

The Development of Lower Criticism

Gomaa Ramadan Ahmed Makhoulouf

Abstract :

The history of the Christian canon may need to be rewritten in light of recent research on the bibliographic and textual realities of early Christian literature. As a result of a new perspective on the history of the canon. The newly discovered papyrus MMs provide insights on the practises and norms of early Christian text creation (the codex format, the nomina sacra) and add depth to our understanding of the texts' circulation, reception, and impact. Scholars, and researchers as well, are realising the growing importance of fields like palaeography, codicology, and textual criticism to the study of canons.

Because of the information and literary traditions contained in manuscripts, the actual usage of books and the attitudes of early people toward them have become the most crucial factors to investigate when tracing the development of the canon. New study into early Christian literature's bibliographical and textual realia may change our view of the canon's history. Due to a fresh viewpoint on the canon's history, scholars have gained much fresh information from the discovery of various old manuscripts. On the other hand, this material provides crucial information regarding early Christian book production, including copying, transfer, circulation, usage, and accumulation. The papyrus MMs that are now available both highlight early Christian methods and conventions in text production (the codex format, the nomina sacra), and provide new insight into the dissemination, provenances, and uses of those texts. This is because canon historians have always had a legitimate interest in MMs, especially their contents, arrangements, and any lists, prologues, tables, or other aids. These additional manuscripts are also helping reconcile textual criticism and canonical history. 'Lower criticism' used to house experts of canon and text history. However, textual criticism's technical specialization has isolated these two fields. Palaeography,

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codicology, and textual criticism are increasingly essential disciplines in canon studies, as scholars are discovering. Due to the material available in manuscripts and the literary traditions they preserve, the actual use of books and early people's attitudes toward them have become the most important aspects to study when tracing the canon's history.

Keywords:

Textual Criticism, Christian, History, Textual, Early, Manuscripts, Criticism Canon, Text, Study and Material.

تطور النقد الأدني

جمعة رمضان أحمد مخلوف

الملخص :

قد يحتاجُ تاريخُ القانونِ المسيحي إلى إعادة كتابةٍ في ضوءِ الأبحاثِ الحديثةِ حولِ الحقائقِ الببليوجرافيةِ والنصيَّةِ للأدبِ المسيحي المبكرِ. كنتيجةٍ لمنظورٍ جديدٍ في تاريخِ الشريعة. توفر أوراق البردي المكتشفة حديثاً رؤى حول ممارسات ومعايير إنشاء النص المسيحي المبكر (تسويق المخطوطة، نوميانا ساكرا) وتضيف عمقاً إلى فهمنا لتداول النصوص واستقبالها وتأثيرها. يدرك العلماء والباحثون أيضاً الأهمية المتزايدة لمجالات مثل علم الببليوغرافيا وعلم المخطوطات والنقد النصي لدراسة الشرائع.

بسبب المعلومات والتقاليد الأدبية التي تحتويها المخطوطات، أصبح الاستخدام الفعلي للكتب ومواقف الأشخاص الأوائل تجاههم من أهم العوامل التي يجب التحقيق فيها عند تتبع تطور القانون. قد تؤدي دراسة جديدة للواقع الببليوغرافي والنصي للأدب المسيحي المبكر إلى تغيير وجهة نظرنا في تاريخ القانون. نظراً لوجهة نظر جديدة حول تاريخ الشريعة، اكتسب العلماء الكثير من المعلومات الجديدة من اكتشاف المخطوطات القديمة المختلفة. من ناحية أخرى، توفر هذه المادة معلومات مهمة فيما يتعلق بإنتاج الكتب المسيحية المبكرة، بما في ذلك النسخ والنقل، والتداول، والاستخدام، والتجميع. تُبرز أوراق البردي المتاحة الآن الأساليب والتقاليد المسيحية المبكرة في إنتاج النص (تسويق المخطوطة، والمسمار المقدس)، وتوفر نظرة ثاقبة جديدة في نشر هذه النصوص، وإثباتها، واستخداماتها. هذا لأن مؤرخي القانون الكنسي لديهم دائماً مصلحة مشروعة في المخطوطات، لا سيما محتوياتها وترتيباتها وأي قوائم أو مقدمات أو جداول أو وسائل مساعدة أخرى. تساعد هذه المخطوطات الإضافية أيضاً في التوفيق بين

