**Text Criticism 1**

2013-2018

### Introduction

We recommend that the following technical article be read in full; then reread until a thorough mastery and understanding of its contents is reached: it will prove to be invaluable when applied to the text criticism of the Bible.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism>

Little of the following are my own ideas; rather, they are a collection of study notes gleaned from the above source. The comments about statistics came from me; but, these are simply adaptions of ideas taught in any statistics course where the subject of sorting is discussed: I simply converted the usual examples into Biblical Textual Criticism illustrations.

### Autographa

Books presumably had one origin, an Autograph. This presupposition is not necessarily true. One author, writing on the same subject matter to different audiences may be highly motivated to customize nearly identical letters to each specific audience. Unless such customized presentations were widely separated in time subsequent readers would not know which one was the original or the Autograph. Only the original author, or his very close associate would know which one was the Autograph, and which were copies. Depending on the author’s intent there may not exist any real distinction at all. In the author’s mind we may be confronted with several documents of equal importance. In this case we would be confronted with a collection of Autographa, not a single Autograph. Each document would have equal claim to being an Autograph and it would be impossible to sort them out. Nor would it make any real difference if we could sort them out. Each would receive equal weight. The compiled result would be a single core document with one apparatus assigning equal value to all variants. This line of discussion calls the whole idea of an Autograph in question.

In the case of the discussion between The Glory and Moses, there was a single audience, Israel. Hence, in this case, there exists the possibility of a Torah Autograph, but it was destroyed or lost in 586 BC. Today, we can say without much fear of contradiction that this Autograph is still extant, and it is resident at the right hand of God in heaven.[[1]](#endnote-1)

In the case of the epistles, many of them were intended to be circular, with multiple audiences. It is impossible to say that these were not customized. Moreover, there is some evidence of lost epistles of which we know nothing at all, except for vague references.

We could examine other scenarios, but the result would be the same. The only Autographa we have is that found in Revelation 5, where Jesus is, at one and the same time Author, Fulfillment, and Interpreter.

Hence, the subjects of Inspiration, Autographs, and Canonicity are nearly irrelevant or moot. We have no direct access to any of them, and we need to rethink what they mean:

* Inspiration, because we tend to say that it only applies to Bible Autographa; we tend to deny that any Inspiration is involved in Bath Kol, and the like. Moreover, we love to deny that there is any Inspiration associated with new ideas, art, etc.[[2]](#endnote-2) Consequently, we continue to heap up glory to ourselves, collecting accolades, patents, and the like; while consistently failing to give glory to God for His gifts.
* Autographs, because we have no access to them. We cannot manually, visually verify our copies. We should be asking if there is any way to verify our copies at all: many of them come to us with no provenance at all.
* Canonicity, because genuine Canonization appears to be the work of man under the direct supervision of God. Much of our standard view of Canonization is simply the work of corrupt human flesh.

“The basic problem, as described by Paul Maas, is as follows:

‘We have no autograph manuscripts of the Greek and Roman classical writers and no copies which have been collated with the originals; the manuscripts we possess derive from the originals through an unknown number of intermediate copies, and are consequentially of questionable trustworthiness. The business of textual criticism is to produce a text as close as possible to the original (constitutio textus).’ ”[[3]](#endnote-3)

“Maas comments further that ‘A dictation revised by the author must be regarded as equivalent to an autograph manuscript’. The lack of autograph manuscripts applies to many cultures other than Greek and Roman. In such a situation, a key objective becomes the identification of the first exemplar before any split in the tradition. That exemplar is known as the archetype. ‘If we succeed in establishing the text of [the archetype], the constitutio (reconstruction of the original) is considerably advanced.’ ”[[4]](#endnote-4)

### Copies

Copies are manuscripts written by professional scribes. Before the invention of the printing press and moveable type, documents were published by manual transmission. The publisher would employ sufficient numbers of scribes to meet his customer demand and run a profitable business.

One method was for a master reader to slowly and precisely read the master document. This may, at times have required letter by letter reading. Scribes would listen to the reading and write down what they heard. One hundred scribes could produce one hundred copies at a time. Errors in the master copy would be copies as well. Readers could make reading errors. Scribes could make hearing errors. Other types of errors were possible. The work required meticulous attention to detail. Such work was necessarily conducted at or near Solomon’s Temple to meet the need for Torah and other scrolls throughout all of Israel. With the development of synagogues,[[5]](#endnote-5) this demand only increased.

