

The Greek Language & Textual Criticism

Chapter 1

History of the Greek Language	
Form of Language	Dates
Proto Indo-European	Prior to 1500 BC
Linear B or Mycenaean	1500–1000 BC
Dialects & Classical Greek	1000–300 BC
Koine Greek	300 BC–AD 330
Byzantine Greek	AD 330–AD 1453
Modern Greek	AD 1453–present



Linear B Tablet

Common Changes from Classical to Koine Period	Example from GNT
First aorist endings appear on second aorist verb stems	ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπα· τίς εἶ, κόριε; (Acts 26:15).
Less common use of optative mood	ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Gal 6:14).
Increased use of prepositions	εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ (Eph 1:3).
-μι verbs appear with omega verb endings	τὰ πτώματα αὐτῶν οὐκ ἀφίουσιν τεθῆναι εἰς μνημα (Rev 11:9).

Common Changes from Classical to Koine Period	Example from GNT
Disappearance of ϕ and ϑ	καλέσω τὸν οὐ λαόν μου λαόν μου καὶ τὴν οὐκ ἡγαπημένην ἡγαπημένην (Rom 9:25).
Greater use of paratactic style	Cf. 1 John and James.
Change in meaning of comparative and superlative forms	μετάγεται ὑπὸ ἐλαγίστου πηδαλίου ὅπου ἡ ὁρμὴ τοῦ εὐθύνοντος βούλεται (Jas 3:4).
Semantic shifts in specific words	σὺ δὲ λάλει ᾧ πρέπει τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ. (Titus 2:1).



Codex Sinaiticus (John 1:1)



Byzantine
Gospel
Lectionary of
Luke
(Arundel 547)

Koine & Modern Greek Differences	
Koine (NT) Greek	Modern Greek Bible
Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. (John 1:1)	Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦτο ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦτο παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ Θεὸς ἦτο ὁ Λόγος. (John 1:1)

A Brief History of Textual Criticism

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος

- The opportunity to compare manuscripts with an unchanging text arose after the invention of the printing press in 1454.
- The first printed edition of the GNT to be published was produced by Erasmus in 1516.
- While Erasmus used a mere seven Greek manuscripts, today we have more than 5,800 manuscripts.

A Brief History of Textual Criticism

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος

- Erasmus's work was built upon and eventually considered to be the standard text.
 - This would eventually be labeled as the “*Textus Receptus*.”
- The Byzantine text would eventually lose its place of primacy among textual scholars to an “eclectic text.”
 - However, there are some scholars who still hold to a “Byzantine priority.”

Principles of Textual Criticism

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος

- Traditionally, the discipline of textual criticism has sought to determine the original wording of an ancient text for which the autograph has disappeared and for which disputed witnesses exist today.
- The criteria for determining an original text can be divided into two broad criteria:
 - **External:** age, quantity, and provenance of manuscripts.
 - **Internal:** how the disputed variant fits into the context of the biblical author’s writing.

External Criteria

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος

- Favor the older manuscripts.
- Favor the reading supported by the majority of manuscripts.
- Favor the reading best attested across manuscript families.

Internal Criteria

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν
ὁ λόγος

- Favor the reading that best fits the literary context.
- Favor the reading that corresponds best with writings by the same author.
- Favor the reading that best explains the origin of the other variants.
- Favor the shorter reading.
- Favor the more difficult reading.

Common Variations -Unintentional Errors

Type	Explanation
Errors of sight	Scribe glancing back and forth between manuscripts makes an error.
Errors of hearing	Scribe listening to dictated manuscript makes an error.
Errors of writing	Scribe makes an error in writing that cannot be attributed to a mistake in copying by sight or listening.
Errors of judgment	Scribe wrongly judges what to copy—incorporating a marginal note into the text, for example.

Common Variations - Intentional Errors

Type	Explanation
Revision of grammar and spelling	Orthographic or grammatical correction by a scribe.
Harmonization of passages	Deleting or incorporating material so that the passage corresponds with a parallel text (in the Synoptic Gospels, for example).
Elimination of difficulties	Deletion or revision of a perceived error.
Conflation of texts	Scribe incorporated two or more variant readings into his manuscript.
Adaption of liturgical tradition	Addition of liturgical material to text.
Theological or doctrinal change	Scribes omits or adds material to avoid perceived theological difficulty.

Textual Apparatuses

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν
ὁ λόγος

- There are different versions of the GNT.
- The NA²⁸ and UBS⁵ contain the same eclectic NT text. However, the textual data is presented differently.
 - The NA²⁸ is aimed at the academic community while the UBS⁵ is aimed at Bible translators and pastors.
- The disputed texts are ranked by a letter grade (A,B,C, or D).
- Two other incomplete and ongoing GNT projects:
 - ECM (*Editio Critica Maior*)
 - IGNTP (International Greek New Testament Project)

Critical Editions of the GNT

Text	Characteristic
United Bible Society, 5th edition (UBS ⁵)	Eclectic critical text. Notes only significant variants, but provides extensive textual data and an A, B, C, or D ranking. Edition primarily intended for pastors and translators.
<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , 28th edition (Nestle-Aland ²⁸ or NA ²⁸)	Same NT text as UBS, but noting many more variants through a system of symbols incorporated into the text. Fewer textual witnesses provided than in the UBS. Aimed at the academic community.
<i>Editio Critica Maior</i> (ECM)	Eclectic critical text of the NT that provides comprehensive manuscript data for the first thousand years of the church. Only the Catholic Epistles and a short volume on parallel Gospel pericopes have been completed. Material from ECM gradually being incorporated into Nestle-Aland and UBS.
International Greek New Testament Project (IGNTP)	Using the <i>textus receptus</i> as a base, the IGNTP provides nearly exhaustive manuscript evidence for all ancient witnesses. Only the Gospel of Luke has been completed. Two volumes on the Gospel of John (papyri and majuscules) have been published.

Recent Trends

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν
ὁ λόγος

- Recently, some scholars have shifted the goal of textual criticism.
- These scholars have shifted the discipline away from recovering the original reading of the GNT.
 - Instead, they see textual variants as a “window” into the theological, ecclesiastical, and cultural world in which the documents were copied and altered .
- Some scholars have also moved to speak of “the earliest recoverable text” rather than “the autograph.”

Theological Considerations

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν
ὁ λόγος

- What role do *a priori* theological commitments play in textual criticism?
- Can it be assumed that God would preserve his word in the textual witness of the New Testament?
- The overwhelming data gives us great confidence that the original wording of the New Testament has been preserved in the manuscript tradition

Online Resources

Website	Contents
csntm.org	Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts. Executive Director, Dan Wallace
nopts.edu/cntts	H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
ntgateway.com	Website overseen by NT scholar Mark Goodacre; includes helpful section of text criticism links
evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com	Forum to discuss biblical manuscripts and textual history from an evangelical perspective

Image Credits

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν
ὁ λόγος

- **Linear B Tablet:** AN1896-1908 AE.2031 Linear B Tablet; recording bull-headed rhyta with decorated horns and gold-covered drinking cups, probably for use at a banquet or religious festival. The Palace at Knossos (North entrance passage area), about 1375 BC, burnt clay. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.
- **Codex Sinaiticus:**
<http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=36>
- **Arundel 547:** British Library. Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts.
<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=7630>