

Textual Criticism of the New Testament

Try Reading:

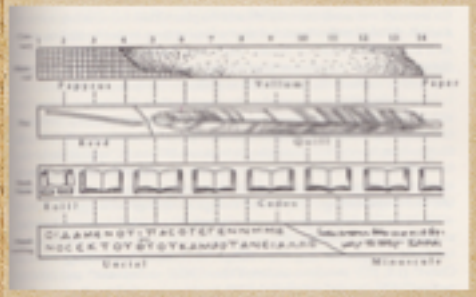
- John 5:4
- Acts 8:37
- Matthew 6:13
- John 7:53-8:11
- Mark 16:9-20



The Textual Transmission of the New Testament

How did they look like?

- Writing material: Papyrus vs.Parchment, Ink, Pens
- "Binding": Rolls vs Codices
- Writing style: Uncial, minuscule
- Compilation: Rolls vs Codices





Copiers of the Text

- Benefactors
- Scribe(s)
- Corrector(s)

Benefactors

- People who commission the writing of the manuscripts
- Paid for the cost of the production
- cost of prep +scribal fee = $$$$$$$

Scribes

- The "copying people"
- Paid by how much they wrote
- Difficult task
  - "he who does not know how to write supposes it to be no labour, but only though 3 fingers write, the whole body labours"
  - "the end of the book, thanks be to God"
  - "writing bows one's back, thrusts the ribs into one's stomach and fosters a general debility of the body"



How?

- "Pre-copying"
  - Preparation of sources
  - Preparation of material
  - Planning

How?

- Copying
  - NO PRINTING
  - "look and write"
  - Dictation
  - Problems faced

How?

- Post-copying
  - Scribes check their work
  - Correctors
  - Binding

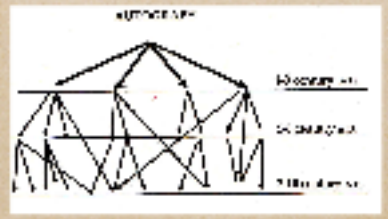
Original copy?

- Gone, gone, GONE...!!
- How? Why? Where?
- Dunno...
- So what do we have?
- Copies of the copies of the copies of the copies.....

Transmission



Transmission



Transmission

- Most manuscripts was in Koine Greek (lingua franca)
- Early church fathers also wrote in Greek
- Septuagint - Greek translation of the OT
- "local text"
- Referred according to location. e.g. Alexandrian, Byzantine, Caesarean, Western

Transmission



Transmission

- Early church fathers: Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius
- Church leaders and theologians
- Responsible for development of NT textual tradition and formation of Christian Theology

Transmission

- Various "local texts" began to mix
- Comparing, editing, and revising brought about a "mixed texts"
- By 4th century CE there were MANY text. Some closely resembling each other but others are significantly different.

Transmission

- Stalled when the persecution of the church occurred.
- Under Emperor Constantine, Christianity became to official religion of Rome (4th century CE)
- New churches emerged and manuscripts could be freely copied and compared.

Transmission

- Latin began replacing Greek in the later years
- The West became Latin speaking churches
- Coptic, Syriac, Gothic, Armenian, Ethiopic
- Translations were necessary as Christianity spread.

Translations

- Problems with translations
  - There was no standardisation for translations
  - Latin and other translations cannot express all of the linguistic and conceptual nuances

Transmission

- Earliest translations from Greek to Latin came approx. before the end of 2nd century CE
- By the 4th century CE there were may Old Latin manuscripts
- Many manuscripts = many mixtures and corruptions = poor quality

Translation

- Pope Damasis commissioned Jerome make a revision, correct the readings and to produce a standard version
- The Vulgate

Very old pieces of paper



St. John's fragment (P52)

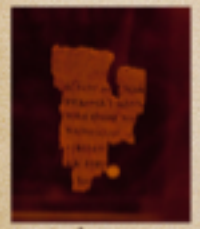
- Oldest manuscript
- Early 2nd century CE
- From Egypt, possibly Oxyrhynchus
- Currently housed in John Rylands Library, Manchester, England

John Rylands library





P52 (earliest NT fragment)



