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# **COURSE GUIDE**



# MAIN COURSE

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## **MODULE 1      GENERAL INTRODCUTION**

Unit 1      Fundamental Issues in New Testament Criticism  
Unit 2      The Canon of the New Testament Unit 3  
An Overview of the New Testament I Unit 4  
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### **UNIT 1      FUNDAMENTAL      ISSUES      IN      NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM**

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- 2.0 Objectives
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  - 3.2 Inspiration and New Testament Criticism
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#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The New Testament has been accepted as the only authority upon which the life and conduct of the Christian and also doctrines of the Church can be based, especially among the Protestants. It is this assertion that led to the issues that are fundamental in the New Testament, and these are the issues of canon (that is, what are the books that can be said to belong) the inspiration (the relationship between God and the books) and ultimately the issues of infallibility, inerrancy and authority, which derives from inspiration. In this unit, you will have an overview of the issues relating to inspiration and the relationship between inspiration, authority and criticism.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define inspiration
- Discuss the various views on inspiration
- Define inerrancy
- Define infallibility

Discuss the supposed negative impact of New Testament criticism on inspiration and consequently on infallibility and inerrancy.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Inspiration of the New Testament

Biblical inspiration is the doctrine in Christian theology concerned with the divine origin of the Bible and what the Bible teaches about itself. The word *inspiration* comes by way of the Latin and the King James translations of the Greek word *θεοπνευστος* (*theopneustos*, literally, “God-breathed”) found in 2 Tim 3.16-17:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God [*theopneustos*], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

*Theopneustos* is rendered in the Vulgate with the Latin *divinitus inspirata* (“divinely breathed into”), but some modern English translations opt for “God-breathed” as in New International Version and avoid *inspiration* altogether, since its connotation, unlike its Latin root, leans toward breathing in instead of breathing out.

In a number of passages the Bible claims divine inspiration for itself. In the New Testament, Jesus treats the Old Testament as authoritative and says it “cannot be broken” (John 10:34–36), and 2 Peter claims that “no prophecy of Scripture ... was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:20–21). That epistle also claims divine authority for the Apostles (3:2) and includes Paul's letters as being counted with the Scriptures (3:16).

In addition, theological conservatives sometimes argue that Biblical inspiration can be corroborated by examining the weight of the Bible’s moral teaching and its prophecies about the future and their fulfillment. Others maintain that the authority of the Church and its counsels should carry more or less weight in formulating the doctrine of inspiration. Those Christians who receive the Bible as authoritative generally accept that the Bible is breathed out by God, in some sense because the Bible itself explicitly states this. However, different groups understand the meaning and details of inspiration in different ways.

## **The Evangelical View**

Most conservative Christians accept the Bible's statements about itself. At times the traditional view of the Bible has been defended as implying that the Bible is “inerrant in the original manuscripts”, while other traditionalists have sought to guard against the inference that the Bible would be read as intended if measured by modern scientific values, ways of describing things, or conventions of precision, and prefer the terminology of “biblical infallibility”. On particular issues these preferences of description represent sharp disagreements about particular approaches to interpretation.

Some evangelical Protestants have sought to characterize the conservative or traditional view as verbal, plenary inspiration in the original manuscripts, by which they mean that every word (not just the overarching ideas or concepts) is meaningfully chosen under the superintendence of God. These Christians acknowledge that there is textual variation, some of which is accounted for by deviations from the autographa. In other cases two biblical accounts of apparently identical events and speeches are reported to somewhat different effects and in different words, which this view accounts for by holding that the deviations are also inspired by God. At times this view has been criticized as tending toward a dictation theory of inspiration, where God speaks and a human records his words, but the traditional view has always been distinguished from the dictation theory, which none of the parties regard as orthodox. Instead, these Christians argue that the Bible is a truly human product and its creation was superintended by the Holy Spirit, preserving the authors' works from error without eliminating their specific concerns, situation, or style. This divine involvement, it is suggested, allowed the biblical writers to reveal God's own message to the immediate recipients of the writings and to those who would come later, communicating God's message without corrupting it.

## **The Catholic view**

As summarized by Karl Keating, the Roman Catholic apologetic for the inspiration of scripture first considers the scriptures as a merely historical source, and then, it attempts to derive the divinity of Jesus from the information contained therein, illuminated by the tradition of the Catholic Church and by what they consider to be common knowledge about human nature. After offering evidence that Jesus is indeed God, they argue that his Biblical promise to establish a church that will never perish cannot be empty, and that promise, they believe, implies an infallible teaching authority vested in the church. They conclude that this authoritative Church teaches that the Bible's own doctrine of inspiration is in fact the correct one.



### **The Modernist view**

The Modernist or liberal doctrine of inspiration typically rejects the Bible's own claims for itself and thus the traditional doctrine. Instead, in this view, other authorities must be established and utilized to determine the validity and truthfulness of the Bible. One such approach is that of Rudolf Bultmann, who argued that Christians must seek to "demythologize" the Bible by removing the layers of myth to get to the underlying historical facts; so that belief in the historical Jesus can be a very different thing from belief in the Jesus of Christian theology.

### **The Neo-orthodox doctrine**

The Neo-orthodox doctrine of inspiration is summarized by saying that the Bible is the word of God but not the words of God. It is only when one reads the text that it becomes the word of God to him or her. This view is a reaction to the Modernist doctrine, which, Neo-orthodox proponents argue, eroded the value and significance of the Christian faith, and simultaneously a rejection of the idea of textual inerrancy. Karl Barth and Emil Brunner were primary advocates of this doctrine.

This issue of inspiration is one of the major reasons why a lot of the conservatives and the fundamentalists reject the critical approach to the study of the New Testament. It looks as if these doctrines have been undermined.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

- 1 a. Define inspiration.
- b. Discuss the various views of inspiration

### **3.2 Inspiration, Authority, Infallibility, Inerrancy and New Testament Criticism**

The question of authority is central to any theological undertaking. Since Protestant theology has located authority in the Bible, the nature of biblical authority has been a fundamental concern. The Reformation passed to its heirs the belief that ultimate authority rests not in reason or a Pope, but in an inspired Scripture. Thus, within conservative Protestantism the question of inerrancy has been much debated. The two words most often used to express the nature of scriptural authority are "inerrant" and "infallible." Though these two terms are, on etymological grounds, approximately synonymous, they are used differently. In Roman Catholic theology "inerrant" is applied to the Bible, "infallible" to the church, particularly the teaching function of the pope and magisterium. Since Protestants reject the infallibility of both the pope

and the church, the word has been used increasingly of the Scriptures. More recently “infallible” has been championed by those who hold to what is called limited inspiration but what today is better called limited inerrancy. They limit the Bible’s inerrancy to matters of faith and practice, particularly issues bordering on salvation.

Inerrancy is the view that when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs and correctly interpreted is entirely true and never false in all it affirms, whether that relates to doctrine or ethics or to the social, physical, or life sciences. Further, inerrancy applies equally to all parts of the Bible as originally written. This means that no present manuscript or copy of Scripture, no matter how accurate, can be called inerrant. (You have to note that there are people who still hold to this view about the translations too, though it cannot be defended).

This definition also relates inerrancy to hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the science of biblical interpretation. It is necessary to interpret a text properly, to know its correct meaning, before asserting that what a text says is true or otherwise. Moreover, a key hermeneutical principle taught by the Reformers is the analogy of faith, which demands that apparent contradictions be harmonized if possible. If a passage appears to permit two interpretations, one of which conflicts with another passage and one of which does not, the latter must be adopted. Probably the most important aspect of this definition is its definition of inerrancy in terms of truth and falsity rather than in terms of error. It has been far more common to define inerrancy as “without error,” but a number of reasons argue for relating inerrancy to truth and falsity. To use “error” is to negate a negative idea.

The major problem that most fundamentalists and conservatives have concerning New Testament criticism has to do with their concept of inspiration. For example, for many who do accept the mechanical view of inspiration (that is, God literally dictated the words of the New Testament to the writers), New Testament criticism is nothing but a direct affront on God. This is because as far as these people are concerned because God is the author of the New Testament books, they cannot contain any error (this view led to the doctrine of infallibility and inerrancy) whatsoever. To corroborate this view on New Testament criticism, A. B. Phillips says that “Redaction, form, and source criticism have also fallen under heavy fire because many Evangelicals assert that these methods are built upon a belief that Scripture is errant”.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

- 1 a. Define infallibility.
- b. Define inerrancy

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, you have been given a brief introduction to the issue of inspiration. There are four major views on inspiration, namely: Evangelical, Catholic, Modernist and the Neo-orthodox views. You have also studied the consequent doctrines of authority, infallibility and inerrancy that grew out of inspiration and the dangers that New Testament criticism is thought to have on these issues of grave concern to the fundamentalists and the conservatives.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

Inspiration is the doctrine of Christian Theology concerned with the divine origin of the Bible

There are the following views on inspiration: Evangelical, Catholic, Modernist and the Neo-orthodox views.

The Roman Catholic Church upholds the doctrine of verbal inspiration.

Modernist view as exemplified by R. Bultmann seeks the demythologization of the Bible for the purpose of separating the historical Jesus from the Jesus of Christian Theology.

The Protestant Evangelicals limited the theory of inspiration and inerrancy to the original manuscripts of the Bible

The Neo-Orthodox view rejected the Modernist view because it eroded the value and significance of Christian faith.

The discipline of New Testament criticism has grave implications for the inspiration, authority, infallibility and inerrancy of the New Testament.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

Discuss the various views of inspiration and how these views can be affected by New Testament criticism.

### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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N. Geisler (ed.) (1979) *Inerrancy*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Cecil B. Murphey (1989) *The Dictionary of Biblical Literacy*, Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Books.

### **Online Resources**

“Inspiration” in Wikipedia Encyclopaedia online available at [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

## **UNIT 2 THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

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- 1.0 Introduction
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- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Need for a Canon
  - 3.2 The Canon of the New Testament
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- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The New Testament canon consists of those books which the Church came to regard as definitive expressions of its faith and life as set forth in the earliest period of its existence. The books were by apostles or by disciples of the apostles, though the question of authorship is not especially significant; the Church itself was the Church of the apostles.

The existence and the nature of the canon thus imply the existence of the Church. This is to say that without the Church there would be no New Testament. Just as the New Testament expresses the response of the apostles and their disciples to Christ, so the Church expresses the same response; but the New Testament is the product of the Church while the Church is not the product of the New Testament. The Church could have proclaimed, and in fact did proclaim, the gospel without possessing the New Testament; but the New Testament could not have come into existence apart from the Church.

The following facts have to be noted before we begin discussion on the canon of the NT. First, the earliest Christian Bible was not, and did not include, the New Testament. Instead, it was the Old Testament, usually read in Greek that was used and regarded as authoritative because Jesus and his apostles had so regarded it.

Second, no New Testament as such came into existence for several centuries after the beginning of the Christian movement. At an earlier time there were oral traditions, along with books of varying authoritativeness: but there was no New Testament.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the factors that led to the process of canonization
- List those who produced the list that was finally considered by the church
- Discuss the process of canonization
- Identify the role of Marcion in the canonization process

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Need for a Canon**

The greatest factor that led to the formation of the New Testament canon is the heretical impulse that rocked the church. In fact, most of the first attempts made toward the formation of the NT canon were from the so-called heretics. The following are some examples:

##### **Marcion**

In 144, Marcion proposed a reform of Christianity for which the church leaders expelled him. He felt that the OT was contradictory and barbaric and that the true Gospel was not at all Jewish, but that Jewish ideas had been imported into NT texts by interpolators, and only Paul's teachings are true. He also rejected the idea that Jesus was flesh, and the idea of Hell. The significant issue however is that Marcion recognizes some texts as being authoritative. After expulsion, Marcion started his own church and was the first to clearly establish a canon, consisting of ten of the Epistles and one Gospel, which Tertullian later identified as the Gospel of Luke, though stripped of unacceptable features such as the nativity and other OT references.

Marcion's canon influenced the final canon of the Church. His prefaces to the letters of Paul that he thought authentic were even retained in several versions of the Latin Vulgate Bible, and many of his proposed emendations (corrections) of these letters and the Gospel of Luke have turned up in numerous surviving manuscripts, showing that his legacy was intimately integrated at various levels throughout the surviving Church, affecting the transmission as well as the selection of the final canonical texts.

##### **Montanism**

The next stage in the canonization process was spurred by the heresy called Montanism in AD 156. Montanism is an apocalyptic, grass-roots church movement of inspiration and speaking in tongues very reminiscent of revivalist movements emphasizing eschatology that arise still to this day. This movement persisted long enough to win over Tertullian in 206, even though the congregations were cut off from the

church as demon-inspired. It is important to know that the first reference to the term “New Testament” (*kainē diathēkē*) is found in an anti-Montanist treatise (written by an unknown author in 192 and quoted by Eusebius, *History of the Church* 5.16.2ff.). This controversy also led to a long-standing hesitancy to canonize the Revelation, which was associated with a Montanist emphasis on personal apocalyptic visions, and was perhaps a little too anti-Roman to be safely approved.

## **The Appearance of Canon Lists**

### **Justin Martyr**

Justin Martyr of Rome composed his first Apology to an emperor in 150 A.D. and the second around 161 A.D. He also wrote *Dialogue with Trypho* which relates what purports to be a debate held around 135 A.D. In the first of these works, Justin describes “Memoirs of the Apostles” which he says are called Gospels (*1st Apology* 66.3). He quotes Luke, Matthew and Mark, and uses distinctly Johannine theology. Justin calls Mark the “Memoirs of Peter”. Justin also tells us that services were conducted by reading from these books, followed by a sermon, then communal prayer (*1st Apology* 67.3-5), demonstrating the rising interest in and use of written texts in the churches. Justin's choice of Gospels could have been influenced by his location (Rome) or some other preferences unknown to us, but it is a crucial consideration because the first "orthodox" canon is devised by Justin's pupil, Tatian, who would thus have favoured the choices of the man who had converted and instructed him. Finally, Justin quotes a lot of additional oral tradition outside these Gospels. He also refers to the Revelation to John, but never mentions or quotes any Epistles.

### **Tatian**

The first "orthodox" Christian move toward canonization begins in the Syrian church. The single man responsible is Tatian, who was converted to Christianity by Justin Martyr on a visit to Rome around 150 A.D. He selected four Gospels (the four we now know as the canon and which no doubt supported his own ideology and that of his tutor, Justin) and composed a single harmonized "Gospel" by weaving them together, mainly following the chronology of John. This is called the *Diatessaron* ("That which is Through the Four") and it became for a long time the official Gospel text of the Syriac church, centred in Edessa. The Syriac “*Doctrine of Addai*” (c. 400 AD) claims to record the oldest traditions of the Syrian church, and among these is the establishment of a canon: members of the church are to read only the Gospel (meaning the *Diatessaron* of Tatian), the Epistles of Paul, and

the Book of Acts and *nothing else* (italics mine). This tradition is traced back to Tatian.

What is significant is that it is shortly after Tatian and Justin's contributions that we discovered the first instance of organized action *against* authors of new Christian source-texts. Although such action is necessary for there to be any hope of control over a reliable textual tradition in a milieu of wanton invention and combative propaganda, the fact that it only begins at such a late date is another blow against those who set their hopes on having complete confidence in the present canon. It means that a century of prolific writing went largely unchecked before the church took any concerted action to stop it.

### **The Muratorian Canon**

The Muratorian Canon is a strange, badly written Latin list with brief comments on the books read in the church. It cannot be adequately dated, and arguments have ranged from late 2<sup>nd</sup> century to the 4<sup>th</sup> century but the 2<sup>nd</sup> century seems more probable. The list begins with the four Gospels in their present order. It clearly states the belief that Luke was a physician and Paul's secretary (based on Col. 4.14, Philem. 24, and 2 Tim. 4.11), and adds that John was written by the Apostle John and then reviewed and approved by all the other Apostles. The list also upholds all the epistles except Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and 3 John. It accepts the Apocalypse of John too.

The list attacks Marcionism, Montanism and the Valentinians, and may in fact represent an early attempt to counter the first Christian canon (that of Marcion) by declaring one opposed to it. Of particular note is that it rejects a now-lost letter of Paul to the Alexandrians as a Marcionite forgery.

### **Origen**

Origen is crucial in church tradition because he is known to have travelled widely, West and East, and was a voracious and sceptical scholar and prodigious writer and commentator on the OT, NT and other texts. He completes what had already been going on by this point by declaring certain texts to be equally inspired alongside the OT and calling them, as a corpus, the "New Testament" (*De Principiis* 4.11-16).

Origen declared the Tatian four as the only trustworthy, inspired Gospels simply because they are the only Gospels that no one "disputes" Origen doubts the authenticity of 2 and 3 John and 2 Peter, and admits some doubts about the author, not the validity, of the Epistle to the Hebrews suggesting that it may have been written by Luke or Clement of Rome, not Paul--and for this he uses the evidence of significant



differences in style and quality of language. It appears that, thanks to Origen's exhaustive scholarship (perhaps tilted slightly by the pressure to remain orthodox and exclude perceived heretics), and received tradition beginning with Tatian, the NT was almost entirely accepted in its present form by 250 A.D., and not much changed from its apparent form in 180, though nothing as yet was official.

### **Eusebius**

Eusebius is the first Christian scholar to engage in researching and writing a complete history of the Christian church. He reveals the embarrassing complexity of the development of the Christian canon, despite his concerted attempt to cover this with a pro-orthodox account. Eusebius gave priority to the Four Gospels. He adds to these Acts, 1 Peter and 1 John, and all the Epistles of Paul. Eusebius hints that there were some disputes about the Apocalypse of John, but places it confusingly in the first category. Among disputed but not heretical texts he places James, Jude, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John.

### **Cyril of Jerusalem**

Around 350 A.D., for his churches in Jerusalem, Bishop Cyril composed a set of lectures with the explicit purpose of indoctrinating new members of the Church, which explained every aspect of the orthodox faith, including the texts to be regarded as Holy Scripture. This is the first time anything like this had been done: an official pronouncement from a high-ranking church official on what the Bible was to consist of, enforced on a major diocese by an imperial Church authority. Moreover, Cyril declares that *no other books are to be read*, not even privately. His canon consists of the four Gospels, Acts, and the now-standard 21 Epistles. To be precise, he has the present list of the books of the Bible excluding Revelation.

### **The Synod of Laodicea**

The first synod ever held to decide the official contents of the Bible was the Synod of Laodicea in 363 A.D., consisting of twenty to thirty bishops. The resulting decree stated quite simply that it was now officially resolved: "Let no private psalms nor any uncanonical books be read in the church, but only canonical ones of the New and Old Testament." The list that follows matches what we now have in modern Bibles, excluding the Revelation. The influence of Cyril is almost certain.

### **Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria**

The Bishop of Alexandria was one of the most important men in the Church for one simple reason: the Festal Epistle written by that bishop to the churches in Egypt was considered the authoritative statement on the dates of Christian festivals. Athanasius took the chance afforded him and included in his Festal Epistle what he declared to be the canonical texts: the very Bible we now know (Gospels, Acts, 21 Epistles, and Revelation). "Let no one add to these," he declared, "let nothing be taken away from them." This became the Western Catholic canon. It was in 692 A.D. that this decision became official having being sanctioned by the Trullan Synod which comprised of several Eastern bishops convened by Emperor Justinian to settle and organize the authorities for Christian law.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The story and stages described above is the movement towards the formation of the New Testament canon. Heretical impulse that rocked the church was the greatest factor that led to the formation of the NT canon. The heretics include Marcion and Montanus. The canon lists begin to appear through writings of early Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr, Tatian, Muratorian canon, Origen, Eusebius, Cyril of Jerusalem and Athanasius of Alexandria.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Marcion was the first to establish a canon of 10 epistles and 1 gospel. Justin Martyr quoted from Luke, Matthew, Mark and John. He also cited Revelation but did not refer to any epistle.

The first orthodox Christian move toward canonization began in the Syrian church. This move is traceable to Tatian.

The Syrian church canon includes the four gospels, Pauline epistles and Acts.

