

The Bible

The Critiquing of The Manuscripts

Introduction

What a difference it would make if we had the original manuscripts of the New Testament. There can be no doubt that translators do a wonderful service to the Lord, yet there are several matters for consideration:

- a) Due to background, culture, etc., there is an automatic bias in the translating and this is also true of the Authorized, for it is distorted in 1 Timothy 3:1. The original manuscript said: “if any man stretch out after overseership”, but because of pressure from the religious and political authorities, it is translated: “If any man desire the office of a bishop”, therefore, in this case it is a distorted translation.
- b) There’s also the possibility, or should I say reality, the publishing houses are there to make money. For instance, there is a “bible” now suited for homosexuals. One of the ways publishers have of making money is to keep bringing out “new improved” translations. Understanding that there is a distinction between “paraphrase” and a “translation”, broadly speaking, a paraphrase is conveyance of concepts, whereas a translation ideally deals with preciseness of word, tone, etc.
- c) Again, so much depends on the genuineness of the manuscripts under consideration, and it is this matter we are concerned with in this paper.

The ancient texts fall under two groups. The older manuscripts are called the “Critical texts” and the newer manuscripts are called the “Received text”. The general teaching is that the older are more reliable since they are closer to the time of the actual happenings. In many translations, passages from the received texts (the newer ones) are either left out or marked with the expression, “these words are not found in the earliest manuscripts”, or similar ones. This is because they are not in the critical texts (the earlier or older ones). For example, Mark 16:9-19. However, age is not the only criteria which is to be considered. There must be brought into the equation the place of origin of the manuscripts, the number of the manuscripts and the unity of thought and words of the manuscripts.

The Codex’s and Manuscripts

The following is a minute survey of the main codex’s and manuscripts.

- a) Codex Vaticanus which consists of 700 leaves of the finest vellum is from about the fourth century, and has been in the Vatican Library since 1450 A.D. This manuscript contains all of the Old Testament with the exception of Psalms 105 to 137. It contains all the New Testament up to Hebrews 9:14 and has been described as the most trustworthy witness to the New Testament.
- b) Codex Sinaiticus is thought to be the second oldest manuscript and was discovered by Dr. Tischendorf in St. Catherine's convent, Mount Sinai. Since there are questions as to whether it really was with other papers in the waste paper basket is a matter of debate. The manuscript itself was bought by England from Russia in 1933. Like Vaticanus, this also finishes at Mark 16:8, thus leaving out the last verses.
- c) Codex Alexandrines. This manuscript is from the fifth century and contains 820 pages in two columns. It was presented in 1628 to Charles I by Cyril Lucar, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and contains the entire Old Testament with only 10 leaves missing. The New Testament is even more defective for the first 25 chapters of Matthew are missing, as well as John 6:50–8:52; 2 Corinthians 4:13–12:6.
- d) Codex Ephraem. It is thought that this was written in the early part of the fifth century, then brought from the east to Florence, and then brought to Paris by Caterine de Medicis. It is called a “palmimset”, a term which indicates a manuscript that has its original contents erased to make room for other material. This was because parchment was very expensive. It was found to contain much of the Old and New Testament.
- e) The Codex of Bezae. From what is known, this manuscript was secured 1562 from a monastery of Saint Irenaeus at Lyon by Theodore Beza who was a friend of John Calvin, who presented it to the university library Cambridge. It was written in two languages with Greek on one side and Latin on the other. It contains the Gospels, the Acts of the apostles, and small fragments of the epistles of John.

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- f) The Codex Washingtonianus may be found in the Smithsonian Institution, having been written about A.D. 450. It contains the complete four Gospels.
- g) The Bodmer Papyri and Bodmer Papyri II are manuscripts dating from A.D. 150 to 200. These various parts of the New Testament, discovered in Egypt, now exist in the Bodmer Library of World Literature.
- h) The Chester Beatty Papyrus II was unearthed in Egypt in 1930. It is the earliest piece of the New Testament known to exist. This contains most of Paul's letters copied around A.D. 100.
- i) The Dead Sea Scrolls. Before the discovery of these earliest Hebrew manuscripts, the earliest manuscript was from the ninth century A.D. The first manuscript was discovered in 1947, and it was the first of a series of discoveries of the Hebrew manuscripts in the cave near the Dead Sea. The scrolls date from about 200 BC and comprise fragments from almost all the books of the New Testament. These assured the credibility of the English translation. Most of these scrolls are in the possession of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The Old Testament was written almost entirely in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. This Septuagint was the translation of the Old Testament into Greek by the Alexandrian Jews in the third and second centuries B.C. This was the scriptures the Lord and the apostles used, and it explains why there is a difference at times between the New Testament quotations and the actual words of the Old Testament.