Another method, a slower one was for the scribe to read and copy the master document by himself. The reading and writing process conducted by a single person was not only slower individually, but only one document could be produced at a time. This method resulted in its own set of errors: some identical, some similar, some unique.

Later generations of copies accumulated previous errors and added new ones. The manuscript stream became more divergent.

The problem is, of course, to move in the reverse direction, up the manuscript stream, resolving all the connections; and hopefully arriving at a relatively pure archetype. This supposes several things that are obviously untrue.

To have a complete picture, we must have all the copies, at least from some terminal date (say before 1000 AD) backwards. Obviously, this is not realistic. We do not have all the copies. We have no way of even knowing how many manuscripts are lost. New manuscripts are being discovered rather frequently. Many known manuscripts have never been collated.

Then the documents must be studied for scribal style, materials, and variations in text. Such studies may result in the grouping of copies and fragments into like sets.

Once sets are constructed, a hoped-for pattern may emerge from the evidence. If a pattern is discovered it can be arranged in an historic tree.

With a little luck the trunk of the tree will be the Archetype, and the Archetype will be an accurate representation of the Autograph, assuming that there is one. We will also have a critical edition, which represents the historic tree, and most of the major variations. The editors may also include a report of their working principles.

### Variorum

“The collation of all known variants of a text is referred to as a variorum, namely a work of textual criticism whereby all variations and emendations are set side by side so that a reader can track how textual decisions have been made in the preparation of a text for publication.”[[6]](#endnote-6)

Robert Lowes Clarke’s Variorum (1881) is available for around $26. It may have been revised. Its quality is unknown.

### Archetype

Archetype differs from the Autograph in that it represents a first generation master copy of the Autograph. Therefore, it is hoped that the Archetype is an exact and true copy of the original. However, there are little or no means to verify this hope, and it is impossible to realize perfectly.

### Eclecticism

Eclecticism does not refer merely to the gathering of as many copies, opinions, or voices as possible. It refers, rather, to the attempt to organize and sort all known copies on the basis of clearly observable variation into distinct groups. Ostensibly, documents with identical additions, errors, and omissions would belong to the same group; it would be highly unlikely that these identical additions, errors, and omissions would accidentally cross pollinate another group. Consequently, we hope, by a process of diligent sorting to identify these distinct groups, their priority, and their relationship with each other.

Eclecticism then attempts to arrive at the Archetype by combining the several witnesses to produce a text that may not actually exist in any known manuscript

“Since the mid-19th century, eclecticism, in which there is no a priori bias to a single manuscript, has been the dominant method of editing the Greek text of the New Testament (currently, the United Bible Society, 4th ed. and Nestle-Aland, 27th ed.). Even so, the oldest manuscripts, being of the Alexandrian text-type, are the most favored, and the critical text has an Alexandrian disposition.”[[7]](#endnote-7)

Eclecticism is supposedly performed without bias. However, current work has tended to favor the Alexandrian text-type with considerable bias.[[8]](#endnote-8)

***This method also carries the real statistical risk of producing a manuscript that is worse than any of its parent manuscripts.***

Example one: Say we begin with 1000 known true exact copies of the Autographa (an absurd assumption). An evil person has mixed 10 fraudulent copies with the good ones. Our inspection accuracy is 99%, which is exceptionally good. We correctly identify frauds as frauds, and trues as trues 99% of the time. We only err 1% of the time. The resultant examination identifies 9.9 fraudulent documents as frauds, and only 0.1 fraudulent document as true. 990 true manuscripts are verified to be true, but the other 10 are mistakenly designated to be frauds. Now we regroup and find that we have identified a total of 19.9 documents as frauds and 990.1 documents as trues. We seem to have gotten worse, not better. Why? Moreover, our 19.9 manuscripts identified as frauds, actually condemn 10, more than half of the documents falsely. Meanwhile, our set of trues actually contains 0.1 fraud. We started with a set including 10 frauds, or 10 Byzantines, or 10 Westerns, and 1000 known Alexandrians: a 0.99% fraudulent set. Now we only have a 0.01% fraudulent set. However, this improvement cost us the loss of 10 good document manuscripts. Repeated sorting may actually make the outcome better, but at a steadily increasing cost.