The Muratorian canon adds Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 3 John and Revelation

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Discuss the formation of the New Testament canon.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **UNIT 3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE NEW TESTAMENT I**

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- 5.0 Summary
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The whole of the New Testament can be divided into four sections, namely: the Gospels, the Historical Book, the Epistles and the Apocalypse. The aim of this unit and the following one is to give you an overview of the contents and the various issues surrounding the sections. In this unit, you will deal with the first two sections, namely the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles while the other sections will be dealt with in the next unit.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Discuss the critical issues surrounding each of the Gospels
- Discuss the synoptic problems
- Evaluate the proposed solutions to the proposed problems
- Evaluate the purpose of Acts of the Apostles

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Introduction to the Gospels**

Gospel, when translated literally means “good news”. It derives from the Old English "*god-spell*" translated from the Greek word *euangelion* as used in the New Testament. In Christianity, the term “*gospel*” can be used to mean different things, including:

- a. The proclamation of God's saving activity in Jesus of Nazareth, or to denote the agape message proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth: this is the original New Testament usage.
- b. The four canonical *Gospels*, which are attributed to the Four Evangelists: (Gospel of Matthew, Gospel of Mark, Gospel of Luke and Gospel of John): the term "a reading from the Gospel" can refer to any of the 4 books.
- c. Other non-canonical works of antiquity that purport to quote Jesus for example, Gospel of Thomas, and
- d. A genre of Early Christian literature titled *The Gospel and the Gospels* in English. It was written in 1983.

The expression "gospel" was used by Paul, probably before the literary Gospels of the New Testament canon had been produced, when he reminded the people of the church at Corinth "of the gospel I preached to you" (1 Corinthians 15.1) through which they were being saved as far as Paul is concerned.

Of the many gospels written in antiquity, only four gospels came to be accepted as part of the New Testament, or canonical. An insistence upon there being a canon of canonical four, and no others, was a central theme of Irenaeus of Lyons, c. 185. In his central work, *Adversus Haereses* Irenaeus denounced various early Christian groups that used only one gospel, such as Marcionism which used only Marcion's version of Luke, or the Ebionites which seem to have used an Aramaic version of Matthew as well as groups that embraced the texts of newer revelations, such as the Valentinians (*A.H.* 1.11). Irenaeus declared that the four he espoused were the four Pillars of the Church: "it is not possible that there can be either more or fewer than four" he stated, presenting as logic the analogy of the four corners of the earth and the four winds (3.11.8). His image, taken from *Ezekiel* 1, of God's throne borne by four creatures with four faces—"the four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and the four had the face of an ox on the left side; the four also had the face of an eagle"—equivalent to the "four-formed" gospel, is the origin of the conventional symbols of the Evangelists: lion, bull, eagle, man. Irenaeus was ultimately successful in declaring that the four gospels collectively, and exclusively these four, contained the truth. By reading each gospel in the light of the others, Irenaeus made *John* a lens through which to read *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*.

Among the canonical Gospels, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* include many of the same passages in the life of Jesus and sometimes use identical or

very similar wording. *John* expresses itself in a different style and relates the same incidents in a different way-even in a revised narrative order-and is often full of more encompassing theological and philosophical messages than the first three canonical Gospel accounts. It is *John* that explicitly introduces Jesus as God incarnate.

Parallels among the first three Gospel accounts are so telling that many scholars have investigated the relationship between them. In order to study them more closely, German scholar J. J. Griesbach (1776) arranged the first three Gospel accounts in a three-column table called a *synopsis*. Apart from this, the word has its root in the combination of two Greek words, sun and optonomia, which will literally carry the meaning “to see together”. As a result, Matthew, Mark, and Luke have come to be known as the synoptic Gospels; and the question of the reason for this similarity, and the relationship between these Gospel accounts more generally, is known as the Synoptic Problem. This will be discussed in details below.

The general consensus among biblical scholars is that all four canonical Gospels were originally written in Greek, the lingua franca of the Roman Orient. On the strength of an early commentator it has been suggested that Matthew may have originally been written in Aramaic, or in Hebrew, or that it was translated from Aramaic/Hebrew to Greek with corrections based on Mark. Regardless, no Aramaic original texts of the Gospel accounts have ever been found, only later translations from the Greek.

### **3.2 The Synoptic Gospels**

The synoptic problem concerns the literary relationships between and among the first three canonical gospels, that is the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, known as the *Synoptic Gospels*. Similarity in word choices and event placement shows an interrelationship. The synoptic problem concerns how this interrelation came to pass and what the nature of this interrelationship is. Any solution must account for the similarities and differences in content, order, and wording. Possible answers speculate either a direct relationship (one Evangelist possessed one of the gospels) or indirect (two Evangelists having access to a shared source). The sources may be written or oral; single or multiple.

Some Christians argue that this could be explained by adhering to the belief that the gospels were “spirit-breathed”, that is, the Holy Spirit provided inspiration for every book in the Bible, and that consequently the similarities in the different accounts are due to having the same author, that is, God. It has also been argued by certain Christian groups that since the Synoptics all tell the story of the life of Jesus, that they

would naturally be similar in their accounts. Most scholars see the similarities as being far too identical, much like three people reporting the same event, and then using exactly the same cultural references, turns of phrase, ordering of content, and on occasion even the same set of words. However, if the Holy Spirit inspiration can account for the similarities, it will not account for the dissimilarities in these gospels.

The understanding found among early Christian writers and scholars has been that the first account of the Gospel to be committed to writing was that according to Matthew, the second Luke, followed by Mark and the final one John; and this order is defended today by proponents of the Griesbach hypothesis. However, since the Enlightenment scholars have been proposing also many other solutions to the Synoptic Problem. The following are the proposed solutions to the Synoptic Problem.

### **Two-Source Hypothesis**

The two-source hypothesis states that Matthew and Luke independently copied Mark for its narrative framework and independently added discourse material from a non-extant sayings collection called “Q”. “Q” is derived from the German word *quelle* which means source. Much work has gone into the extent and wording of “Q”, particularly since the discovery of the Gospel of Thomas which attests to the sayings gospel genre. Holtzmann's 1863 theory posited an Ur-Marcus in the place of our Mark, with our Mark being a later revision. Some scholars occasionally propose an unattested revision of Mark, a deutero-Mark, being the base of what Matthew and Luke used. Streeter (1924) further refined the Two-Source Hypothesis into a Four-Source Hypothesis this will be discussed later.

### **Four-Source Hypothesis**

Four document hypothesis is a conflation of the two-source hypothesis. It takes Mark as the primary document and then presupposes that an ‘M’ and an ‘L’ being a unique source to Matthew and Luke respectively, with ‘Q’ and ‘L’ combined into a Proto-Luke before Luke added Mark. While unique sources, such as ‘M’, ‘L’, or Semitic first editions, are interesting for form-critical purposes, they are quite peripheral to the Synoptic Problem as to how the canonical gospels are interrelated.

### **The Farrer Hypothesis**

The Farrer hypothesis posits that Mark was written first and Matthew used Mark, but that Luke used both, thus dispensing with Q. What Austin Farrer has argued is that Luke used Matthew as a source as well

as Mark, explaining the similarities between them without having to refer to a hypothetical document.

### **The Griesbach hypothesis**

The Griesbach hypothesis is also known as the Two Gospel Hypothesis. It holds that Matthew was written first, and Luke used it in preparing his gospel. Then, Mark conflated the two in a procedure that mostly followed where Matthew and Luke agree in order except for discourse material.

### **The Augustinian Hypothesis**

The Augustinian hypothesis holds that Matthew was written first, then Mark, then Luke, and each Evangelist depended on those who preceded him. This position is in the closest agreement with the church fathers' testimony of the gospels' origins. John Wenham was considered one of the prominent contemporary scholars who supported the Augustinian hypothesis. A variant of this hypothesis that was popular mainly among Roman Catholic scholars in the first half of the 20th century was that Matthew was written first, and copied by Mark and then Luke, but that Matthew was written in Aramaic, and when it was translated to Greek the translator liberally adapted some of the phraseology of the other gospels which were already in Greek. Some scholars argue that the Griesbach hypothesis is merely another variant of this original hypothesis since they agree on their principal points.

## **3.3 Brief Overview of the Gospels**

### **Matthew**

The Gospel of Matthew is one of the four Gospel accounts of the New Testament. It narrates an account of the life and ministry of Jesus, from his genealogy to his post-resurrection commissioning of his Apostles to go and make disciples of all nations. The Christian community traditionally ascribes authorship to Matthew the Evangelist, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, while secular scholarship generally agrees it was written by an anonymous non-eyewitness to Jesus' ministry.

The one aim pervading the book is to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, that is, he of whom "Moses in the law and the prophets did write" and that in him the ancient prophecies had their fulfillment. This book is full of allusions to passages of the Old Testament which the book interprets as predicting and foreshadowing Jesus' life and mission. This Gospel contains no fewer than sixty-five references to the Old Testament, forty-three of these being direct verbal



citations, thus greatly outnumbering those found in the other Gospels. This Gospel sets forth a view of Jesus as Christ and portrays him as an heir to King David's throne, the rightful King of the Jews.

The cast of thought and the forms of expression employed by the writer show that this Gospel was written by Jewish Christians of Iudaea Province. Some believe this gospel was written to the Jewish community, thus explaining all the allusions to passages of the Old Testament, however, this has been refuted by others who have been able to identify the universal message in the book. The distinctive features of Matthew include the following:

- A unique emphasis on the role of the Gentiles in the new kingdom
- The only gospel that mentions the church
- The grouping of Jesus' saying into five blocks of discourses, each ending with the phrase "when Jesus had finished..."

## **Mark**

The Gospel of Mark is traditionally ascribed to Mark the Evangelist, who was said to have been the secretary to the Apostle Peter. It narrates the life of Jesus from John the Baptist to the Ascension but it concentrates particularly on the last week of his life (chapters 11-16, the trip to Jerusalem). It portrays Jesus as an exorcist, a healer, the Messiah (Christ), and a few times as the Son of God.

Two important themes of Mark are the Messianic secret and the obtuseness of the disciples. In Mark, Jesus is not generally recognized as the Son of God, except by demons (whom he commands to silence) and at his death. Jesus uses parables to prevent the unworthy from understanding his message and being forgiven. Even the disciples have trouble understanding the parables, but Jesus explains what they mean in secret. They also fail to understand the implication of the miracles that he performs before them.

Mark usually appears second in the New Testament after the Gospel of Matthew and traditionally Matthew was thought to be the first gospel to be composed with Mark the second. However most contemporary scholars date Mark to the late 60s or the early 70s, and, contrary to the traditional view, regard it as the earliest of the canonical gospels, and a source for material in the other synoptic gospels, Matthew and Luke. Mark is unique in its use of language as follow:

- Mark uses more Latin words than any other Gospel
- Mark has a pronounced Aramic flavour

Mark uses rough Greek marked with broken sentence structures and slang expressions.

## **Luke**

The Gospel of Luke is the third and longest of the four canonical Gospels of the New Testament, which purport to tell the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The author was also the author of Acts of the Apostles. Like all gospels, the gospel originally circulated anonymously. Since at least the 2nd century, authorship has been ascribed to Luke, named in Colossians 4:14, a doctor and follower of Paul.

The introductory dedication to Theophilus, 1:1-4 states that since many others have compiled an orderly narrative of the events from the original eyewitnesses, that the author has decided to do likewise, after thorough research of everything from the beginning, so that Theophilus may realize the reliability of the teachings in which he has been instructed.

The consensus is that Luke was written by a Greek or Syrian for Gentile Christians. The Gospel is addressed to the author's patron, the most excellent Theophilus, which in Greek simply means "friend or lover of God". This has made some scholars to suggest that it may not be a name but a generic term for a Christian. The Gospel is clearly directed at Christians, or at those who already knew about Christianity, rather than a general audience, since the ascription goes on to state that the Gospel was written so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. The uniqueness of Luke is marked by the following:

Luke usually tell the time and place of narrated events

Luke supplies more details about Jesus' human life than any other Gospel

Luke alone gives Jesus the title, Saviour

## **John**

The Gospel of John is the fourth gospel in the canon of the New Testament. It is traditionally ascribed to John the Evangelist. Like the three synoptic gospels, it contains an account of some of the actions and sayings of Jesus, but differs from them in ethos and theological emphases. The purpose is expressed in the conclusion, 20:30-31: "...these are written down so you will come to believe that Jesus is the Anointed, God's son - and by believing this have life in his name".

According to Trinitarianism, of the four gospels, John presents the highest christology, implicitly declaring Jesus to be God. Compared to

the synoptics, John focuses on Jesus' cosmic mission to redeem humanity over the earthly mission to teach, cast out demons (which is not mentioned), and comfort the poor.

The Gospel of John is distinguished by the following:

- John highlights the "I am" sayings of Jesus
- John emphasizes Jewish feasts and festivals that Jesus attends
- John pictures Jesus as addressing individuals rather than crowds
- John puts an emphasis on the deity of Christ
- John highlights Christ's preexistence in calling him the Word.

### **3.4 Brief Overview of the Book of Acts**

The Acts of the Apostles is a book of the Bible, which now stands fifth in the New Testament. It is commonly referred to as simply Acts. The title "Acts of the Apostles" was first used by Irenaeus in the late second century, but some have suggested that the title "Acts" be interpreted as the "Acts of the Holy Spirit" or even the "Acts of Jesus", since 1:1 gives the impression that that Acts is set forth as an account of what Jesus *continued* to do and teach.

Acts tells the story of the Early Christian church, with particular emphasis on the ministry of the Twelve Apostles and of Paul of Tarsus. The early chapters, set in Jerusalem, discuss Jesus's Resurrection, his Ascension, the Day of Pentecost, and the start of the Twelve Apostles' ministry. The later chapters discuss Paul's conversion, his ministry, and finally his arrest and imprisonment and trip to Rome.

It is almost universally agreed that the author of Acts also wrote the Gospel of Luke. The traditional view is that both the two books were written *c.* 60 by a companion of Paul named Luke—a view which is still held by most scholars, though some view the books as having been written by an unknown author at a later date, sometime between 70 and 100.

Like all historians, Luke in the book of Acts sets forth an interpretation of history. The overall structure of the book is geared to show how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to the uttermost part of the world and how the faith shifted from Judaistic faith to Gentile faith.

The book of Acts contains selected speeches that are used frequently and extensively. Examples of these speeches include Peter's speech on Pentecost, Paul's speech on Mars Hill and Paul's address to the Ephesian elders.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has given you a brief overview into the content of the four gospels as well as the synoptic problems and the proposed solutions into the synoptic problems. You have also been exposed briefly to the contents of the book of Acts of the Apostles.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptic gospels

The problem of the interrelationship between the three gospels is called the synoptic problem.

Some of the proposed solution to the synoptic problem are: the Farrer hypothesis, two-source document, four-source document and the Griesbach hypothesis.

The Gospel of Mark has been generally accepted as the first gospel to be written.

The Gospel of John is different from the synoptic gospels in style, arrangement and emphasis.

Acts of the Apostle and the Gospel of Luke are considered to be from the same author.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write short notes on the following:

- |            |         |         |
|------------|---------|---------|
| a. Matthew | b. Mark | c. Luke |
| d. John    | e. Acts |         |

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## **UNIT 4 AN OVERVIEW OF THE NEW TESTAMENT II**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Definition and Structure of Epistle
  - 3.2 The Nature of Epistles
  - 3.3 Pauline Epistles
  - 3.4 Petrine Epistles
  - 3.5 The Epistle of James
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  - 3.7 The Epistle of Jude
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  - 3.9 The Apocalypse
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit you have had an overview of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and the book of Acts of the Apostles. You have studied briefly about the books, their contents and what the scholars say about the books. In this unit, we will concentrate on the epistles and the apocalypse.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss epistolary structure
- Explain why the epistles are called occasional documents
- Discuss the themes of Pauline epistles
- Discuss the theme of Johannine epistles
- Discuss the theme of Petrine epistles
- Identify general epistles

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Definition and Structure of the Epistle**

The word epistle is derived from the Greek word *epistole*, which is used to refer to any kind of letter. Originally, it is used to refer to a written communication between persons apart, whether personal, private or official. Epistles have a structure that is followed, though there could be variations depending on the subject or the mood of the writer. As a result, any epistle can be divided into the following parts:

- a. Address: This usually includes the name of the writer and the recipient.
- b. Greetings
- c. Thanksgiving or Prayer wish
- d. The main body of the epistle
- e. Closing: This usually includes final greetings and farewell.

### **3.2 The Nature of the Epistles**

Firstly, the epistles are called occasional documents because according to Fee and Stuart, they were called forth by some special circumstances either from the readers' side or the author's. They went further to say that usually the occasion may be the need to correct some behaviour or a doctrinal error or a misunderstanding that needed further light. For example, in writing the epistle to the Galatians, Paul needed to correct the doctrinal error that has overtaken the Galatians' believers that they needed to be circumcised before they could be saved. As a result of this there is always the need for application in the interpretation of epistles.

Secondly, the epistles are not theological compendia. It has to be stated however that the epistles contain theological ideas, they are called task theology, because the theology has already been brought to bear on a particular problem.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Divide any epistle of your choice in line with the epistolary structure

### **3.3 Pauline Epistles**

As we have indicated earlier, epistles are generally written in the ancient world. Paul's letter usually follows this general structure. However, Paul's letters are clearly marked out as being an apostolic proclamation and exhortation. Paul inserts words like grace and peace instead of the customary greeting. He replaces the thanksgiving for the recipient's health and happiness with a blessing or thanksgiving from the blessings received from God.

The main part of Paul's letters opens with a well-known device taken from the rules of Greek and Roman speaking called rhetoric. Paul seeks to establish rapport with his readers by making a request, or an appeal or an injunction. The letters usually close with notes of greetings, a doxology and a benediction. Letters of Paul are characterized by the following:

The tone is unlike the typical letter genre

Except Timothy, Titus and Philemon, Paul's letters were written to a general audience.

He speaks more as a public person than as a private individual and emphasizes his apostolic authority.

The epistles are thematic extensions of the gospels.

Paul proves himself as a master of rhetoric and eloquent style through the use of long suspended sentences that build up to a powerful climax. He skilfully use evocative words like: metaphors, similes and allusions to Jesus' person and life. He is especially adept at peroration, attaining a strong climax as in Ephesians 6:10-18.

It must be noted that the Pauline epistles form the largest chunk of the New Testament. They are: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

What are the elements that made Paul's epistles unique?

### **3.4 Petrine Epistles**

Two epistles are purportedly written by Apostle Peter and these are 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter. The first epistle was written from Rome and addressed to the predominantly Gentile churches of Asia that were enduring severe persecution at the hands of their unbelieving neighbours. This epistle has been viewed in various ways:

As a baptismal sermon with a general address at the end

As a double letter that was subsequently combined

As a general epistle used to convey exhortation.

The style of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter is very elegant and close to classical Greek but also has some rough styles. This is why some scholars have proposed that it has been written by two writers. It is agreed that the thought and substance are Peter's but may have been written by Silvanus who would have been the Greek amanuensis as indicated by 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:12.



A number of passages in the epistle contains ancient hymns of the church and frequently quotes the Old Testament. It uses a combination of simile, epithets and metaphors.

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter was written at the time the apostle's death is certain. The same readers as in 1 Peter were addressed and they were warned against false teachers who were already eroding the truth of church doctrine. The Greek is less elegant than the first letter and there is difference in vocabulary. As a result of this some scholars say that it was not written by Peter while others assume that it was written by a scribe.

There is a very strong similarity between 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and Jude but it is not yet certain who used the other. They were definitely in agreement over the theme.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

What is Silvanus' role in the composition of Peter's epistles?

### **3.5 The Epistle of James**

This epistle was written by James, the brother of Jesus to the Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire. The epistle exhibits a strong Jewish background thus refuting the notion that James structured his work after the Greek diatribe.

The style of the epistle is authoritative, simple and direct. It is didactic and pastoral in purpose. It contains many epigrams that demonstrate the influence of Old Testament poetic style. This is why some see James as an example of New Testament wisdom literature. He appears as a wise teacher instructing his readers in the way of wise living. His short disconnected maxims resemble that of Proverbs.

### **3.6 Johannine Epistles**

The New Testament contains three letters purportedly written by Apostle John. They are tagged 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John. These epistles contain notable similarities to the Gospel and Revelation. These letters are written to combat the Gnostic error.

First John looks more of a personal letter and does not have the form of an epistle. It lacks the writer's greetings and thanksgiving typical of an epistle. This epistle has been linked with the diatribe genre however, unlike the diatribe it speaks to a definite historical situation. The book presents a series of pastoral instructions on various issues. It also refutes Gnosticism and the leading themes are light, truth and love.

The sentence structure is simple and straightforward involving the use of parallelism of idea. The author tends to present ideas in strong contrast to one another.

2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John are more personal than 1<sup>st</sup> John. They however include the form of the epistle that was missing in 1 John. Though their style is similar to 1<sup>st</sup> John they are closer to that of the Gospel.

### **3.7 The Epistle of Jude**

This epistle is purportedly written by Jude the brother of James and Jesus. It was certainly written against heretics and condemns the teaching that whatever is done with the body has nothing to do with the soul. Those who hold this teaching believe that their acts do not have any effect on their salvation so they can commit as many sins as possible.