There are three main sources from which the Bible translators have gained the material. They are:

- a) "Manuscripts". It is a term broadly applied to copies, or early translations in either Hebrew or Greek, and it is with these that this paper is dealing with.
- b) There were translations into other languages such as Syriac, Ethiopian, or Armenian.
- c) "Fathers". These were writings of early Christian scholars and others from which practically all the New Testament could be reconstructed.

The Leading Questions

When we are constantly told in so many new translations that, "the earliest manuscripts" do not have this or something similar, then questions arise.

- a) What are the earliest manuscripts?
- b) Are they the earliest manuscripts?
- c) Are they genuine or corrupt manuscripts?
- d) Were they available at the time of the KJV translations, if so why were they not used?
- e) Do they agree with each other?

The Earliest Manuscripts

1) What are the earliest manuscripts?

- a) Without exception we are told, the "earliest manuscripts" are "Codex Vaticanus" and "Codex Sinaiticus"
 - i) Only seven of the great codex's have survived to this present day, they are: Codex Sinaiticus; Codex Vaticanus; Codex Alexandrinus; Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus; Codex Aleppo; Codex Washingtonianus; and Codex Cyprus. Of these, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are the best known and often quoted as the most ancient and reliable. Being such, it is expected that they have much in common but this is not the case, yet it is on these two virtually all modern translations are founded.
 - ii) How much do they have in common?
 1. The Sinaiticus and Vaticanus agree with the Textus Receptus (the text which the vast majority of manuscripts agree) about 95 percent of the time, but it is in the times they do not agree

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with Textus Receptus that there is the problem. Furthermore, they do not always agree with each other but are at variance with each other in 3000 passages in the gospels alone! This does not include spelling mistakes. A series of conclusions must be made:

- a) Which one of them is the more accurate in the 3000 times?
- b) Are they both corrupt?

2. Our first observation is that there are multiple places in the Vaticanus where a scribe wrote the same word or phrase twice in succession. At other times he skipped lines, which is an indication that the writing was not checked. There were so many errors during the time Sinaiticus was used, that ten different readers made corrections. Tragically, instead of questioning the reliability of these manuscripts, many have accepted the sales pitch that these are more reliable, and ignore the discrepancies. Reality is, these two manuscripts are the foundation for most of the two hundred omissions from a great number of New Testament versions.

2) Are they the earliest manuscripts?

(a) If we are speaking of Biblical manuscripts then at this moment and from the data on the Codex's above they are the earliest, and to accept them as such is to ignore the writings by the church fathers who quoted from the scriptures BEFORE either Sinaiticus or Vaticanus were penned. For instance:

- i) Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the church at Corinth in about A.D. 95, and it either quotes or alludes at least one of the synoptic gospels, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Hebrews, and possibly John, Acts, James, and 1 Peter.
- ii) Ignatius was condemned and sent to Rome to die in A.D. 110. While traveling to Rome he wrote to churches and individuals, and cited Matthew, John, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and possibly Luke, Hebrews, and 1 Peter.
- iii) Polycarp (A.D. 110-35) when writing to the Philippians (A.D. 110-120), quoted Matthew, Luke, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 John, 1 Peter, and possibly 2 John. In his many quotations from these writings, he at times introduced them with expressions such as, "The Scripture saith". He cites Ephesians 4:26 where Paul quoted Psalm 4:4, and then makes an additional comment of his own, introducing the reference with the words, "It is declared in these Scriptures" (Epistle to the Philippians 12).
- iv) These writings were all written between A.D. 95 and 110, long before either Sinaiticus or Vaticanus! The Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (c. A.D. 130) was a work falsely ascribed to Barnabas who was Paul's associate in Acts. It uses phrases such as "God saith"; "Scripture"; and "it is written", referring to Biblical passages. Papias (c. A.D. 130-40) wrote a book with the title, Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord, the same expression used by Paul in Romans 3:2 to refer to the Old Testament scriptures, and the so-called Epistle to Diognetus (c. A.D. 150) which makes numerous allusions to the New Testament.

