

# How We Got Our English Bible

## Session 7

### *Higher and Lower Criticism*

#### **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.

#### **Lower Criticism**

1. Deals with the manuscript evidence for a book.
2. Deals with the recovery of the original text of a book.

#### **The Historical Development of Textual Criticism**

##### *The Period of Reduplication (to A.D. 325)*

1. Copies of the autographs - to A.D. 150
2. Copies of the copies of the autographs - from A.D. 150 to A.D. 325.
  - a. Many mss were made hastily because of widespread persecution.
  - b. High quality mss were expensive and rare.
  - c. Some early attempts were made to perform textual criticism on the rising number of variants. Some notable examples are:
    - 1). Origin's *Hexapla*.
    - 2). Lucian Recension
    - 3). Theodore of Mopsuestia's Song of Songs.

##### *The Period of Standardization - A.D. 325 to A.D. 1500*

1. Introduction of higher quality vellum and parchment mss.
2. Uncials were replaced by miniscules.
3. The Biblical text remained relatively unchanged throughout this period as mss were carefully prepared.

##### *The Period of Crystallization - A.D. 1500 to A.D. 1648*

1. The text was standardized for mass printing.

2. The Old Testament used a standardized text from the Masoretes under the editorship of Jacob Ben Chayyim.
3. **Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros** (1437-1517) printed the first Greek text in 1502.
4. **Disideris Erasmus** (1466-1536) edited the first Greek New Testament to be published in March 1516. It later became the basis for the Textus Receptus and according to scholars was not reliably edited, not based on early mss, and hence not completely trustworthy. All of Erasmus' work was based on late Byzantine texts.
5. **Robert Estienne** published a Greek text in 1546, 1549, 1550, and 1551. This work, based on Erasmus, became the foundation of the Textus Receptus.
6. **Theodore de Beze** (1519-1605) succeeded Calvin in Geneva and produced numerous editions. Beza's text omitted D and D<sup>2</sup> since they differed from Erasmus' text.
7. **Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir** (1583-1652 and 1592-1652) produced the Textus Receptus which was very close to that of Stephanus' text, the basis of the KJV translation.

*The Period of Criticism and Revision - A.D. 1648 to the present*

1. The Period of Preparation - A.D. 1648 to A.D. 1831.
  - a. Characterized by the collection of textual mss.
  - b. Three recensions, or families, of New Testament texts were identified, Alexandrian, Eastern (Byzantine), and Western, by Salamo Semler.
2. The Period of Progression - A.D. 1831 - A.D. 1881
  - a. The "critical" text was introduced during this time. This text was constructed by a careful analysis of all available mss.
  - b. F. J. A. Hort and B. F. Westcott produced a two volume work called The New Testament in the Original Greek (1881-1882) which was the basis for the English Revised Version (ERV).
  - c. Westcott and Hort saw four families, Syrian, Western, Neutral, and Alexandrian. They favored the neutral text over the other families much to the criticism of others. This resulted in a very low view of the Textus Receptus.
  - d. The seeds of the Alexandrian vs. Byzantine text type wars started at this time.
3. The Period of Purification - A.D. 1881 to present.
  - a. Westcott and Hort's theories have been examined and altered to a large degree.
  - b. The rise of the UBS Greek Text occurred at this time. Mss were favored in the order Alexandrian, Caesarean, Western, and Byzantine.

## The Purpose of Textual Criticism<sup>1</sup>

### *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.

### *To Discover and Correct Transmission Errors*

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.
3. Types of Variants
  - a. **Haplography** - the writing of a word or letter only once when it should have been written more than once.
  - b. **Dittography** - the writing of a word or letter twice when it should have been written once - Ezekiel 48:16 reads five five hundred instead of the correct five hundred.
  - c. **Metathesis** - switching the order of two letters or words - Ezekiel 42:16 has five cubits reeds instead of five hundred reeds (a switched letter).
  - d. **Fusion** - the combining of two separate words into one.
  - e. **Fission** - the dividing up of a single word into two words.
  - f. **Homophony** - the substitution of one homonym for another - Isaiah 9:3 substitutes not for him.

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

- g. Misreading of similar letters - dalet and resh resemble each other very closely. The Dodanim of Genesis 10:4 appear as Rodanim in 1 Chronicles 1:7.
  - h. **Homoeoteleuton** - the accidental omission of an intervening passage because the ending of lines appeared identical.
  - i. **Homoeoarkton** - the accidental omission of an intervening passage because the beginning of two lines were similar.
  - j. Accidental omissions of words in situations where no repetition is involved.
  - k. Misreading vowel letters as consonants
4. Principles of Textual Criticism
- a. The older reading is preferred.
  - b. The more difficult reading is preferred - the tendency is to clarify rather than complicate a passage.
  - c. The shorter reading is preferred.
  - d. The reading which best explains all variants is to be preferred.
  - e. The reading with the widest geographical support is to be preferred.
  - f. The reading which most conforms to the style and diction of the author is to be preferred.
  - g. The reading which reflects no doctrinal bias is to be preferred.