Example two: Suppose we begin with 1000 known true exact copies of the Autographa. This time an evil person has mixed 1000 fraudulent copies with the good ones. Our inspection accuracy is still 99%. The resultant examination identifies 990 fraudulent documents as frauds, and only 10 fraudulent document as true. 990 true manuscripts are verified to be true, but only 10 are mistakenly designated to be frauds. Now we regroup and find that we have identified a total of 1000 documents as frauds and 1000 documents as trues. Our 1000 manuscripts identified as frauds, still condemn 10 documents falsely. Meanwhile, our set of trues actually contains 10 frauds. We started with a set including 1000 frauds, or 1000 Byzantines, or 1000 Westerns, and 1000 known Alexandrians: a 50% fraudulent set. Now we only have a 1% fraudulent set, or misidentified Alexandrian set. However, this improvement still cost us the loss of 10 good manuscripts.

***The perfect manuscript could be among those 10 good manuscripts that were mistakenly eliminated from the set.***

It is even possible to sort the set and make it worse. Such sorting cannot be trusted to the hands of sloppy workers. It is a high risk venture that must be committed to the most meticulous and skilled. The better the original set, the harder it is to improve it. It is entirely possible to mistakenly identify Byzantine documents as Alexandrian or Western. It is not out of the question that even the group names Alexandrian, Byzantine, and Western are in error.

I have no experience with sorting ancient documents. I have a great deal of experience with the nearly identical process of inspecting industrial parts. It is a costly and often worthless enterprise. Once errors are introduced into any system, it becomes unbelievably difficult to get them out.

### External Evidence

External evidence is evidence that comes from outside of the particular manuscript itself: from other manuscripts, witnesses, geographical diversity, mass of evidence, probabilistic opinions, etc. The existence of identified alternative readings would be external to the alternative readings and help establish their relationships within the overall structure. The most important external evidence is that of provenance, by which we know the chain of evidence of a particular artifact. Without a known provenance, we are forces to guess at provenance by sleuth-work. For example: if one of the Church Fathers should happen to quote a manuscript exactly, and state its date and source from his lifetime, we have a known provenance tying that manuscript to a specific time and place: thus, its location on the tree is now fixed with a high probability.

### Internal Evidence

Internal evidence is evidence that comes from the particular manuscript itself. Short readings, difficult readings are supposedly superior. Skipping lines, and duplicating lines, and author or scribal style are all under consideration here. A reading that explains other readings is thought of as the best candidate.

Having worked as a professional scribe for a significant portion of my life, I can assure you of two things. One, I have committed every copying error imaginable. Two, all of these criteria are highly subjective and several of them work equally well at producing errors in either direction. I simply don’t believe them, with one exception.

A skilled handwriting expert is able to identify the distinctive writing styles of individual scribes. In spite of the fact that we were all trained to write with identical style and to match the style of the particular document with which we worked, I can still pick my work out of the pile without much difficulty, because I observe minute differences that most observers would not even notice. My basic scribal style has not changed much in the past fifty years: although, age has made a telling mark on my ability to perform particular muscular motions. This does not mean that my basic style has changed, it has just gotten sloppier. Such visual analysis is easily enhanced by the study of surface and ink materials. It is highly unlikely that two fragments with identical surface and ink makeup, carrying the same history of erasure and reuse, with identical scribal styles could have come from differing sources. Carving, engraving, paint, etc. are also possible, but are less frequently under consideration.

Differences of author’s thought and topic style is a far different matter. My writing subject matter and literary style change all the time. My grammar improves. My knowledge base grows. My creativity ebbs and flows. My audience changes. My emotions fluctuate from day to day. All of these variables and many others effect my genre and literary writing style. I may have discovered a new word today, and used it extensively. I may read a new book tomorrow, and unconsciously mimic the author. Author’s genre and literary writing style is a poor indication of textual grouping.

Handwriting styles are a matter of muscle memory. Genre and literary writing styles are a matter of mental activity and creativity. Muscle memory forms slowly and is relatively fixed: it takes three to four weeks or longer to train a new muscle memory. Mental activity and creativity form second by second, hundreds and thousands of times each day. Fresh ideas flow to my typing at roughly three pages a day. Fresh ideas are thought of as positive values. A muscle memory change causes me to hit the wrong key, and is thought of as a negative value, a failure, a typographical error. Muscle memory is easily identified by its style; mental activity and creativity are nearly impossible to trace: because humans are so creative and inventive. New ideas flow freely; but, the muscles that express those ideas move in established patterns: the ideas change; the muscle patterns… not so much. Ideas are often encouraged to be different; muscle motions are designed to be repetitive: one involves thinking; the other suppresses thought.

