

New Testament Textual Criticism: The Craft, Transmission and Corruption of the Sacred Writings

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Date: 16 March 2014

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[0 : 00] The New Testament textual criticism. Textual criticism is the study of any written work, the original of which no longer survives, with the purpose of recovering the original text from those copies which have chance to survive.

So it is the study of written text, and usually one would study the copies of this text because usually the original work will not exist or no longer survives.

And the one aim is to get as closely as possible to the original text. So the purpose is, number one, to reconstruct the original wording of the biblical text because we are talking about the New Testament textual criticism.

And number two, the purpose will be to establish the history of the transmission of the text through the centuries. And usually the New Testament textual criticism and textual critics' tasks will be to compare extant manuscripts, and there are many, and I'll tell you how many later on.

So to compare the manuscripts, first of all, and then to develop a critical text that lists varying readings called the critical apparatus.

[1 : 30] So within many manuscripts, there are differences, some differences, many differences, some minor, some major, and the textual critics' job and task is to compare those manuscripts and develop a critical text that they would think and they would discover that it is as much as close to the original reading as possible.

So textual criticism not only provides an idea of how the original text may have read, but it also provides knowledge of how, in fact, it did read, and in some respects, how it was interpreted at various centuries of faith at various times in Christian history.

So it will now, just to show us how the original text might have been read when it was first written, but it also shows us because of the textual criticism or textual critics will be mindful of the transmission of the text that will see in different centuries and different centers of Christian history that how the text might have been written or copied and interpreted and transmitted throughout the history.

So it is very, so it's the combination of science, history, and literary all together. That's why this topic is very fascinating.

So the text, let's go back, go to the text first, how the ancient people wrote thousands and thousands of years ago.

[3 : 13] First thing that we can refine from the New Testament text or New Testament manuscripts is that they were written on papyrus or papyri in plural.

Papyrus was an aquatic plant that grows most successfully in the still shallow of marsh lands. The tallest will go anywhere between 12 to 15 feet.

So as you can see in the picture, those are the papyrus plants, papyri plants. And in the ancient days, especially for the Egypt, it was very important for everyday life.

They will make sandals out of it, baskets or ropes from the tougher parts of the plant. And Herodotus, from the 5th century historian, tells us that they even eat these plants when they are baked in the oven.

But about 3000 BC, from Egypt, they start making these papyrus plants into writing materials.

[4 : 30] That's where the papyrus first invented. Pliny the Elder from Rome, from Roman history, accounts a description of how papyrus was developed and manufactured.

However, it seems like his account is not really, really clear because he overlooks some of the height and width and dimension of papyri as well as the process of gluing the papyrus together. So, whether he's either incorrect in his account or maybe he's just overlooking some of the stuff that I'm uncertain, but in history, these manufacturing process have been accounted in one way or another.

What you're looking at here, those two papyrus, one is fragment and one is one of the leaves from the manuscript is P52, which is on the left-hand side, the fragment.

It's the small little fragment. I'll tell you more about it a little later, but it's where textual critics think that this is the earliest fragment of the New Testament from the Gospel of John.

[5 : 55] Papyrus 46, which is on the right, is one of the leaves from Paul's Gospels, and it is the earliest extant manuscript especially for the Paul's letter, which is called P46, and this is the one that is currently located in Chester Beatty Library in Dublin Island, as well as Michigan Library in Michigan in the United States.

So we'll talk about this a little later. And the text from Papyrus, which have their life from anywhere from 3000 BC to about up to 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries AD, they were replaced by this parchment called, it's also writing material that was made out of animal skins, made from skins of cattle, sheep, goats, and antelopes, and so forth.

And they were adopted and replaced papyrus from about the 4th century. So 4th century on, we don't see many papyrus any longer, and parchment, they replaced most of papyrus and became the major writing materials until the paper comes along.

It is also called as vellum sometimes, interchangeably, but usually that's how most scholars take it as, but it's more specifically used to describe a finer or better quality of parchment.

