

Text Criticism

Introduction

Telephone Game

NIV footnote I Tim. 3:16 “He^d appeared in a body” ^d ‘some manuscripts *God* Scriptures copied by hand until 16th century, mistakes crept in.

We have almost 6000 ancient copies of the NT, but no two are completely alike
How do we know which is the right words?

Terms

witness- a manuscript or translation that demonstrates a particular variant

variant- a different possible wording

The sources

OT

MT- around 600-1000 AD but based on carefully preserved much earlier tradition

LXX around 300-100 BC

Other ancient versions

NT and church quotations

Mishnah, Talmud- Jewish commentaries- oral tradition

Dead sea scrolls

NT

Greek manuscripts

Ancient versions

Old Latin

Syriac

Coptic

Armenian

Aramaic

Patristic citations

Manuscript relationships

genealogical- written at one place and early copies circulated,
others copied from them.

The Method

NT- see Fee NT Exegesis pp. 81-91.

External evidence

- date of witnesses
- quality of witnesses
 - geographic distribution
 - text families

Internal evidence

- types of changes
 - accidental
 - copied a word or letter twice
 - missed a word or letter
 - transposed letter or word
 - added a word from memory
 - misheard a sound alike letter
 - misread a look alike letter (Heb.)
 - intentional
 - thought that an earlier scribe make a mistake
'corrected'
 - 'fixes' grammar
 - difficult or unusual passages corrected
 - harmonize e.g. gospels

Criteria

- shorter reading preferred
- more difficult reading preferred
- unique reading preferred
- style and vocabulary of author- very subjective
- *the reading that best explains the other variants*

OT –see Chisholm, From Exegesis to Interpretation, pp. 19-29.

External evidence

Internal evidence

Which reading explains the others

Examples

NT- Jn 3:15- 2 issues

everyone who believes (into him/in him) (may not perish but/omit) may have eternal life.

1. εἰν αὐτῷ or εἰς αὐτὸν

“in him” or “into him” interchangeable

External evidence slightly favors εἰν αὐτῷ

Internal evidence seems to favor εἰς αὐτὸν because John always uses the prep εἰς with ‘believe’

But on closer examination, this phrase may not go with ‘believe’ but with ‘have life’

This would explain why an ancient scribe saw εἰν, thought it was with ‘believe’ and ‘corrected’ it to normal usage

Difficult to explain how it would have changed vice versa

εἰν αὐτῷ is the best reading

2. μὴ ἀποληται ἀλλ’ or *omit*

External evidence overwhelming in favor of *omit*

Internal evidence, μὴ ἀποληται ἀλλ’ is easily explained by confusion with v. 16.

Difficult to explain how it would have changed vice versa

omit is the best reading

OT- I Sam 8:16

Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your (young men/cattle) and donkeys

MT - וְאֶת־בְּחֹרֵיכֶם הַטֹּבִים ‘your choice young men’

LXX - τὰ βουκόλια ὑμῶν τὰ ἀγαθὰ ‘your choice cattle’

‘cattle in Heb. is בְּקָרָה ‘young men’ is בְּחֹרֵי

if the original was בְּקָרָה cattle, it would explain the LXX translation and the accidental change to בְּחֹרֵי

Difficult to explain how it would have changed vice versa

Also note parallelism

menservants

maidservants

young men/cattle

donkeys

‘cattle’ is the best reading

Our method

NT- eclectic text- pastes together what the editors think is the best text in each case

UBS textual apparatus

lists significant variants

lists manuscript evidence for each variant

grades the certainty for each reading

A= certain, D = significant uncertainty

UBS
Text

15 {B} ἐν αὐτῷ Ϝ75 B T Wsupp 083 0141 Cyrilms // ἐπ' αὐτῷ Ϝ66 L (579 only αὐτῷ) Cyril // εἰς αὐτόν 8 086 f1 33 205 565 it^a, f^c Gregory-Nyssa^{vid} Cyrilms // εἰς αὐτόν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' (see 3.16) (Ϝ63vid A ἐπ' αὐτόν) Δ Θ Ψ f13 28 157 180 597 700 892 1006 1010 1071 1241 1243 1292 1342 1424 1505 Byz [E F G H N] Lect (l 127 l 1016)^{1/2} ἐπ' αὐτῷ; l 950 οὐ μὴ) it^b, e, f*, ff², j, q vg^{cl} (it^{aur}, c, l, r¹ vg^{ww}, st ἐν αὐτῷ) syr^S, P, b'

NA has similar textual apparatus

Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament

explains how the UBS committee made their textual choices

Metzger

3.15 ἐν αὐτῷ {B}

Exegetical as well as textual problems are involved in deciding among the variant readings. Except for this passage, the fourth evangelist always uses εἰς after πιστεύειν (34 times), never ἐν. On the other hand, if ἐν αὐτῷ is original here, the meaning may well be, "that every one who believes shall in him [i. e. resting upon him as the cause] have eternal life." In support of such an interpretation is John's manner of placing an adverbial phrase with ἐν before its verb when the phrase is emphatic or metaphorical (cf. 5.39, 16.33; and 1 Jn *passim*). On balance, therefore, the reading of Ϝ⁷⁵ B *al*, being ambiguous, seems to account best for the rise of the other readings.

Good commentaries- WBC, NICNT discuss significant textual issues

WBC

The expression ὁ πιστεύων ἐν αὐτῷ has caused confusion in the textual tradition. The text is read in P⁷⁵ B, whereas P⁶⁶ reads ἐπ' αὐτῷ, P⁶³ (apparently) & and most MSS read εἰς αὐτόν, and A reads ἐπ' αὐτόν. In this Gospel πιστεύω is always followed by εἰς (34 times). Both the unusualness and the ambiguity speak for the originality of ἐν αὐτῷ; in that case it must be viewed as an adverbial phrase, linked with ἔχη: "may in him have life eternal" (so Metzger, 204, and most recent commentators).

Some MSS, including P⁶⁶, add to the verse ὅτι πονηρά ἐστὶν ("because [or "that"] they are

Compare good translations

OT- BHS is not eclectic-

based on one manuscript and then lists significant variants in the apparatus

Good commentaries are the best bet for OT text criticism

WBC

are combined in LXX. However, on the other hand, considers LXX^a superior.

16.a. Read בְּקָרְכָם with LXX for בְּחֹרֵיכֶם ("your young men") in MT. "Young men" seems out of place in a verse which begins with "servants" and continues with "asses." The king's treatment of the young men is probably already included in vv 11-12.

16.a. LXX adds a clause which suggests that...

Compare good translations

Final notes

- 90-95% of NT text is absolutely certain- much better than any ancient document
- Of the remaining 5-10% most are minor changes that don't affect the meaning at all- only about 2% have any exegetical significance
- No major NT doctrine is dependent on textual issues.