This epistle however presents two serious problems. It quotes from 1<sup>st</sup> Enoch and Assumption of Moses. These two books were written before the New Testament times and were not accepted as canonical by both the Jewish and Christian communities. The second problem is that of the interrelationship with 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter that has been discussed above.

The following are the characteristics of Jude:

The style is vivid, vigorous and poetic at some points.

He does not use rugged broken sentence as Paul

He avoids the epigram that is common to James

He uses the three-point argument frequently.

A carefully constructed doxology. This is only typical of Jude and Paul.

### **3.8 Epistle to the Hebrews**

This book is really not an epistle in that it lacks the structure of the epistle. Though it has several personal allusions its arguments are more cohesively developed than an ordinary epistle. The style belongs to the didactic treatise. Consequently, it has been viewed as a written sermon, an essay and a combination of several sermons. The book is unique as it contains some elements of an epistle, essay, a theological treatise and a sermon. It makes frequent reference to the Old Testament and establishes doctrinal points by expounding and applying the OT passages.

### **3.9 The Apocalypse**

Apocalyptic literature can be defined as a highly stylized form of literature with its own conventions of symbolism and terminology which feeds on Old Testament sources continually. It is a literature of dreams and visions which centres on the vision of the heavenly throne room. The use of special symbols and terminology makes apocalyptic literature very different from the other forms of literature in the Bible.

Apocalypse, in itself is a borrowed Greek word that has been assimilated into the English language. The general meaning however is revelation. As far as the New Testament is concerned, the book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic book.

Unlike all other epistles that have been studied above briefly, the book of Revelation is a letter (that is, an epistle), a drama, a prophecy and an apocalypse, all in one. Though all these elements are present in Revelation, the most prominent are the apocalyptic and the prophetic nature and followed by the nature of the book as an epistle.

As an apocalyptic literature, Revelation is pessimistic about the contemporary culture for John presents evil as reigning at the time he was writing. It also presents a dualistic eschatology through the presentation of a cosmic war between the forces of evil and God with the view of God's ultimate victory. The book is also soaked with heavy symbolism as seen in the symbolism of angels, demons, heavenly bodies, animal imagery and numerology. However, Revelation is not a pseudigrapha because the author identified himself. Because of the shared characteristics that the book has between apocalypse and prophetic literature, it has been classified as an apocalyptic-prophetic literature.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, you have been exposed to the various epistles in the New Testament. You have studied about the Pauline epistles and what they have in common, the Petrine epistles, the Johanne epistles as well as the single authored epistles like Jude and Hebrew. Finally, you also studied about the Apocalypse and the uniqueness of the book of Revelation that combines the features of an apocalypse, an epistle and a prophetic book all in one.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

Epistle is derived from ‘*epistole*’ which refers to any kind of letter  
The epistolary structure includes: address, greetings, thanksgiving/prayer wish, main body and closing.

Epistles of the New Testament are occasional documents

Pauline epistles form the largest chunk of the New Testament

Petrine epistles are 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter

Johannine epistles are 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John

Other epistles are James, Jude and Hebrews

Revelation is the only apocalyptic book of the New Testament but it contains the elements of an epistle, prophecy and apocalypse

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Discuss the nature of the book of Revelation

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **UNIT 5 HISTORY OF NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM**

### **CONTENTS**

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Pre-18<sup>th</sup> Century Stage
  - 3.2 The 18<sup>th</sup> and Post-18<sup>th</sup> Century Stage
  - 3.3 Contemporary New Testament Criticism
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit you will focus on the history of New Testament Criticism. This is important because it will afford you the opportunity to know about the development of the New Testament criticism and the various scholars that have contributed to the development of this important discipline.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

Trace the development of New Testament Criticism

Discuss the contribution of the notable scholars to the development of the discipline.

Discuss the role of the Tubigen School in the development of the discipline.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Pre-18<sup>th</sup> Century Stage**

If one would make a general comment, one would agree that criticism as is known today is almost non-existent. This is because the early ecclesiastical writers were unconscious of nearly all the problems to which criticism has given rise. Their attention was concentrated on the Divine content and authority of sacred Scripture, and, looking almost exclusively at the Divine side, they deemed as of trifling account, questions of authorship, date, composition, accepting unreservedly for these points such traditions as the Jewish tradition had handed down, all

the more readily that Christ Himself seemed to have given various of these traditions His supreme confirmation. As far as they were concerned tradition was the determining factor.

The only exceptions in record to this general anti-criticism mood were Origen and Dionysius. Origen concluded partly from internal evidence that St. Paul could scarcely have written the Epistle to the Hebrews, and his disciple Dionysius adduced linguistic grounds for rejecting the Apocalypse as a work of St. John.

It has to be mentioned however that during this period, the preservation of the sacred text was the only thing that elicited a critical view of the Bible in the age of the Fathers, and this applies also to the Scholastic period. For example, Irenaeus noted that there are differences in the number of the Beast in Revelation 13:8. Like modern critics, he however adopted “666” because it was contained in the oldest manuscripts known to him. Even the Humanist movement preceding the Reformation gave no impulse to the critical spirit beyond fostering the study of the Scriptures in their original languages.

### **3.2 The 18<sup>th</sup> and Post-18<sup>th</sup> Century Stage**

The Eighteenth Century New Testament criticism began as the outgrowth of philosophic speculations of a distinctly anti-Christian character. It was conducted by rationalists and liberal Protestants. To date, the discipline has not yet freed itself from the sway of such a priori principles, though it has tended to grow more positive, that is, more genuinely critical, in its methods.

When the German Rationalism of the eighteenth century, in imitation of the English Deism of the seventeenth, had discarded the supernatural, the New Testament became the first object of a systematic attack. Reimarus assailed the motives of its writers and cast aspersions on the honesty of Jesus Himself. J.S. Semler used the greatest latitude in discussing the origin and credibility of the sacred Scriptures, arguing that these subjects should be dealt with without regard to any Divine content. Semler was the first to question the authenticity of New Testament books from a critical standpoint. His exegetical principles, if admitted, would largely destroy the authority of the Gospels. Paulus professor at Jena and Heidelberg, granted the genuineness of the Gospels, and their authors' honesty of purpose, but taught that in narrating the miraculous and supernatural the Apostles and Evangelists recorded their delusions, and that all the alleged superhuman occurrences are to be explained by merely natural causes. Eichhorn, the pioneer of modern German criticism, carried his inquiries into the field

of the New Testament and, beginning with 1794, proposed a theory to explain the similarities and differences of the Synoptic Gospels.

The problem was first clearly formulated by Lachmann in 1835. Schleiermacher was the earliest of those German theologians who acknowledge the religious force of the sacred writings, but imperil their authority by a free and independent treatment of their origin and historical contents. His view of the New Testament was influenced by Semler's criticisms. Somewhat akin to Schleiermacher's attitude is that of De Wette, but his conclusions are often negative and doubtful. The Evangelistic school of Protestant German commentators, represented earliest by Guericke, Olshausen, Neander, and Bleek, were in the main adherents to the genuineness and truthfulness of the Gospels, though influenced by the mediating rationalistic tendencies of Schleiermacher. As New Testament scholars they belong between 1823 and 1859.

The *Life of Jesus* by David Friedrich Strauss, which appeared in 1835, marked a new departure of view with regard to the New Testament, and made a great sensation. Strauss was a Hegelian. He held that the orthodox conception of Christ was the creature of the ardent Messianic hopes of the Jewish-Christians of the primitive Church, who imagined that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, and who, soon after His death, invested His personality and the whole tenor of His life with mythical qualities, in which there was nothing but a bare kernel of objective truth- the existence of a rabbi named Jesus, who was a man of extraordinary spiritual power and penetration, and who had gathered about him a band of disciples. Strauss's relatively refined philosophy of religion was more in the spirit of the age than the moribund, crude naturalism of Paulus, though it only substituted one form of rationalism for another.

### **The Tübingen School**

The "Life of Jesus" soon called forth refutations, but in the advanced circles of German thought the finishing stroke was not given to it until Ferdinand Christian Baur, the founder of the Tübingen School (the school of exegesis and criticism), published the mature fruit of his speculation under the title "Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ", in 1845. Baur, like Strauss, was a disciple of Hegel, but had taken from that philosopher a different key to the significance of the New Testament. This is the principle of the evolution of all truth through the conciliation of contradictions. He taught that the New Testament is the outcome of an antagonism between Jewish, or Petrine, and Pauline tendencies in the primitive Church. The Pauline concept of Christianity (one of a philosophic and universal order) is represented by the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, which alone Baur admitted as the

certainly authentic works of St. Paul. The Apocalypse was composed in direct opposition to the spirit of the Pauline writings. The above works were written before A. D. 70. Between 70 and 140 appeared St. Matthew's Gospel (though some argue that it could have been written between A. D. 40 and A. D. 60), Petrine in character; St. Luke's Gospel, Pauline, though retouched in a conciliatory spirit; Acts, adapted similarly to St. Luke; and latest the Gospel of St. Mark, also of an irenic type. This second period is one of transition between antagonism and complete reconciliation. This latter is the note of the third period, reaching to about A. D. 170, which produced the Gospel and Epistles bearing the name of St. John, and the Pastoral Epistles, which therefore cannot have come from St. Paul. The scheme excluded the authenticity of all the Gospels. Baur's theory has not survived except in the mitigated form seen in the works of Hilgenfeld and Pfleiderer. Nevertheless, aside from his philosophic assumptions, the principles and methods of Baur have left a deep impress on later New Testament criticism. He first practised on a consistent and developed plan the habit of scrutinizing the sacred documents themselves for evidences of the times which gave them birth, and led the way in the present critical trend towards a division of the New Testament into Judaistic, Pauline, and Johannine elements.

The Tübingen ideas evoked a reaction against their destructive and purely rationalistic conclusions. This movement has been twofold: on one side it is orthodox Protestant, though critical in its method; this section is the natural continuation of the earlier Evangelistic exegesis, and counts as its ablest representatives Zahn, B. Weiss, and Godet; the other branch is partly the outgrowth of the Schleiermacher school and acknowledges as its founder Albert Ritschl, whose defection from the Tübingen group proved a serious blow to Baur's system. The Ritschlian theology insists on the religious value of the New Testament, especially in the impression its picture of Christ makes on the individual soul, and on the other hand allows a free rein to the boldest and most searching criticism of the origin and historical worth of the New Testament books, in a blind mystic confidence that nothing that criticism can do will impair their religious value. The indifference of the Ritschlians to the consequences of criticism is also shown towards the miraculous element in our Lord's life and in the New Testament in general. This tendency is very manifest among other contemporary German critics, who, while influenced by Ritschlianism, belong rather to the "scientific" and evolutionary school. Holtzmann, Bousset, Jülicher, Harnack, Schmiedel by critical procedure eliminate from the Gospels, or at least call into doubt, all the miraculous elements, and reduce the Divinity of Christ to a moral, pre-eminent sonship to God, and yet, by a strange inconsequence, exalt the saving and enlightening power of His personality. This latest school, however, admit dates which approach much nearer to the



traditional ones than to those of Baur. Harnack, besides affirming the genuineness of all the Pauline Epistles except the pastoral ones, and of Mark and Luke, places the Synoptic Gospels between A. D. 65 and 93, and fixes the year 110 as the latest limit for the Gospel and Epistles of St. John and the Apocalypse.

In Great Britain, New Testament criticism with few exceptions has been moderate and, on the whole, conservative. Excellent service has been done in the defence of contested books by the British divines J. B. Lightfoot, B. F. Westcott, W. H. Sanday, and others. Holland has produced a small group of radical critics, Van Manen, Pierson, Loman, who, with Steck in Germany, have revived Bruno Bauer's total denial of authenticity to St. Paul's Letters. In France and French Switzerland conservatism has been the keynote of the Protestant scholars Pressensé and Godet; a rationalizing evolutionism that of Sabatier. Abbé Loisy's work will be spoken of below.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Discuss the basis for the anti-Christian spirit of the criticism of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the Post 18<sup>th</sup> Century New Testament criticism.

### **3.3 The Contemporary New Testament Criticism**

In the area of textual criticism, there are four major approaches today. They are as follows:

#### **Radical Eclecticism**

This approach is championed by G. P. Kilpatrick and S. K. Elliott. The approach holds to a purely eclectic text and prefers a text based on internal evidence. The main argument is that since the history of the New Testament text is untraceable no text type should carry any weight. A radical eclectic scholar will thus choose a reading that best suits the context either in style or in thought.

#### **Reasoned Eclecticism**

This approach is led by B. M. Metzger and Kurt Aland. The approach holds that the text of the New Testament should be based on both internal and external evidence without a preference for any text type.

#### **Reasoned Conservatism**

This approach is led by H. A. Sturz. The approach holds that each of the main text types is early and independent and calls for both internal and external evidence. It also emphasizes geographical distribution of text types.

## **Radical Conservatism**

This approach is led by Z. Hodges and A. Farstad. It holds that the Byzantine text most represents the original text. The New King James' Version is a product of this approach.

From the overall view of New Testament criticism, especially, Higher Criticism; one would toe the position of Richard Heard. He opines that the present position of New Testament criticism cannot be easily defined, although the later chapters of this book attempt to summarise some of the more generally accepted views, and to indicate the main issues of present controversy. There are many important points on which critical opinion is likely to continue divided, but there are good grounds for thinking that we can still get from the New Testament a knowledge of Jesus and of his Church different in some respects from that of earlier days but with the same power to inspire men to follow him in their lives.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Compare and contrast the contemporary methods of New Testament criticism.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The history of New Testament criticism can be classified into three stages, namely: the Pre 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the 18<sup>th</sup> and Post 18<sup>th</sup> Century stage and the Contemporary stage. The Pre-18<sup>th</sup> Century stage witnessed only very little critical interest as the scholars were more interested in the authority of the Scriptures. However, Origen and Doinysius stood out in this period. The 18<sup>th</sup> and Post 18<sup>th</sup> Century stage criticism was led by rationalists and liberal Protestants hence it was a bit anti-Christian in character. The critical Tubigen School led by Baur belonged to this period. Their criticism was said to be destructive. It was also at this point that the scientific approach to NT criticism was developed. At the contemporary stage, there are four major approaches: Radical Eclecticism, Reasoned Eclecticism, Reasoned and Radical conservatism.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

There are three identifiable stages in the history of New Testament criticism

The Pre-18<sup>th</sup> Century stage featured only Origen and Dionysius

The 18<sup>th</sup> and Post-18<sup>th</sup> Century stage was anti-Christian in spirit because it was led by rationalists and liberal Protestants.

The Tubigen School that was said to be destructive in its criticism belonged to this period.

It was also this period that saw the emergence of scientific approach to NT criticism.

The contemporary NT criticism uses four major approaches, namely Radical Eclecticism, Reasoned Eclecticism, Reasoned and Radical conservatism.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Discuss briefly the development of New Testament criticism.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **MODULE 2      LOWER CRITICISM**

Lower criticism is another name given to textual criticism. It is a branch of philology or bibliography that is concerned with the identification and removal of errors from texts and manuscripts. The textual critic seeks to determine the original text of a document or a collection of documents, which the critic believes to come as close as possible to a lost original, usually called the archetype, or some other versions of a text as it existed-or was intended to exist-in the past.

There are three fundamental approaches to textual criticism: eclecticism, stemmatics, and copy-text editing. Techniques from the biological discipline of cladistics are currently also being used to determine the relationships between manuscripts. Most of these will be studied in this module.

Unit 1	Introduction to Textual Criticism
Unit 2	The History of New Testament Textual Criticism
Unit 3	The Manuscript of the New Testament
Unit 4	Types of Scribal Errors in the New Testament Manuscripts
Unit 5	The Process of Textual Criticism

### **UNIT 1      INTRODUCTION TO TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

#### **CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Introducing New Testament Textual Criticism
3.2	The Necessity for New Testament Textual Criticism
3.3	The Tasks of New Testament Textual Criticism
3.4	The Significance of New Testament Textual Criticism
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignments
7.0	References/Further Readings

#### **1.0      INTRODUCTION**

This is the first unit of the second module of this course. The module is tagged “Lower Criticism” because all the materials to be studied here have to do with what is called lower criticism. Lower criticism is the discipline and study of the actual wordings of the Bible. It is a quest for textual purity and understanding. Wikipedia defines textual criticism or lower criticism as a branch of philology or bibliography that is

concerned with the identification and removal of errors from texts. Normally, the product of textual criticism is an edited text that the editor believes comes as close as possible to a lost original (called the archetype), or some other version of a text as it existed – or was intended to exist – in the past. Therefore in this module you will be concerned with how we arrived at the wordings of the books of the New Testament as we have it today especially when there is no autograph to refer to for accuracy.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define textual criticism
- Argue for the necessity of textual criticism
- Defend textual criticism as a discipline
- Explain the discrepancies in the various versions of the Bible
- Enumerate the significance of textual criticism

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Introducing New Testament Textual Criticism**

Let us begin this introduction to textual criticism by drawing an illustration that would be easily understood by even a layman. In Acts 8, there is the story of the Ethiopian eunuch that Philip was led to preach to by the Holy Spirit. In verse 37 of the King James' Version the confession of the Ethiopian eunuch was stated as follows: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God". If you read the same account in the Revised Standard Version, you will discover that the confession is not in the text. Instead, it is placed in a footnote with the remark: "other ancient authorities add all or most of verse 37". Again, King James Version reads "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had". This verse is missing from Revised Standard Version and other later versions. Apart from these examples of cross-version references, some versions of the Bible like Revised Standard Version (RSV), New English Bible (NEB), Jerusalem Bible (JB), New International Version (NIV) and New American Bible (NAB) along with other modern versions always contain footnotes or list of symbols that usually refer the reader to explanations about the text.

The question that most critical readers of the Bible and opponents of the Bible usually ask is this: why are there variants in the readings of the versions of the Bible. This is the question your study of textual criticism would attempt to answer.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Try and use the version of the Bible you have critically and discover if there are variants noted and list them out.

### **3.2 The Necessity for New Testament Textual Criticism**

#### **The Non-Existence of the Autographs**

One major reason that makes textual criticism necessary is that the church has no autographs (that is, the original manuscripts written by the authors) of the books of the New Testament that we have today. Some of the reasons that account for the loss of the autographs are listed as follows. One, the ancients do not believe that superstitious veneration for original manuscripts which we have to-day. In very early times the Jews used to destroy the sacred books no longer in use, either by burying them with the remains of holy personages or by hiding them in what was called a *ghenizah*. Two, in the first centuries of the Christian era the Greeks and Latins generally used papyrus, a material that quickly wears out and falls to pieces. It was not until the fourth century that parchment was commonly used, and it is also from that time that our oldest manuscripts of the Septuagint and the New Testament date. Nothing short of a continuous miracle could have brought the text of the inspired writers down to us without alteration or corruption, and Divine Providence, who exercises, as it were, an economy of the supernatural, and never needlessly multiplies prodigies, did not will such a miracle.

#### **The Nature of the Copies**

By the simple reason stated above, what the church had was the copies of the autographs. The nature of these copies can be appreciated when one realizes that the copies we have are not even the firsthand or second-hand copies but copies of copies that have been handwritten by scribes. Two, the oldest surviving manuscript of the New Testament is a fragment of John which is dated the early second century. Thus, if Jesus finished his ministry around 29 CE and the first copy of the scripture we have is around 100 CE, this tells us that there is a chronological gap of not less than 50 years between the original manuscript written by a biblical author and the earliest copy preserved.

The most astounding thing to know about these copies is that despite the fact that they are numerous and runs into thousands no two of these manuscripts are identical in every detail. The translations that were made of these writings are also not identical. Consequently, the textual variants for biblical materials are of four types:

- a. Variation among manuscripts in the original language
- b. Variation among manuscripts in early translations
- c. Variation between ancient manuscripts in the original languages and manuscripts of early translations, and
- d. Variant quotations in early Jewish and Christian writings.

### **Errors in the Process of Copying**

Textual variants within manuscripts of the original biblical languages are often due to corruptions of the text that occurred during the process of copying the manuscripts. The two kinds of corruption that have been detected are classified as unintentional and intentional errors. These will be discussed fully at the unit designated for it.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Discuss the factors that make textual criticism necessary.

### **3.3 The Tasks of New Testament Textual Criticism**

New Testament criticism actually involves three main tasks, and they are as follows:

#### **The Gathering and Organisation of Evidence**

This first task includes the collation and comparison of manuscripts with one another with the aim of ascertaining where errors and alterations have produced variations in the text. It also includes the study of how and why these variations happened. It has to be stated that it is the process of gathering and organization of manuscripts that have given birth to text families and the use of the textual families have greatly impacted the field of textual criticism. This grouping is done based on genealogical relationships. If a particular variant was introduced in the fourth century CE and the same variant is introduced in an entire set of manuscripts and this was done repeatedly in a certain number of times, all the manuscripts showing these tendencies would be grouped into the same family. For example, some text families are said to be expansionist because they will consistently contain variant readings that are longer than those in the other groups.