النقد النصي والتاريخ القانوني. "النقد الأدنى" ملاذاً لمؤرخي القانون الكنسي وتاريخ النص. ومع ذلك، فإن التخصص الفني للنقد النصي قد عزل هذين المجالين. علم البابليوغرافيا، وعلم المخطوطات، والنقد النصي هي تخصصات أساسية بشكل متزايد في الدراسات الكنسية، كما يكتشف العلماء. نظراً للمواد المتوفرة في المخطوطات والتقاليد الأدبية التي تحافظ عليها، أصبح الاستخدام الفعلي للكتب ومواقف الأشخاص الأوائل تجاهها من أهم الجوانب التي يجب دراستها عند تتبع تاريخ القانون.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

النقد النصي، المسيحي، التاريخ، النص، المبكر، المخطوطات، النقد الكنسي، النص، الدراسة والمواد.

Introduction

To help better understand ‘Lower Criticism’, one has to have enough knowledge of literary criticism’s function. Two key questions that have motivated researchers to dig more into this topic are as follows: 1) Is the content still the same as when the text was initially penned? 2) Why is this paper so important? Textual Criticism, sometimes known as ‘lower criticism’, may serve as either a reaction to or a precursor to a question. The search for a solution to this problem is useful to both the Old and New Testaments since they give a broad arena in which to research this subject. ⁽¹⁾

In the sense that he regarded the term in the same manner as the general public, Stanley Porter provided the following definition of minor criticism: Textual criticism, sometimes called ‘lower criticism’ (as opposed to ‘higher criticism’), is a crucial aspect of biblical interpretation since it establishes the foundation upon which the text to be interpreted rests. Supercritical critique is another name for higher criticism. On the other hand, higher criticism, also known as interpretive criticism, refers to criticism of a higher level. Over the course of the last several hundred years, there

¹ (Mathews 50)

has been a consistent uptick and subsequent decline in the number of people interested in textual criticism. ⁽¹⁾

According to Arthur S. Peake, textual criticism may also be defined as ‘the concern with restoring to its original state, so far as it could be, the text of an author.’ ⁽²⁾ He discusses the function of the lower criticism as a science that may be applied to the Scriptures, but he never strays from the admission that ‘The Lower Criticism Occupies a Preliminary Stage’. Our current text is compared to the one the author really wrote, and if many versions exist, the best one is selected. Finally, it attempts to ‘go back to the original as nearly as may be done’ in cases when we have reason to believe that the original text has not been preserved in any form. ⁽³⁾

‘Biblical criticism’, as a major discipline of theology, studies the Bible’s origins, topics, and writers. Early biblical criticism focused on Lower and Higher Criticism. To preserve the divinely inspired writers' language, ‘Lower Criticism’ was chosen to examine Scripture. This study examined different versions, codices, and manuscripts and their varied readings.

² (Porter p. 352).

² (Peake)

³ (Peake p. 78.)

Nowadays, 'Textual Criticism' is the term. Beza, Erasmus, Bengel, Griesbach, Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorff, Scrivener, Westcott, and Hort were Lower Critics in the 20th century. This phrase is hardly used anymore. ⁽¹⁾

New study into early Christian literature's bibliographical and textual realia may change our view of the canon's history. Due to a fresh viewpoint on the canon's history. Scholars have gained much fresh information from the discovery of various old manuscripts. On the other hand, this material provides crucial information regarding early Christian book production, including copying, transfer, circulation, usage, and accumulation. The papyrus MMs that are now available both highlight early Christian methods and conventions in text production (the codex format, the nomina sacra), and provide new insight into the dissemination, provenances, and uses of those texts. This is because canon historians have always had a legitimate interest in MMs, especially their contents, arrangements, and any lists, prologues, tables, or other aids. These additional manuscripts are also helping reconcile textual criticism and canonical history. 'Lower criticism' used to house experts of canon and text history. However, textual criticism's technical

¹ (Torrey)

specialization has isolated these two fields. Paleography, codicology, and textual criticism are increasingly essential disciplines in canon studies, as students are discovering. Due to the material available in manuscripts and the literary traditions they preserve, the actual use of books and early people's attitudes toward them have become the most important aspects to study when tracing the canon's history. ⁽¹⁾

