

The Doctrine of Scripture (2)

The Canonicity, Transmission & Translation of the Bible

Transmission of Scripture

Important Question:

- *How can we be certain that we have today is an accurate, reliable reproduction of what was originally written?*

Transmission of Scripture

Textual Criticism

- “the study of the copies of any written work of which the original is unknown, with the purpose of ascertaining the original text”

(Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Criticism*; Rev. Ed.; 1995)

Transmission of Scripture

NT Textual Criticism

- Scope of textual variants
 - the percentage of variants in the NT is about 7%; 93% of the NT contains no variants!
 - 85% of these variants are consider insignificant – spelling, word order, tense
 - between 1% and 2% of the NT contains substantial variants (e.g. Mark 16:9-20; John 7:53-8:11)

Transmission of Scripture

NT Textual Criticism

- Scope of textual variants
 - over 98% of our Greek NT is free of any substantial variants!
 - while we do not have the original manuscripts, we most certainly have the original text in the various manuscripts

Transmission of Scripture

History of Transmission (NT)

- A. Early Period (before 325 A.D.)
 - introduction of most textual variants
 - not copied by professional scribes
 - no opportunity to establish an official edition
 - emergence of local “text-types”



Transmission of Scripture

History of Transmission (NT)

B. Standardized Text (4th - 8th centuries)

- *important events*: Edit of Milan (313); capital moved to Constantinople (330); Latin Vulgate (384)
- emergence of a secondary text-type through the conflation of MMS (harmonization, smoothing)
- the perpetuation of this "Byzantine" text-type in the Greek-speaking church



Transmission of Scripture

History of Transmission (NT)

C. The "Received Text" (1516-1633)

- 1516 – Erasmus published the first Greek NT; it was based on six Greek MMS (basis on the KJV)
- 1550 – Stephanus published four editions; used Erasmus and 15 MMS (verse numeration)
- 1624-1678 – Elzevir brothers published seven editions; used the phrase "the text now received by all" – "Textus Receptus" (TR)

Transmission of Scripture

History of Transmission (NT)

D. The Age of the Critical Text

- Johann Griesbach (1775-1806) – first scholar to abandoned the TR; divided MMS into text-types
- Karl Lachmann (1831) – first to publish a Greek NT based entirely on text-critical principles
- Tischendorf – discovered and published 21 uncial MMS (Sinaiticus-1859); eight editions of the Greek NT (1841-1872)

Transmission of Scripture

History of Transmission (NT)

D. The Age of the Critical Text

- Westcott & Hort – published their critical edition of the Greek NT in 1881 after 28 yrs. of work; included a volume detailing their textual principles

All modern English versions of the NT are based on subsequent versions of the Greek critical text