

UNIT 3: God's Revealing Work

Section 6: Textual Criticism & Translations

Theological Works:

Calvin, Chafer, Greenlee, Grudem, Manly Jr., Metzger, McDowell, Sproul, Thomas, Warfield

INTRODUCTION:

In our last section we discussed the nature and makeup of the Canon – the 66 books comprising the Bible – both Old Testament and New Testament. Just as our view of the authority of Scripture and its inerrancy brought us to consider the books that make up the Bible, so it drives us to another important consideration. It's not only important to know what books make up the Scriptures but also what words make up those books, which leads us to a study of Textual Criticism. Jesus' own explanation of his relationship to the Law becomes helpful in this regard:

Matt 5:17-18 “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

Understanding Jesus' relationship to the Scriptures informs our relationship to them as well! Far from abolishing/destroying [**kataluw**] the Law and Prophets, Jesus had come to fulfill... Jesus fulfilled the Law and Prophets in His teaching as well as his living – being the culmination of the Law and Prophets! Jesus lived a perfect life and was without sin – **2 Cor 5:21** “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Jesus was concerned about fulfilling all righteousness (see **Matt 3:15**) and said in **John 4:34**, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”

Jesus' statement in Matthew 5 communicates the proper view we ought to have of the Scriptures and becomes a starting place for understanding the motivation behind the painstaking discipline of Textual Criticism. We know that the Word of God endures! **Isaiah 40:8** explains, “The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.” Nothing so durable is to be found in the whole created world as God's Word! Jesus explains in **Matt 24:35** “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” And Jesus explains that the Law “will not pass away” ... It will be brought to complete and utter fruition! It will bring forth what God intends! It is not going to be merely swept under the rug as some unseemly thing that God is embarrassed about and is trying to retool... It is God's word and carries His authority and will accomplish His intended end! All that it points to will come to pass perfectly! **Isaiah 55:11** So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.” God never fails to bring to pass His purposes! So every part of the Law down to the smallest details is as permanent as heaven and earth, never losing its significance! All that it points to will be accomplished! I think **Calvin** explained this rightly, “The coming of Christ has taken nothing away even from ceremonies, but, on the contrary, confirms them by exhibiting the truth of shadows: for, when we see their full effect, we acknowledge that they are not vain or useless.” The outward use of some of the OT was temporal, but its meaning and significance is eternal!

There are many who take exception with God's word being inerrant, not holding to a belief in verbal plenary inspiration (The Holy Spirit's superintending work in authoring scripture extending to the very

words)... But in so doing they fail to uphold Jesus' own belief regarding the Scriptures! Jesus' upholds Scriptural authority to the very letters and marks making up letters.

1. ἰῶτα ἐν – one iota [ι] the smallest Gr letter (looks like our “i”) or might denote the smallest Hebrew letter the yod [י] (looks like our apostrophe mark)
2. But if the point wasn't made clear enough, Jesus continues: ἡ μία κεραία – literally translated this means ‘little horn’ and is translated “stroke” as in part of a letter. It is the small projection which distinguished one letter from another. Like crossing the “t” in English and thereby distinguishing t from l. All that separated various letters at times in Hebrew were slight projections – like resh [ר] and daleth [ד] or he [ה] and heth [ח].

If we are to adopt Jesus' bibliology – we would not only affirm verbal plenary, but mark/tittle plenary inspiration – every stroke of the writing instrument is exactly what God intended! Some have accused those with a high view of Scripture as “biblioters” – idolizing the Bible – but notice the high manner in which Jesus treated the Scriptures! Besides this statement in Matt 5:17-20, notice Jesus' appeal in his arguments to Scripture:

1. **Use of Scripture as a whole:**
 - In **Lk 24:44** Jesus reminded his disciples that all the things written about Him in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.
2. **Use of Particular Scriptures:**
 - Jesus refuted Satan when tempted by quoting **Deut 8:3, 6:13, 6:16**.
 - After reading from Isaiah (**61:1-2**), Jesus explained, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (**Lk 4:21**).
3. **Use of a Single Word:**
 - “lord” – **Matthew 22:43** He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, ⁴⁴ 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET ""? ⁴⁵ "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" – (quote from **Psalms 110:1**)
 - “gods” – **John 10:34** Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS' "? ³⁵ "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), ³⁶ do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God' "? – (quote from **Ps 82:6**)
 - “I am” – **Matthew 22:31-32** "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: ³² 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB' "? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." (quote from **Ex 3:6** – especially appropriate for the Sadducees for they only held to the Torah). Interesting to note: The Hebrew only implies this verb which the LXX includes.

Paul follows suit in **Gal 3:16** “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.” Here it is the *singular number of the noun* that is foundational for Paul's argument. It is the attention given to the very words, letters, and marks of scripture that undergirds our passionate pursuit of ensuring we do indeed have the very word of God in our Bibles!

Q1: What is Textual Criticism & Why is it Necessary?

Q2: What Criteria are used to decide Between Variants?

Q3: What Impact does Textual Criticism have on Translations?