Parchment came about 2nd century BC from Asia Minor, and it was because the king of Egypt was trying to stop the exporting the papyrus to Asia Minor because one of the kings from Pergamon was trying to build a library just like one in Alexandria in 2nd century BC that king of Egypt Ptolemy, or not Ptolemy, yeah, Ptolemy, Ptolemy, the Epiphanes was trying to stop that, so the king of Pergamon was trying to make another way of writing, record the writings, so that's where historians think that Parchment came from.

[8 : 46] So the Parchment became one of the major manuscripts for the New Testament from 4th century on, and you'll see them on the screen soon.

And then for the New Testament text of Christum, one of the things that we have to talk about is how the style of writing or scripts, as well as the hands.

There are two types of scripts and hands for the New Testament texts. One is majorschool, and the other one is minischools.

Easy, right? Minischools were letterbox usually usually bookend capital letters, and some of them adopted, some of the early cursive, like cursive script as well, but mostly just like the box letters like that on the left.

And then miniscules are the cursive, many letters with long curses of going up or down for each letter. So those miniscules were up to about 9th and 10th century AD that were still used, and then all of a sudden miniscules takes over from late 9th century and on, and most of the manuscripts from there on are all cursive, and you will see that in some of the pictures that I'll show from the manuscripts.

[10 : 33] Another characteristics of New Testament textual criticism or New Testament manuscripts is the nomina sacra.

Nomina sacra is, just like for Judaism, the name of Yahweh was taken as holy and sacred, and Jewish people will not say it or not say the name of Yahweh and they'll write it differently whenever they write in the Hebrew manuscripts, they'll have a ritual and they'll not write it in the same way as they write other writings.

New Testament scribes also adopted similar practices. So if you look at some of the words like God, Lord, Jesus, Christ, Son, Spirit, and so on, you'll see that they are contracted in either two words, just the first and last letter for God, Lord, Jesus, Christ, and Son, and first two letters and last letter for Spirit, David, Cross, and Mother, and then first letter and last two letters for Father, Mother, Father, Israel, and Savior, and then first syllabus and last syllabus for Jerusalem and Heaven.

I mean, this is not always exactly the same throughout the manuscript, but for most of the manuscripts follow, or many manuscripts follow this kind of practice.

So the way the early Christian scribes and how they look at the text, this shows that it is very significant.

[12:41] So from text, let's move on to transmission. For the copies of New Testament manuscripts, and I'm just restraining myself just to Greek manuscripts, because if we include Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and other manuscripts, the world is too big, and we cannot really contain it in our studies today.

So this is just an estimate, it's not an exact number, but there are about 5600 plus Greek New Testament manuscripts.

There are about 125 papyri, period from the 2nd century to 8th century. In the magical manuscripts, there are about 284 over the period of the 3rd to 11th century.

In the miniscule manuscripts, there are about 2,820 over the period of the 8th and 9th centuries and onward. lectionaries are very important manuscripts as well, especially for New Testament studies, and there are about 2,377 over the period of 7th century up to 19th or on.

1,820 and for today's time's sake, I'm just bringing you a few manuscripts to your attention.

[14:22] The first one is P46. I mentioned it before. It's from the 3rd century. It's the earliest extent Paul's letters that we have, or copies of Paul's letters that we have.

Scholars, they estimate about 8,200 to be where it was copied, when it was copied. What's interesting is the list, the order of the books.

So it starts off with Romans and then includes Hebrew, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1st Thessalonians.

So it does not include 2nd Thessalonians, and then we don't know whether the originally for the P46, whether it included Philemon or not.

So that's P46. And one of the interesting aspects of this manuscript is that it's missing some portions of Romans, and then the doxology of the last part of Romans, which is chapter 16, verses 25 to 27, comes after the chapter 15, instead of end of chapter 16, which is interesting.

