

For slides see 05-06.TC-V.TT.PT-CT Presentation.pdf

## TEXTUAL CRITICISM [Slide 1]

### 1. Definition [Slide 2]

J. Harold Greenlee, New Testament Textual Criticism: “*Textual criticism is the study of copies of any written work of which the autograph (the original) is unknown, with the purpose of ascertaining the original text.*”

[Slide 3] Textual criticism gathers and compares the available manuscripts (mss), and applies objective criteria to try to determine which alternative of a given variant is most likely the reading of the original.

### 2. The necessity for textual criticism [Slide 4]

#### a. The large number and diversity of manuscripts (mss)

- 1.) There are 5,338 mss, no two exactly alike, with over 400,000 total variants.
- 2.) Geographical distribution, with the effects of climate on preservation
- 3.) Historical distribution, with the effects of church history on proliferation, preservation, and duplication
- 4.) The influence of copying methods

#### b. Reality check: [Slide 5]

- 1.) 62.9% of the verses the New Testament have no variants!

We have total certainty as to the reading of almost two-thirds of New Testament verses.

- 2.) Of over 400,000 total variants, none affects a major doctrine!

One-third of verses and 5,338 mss presents thousands of variants, yet no major doctrine is at stake. (Proponents of the different views concerning textual theories, texts, translation, and versions would do well to remember this point!)

#### c. Kinds of textual variants [Slide 6]

##### Quotes from scribes [Slide 7]

- 1.) Unintentional scribal errors [Slide 8]

- a.) Different possible word divisions – The earliest mss were written in *scriptio continua*, an uncial script with no word breaks and few reading aids. This led to differences in word division that affect meaning.

**Mark 10:40** – Jesus’ response to James’ and John’s request to sit on his right and left is either: “This is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared”; or “This is not mine to give: for others it has been prepared.” The difference is between “ΑΛΛ ΟΙΣ” (‘all’ ‘ois – “but to those,” possibly including James and John) and “ΑΛΛΟΙΣ” (‘allois – “to others,” excluding James and John).

- b.) Confusion of letters [Slide 9] – The similarity of many uncial letters to each other is another source of variants. E.g.: Θ Ο C, Π Γ T, Λ Α Δ, ΛΛ Μ

**Jude 12** – ΑΓΑΠΑΙΣ (love feasts) was mistaken for ΑΠΑΤΑΙΣ (deceptions).

If a resulting variant made no sense, the next copyist would often alter the word or phrase to try to correct the problem, producing more variants. In Jude 12, a later scribe then altered Alexandrinus from “your” to “their” to resolve the confused meaning.

- c.) Dittography (repetition of letters) and haplography (omission of letters) [Slide 10]

**1 Thessalonians 2:7** – One reading translates, “We became gentle,” as in “ΕΓΕΝΗΘΗΜΕΝΗΠΙΟΙ.” Variants read “We became babes,” as in “ΕΓΕΝΗΘΗΜΕΝΝΗΠΙΟΙ.” (Here notice the addition of an “N.”) The question is which reading is original? Was an “N” added or omitted? Either way, it could have been caused by an error in sight or hearing.

- d.) Signs of fatigue [Slide 11] – Certainly scribal fatigue had a part in many errors, but some can be attributed only to fatigue.

**Romans 3:20** – Two 9<sup>th</sup> century mss, one probably copied from the other (they both lack Hebrews and have been traced to locations within 50 km of each other on the German-Swiss border), have an incorrect noun form that changes “through the law comes the knowledge of sin” to “through the law of knowledge of sin,” a sentence fragment which makes no sense.

- e.) Homoioteleuton (*same-ending*) and homoioarcton (*same-beginning*) [Slide 12] – When words, phrases, sentences, or lines in a ms began or ended with similar letters or words, it was easy for the eye to omit or repeat text.

**Matthew 5:19-20** – The end of the first sentence of v. 19, the end of v. 19 itself, and the end of v. 20 all end similarly: “...in the kingdom of heaven.” Two mss (ℵ\*, W) omit the last half of v. 19, and one ms (D) omits all of v. 20!