I. Defining Textual Criticism

A. *The Meaning of Textual Criticism*

1. Most of our discussion as a church revolves around the meaning of the words, phrases, and ideas of a scriptural text, but actually there is a prior question that needs to be answered: “What is the original text of the passage?”
2. **Sproul**, “Textual criticism is the science which seeks to reconstruct an original text by a careful analysis and evaluation of the manuscripts we presently possess. This task has to be accomplished with respect to all documents from antiquity that have reached us through manuscript copies.”
3. **The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology explains**, “The task of textual criticism is to determine which variant readings in the ancient manuscripts most likely preserve the original wording and then reconstruct a text that best represents the autographs.”
4. **Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy**: “Since God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographic text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need for textual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the text in the course of its transmission. The verdict of this science, however, is that the Hebrew and Greek text appear to be amazingly well preserved, so that we are amply justified in affirming, with the Westminster Confession, a singular providence of God in this matter and in declaring that the authority of Scripture is in no way jeopardized by the fact that the copies we possess are not entirely error free.”

B. *The Necessity of Textual Criticism*

1. Arises from Two Realities:
 - a. *None of the Original Documents are extant today*
 - b. *The Existing Copies differ from one another*
2. The Process of Textual Transmission
 - a. **Transmission** – the path from the autographs (original writings) to today’s copies
 - b. **A Glance at the OT (good illustration because of its long time of transmission)**
 - (1) That the Hebrew text has been transmitted by copyists through so many centuries is a phenomenon unequalled in the history of literature.
 - (2) The listing of Kings (complete w/ proper spelling) living from 2000 BC to 400 BC appearing in chronological order is some of the strongest evidence imaginable for the historical accuracy of the OT.
 - (3) Though the OT doesn’t have as many MSS as the NT, the number available is still remarkable considering the combination of antiquity and destructibility of MSS.
 - (4) The Succession of Scholars charged with standardizing and preserving the OT
 - Sopherim [from Hebrew “scribes”] (5th – 3rd C BC)
 - Zugoth [“pairs” of textual scholars] (2nd – 1st C BC)
 - Tannaim [“repeaters” or “teachers”] – active till AD 200
 - Also worked on the Talmud [instruction] – divided into Mishnah [repetitions] and Gemara [matter to be learned]
 - They preserved the bible while compiling rabbinic teaching
 - Talmudists (AD 100-500) – see the following rules for copying...
 - A synagogue roll must be written on the skins of clean animals
 - It must be fastened together w/ strings from clean animals

- Each skin must contain the same number of columns through the codex
 - The length of each column must not extend over less than 48 or more than 60 lines – its breadth must consist of 30 letters.
 - The whole copy must be first-lined; and if three words be written without a line, it is worthless
 - The ink should be black (not green, red, or any other color) and be prepared according to a specific recipe
 - An authentic copy must be the exemplar, for which the transcriber is not to deviate in the least
 - No word or letter must be written from memory – he must see it on the page in front of him
 - Every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene
 - Between each new section – the breadth of nine consonants
 - Between every book – three lines
 - The 5th book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so.
 - The copyist must sit in full Jewish dress, and wash his whole body
 - When writing the name of God, the pen must be newly dipped in ink before commencing and should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him.
- Masoretic [traditions] (AD 500-950)
 - The Destruction of the Temple (70AD) along w/ the dispersion of the Jews became the impetus for several practices...
 - Edited and Standardized the text
 - Added Vowel Points to ensure proper pronunciation
 - Added Safeguards to ensure proper copying
 - Numbered verses, words, letters of every book
 - Calculated middle word and letter of each
 - Enumerated verses that contained every letter of the alphabet, or a certain number of them.
 - They were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter be lost!
 - If a manuscript was found to contain even one mistake it was discarded and destroyed.
- (5) Explanation for fewer numbers of texts...
- Antiquity (sheer age of the manuscripts) – deterioration
 - Persecutions and resulting destruction of property
 - Jewish Copying Customs
 - Damaged or imperfect copies were at once condemned as unfit for use
 - Because the copies were so scrutinized, upon acceptance of a new copy, it was considered better than the old – more perfect or free from damage
 - Older copies would be placed in the “Gheniza” (lumber cupboard) – they would either naturally perish there or be deliberately burned when “Gheniza” became full – ***archaeologists finding these cupboards have yielded great results***