3) Are they genuine or corrupt manuscripts?

a) This is a question of great importance for if they are corrupt, then every "bible" translated which depends on them for accuracy, then is corrupted. Readability, etc., is totally irrelevant. i.e.; I may have a bottle of Pepsi cola in my fridge, it is a full gallon or 4 liters approximately. I have a decision to make, "Should I drink it or not, because there is a quarter teaspoon of hemlock in it, but apparently it tastes so good and does not seem to have any effect on others who have drunk it?" Would I risk drinking it, especially if I had an uncorrupted gallon or pure Pepsi available? If the "earliest" manuscripts are corrupt, is it wise to accept any translation which comes from them? Interestingly, the translation used by the Jehovah's witness states, "In 1969 the Committee released The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures, which presented under the Greek text revised by Westcott And Hort (1984 reprint) a literal word for word translation into English". This Greek text is the two "oldest" manuscripts the Sinaiticus

and Vaticanus, which we are told, are the most accurate because they are older and are the texts used in many of the modern translations.

- b) On the other hand, if they are definitely genuine and do predate manuscripts which were unavailable when the KJV was translated, then to reject them is to reject that which is the Word of God for sake of personal preference, or what I have always been used to, or what I have been led to believe is the correct translation.
- c) It is an “either” or “or” situation and with it there needs to be the deep awareness that the Holy Spirit spoke of the Lord as the “true Light” (Jn. 1:9); the Lord referred to Himself as the “true Bread (Jn. 6:32); the “true Vine” (Jn. 15:1); and God as the “true God” (Jn. 17:3). When there is added to that, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:17); and He is the Author of the “Scripture of truth” (Dan. 10:21) who made the declaration, “Thy Word is true” (Psa. 119:160); let me repeat, no translation is perfect, no translation is inspired, that which must be done is to use that which is closest to that which was inspired, namely the original documents.

4) Was the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus available at the time of the Authorized translations, and if so, why were they not used?

- a) It is noteworthy that Vaticanus was available to the translators of the Authorized but they didn't use it because they knew it was unreliable. It is of importance to observe that the Roman Catholic church, which had Vaticanus, why did they not use this manuscript when they translated the Douay-Rheims translation? The reason was they knew it was corrupt.
- b) There are 5,309 surviving Greek manuscripts that contain all or part of the New Testament. These manuscripts agree together 95% of the time. The other 5% account for the differences between the King James and the modern versions. Because they agree with the Received Text 95% of the time does not nullify the 5% they differ. Why they are corrupt we cannot say for sure, but when 5309 witnesses agree on statements which are authenticated and two record otherwise, to accept the witness of the two is foolishness. Yet that is exactly what is done and I say again, this indicates an activity of Satan.
- c) Sinaiticus was not used in 1611 for the simple reason that it was not until 1844 that it was found in a trash pile in St. Catherine's Monastery near Mt. Sinai, by Mr. Tischendorf. It contains nearly all of the New Testament plus it adds the "Shepherd of Hermes" and the "Epistle of Barnabas" to the New Testament.

5) Do they agree with each other?

- a) I repeat, the Alexandrian manuscripts, Sinaiticus, and Vaticanus are corrupt and do not agree with each other. The following are the differences in them, yet these are the manuscripts on which Westcott and Hort and the modern versions rely so heavily.
 - i) Sinaiticus differs from Vaticanus by 3036 times:
 - 1. 656 differences in Matthew
 - 2. 567 differences in Mark
 - 3. 791 differences in Luke
 - 4. 1,022 differences in John
 - 5. Putting it another way, Vaticanus has been found to omit at least 2877 words; to add 536 words; to substitute 935 words; to transpose 2098 words; to modify 1132 words (in all 7578). Only in Sinaiticus and Bezae are the words, “In him is life” (Jn. 1:4).
 - vi) Sinaiticus is known to be the most corrected manuscript in history with 23,000 corrections according to David Parker and Tischendorf counted 14,800 in two-thirds of the codex. Do they deserve the derision they are held with? I think so.