**John 17:15** – One ms (B, 4<sup>th</sup> century) omits the following words in brackets: “I do not pray that You might take them from the [world, but that You might keep them from] the evil one.” The text of the ms from which the scribe copied could have been arranged thus:

οὐκ ἔρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ  
κόσμου, ἀλλ’ ἵνα τηρήσῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ  
πονηροῦ. ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰσὶν...

I do not pray that You might take **them from the**  
world, but that You might keep **them from the**  
evil one. They are not of the world...

It is easy to see how the eye of the tired scribe in his tedious work might skip a line and not realize the reversal of the meaning of the sentence!

- f.) Itacisms [Slide 13] – This refers to the similarity or confusion of the pronunciation of the vowels of Koine Greek. According to Metzger (The Text of the New Testament, p. 191), the vowels η, ι, υ and the diphthongs ει, οι, υι, and η were pronounced alike, all sounding like long *ee* as in *feet*.

**1 Corinthians 15:54** – The statement, “Death is swallowed up in victory (*nikos*)” appears in 2 mss (P<sup>46</sup> and B) as “Death is swallowed up in conflict (*neikos*).” Both words were pronounced “*neekos*.”

- g.) Punctuation [Slide 14] – The uncial mss had no punctuation. As punctuation was added in time to improve clarity and readability, interpretive decisions had to be made where the placement of a comma or period would alter meaning.

**John 1:3-4** – Here the placement of the period produces either of these two readings, depending on whether it is before or after  $\delta \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \gamma \omicron \nu \epsilon \nu$ :

“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being. that has come into being. In Him was life...” (NASB)

“All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life...” (NRSV)

- h.) Variants of a single letter [Slide 15] – Even the change of a single letter would produce a different word or word form, with a different meaning.

**Luke 2:14** – The praise of the angels concludes either as:

“And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (NKJV), or

“And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” (NASB)

The difference is one letter, a *sigma*, on the end of the last word.

**Revelation 1:5** – This verse reads, “To Him who loved us and released (*lusanti*) us from our sins...” The following variant appeared in the 9<sup>th</sup> century: “To Him who loved us and washed (*lousanti*) us from our sins...” This variant may be caused by itacism (see f.) above) and is a good example of a variant that has no serious theological impact because both are true and can be demonstrated from other passages.

## 2.) Intentional scribal alterations

[Slide 16] Jerome (c. 347-420 AD) complained of copyists who “write down not what they find, but what they think is the meaning; and while they attempt to rectify the errors of others, they merely expose their own.” (Metzger, p. 195, note 3)

The Greeks did not share the view of the Jews, for whom every letter was sacred. The Hebrew text of the Old Testament is alike in all mss, except for unintentional errors. For Greeks it was the message that was sacred, so they demonstrated a lesser concern for details, as long as the message was preserved.

[Slide 17] This view was expressed by Porphyry (c. 232-305 AD), a Neo-Platonist philosopher contemporary with the early years of the copying and circulating of the New Testament writings. Speaking of his anthology of oracles, Porphyry “appeals to the gods to attest that he has neither added nor deleted anything. He has only corrected readings that were faulty, improving their clarity, supplying minor omissions, and omitting irrelevant accretions: ‘*But the meaning of the words I have preserved faithfully.*’” (Emphasis mine; Aland & Aland, The Text of the New Testament, p. 291)

During this same time period, some scribes, influenced by the same mindset, took the liberty of altering or adding to the text for various reasons.

- a.) Explanatory supplements [Slide 18] – Sometimes a copyist would try to clarify things that were not readily apparent.

**John 5:3b-4** – “...waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.”

These words are not found in the oldest mss and were probably inserted as an explanation as to why the sick man would want to get into the water and why it was stirred. (v. 7)

- b.) Stylistic improvements [Slide 19] – With the probable exception of Luke, all the NT writers were Jews. Their native tongue was most likely Aramaic, similar to Hebrew but quite different from Greek. Most of them were “uneducated and untrained men” (Acts 4:13), and their use of the Greek language often reflected it. Copyists would sometimes revise Semitisms and correct poor grammar.