C. *The Material of Textual Criticism*

1. There is a distinction between the original documents (autographs) and subsequent copies and translations (technically it is the former that are inspired, infallible, and inerrant).
2. The original documents have primal or chief authority while the copies and translations have *derivative* inspiration and thus authority. So when we appeal to a translation, the appeal is only as authoritative as it reflects the original text – w/o this, the appeal is devoid of authority!
3. Since no original documents presently exist, we are incapable of asserting one copy or translation as perfectly reflecting the words of the original. The manuscripts we have are each unique (no two are identical in every detail). Without “infallible criteria” for determining original readings, infallible determinations of readings are impossible.
4. So a copy and translation is authoritative only so far as it reflects the message of the original text, and insofar as they do, they may be called the Word of God!
5. Understand that just to claim to have an infallible criteria does not mean you really have it.
 - a. The KJV only adherents who make outlandish claims like this must defend their position! Assertion is not Proof, just as Rejection is not Refutation!
 - b. Interestingly, the KJV only group is to textual criticism what the Roman Catholic Church is to the Canon. Just to claim to have the infallible authority doesn’t mean you do. This must be borne out through argumentation/explanation.
6. By the way, there is a theological debate ongoing regarding God’s relationship to the “preservation” of the Scriptures (The KJV Only Camp especially)...
 - a. Some Christians believe the Textus Receptus (TR) must be the best representation of the original text because they can’t believe that God would have allowed the Christian church to use a corrupt version of the Scriptures for 100s of years.
 - b. Other Christians recognize that the original text did become marred throughout the process of transmission, but by God’s providence, earlier and better manuscripts have been recovered which are allowing recovery of the Scriptures closer to how they originally were. They would also see a comparison to the work of Erasmus as compared to the Vulgate that had been used for 100s of years – in other words, the KJV only argument is self-defeating for its “translation” arose as an improvement upon the text that had been widely accepted for a long time.
 - c. In either case, God’s preservation of the original text can be upheld, just the latter view believes that God has allowed the recovery of several ancient manuscripts to manifest His sovereignty over the situation.
7. Number of NT Manuscripts:
 - a. According to quite recent tabulations there are 98 papyrus manuscripts, 257 uncial manuscripts, 2,795 minuscule manuscripts, and 2,209 Gr lectionaries: totaling over 5,350 manuscript copies of the Gr. NT.
 - b. **Bruce Metzger**, “Following the custom of the synagogue, according to which portions of the Law and the Prophets were read at divine service each Sabbath day, the Christian Church adopted the practice of reading passages from the NT books at services of worship... The lectionaries were usually rather conservative and used older texts, and this makes them very valuable in textual criticism.”
 - (1) They contain all of the NT many times over, w/ exception of Revelation and Acts
 - (2) Text types: primarily Byzantine, but some Alexandrian and Caesarean readings.

- c. By comparison: Homer's Iliad (greatest of all Gr classical works) has 650 manuscripts and Euripides' tragedies exist in 330 manuscripts. All other works of Gr literature have far less.
- d. **Add** to this over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and 9,300 other early versions, and we come close to if not over **25,000** MSS copies of portions of the NT in existence today!
 - (1) 10,000+ Latin Vulgate
 - (2) 2,000+ Ethiopic
 - (3) 4,101 Slavic
 - (4) 2,587 Armenian
 - (5) 350+ Syriac Pashetta
 - (6) 100 Bohairic
 - (7) 75 Arabic
 - (8) 50 Old Latin
 - (9) 21 Other Miscellaneous Languages
- e. **Add** to this Quotations of early Church Leaders:
 - (1) Give overwhelming support to the existence of 27 authoritative books of NT canon
 - (2) **Geisler**, "Quotations are so widespread that if no manuscripts of the NT were extant, the NT could be reproduced from the writings of the early Fathers alone."
 - (3) **Warning:** some quotes are sometimes w/o verbal accuracy, some copyists were prone to mistakes or intentional alteration.
 - (4) **There are some 32,000 quotations of the NT prior to 325**
 - (5) **Dean Burgon** has an index of quotations by church fathers of antiquity in the British Museum... it consists of 16 thick volumes containing 86,489 quotations.
- f. Add to this the fact that the time lapse between most classical Gr works is 800-1000yr from the autograph to 1st extant manuscript, while our earliest NT extant manuscripts date only 100-200yr from the autographs!
- 8. Dating of the NT Extant MSS
 - a. **Dating factors:** materials used, letter size and form, punctuation, text divisions, ornamentation, color of ink, texture and color of parchment.
 - b. **See chart p32 Introduction to NT Textual Criticism by Harold Greenlee**
- 9. Families of Texts:
 - a. **Metzger**, "Today it is possible to identify the type of text preserved in NT manuscripts by comparing their characteristic readings with quotations of those passages in the writings of Church Fathers who lived in or near the chief ecclesiastical centers."
 - b. Four/Three Main Families:
 - (1) Alexandrian
 - o Characterized by "brevity and austerity" – generally shorter and does not exhibit the degree of grammatical and stylistic polishing of the Byzantine texts
 - o This family goes back to the earliest dated manuscripts.
 - o During 20th century with discovery of NT manuscripts which were much older than those otherwise available the Alexandrian text family now figures more prominently in the textual decisions of textual critics today.
 - o **Important Witnesses:** Codex Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (Ⲁ), and \mathcal{P}^{66} & \mathcal{P}^{75}
 - (2) Western
 - o Characterized by paraphrasing. **Metzger**, "Words, clauses, and even whole sentences are freely changed, omitted, or inserted. Sometimes the motive