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- b) Both omit the words:
 - i) "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." (Matt. 6:13), despite that out of one thousand manuscripts only ten fail to have them. The NIV omits them while the NASB puts them in brackets.
 - ii) "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky: but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matt. 16:2-3)
- c) Changes made based on one of both of these manuscripts.
 - i) "And when the daughter of Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod", compared to, "And when his daughter Herodias came in and danced", thus making Herodias the daughter of Herod. (Mk. 6:22)
 - ii) "And the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth." Sinaiticus reads, "a city of JUDEA, named Nazareth". Clearly a geographical error (one of many). Nazareth is in Galilee, not Judea. (Lk. 1:26)
 - iii) "After these things the Lord appointed other SEVENTY also, and sent them two and two before his face" (Lk. 10:1). Here Vaticanus reads 72 but Sinaiticus reads 70.
- d) Make no mistake, Sinaiticus has been shown to be extremely unreliable by great scholars such as:
 - i) John Burgeon who spent years examining every available manuscript of the New Testament and then wrote concerning it: "On many occasions 10, 20, 30, 40 words are dropped through carelessness. Letters, words, or even whole sentences are frequently written twice over, or begun and immediately cancelled; while that gross blunder, whereby a clause is omitted because it happens to end in the same words as the clause preceding, occurs no less than 115 times in the New Testament. On nearly every page of the manuscript there are corrections and revisions, done by 10 different people. Some of these corrections were made about the same time that it was copied, but most of them were made in the 6th or 7th century. "The impurity of the text exhibited by these codices is not a question of opinion but fact. In the Gospels alone, Codex B (Vatican) leaves out words or whole clauses no less than 1,491 times. It bears traces of careless transcriptions on every page."
 - ii) Phillip Mauro was a brilliant lawyer who was admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court in April 1892. He wrote concerning the Sinaiticus: "From these facts, therefore, we deduce: first that the impurity of the Codex Sinaiticus, in every part of it, was fully recognized by those who were best acquainted with it, and that from the very beginning until the time when it was finally cast aside as worthless for any practical purpose."
 - iii) According to The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, "It should be noted . . . that there is no prominent Biblical (manuscripts) in which there occur such gross cases of misspelling, faulty grammar, and omission, as in (Codex) B."
 - iv) The entire manuscript has been mutilated . . . every letter has been run over with a pen, making exact identification of many of the characters impossible. Dr. David Brown observes: "I question the 'great witness' value of any manuscript that has been overwritten, doctored, changed and added to for more than 10 centuries." (The Great Uncials).
 - v) Codex Vaticanus identifies itself as a product of gnostic corruption in John 1:18, where "the only begotten Son" is changed to "the only begotten God," thus perpetuating the ancient Arian heresy that disassociates the Son of God Jesus Christ from God Himself by claiming that the Word was not the same as the Son. John's Gospel identifies the Son directly with the Word (John 1:1, 18), but by changing "Son" to "God" in verse 18, this direct association is broken.

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- vi) Linguistic scholars have observed that Codex Vaticanus is reminiscent of classical and Platonic Greek, not Koine Greek of the New Testament. Nestle admitted that he had to change his Greek text (when using Vaticanus and Sinaiticus) to make it "appear" like Koine Greek.
- vii) Codex Vaticanus contains the false Roman Catholic apocryphal books such as Judith, Tobias, and Baruch, while it omits the pastoral epistles (1 Timothy through Titus), the Book of Revelation, and it cuts off the Book of Hebrews at Hebrews 9:14 (a very convenient stopping point for the Catholic Church, since God forbids their priesthood in Hebrews 10 and exposes the mass as totally useless as well!).
- viii) The Sinaiticus was written by three different scribes and was corrected later by several others. (This was the conclusion of an extensive investigation by H.J.M. Milne and T.C. Skeat of the British Museum, which was published in *Scribes and Correctors of Codex Sinaiticus*, London, 1938.) Tischendorf counted 14,800 corrections in this manuscript (David Brown, *The Great Uncials*, 2000). Dr. F.H.A. Scrivener, who published "A Full Collation of the Codex Sinaiticus" in 1864 testified: "The Codex is covered with alterations of an obviously correctional character—brought in by at least ten different revisers, some of them systematically spread over every page, others occasional, or limited to separate portions of the manuscript, many of these being contemporaneous with the first writer, but for the greater part belonging to the sixth or seventh century." Thus, it is evident that scribes in bygone centuries did not consider the Sinaiticus to represent a pure text. Why it should be so revered by modern textual critics is a mystery.
- ix) Consider these facts and oddities relating to the Codex Vaticanus:
 - 1. It was corrected by revisers in the 8th, 10th, and 15th centuries (W. Eugene Scott, *Codex Vaticanus*, 1996).
 - 2. The entire manuscript has been mutilated . . . every letter has been run over with a pen, making exact identification of many of the characters impossible.
 - 3. In the Gospels it leaves out 749 entire sentences and 452 clauses, plus 237 other words, all of which are found in hundreds of other Greek manuscripts. The total number of words omitted in Codex B in the Gospels alone is 2,877 as compared with the majority of manuscripts (Burton, *The Revision Revised*, p. 75).