**Revelation 1:4** – “From Him who is and who was and who is to come...” The preposition “from” requires that its object be in the genitive case, but John uses the nominative. Three different variants occur in the genitive as attempts to fix the grammar, including “from God” and “from the Lord.”

**Revelation 1:5b-6** – The use of “and” joining the finite verb “he made” with the preceding participles “who loves” and “who released” is fine in Hebrew or Aramaic, but not in Greek. Scribes (10<sup>th</sup> century at the earliest) mended the syntax by changing the finite verb “he made” to the participle “who made.”

- c.) Harmonization [Slide 20] – Where there were differences between the synoptic gospels, there was a tendency to harmonize wording and details.

**Luke 23:38** – Here a number of mss insert the fact that the inscription on Jesus’ cross was written “in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew,” a harmonization which comes from John 19:20.

This tendency is worsened if the scribe had a faulty recollection of the parallel passage with which he was harmonizing!

- d.) Synonyms [Slide 21] – Where copyists felt the freedom to correct grammar and harmonize accounts, it is no surprise that many variants involve synonyms.

**Matthew 17:25-26** – “He *said*, ‘Yes.’ And when he came into the house, Jesus *spoke* to him first, *saying*, ‘What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?’ When Peter *said*, ‘From strangers,’ Jesus *said* to him, ‘Then the sons are exempt.’” The italicized words translate three different Greek words that are generally interchangeable, and the variants in these verses among mss demonstrate that.

- e.) Perceived historical and geographical difficulties [Slide 22] – Sometimes copyists assumed there was an error of time or place in the text.

**Mark 8:31** – Jesus said that he must “be killed and after three days rise again.” This seems to involve a chronological difficulty, so some copyists changed “after three days” to “on the third day.”

**John 1:28** – “These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.” Origen (c. 185-254 AD), in Book IV of his commentary on John, claims that there was no Bethany near the Jordan, and substituted Bethabara. This reading found its way into many mss, including the Textus Receptus, and appears in the KJV and NKJV.

- f.) The tenacity of the textual tradition [Slide 23] – Once a reading was included, it had a tendency to remain. Even if a reading was doubtful, it would be included, sometimes in the margin or with a marginal note. A later copyist might reinsert it or leave out the note. This is understandable since it would seem safer to include something extra than to exclude something genuine, because if it were excluded now, it might be lost forever. But if included, at least in the margin, it would be available if future study called for it.

[Slide 24]

- g.) Mixed readings (conflation) [Slide 25] – Sometimes the different wordings of the gospels would be combined, or if a scribe had two manuscripts which differed, both readings would be included.

**Matthew 13:57** – Jesus declared that “a prophet is not without honor except in hometown.” (a word-for-word rendering of the Greek that does not make smooth English) Mark 6:4 and Luke 4:24 read “in *his* hometown,” while John 4:44 reads “in *own* hometown.” These three different readings were mixed together so that Matthew reads in several mss, “in *his own* hometown.”

**Colossians 1:12** – Some mss read “who has *qualified* us,” while others read “who has *called* us.” Codex Vaticanus (B, 4<sup>th</sup> century) alone reads “who *called and qualified* us...”

- h.) Doctrinal concerns [Slide 26] – Where the scribe perceived a doctrinal problem, he might add or change something to relieve the concern. Also, because of heresies, the copyist might strengthen the orthodox position by altering the text.

**Matthew 5:22** – Jesus said, “Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court...” Jesus often used hyperbole to emphasize a point (see vv. 29-30), but when a scribe apparently felt that this saying contradicted Ephesians 4:26, “Be angry, and yet do not sin,” and was inconsistent with Jesus’ own behavior in Mark 3:5 (“looking around at them with anger”), and driving the traders from the temple (Matthew 21:12ff; John 2:13ff), he changed it to read, “Everyone who is angry with his brother *without cause*...” (thus a 7<sup>th</sup> century “corrector” of  $\aleph$  et al.)