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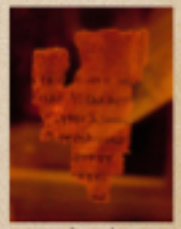


back

Chester Beatty Papyri

- Gospels & Acts (P45), Pauline letters (P46), Revelations (P47)
- 2nd Century CE
- Origin is unknown but is thought to be from Egypt

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



Chester Beatty Papyri



Acts of the Apostles (P45)



Gospel according to John (P45)

Chester Beatty Papyri



Gospel according to Matthew (P45)



Gospel according to Mark (P45)

Chester Beatty Papyri

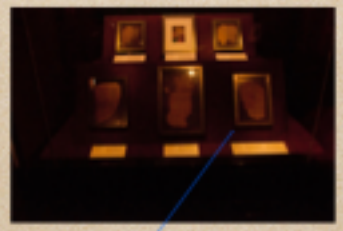


Gospel according to John (P45)



Pauline Letters (P46)

Chester Beatty Papyri



Revelations (P47)

Codex Sinaiticus

- made in the 4th Century CE
- Found in St Catherine's Monastry
- Constantin von Tischendorf
- Oldest surviving complete NT and one of 2 oldest manuscripts of the whole bible

Codex Sinaiticus

- At least 3 or 4 scribes
- Original - 743 leaves; now - 411 leaves (excluding fragments)

Codex Sinaiticus

- 694 leaves - British Library, London
- 8 leaves - St Petersburg, Russia
- some or all 36 leaves - St Catherine's, Egypt



Codex Sinaiticus

- Contains LXX, intertestamental literature, the entire New Testament and apostolic fathers
- Alexandrian text type uncials on parchments
- Only ancient manuscript written in 4 columns
- One of the most valuable codices in the reconstruction of the New Testament

Codex Sinaiticus



Sheep hair follicle



Calf hair follicle

Codex Sinaiticus

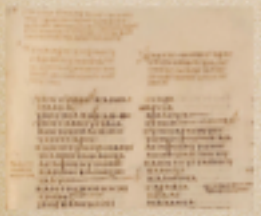


Veining



Scar tissue

Codex Sinaiticus



Corrections



The Textual Corruption of the New Testament

Is our Bible corrupted? Are there errors in the transmission of the Bible?

- Variants
- Additions
- Corruption
- Errors in transmission

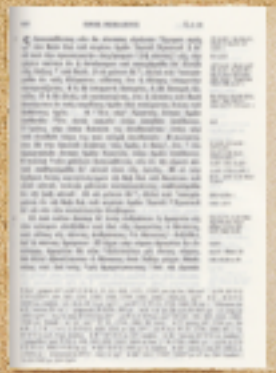
Footnotes in the New Testament

- How do we account for some of the footnotes in our Bible -
  - "some of the ancient and more reliable manuscripts do not have ..."
  - "some late manuscripts have ....."

A Look at the Apparatus

- Ending of Mark 16





Romans 5

Footnotes in the New Testament

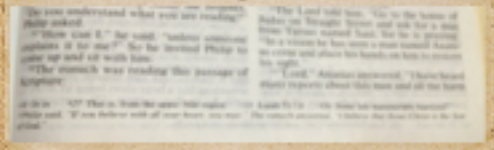
- Examples:
  - John 20:31 - "may believe" or "may continue to believe"?
  - Romans 5:1 - "we have peace" or "let us have peace"

Footnotes in the New Testament

- Examples:
  - Acts 8:37

Footnotes in the New Testament

- Examples:
  - Acts 8:37 - missing verse?

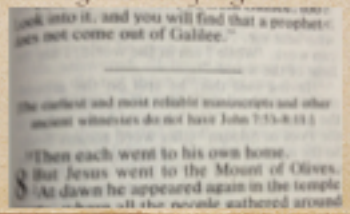


Footnotes in the New Testament

- Examples:
  - Ephesians 1:1 - "in Ephesus"?
  - 1 John 5:7-8 - "Trinity" phrase?

Footnotes in the New Testament

- Examples:
  - John 7:53-8:11 - is the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery a legend?



look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53–8:11.

[1]Then each went to his own home.
8 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.
2At dawn he appeared again in the temple

Footnotes in the New Testament

- Examples:
  - Ending of Mark - does Mark end at 16:8?