Not all scribes have a tendency to lengthen manuscripts. On the contrary, the scribe is under constant pressure to produce sellable documents. Time is of the essence. The natural tendency of the scribe is to shorten the manuscript. The scribe makes more money with less effort. If the scribe is also lazy, this tendency to brevity is also enhanced.

Commentators, on the other hand have a tendency to lengthening. For every word in the Bible there are thousands of comments explaining what these words mean. Under the rubric of publish or perish the scholar increases his income by increasing his verbosity.

Authors, on the other hand, vary all over the lot. Tolkien takes a thousand words to say what his friend Lewis would say in one hundred words, and Poe would condense to ten words.

These supposed rules are far too subjective for my taste.

### Canons of Textual Criticism

The canons of textual criticism are extremely subjective.

### Limitations of Eclecticism

“Since the canons of criticism are highly susceptible to interpretation, and at times even contradict each other, they may be employed to justify a result that fits the textual critic's aesthetic or theological agenda. Starting in the 19th century, scholars sought more rigorous methods to guide editorial judgment. Best-text editing (a complete rejection of eclecticism) became one extreme. Stemmatics and copy-text editing – while both eclectic, in that they permit the editor to select readings from multiple sources – sought to reduce subjectivity by establishing one or a few witnesses presumably as being favored by “objective” criteria. The citing of sources used, and alternate readings, and the use of original text and images helps readers and other critics determine to an extent the depth of research of the critic, and to independently verify their work.” [[9]](#endnote-9)

### Stemmatics

Stemmatics is simply the arrangement of eclecticized documents into an historical tree. Eclecticism is not exact. Ideally, all additions, errors, and omissions would be identical and intact. This is rarely the case. The eclecticist is forced to make compromises. The stemmaticist must make similar compromises. These compromises open the door to the possibility of new eclectic and stemmatic errors. The student of statistics knows that the combination of these and other errors sometimes produces an inferior result: the compiled reading can actually be worse than any of its contributing manuscripts and manuscript fragments. In other words taking any one contributing manuscript at random may better represent the archetype. If the stemmatic scheme is used to override the eclectic evidence, further error is introduced.

Fortunately, the modern introduction of computer science offers promise for further perfection of eclectic and stemmatic skills. Computers are simply too stupid to make mistakes, and are thus capable of removing much human error from the decision process. Efforts are underway to digitize many, if not all, ancient Bible manuscripts. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is capable of standardizing these into a single type of printed text.[[10]](#endnote-10) Manual inspection can correct OCR errors. The resultant perfected analysis can then be subjected to powerful sorting routines. The eclecticism process should be capable of approaching perfection.[[11]](#endnote-11) This is not to say that any of us will be able to understand the result. This is difficult work, accomplished with insufficient funding and a shortage of skilled labor.

### Limitations of Stemmatics

The limitations of Stemmatics include:

* only one predecessor or source,
* multiple source manuscripts are identified as contaminated,
* scribes only make new errors,
* scribe improved manuscripts are identified as sophisticated (therefore also contaminated),
* grouped by commonality of error,
* mistakes are inevitably nonsense,
* with emendation, conjectural emendation, conjecture, dominant reading is better,
* only one authoritative version — the author never revised his work.

“Franz Anton Knittel defended the traditional point of view in theology and was against the modern textual criticism. He defended an authenticity of the Pericopa Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11), Comma Johanneum (1 John 5:7), and Testimonium Flavianum. According to him Erasmus in his Novum Instrumentum omne did not incorporate the Comma from Codex Montfortianus, because of grammar differences, but used Complutensian Polyglotta. According to him the Comma was known for Tertullian.”[[12]](#endnote-12)

“The critic Joseph Bédier (1864–1938) launched a particularly withering attack on stemmatics in 1928. He surveyed editions of medieval French texts that were produced with the stemmatic method, and found that textual critics tended overwhelmingly to produce trees divided into just two branches. He concluded that this outcome was unlikely to have occurred by chance, and that therefore, the method was tending to produce bipartite stemmas regardless of the actual history of the witnesses. He suspected that editors tended to favor trees with two branches, as this would maximize the opportunities for editorial judgment (as there would be no third branch to “break the tie” whenever the witnesses disagreed). He also noted that, for many works, more than one reasonable stemma could be postulated, suggesting that the method was not as rigorous or as scientific as its proponents had claimed.”[[13]](#endnote-13)

### Copy-Text Editing

In copy-text editing the critic assumes a basic manuscript to be primary and corrects or emends it in accordance with his own opinions, rules, and standards. This is also highly subjective.