[15:49] the next one is P25. It's a fragment, actually. It's not the full manuscript. But significance of this is if we think that Gospel of John might have been written anywhere between 80-60 to 90, possibly right before or right after the fall of Jerusalem temple in 80-70, then if this manuscript is approximately about early 2nd century, some goes as early as 125, some other scholars are a little conservative, maybe 150 or middle of it, or later on.

But if this manuscript or this fragment is as early as 2nd century, it's not that far off from the original Gospel of John, if Gospel of John was written anywhere between 60-90.

It's the Gospel of John chapter 18, and front of the fragment is verses 31-33, and the back of the fragment is just verses 37-38.

So, it is very significant when this was discovered. then we move on to the codices or codex.

First one, I think this is one of the most significant discoveries in the New Testament studies, because this codex, Codex Sinaiticus, contains the whole Bible, Old Testament, as well as New Testament in Greek.

[17:41] It's from the 4th century Greek codex. So, this is the earliest entire Bible in a book, in one book. That's why this was very significant.

This was discovered at the monastery at St. Catherine on Mount Sinai by Tishendorf. Tishendorf. And what's interesting about it is his story.

He was journeyed through Egypt and Mediterranean to find manuscripts. He was textual critics.

And he went to this monastery just looking for manuscripts.

And he discovered this basket with some of the manuscripts in it. And he didn't know what they were. And the monks told him that those were ready because it's winter time for their fireplace.

So they were just ready next to the fireplace. And all these manuscripts were about to be burned.

And they also shared with Tishendorf that they already burned about a basket or two.

[18:59] beforehand. So he stopped the monks and he took a look at the manuscripts and he found that these were Greek subjugion of some of the Old Testament books.

So he took some of those in order to transcribe them. And ever since then we have the discovery of Codex Sinaiticus, one of the most significant manuscripts manuscripts in the New Testament history.

The recovery of the whole book has taken over the period of years and years and eventually long history about 1970s.

It was completed and presented to British museum or British library now. and it's about 15 inch by 13 and a half inches size and currently located at British library.

So this is very significant discovery for New Testament studies. next one is oh yes still Codex Sinaiticus not next one.

[20 : 28] So if you look at this one right here it's not just the text but how it's written is very I mean just beauty of it. And it says over there in Jeremiah so this is the end of Jeremiah book of Jeremiah and they have this beautiful page where with a drawing as well as a title of the book Jeremiah right there so it's just the beauty of it.

It's great. The next Codex is Codex Alexandrinus this is the 5th century Greek Codex it's also majuscular manuscripts just like the Sinaiticus it was from the 5th century Greek Codex and it was presented to the King Charles I in 1628 by by Patriarch Cyril Lucar of the Constantinople it contains the Old Testament as well as the New Testament except Matthew up to chapter 25 6 so it doesn't have that and some part of John 6, 7, and 8 and 2nd Corinthians 4 to 12 is missing as well but it includes 1st and 2nd Clement and but missing other book as well the significance of this this Codex is that its Gospels copies are not as reliable but the rest of like epistles Paul's epistles general epistles are pretty good reliable text but another significance for this one is that the Revelation text is the best in this Codex so those New Testament scholars as well as New Testament students who work in Revelation textual criticism will go to this text to see the differences between this text as well to others as for manuscript we're going to look at just one more manuscript which is once they name the manuscripts like Codex Sinaiticus with Aleph Hebrew Aleph Hebrew letter first letter and then they went on to name or signify the manuscript with alpha beta delta and so on and so forth and then when they ran out of those Greek alphabets they couldn't find they couldn't use any other alphabet so they started just using numbers they were creative that way so they went from 0-1 0-2 and then it went on and now we have this one is manuscript 81 this is 5th century Greek codex well that second point is not true I think that was codex Alexandrianus sorry about that those mistyped should have been taken out but it contains and this is that's the manuscript so it's cursive and it's written in 1044 so it's about 11th century and this one's significance is that the book of

