-speaking world.

B. Factors in Evaluating Translations

1. The Translators

Were the translators Bible-believing men or mere scholars?

2. The Text

What family of manuscripts were used as the basis for the translation?

3. The Method of Translation

Did the translators stick to a very literal translation or did they use dynamic equivalence to make the translation more understandable in modern language?

4. The Theology

Does the translation advance or espouse some errant form of theology? An example is the TEV translation of 1 Peter 2:2 which it translates “that ye may grow up and be saved.”

5. The Type and Style of Language Used

Does the translation use language that can be understood by the average person?