Modern textual criticism emerged in the nineteenth century in response to new biblical studies and the heightened interest in ancient manuscripts after their rediscovery and study. The nineteenth century's excitement gave way to a passive and less critical acceptance of textual criticism's definitive conclusions. Textual criticism has seen a resurgence in recent decades. Analysis of new canonical and non-canonical texts has revived this issue. An investigation yields two primary conclusions. First, it's heartening to know that the New Testament's textual tradition is more stable than other ancient documents. Because we have approximately 5,000 Greek New Testament manuscripts. These contain 120 papyri, many majuscule manuscripts, and several minuscules and lectionaries. Almost every other ancient literature has a significantly less consistent textual legacy (see Bruce 1960:

¹ (McDonald p. 274.)

13–20). As we have learned more about the New Testament's textual environment, we have realized textual criticism's constraints in establishing textual certainty. This includes our respect for New Testament manuscript variety, variation numbers and importance, and scribal practice problems. Variations, manuscript transfer, and scribal practices all provide challenges. Textual criticism of the New Testament will never deal with autographs, no matter how early the manuscripts are, but will reconstruct them from later copies, unless something unexpected happens. Despite the writings' ages. Textual critics struggle with this, affecting Bible interpretation and critique.⁽¹⁾

Considering the history of textual criticism, Griesbach was the first to state its principles. These hypotheses were refined by Lachmann, Westcott, and Hort. Many organizations have tacitly agreed that textual criticism's generally accepted principles may provide a solid basis for textual criticism choices. Divide deviations into accidental and planned categories to classify them. Since Westcott and Hort, transcriptional probabilities (calculated by scribes) and intrinsic probability (determined by writers) have been given to manuscript-derived evidence (see Metzger 1968: 209–10).

¹ (Porter pp. 352-3.)

Consider that the disagreements over textual criticism's guiding principles stem from Enlightenment rationalism, which is reflected in the vocabulary used to frame the discussions. It is necessary. For instance, textual criticism holds that the shorter reading is better. From Griesbach's time. We have believed this forever. This theory claims that authors add words rather than eliminate them while composing. While proposing this idea, Griesbach qualified it in many ways. Compared to the harder reading, this is one way it was employed.⁽¹⁾

Stanley Porter explained why a premise like this is dubious. He gave a few explanations on numerous fronts, however. He argues that if the shortest and most difficult reading does not make sense, how can it be original? Current Gospel criticism has proven that scribal enlargement is not always the norm, complicating the issue. It is proven. However, the harder reading notion is also criticized. Bruce Metzger, his boss, illustrates this approach. He advises choosing the more difficult interpretation 'when the feeling seems to be erroneous, but on more mature investigation demonstrates itself to be true.' It is impossible to distinguish what makes sense and what is simply difficult babble, which

¹ (Porter p. 354.)

might lead to an ad hominem argument over mature debate. Because it is impossible to know what makes sense and what is simply convoluted babble, it is a contradiction. These criticisms may be understood using other textual criticism concepts.⁽¹⁾

Textual criticism was primarily limited to classics and the Bible until 1900. In the third century B.C.E., Alexandrian thinkers formalised study and practise. Books were widely used in the fifth century, but the concept of complete textual correctness and duplication was foreign, resulting in many damaged manuscripts. The Alexandria librarians prepared critical versions of the classic literature and annotated them with incisive commentary. Multiple printings and commentaries were published. By utilizing only the finest and oldest copies and saving speculative revisions for the book-long commentary, the Alexandrian editors maintained tradition. Indicators didn't help interpret the content. Latin literature was studied using the same methods by Roman academics. The scribe was supposed to copy his exemplar, and any inconsistencies were resolved by comparing copies. Tours' Lupus of Ferrières was one of the most famous monasteries and academics to practise it (fl. 850). Around 1350, Western

¹ (Porter p. 354.)

culture changed. Christian humanism used old antiquity via study. Readers, copyists, and academics made random modifications to make manuscripts intelligible (the three categories being in fact hardly distinguishable). Late Middle Ages and early Renaissance critiques, like Demetrius Triclinius', can achieve scientific proficiency. Text correction was based on superficial elegance and subjective taste. Early printers used such manuscripts to make the first printed editions (*editiones principes*) of classical literature in the 1470s due to rampant textual deterioration. The press's *editiones principes* were usually solely formatted for aesthetics by academics.⁽¹⁾