Acts in this text is very reliable especially book of Acts there there are manuscripts that have longer contents more contents whereas this manuscript goes close to shorter reliable text it's currently at British library as well so this is one of the examples of cursive minuscule manuscript and the point about 5th century Greek codex and all that those are supposed to be the one slide before not for this one so sorry about that okay so those are the manuscripts just some examples now we move on to the interesting part of this study is the corruption of the sacred writings in

[25 : 39] New Testament textual criticism there are external as well as internal criteria that texture critics will look at the text and look at the variations and decide which one is more reliable which text or which variation is more reliable or more close to the original text or not and how they decide is complex than what I'm about to delineate but this is where they begin first is external criteria there are a family of texts there are text types so one is there are three text types Alexandrian Western and Byzantine and usually if the text if variation shows in Iofandrian and Western that that will be the most reliable text that they usually assume if it only shows in Byzantine then they usually have some skepticism about that variation so that's external criteria so there's a family of text types and internal criteria is more difficult reading is considered to be close to original and more shorter reading is considered to be close to original and then someone like

Paul the apostle the characteristic of that author that whether that author most likely would use such such text or such wording or phrases or not will take also into consideration so with some of these internal criteria I'm just listing three but there are it's longer than this but examine some of these criteria texture critic will decide whether which variation would be most likely to be the original then why are there corruptions in the sacred writings in transmission it's because we are not computers but human beings right there are unintentional changes or errors mistakes so errors of sight how you gonna I mean so this is like this is a simple example of most of the magic goals will look like they don't have punctuation they don't have spaces

I mean those spaces and punctuation would adopt it later on so how are you gonna read that is it God is nowhere or God is now here so that kind of so when scribe copies the magic school manuscript they could easily make some of these mistakes errors of sight there are there are also missed copies extant skip you know the I goes one to the other or because of some similar words

so you skip it or some manuscripts have repetition they have two words like Jesus Jesus or something like that so those are unintentional changes they're also intentional changes they look at the Greek some of the Greek in the New Testament they're not as grammatical good as some of the classical writings so some scribes they look at the manuscript and the way it was written when it's grammatically not correct some of them correct that right like

ESL student writing a paper like me and then English teacher will correct and give corrections that could happen and that happened and some some others they change the text for liturgical reasons for example in Matthew 6:13 some manuscript or one manuscript has amen at the end of at the end of the end of the verse and some other scribes they'll change the text for harmonizing the text like Mark chapter 1 verse 2 it says Isaiah in the most likely Isaiah in the original as Mark Mark quotes Malachi as well as Isaiah passage and because the Malachi passage comes before Isaiah passage some scribes they change Isaiah to prophet or some scribes add Isaiah the prophet so that could happen and some for theological reason they add or remove the text for example Romans chapter 8:1 some manuscripts they added not circumcised according to the flesh but according to the spirit because that phrase comes prior chapters so those are some reasons why intentionally scribes might do some changes or correct the text so what about

[31:41] New Testament textual criticism what is its fruit what has happened what's the result of it how can we apply to the life of the church and then what are some examples of continuous scholarly endeavor and how can we appreciate it so first thing is Eddie Teal Critical Meier this is the project that these three institutions institute for New Testament textual research from Germany College of Theology of Wuppertel and Bethel in Germany as well as International Great New Testament Project from Birmingham University these three institutes they continue to endeavor working with manuscripts and list all the variations and try to list all the variations as much as possible and try to list all the manuscripts as many as possible to their critical edition it's called

Editio Critica Meier so far because of this project all the general epistles Catholic epistles have been they were able to publish this critical edition of the text the significance of this is that because of this edition it will be adopted to the Greek New Testament later on and take it into consideration and the other fruit of textual criticism and New Testament textual critics are these Greek New Testaments where all the Bible students at seminaries or places like region college if they are students of the New Testament they will have to study out of and read from this one is Nestle Allen we call it NA28 because originally it was initiated by scholars like Nestle and Kurt Allen and Metzger and others and this is the most recent New Testament Greek New Testament from German Bible Society considering more recent findings of manuscripts and variation and so on and so forth so that's one of them and United Bible Society 4th revision of or we call UBS 4 is very similar very close to almost same as the NA not the 28 but 27th edition of the Nestle Allen Greek Bible but both of these Greek Bibles the New