Westcott and Hort

While there are those who proclaim these two Greek scholars (for that they were) with either undying praise or disdain, is something I am not interested in. If I could sit with them and ask questions on God, salvation, and Christ, what would they answer? Thankfully we have in their own writings the answers to these very matters.

1) Concerning the Deity of Christ:

- a) "He never speaks of Himself directly as God, but the aim of His revelation was to lead men to see God in Him." (Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 297).
- b) "(John) does not expressly affirm the identification of the Word with Jesus Christ." (Westcott, *Ibid.*, p. 16).

2) Concerning the Scriptures:

- a) "I reject the infallibility of Holy Scriptures overwhelmingly." (Westcott, *The Life and Letters of Brook Foss Westcott*, Vol. I, p.207).
- b) "Our Bible as well as our Faith is a mere compromise." (Westcott, *On the Canon of the New Testament*, p. vii)
- c) "Evangelicals seem to me perverted . . . There are, I fear, still more serious differences between us on the subject of authority, especially the authority of the Bible." (Hort, *The Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, Vol. I, p.400)

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- 3) Concerning Hell:
 - a) "(Hell is) not the place of punishment of the guilty, (it is) the common abode of departed spirits. (Westcott, Historic Faith, pp.77-78).
 - b) "We have no sure knowledge of future punishment, and the word eternal has a far higher meaning." (Hort, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p.149).
- 4) Concerning Creation:
 - a) "No one now, I suppose, holds that the first three chapters of Genesis, for example, give a literal history. I could never understand how anyone reading them with open eyes could think they did." (Westcott, cited from Which Bible?, p. 191).
 - b) "But the book which has most engaged me is Darwin. Whatever may be thought of it, it is a book that one is proud to be contemporary with. My feeling is strong that the theory is unanswerable." (Hort, cited from Which Bible?, p. 189)
- 5) Concerning the Atonement:
 - a) "The popular doctrine of substitution is an immoral and material counterfeit . . . nothing can be more unscriptural than the limiting of Christ's bearing our sins and sufferings to His death; but indeed that is only one aspect of an almost universal heresy." (Hort to Westcott, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 430)
 - b) "I confess I have no repugnance to the primitive doctrine of a ransom paid to Satan. I can see no other possible form in which the doctrine of a ransom is at all tenable; anything is better than the doctrine of a ransom to the father." (Hort, The First Epistle of St. Peter 1:1-2:17, p. 77).
- 6) Concerning Man:
 - a) "It is of course true that we can only know God through human forms, but then I think the whole Bible echoes the language of Genesis 1:27 and so assures us that human forms are divine forms." (Hort to Westcott, August 14, 1860)
 - b) "Protestants (must) unlearn the crazy horror of the idea of Priesthood." (Hort, Life and Letters, Volume II, pp. 49-51)
- 7) Concerning Roman Catholicism:
 - a) "The pure Romanist view seems to be nearer, and more likely to lead to the truth than the Evangelical." (Hort, Life and Letters, Vol. I, p. 77)
- 8) The place of origin of the manuscripts:
 - a) The foremost earlier texts are Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, both of which originate in Alexandria, Egypt, which was the center of commerce and Hellenistic culture and was renowned for its schools of philosophy. Christian thinkers regarded Greek philosophy as a tool for understanding and applying Scripture. Greek philosophy can never be a tool for determining that which was inspired or otherwise. They may well have been the highest authority in Alexandria, Egypt in the third century, but that does not indicate they are the best.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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