The last hundred years have had the greatest impact on interpretation. This time period's work has been inspired by archaeological discoveries, a new appreciation for nature, and comparative religion studies. Lower criticism restored the earliest Scriptures that can be confirmed, but higher criticism has helped us understand the historical context of various biblical passages. Today, exegesis is less regulated by the church than ever before. For the first time, the Bible's

¹ (Kenney)

historical relevance has been illuminated and inspired, changing many Bible interpretations.⁽¹⁾

Textual criticism is an ancillary field of study that is meant to provide a framework for ‘higher criticism’. Authenticity, attribution, interpretation, and literary/historical assessment are discussed in this subfield of criticism. The term ‘textual criticism’ has been used in English since the middle of the nineteenth century, but German biblical scholar J.G. Eichhorn was the first to distinguish between lower and higher criticism. ‘Textual’ and ‘higher’ criticism are inextricably linked. When given several textual variants, a critic applies ‘higher’ criticism’s stylistic and other standards. Textual criticism’s methods of historical inquiry cannot be reduced to common sense. Textual critics must account for the variety of ways texts have been transmitted to be valid.⁽²⁾

Arthur S. Peake writes about how negative criticism affected him in ‘The Bible: Its Origin, Its Significance, and Its Abiding Worth’. Peake’s book examines the pros and cons of the lesser critique. ‘Lower Criticism’ shows that the Old and New Testaments’ texts are ‘very defective and unstable’, according to him. The Revised Version of the New Testament’s release, though minor, must have been a shock to

¹ (Mathews pp. 228-9)

² (Kenney)

many. It was shocking to discover that much of what had been believed for generations to be an authentic copy of God's Word was a mistranslation. The King James Version's translators' errors do not lower the original's quality, which was inspired by God. Before the Revised Version, few knew the Greek text was questionable. Those who had relied on the inerrancy of the original text to protect them from translator errors now found themselves in a situation where it was impossible to tell what the Holy Spirit's voice was. Studying the Bible was a Christian's duty.⁽¹⁾

One of the first pioneers in this field is Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), who released a Greek New Testament edition in 1734. Bengel was a human who lived from 1687 until 1752. The idea that 'Proclivi scriptioni praestat ardua', which may be translated as 'Proclus's transcriptions precede the arduous', was proposed by him in the commentary ('the harder reading is to be preferred').⁽²⁾ Leipzig professor Johann August Ernesti (1707–1781) is considered a forefather of critical theory. Ernesti highlighted it in his *Institutio interpretis*

¹ (Peake 7)

² (Porter p. 97).

Novi Testamenti (1761) that philological and grammatical components should be used as guides to interpretation. ⁽¹⁾

By working together, Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791) and Johann Gottfried Eichhorn propelled the newly founded Gottingen University in the area of biblical studies (1752–1827). Michaelis published his *Einleitung in die godly Scriptures of the New Federal* in 1750. When it was first published in 1788, it was only an elaboration of Richard Simon's work; by the time it went to press for the fourth time in two volumes, however, it had become an in-depth examination of the historical difficulties surrounding the New Testament. ⁽²⁾

As this was happening, Johann Jakob Griesbach (1715-1812) developed a competing strategy....Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) began his academic career as one of Kant's students in the subject of philosophy, but under the guidance of J. G. Hamann, he shifted his focus to the study of literature and religion instead (1730–1788). ⁽³⁾

Since his birth in 1867 until his death in 1948, Adolphe Lods had a long and fruitful career. Lods is a biblical scholar and historian of French Protestant ancestry who was born in

¹ (Porter p. 97).

² (Porter p. 97).

³ (Porter pp. 97-98).