## **The Evaluation and Assessment**

At this point the various manuscripts are evaluated and assessed along with their variants with the aim of determining the significance and implications of the evidences. This is to help the critics to determine which of the variant is likely to represent the original text.

## **Reconstruction of the History of the Text**

At this point the critics attempt to reconstruct the history of the transmission of the text to the extent allowed by the evidence. If this is done, the point at which various variants crept in can be determined.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Discuss the major tasks involved in textual criticism.

### **3.4 The Significance of New Testament Textual Criticism**

New Testament as an academic discipline has greatly influenced New Testament studies of the contemporary days. The following are some of the advantages of the discipline.

#### **The Reconstruction of the New Testament Text**

This is the most significant importance of textual criticism. Thus, one can safely conclude that textual criticism is foundational to all other studies of the New Testament. This is because without a reliable text of the New Testament all other studies are of no use be it source or redaction studies. In fact there can be no meaningful worship because there would be no reliable text to read in the church.

#### **Knowledge of Text History**

The development of textual criticism as a scientific enterprise across the decades has developed our knowledge of the process through which early manuscripts of the New Testament have been preserved and transmitted. This includes a fair knowledge of date of writing, place of origin, peculiarity and style, particular manuscripts and the relationship of these manuscripts to other manuscripts. At another unit, we will study some of these manuscripts and make references to some of their characteristics and this have been made possible through the discipline called textual criticism.



## **A Symbiotic Relationship with Archaeology**

Textual criticism and archaeology have both influenced the development and importance of one another, hence the term symbiotic relationship. Textual criticism in the earlier centuries increased the urge for archaeological expeditions in that people went for digging in the Holy Land areas for the purpose of looking for manuscripts and have in the process found other landmark discoveries. Also some archaeological discoveries have led to breakthroughs in the field of textual criticism. For example, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (also called the Qumran Cave Scrolls) has provided valuable information for textual criticism.

## **The Basis of Good Exegesis**

Observing textual criticism leads to great textual insights. This is because textual decisions require close attention to an author's style, thought and argument and all these are in turn crucial to exegesis. In other words, you can in the process of observing textual analysis discover truths that can make your interpretation of the Bible very unique. For example, my study of the textual analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan made me to understand that the Greek word translated "and he brought him to an inn" can also be interpreted "and he led it to an inn". This shows that in the process of demonstrating or showing love one may have to become a servant. Good exegesis in turn can lead to good sermons and also good doctrines or theologies.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

Discuss the advantages of textual criticism

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, you have been introduced to textual criticism as an academic discipline. You have studied the definition of textual criticism, the reasons why the discipline is necessary and the task of the discipline as well as the advantages that are being derived from textual criticism.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

Textual criticism is the discipline and study of the actual wordings of the Bible. It is a quest for textual purity and understanding.

One major reason that makes textual criticism necessary is that the church has no autographs (that is, the original manuscripts written by the authors) of the books of the New Testament that we have today. The nature of the manuscripts of the text of the New Testament also makes textual criticism necessary.

The tasks of textual criticism include the gathering and organisation of evidence, the evaluation and assessment of manuscripts and the reconstruction of the history of the manuscript.

The advantages of textual criticism includes reconstructions of the New Testament text, knowledge of text history, the symbiotic relationship with archaeology and the basis for good exegesis that it is.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

Based on your understanding of this unit, what would you say is the asset of textual criticism to the church?

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Aland, Kurt and Barbara (1989). *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. Translated by E. F. Rhodes. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans.

Mather, G. A. and Nichols, L. A. (1993). *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Metzger, Bruce M (1968). *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### **On-line Resources**

“Lower Criticism” in Wikkipedia Encyclopaedia online available at [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

## **UNIT 2 THE HISTORY OF NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Contents
  - 3.1 The History of New Testament Textual Criticism
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit you have been introduced to textual criticism as an academic discipline. You have examined why it is a necessary field of study, its tasks and its significance. In this unit, you will be concerned with the history of textual criticism and learn how it developed through the ages to the present day systems. This is very important in that it will help you to understand the discipline and appreciate the problems it has faced in the development of contemporary methodology.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

Discuss the role of each scholar that has contributed to the development of textual criticism.

Trace the history of textual criticism through the various ages

Trace the development of the methods of textual criticism from the crude methods of the early ages to the scientific methods

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The History of New Testament Textual Criticism**

The history of New Testament textual criticism can be sub-divided into the various ages as indicated below:

#### **3.2 The Patristic Era**

It can be said that the practice of textual criticism started as soon as people were aware of the multiple copies of the New Testament books.

For example, Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* 5.30.1, as far back as about 175 CE has reported that some copies of the manuscript of Revelation at Revelation 13:18 read “616” while all good and ancient copies read “666”. Other Church Fathers such as Origen and Jerome noted and discussed variants among manuscripts. At this period however, there was little or no sustained effort for the practice and there was no developed methodology for the discipline.

### 3.3 The Renaissance

The Renaissance also affected the study of textual criticism as it affected all other forms of study. In fact it was not until late Renaissance that there was any systematic effort to attempt to recover the text of the New Testament. The first printed edition of the Greek New Testament was actually the product of a group of Spanish scholars at the University of Alcalá (which is called Complutum in Latin). Though they finished the work around 1514, they were not able to secure permission for its publication until 1520. The work called Complutensian Polygot (after the Latin name of the university) was mainly headed by Erasmus of Rotterdam. In this edition he listed a well developed critical sense of the causes of errors and variations in New Testament manuscripts and of criteria for discerning the original reading. One can confidently say that he utilized in a crude form many of the analytic tools developed by later scholars.

This work is called the “Textus Receptus”[TR] (that is, received text in English) based on a printer’s comment in 1633. This text was undoubtedly the first printed text in the market and because of its low price; it was widely influential and often reprinted without permission. It was the dominance of this text that made the printer to boast that *textum... nun ab omnibus receptum*, which means “the text which is now received by all”. The dominance was very notable because it also formed the basis of all European major Protestant Translations of the period before 1881. It has to be noted that later editions of Robert Estienne (Stephanus) and Theodore Beza were essentially reprints of Erasmus TR. It also forms the basis especially for the King James Version of 1611.

It has to be stated however that though the methodology used by Erasmus in this text was highly qualitative the same cannot be said of the manuscripts he used. This is no fault of his but the manuscripts at his disposal were severely limited. He relied primarily on MS 2 of the Gospels and MS 2 of the Acts and the Catholic Epistles; his sources of corrections were MS 817 for the Gospels and MS 4 for Acts and Catholic Epistles. His main source for Pauline Epistles was MS 7 and that of Revelation was MS 1. Erasmus filled in the gap by translating

from the Vulgate back into Greek. Consequently, this work ended up being a late corrupt form of the Byzantine text-type. Despite this however, it was a watershed in the discipline of textual criticism.

### **Bengel J. A.**

It was Bengel that first propounded the theory of manuscript families. He recognised that many manuscripts could be divided into families or groups based on the shared pattern of variant readings. He concluded that on this basis, manuscripts should therefore be weighed rather than be counted. He also expressed a principle used by Erasmus, which remains to date a cardinal principle in textual criticism: the difficult reading is to be preferred above the easy reading.

This principle is based on the assumption that a scribe is far more likely to make a difficult reading easier than he is to create a difficult or awkward reading out of one that poses no difficulty.

### **Griesbach J. J.**

The next development in the field of textual criticism was made by Griesbach who was also known for his studies on the Synoptic problem. He developed the manuscript families as stated by Bengel by recognizing the three major families for the manuscripts. He called these families the Alexandrian, the Western and the Byzantine text families. After this he sets out in details 15 canons or principles of textual criticism that to date are still in use often in slight alterations. He also printed some editions of the Greek New Testament in which he abandoned the readings of the TR at many places. His texts were widely influential in England, Scotland and the Americas and they marked a step away from the dominance of the TR. Commenting on Griesbach importance in textual criticism, Metzger says that his influence can scarcely be overestimated.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Discuss the advancement of textual criticism in the Renaissance

### **3.4 The Nineteenth Century**

By the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the modern methods of New Testament textual criticism had been accepted and adopted on a large scale especially in German universities. This foundation was laid by Lachmann who applied the methods he had learnt in classics to the New Testament.

## **Lachmann Karl**

Lachmann was the first scholar to cause a clean break from the TR by publishing in 1831 an edition of the Greek New Testament based solely upon the evidence of the earlier uncials, the Old Latin and Vulgate and the early patristic citations. In other words, rather than modifying the TR as Bengel has done, Lachmann bypassed it entirely by using the oldest available manuscript evidence. Despite this break from the TR, it has to be stated that the work of Lachmann is also weak because it has lean manuscript evidence to rest upon.

## **Tischendorf Constantine**

Tischendorf was best known for his discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus (which will be studied later) thus ending the case of lean manuscript witness for the textual critics. He was also known for the discovery and assembling of textual evidence. Tischendorf published 22 volumes of biblical texts. The critical apparatus of his eighth edition of the Greek New Testament which was published in two volumes remains to date an indispensable source of information.

## **Tregelles S. P.**

Though this man's name has been overshadowed by the name and fame of his contemporary, Tischendorf Constantine, he remained nonetheless a careful and systematic textual critic. He was reputed to have examined all the then-known uncials and the leading manuscripts. He contributed immensely to the accurate knowledge of manuscript evidence. Unlike others, Tregelles focused his energy upon a single definitive edition which was published in 1854 preceded by a statement of his critical principles with the topic *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament*.

## **Westcott B. F. and Hort F. J. A.**

The work of the above scholars (Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles and their forerunners) that can be called the predecessors of textual criticism set the stage for the epochal event in the history of the New Testament textual criticism. This event is the publication in 1881 of *The New Testament in the Original Greek* by Westcott and Hort. In addition to a new edition of the Greek New Testament, Westcott and Hort also gave a fundamental statement of methodological principles upon which the edition was based and a reconstruction of the history of the text.

Westcott and Hort were able to utilise a mass of new knowledge that their predecessors had brought to light. Thousands of Greek manuscripts

of the New Testament, as well as versions in numerous other languages, had been examined by scholars, dated, and grouped into 'families'. The older and more important manuscripts had been minutely studied and exactly reproduced in printed editions. The chief textual variants had been grouped in the 'apparatus criticus' of critical texts, notably in the later editions of Tischendorf's Greek New Testament.

On the basis of this accumulated knowledge and of their own painstaking studies, Westcott and Hort took a great step forward in the search for the true text. They divided the readings of manuscripts into four great groups. The great mass of readings of later manuscripts they regarded as deriving from a Syrian revision of the text, which took place in the fourth century, and as largely worthless for the reconstruction of the true text. A number of readings found especially, but not exclusively, in manuscripts from the West, and termed 'Western', they regarded as early but as generally due to a corruption of the apostolic texts. Another type of text, the 'Alexandrian', supported largely by writers and manuscripts associated with Alexandria, was to be suspected as likely to have been the result of correction by literary scribes. Finally, a 'Neutral' text was constructed containing readings that were pre-Syrian but neither 'Western' nor 'Alexandrian' and proclaimed as the purest. No manuscript, version, or Father preserved this text in its original purity, but the great fourth century manuscript B, that is Codex Vaticanus (preserved in the Vatican Library) comes nearest to doing so, often with the support of ((the fourth or fifth century Codex Sinaiticus, then in St. Petersburg and now in the British Museum).

It has to be stated here that the discoveries of the papyri (these would be studied later) have made contemporary textual critics to lay aside Westcott and Hort's historical reconstructions. Their methodology was so sound and insightful that the discoveries and the subsequent editions have confirmed their edition of New Testament text. For example, the text of the two most widely used Greek New Testament texts today stands closer to the text of Westcott and Hort than it does to any other published text since Tischendorf.

### **Eberhard Nestle and the Alands**

Since the edition of Westcott and Hort, the most widely used edition of the Greek New Testament was that of Eberhard Nestle which was published in 1898 and was used for several decades. This text was based on the edition of Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf and Bernhard Weiss thus making it representative of the 19<sup>th</sup> century scholarship consensus. This was the edition that was subjected to constant review and editorship by the efforts of Eberhard Nestle and Kurt and Barbara Aland. With the assistance of the Institute for New Testament Textual

Studies directed by the Alands this text has evolved into a critical text that is no longer based on previous editions but solely on manuscript evidence, which is presented along with numerous variant readings in a highly useful critical apparatus. Currently in its 28<sup>th</sup> edition, NA<sup>28</sup> as it is styled is one of the two forms of the standard critical texts in use today.

### **The Greek New Testament**

The other standard critical text of the Greek New Testament in use today is the Greek New Testament that is published by the United Bible Societies. It is currently in the fourth revised edition styled GNT<sup>4</sup>. It is intended for use by translators. It is edited by the same committee that was responsible for NA<sup>28</sup> and it presents a much fuller apparatus for a smaller number of variants.

It has to be noted that as of today, both NA<sup>28</sup> and GNT<sup>4</sup> presented an identical text and therefore represents the consensus of contemporary scholarship and research.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Discuss the advancement of textual criticism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **3.5 Textual Criticism in Contemporary Times**

In contemporary times, textual criticism is going digital. Though, so far it has not been seriously applied to the New Testament with far reaching results, it could happen anytime from now. An institute has been set up in the University of Birmingham for the purpose of perfecting this process.

The Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing is founded on the premise that computer methods are now fundamental to every stage of the editorial process. Digital tools are used to locate and view the original materials; to transcribe them into electronic form; to compare the texts and to analyze the patterns of variation before they are published electronically.

ITSEE staff have developed internationally-accepted encodings for original source description, transcription and textual apparatus (these are now part of the TEI guidelines); have created widely-used software for text transcription and collation (the Collate system); worked with evolutionary biologists on applying their methods to textual traditions; and created many electronic editions, some using the Anastasia software developed by the Institute. The Institute has led, or assisted in, many electronic editing projects, including the publications of the digital Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament.



## 4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have focused on the history and development of New Testament textual criticism. The study began from the Patristic era with Origen and Jerome. This was followed by the Renaissance with the likes of Robert Estienne, Erasmus, Bengel and Griesbach. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the methods of textual criticism has become fixed with the works of Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, Eberhard and the Allands. You have also learnt about the beginning of digital textual criticism.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

Textual criticism began as early as 175 CE with Origen's critique of Revelation 13:18

*Textus Receptus* was produced by Erasmus and it formed the basis of major translations before 1881.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century marked the acceptance and adoption of the modern methods of New Testament textual criticism.

GNT<sup>4</sup> the fourth revised edition of the Greek New Testament is the current edition meant for translators.

NA<sup>28</sup> is the standard critical text for today.

Both GNT<sup>4</sup> and NA<sup>28</sup> represent the consensus of contemporary scholarship and research.

Digital textual editing is now being used for textual criticism.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Write short notes on the following:

- |                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| a. Tischendorf Constantine | b. The Allands |
| c. Westcott and Hort       | d. Lachmann    |

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

O. A. Adewale (2004). *A General Introduction to the New Testament*, Oyo: Multicrown Publishers

Aland, Kurt and Barbara (1989). *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. Translated by E. F. Rhodes. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans.

Mather, G. A. and Nichols, L. A. (1993). *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Metzger, Bruce M (1968). *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### **On-line Resources**

[www.itsee.bham.ac.uk](http://www.itsee.bham.ac.uk) the official site for the Institute Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing

## **UNIT 3 THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit you have been exposed to a very brief history of the discipline referred to as textual criticism. In the course of the unit you have come across terms like “manuscript” or “witnesses” and you would have wondered about what these mean. In this unit you will be exposed to some of the great manuscripts and witnesses that have formed the raw materials to the judgement of the critics. Undoubtedly, some of them have been named in the above unit but in this unit you will read about them closely and some would be given to you in pictures so that you will be able to see the text of the New Testament as it was. The aim of this is to make you appreciate the work of the textual critics.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Give brief descriptions of some of the great uncials
- Discuss briefly about some of the papyri
- Define miniscules and majuscules
- Narrate the history of given manuscripts
- Note the role of early translations in the work of textual critics
- List all available translations and identify them by their symbols
- Read the critical apparatus of the Greek New Testament

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 The Manuscripts of the New Testament**

The manuscripts that have been employed in the enterprise of textual criticism can be divided into the following classes: the uncials, the papyri, the minuscules, the translations, the lectionaries and the readings from the early church fathers. The discussion will follow the above classes.

### **3.2 The Uncials**

When Christianity was officially recognized as a legitimate religion (*religio licita*), the use of parchment became the vogue in writing the manuscripts of the New Testament. This is because a parchment is more durable than the papyrus but it became popular only after the order of Emperor Constantine that 50 copies of the Bible on parchment be made for the use of the churches in Constantinople.

They are actually called uncials or majuscules because they were written in capital letters. In textual criticism they are represented by what is called a sigla (the identification mark) which are the capital Latin letters. When these letters are fully assigned up to Z, the Greek alphabets were used in addition. However, the Codex Sinaiticus is designated with the first Hebrew letter (aleph). The following are examples of some of the codices considered to be very important.

#### **Codex Sinaiticus (01)**

This codex was discovered by Constantine Tischendorf in the convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. He got the first set of leaves of this 4<sup>th</sup> century manuscript in 1844. In 1859 he was given the remaining leaves of the manuscript. It contains the entire New Testament. It was seen as a neutral text which does not belong to any tradition, thus it is one of the very important manuscripts. It is called Sinaiticus to designate its place of origin. It was sold to the British Museum by the Russian Government for 100,000 pounds.

Out of the 346 leaves of Sinaiticus, 147 contain the text of the New Testament which is almost completely preserved. In addition to the New Testament and most part of the Old Testament it also preserved the text of the Epistle to Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermes. This text has greatly influenced the decisions of the scholars of the New Testament textual criticism because it was seen as a neutral text. It has to be noted that there are certain corrections of a later date on this codex and these

corrections showed the influence of the text type that was current in Caesarea.

Codex Sinaiticus is textually very good (although only one of the three scribes was an accurate speller, and this one wrote only a handful of leaves in the New Testament). In the Gospels it is generally Alexandrian (although the text is something else, perhaps “Western”, in the first third of John). It is considered second only to P<sup>75</sup> and B as a representative of this type. The same is true in Acts and the Catholic Epistles. In Paul, where the textual character of B changes somewhat, Sinaiticus is actually the *best* Alexandrian witness. In the Apocalypse it is somewhat different; it belongs with P<sup>47</sup>, with a text considered inferior to A C.

### **Codex Alexandrinus (A-02)**

This is a 5<sup>th</sup> century manuscript. This manuscript was sent to the King of England in 1628 by Cyril Lucar, the Patriarch of Constantinople. It is in the British Museum to date. It also contains the two letters of Clement of Rome.

This is the first of the great uncials to come to the attention of European scholars. It once contained the entire Old and New Testaments; in its current state, most of Matthew and smaller portions of John and 2 Corinthians are missing. In the Gospels the manuscript goes primarily with the Byzantine text, although it has a number of non-Byzantine readings, most of which are also found in good manuscripts such as B. In the Acts and Epistles the text is much better, mostly Alexandrian with only a few Byzantine and mixed readings. In the Apocalypse it (along with C) is considered the best surviving witness.

### **Codex Vaticanus (B-03)**

Codex Vaticanus is an uncial of the fourth century (probably copied around AD 350), and widely regarded as the most important surviving Biblical manuscript. Originally, it probably contained the entire Greek Bible (except the books of Maccabees). However, the final pages of the manuscript have been lost, taking with them Hebrews 9:14-end, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and probably the Apocalypse (although it is possible that the latter was never part of the manuscript). This manuscript lies in the Vatican Library, hence the name Vaticanus. In the gospels in particular, Codex Vaticanus is considered almost to define the Alexandrian text, and - since the Alexandrian is considered the best text-type - by implication the original text. Both the Westcott & Hort and United Bible Societies editions are strongly dependent on it. Codex Vaticanus retains its high quality in the Acts and Catholic Epistles. Its nature in Paul is more uncertain. Hort viewed it as mostly

Alexandrian with some Western mixture. However, it appears that it actually belongs in its own group with P<sup>46</sup>. (Interestingly, Codex Vaticanus is the closest uncial to all the substantial early papyri - to P<sup>66</sup> and especially P<sup>75</sup> in the Gospels, to P<sup>46</sup> in Paul, and to P<sup>72</sup> in the Catholics.)