- appears to have been harmonization, while at other times it was the enrichment of the narrative by the inclusion of traditional or apocryphal material.”
- Generally longer in content (Acts is 10% longer than accepted form of that book), although there are some places where words are omitted (i.e. the ending of Luke demonstrates this peculiarity)
 - **Important Witnesses:** Codex Bezae (D) – Gospel & Acts, Claromontanus (D) – Pauline epistles, and Washintonianus (W) – Mark 1:1-5:30.
- (3) Caesarean
- The text of this family of manuscripts is a mixture of western & Alexandrian readings – some research has argued it shouldn’t be considered a separate family of texts...
 - **Important Witnesses:** Gr manuscripts (**Q, 565, 700**) & Syriac witnesses
- (4) Byzantine
- Characterized by lucidity and completeness. **Metzger**, “The framers of this text sought to smooth away any harshness of language, to combine two or more divergent readings into one expanded reading (conflation), and to harmonize divergent parallel passages.”
 - While being the least ancient of the text families, it enjoys the largest distribution, due to its early travel to Constantinople from where it was distributed through the Byzantine Empire.
 - From about the 6th century till the invention of printing with movable type (1450-1456), the Byzantine form of text was generally regarded as *the* authoritative form of text – widely circulated and accepted.
 - Gutenberg’s press made mass production of books cheaper and easier – and again the Byzantine text became the standard form of the NT printed editions due to their readily available status.
 - Erasmus’ Greek Testament (1516 & 2nd ed. in 1519) used this basis...
 - His work was based on 2 rather inferior manuscripts (now in the university library in Basel) with comparisons to 2 or 3 others – for Revelation he only had one manuscript which he borrowed from a friend which lacked the last leaf (containing the last 6 verses) so he used Jerome’s Latin Vulgate translating it into Greek to complete the work (which was a practice he used a couple of other times in other parts of his Greek testament)
 - Erasmus’ 2nd ed. became the basis for Martin Luther’s translation into German (1522) and William Tyndale’s into English (1525).
 - Metzger explains, “Theodore Beza (friend and successor of Calvin in Geneva) had access to a 5th century manuscript and 6th century codex, but even he made little use of them for they “deviated too far from the text that had become standard in the latter copies” Beza published no fewer than 9 Gr Testament copies between 1565 and 1604 ... which then became the basis for the “Textus Receptus” – leading to the Authorized or King James Bible of 1611. It was called this because from the approximately 160 editions of the Greek testament issued since Erasmus’s work, there was little difference. All based on the Byzantine family of texts.
 - **Important Witnesses:** Codex Alexandrianus, and later uncial manuscripts, and the great mass of minuscule manuscripts.

10. The Nature of Ancient Texts
 - a. Only Capital letters were used
 - b. No spaces between words
 - c. No punctuation
 - d. No sentences or paragraphs
 - e. Hebrew-no vowels
 - f. No chapter or verse references

D. The Method of Textual Criticism

1. Let's begin by explaining the Possible Reasons for Differences among Copies:
 - a. Possible Scribal Copying Errors (inadvertent)
 - (1) Mistaking a letter or a word for another that looks like it.
 - (2) Accidental repetition or omission of words or letters
 - (3) These problems might increase in less than excellent conditions – if the scribe had defective eyesight (or lighting), or was distracted while copying, or fatigued...
 - b. Possible deliberate shaping of the text (purposeful)
 - (1) Sometimes scribes might attempt to “smooth out” grammatical or stylistic harshness, or remove textual difficulties.
 - (2) At times this was due to “harmonization” or “assimilation”
 - c. Possible inclusions of glosses as part of the original text
 - d. Effect of “translations”
 - (1) The Greek texts were also translated into other languages...
 - (2) The accuracy of such translations depended upon the skill of the translator in both Greek and the language of translation – and how careful his work was.
2. **P.W. Comfort** explains, “The work began in the early 18th C by men such as Mill and Bengel, and then intensified in the 19th by Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott, and Hort. In the beginning of the 20th Eberhard Nestle used the best editions of the Gr NT to compile a text that represented the majority consensus. The work of making new editions was carried on by his son for several years, and then by Kurt and Barbara Aland. After the United Bible Societies had published two editions of the *Greek New Testament*, they decided to unite with the work being done on a new edition of the Nestle-Aland text – and so produce two volumes containing virtually the same text: The UBS 3rd ed. And the Nestle-Aland 26th ed. In 1993 a 4th ed. of the UBS was published and 27th ed. of the Nestle-Aland was released. The text was not changed in either volume, but the critical apparatus was greatly revised.” - *Almost all modern translations footnote disputed texts*
3. Textual Criticism Criteria for Choosing among Conflicting Readings:
 - No two manuscripts agree exactly in all the particulars, so editors must decide which variants deserve to be included in the main text, and what gets put in the apparatus.
 - There are several “criteria” that are utilized to make this decision – sometimes these criteria are weighed against each other... Textual criticism is a science and art!
 - a. External Evidence:
 - (1) Date and Character of the witness – older manuscripts are more likely to be free from errors that arise from repeated copying. The degree of care taken by the copyist while producing the manuscript weighs in heavily as well.

- (2) Geographical Distribution – a witness that is represented in only one locality has a greater chance of being spurious, although one must ensure the geographically remote witnesses that are similar are really independent of one another...
 - (3) Genealogical relationship of texts and families of witnesses – mere numbers of witnesses counts for nothing if all of them point back to the same manuscript whose date is compared to another witness of that date. We cannot allow sheer numbers to drive our ending decision.
 - (4) Witnesses are to be weighed rather than counted. **Metzger**, “Those witnesses that are found to be generally trustworthy in clear-cut cases deserve to be accorded predominant weight in cases when the textual problems are ambiguous and their resolution is uncertain.”
- b. Internal Evidence:
- (1) Transcriptional Probabilities (related to habits of scribes)
 - In general, the more difficult reading is to be preferred, particularly when a mature reflection upon the more difficult reading proves itself just fine. Obviously a reading which makes no sense might have arisen by accident in transcription, so this rule (as the rest) has to be handled carefully.
 - In general, the shorter reading is to be preferred, except when it can be demonstrated that (1) a copyist may have passed from one word to another or skipped one inadvertently (2) the scribe omitted material believed to be superfluous, harsh, or contrary to established belief, liturgical usage, or practice. This is because longer readings are typically easier to explain due to a scribes desire to make a shorter reading “more clear” with added words.
 - In general, the reading which results in verbal dissidence is to be preferred over the one which is verbally concordant. Scribes typically like bringing divergent passages into harmony with one another.
 - In general, a reading which is unfamiliar, has a less refined grammatical form or a less elegant lexical expression is preferred—less smooth texts are preferred.
 - The reading which best explains the other variants is preferred.
 - (2) Intrinsic Probabilities (related to the style of the author)
 - The style and vocabulary of the author should be considered
 - The immediate context should be considered
 - Harmony of the usage of the author elsewhere should be considered