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Courbevoie (Seine) and educated in Paris, Berlin, and Marburg. In addition to being a talented watercolourist and mountain climber, he also served as a priest at the Church of the Redemption in Paris. In the year 1891, Lods was given the job of professor of OT at the evangelical theological institution in Paris. He was a professor at the college of letters at the Sorbonne from 1906 to 1937, where he lectured on Hebrew language and literature. ⁽¹⁾

Lods's literary criticism and religious history studies follow J. Wellhausen, but he claimed he was regaining a French viewpoint that had begun with R. Simon and continued with J. Astruc in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries before being suppressed by the Roman Catholic Church's furious assaults. Lods thought the Roman Catholic Church had violently suppressed this position, and he was restoring it (e.g.: J.-B. Bossuet against Simon). Lods's famous lectures on the OT 'canon' began with a fresh translation and in-depth study of the text after his grammatical analysis (lower criticism). Analysis and creativity were Lods's historical-critical approach (higher criticism). He overcame every challenge, including finding the piece's author. When was it printed? How and who polished that information? What does

¹ (Hayes P. 86.)

its place in the current canon mean? What did the author want readers to learn? He stressed reading texts carefully and combining their abundance of information with additional sources from archaeology, linguistics, comparative religion, psychology, sociology, statistics, demography, and anthropology. Lods acknowledged that personal bias would enter the equation, but he insisted on beginning with a careful study of the texts. Lods's superb presentation of oral tradition in the final portion of his '*Histoire de La littérature hebraique et jllive*' shows his intellectual curiosity and openness to try new methods. ⁽¹⁾

Scholars who contribute to 'Textual Criticism' have been around for quite some time; below is a selection of the most well-known:

Bart D. Ehrman (1955-)

David C. Parker (1953-)

Daniel B. Wallace (1952-)

Ernst Würthwein (1909-1996)

Larry Hurtado (1943-2019)

Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791)

W. W. Greg (1875-1959)

Paul E. Kahle (1875-1964)

Kurt Aland (1915-1994)

¹ (Hayes P. 86.)

Barbara Aland (1937-)

F. J. A. Hort (1828-1892)

Eldon J. Epp (1930-)

Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901)

Etherland Nestle (1851-1913)

Johann Albercht Bengel (1687-1752)

Richard Bentley (1662-1742)

B. H. Streeter (1874-1937)

Johann Jacob Griesbach (1745-1812)

Constatin von Tischendorf (1815-1874)

Canonization and textual criticism are intertwined, and canonization may have had a bigger impact on contemporary biblical studies than textual criticism. Determining which texts belonged in the Jewish canon and which did not was vital to stabilize the text. Is Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira), Enoch, and Jubilees in this set? The Talmud's usage of Ecclesiasticus passages in doubtful settings supports this notion. Note: After the Reformation, Protestants eliminated these books from the Jewish canon. Canonical Criticism began with A. von Karlstadt's *De callolicis scriptllris libe/lus* (1520). Thus, one of Germany's most influential reformers' most important work is this. Much of higher and lesser criticism is here. ⁽¹⁾

¹ (Hayes P. 544)

Although most of the material from this time period has been significantly altered, what can be said about it is compatible with what can be found in older literature. The battle lines once set between the disputants had to be revised, and today the disagreement between Lagarde and Kahle and their followers is interesting only from a historical viewpoint. The Eastern Orthodox Church exclusively employed the Septuagint and all of its versions as their Bible. As a Western language, Latin evolved from a predecessor called *Vetus Latina*. This version was supplanted in the fourth century CE by a Latin version known as Jerome's Latin revision. ⁽¹⁾

Jerome's translation, known as *hebraica veritas*, was widely used as a valid alternative to the HB during the Middle Ages because to his consultation with Jewish teachers in the Bethlehem region. Starting with the Renaissance humanist resurgence, however, students and professors were able to compare and contrast the various writings side by side. Long-standing polemics had developed over the years owing to theological rather than philological differences between the texts used by the church and by the synagogue, with Jews

¹ (Hayes P. 544)

being on the receiving end of the struggle due to their inferior status in society.⁽¹⁾

The modern study of textual criticism examines differences between the Masoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and later Bible translations, such as the Targumim, the Peshitta, and the Arabic Tafsir. This final version is noteworthy since Rav Saadia's Tafsir was written about the same time as A. Ben Asher's Masorah text. Since it was written at the same time as the Aleppo Codex, the oldest codex containing the whole Masoretic Tiberian text, it may offer corrective or corroborative evidence.⁽²⁾

This takes us to the Hebrew University Bible's replica codex. The textual critic must know the history of the most notable Bible translations and how to handle the Masoretic text. He or she must also be able to analyse the rabbinic canon's numerous biblical references. Since it doesn't address authorship, source, history, or literature, textual criticism is still considered 'lower criticism' in biblical criticism. In comparison, other areas are 'higher critique'. Textual criticism