### **Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C-04)**

This is a 5<sup>th</sup> century manuscript and it is the most important New Testament palimpsest (a writing material on parchment or tablet that has been used more than once having its earlier writings washed off). It originally contained the whole Greek Bible; about three-fifths of the New Testament, and fragments of the Old, survived. The upper writing is a series of sermons by the Syrian Father Ephraem. It was called rescriptus, which means written over because of the sermons written over the original Bible manuscript. It is in the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris.

By the application of chemical reagents and the dint of painstaking labour, Tischendorf was able to decipher the almost totally obliterated under-writings of the palimpsest. Only 64 leaves are left of the Old Testament and 145 of the New Testament. It contains portions of every book except the 2 Thessalonians and 2 John. The codex was probably written in Egypt.

The text-type of Codex Ephraemi varies. In the Gospels it is a mixture of Alexandrian and Byzantine elements, though some parts are more Byzantine than others. In Acts it is somewhat more Alexandrian. In Paul it is almost purely Alexandrian, being very nearly as good as Alexandrinus, although perhaps not quite as pure as. In the Catholic Epistles it seems to show a mixture of Alexandrian and Family 1739 readings, with more of the latter than the former. In the Apocalypse it stands close to Alexandrinus, and is one of the best manuscripts of the book.

### **Codex Bezae (D-05)**

This is a 6<sup>th</sup> century Greco-Latin text. It was named after the Reformed scholar Theodore Beza, who gave the manuscript to the University of Cambridge in 1581. It is also called the Codex Cantabrigiensis. It contains most of the text of the four Gospels and Acts of Apostles with a small fragment of John.

The unusual feature of the codex is the presentation of both Greek and Latin writings on the left and right respectively. The Latin text is of the Old Latin translation which was used in the Vulgate while the Greek is

the Western text type. This manuscript is characterized by many additions and some significant omissions in the text of the Gospels and divergences in readings in Acts from the other manuscripts that it has been assumed that it derived from a second edition and not by the author himself. It is important to note however that the ancient Syrian translation of the Gospels agree with the Western readings as they appear in the Codex Bezae.

Codex Bezae is the most controversial of all New Testament manuscripts. It now contains most of the Gospels and Acts, but many pages have been lost. The lost pages contained the Johannine Epistles, but there were probably other writings as well, and it is not certain what they were.

On the above scholars agree. On all other things there is debate. For instance, the Greek and Latin sides of D (denoted D and d respectively) are very similar, and have obviously been edited so as to agree. But was D conformed to d, or d to D, or both? There is no consensus among scholars whether it was the Greek that was made to conform to the Latin or vice versa.

Though it clearly falls closest to the so-called “Western” witnesses such as the Old Latin versions and fathers such as Irenæus, it also has important differences. For example D is the *only* manuscript to transfer Matthew's genealogy of Jesus into Luke 3:23f. This transfer is obviously the result of rewriting. This is a particularly serious problem in that D is the only substantial Greek witness to the “Western” text of the gospels. Assessing its readings is a perennial problem of textual criticism. All we can say here is that its readings should be used with caution, especially when they do not have support from a large number of Latin witnesses.

### **Codex Claromontanus (D<sup>p</sup>-06 or D<sub>2</sub>)**

This codex has to be distinguished from Codex Bezae which is classified as D; hence it is called D<sup>p</sup> or D<sub>2</sub>. It contains only the Pauline epistles including Hebrews. It is also a bilingual Greek and Latin manuscript having the Greek on the left and the Latin on the right. It was written in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and it is also a representative of the Western text.

### **E-07**

This is an uncial of the ninth century, containing the gospels with minor defects. It is noteworthy only as the earliest full-blown witness to the Byzantine text.

### **Codex Laudianus (E/08)**

This is a sixth century uncial of Acts. It is a Greek/Latin diglot, with the two languages in very narrow parallel columns on the same page. This manuscript was almost certainly consulted by Bede in his commentary on Acts. It is largely Byzantine, but also has many "Western" readings (some perhaps from the Latin, but not all) and some Alexandrian readings.

### **F-010 and G-012**

These are ninth century uncials of Paul. Both are Latin diglots; F has the Latin (a mixed Old Latin/Vulgate text) in a facing column; G has a Latin interlinear that appears based on an Old Latin text but which has been conformed to the Greek. Both appear to derive from a common ancestor at a distance of no more than two generations. This common ancestor lacked Hebrews and probably had some other gaps that appear in both manuscripts. The text of the two sister uncials is "Western," with perhaps more minor alterations in the text than even D/06. Of the two, F is the more attractive and legible, but G is more complete and seems to have preserved the ancestral text better.

### **Codex Regius (L/019)**

This is an eighth century uncial of the Gospels with some slight gaps. It is the most Alexandrian of the late uncials, falling closer to Vaticanus than to Sinaiticus. The combination of Vaticanus and Regius was considered very strong by Hort. Regius is mostly Byzantine in the early parts of Matthew, but Byzantine readings are rare in Mark through John.

### **P/025**

This is a ninth century uncial palimpsest of the Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse. P is more noteworthy for its relative completeness than its text; it is everywhere more Byzantine than anything else. P is almost purely Byzantine in Acts, and has the "Andreas" text in the Apocalypse; in Paul and the Catholic Epistles, however, it has many Alexandrian readings among the Byzantine.

### **W/032**

This is a fifth century uncial of the Gospels, with some slight lacunae. W is unusual in that its text is heavily "block mixed": Byzantine in Matthew, "Western" and/or "Cæsarean" in Mark; Byzantine and Alexandrian in Luke, mostly Alexandrian in John. Its early date makes it



important, but the student should always be sure to know what to expect from it in any particular passage.

### **Codex Koridethi (Q/038)**

This is an uncial of the gospels with missing parts of the first five chapters of Matthew. Its date is uncertain (there are no other manuscripts which use the same writing style; it seems to have been written by a scribe who had very little Greek), but the ninth century is often suggested. The earliest and most important witness to the so-called "Cæsarean" text, although in fact it has many Byzantine readings as well.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Discuss any five of the uncials considered very important in the process of textual criticism.

### **3.3 The Papyri**

Before the coming of parchment, the manuscripts and other writings for that matter were written on papyrus, hence the name papyri - the plural form of papyrus. They are also written in uncial script. As noted, the earliest papyri date from the second century, and the last date from the eighth. Papyri are designated by the letter P (often in a blackletter script) and a superscript letter. Thus P<sup>13</sup>, P<sup>45</sup>, P<sup>46</sup>, P<sup>47</sup>, P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>72</sup>, P<sup>74</sup>, and P<sup>75</sup> are among the most important papyri. As new papyri continue to be discovered, new numbers are added to the series (thus the lower the number, the earlier a papyrus was probably found). As of this writing, the number of known papyri is about one hundred. (Note that some papyri have more than one number, as different portions came to light at different times. So the actual number of manuscripts in a class will generally be slightly less than the nominal number.) The following are descriptions of papyri considered very important.

#### **Chester Beatty Papyrus I (P<sup>45</sup>)**

This is a third century papyrus of the Gospels and Acts, but now very defective. Thought for a time to have a "Cæsarean" text, but Hurtado has given strong evidence against this, and Colwell has shown that the text has been extensively rewritten and often shortened. The text as it stood before this editing may have been Alexandrian.

### **Chester Beatty Papyrus II (P<sup>46</sup>)**

This is a papyrus of the Pauline Epistles (with assorted lacunae; the beginning of Romans, all of 2 Thessalonians including Hebrews are missing, but probably never contained the Pastoral Epistles). It is usually dated around 200, although much earlier dates have been suggested. The text is rather free, especially in Romans, and contains very many singular readings. It stands closer to Vaticanus than any other manuscript; however, the two probably form their own text-type or sub-text-type.

### **Chester Beatty Papyrus III (P<sup>47</sup>)**

This is a third century papyrus of the Apocalypse, containing (with lacunae) 9:10-17:2. The text is closest to Sinaiticus; it is considered to be more "wild" and less valuable than the mainstream Alexandrian witnesses Alexandrinus and Ephraemi Rescriptus.

### **The Ryland Papyrus (P<sup>52</sup> or 457)**

This is the oldest papyrus fragment of the New Testament. It is about two inches square in size and contains a portion of John 18:32-33 and 37-38 one on either side. It is now at the John Ryland Library at Manchester. It is usually dated the first half of the second century.

### **Bodmer Papyrus II (P<sup>66</sup>)**

This is a second or third century papyrus containing most of the gospel of John. The manuscript was written in a beautiful hand, probably that of a professional scribe, but very carelessly. There are literally hundreds of casual errors corrected by the scribe himself, and in all likelihood many more that he did not catch. The resultant text is mostly Alexandrian, and closest to P<sup>75</sup> and Vaticanus, but with very many singular readings and readings associated with other types.

### **Bodmer Papyri VII, VIII (P<sup>72</sup>)**

This is a third or fourth century papyrus containing, along with assorted non-Biblical works, 1 and 2 Peter and Jude. P<sup>72</sup> is the only papyrus to contain biblical books without lacunae. In the Petrine Epistles its text appears good and early, being closest to Vaticanus. In Jude the text has been regarded as "wild" - not unusual for manuscripts of Jude, which was not highly esteemed in the early church.

## **Bodmer Papyri XIV, XV (P<sup>75</sup>)**

This is an early third century papyrus of Luke and John, containing the majority of Luke 3-John 15. The text is regarded as extraordinarily good and carefully written. It is a very close kin of Vaticanus, although not a direct ancestor.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Where did the name papyri derive from?

### **3.4 The Minuscules**

The minuscules are the manuscripts that were written in a running hand or cursive style. They are recognized by the script in which they are written since they can be on either parchment or paper. The earliest minuscules date from the ninth century (overlapping the last uncials), and continued to be written up to, and even after, the appearance of the first printed New Testament in 1516. For the most part, the minuscules are marked not only by their script but by the presence of accents, breathings, word spacing, paragraphs and punctuation – all the things whose absence made the early uncials so hard to read. Minuscules are given simple numbers, from 1 on up to the current total of about 2850. Some of these minuscules have been grouped into text families. The following are examples of the minuscules:

#### **Miniscule 1**

This is a minuscule of the twelfth century, containing the entire New Testament except the Apocalypse. In the Acts and Epistles the text is mostly Byzantine, but in the Gospels it is the head of the family known as the Lake Group (usually symbolized by f<sup>l</sup>), which also contains 118, 131, 205 (a probable descendent of 209), 209, and 1582 (the closest relative of 1). The Lake Group is usually listed as "Cæsarean," although the group seems slightly closer to the Alexandrian text than the other witnesses to this type.

#### **Miniscule 13**

This is a minuscule of the thirteenth century containing the Gospels with some lacunae. It is the best-known (though not the best) member of the family known as the Ferrar Group (usually symbolized by f<sup>13</sup>), which also contains 69, 124, 174, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, and 1709. Like the Lake Group, the Ferrar Group is listed as "Cæsarean," though it has more Byzantine readings than the Koridethi Codex or Family 1.

### **Miniscule 33**

This is a minuscule of the ninth century, containing the entire New Testament except the Apocalypse (with some small gaps in the gospels and many places where damp has made the manuscript difficult to read). It is usually called “the Queen of the Minuscules,” and generally worthy of the title. In the Gospels it is Alexandrian, though with much Byzantine mixture. The Byzantine mixture is less in the rest of the New Testament; in Paul it is second only to Sinaiticus as an Alexandrian witness (except in Romans, which has a Byzantine text written by another hand).

### **Miniscule 81**

This is a minuscule of the year 1044, containing the Acts (with lacunae) and Epistles. Often, and with some justice, regarded as having the best text of Acts among the minuscules. It agrees generally with the Alexandrian text, although with somewhat more Byzantine mixture and a few more late readings than the Alexandrian uncials.

### **Miniscule 892**

This is a minuscule of the ninth century, containing the Gospels with some insertions from a later hand. Although 892 is a minuscule, it was copied from an uncial, and still displays some of the characteristics of its parent (e.g. the same page breaks). 892 is probably the most Alexandrian of all the minuscules of the Gospels, although there is (as always) a significant Byzantine element. The supplements (which occupy most of the second half of John) are almost purely Byzantine.

### **Miniscule 1175**

This is a minuscule of the eleventh century, containing the Acts and Epistles (with significant lacunae in the final part of Paul). It is considered one of the best and most Alexandrian minuscules, but with a curiously mixed text. The text of Romans and the Johannine Epistles are Byzantine. The rest of the Epistles are Alexandrian with some Byzantine readings. Acts is mostly pre-Byzantine, but the amount of “Western” influence seems to vary from insignificant to rather large.

### **Miniscule 1241**

This is a minuscule of the twelfth century containing the entire New Testament except the Apocalypse, but with some lacunae and assorted supplements. It has been carelessly copied and with many peculiar readings as a result. A curiously mixed text, mostly Byzantine though

with some Alexandrian readings in Matthew and Mark; perhaps the most Alexandrian minuscule witness to Luke; Alexandrian and Byzantine mixed in John; mostly Byzantine in Acts; mostly Byzantine in Paul, but with supplements containing some earlier readings; highly valuable in the Catholics, where it goes with 1739.

### **Miniscule 1739**

This is a tenth century minuscule of the Acts and Epistles, complete except that the first chapter and a fraction of Acts come from a later hand. It is the single most important minuscule known. Space does not permit us to describe it in detail here; see the link. Suffice it to say that 1739 and its allies contain a very old text -- which, however, is not part of the Alexandrian text and so has great value in its own right.

### **Miniscule 2138**

This is a minuscule of the year 1072, containing the Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse. 2138 is of value only in the Acts and Catholic Epistles. It is, however, the earliest member of a fairly large group of manuscripts (e.g. 614 in the Acts and Catholics, 630 in the Catholics, and 1505 in the Acts, Paul, and Catholics) which contain a text neither Alexandrian nor Byzantine.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

What in your opinion is the major difference between the Uncials and the Miniscules?

### **3.5 The Lectionaries**

There is a fourth class of Greek manuscripts, the lectionaries, which of course contain the lessons read in the Greek church in the order in which they are read. Lectionaries are quite numerous (about 2300 are now known), but most of them are late and fairly standardized. They may be written on parchment or paper, in uncial or minuscule script. Lectionaries are designated by a script letter *l* followed by a number (e.g. *l*<sup>547</sup> is the relatively well-known "Ferrar Lectionary," so-called because its text resembles that found in the group of manuscripts called Family 13). To this point, they have not been very carefully studied, and they are rarely used in textual criticism.

### **3.6 The Early Versions**

In addition to the Greek manuscripts, we have the testimony of the "versions" that is, the ancient translations of the Greek New Testament.

These are highly valuable in some ways, they are usually early (the oldest Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions date from the second to fourth centuries, and the Armenian probably to the fifth), and we know what part of the world they come from. But they also have drawbacks: No translation, even if precise and literal (and not all these translations are) can exactly render the wording of the Greek original. Also, the versions have a textual history of their own, which means we have to reconstruct *their* readings. Finally, it is worth remembering that, although a version may exist in thousands of copies, it is usually translated from no more than a handful of Greek originals. Thus the versions are very important for determining the history of a variant reading, but sometimes less useful for determining the original text.

### **3.7 The Patristic Quotations**

The final class of witnesses normally mentioned is the testimony of quotations in the Church Fathers. This is an amazingly rich resource since many, many authors quoted the New Testament over the centuries. And we usually know with fair precision both the date of the quotation and the place where the author wrote. Unfortunately, the authors often cited loosely, adding, paraphrasing, or omitting as they saw fit; they did not cite in order, they rarely cited long passages; and in any case, their works, just like the manuscripts themselves, have been subject to copying and corruption over the years. Hence the Fathers, like the versions, are best used to establish the history of the text. As Grant concludes, there are at least 100,000 patristic quotations or allusions.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit you have been exposed to the various stages the manuscripts of the New Testament have been before the beginning of textual criticism to determine how we can arrive at the closest text to the original manuscripts. You have learnt about the uncials, the papyri, the miniscules, the early versions, the lectionaries and the patristic quotations. You have also been exposed to the description of many of these manuscripts that have served as evidence in the quest for the text of the New Testament.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

The uncials are the manuscripts that were written in capital letters and usually on parchment. It was made popular in the time of Constantine, emperor of Rome.

The papyri were earlier than the uncials in terms of being written but were later discovered. They are the manuscripts written on papyrus, a form of early plant that was not durable. They are written mostly in capitals.

The miniscules were written in running hands or the cursive style and are found on either papyrus or parchment. They contain breathing marks, punctuation and other divisions that distinguish them from the uncials.

The early versions were often used in the process of textual criticism. The lectionaries are also part of the manuscripts used by textual critics.

The quotations of the early church fathers are also used especially in the determination of text families of the manuscripts.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Write short notes on the following manuscripts:

- a. Codex Sinaiticus
- b. Codex Vaticanus
- c. Codex Alexandrinus
- d. Chester Beatty III
- e. Bodmer Papyrus II

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **On-line Resources**

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## **UNIT 4    TYPES OF SCRIBAL ERRORS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Errors of the New Testament
  - 3.2 Unintentional Errors
  - 3.3 Intentional Errors
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit you have been exposed to the varied range of the manuscripts that have formed the witnesses to the New Testament textual critics in the process of their work. You have learnt that the manuscripts range from the uncials to the papyri, to the miniscules, the early versions, the lectionaries and the patristic quotations. In this unit you will be exposed to various examples of the variant readings and how they are likely to have occurred in the process of the transmission of the texts of the New Testament.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Answer questions on the reliability of the New Testament intelligently
- Discuss the types of errors that crept in to the text of the New Testament in the process of transmission
- Appreciate the different renderings of certain passages of the New Testament
- Give examples of intentional errors
- Give examples of unintentional errors

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 The Errors of the New Testament**

Scribal errors are the errors that have crept into the New Testament in the process of copying the text of the New Testament.

### **3.2 Unintentional or Accidental Errors**

In this class there are errors of the eyes, error of the ears, errors of memory and errors of judgement.

#### **Error of the Eyes**

Errors of the eyes are errors that occur if the manuscript is copied by one man from one manuscript into another manuscript. The following are examples of errors of the eyes:

#### **Different Word Divisions**

As we have indicated earlier, the uncial manuscripts are written in capitals and also continuously without any break in between words either for punctuation or to indicate different words. As a result, at times scribes could not tell where one word is expected to end and where another should begin. For example, in the hypothetical phrase GODISNOWHERE, you may find it difficult to determine whether the writer wants to say “God is now here” or “God is nowhere”. A biblical example of this would be found in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:16. In the said verse, there is a Greek word “*omologoumenos*”. If this word is taken as one word, it will be translated “confessedly” in English as in the King James Version and if it is taken as two words, it would be translated “we confess”. To avoid this problem, most modern translators avoid the use of direct translation. For example, the New International Version uses “beyond all questions”.

#### **Misinterpretation of Abbreviations**

It was common for scribes in those days to use abbreviations for certain words. When such manuscripts are being copied however, the other scribes may not be able to recognize the presence of abbreviations and confuse the words with other words of the same spelling. Note that abbreviations then consist in the use of the first and the last letter of the word. Let us take an example from 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:16 where such confusions occurred. The hymn that was quoted in the verse begins with *Os*. Since *theos*, the Greek word for God could have been abbreviated as such, it was difficult for some scribes to distinguish between “who” and “God” in that verse. This is the reason behind the King James’ Version use of “God” and the New International Version use of “he” which

would apparently refer to God. It should be noted however that some manuscripts uses “who”.

### **Identical Letters**

As you have learnt earlier, both the papyri and the early parchments were written in a style of writing known as "uncial" (also sometimes called "majuscule"). This is, more or less, what we would call "upper-case letters." The letters were large, and the various letterforms were not connected. For the most part, the letters fall between two lines. In the earliest manuscripts, there were no accents, no breathings, no punctuation, and no spaces between words. This doubtless led to certain errors, as scribes misread undivided words and sentences. These include the possibility of confusing Greek capital letter sigma ( Σ ) for capital letter ( Α ) and capital letter ( Μ ) for capital letter ( Λ ). For example, in Romans 6:5 there is a Greek word *ama* ( ΑΜΑ ) and this had been rendered by some manuscripts as *alla* ( ΑΛΛΑ ). *ama* means ‘together’ and *alla* means ‘but’. This confusion is obvious because the Greek L, when unconnected and doubles actually looks like M.

### **Homoeuteleuton and Haplography**

These are normal errors that occur especially when there is fatigue when one is reading. These might have occurred to you too as you read. At times when you get tired and you still want to read you discover that you begin to omit or repeat some phrases or lines. These have caused some errors in the sacred writings too.

Homoeuteleuton is the repetition of some words or phrases when two lines or clauses end with identical words or phrases while haplography is the omission of some words or phrases when two lines or clauses end with identical words or letters. Haplography is the opposite of homoeuteleuton.