II. Exemplifying Textual Criticism

A. *Practice with Textual Criticism*

1. Based upon our discussion, choose the “best” reading from the options given and provide reasons for your choice. (**Greenlee p59-68** list of possible reasons for differences)
2. We’ll look at four examples, and I’ll give you a couple options with each one. We’ll work through the various criteria together, attempting to choose the best reading from all the evidence.
3. **Quick Introductory Example** from the Greek NT (apparatus) and Metzger’s Textual Commentary on the NT: **Luke 2:33**

[1.] Luke 11:2

- (1) ...**Pater, agiasqhtw to lojnomav sou...**
- (2) ...**Pater hmw n oleh toi s ouranoi s, agiasqhtw to lojnomav sou**

In English... **And He said to them, “When you pray, say:**

- (1) Father, hallowed/sanctified be your name...”
- (2) **Our Father the one in the heavens, hallowed/sanctified be your name...”**

Answer:

1. Internal Evidence

- a. Shorter Reading is generally preferable
 - Reading #1 is the shorter reading... if intentional changes have occurred, it is to be preferred (people tend to add in intentional changes)
 - Reading #2 being intentional is supported by the parallel account in Matthew 6:9 which reads as reading #2 with no variant.
 - Matthew’s form of the prayer probably being more well known could have influenced a scribe to add these words intentionally (harmonization) or unintentionally.
- b. Harder Reading is generally preferable
 - Neither phrase seems difficult to understand (no particular reason a scribe might intentionally want to change for doctrinal or understanding reasons)
- c. Reading from which the other reading could most easily come from is preferable
 - If the longer reading were original there would no apparent reason for its omission, as there is no difficulty of understanding or likelihood of accidental omission.
 - On the other hand, due to harmonization, the longer phrase could have been added to the shorter
 - Reading 2 could have developed from Reading 1, but the reverse is unlikely
- d. The reading which is characteristic of the author is preferable
 - Luke quotes Jesus as addressing God as “Father” in direct address 5 or 6 times without a possessive or other attributive qualifier
 - Moreover Luke contains numerous references to God as Father, only one has a modifier referring to heaven and its different from this one **Lk 11:13** “the Father the One from heaven” **o pathr o ex ouranou**

2. External Evidence

- a. Reading 1 is the reading of the Alexandrian text, part of the Caesarean text, and a small part of the Western text
- b. Reading 2 is the reading of the Byzantine text, the Western, part of the Caesarean, and a small part of the Alexandrian.
- c. Reading 1 is preferable – supported by best single text (oldest)

II. Lk 24:53

- (1) **eu] ogounteç**
- (2) **ainounteç**
- (3) **ainounteç kai eu] ogounteç**

In English: “and were continually in the temple _____ God.”

- (1) blessing/praising (when used with God)
- (2) praising (always used in reference to God)
- (3) praising and blessing

Answer:

1. Internal Evidence

- a. Shorter Reading is generally preferable
 - Reading 1 and 2 are short
 - Reading 1 or 2 are hard to see a scribe intentionally shortening from 3
 - There is possibility however that since both participles end in **-ounteç** that a scribe could have inadvertently omitted **kai eu] ogounteç**
 - Reading 1 or 2 are preferred, with possibility of 3 w/ unintentional omission producing 2 (but not 1).
- b. Harder Reading is generally preferable
 - Both readings are used in reference to God in the NT, but **eu] ogounteç** is more commonly used of blessing men.
 - A scribe could have intentionally changed **eu] ogounteç** to **ainounteç** as a more appropriate word
 - This would point to reading 1 over 2, but no bearing upon 3.
- c. Reading from which the other reading could most easily come from is preferable
 - Reading 3 could have given rise to 2 by omission (homoioteleuton)
 - Reading 2 is appropriate in context, hard to see 1 or 3 arising from it
 - Reading 1 could have been changed by a scribe to reading 2 (as a “more appropriate” word) and then 3 developed from the conflation of 1 and 2.
- d. The reading which is characteristic of the author is preferable
 - 6 of 8 occurrences of **ai]new** in the NT are found in Luke and Acts and are always in reference to God
 - Luke and Acts also contain 1/3 of the NT instances of **eu] ogew** although only 2 aside from the present passage are in reference to God.
 - Both words are common, with **eu] ogew** more frequent, but **ai]new** more common in reference to God

2. External Evidence

- 1 is supported by the Alexandrian text, and small amounts of non-Byzantine texts
- 2 is supported by the Western text
- 3 is supported by the Caesarean and Byzantine texts
- 1 is the best by these standards, The western text paraphrases often (and could be seen as the reason for 2) when the Byzantine often conflates (suggested by internal evidence)