¹ (Hayes P. 544)

² (Hayes P. 544)

is essential to studying the biblical canon and its works, notwithstanding the language barrier.⁽¹⁾

Since textual criticism has been at the centre of exegetical research for so long, it has fostered a plethora of specialised disciplines, making it impossible to find a modern Bible introduction that covers all of them. In contemporary academia, many introductory treatises concentrate only on textual criticism. Up to the beginning of the 20th century, almost all commentary on a section began with a dispute over the text that led to an interpretation. This was the principal commentary series in Protestant Germany and Anglican England. It was popular among French and Italian Roman Catholics.⁽²⁾

It was quite an innovation when in 1906 R. Kittel published the first edition of his *Biblia Hebraica*, which did not focus on exegesis at all but on the text. As an aid for the average student of theology, Kittel's edition did not even pretend to deal exclusively with textual facts but mixed textual corrections based on old versions with conjectural emendation, so much so that the usual type of student, untrained in the exactness of textual criticism, had a difficult time differentiating between textual facts and hypothetical

¹ (Hayes P. 544-5)

² (Hayes P. 545)

fiction. This basic attitude has hardly changed in later editions up to the latest *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1967-77) and continues, in fact, to prevail in the planned new edition, BHQ(uinta). This mixture of textual facts and hypothetical emendations has been avoided in the latest attempt to prepare a proper text-critical edition, the Hebrew University Bible, which began publication in Jerusalem in 1965, with the complete volume of the book of Isaiah appearing in 1995 and that of Jeremiah in 1997. Only the future will show which type of edition will ultimately best serve biblical scholarship. ⁽¹⁾

Stanley Porter regarded 'interpretation' as a problem while evaluating lower criticism. Understanding textual criticism impacts biblical criticism and interpretation. One of this system's many benefits is reducing misunderstanding about older texts and their content. Textual critics are motivated to study the textual tradition rather than find the signature or a flawless copy. While making text-critical judgements, the criteria should be rigorously reviewed. To meet the guiding principles' aims, this is done. Avoid extremes when analysing textual criticism's potential and usage. However, significant judgements concerning the text must be

¹ (Hayes P. 545)

taken at the start of the interpretative process to establish the text that will be used in later interpretation. ⁽¹⁾

The phrase ‘siamese twins’ applies to these two (J. Delobel). The alternative readings contain some of the oldest viewpoints on the meaning of the text, and sometimes it's hard to tell which is the text and which is the commentary! The update is an effort to make the text mean what it's meant to. It's true that this rewording sounds dumb by today's standards, but we have various methods to express what we believe it means in a commentary, so it is not all awful. Is it too much of a stretch to link the fact that the great majority of New Testament variant readings precede 200, or at the very latest 250, with the commentary on Scripture, which was pioneered in Alexandria by Didymus and Origen at the start of the third century? Is this relationship too far-fetched? Once the commentary, which was likely in the text's margins, was accessible, there was no need to change the text. The original text might be discarded because of the comments. Thus, the different forms of the works support their interpretations. ⁽²⁾

Textual critics explore theology. D. C. Parker adds that textual criticism and theology have not always been related. Here. From the early eighteenth century, textual critics have

¹ (Porter p. 354).

² (Parker p. 183.)

been harshly criticized. Though based on ancient Greek manuscripts, the Received Text was deemed God-breathed (and in certain cases, on no Greek manuscripts at all; see section 7.2). Textual critics informed these Christians that earlier manuscripts read differently. Textual critics struggled with scepticism in revealed religion. Due to textual discrepancies, some atheists and sceptics think the theologian's biblical revelation was a fake. Many revealed religion believers considered this treachery. The first publication with a complete bibliography was John Mill's *Novum Testamentum Graece* (1707). Mill offered the popular text along with approximately 30,000 other readings from manuscripts, translations, and patristic sources. The effects will become apparent then. The most comprehensive presentation of the topic at that time insulted religious sensibilities. Daniel Whitby, a clergyman, said, 'I have seen so much in Mill's *Prolegomena* which appears obviously to render the standard of faith weak, or at best to provide others too firm a grip for disbelieving.' Anglican clergy were 'owning and seeking to demonstrate the Text of the Scripture to be unstable', according to independent thinker Anthony Collins'.⁽¹⁾