**Luke 2:41, 43** – To protect and emphasize the virgin birth, in a few mss the words “Joseph and Mary” (v. 41) and “Joseph and his mother” (v. 43) were substituted for “his parents.” Also in vv. 33 and 48 “Joseph” was substituted for references to Jesus’ “father.”

- i.) Disturbed texts [Slide 27] – Several New Testament texts show major differences among the mss.

**Mark 16** – Mark’s gospel has three different endings: one at v. 8, one at v. 20, and the so-called “shorter ending,” a concluding paragraph after v. 8 instead of vv. 9-20.

**John 7:53 – 8:11** – The account of the woman caught in adultery has weak ms support and none before the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. Types of manuscripts (Before printing press) [Slide 28]

In the course of time, as copies were made, circulated, and again copied, manuscripts that shared characteristics of a particular time and/or location were categorized.

- a. Alexandrian [Slide 29] – Scribes associated with or employed by the scriptorium associated with the catechetical school at Alexandria, Egypt, who were trained philologists, grammarians, and textual critics, were the first to attempt to recover the original text in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

Exemplars include  $\aleph$  Sinaiticus and B Vaticanus (4<sup>th</sup> century), T (5<sup>th</sup> century), L (8<sup>th</sup>), 33 (9<sup>th</sup>), 1739 (10<sup>th</sup> century copy of a 4<sup>th</sup> century ms), and 579 (13<sup>th</sup>). Almost all of the early papyrus mss from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries are of this type.

- b. Byzantine (aka Majority Text) [Slide 30] – This text-type appeared at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and grew in popularity until it was the dominant text type throughout Christendom. According to Jerome, it originated with Lucian of Antioch as a recension (a purposely created edition). It is characterized by smoothness of language achieved by the removal of obscurities and awkward grammatical constructions, and by the conflation of variant readings.

[Slide 31] The abundance of mss of this type is the result of a combination of several factors:

1. During the Diocletian persecutions (c. 303 AD) many mss throughout the Roman Empire were destroyed. This eliminated many of the oldest copies of the NT.
2. [Slide 32] With the conversion of Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313 AD), which proclaimed religious toleration, trained bishops and copies of the Bible were widely in immediate demand. Antioch in Syria became the source of bishops who brought with them copies of Lucian’s text. This text thus became the standard text and formed the basis for the Byzantine text type.
3. [Slide 33] The development of the monastic movement during the 4<sup>th</sup> century provided a place for scholars and scribes to study and copy the scriptures.
4. [Slide 34] The stability and spread of the Holy Roman Empire during the Middle Ages brought Roman Catholicism to a wide geographical area, and with it the Byzantine text.
5. [Slide 35] Furthermore, the 9<sup>th</sup> century development of a minuscule (cursive) script (see Minuscule.pdf) was combined with the use of scriptoria.

[Slide 36] These combined factors resulted in the majority of mss being of the Byzantine text type. The oldest exemplars include Q (5<sup>th</sup> century), N and O (6<sup>th</sup>).

- c. “Western text” [Slide 37] – a popular or “uncontrolled” text characterized by scribal emendations intended to harmonize accounts, eliminate difficulties, or emphasize a doctrinal perspective.

Exemplars are few, since its inferiority was apparent: D (5<sup>th</sup> century), and sister mss 614 (13<sup>th</sup>) and 2412 (12<sup>th</sup>).

[Slide 38] Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, most scholars (influenced by Westcott and Hort) have endorsed Alexandrian priority.

The development and application of principles of textual criticism over the last 200 years has produced what is known as the critical text.

The critical text is the basis for all modern translations except the NKJV.

[Slide 39]

#### **4. Printed Greek Texts (After printing press) [Slide 40]**

##### a. Textus Receptus

- 1.) [Slide 41] Erasmus (1516 and five later editions) was the first to produce a Greek New Testament using the printing press. He lived from 1466 to 1536. He was known as the “Prince of Humanists.”

