

SOME RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD

The Transmissional History:

1. Did the authors think they were writing Scripture?
Paul—Rom. 16:26, 1 Cor. 2:13, 14:37, Gal. 1:6-12, Eph. 3:4-5, Col. 1:25, 1 Thess. 2:13, 2 Thess. 3: 6-14, (Gal. 1:2, Col. 4:6, 1 Thess. 5:27—wide circulation).
Peter—1 Pet. 1:12, 22-25, 2 Pet. 3:2.
John—Rev. 1:1-3, 21:5, 22:6, 18-19.
Luke—Lk. 1:3 (*αὐθεντ* = from above).
2. Did the Apostles recognize the writings of contemporaries as Scripture?
1 Tim. 5:18 (Lk. 10:7 & Deut. 25:4 are both quoted as Scripture).
2 Pet. 3:16 (Paul's epistles are recognized as Scripture).
(Rom. 16:26, 2 Pet. 3:2).
3. Did the I and II century Fathers regard NT writings as Scripture?
Clement of Rome (A..D. 96), Barnabas, Polycarp, *Didache*, Diognetus, Hermas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, etc. (W. Pickering, *The Identity of the NT Text II*, www.esgm.org, Ch. 5, pp. 56-59).

[In points 1-3 I am not begging the question of inspiration; I am concerned with the implications of **their** attitude toward the Text.]

4. Were NT writings used in early assemblies? How?
Justin Martyr—each Sunday “the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets” were read in the assemblies (*Apol.* 1.67). You can't read without books, so there had to be a proliferation of copies. Were they made with care? (*Identity II*, p. 57).
5. Were early Christians aware and concerned about textual purity?
Apostles (2 Thess. 2:2, Rev. 22:18-19), Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Dionysius, Irenaeus, Tertullian—“*authenticae*”. (*Identity II*, pp. 59-61).

IMPLICATIONS: a) The true Text was never “lost”.
b) In A.D. 200 the precise original wording could be verified and vouched for.
c) There was no need to practice textual criticism.

6. What regions started out with the Autographs?
Aegean area (18-24), Rome (2-7), Palestine (0-3), Egypt (0); therefore the text in Egypt was second-hand from the start. (*Identity II*, pp. 61-62).
7. Where was the Church strongest during the II and III centuries?
Asia Minor and the Aegean area; Egypt was weak, with eleven heretical camps [Bishop Demetrius]; Jerusalem was sacked in A.D. 70. K. Aland opined that during the II and III centuries, and into the IV, Asia Minor continued to be “the heartland of the Church” (*The Text of the NT*, p. 53). (*Identity II*, pp. 63-64).
8. Where was Greek used most and longest? (Byzantine Empire)
Aegean area and Asia Minor. (Aland, *The Text*, p. 52). (*Identity II*, pp. 62-63).
9. Was any area characterized by a conservative attitude toward the Text?
School of Antioch; Peshitta. (Aland, *The Text*, p. 59; “The Text of the Church?” p. 138) (*Identity II*, pp. 64-65).

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- IMPLICATIONS: a) Where should we go to find the most accurate text in the IV century? Asia Minor and the Aegean area. Egypt would be one of the last places to go.
- b) How about the succeeding centuries? Did anything happen to reverse our expectations? No.
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10. For a MS to survive for 1500 years what conditions must be met?
Remain unused; arid climate. (*Identity II*, Ch. 6, pp. 83-84).
11. What are the implications of Diocletian's campaign and the Donatist movement?
(*Identity II*, pp. 86-87).
12. What are the implications of the switch from uncial to cursive style?
(*Identity II*, pp. 85-86).

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- IMPLICATIONS: a) Only unused (presumably deficient) MSS could survive (why did the Church refuse to propagate them?—Wisse).
- b) The good Byzantine-type MSS perished, but we can demonstrate that the Byzantine text existed in the II and III centuries nonetheless. (Pickering, "The Text of the Church").
- c) The Majority Text is not predicated upon the blind counting of "noses"—by "majority" we mean over 90%, usually over 95%, the point being that for a reading to enjoy that kind of attestation it had to dominate the stream of transmission, or genealogical tree (genealogical relationships must exist, but they need to be demonstrated in each case before making use of them in the praxis of textual criticism—Wisse).
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Interpreting the Evidence—Presuppositions:

1. Is the NT inspired?
2. An evolutionistic framework?
3. A classical Greek bias?
Bad Greek VS Holy Ghost Greek. (Adolf Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East*; 1st German ed.—1908, 1st English ed.—1910).
4. Is there supernatural involvement?
1 Jn. 5:19, Eph. 2:2, 2 Cor. 4:4, Lk. 11:23, 2 Tim. 2:24-26, James 4:4, [Jn. 12:43].

Results of modern textual criticism (eclecticism):

1. A patchwork quilt: We have over 1800 Greek MSS of Matthew, but in 34 places in Matthew UBS³ prints a text not found in any MS used by the editors. Codex W alone is followed once, Codex II alone once, D alone twice, C alone four times, L alone four times, Aleph alone 18 times, and B alone over 40 times. (R.J. Swanson, *The Horizontal Line Synopsis of the Gospels*, Greek edition, vol. I).
2. A credibility crisis: The authority of the Text has been undermined in the minds of the laity by the modern versions that enclose parts of the text in brackets and have numerous footnotes that raise doubts about its integrity.

Implications for Divine Preservation:

1. W-H critical theory.
2. Process view (Kenyon, etc.).
3. 2 out of 3 text-types (von Soden, Sturz).
4. Eclecticism ("rigorous" or "reasoned").
5. Canon-criticism (Childs, Letis).
6. TR/KJV as such.
7. Majority Text theory.