¹ (Parker p. 185-6)

According to a small but outspoken group of Western scholars headed by Arthur S. Peake, the preservation of Hebrew Bible texts is directly related to the preservation of New Testament manuscripts. The Hebrew Bible and New Testament are compared here. Unlike the NT, he thought the HB texts should be preserved. I've already told you about them. The Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts are almost similar, supporting the idea that a specific divine providence has kept the text from deteriorating. However, no Christian would hold such a view because the New Testament, which has been translated thousands of times and claims to be God's word, has never been the subject of a miracle. The New Testament text used by Christians for nearly a millennium and a half differs substantially from the original text. It's obvious now. The concept that the New Covenant Scriptures were miraculously destroyed while the Hebrew text was preserved by Providence is contrary to Christian doctrine. However, this does not give a definite response to the factual question at hand, but rather warns against the temptation to turn to the supernatural to protect the Hebrew Text. Christian Scriptures are less likely to be in good condition than Hebrew Scriptures. This is supported by the Jewish people's interest with the land. To assure the duplicates' accuracy, they constructed a

complicated computing method and meticulously tested the findings. It took a long time, but their job was great. ⁽¹⁾

He repeated the same thing for the HB. From the Old Testament passage, it is possible to secure the stable door after the horse is stolen. Realizing the Torah was susceptible to tampering, the Jewish people put up many measures to protect it. We only have Hebrew texts from 916, which is a big setback. The Massorettes finished the tremendous effort to improve the text from the sixth to the ninth century after Christ. The Hebrew text's oldest dating is the second century CE, according to several studies. But think about the consequences. First, the modern Old Testament's earliest date was long after the books were written. The time between these occurrences is lengthy. Example: Amos prophesied around the middle of the ninth century B.C., and a Hebrew text was written over 1600 years later. Amos, a prophet from the middle of the seventh century B.C., made several pronouncements. Thus, it is not unexpected that the prophet's early writings had many errors. Many of our copies may be off, but this is not guesswork. Many sentences do not convey the intended meaning, are hard to translate without linguistic abuse, or are missing important phrases. In Hebrew, let us read

¹ (Peake pp. 79-80)

1 Samuel 13. We were surprised by ‘Saul was one year old when he began to reign, and he reigned for two years over Israel.’ More passages exist in two Old Testament books. This occurs often. When compared, they differ in many ways. Some of these anomalies are caused by intentional editing, while others are clearly changed. Historical translations, such as the Septuagint, which was likely completed before Christ’s birth, provide more evidence.⁽¹⁾

Lower criticism (or textual criticism) examines translations and works that quote from the MMs. This study determines the original and authorized document version. Since the originals are gone, a field of research that replicates manuscripts is growing. Western academics all agree. The existing manuscripts disagree on numerous major aspects. Next, Higher Criticism determines whether the document’s assertions (in the document or by other evidence) are genuine, if its authorship and date are correct, and if its statements are trustworthy and believable. Higher Criticism evaluates a text’s assertions after Lower Criticism finishes it.

Lower criticism focuses on the text’s meaning rather than its worth, validity, or provenance. The more skilled reviewer must assess whether the book’s assertions are true.

¹ (Peake pp. 80-81)

Higher criticism often complements lesser criticism, although not always. LC and HC are separated by a large gap, although they are not intrinsically related. Example: Conservative evangelicals who think the Bible is inerrant may criticize, but they do not need to. Fundamentalist Christians consider the Bible infallible. Another indisputable truth is that no respectable Christian would ever challenge the Bible's credibility, attempt to discover which chapters are authentic, or criticize other Christians who do. Since it's God's word in its whole and error-free, most Christian academics believe he can trust and accept it.

In light of the fact that lower criticism does not inevitably lead to higher criticism, it should also be recalled that individuals who developed the Textus Receptus and the King James Version were all considered lower or textual critics themselves! Erasmus was himself a top-class textual critic in his day, and the standards of criticism that he employed were not very different from what is used by current textual critics. Erasmus published the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament, and he was also the one who produced it. One of the most significant contrasts is, of course, that Erasmus did not have access to nearly as many manuscripts and other sources of information as the contemporary critic has today.⁽¹⁾

¹ (htt)