III. John 1:18

- (1) **uibr̄**
- (2) **qeor̄**
- (3) omit

In English: “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten _____ who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”

- (1) Son
- (2) God
- (3) -----

Answer:

1. Internal Evidence

- a. Shorter Reading is generally preferable
 - Reading 3 is obviously the shortest, and a scribe could be seen as having attempted to strengthen the phrase by adding Son or God
 - On the other hand, an accidental error might have resulted in the omission, especially if **uibr̄** or **qeor̄** was abbreviated **MONOGENHSUSOWN** or **MONOGENHSQSOWN**
- b. Harder Reading is generally preferable
 - Easiest reading is clearly **uibr̄** since the phrase “only son” is found in John 3:16...
 - Hardest reading is clearly **qeor̄** – “no one has seen God... the only God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”
 - But this reading fits well with John’s pointing to Jesus’ deity (Jn 1:1)
- c. Reading from which the other reading could most easily come from is preferable
 - **qeor̄** Is seen as the reading most easily accounting for the others... It could have been dropped inadvertently or changed intentionally to “Son.”
 - If the absence of a noun was original a scribe would have added “Son” but surely not “God” here
 - And a “Son” might have been dropped, but surely not changed to “God”
- d. The reading which is characteristic of the author is preferable
 - John reads **monogenh̄t̄** alone once and **monogenh̄t̄ uibr̄** twice, but **monogenh̄t̄ qeor̄** not at all elsewhere.
 - John does use **qeor̄** in reference to Christ, though.

2. External Evidence

- Reading 2 is the Alexandrian reading
- Reading 1 is the reading of the other 3 texts
- Reading 3 has little support
- Without support at all from the other text types, we might be cautious about going with reading 2, however combined with our internal evidence tests, it seems that it reflects the best reading.

[IV.] Luke 15:21

(1) poihsou me w^t eha twa misqiwn sou

(2) omit

In English: “But the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am not worthy to be called your son...’”

(1) make me as one of your hired laborers.

(2) .

Answer:

1. Internal Evidence

a. Shorter Reading is generally preferable

- Reading 2 is the shorter reading, and if change intentional it is to be preferred.
- On the other hand, since **sou** occurs both just before and at the end of the additional words there is a possibility that the longer reading is original and that the omission has occurred accidentally by homiooteleuton; but with only one identical syllable involved, this seems less likely!

b. Harder Reading is generally preferable

- Neither seems to be a “hard” reading”

c. Reading from which the other reading could most easily come from is preferable

- Reading 1 is more easily understood as a development from reading 2. There is no reason why the words would have been erased if they were in verse 19 as well... but they could have been added by a scribe intentionally based upon Jesus’ having said the son intended to say them.

d. The reading which is characteristic of the author is preferable

- This probably won’t offer much help here.

2. External Evidence

- Reading 1 is apparently the Alexandrian reading and possibly the Western as well... It also has some Caesarean and Byzantine support
- Reading 2 is the Byzantine and Caesarean reading w/ some Alexandrian and Western support.
- Reading 1 is preferable from external support...

In this variant, internal and external evidence seem to conflict. Seems better to go with the shorter reading in this case on the basis of internal evidence and assume that some of the Alexandrian and Western texts made a learned “correction” by intentionally adding these words from v19.

In all of these examples, we see that textual criticism, while certainly important, is not debating any large doctrinal issue in relation to variants! See the amazing continuity of the Bible!!

B. Notable Differences between the TR and Nestle-Aland editions of the Gr. Text

1. It seems some theological changes were made in the TR – Christology in particular...
 - a. Matt 24:36; Lk 4:41, 9:35; Jn 1:18, 6:69; Acts 3:20, 16:7; Col 2:2; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 3:15; Jude 4
 - b. See **p1179-1180** in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2nd ed.)
2. Also found often in the TR is an attempt to “harmonize” passages, as well as spurious additions possible...
 - a. TR additions to verses: Matt 5:44, 6:13, 16:2b-3, 20:16, 20:22-23, 25:13, 27:35; Mark 9:49, 10:7, 21, 24, 14:68; Luke 4:4, 8:43, 9:54-56, 11:2-4, 11, 22:19-20, 43-44, 24:42; Acts 28:16, Rom 16:24, 25-27; 1 Cor 11:24.
 - b. TR complete verse additions: Matt 17:21, 18:11, 23:24; Mark 7:16, 9:44, 46, 11:26, 15:28; Luke 17:36, 23:17; John 5:3b-4; Acts 8:37, 15:34, 24:6b-8a, 28:29.
 - c. TR passage additions: Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53-8:11 – included in Nestle-Aland text but set off with double brackets to signal spuriousness.
 - d. THE KEY ISSUE: do these passages have the right to be considered “scripture?” If they are clearly scribal additions then they cannot be considered part of the original text of Scripture and therefore ought not to be treated on the same level as inspired Scripture. Be careful with these passages & beware of forming doctrines based solely on them!

III. Choosing a Bible Translation

- How To Choose a Bible Version, Robert L. Thomas
- 5 Categories for Investigation

1. Historical Background

- a) Tyndale Tradition Translations (**p34**) Flowchart
- b) Non-tradition Translations (**p51-52**) Chart
- c) Conclusions
 - A translation with deep roots has profited from improvements made over a long period of time. Provides a degree of stability and reliability.
 - On the other hand, having an absolutely new translation could add freshness to our reading of Scripture.