### **Error of the Ears**

Unlike the errors of the eyes, the errors of the ears occur when copying is done by dictation. It has to be stated that there are times that in the quest for multiple copies, scribes would have some people doing the copying of the manuscripts while there is the head of the team reading the manuscripts out to the copyists.

The basic problem is that some Greek vowels have identical sounds like ( *eta* ) and ( *iota* ). This is the problem that occurred in 1 John 1:4. Some manuscripts use ( *η* ) and others use ( *ι* ). This is the reason why King James’ Version reads “your joy” and the New International

Version and New American Standard Bible read “our joy”. Another example is in Romans 5:1. In this verse, some manuscripts have (which is a present active indicative verb) that will be translated as “we have” while others have (which is a participle form) that will be translated as “let us go on having”.

### **Error of the Ears**

The errors of memory take many forms but the principle is identical. It was common for the scribes to change the readings in the Gospel to agree with the reading of a similar passage from another passage of the gospel known to them. For example, the Lord’s Prayer in the King James’ Version as it appears in Matthew 6:9 and Luke 11:2-4 are identical. This is because in the manuscript upon which the King James’ Version was based, the Luke’s edition of the prayer has been adapted to the Matthew edition. If one takes up the Revised Standard Version and check the two passages, the difference in the rendering of the two gospel accounts would be obvious.

Another common error is to make quotations from the Old Testament to agree with the exact words of the Old Testament text. For example, in some manuscripts of Matthew, the quotation of Isaiah 29:13 in Matthew 15:8 has been elongated to contain the exact words of Prophet Isaiah.

### **Error of the Judgement**

Some people write marginal notes in their manuscripts as it is still the practice with many people today. However, because the writing of the notes and the actual readings are handwritten, when such manuscripts are to be copied, the scribe is faced with a decision as to whether to delete the marginal notes or incorporate them into the text as if they are part of the text. In some cases, these marginal notes have been incorporated into the text of the new copy which in turn becomes a copy for new copies. An example can be found in John 5:4 which the King James’ Version rendered as follows:

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

The later versions of the Bible like the Revised Standard Version and the New International Version among others omit this verse (that is, John 5:4) and explains at the footnote that it comes from unreliable manuscripts.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the types of unintentional errors citing examples where possible.

### 3.3 Intentional Errors

This occurs when a scribe intentionally tinkered with or altered the readings of a passage of the scriptures for any reason whatsoever. This can be done however to justify a doctrinal position as is the case in 1 John 5:7 of the King James' Version which reads: "*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one*". It is glaring from the above passage that whosoever emended the passage is actually interested in showing that the doctrine of Trinity (which many still argue today as not being explicitly taught in the Bible) is actually biblical. The New International Version renders the same passage thus: "*For there are three that testify, the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement*".

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

In the last few pages, you have been examining the various types of errors that have crept into the Bible through the process of copying by the scribes especially in the period when these are done by writing. You have learnt that scribal errors can be classified into two broad classes: the unintentional and intentional. Under the unintentional errors you have the errors of the eyes, the errors of the ears, the errors of memory and the errors of judgement. You have also been given some passages that have examples of such errors.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

Early manuscripts of the New Testament are copied by hand by scribes who are liable to make mistakes in the process.

The errors committed by the scribes can be categorized as intentional and unintentional errors.

Unintentional errors are the errors that are made by accident, so they are also called accidental errors.

Errors of the eyes, errors of the ears, errors of memory and errors of judgement are all aspects of unintentional errors.

Intentional errors occur when the scribe for any reason, especially doctrinal issues alter the readings of the text of the scriptures.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Discuss the factors responsible for scribal errors.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **UNIT 5 THE PROCESS OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Process of Textual Criticism
  - 3.2 Eclecticism
  - 3.3 Stemmatics
  - 3.4 Copy-Text Editing
  - 3.5 Cladistics
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, you have been exposed to the various types of scribal errors that have crept into the manuscripts of the New Testament during the process of copying. In this last unit of this module, you will be exposed to the processes involved in textual criticism and the various principles that are employed. As such you will be introduced to methods like eclecticism, stemmatics, copy-text editing and cladistics. The presentation will attempt to highlight the weaknesses of each of these methods of textual criticism.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this lesson you should be able to:

- Define eclecticism
- Define stemmatics
- Define copy-text editing
- Define cladistics
- Describe all the methods and principles used in textual criticism
- Evaluate the methods and principles of textual criticism
- Evaluate the criteria used in judging readings of a manuscript.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 The Process of Textual Criticism**

As you have studied earlier, the raw materials used in the process of textual criticism are the manuscripts that are available as evidence or witness for the text of the New Testament. It is these manuscripts that are judged according to some criteria to arrive at the current text as we have it.

### **3.2 Eclecticism**

Eclecticism is the practice of examining a wide number of witnesses and selecting the variant that seems best. The result of the process is a text with readings drawn from many witnesses. In a purely eclectic approach, no single witness is theoretically favored. Instead, the critic forms opinions about individual witnesses, relying on both external and internal evidence.

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.

The external evidence is that furnished by documents reproducing the text in whole or in part, in the original or in a translation-diplomatic evidence-and the internal is that resulting from the examination of the text itself, independently of its extrinsic attestation-paradiplomatic evidence. We shall consider them separately.

#### **External (Diplomatic) Evidence**

In using external evidence, the evidence for a work of which the original manuscript is lost is furnished by; (a) copies, (manuscripts), (b) versions, and (c) quotations. These three do not always exist simultaneously, and the order in which they are here enumerated does not indicate their relative authority.

#### **Manuscripts**

With regards to the copies of ancient works three things are to be considered, namely: (i) age, (ii) value, and (iii) genealogy



## Age

Age is sometimes indicated by a note in the manuscript itself; but the date, when not suspected of falsification, may simply be transcribed from the exemplar. However, as dated manuscripts are usually not very old, recourse must be had to various palæographic indications which generally determine with sufficient accuracy the age of Greek and Latin manuscripts. Besides, the exact age of a copy is, after all, only of minor importance, as it is quite possible that an ancient manuscript may be very corrupt while a later one, copied from a better exemplar, may come nearer to the primitive text. However, other things being equal, the presumption is naturally in favour of the more ancient document, since it is connected with the original by fewer intervening links and consequently has been exposed to fewer possibilities of error.

## Value

It is more important to ascertain the relative *value* than the age of a manuscript. Some evidences inspire but little confidence, because they have frequently been found to be defective, while others are readily accepted because critical examination has in every instance shown them to be veracious and exact. But how is the critic to discriminate? Prior to examination, the readings of a text are divided into three or four classes: the certainly or probably true, the doubtful, and the certainly or probably false. A manuscript is rated good or excellent when it presents in general true readings and contains few or none that are certainly false; under contrary conditions it is considered mediocre or worthless. Needless to add, the intrinsic excellence of a manuscript is not measured according to the greater or less care exercised by the scribes; a manuscript may teem with copyist's errors, though it be made from a very correct exemplar; and one transcribed from a defective exemplar may be considered merely as a copy, but quite faultless.

## Genealogy

The genealogy of documents, from a critical view-point, is most interesting and important. As soon as it is proven that a manuscript, no matter what its antiquity, is simply a copy of another existing manuscript, the former should evidently disappear from the list of authorities, since its particular testimony is of no value in establishing the primitive text. This, for instance, is what happened to the "Codex Sangermanensis" (E of the Pauline Epistles) when it was proven to be a defective copy of the "Codex Claromontanus" (D of the Pauline Epistles). Now, if a text were preserved in ten manuscripts, nine of which had sprung from a common ancestor, we would not therefore have ten independent testimonies but two, as the first nine would count

for only one, and could not, therefore, outweigh the tenth, unless it were shown that the common exemplar of the nine was a better one than that from which the tenth was taken. The consequences of this principle are obvious, and the advantage and necessity of grouping the testimonies for a text into families is readily understood.

## **Versions**

The importance of the ancient versions in the textual criticism of the New Testament arises from the fact that the versions are often far anterior to the most ancient manuscripts. For the New Testament the Italic and the Peshito versions are of the second century, the Coptic is of the third, while the "Vaticanus" and the "Sinaiticus", which are our oldest manuscripts, date only from the fourth. These translations, moreover, made on the initiative and under the superintendence of the ecclesiastical authorities, or at least approved and sanctioned by the Churches that made public use of them, have undoubtedly followed the exemplars which were esteemed the best and most correct; and this is a guarantee in favour of the purity of the text they represent. Unfortunately, the use of versions in textual criticism offers numerous and sometimes insurmountable difficulties. First of all, unless the version be quite literal and scrupulously faithful, one is often at a loss to determine with certainty which reading it represents. And besides, we have few or no ancient versions edited according to the exigencies of rigorous criticism; the manuscripts of these versions differ from one another considerably, and it is often hard to trace the primitive reading. When there have been several versions in the same language, as is the case, for example, in Latin, Syriac, and Coptic, it is seldom that one version has not in the long run reacted on the other. Again, the different copies of a version have frequently been retouched or corrected according to the original, and at various epochs some sorts of recessions have been made.

## **Quotations**

That the textual criticism of the Greek New Testament, the Septuagint and the Vulgate has profited by quotations from the Fathers is beyond question; but in using this authority there is need for caution and reserve. Very often Biblical texts are quoted from memory, and many writers have the habit of quoting inaccurately. In his Prolegomena to the eighth edition of Tischendorf (pp. 1141-1142), Gregory gives three very instructive examples on this subject. Charles Hodge, the author of highly esteemed commentaries, when informed that his quotation from Genesis, iii, 15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head", was a serious inaccuracy, refused to change it on the ground that his translation had passed into use. In his history of the Vulgate the learned

Kaulen twice quoted the well-known saying of St. Augustine, once accurately, and once inaccurately. Furthermore, it should be noted that the text of our editions is not always to be depended upon. We know that copyists, when transcribing the works of the Fathers, whether Greek or Latin, frequently substitute for Biblical quotations that form of text with which they are most familiar, and even the editors of former times were not very scrupulous in this respect. Quotations have a greater value in the eyes of the critic when a commentary fully guarantees the text; and the authority of a quotation is highest when a writer whose reputation for critical habits is well established, such as Origen or St. Jerome, formally attests that a given reading was to be found in the best or most ancient manuscripts of his time. It is obvious that such evidence overrules that furnished by a simple manuscript of the same epoch.

### **Internal or Paradiplomatic Evidence**

Internal evidence is evidence that comes from the text itself, independent of the physical characteristics of the document. Various considerations can be used to decide which reading is the most likely to be original. Though internal evidence seldom suffices for a firm decision, it nevertheless corroborates, and sometimes modifies, the verdict of the documents. The rules of internal criticism are simply the axioms of good sense, whose application calls for large experience and consummate judgment to ward off the danger of arbitrariness amid subjectivism. The following are the rules that can be considered as very important.

#### **Rule 1**

Among several variants that is to be preferred which best agrees with the context and most closely conforms to the style and mental habits of the author.

Hort in *The New Testament in the Original Greek* explains this rule as follows:

The decision may be made either by an immediate and as it were intuitive judgment, or by weighing cautiously various elements which go to make up what is called sense, such as conformity to grammar and congruity to the purport of the rest of the sentence and of the larger context; to which may rightly be added congruity to the usual style of the author and to his matter in other passages. The process may take the form either of simply comparing two or more rival readings under these heads, and giving the preference to that which appears to have the

advantage, or of rejecting a reading absolutely for violation of one or more of the congruities, or of adopting a reading absolutely for perfection of congruity.

## **Rule 2**

Among several readings that is preferable which explains all others and is explained by none.

The basis for the rule is that the reading that is not explained by any other readings may have been the root for the ones that it explains. This rule has to be subjected to careful use because it is subject to arbitrary applications.

## **Rule 3**

**The more difficult reading is also the more probable.**

Although it may seem entirely paradoxical, this rule is, in a certain measure, founded on reason. Copyists usually never change their text merely for the pleasure of rendering it obscure or of corrupting it; on the contrary, they rather try to explain or correct it. Hence a harsh expression, an irregular phrase, and an unlooked-for thought are possibly primitive. It has to be noted however that the difficulty of the reading may arise from other causes, such as the ignorance of the scribe or the defects of the exemplar which he copies.

## **Rule 4**

The shortest reading is, in general, the best.

The basis for this rule is that copyists are prone to elongate rather than summarize the readings of a given text.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

List the four rules of eclecticism and determine the strengths and the weaknesses of the rules.

### **3.3 Stemmatology**

Stemmatology is a rigorous approach to textual criticism developed by Karl Lachmann (1793–1851) and others. It takes its name from the *stemma*, or "family tree," which shows the relationships of the surviving witnesses. The method works from the principle that "community of error implies community of origin." That is, if two witnesses have a

number of errors in common, it may be presumed that they were derived from a common intermediate source, called a *hyparchetype*. Relations between the lost intermediates are determined by the same process, placing all extant manuscripts in a family tree or *stemma codicum* descended from a single archetype.

Having completed the stemma, the critic proceeds to the next step, called *selection* or *selectio*, where the text of the archetype is determined by examining variants from the closest hyparchetypes to the archetype and selecting the best ones. If one reading occurs more often than another at the same level of the tree, then the dominant reading is selected. If two competing readings occur equally often, then the editor uses his judgment to select the correct reading.

After *selectio*, the text may still contain errors, since there may be passages where no source preserves the correct reading. The step of *examination*, or *examinatio* is applied to find corruptions. Where the editor concludes that the text is corrupt, it is corrected by a process called "emendation," or *emendatio* (also sometimes called *divinatio*). Emendations not supported by any known source are sometimes called *conjectural* emendations.

The process of *selectio* resembles eclectic textual criticism, but applied to a restricted set of hypothetical hyparchetypes. The steps of *examinatio* and *emendatio* resemble copy-text editing. In fact, the other techniques can be seen as special cases of stemmatics, but in which a rigorous family history of the text cannot be determined but only approximated. If it seems that one manuscript is by far the best text, then copy text editing is appropriate, and if it seems that a group of manuscripts are good, then eclecticism on that group would be proper.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Describe the process involved in using stemmatics

### **3.4 Copy-Text Editing**

In using copy-text editing, the textual critic selects a base text from a manuscript thought to be reliable. Often, the base text is selected from the oldest manuscript of the text.

The critic then examines the base text and makes corrections (called emendations) in places where the base text appears wrong to the critic. This can be done by looking for places in the base text that do not make sense or by looking at the text of other witnesses for a superior reading.

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.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Is your assessment of the copy-text method, what will you pinpoint as its weakness?

### **3.5 Cladistics**

Cladistics is a technique borrowed from biology, where it is used to determine the evolutionary relationships between different species. 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.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, you have been given a brief exposition on the methods that are used in the process of textual criticism. You have been exposed to the four methods, namely: eclectics, stemmatics, copy-text and cladistics. You have also been shown the process of each of the methods and the problems that the critics face in using each of the methods.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

Eclecticism is the practice of examining a wide number of witnesses and selecting the variant that seems best.

In using external evidence, the evidence for a work of which the original manuscript is lost is furnished by manuscripts, versions, and quotations.

In regard to the manuscripts of ancient works three things are to be considered, namely: age, value and genealogy.

Internal evidence is evidence that comes from the text itself, independent of the physical characteristics of the document.

Stemmatics works from the principle that "community of error implies community of origin."

Copy-text editing is when the textual critic selects a base text from a manuscript thought to be reliable.

Cladistics is a technique borrowed from biology, where it is used to determine the evolutionary relationships between different species.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Would you advance reasons for preferring stemmatics above other methods of textual criticism?

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Wikipedia Encyclopedia online, available at [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



## **MODULE 3            HIGHER CRITICISM**

Higher criticism is the name given to a type of biblical criticism distinguished from textual or lower criticism. It seeks to interpret text of the Bible free from confessional and dogmatic theology. Higher criticism sought to apply the Bible to the same principles of science and historical method applied to secular works. It was largely dependent upon the study of internal evidence, although available data from linguistics and archaeology were also incorporated. The primary questions concerned the determination of the authenticity and likely chronological order of different sources of a text, as well as the identity and authorial intent of the writers. Higher criticism began most notably with the French scholar Jean Astruc's work (mid-18th cent.) on the sources of the Pentateuch. It was continued by German scholars such as Johann Salomo Semler (1725–91), Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827), Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), and Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918). Not only did these scholars dispute one another's findings, they were bitterly attacked by others, who felt their criticisms discredited Christianity. Higher criticism has been increasingly abandoned for other methodologies, such as narrative criticism and canonical criticism

Unit 1	Historical Criticism
Unit 2	Source Criticism
Unit 3	Form Criticism
Unit 4	Redaction Criticism
Unit 5	Grammatical Criticism

### **UNIT 1            HISTORICAL CRITICISM**

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3.3	Dimensions of Historical Criticism
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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit which is the first unit of this module you will begin to study about historical criticism. Historical criticism is placed first in this module about higher criticism because it was through historical criticism that the awareness of the other forms of historical criticism came to being. Hence, they (source, form and redaction among others) are largely considered the offspring of historical criticism. In this unit, you will be concerned with the definition of historical criticism, the assumptions behind it, the dimensions in which it could be studied, the tools that can be of help in studying these as well as the advantages that can be derived from historical criticism for the modern day users of the Bible.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define historical criticism
- Analyze the assumptions behind the discipline
- Describe the various dimensions of historical criticism
- Evaluate the weaknesses of historical criticism.
- Discuss the advantages of historical criticism to the modern day users of the Bible

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 The Definition of Historical Criticism**

Historical criticism is a broad term that covers techniques to date documents and traditions, to verify events reported in those documents, and to use the results in historiography to reconstruct and interpret. The historical-critical method is like most of the critical methods - rooted in rationalism and Enlightenment philosophy. It has to be noted that during this period the role of reason was held above Scripture. Reason was then used to analyze Scripture because the Enlightenment philosophers believed that reason was more trustworthy.

### **3.2 Brief Overview of the History of Historical Criticism**

The historical-critical study of the Bible started when the French priest Richard Simon published a series of books, beginning in 1678, in which he applied a rationalistic, critical approach to studying the Bible. However, it was not until the works of Johann Gottfried Eichhorn and Johann David Michaelis that the modern historical-critical pattern set.

They were influenced by the secular historical research of Barthold Georg Niebuhr, Leopold von Ranke, and others, who developed and refined the techniques. Among those influenced was Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann who combined elements of Friedrich Schelling, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and orthodox Lutheranism with historical categories and the critical methods to make a biblical-theological synthesis. This model stressed “superhistorical history” “holy history,” or “salvation history” (Heilsgeschichte) - the sorts of history that need not be literally true. His ideas and terms influenced Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and others in the twentieth century. Toward the close of the nineteenth century, capable orthodox scholars challenged “destructive criticism” and its rationalistic theology.

Among more conservative scholars were George Salmon, Theodor von Zahn and R. H. Lightfoot, who used criticism methods as the bases for a constructive criticism. This constructive criticism manifests itself most openly when it considers such matters as miracles, virgin birth of Jesus, and bodily resurrection of Christ. Historical criticism is today taken for granted in biblical studies. Much recent work in historical criticism manifests rationalistic theology that at the same time claims to uphold traditional Christian doctrine. As a result, it has given rise to such developments as source criticism.

### **3.3 The Dimensions of Historical Criticism**

Historical criticism is based on the assumption that any literary text or piece is historical in two senses. In the first sense, it may contain historical information, thus relaying history in itself. This is called “the history in the text”. An example of this is Luke’s statement in 2:1 that “in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all inhabited earth”.

In the second sense, the text would have its own history which is also called “the history of the text”. This deal with the story of the text itself like: who wrote it, why was it written and when was it written. In fact it can also include the story transmission, development and preservation.

### **3.4 The History in the Text**

A biblical critic must be concerned with the situation that is depicted in the text, especially when he is dealing with biblical book that are concerned with historical matters such as the Gospels and books of Acts. These matters would obviously aid the understanding and consequently the interpretation of the text.

If the text contains references to persons, places and customs that are strange to the reader, it is of the reader's best interest to make himself or herself sufficiently knowledgeable with the historical period or the cultural setting described in the text so as to understand what is being said. For example, if one reads the following passage: "The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road... others fell on rocky soil... others fell among the thorns... others fell into the good soil" (Luke 8:5-8), what will easily come to mind, especially if the reader is from the cultural area where planting is done systematically, is to ask why do the seeds fall into unwanted places? Is there a road in the farm? How can there be rocky soil in a place where farming is to take place? Any interpretation done without seeking for answers that are true to the above questions will leave the interpretation misguided.

### **Tools for Discovering History in the Text**

The following are the types of textbooks that can supply answers to the above question and give a clearer understanding of historical issues.

#### *Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias*

These books usually contain good background information on the history in the text especially where the text contains references to peoples, places and customs.