[Slide 42] Educated at University of Paris, an important center of scholasticism; Influenced by renaissance humanism; Ordained a priest, took monastic vows as an Augustinian monk; A critic of the Roman church, but also refused to join the reformers.

[Slides 43 and 44] “Holy to the Lord” “Not to be sold!”

- 2.) [Slide 45] Editing was completed in only a few months’ time in order to get it printed and on the market before the Complutensian Polyglot, a Hebrew, Greek, and Latin parallel Bible. The printing of the polyglot had begun in 1514, but it was awaiting papal authorization. Erasmus’ haste resulted in “innumerable errors,” many of which were pointed out by his own contemporaries. In Erasmus’ own words, it was “thrown together rather than edited.”

[Slides 46 and 47] Erasmus used fewer than six mss that were available in Basel, which were from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and all of the Byzantine text type, the latest and poorest of the major text types.

[Slide 48] Furthermore, he was unable to find any ms of the Revelation of John in Basel, so he borrowed one from his friend Johann Reuchlin. Because its ending was mutilated, Erasmus translated Revelation 22:16-21 from Latin back into Greek. (see Aland & Aland, The Text of the New Testament, p. 3ff.) There were also instances where he preferred the Latin reading, so he translated other passages from the Vulgate as well.

- 3.) [Slide 49] Stephanus (1546, 1549, 1550, 1551) and Theodore de Beza (nine editions between 1565 and 1604) produced multiple editions all based on Erasmus’ work.

- 4.) [Slide 50] The Elzevir Brothers produced seven editions between 1624 and 1678.  
 [Slide 51] The preface of the 1633 edition contained the words in Latin: “Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus.” (“The *text* which is now *received* by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted.” This is the source of the common title *Textus Receptus*.)
- 5.) [Slide 52] The primary texts behind the KJV (and the NKJV) were Beza’s editions of 1588-89 and 1598. By this time, many of Erasmus’ errors had been corrected, but the text was still essentially 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine.
- 6.) The *Textus Receptus* (TR) became entrenched as the standard Greek text, and resisted all efforts of scholars to challenge its supremacy. Over time, more and more manuscripts were discovered and studied, and more questions were raised concerning the accuracy of the TR and its underlying Byzantine text.

b. The Critical Text

- 1.) History records many who studied the available mss in search of the original text from the late 17<sup>th</sup> through the late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. During this period, methods of textual criticism were refined and the way paved for the systematic study of the mss evidence through the work of men such as Bengel (1687-1752) [Slide 53], Wettstein (1693 – 1754) [Slide 54], and Griesbach (1745-1812) [Slide 55].
- 2.) The late 18<sup>th</sup> through the late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries finally brought about the overthrow of the TR. Lachmann (1793-1851) [Slide 56] was the first to break totally with the TR and produce a text in 1831 based solely on the comparison of ms evidence. However, Lachmann was not trying to find the original text; rather he believed he could reconstruct a copy of the 4<sup>th</sup> century text.
- 3.) Tischendorf (1815-1874) [Slide 57] believed he could get all the way back to the original text. Beginning at age 25, he scoured Europe and the Near East searching for and examining any mss he could find. He is known for the discovery of Codex Siniaticus (4<sup>th</sup> century) in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai as well as 21 other lesser uncials. In all, he published eight editions of the NT text, the last of which was reprinted as recently as 1965.
- 4.) Westcott [Slide 58] and Hort [Slide 59] produced The New Testament in the Original Greek in 1881. They built upon the work of numerous predecessors and further refined the principles and procedures of textual criticism.
- 5.) Progress continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the work of von Soden (1852-1914) and Nestle (1851-1913) [Slide 60]. Nestle’s text has appeared in 27 editions, and is the standard text that underlies most modern translations. This text is the same as the United Bible Societies’ 4<sup>th</sup> edition, but with extensive critical notes.