2. Textual Bases

- Manuscript sources do not always agree with each other, and the English that renders those sources may reflect the disagreements.
 - The works that came from the authors of Bible books (or secretaries) are the ones that the Holy Spirit inspired, but when various scribes made copies from the original productions, changes gradually crept in.
 - Need to recognize which variation represents the inspired text. Less complex for the OT, than the NT (fewer source documents for OT)
- a) Four text-types
 - i) Alexandrian
 - Generally accepted by most as the most reliable of the four.

- More recently discovered.
 - Westcott and Hort, in 1881, translated English Revised Version from Alexandrian-type readings, instead of Byzantine.
- ii) Western
- Source of the Douai Version
- iii) Caesarean- least correlation with members of its own family
- iv) Byzantine- highest correlation w/ other members of its own family
- Probably arose later than the rest as an effort by the church to include as many readings as possible from the other families.
 - Byzantine Greek manuscripts dominated the middle ages which led to its dominance in English translations for so long.
- b) We must accept that God in His providence has seen fit to preserve several families of readings, not just one.
- c) Difference between Alexandrian and Byzantine
- See **p 64-78**
 - The difference in almost half of the passages is traceable to the attempt of a later copyist to harmonize the passage with some other part of the Bible.
 - Ex) **Matthew 5:44**... differences derive from **Luke 6:27-28**.
 - It is a well-known tendency among the writers of the early part of the Christian era to alter Scripture to bring it into greater agreement with other portions.
 - Statistical Summary of Comparison of translations to Byzantine and Alexandrian Families: **p85**
- d) Conclusions
- Boils down to a decision between Byzantine and Alexandrian manuscripts
 - Byzantine- influence due to long standing KJV
 - Stronger evidence in all probably supports Alexandrian

3. Methodological Techniques

- a) Two general categories
- i) Formal-equivalence- literal translation
- Focuses on accuracy or faithfulness to original text (word driven)
- ii) Dynamic-equivalence- free translation
- Focuses on conveying the thought of the original languages (idea driven)
- b) Conclusions
- A literal translation provides a reliable tool for **studying** the text
 - A student of Scripture usually seeks the meaning of the text, not an interpretation of the translator... if he wants someone's interpretation, he will consult commentaries on the text.
 - Free translations and paraphrases are especially harmful where the translator has erred in his interpretation. Misleading without awareness that it is someone's interpretation rather than what the original text says.
 - Closeness to the original must be the prime consideration

4. Theological Biases

- The nature of the translation discipline is sufficiently objective to reduce to a minimum the overall impact of such theological biases.

a) Four Methods to detect Theological Bias:

i) Theological viewpoints of translators may be a matter of general knowledge

- Much easier in translations by one person.

ii) Statements made in introductory materials

- Especially stand on inspiration of Scripture (like verbal inspiration)

Example:

- JB Phillips "... Most people, however great their reverence for the NT may be, do not hold a word-by-word theory of inspiration"
- NASB states it "... has been produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture as originally penned in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek were inspired by God."
- NKJV all signed "a statement affirming their belief in the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture, and in the inerrancy of the original autographs."
- NIV state they "have striven for more than a word-for-word translation"... seeking a meaning-for-meaning correspondence. Translators still affirm their commitment to "the full authority and complete trustworthiness of the Scriptures."

iii) Notes that accompany a translation will often disclose doctrinal perspectives in the translation

iv) The text itself

Examples:

- Gender-neutral translations: NCV, NET, REB, NJB, NLT, NRSV, CEV
→ Translate Greek word for "brothers" as "brothers and sisters"
→ If the translator obscures that cultural feature, what keeps him from obscuring other cultural features of the original text that contemporary cultural perspectives find distasteful?
- **John 1:1** in the New World Translation (Jehovah's Witnesses)
"The Word was a god"
- **Philippians 2:6** in the TEV
"He did not think that by force he should try to become equal with God"
- **I Corinthians 14** the word "**tongue**"
→ "tongue" – NASB, PME, RSV, JB, REB, CEV, NJB, NET
→ "ecstatic speech" – NEB
→ "strange tongues" – TEV
→ "tongues" – NIV, NLT "other languages" in text note
→ "unknown languages" – NLT and "tongues" as footnote
→ "languages" – CEV, NirV, NCV
→ "in languages you haven't learned" – LB
- **Hebrews 6:6** Soteriology
→ "If they fall away" – text note "while" in NASB, NIV, and NET

b) Conclusions

- No translation has successfully excluded doctrinal bias completely, doubtful one ever could.
- Recognize works that are of a generally conservative outlook
- NASB, MLB, NIV, LB, NLT, NET, NCV, MES, KJV, ASV