#### Books on History and Sociology of the Period

Very relevant in this case are books that focus on the history of Israel and Palestine in general and that of early Christianity. These will handle issues that focus on history, chronology, names and events.

#### *Bible Atlases and Geographies*

These types of books contain information on culture, sociological context and social life of the people of the biblical times.

#### Comparative Non-biblical Literature

These are books of antiquity that derive from roughly the same period. They can discuss the same topic or issue and so often provide valuable background information. An example of such is *Josephus*.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

What is history in the text? What are the tools that can help you determine the history in the text of any particular Bible passage?

### **3.5 The History of the Text**

As indicated earlier, the history of the text deals with the situation out of which the text arose, that is the situation of the author and the audience. It has to be noted that at times the situation described in the text and the situation out of which the text arose may reflect the same historical setting. For example, the situation described in the two books of Corinthians and that of Paul's situation are similar. There are times however when these will be different as it is in the case of the Gospels where the situation of the author and the history in the text differs. It is important to note that the critic or reader should endeavour to determine the situation out of which the passage arose and also its source.

The other important aspect of the history of the text is the question of authorship. Two important issues would be raised in considering the authorship and these are the issues of multiple authorship and pseudonymous authorship. For example, in the New Testament, thirteen epistles are attributed to Paul the apostle and out of these six are still widely disputed. It is important to resolve issues of authorship for good understanding. In dealing with the issue of authorship, the style and language of the writings are examined vis-à-vis the writings of the author. For example, in trying to resolve the seemingly stylistic difference between two epistles of Paul, critics often appeal to Paul's use of a secretary whom he gave the free hand to construct what he wants to write.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Compare history in the text and the history of the text.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Historical criticism is the mother of all other branches of higher criticism. It gave birth to source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism among others. In this unit you have learnt that historical criticism started with the work of Richard Simon, a French priest in 1678. There are two dimensions to historical criticism and these are: the history in the text and the history of the text. The history in the text is concerned with the situation depicted in the text and the history of the text deals with the situation out of which the text arose.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit:

Historical criticism is the mother of all the branches of higher criticism.

Historical criticism as a discipline started with the work of Richard Simon in 1678.

There are two dimensions to historical criticism: the history in the text and the history of the text.

The history in the text deals with the situations depicted in the text.

The history of the text deals with the situation out of which the text arose.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

What are the tools that are very important to historical criticism?

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

N. R. Peterson (1978) *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* Philadelphia: Fortress Press

Edgar Krantz (1975) *The Historical-Critical Method* Philadelphia: Fortress Press

W. G. Kummel (1972) *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and H. C. Kee. Nashville: Abingdon Press

N. Perrin (1969) *What is Redaction Criticism?* Philadelphia: Fortress Press

Murray Krieger (1964) *A Window to Criticism* Princeton: Princeton University Press

Roman Jakobson (1974) *Main Trends in the Science of Language* New York: Harper and Row

### **On-line Resources**

“Historical Criticism” available on [www.catholicencyclopediaonline.com](http://www.catholicencyclopediaonline.com)

J. F. McCarthy, “Two Views of Historical Criticism” available on [www.rtforum.org](http://www.rtforum.org)

## **UNIT 2 SOURCE CRITICISM**

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- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit which is the second unit of this module on higher criticism you will begin to study about source criticism. Source criticism has to do with the determination of the sources that form the raw material with which the writers of the New Testament wrote. It has to be stated that this assumption does not in any way diminish the theory of divine inspiration. For example, Luke admits that he carefully examine what has been written before his work in order to arrive at the truth.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Define source criticism
- Identify the origin of source criticism in biblical criticism
- Identify the hypothesis of source criticism
- Give an account of the history of biblical source criticism
- Evaluate the methodology in biblical source criticism

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of Source Criticism**

Source Criticism is an aspect of historical criticism, a method of literary study used especially in the field of biblical criticism that seeks to understand a literary piece better by attempting to establish the sources used by the author and or redactor who put the literary piece together. Sometimes biblical scholars use the term literary criticism as a synonym for source criticism.

In biblical studies, source criticism is tied to the historical-critical approach which is heavily historical in orientation. Source criticism has its origins in the attempt by historians to reconstruct biblical history. In general, the closer a source is to the event which it purports to describe, the more one can trust it to give an accurate description of what really happened. In the Bible where a variety of earlier sources have been quoted, the historian seeks to identify and date those sources used by biblical writers as the first step in evaluating their historical reliability.

Source Criticism begins with the hypothesis that the biblical writings as we now have them are a combination of once distinct written documents that were only later brought together. So today source critics try to decipher as much as they can about these original documents or *sources* and the authors who wrote them.

### **3.2 History of Source Criticism**

Source criticism has a long history, and is one of the foundational methodologies of the historical critical method. Spinoza's preliminary analysis of the Bible was an early form of this method combined with elements of what would now be termed 'redaction criticism' (a study of how the documents were edited and came to their final form). The early conclusions of the source critics of the Jewish Testament, which were widely accepted until recent times, became known as the Documentary Hypothesis, the contribution of Wellhausen. The theory postulated four separate sources, the 'J' document (or Yahwist) document and the 'E' (or 'Elohim') document, the 'D' or Deuteronomist source (found, of course in Deuteronomy, but also to be found in redactional additions, during or after the exile, to the historical books of Kings, usually in the form of 'D' type polemics intended to 'correct' the earlier belief in the Divine Protection of the Jewish people by adding commentary on the subject of 'sin' and 'punishment' to bring the earlier and more optimistic traditions into line with the experience of conquest and exile while still maintaining the earlier faith in God), and a fourth source, 'P' or the Priestly source consisted of ritual laws and various retelling of parables from the perspective of the Levitical priesthood.

### **3.3 Methodology in Source Criticism**

Before focusing on the methodology in source criticism it is important to point out the two main problems that source criticism is concerned with. These are the problems of locating the source for a single document (as in the case of the book of Genesis) as well as sources and relationships between sources for independent documents (as in the synoptic gospels).



To discern the discrete sources of a text, these three steps are usually applied to it:

### **Step 1: Searching for textual anomalies or irregularities**

The source critic would be on the lookout for what can be described as irregularities in the reading of the text. These can feature in any of the following:

#### **Thematic inconsistency**

Thematic inconsistency shows itself in abrupt changes in the main theme or in the tone of the text change.

#### **Repetition**

This happens when you suddenly find yourself reading another version of a previous story. In most cases, there would be a contradiction in the two accounts. For example there seems to be a very close relationship between the Parable of the Wedding of the King's Son in Matthew and the Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke.

#### **Digression**

This occurs when there seems to be some explanatory comment or story interrupting the main text. For example, in John 1, verse 3-13 seems to be some sort of explanation disrupting the flow of John 1: 2-14.

#### **Different vocabulary or style**

There are times when the text includes certain words, expressions and idioms characteristic of a certain group's perspective. There are times also that the text shift "persons" as in the book of Acts from the 3<sup>rd</sup> person narrative to the 1<sup>st</sup> person narrative. These can be indications of different sources.

### **Step 2: Isolating the anomaly from the surrounding text**

When these anomalies are found, they are listed and isolated for careful examination. For example, if a repetition is found, the accounts are laid out side-by-side, so that the differences and similarities can be seen more easily.

### **Step 3: Discerning and listing the themes important to the anomalous passage and to the surrounding text.**

A source critic would then integrate these results with his or her knowledge of Israelite history and literary production, in order to discern the date and meaning of each passage.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The aim of source criticism is to understand a literary piece better by attempting to establish the sources used by the author and or redactor who put the literary piece together. The discipline took its root from the work of Wellhausen on the Pentateuch. The methodology involves a three-step process aimed at arriving at the original material that would be laid bare without all the additions from the author or redactor.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points that you have studied in this unit:

The aim of source criticism is to establish the sources used by the author or redactor in writing biblical books

It has its origin in the attempts by historians to reconstruct biblical history

It is based on the assumption that the biblical writings as we have them now are a combination of distinct documents later brought together

It started with the work of J. Wellhausen on the Pentateuch

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

Evaluate the methodology of source criticism critically

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

N. R. Peterson (1978) *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*  
Philadelphia: Fortress Press

Edgar Krantz (1975) *The Historical-Critical Method* Philadelphia:  
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## **UNIT 3      FORM CRITICISM**

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, you have learnt about one of the forms of higher criticism called source criticism. In this unit you will be studying about form criticism. Form criticism is one of the aspects of biblical criticism that grew out of source criticism. It is based on the fact that critics are trying to find out the source of the materials for the writing of the New Testament. In this unit, you will be exposed to the definition of form criticism, a brief history of form criticism and examples of the various forms that have been identified, especially as it applies to the gospel accounts.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define form criticism
- Discuss the work of the earlier scholars on form criticism
- Identify the various forms of the materials that made up the gospel.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of Form Criticism**

Form criticism is a method of biblical criticism adopted as a means of analyzing the typical features of texts, especially their conventional forms or structures, in order to relate them to their sociological contexts. ‘Form Criticism’ is the English rendering of the German *Formgeschichte* “form history” or *Gattungsforschung* “genre research.”

It is an attempt to analyze oral materials (or written materials that have been transmitted orally) by identifying their literary form(s) and reconstructing them in their most primitive versions.

### **3.2 History of Form Criticism**

Form Criticism berthed when Hermann Gunkel espoused that it is possible for scholars to pry into the pre-literary stages of the synoptic gospels by applying form criticism to the book of Genesis. This attempt by Gunkel spurred New Testament scholars into action.

Three scholars are credited with the beginning of form criticism in the New Testament. In 1919 K. L. Schmidt published *The Framework of the Story of Jesus*. Schmidt's work was a comprehensive study of the entire gospel tradition and his conclusions gingered other New Testament scholars to action. The following are the key conclusions of Schmidt:

Mark was the earliest of the synoptic gospels and it was used by Matthew and Luke along with non-Markan materials.

Mark was made up of short episodes linked together by a series of bridge passages which provide chronology, geography and a movement of Jesus' life from the early point of his ministry to his arrest. This leads to his final submission that the oldest tradition of Jesus consisted of individual stories which have been united by early Christians with their different religious, apologetic and missionary interest.

Despite all this, it has to be noted that Schmidt did not really utilize the tools of form criticism. This was taken up by Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann.

Martin Dibelius was the first to apply form criticism to the gospel tradition. In fact, the term form criticism (*formgeschichte*) came into use as a result of the title of his work *Form Tradition to the Gospels*. The aim of Dibelius was to explain by reconstruction and analysis the origins of the tradition about Jesus and to penetrate into the pre-literary period of the gospel.

Bultmann published his work titled *History of the Synoptic Tradition* in 1921. His aim was to discover the original units of the synoptic gospels and to establish what their historical setting was, whether it was primary or secondary tradition or whether they were products of editorial activity. As a consequence of this, Bultmann's name and method have been more closely associated with form criticism than that of Dibelius.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Give a brief history of form criticism.

### **3.3 Presuppositions of Form Criticism**

#### **Source Criticism**

The early form critics accepted and built upon the conclusions of source criticism. The literary interdependence of the gospels provided a profitable tool for form criticism. It has to be noted however that source criticism is only the starting point for form criticism.

#### **Independent Unit of Tradition**

The fundamental assumption which in fact makes form criticism necessary and possible is that the tradition consists basically of individual sayings and narratives joined together in the gospel by the works of editor.

#### **The Passion Narrative**

The Passion narrative is the only form of the gospel material that seems as an exception to the assumption that there were no connected narratives of the life of Jesus in the earliest period. Both Dibelius and Bultmann agree that the Passion narrative of the synoptics is an early composition of a connected narrative.

#### **The Tradition and the Church**

The tradition served the needs and purposes of the church. They assume that the tradition is thus church oriented.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

What are the assumptions for form criticism?

### **3.4 Classification of Forms**

Both Dibelius and Bultmann assume that the materials can be classified into forms and that these classifications can enable the students to reconstruct the history of the tradition. It is accepted that each unit has a form to which it is put. The following are the forms according to Bultmann:

## **Sayings/Discourse**

The discourses of Jesus are divided into two main groups: apophthegms and dominical sayings.

### **Apophthegms**

These are the short sayings of Jesus that are set in a brief context. Bultmann identified three different types of this class. They are as follows:

#### **Controversy Dialogues**

These are the dialogues that are occasioned by conflicts over such matters as healings and conduct of the disciples of Jesus. An example of this is the healing of the man with dropsy on the sabbath day.

#### **Scholastic Dialogues**

These are the dialogues that arise through questions from opponnets of Jesus. An example is “Which of the commandments is the greatest” and the ensuing dialogue.

#### **Biographical Apophthegms**

These are forms of historical reports.

#### **Dominical Sayings**

#### **Proverbs**

These are the sayings that show Jesus as a teacher of wisdom in comparison with the teachers of Israel. They are often declarative statements given as a principle. For example, “for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks”. They also come in the form of imperatives like, “physician, heal yourself,” as well as interrogatives like “can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them”?

#### **Prophetic/Apocalyptic Sayings**

These are sayings that procalimaed the coming of God’s kingdom, call to repentance and woes upon the unrepentant. Examples are, “repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand”.

#### **“I” Sayings**

These are the sayings attributed to Jesus in which he speaks of himself, his work and his destiny. For example, “I have not come to abolish the law”.

### **The Parables**

The parables are concise and simple story which is much like a popular story in its concrete language, its use of dialectical language and soliloquy as well as repetition. It is usually accepted that though Jesus spoke in parables, the church transmitted the parables and used them for their own purpose.

### **Narratives**

Narrative materials are divided into two classes by Bultmann. They are miracle stories and historical narratives and legends.

### **Miracle Stories**

These are stories of healing and nature miracles in which the miracle constitutes the main theme and is described with considerable detail. It has to be noted that miracle stories may occur under the apophthegms, but in that case the miracle is subordinated to the point of the apophthegm.

### **Historical Narratives and Legends**

These are religious and edifying narratives which are not properly miracle stories although they may include something miraculous and are not basically historical although they may not be based on historical happenings.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 25**

Write short notes on the forms that make up the Gospels.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

As you have learnt in this unit, form criticism is aimed at discovering the nature and position of the narratives in the gospel prior to the fixed stage they attained when they were written down. Three scholars laid the foundation for this, and they are Schmidt, Dibelius and Bultmann. It is a follow up on source criticism. The gospel materials have thus been broken down into the various forms such as sayings and narratives.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**



The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

‘Form Criticism’ is the English rendering of the German *Formgeschichte*. It is an attempt to analyze oral materials (or written materials that have been transmitted orally) by identifying their literary form(s) and reconstructing them in their most primitive versions.

In 1919 K. L. Schmidt published *The Framework of the Story of Jesus* - a comprehensive study of the entire gospel tradition and his conclusions gingered other New Testament scholars to action.

Martin Dibelius was the first to apply form criticism to the gospel tradition. In fact, the term form criticism (*formgeschichte*) came into use as a result of the title of his work *Form Tradition to the Gospels*.

The aim of Dibelius was to explain by reconstruction and analysis the origins of the tradition about Jesus and to penetrate into the pre-literary period of the gospel.

Bultmann published his work titled *History of the Synoptic Tradition* in 1921. His aim was to discover the original units of the synoptic gospels and to establish what their historical setting was, whether it was primary or secondary tradition or whether they were products of editorial activity.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Write briefly on all the forms that the gospel units have been broken down to.
2. What are the presuppositions that make form criticism necessary?

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Ladd, George Eldon (1967). *The New Testament and Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Gunkel, Hermann (1964). *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History*. Trans. by W. H. Carruth. New York: Schocken.

Dibelius, Martin (1933). *From Tradition to Gospel*. Trans. by B. L. Woolf. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.

Bultmann, Rudolf (1963). *History of the Synoptic Tradition*. Trans. by J. Marsh. New York: Harper and Row.

McKnight, Edgar V. (1975). *What is Form Criticism?* Philadelphia: Fortress Press.



## **UNIT 4     REDACTION CRITICISM**

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- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit you will begin to focus on another interesting area of biblical criticism tagged redaction criticism. In this unit, you will be exposed to the definition of redaction criticism, the origin of the discipline, the methodology of the discipline as well as the advantages and the disadvantages of the discipline.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define redaction criticism
- explain the rationale for redaction criticism
- identify the contributions of particular scholars to redaction criticism
- analyze the methodology for redaction criticism
- discuss the advantages and disadvantages of redaction criticism
- discuss the importance of redaction criticism to biblical exegesis

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of Redaction Criticism**

The term Redaction Criticism (*Redaktionsgeschichte*) was coined by W. Marxen to denote the method whereby a researcher investigates how an editor or author expresses his (of her) theological outlook by means of the arrangement and editing of pre-existing traditional material. Traditional material is literally that which is handed on to the author, his sources, in whatever forms these may have taken; these sources could include oral sources, written sources and complete gospels. The

assumption is that some changes to the sources are theologically motivated, and, therefore, redactionally significant. Often these theological assertions that are redactionally woven into the gospel are subtly and tacitly directed to a situation in the community that the author intends to address. N. Perrin defines the discipline of Redaction Criticism as the determination of “the theological motivation of an author as this is revealed in the collection, arrangement, editing and modification of traditional material, and in the composition of new material or the creation of new forms within the traditions of early Christianity”.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Define redaction criticism in your own words.

### **3.2 The Origin of Redaction of Criticism**

The forerunners to redaction criticism began in Germany in the early 1700's with Hermann Reimarus who was a professor of Oriental languages in Hamburg. He was a deist who wrote extensively opposing Christianity. He proposed that Jesus was a failure and that the disciples altered their stories in an attempt to make Jesus appear messianic and miraculous.

Redaction criticism was then taken up by David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74) who attempted to show that the gospels were altered, were the expression of myth, and cannot be construed as historical. His main contribution to redaction criticism was the idea that Mark was used as a source document by Matthew and Luke.

Wilhelm Wrede (1859-1906) was the next major proponent of redaction criticism who attempted to show that the historical narratives of Mark were not reliable.

Redaction criticism itself began in post-World-War2 Germany with three independent works belonging to Bornkamm, Conzelmann and Marxsen. G. Bornkamm launched the movement with his 1948 article, “The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew”, later combined with articles by two of his students in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*. He argued that Matthew not only changed but reinterpreted Mark's miracle story into a paradigm of discipleship centring on the “little faith” of the disciples as a metaphor for the difficult journey of the “little ship of the church”. In a 1954 article, “Matthew as Interpreter of the Words of the Lord” Bornkamm considered Matthew's Gospel as a whole, stating that for Matthew, eschatology is the basis for ecclesiology: the church

defines itself and its mission in terms of the coming judgments. With this Bornkamm laid the foundation for redaction criticism.

N. Perrin states, that “if Günther Bornkamm is the first of the true redaction critics, Hans Conzelmann is certainly the most important”. Conzelmann's study of Luke began with a 1952 article, “Zur Lukasanalyse”, which was later expanded into *The Theology of St. Luke* in 1954. He challenged the prevalent view by arguing that Luke was a theologian rather than a historian; the delay of the Parousia led Luke to replace the imminent eschatology of Mark with a salvation-historical perspective having three stages--the time of Israel, ending with John the Baptist; the time of Jesus and the time of the church. According to Conzelmann the kingdom in Luke has become virtually a timeless entity, with the Parousia no longer the focus. Mark's brief interim has become an indefinite period, and the church is prepared for prolonged conflict in the lengthy period before the final judgment.

W. Marxsen in his *Mark the Evangelist* of 1956 was the first to use the term *Redaktionsgeschichte*, and the first and most influential portion of his work described the differences between form and redaction criticism, asserting that form-critical research has missed the third *Sitz im Leben* (after the situations of Jesus and the early church), namely that of the Evangelist. His method is called «backwards exegesis», which interprets each pericope from the perspective of those preceding it. By this theory Mark used the John the Baptist story not to tell what happened but rather to provide a base for what came after, the story of Jesus. Marxsen's actual theory regarding Mark was much less influential; he stated that Mark wrote to tell the church to flee the terrible persecution during the Jewish war of AD 66 and to proceed to Galilee where the imminent return of the Son of man (Parousia) would take place.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Summarize the history of the development of redaction criticism.

### **3.3 Methodology in Redaction Criticism**

Redaction Criticism assumes the results of Source Criticism and Form Criticism. First, before one can determine how a gospel writer handled his sources, one must determine what these sources were. Second, Redaction Criticism assumes the form-critical premise that originally the tradition circulated as isolated and independent units and that they can be classified formally corresponding to a *Sitz-im-Leben* of the early church. The first step in redaction criticism then is tradition-critical analysis.