Testament students are scholars they will use for their studies and research and so on and so forth so those two projects are those these two fruits are very significant in New Testament studies and for the life of preaching or ex-Jesus New Testament textual criticism also brings some clarity to the text and its context for example 1st Corinthians 13 chapter 13 verse 3 if you look at ESV Bible or King James version it says I deliver up my body to be burned this is a love passage but then if you look at NIV or some of the more reliable manuscripts it says I give over my body to hardship so that I may boast it's just one word different just if you look at it kaute somai and kaute somai or two words different so there's teta and omicron and there's he and omicron and this is so there's two letter differences but because of the manuscript variations or more reliable text scholars found so newer

NIV will have I give over my body so that I may boast instead of to be burned so most likely the later scribes in history used the to be burned because that was the more later modern of Christian history or modern happened that way in Christian history so it could have been that differences if you look at 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 20 if you look at King James version as well as New King James version it says glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are gods but if you look at our ESP study it just has glorify God in your body and just like one of the internal criteria the shorter reading is better reading so according to some of the manuscripts more reliable manuscripts most likely glorify

[37:39] God in your body the shorter reading is the original because that chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians was about what's going on in the churches in Corinthians especially how they view

sexuality and so on and so forth so most likely the shorter reading is more likely to be the original than the longer one so when a preacher or Bible teacher prepares their teaching or sermon these are some of the process they go through and they we look at the New Testament text and then because it has a variation apparatus on the bottom of the text we look at that and see what's most likely to be the original and therefore gives us more clarity in our teaching and the text and our teaching and more recently and

I'm almost done in 2012 there has been some scholarly claim to have discovered who claimed to discover that they discovered this manuscript it's in Coptic Egyptian Coptic and they claimed this to be from the 4th century Coptic papyrus and then line 3 it says I don't read Coptic yet I'm in the process of doing that but learning that but on the 3 third line it says deny Mary is not worthy of it and then on the fourth line it says Jesus said to them my wife and then the last or fifth line says she can be my disciple so out of this that's why this papyrus got the name of gospel of Jesus wife this might have been suggests that Jesus might have had wife Mary Macklin in this case because on line three Mary is not worthy of it but what textual critics did is they investigate and examine this manuscript and scholars like Francis Watson and others they discover and some Egyptologists as well discovered that this is most likely a forgery it's a fake manuscript so there was supposed to be a publication on this from the scholar that discovered this manuscript but that went on hold after that and this kind of textual critical work and endeavor I think is still to this day is still important and significant and I think this is just one example of many that shows how this text is still reliable and truthful and because this manuscript especially some of the

I didn't include line one and two and the other lines but those texts are very similar to the Gospel of Thomas so this forgery most likely just copy of Gospel of Thomas and just adding the part of Mary as well as my wife so most likely fake manuscript but we're still waiting for the publication on this so it's supposed to happen soon so we'll see what they come back with on this one so that's New Testament textual criticism for me I appreciate New Testament textual criticism because I think it shows that God has given us his word to us but then he didn't just make these copies from some kind of magical process or from a computer but he actually entrusted these texts to people his people

I think that's the beauty of it that transmission of because of the transmission of the text that now we have these New Testament texts and translate it into English and then textual critics they continue to endeavor to get as much as close to the original text from the manuscripts that they find that's why I appreciate New Testament textual critics and their studies and their scholarly endeavor and I think church also gets benefit out of it because there are some people some scholars that they are willing to look at the manuscripts and try to decipher and try to decide what the original text might have been so that's New Testament textual critics thank you for your time and thank you for your patience