“A page from Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209 shows a medieval scribe (the marginal note between columns one and two) criticizing a predecessor for changing the text: ‘Fool and knave, leave the old reading, don't change it!’ ”[[14]](#endnote-14)

“The first published, printed edition of the Greek New Testament was produced by this method. Erasmus, the editor, selected a manuscript from the local Dominican monastery in Basle and corrected its obvious errors by consulting other local manuscripts. The Westcott and Hort text, which was the basis for the Revised Version of the English bible, also used the copy-text method, using the Codex Vaticanus as the base manuscript.”[[15]](#endnote-15)

See also Ronald B. McKerrow (ca 1939), Joseph Bédier, and Sir Walter W. Greg (ca 1950), “The Rationale of Copy-Text”, Fredson Bowers (1905–1991), G. Thomas Tanselle (1934 –).[[16]](#endnote-16) Because these methods are usually based on the existence of the authors own manuscript, and or a first printing also approved by the author, they cannot be applied to Biblical text criticism where no such documents exist. However, these methods do expose issues that can be applied to ancient manuscripts, such as dealing with editorial coercion, censorship, and the like. It is highly likely that the influences of Constantine, various hierarchs, and King James I of England worked to produce editorial changes in manuscripts.

### Cladistics

Cladistics is a technique borrowed from biology, where it was originally named *phylogenetic systematics* by Willi Hennig. In biology, the technique is used to determine the evolutionary relationships between different species. In its application in textual criticism, the text of a number of different manuscripts is entered into a computer, which records all the differences between them. The manuscripts are then grouped according to their shared characteristics. The difference between cladistics and more traditional forms of statistical analysis is that, rather than simply arranging the manuscripts into rough groupings according to their overall similarity, cladistics assumes that they are part of a branching family tree and uses that assumption to derive relationships between them. This makes it more like an automated approach to stemmatics. However, where there is a difference, the computer does not attempt to decide which reading is closer to the original text, and so does not indicate which branch of the tree is the “root” — which manuscript tradition is closest to the original. Other types of evidence must be used for that purpose.

The major theoretical problem with applying cladistics to textual criticism is that cladistics assumes that, once a branching has occurred in the family tree, the two branches cannot rejoin; so all similarities can be taken as evidence of common ancestry. While this assumption is applicable to the evolution of living creatures, it is not always true of manuscript traditions, since a scribe can work from two different manuscripts at once, producing a new copy with characteristics of both.

Nonetheless, software developed for use in biology has been applied with some success to textual criticism.[[17]](#endnote-17)

### Religion Documents

“Application of textual criticism to [documents of religion].[[18]](#endnote-18) All texts are subject to investigation and systematic criticism where the original verified first document is not available. Believers in sacred texts and scriptures sometimes are reluctant to accept any form of challenge to what they believe to be divine revelation. Some opponents and polemicists may look for any way to find fault with a particular religious text. Legitimate textual criticism may be resisted by both believers and skeptics.”[[19]](#endnote-19)

This may be the very reason, the very form of idolatry, Bibliolatry, that God has deliberately blocked our access to the Autographa: to prohibit our worship of it rather than of Him. Yet, here we are. So fast is our tenacious grip on sin that we continue with fanatic zeal to either deify Scripture or condemn it. Neither of these tactics pursues the Truth.

### Al-Qur’an[[20]](#endnote-20)

This topic has significant errors. It fails to note the process whereby a famous Islamic leader destroyed all written copies of Al-Qur’an (610-632 AD) and demanded that his expert worship leaders reproduce the entire text from memory, producing a unified, standard text, a new Autographa. Fortunately or unfortunately, some of the older manuscripts were hidden and survived. In either case, Islam is sharply divided over support for one or the other of these manuscript types. Text criticism is nearly impossible in the one case, and merely difficult in the other. This is a good place for western scholars to avoid. Islam has suffered enough from western intrusion. Be that as it may, Muhammad (d. 632 AD) drew from both Christian and Jewish sources. Although his contribution is rather late, it may help resolve some of the thornier problems. Because Arabic is cognate to both Aramaic and Hebrew, it frequently gives us insight into the meaning of ancient words.