## **Tradition-Critical Analysis**

The historical development of the pericope from Jesus through the early church to the Evangelist is determined by applying the following criteria of authenticity to the passage:

**Dissimilarity** (the tradition is authentic if it exhibits no ties to Judaism or the church).

**Multiple attestations** (the pericope is repeated in several of the primary sources like Mark, Q, M, L or in more than one form).

*Divergent patterns* (it is contrary to emphases in the early church).

*Unintended evidence of historicity* (details which suggest an eyewitness report).

**Aramaic or Palestinian features** (Semitic constructions or Palestinian customs which point to an early origin).

**Coherence** (it is consistent with other passages proven reliable on the basis of other criteria).

Though these in and of themselves do not prove authenticity, they can demonstrate that the tradition goes back to the earliest stages. It has repeatedly been shown that the criteria when used in this manner have proven inconclusive, and most scholars today, use them more positively to trace the text's development. In this way tradition criticism provides the data for the form-critical and redaction-critical stages which follow. Nevertheless, demonstrating the text's reliability is an important step in itself since it grounds the interpreters in history and forces them to realize that they are not just tracing the ideas of Mark or Matthew but also the very life and teachings of the historical Jesus.

Tradition criticism used in this way is an important step prior to carrying out redactional study. Its primary value lies in the area of historical verification, for it links redactional study with the quest for the historical Jesus and anchors the results in history. The study of the history of the development of the text, though admittedly speculative at times, leads to greater accuracy in identifying redactional tendencies. By tracing with greater precision how an author is using the sources and how the sources have developed, the results of redactional criticism will be established on a stronger data base.

## Form-Critical Analysis

The second stage in the methodology of redaction criticism is the form-critical analysis. Before beginning the detailed study of a pericope it is crucial to determine the form it takes, since the interpreter will apply a different set of hermeneutical principles to each subgenre in the Gospels. A pericope can take the form of a *pronouncement story*; *miracle story*; *dominical saying*; *parable*; *event or historical story* and *passion story*. In the final analysis the formal features help more in the stage of composition criticism than in redactional study, but these are two aspects of a larger whole and therefore form-critical analysis is an important part of the redactional process.

## Redaction-Critical Analysis

The third stage is the redaction-critical analysis. The interpreter examines the pericope and notes each time the source (Mark or Q) has been changed in order to determine whether the alteration is redactional or stylistic; that is, whether it has a theological purpose or is cosmetic, part of the Evangelist's normal style. While this process is obviously more conducive for Matthew and Luke, since sources in Mark are so difficult to detect and John is so independent, most scholars believe that a nuanced redaction criticism may still be applied to Mark and John.

The last two stages are the individual analysis of a single pericope, and holistic analysis which studies the redactional strata that appear throughout the Gospel. These aspects work together, as the data emerge from the individual studies and are evaluated on the basis of recurring themes in the whole.

## Individual Analysis

The text of the synopsis should first be underlined with different colours to denote which readings are unique to a Gospel, which are paralleled in Mark and Matthew, Mark and Luke or Matthew and Luke (Q), and which are found in all three. The next step is to evaluate the data. McKnight notes seven ways the Evangelists redact their sources:

They can *conserve* them (this is important because this also has theological significance for the Evangelist).

They can *correlate two traditions* (as in the use of both Mark and Q in the temptation story of Matthew and Luke).

They can *expand the source* (as in Matthew's added material in the walking-on-the-water miracle, Mt 14:22-33; cf. Mk 6:45-52).

They can *transpose the settings* (as in the different settings for Jesus' compassion for Jerusalem in Mt 23:37-39 and Lk 13:34-35).

They can *omit portions* of the tradition (as in the missing descriptions of demonic activity in the healing of the demon possessed child, Mt 17:14-21; cf. Mk 9:14-29).

They can *explain details* in the source (as in Mark's lengthy explanation of washing the hands, Mk 7:3-4).

They can *alter a tradition to avoid misunderstandings* (as when Matthew alters Mark's "Why do you call me good?" in Mk. 10:18 to "Why do you ask me about what is good?" in Mt. 19:17).

By grouping the changes one can detect patterns which point to certain theological nuances within the larger matrix of the story as a whole. Each change is evaluated in terms of potential meaning; that is, does it possess theological significance as it affects the development of the story?

### **Holistic Analysis**

In holistic analysis, the individual analysis is now expanded to note the development of themes as the narrative of the whole Gospel unfolds. Decisions regarding single accounts are somewhat preliminary until they are corroborated by the presence of similar themes elsewhere. Also, these steps enable one to discover redactional emphases in Mark and John, for which the interpreter has difficulty noting sources.

The "seams" in a Gospel are the introductions, conclusions and transitions which connect the episodes and provide important clues to the theological purpose of the author. They often contain a high proportion of the author's own language and point to an Evangelist's particular reasons for including the pericope. For instance, the two seams in Mark 1:21 and 3:1 provide a synagogue setting for the Christological emphasis on Jesus' authority in word and deed as he confronts the Jewish leaders. Also, the summaries in a Gospel are redactional indicators of theological overtones. An example of this would be Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 (introducing the Sermon on the Mount and missionary discourse, respectively), which contain similar wording and summarize Jesus' itinerant missionary activity. The threefold emphasis on teaching, preaching and healing are major theological emphases in Matthew.

Editorial asides and insertions are key indicators of the theological direction a narrative is taking. John has long been known for his



tendency to add explanatory comments to describe the significance more fully, as in his famous commentary (3:16-21) on the soteriological significance of the Nicodemus dialog (3: 1-15). In similar fashion, repeated or favourite terms show particular interests. Again, John is the master of this technique; nearly every theological stress is highlighted by terms which appear nearly as often in his Gospel as in the rest of the New Testament altogether.

Finally, theme studies trace the development of theological emphases within the Gospel as a whole. Here one reads through the Gospel, noting the theological threads which are woven together into the fabric of the whole. For instance, one of Mark's primary themes is discipleship failure, introduced in Mk 4:38, 40 and then emerging as a major emphasis in the "hardened heart" passages of Mk 6:52 and 8:17.

### **Composition-Critical Analysis**

The final task is that called the composition-critical analysis. Redaction criticism is incomplete as long as one focuses only on the redactional changes. Therefore, most recent redaction critics wish to study the traditions included as well as the redactional modifications. Obviously, each Evangelist unified tradition and redaction into a larger whole in producing a Gospel. It is erroneous to examine only the redaction. The following are then examined at this stage:

### **The Structure**

The way the Evangelist arranges material tells a great deal about the meaning of the whole. At both the micro and macro levels the rearrangement of the inherited tradition is significant. In the temptation narrative Matthew and Luke reverse the last two temptations. Most believe that Matthew contains the original order and that Luke concludes with the Temple temptation due to his special interest in Jerusalem and the Temple (Lk 4:9-12). But it is also possible that Matthew concludes with a mountain scene for thematic reasons (Mt 4:8-10; cf. 5:1; 8:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1). At the macro level, one could note the quite different things which Mark and Luke do with Jesus' early Capernaum-based ministry, with Mark placing the call to the disciples first, due to his discipleship emphasis (Mk 1:16-20), and reserving the rejection at Nazareth for later (Mk 6:1-6), while Luke begins with Jesus' inaugural address and rejection at Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30) in order to centre upon Christology, reserving the call of the disciples for later (Lk 5:1-11).

## **Inter-textual Development**

Each Evangelist arranges pericopes in such a way that their interaction with one another yields the intended message. Inter-textuality at the macro level is the literary counterpart to redaction criticism at the micro level, for the Evangelist uses the same techniques of selection, omission and structure in both. This is exemplified in Mark's strategic placing of the two-stage healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22-26 (found only in Mark). On one level it forms an inclusion with the healing of the deaf man in Mark 7:31-37, stressing the need for healing on the part of the disciples (note the failure of Mk 8:14-21, in which the disciples are accused of being both blind and deaf!). On another level, it metaphorically anticipates the two-stage surmounting of the disciples' misunderstanding via Peter's confession (Mk 8:27-33, only a partial understanding) and the Transfiguration (Mk 9:1-10, at which time they glimpse the true nature of Jesus, cf. esp. Mk 9:9).

## **Plot**

Plot refers to the interconnected sequence of events which follows a cause-effect pattern and centres upon conflict. In the plot, one examines how the characters interact and how the lines of causality develop to a climax. For redaction criticism this means especially the individual emphases of the Evangelists. The differences are often striking, as in the resurrection narratives. Mark follows a linear pattern, tracing the failure of the disciples and concluding with the women's inability to witness (Mk 16:8). This is countered by the enigmatic promise of Jesus to meet them in Galilee (Mk 16:7; cf. 14:28), apparently the place of reinstatement (note Mk 14:28 following 14:27). Matthew constructs a double-edged conflict in which the supernatural intervention of God (Mt 28:2-4) and the universal authority of Jesus (Mt 28:18-20) overcome the twofold attempt of the priests to thwart the divine plan (Mt 27:62-66; 28:11-15).

## **Setting and Style**

When the Evangelists place a saying or event in different settings, they often produce a new theological thrust. For instance, Matthew places the parable of the lost sheep (Mt 18:12-14) in the context of the disciples and the church, with the result that it refers to straying members, while in Luke 15:3-7, Jesus addresses the same parable to the Pharisees and scribes, so that it refers to those outside the kingdom.

Style refers to the individual way that a saying or story is phrased and arranged so as to produce the effect that the author wishes. There can be gaps, chiasm, repetition, omissions and highly paraphrased renditions in

order to highlight some nuance which Jesus gave his teaching but which is of particular interest to the Evangelist. Here it is important to remember that the Evangelists' concern was not the *ipsissima verba* (exact words) but the *ipsissima vox* (the very voice) of Jesus. They were free to give highly paraphrastic renditions to stress one certain aspect. One example is the Matthean and Lukan forms of the Beatitudes, which most scholars take to be derived from the same occasion (since Luke's "plain" can also mean a mountain plateau in Greek). In Matthew the central stress is on ethical qualities ("blessed are the poor in spirit", Mt 5:3), while in Luke the emphasis is on economic deprivation ("blessed are you poor"). Both were undoubtedly intended by Jesus, while the two Evangelists highlighted different aspects.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Discuss step by step the methodology involved in redaction criticism

#### **3.4 The Weaknesses of Redaction Criticism**

##### **The Tendency to Reject the Authenticity of the Scriptures**

Many have discounted the value of redaction criticism due to the excesses of some of its practitioners. Primarily, it has been the application of redaction criticism along with historical scepticism that has led some to reject the approach. As a result of the influence of form and tradition criticism in the past and of narrative criticism in the present, the historical reliability of Gospel stories has been called into question. Certainly some critics have begun with the premise that redaction entails the creation of Gospel material which is unhistorical, but this is by no means a necessary conclusion. Techniques like omission, expansion or rearrangement are attributes of style and are not criteria for historicity.

##### **The Dependence on Four-Document Hypothesis**

Another problem is redaction criticism's dependence on the four-document hypothesis. It is true that the results would look quite different if one were to assume the Griesbach hypothesis (the priority of Matthew). However, one must make a conclusion of some sort regarding the interrelationship of the Gospels before redactional study can begin, and most scholars have judged the four-document hypothesis to be clearly superior to the others.

## **The Tendency for Fragmentation**

As in form criticism, redactional studies tend to fragment the pericopes when they study only the additions to the traditions. Theology is to be found in the combined tradition and redaction--not in the redaction alone. The movement to *composition criticism* has provided a healthy corrective. The Evangelists' alterations are the major source of evidence, but the theology comes from the whole.

## **The Tendency for Overstatements**

There has been a problem with overstatement. Scholars have often seen significance in every minute discrepancy and have forgotten that many changes are stylistic rather than theological. Once again, composition criticism helps avoid excesses by looking for patterns rather than seeing theology in every possible instance.

## **The Problem of Subjectivism**

Subjectivism is another major danger. Studies utilizing the same data frequently produce different results, and thus some argue that no assured results can ever come from redaction-critical studies. The only solution is a judicious use of *all* the hermeneutical tools along with cross-pollination between the studies. Interaction between theories can demonstrate where the weaknesses are in each. Subjectivism is especially seen in speculations regarding *Sitz im Leben*, which are too often based on the assumption that every theological point is addressed to some problem in the community behind the Gospel. This ignores the fact that many of the emphases are due to Christological, liturgical, historical or evangelistic interests. The proper life-situation study is not so much concerned with the detailed reconstruction of the church behind a Gospel as in the delineation of the Evangelists' message to that church.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

What are the weaknesses of redaction criticism as a discipline?

### **3.5 The Place and value of Redaction Criticism**

A careful use of proper methodology can reduce the problems inherent in redaction criticism, and the values far outweigh the dangers.

## **Enhancement of the Study of the Gospels and the Writers**

Any study of the Gospels will be enhanced by redaction-critical techniques. A true understanding of the doctrine of inspiration demands

it, for each Evangelist was led by God to utilize sources in the production of a Gospel. Moreover, they were given the freedom by God to omit, expand and highlight these traditions in order to bring out individual nuances peculiar to their own Gospel. Nothing else can explain the differing messages of the same stories as told in the various Gospels. There is no necessity to theorize wholesale creation of stories or to assert that these nuances were not in keeping with the original Gospels. In short, redaction criticism has enabled scholars to rediscover the Evangelists as inspired authors and to understand their books for the first time as truly Gospels; not just biographical accounts but history with a message. They did not merely chronicle events but interpreted them and produced historical sermons.

### **Revealing the Theological Component of the Gospels**

Until redaction criticism arose, Christians tended to turn to the epistles for theology. Now it is known that the Gospels are not only theological but in some ways communicate a theology even more relevant than the epistles, because these truths are presented not through didactic literature but by means of the living relationships reflected in narrative. The Gospels are workbooks for theological truth, yielding not just theology taught but theology lived and modelled. Redactional study enables us to reconstruct with some precision the theology of each of the Evangelists by noting how they utilized their sources and then by discovering patterns in the changes which exemplify themes developed through the Gospels. The whole (tradition, redaction and compositional development) interact together to produce the inspired message of each Evangelist.

### **The Correlation of History and Theology in the Gospels**

Through redaction criticism, the church is presented with the twofold purpose of the Gospels: to present the life and teachings of the historical Jesus (the historical component) in such a way as to address the church and the world (the kerygmatic component). History and theology are valid aspects of Gospel analysis, and we dare not neglect either without destroying the God-ordained purpose of the Gospels. While redaction criticism as a discipline centres on the theological aspect, it does not ignore the historical nature of the Gospels.

### **Redaction Criticism brings out the Homiletic Nature of the Gospels**

Redaction criticism is a preaching and not just an academic tool. The Gospels were originally contextualization of the life and teaching of Jesus for the reading and listening audiences of the Evangelists' time. They were biographical sermons applying Jesus' impact on his disciples, the crowds and the Jewish leaders to first-century readers and listeners.

This is perhaps the best use of life-situation approaches, for they show how Matthew or Luke addressed problems in their communities. Thus by extension, it becomes a homiletical tool in applying the same message for the contemporary church.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5**

Discuss the advantages of redaction criticism today.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit, you have learnt about the discipline called redaction criticism. You have read that it has to do with the manner of selection and use of the available materials for the writers of the Gospels in the process of the writing of the gospel. You have also learnt about the origin and the development of the discipline and that it depends on the fruits of the work of tradition, source and form criticisms. You have also learnt about the methods involved in doing redaction criticism and the strengths as well as the weaknesses.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

Redaction criticism is the determination of the theological motivation of an author as revealed in the collection, arrangement, editing and modification of traditional materials in the composition of new materials.

Redaction criticism proper started with the works of three German scholars- Bornkamm, Conzelmann and Marxsen.

Redaction criticism assumes the results of source and form criticism. The stages in the methodology of redaction criticism includes: tradition-critical analysis, form-critical analysis, redaction-critical analysis, individual analysis, holistic analysis, composition-critical analysis and inter-textual development.

Despite its weaknesses, redaction criticism can be used for a rewarding study and understanding of the scriptures.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

Discuss the advantages and the disadvantages of redaction criticism.

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### On-line Resources

Quartz Hill School of Theology "Redaction Criticism" an internet article available on [www.theology.edu](http://www.theology.edu)

Slick, Matthew J. "What is Redaction Criticism?" an internet article available on [www.carm.org](http://www.carm.org)

## **UNIT 5     GRAMMATICAL CRITICISM**

### **CONTENTS**

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit which will be the last unit of this course, you will begin to focus on another interesting area of biblical criticism called grammatical criticism. In this unit, you will be exposed to the definition of grammatical criticism, the methodology involved in grammatical advantages of grammatical criticism.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Define grammatical criticism
- Describe the methods of grammatical criticism
- Discuss the advantages of grammatical criticism

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of Grammatical Criticism**

Grammatical criticism is concerned with analyzing a text through its language. It is a set of skills and discipline through which one seeks to recreate and enter the original thought world of the author through the language of the text. This criticism is based on the fact that ideas and concept are conveyed through the arrangement of words in their various combinations.



### **3.2 The Methodology of Grammatical Criticism**

The following are the stages involved in grammatical criticism:

#### **Isolation of Prominent Words and Expressions**

The first step in grammatical criticism is the isolation of words and phrases that you suspect of being important and that may be ambiguous. This is because such words may be the key to the understanding of the message of the passage. When this is done, you will have to examine the usage of such words and term in the book where it was used, its meaning in other New Testament writings as well as the other writings of the first century AD. All these information would be used to throw light on the meaning of the word or phrase.

At this point, interpretative questions would be raised: is the word used in the same sense in all its other occurrences? Does the word have a technical meaning? Does the word have various usages in its other occurrences? The answers to the questions would furnish us the required understanding of the term as used by the particular author. The tools that would be used in undertaking this task will be given later.

#### **Dealing with Syntactical and Grammatical Analysis**

Since the text does not contain words that are unrelated but words that are arranged in meaningful combinations. This meaningful combination gives rise to the issues of language, syntax and grammar. At this point, you have to deal with the words of the text as they combine with each other to form phrases, sentences and paragraphs.

Syntactical analysis and the assessment of grammatical rules as they apply to the passage should be done only as far as the passage requires it. There are some passages that require little or no grammatical analysis while some others actually need it. It has to be noted that this level of exegesis deals with the author's world of thought as it is expressed through written words. The language of the text provides only the skeletal structure of the author's thought. It is when the interpreter enters into this world that he might be able to interpret the author's message correctly.

### **3.3 The Tools Necessary for Grammatical Criticism**

The following are the tools that are needed for adequate word studies and syntactical analysis of the passages:

## **Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias**

Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias contain articles treating important biblical ideas and concepts. These articles are usually comprehensive and provide enough details for syntactical and analytical quest of the interpreter. Examples of this are International Bible Dictionary and New Bible Dictionary.

## **Biblical Wordbooks and Lexicon**

These are books that are specifically designed to provide lexical, linguistic and syntactical information rather than biblical history and culture. There are the single volume editions of these wordbooks and lexicon as well as the multi-volume editions. There are some of these that are specifically based on the New Testament. Despite the fact that they are based on the original language there are those that would be quite useful for non-users of the Greek language.

These tools contain extensive articles on individual words and trace their usages through the New Testament where necessary. In other words, they provide philological and linguistic information while at the same time having a well of theological, historical and cultural information. Examples of these include Wordbook of the New Testament.

## **Biblical Concordances**

Though concordances are used to list the various verses in which a word occurs in the Bible, it however has other useful exegetical functions. This works out especially with the analytical concordances. For example, in the Young or Strong's Concordance, the interpreter is given the Hebrew or Greek word where the particular English word comes from. This is already the first step in exegesis. Other concordances arrange word on thematic appearances.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Which tools are required for grammatical criticism and what are the functions of each one of them?

### **3.4 The Advantage of Grammatical Criticism**

The major advantage of grammatical criticism is that it aids in opening bare the world thought of the writers and their use of language that helped the interpreter to understand the message they wish to bring forth. As a result of this, grammatical criticism becomes indispensable to proper hermeneutics and exegesis. Therefore, those who have the

passion of depicting or deducing exactly what the text of the Bible is saying cannot shy away from grammatical criticism.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit you have been exposed to the concept of grammatical criticism. You have also learnt that the meaning of a text can be arrived at through the study of the key or principal words of the text and by determining the syntactical relationship between the words. You have also been taught the steps involved in grammatical criticism.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

Grammatical criticism is concerned with analyzing a text through its language.

The stages in grammatical criticism are isolation of prominent words and expression and dealing with syntactical and grammatical analysis.

The tools necessary for grammatical criticism are Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopaedias, wordbooks, lexicons and concordances.

The major advantage of grammatical criticism is that it aids in opening bare the world thought of the writers and their use of language and helps the interpreter to understand the message the writers wish to bring forth.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

Describe the process involved in grammatical criticism.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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