5. Varieties of English

- a) Classifications of English usage
 - i) Varying age levels **p127**
 - ii) Varying stages of English language development
 - Because English language is constantly changing, it is impossible to produce a translation whose English will remain contemporary.
 - iii) Varying geographical locations
 - iv) Varying amounts of education
 - v) Varying methods of communication
 - Ex) how to divide **Ephesians 1:3-14**
 - vi) Varying degrees of formality
 - vii) Varying interests
- b) Text Format
 - i) Punctuation (ex) quotation marks) NASB **Isaiah 36:10**
 - ii) Capitalization
 - MLB “Yourself” and “Your” in John 8:13 (Pharisees talking to Jesus) (not really attributing deity to Him in the passage, exactly opposite.
 - iii) Text Arrangement
 - Paragraph vs Verse
 - iv) Print Styles – use of italics for added words (NAS, NASU)
- c) Miscellaneous Influences
 - i) Translation policy- use of large vocabularies...
 - **James 2:2-3** Greek word “esthes” (garment) used 3 times
 - KJV translates “apparel,” “raiment,” “clothing”
 - NAS translates “clothing” all three times
 - ii) The individual who translated
 - Inconsistency plagues any translation produced by different personnel working on different portions of the Bible
 - When one person does the entire work, his personal prejudices and peculiarities become magnified.
 - iii) Influence of Source Languages
 - Effort to stay true to original language... causes “wooden” translations at times. Structure like Greek, instead of English.
 - Ideal is to eliminate distortion without surrendering faithfulness to original text if at all possible.

6. Conclusions

- There is no “perfect” English translation of the Bible in existence.
- All versions have weaknesses, some more than others, but all have them.
- When researching a passage, it is helpful to investigate numerous translations.
- *Why not* learn Greek and Hebrew?? ☺

Conclusion:

Learning that we have no “autographs” in our possession today, has led some to the hasty conclusion – that the issue of inspiration and inerrancy is only an academic debate since it cannot be proven one way or the other. But if you have gotten the impression that the entire contents of Scripture are uncertain, you haven’t understood this discussion aright. In an overarching way, we agree with so many reformed theologians over the centuries that God’s special providence has watched over His Word. There are more than 4,000 Gr MSS of the NT in addition to 6,000 MSS of the Vulgate. **Kenyon** (an eminent authority on this subject) explains, “The number of manuscripts of the NT, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church is so large, that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world.” In the various copies made of the Scriptures, errors did creep into the text as seen by the variations between manuscripts. **Nestle** speaks of 150,000 in the NT, but adds that about 19/20ths are devoid of real authority. Of the remaining 7,500 19/20ths do not alter the meaning of the sense of Scripture in any way. He explains that there are about 375 variations that bear on the sense of Scripture, and even among these are several of little importance. **Moses Stuart** points out that 95% of all existing variations amount to the difference between the English spelling “honor” and “honour.” Not one definitive doctrine of Christianity is changed, not one precept is taken away, not one important fact altered by the whole of the various readings collectively taken.” **R.C. Sproul explains**, “For more than 99% of the cases, the original text can be reconstructed to a practical certainty. Even in the few cases where some perplexity remains, this does not impinge on the meaning of Scripture to the point of clouding a tenet of the faith or a mandate of life.” **Berkhof** explains, “From the existence of these variations it does not follow that the doctrine of verbal [plenary] inspiration has no practical value; but only *that we do not know at present in what reading we have the Word of God on those particular points.*”

Dr. Ezra Abbot, of Harvard, ranked among the first textual critics was not *hampered* by orthodox bias (being a Unitarian), asserted that “no Christian doctrine or duty rests on these portions of the text which are affected by differences in the manuscripts, still less is anything *essential* in Christianity touched by the various readings. They do, to be sure, affect the bearing of a few passages on the doctrine of the Trinity; but the truth or falsity of the doctrine by no means depends upon the reading of those passages.” He also explained, “The greatest service which the scholars who have devoted themselves to critical studies and the collection of critical materials have rendered has been the establishment of the fact that on the whole, the NT writings have come down to us in a text remarkably free from important corruptions, even in the late and inferior manuscripts on which the so-called “received text” was founded... The multitude of “various readings,” which to the thoughtless or ignorant seem so alarming, is simply the result of the extraordinary richness and variety of our critical resources.”

Some object that plenary inspiration is useless unless it was secured by a perpetual miracle against corrupt transmission, but **Basil Manly, Jr.** explains, “A truly divine original, even if copied with no more than ordinary human care and fidelity, is vastly superior to an original, however accurately preserved, that never had divine authority. And obviously the fact that it was recognized and accepted as from God would serve greatly to insure its being preserved with more than ordinary care. Neither can it be justly said that there is no probability that God would supernaturally inspire the writings, unless He also miraculously preserved them from erroneous transcription. He might do the one, which He alone could

do, and leave the other, as in so many other matters, to the faithfulness of His servants entrusted with that responsibility.”

And in reference to translations, **The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy** explains, “No translation is or can be perfect, and all translations are an additional step away from the autographa. Yet the verdict of linguistic science is that English-speaking Christians, at least, are exceedingly well served in these days with a host of excellent translations and have no cause for hesitating to conclude that the true Word of God is within their reach. Indeed, in view of the frequent repetition in Scripture of the main matters with which it deals and also of the H.S.’s constant witness to and through the Word, no serious translation of the Holy Scripture will so destroy its meaning as to render it unable to make its reader “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (**2 Tim 3:15**).

For further Study on Textual Criticism and Translations:

- Greek New Testament UBS 4th ed. w/ Dictionary
- A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament 2nd ed. Bruce Metzger
- The Text of the New Testament – Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman
- How to Choose a Bible Translation – Robert Thomas
- The King James Only Controversy – James White