### Book of Mormon[[21]](#endnote-21)

Textual criticism of the Book of Mormon is not germane to our present goal, the textual criticism of the Bible. Suffice it to say that large sections of the Book of Mormon are copied directly from Masonic ritual. Hence, we should probably regard this as the textual criticism of Masonic ritual.

### Old Testament, Hebrew[[22]](#endnote-22)

Textual criticism of the Hebrew Old Testament is virtually impossible. Available extant printed copies are all Masoretic Text, with minimal apparatus. This article gratuitously assigns a beginning date for the Masoretes at 100 AD. There is precious little support for this opinion. Most articles on the Masoretes assigns their work from the seventh century AD onward. Their oldest surviving manuscripts are dated in the tenth century AD. The Masoretes produced a standardized text, which obviates most attempts at real textual criticism. The value of their work is also greatly diminished by the lateness of it. The Masoretic Text is a standardized modern document.[[23]](#endnote-23)

Nor should we think of it as a Hebrew document. Moses most likely wrote in Akkadian, the lingua franca of the day. That language was already in dynamic transmission from the time of Heber, until the destruction of Solomon’s Temple in 586 BC. From David (1010 BC) onward a new alphabetic language, paleo-Hebrew (indistinguishable from Canaanite or Phoenician) was invented and appears to dominate in use. During the ensuing years the language of Moses necessarily changed. This dynamic effect, known in all language, was greatly dampened by the Temple preservation process, but change the Israelite language did: all language is a moving target.

Between 586 and 516 BC the Jews were compelled to learn a new language, Aramaic.[[24]](#endnote-24) Daniel now writes in Aramaic. The bulk of the populace speak Aramaic. Public Scripture readings are conducted conjointly with an Aramaic translation, so that the hearers are able to understand what is being read. The text itself is recorded in Aramaic block letters. Hebrew, for all intents and purposes, is now a dead language, known only to scholars.

The Aramaic/Hebrew language Dead Sea Scrolls, might be thought of as proto-Masoretic.[[25]](#endnote-25) The work of the Masoretes served to standardize and eliminate variant chanting, readings, and vocalization. The Masoretes may well have destroyed the Dead Sea Scrolls had they known them. However, the point is largely moot. The accidents of history radically change the course of the Jews, making the Dead Sea Scrolls largely irrelevant, a mere curiosity of textual criticism. Their very hiddenness necessitates the fact that they were not in common use at the time of Christ. They may or may not give any insight into the nature of the text from 6/4 BC to 33 AD, and onward until 90 AD, and the end of the Apostolic era. Any insights must be relegated to hearsay and classed as highly subjective.[[26]](#endnote-26)

### Samaritan Pentateuch and Targums

The Samaritan Pentateuch and Targums are fraught with the same sorts of problems that plague Aramaic/Hebrew.

### Old Testament, Greek[[27]](#endnote-27)

In the accidents of history, Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) conquers the world. Before long Greek language and culture dominate the Jews. Aramaic/Hebrew remains an active language among the few: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes. But the lingua franca transitions to Greek. The Hasmoneans become Greek. The Jews even take sides in Greek politics: they much prefer the Ptolemies to the Seleucids. This history is widely ignored or opposed by western scholars. By neglecting to read the inter-testamental books or study the inter-testamental history, they pretend that it will somehow go away. Such wilful ignorance is inexcusable.

The demand for Greek language literature drives the Jews to translate the Old Testament into Greek (300-100 BC). As far as the populace is concerned, the Old Testament is now a Greek document. This is the fact that makes the Masoretic Text, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Targums so largely irrelevant. Our Stemma must relegate all of these as offshoot branches. None of them can be considered to be mainstream documents. This Greek Old Testament is commonly called the Septuagint or LXX, but it has a rich textual tradition all its own, replete with families and types, some of which are intimately linked to the Greek New Testament and New Testament textual criticism. So LXX is somewhat of a misnomer. Sometimes, Greek Old and New Testaments were even published together.

Nevertheless, the closest that most of us can get to this vibrant history is the Rahlfs edition. The cost of Old Testament documents is simply too great to overcome. In 1975, a single photographic copy of one manuscript cost as much as five hundred dollars or more. The acquisition of thousands of documents is far out of reach, even for wealthy libraries. The idea of dropping half a million dollars or more, on photographs of Old Testament Greek manuscripts is mind boggling. Consequently, LXX studies are largely limited to the London area and Manchester in the United Kingdom, Göttingen and Stuttgart in Germany. One must visit the great European libraries to study the LXX properly and thoroughly. The hoped for resolution to this problem is that all such manuscripts will be digitized and made available to all Old Testament students, over the internet, and free of charge.[[28]](#endnote-28)

### The Christ Event

It is too easy and simplistic to overlook the Christ Event in the field of textual criticism. After all, textual criticism is a scientific endeavor, devoid of all theological import, isn’t it? This attitude neglects the facts of the matter. The Christ Event is nothing less than the earth shattering return of the Glory of God to earth. Hence, the Christ Event includes with it the integral probability and reality of a new Autographa, a Greek one. It is entirely within the authority of the principal author to publish a second edition, one that corrects all the lapses, lacuna, additions, and deletions since Moses (ca. 1406 BC). This Christ Event shatters the vain Jewish hope that only Aramaic and Hebrew can be Inspired languages.[[29]](#endnote-29) Since Christ and His Apostles so obviously preached in Greek, Greek must now be considered an Inspired language.[[30]](#endnote-30)

Moreover, the Pentecostal Event follows on the heels of the Christ Event and fills all the people of God, male and female, young and old, learned and uneducated, from every kindred, tongue, and nation, with the Divine Glory in accordance with the promise made to Abraham. It also endorses all the languages of the world as Inspired languages.[[31]](#endnote-31) This opens the door to the possibility of Divinely Canonized Autographa in any and every language. Pentecost reverses Babel in a very real sense and we should be looking to the Holy Ghost far more than we do.

In addition to all this, the whole concept and identity of Temple, Oracle, ark, mercy seat, priesthood, breastplate, Urim, and Thummim is abandoned, cast aside, demolished, ripped to shreds, torn asunder, and replaced with its heavenly realities. I cannot summon speech violent enough to do credit to these Cosmological, Universe shattering events. Nothing on earth or in heaven will ever be the same. It is utterly impossible that these events not dramatically change the way we think about textual criticism. The resurrection of Christ from the dead moves all heaven and earth. For scholars that think that this is too religious, too theological — Get over yourselves; Get over it; this is the cosmic reality. ΙΣ ΧΣ ΝΙΚΑ.

### Old Testament, Syriac[[32]](#endnote-32)

The investigation of early Old Testament translations (early fifth century AD or prior)[[33]](#endnote-33) is outside of the scope of this study paper, and far beyond the capabilities of its author. Needless to say, early translations directly from Greek to the receptor language have a direct witness to the nature of the Greek original. No proposed Archetype can credibly stand without being reconciled with these early translations. The Peshitta[[34]](#endnote-34) and Old Latin[[35]](#endnote-35) manuscripts are of particular interest. There may well be others.[[36]](#endnote-36)

### Old Testament, Latin[[37]](#endnote-37)

Also out of the available scope and capabilities (early fifth century AD). Called the Vulgate, or Vulgata (382-420),[[38]](#endnote-38) it is a fresh translation of “Hebrew” into Latin. The translator, Jerome (347-420)[[39]](#endnote-39) was probably the most capable linguist in The Church of the fourth century. Among its values, the Vulgata preserves a better and earlier witness of the “Hebrew” text than the Masoretic Text. However, Augustine, in his letters to Jerome, vigorously opposes the publication this “Hebrew” based translation.

### New Testament[[40]](#endnote-40)

“The New Testament has been preserved in more than 5,800 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin manuscripts and 9,300 manuscripts in various other ancient languages including Syriac, Slavic, Ethiopic and Armenian. The sheer number of witnesses presents unique difficulties, chiefly in that it makes stemmatics impractical. Consequently, New Testament textual critics have adopted eclecticism after sorting the witnesses into three major groups, called text-types.”[[41]](#endnote-41)

“Possible later additions include the following:

* the longer ending of Mark, see Mark 16 (Mark 16:9–20).
* Jesus sweating blood in Luke, Christ's agony at Gethsemane (Luke 22:43–44).
* the story in John of the woman taken in adultery, the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11).
* an explicit reference to the Trinity in 1 John, the Comma Johanneum (1 John 5:7–8).

Other disputed NT passages:

* Opinions are divided on whether Jesus is referred to as ‘unique [or only-begotten: Gk. monogenes] Son’ or ‘unique [monogenes] God’, in John 1:18[86]
* 1 Corinthians 14:33–35. Some scholars regard the instruction for women to be silent in churches as a later, non-Pauline addition to the Letter, more in keeping with the viewpoint of the Pastoral Epistles (see 1 Tim 2.11–12; Titus 2.5) than of the certainly Pauline Epistles. A few manuscripts place these verses after 40.”3

### Conclusion

To be sure, these are not the only translatable differences we need to explore. We hope that this study puts the rigor and scope of Biblical Textual Criticism before you in an understandable way.

Yours in Christ,

Augie-Herb

[[42]](#endnote-42)

1. Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 31:24-27; Revelation 5 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Here, if and when we use the term inspiration at all, we are referring to human brilliance, that old razzle-dazzle of fleshly inventiveness: we are actually using the same word, inspiration, to deny the gift of God. From the biblical perspective, this is not inspiration at all. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. It is commonly thought that the institution of the Synagogue occurs after 516 BC. We have found references in the Psalms (Psalm 74:8) that must refer to the era of Solomon’s Temple, before 586 BC. Elsewhere, we have developed the arguments which show that the Synagogue institution was necessarily formed in the time of Moses (1406-1366 BC). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. The artistic style of printing; for example, Times New Roman: not the text type (Alexandrian, Byzantine, Western, other). Standardization of the type of printed text may make reading and word searches easier. Examination of a manuscripts style still requires examination of the original, or at least a photographic copy of the original; such manuscripts and photographs may not be analyzable by computer search methods: so, both text type and standardized type text methods of analysis are valuable. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. This does not mean that we at all approve of the “experts” voting to select this “best” word or phrase from one manuscript, and the next word of phrase from another manuscript: which is often the method in play. This is a destructive and disrespectful use of evidence. No, the manuscript, as far as its handwriting style and materials show the work of a single hand, must be evaluated as a whole, not in parts. We reject all slicing and dicing methodologies. Even if two hands are observed, working in the same manuscript; the fact that they were bound together into a single manuscript is indication enough that someone considered them equal in provenance: equivalent in time and location. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Please note the use and usefulness of emendation, or conjectural emendation in correcting the quotation. It is simply impossible for documents to be religious. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. As Orlinsky shows us, this was not always the case. Differing Masoretic voices have been lost to age related attrition: they just crumbled out of existence. Whether by default or by design, variant readings simply do not appear in printed texts. This creates an impression of homogeneity where none exists. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. This is the language we see in our printed “Hebrew” Bibles, which is erroneously called “Hebrew”: it is, in fact, block-Aramaic… the Jews probably did little more than rewrite the words letter by letter in the new writing style (circa 516 BC): it has nothing to do with a patriarch named Heber. However, the pointing and accentuation are all the invention of the Masoretes: hence, very modern. This means that to a great extent, the grammar, lexicography, and syntax are all Masoretic inventions: all highly subject to Jewish superstitions, mysticism, Kabballah, and the like. The disagreements between the Rambam and the Ramban should serve to warn us that all of this did not come from the mouth of God.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_diacritics>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niqqud>

Niqqud or nikkud, it would seem, was not invented and put into use until 500-1000 AD: thus, there is no real reason to consider it as either canonical or inspired: it is simply rabbinic opinion. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. We must be cautious here. The Dead Sea Scrolls have no provenance. They contain Greek as well as “Hebrew” manuscripts. We have no idea of who put them there or why. As far as we know today, the resemblance between the Isaiah Scroll and MT is purely accidental. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. For an opposing perspective see: Ginsburg, Christian D. with Harry M. Orlinsky, Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible (KTAV, New York, 1966: 1028 pages). [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. For further study see: Beckwith, Roger T., *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Wipf and Stock, Eugene, 1985, and SPCK, London, 1985: 528 pages) and Jellicoe, Sidney, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford University Press, London, 1968: 424 pages). [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. An Inspired language is any language in which the Holy Ghost may address man, and breathe into that man Inspired writing. It includes any language which the Glory approves for recording, presentation to the Oracle, and Canonization by the Glory Himself. We have repeatedly defended the idea that such Inspiration is not limited to Scripture; it includes Bath Kol, and possibly other things. To become Scripture, such Inspired writings must be recorded in an approved language, submitted to the Oracle, and received by the Oracle. Then, and only then can it be considered Scripture. The language in which it is written is an Inspired language. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. An Inspired language … see Note 29. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. An Inspired language … see Note 29. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15367a.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peshitta> [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vetus_Latina> and <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15367a.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15367a.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15367a.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulgate> and <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15515b.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome> and <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08341a.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_criticism> [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)