

School of Religion & Theology

(O) *Textual Criticism and the Journey of the New Testament in Becoming A Book: Implications for the Inspiration of Scripture*

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Although the New Testament books were written by particular individuals, the New Testament as we now have it, is not exactly the product of these original authors but rather it is the product of multiple authors/scribes. This is so because all autographs of the New Testament books have been lost and what we now possess are copies of copies of these books, beginning not from the first century, but from the second century, that is, more than a century after the books were initially written. The later scribes are here designated authors/scribes because their activities did not only involve strict copying of their exemplars but, more importantly, they were theologians who adjusted the copied texts to suit their theological positions. Thus the text of the New Testament, as D.C. Parker describes it, has always remained a “living text.”

Unlike what many may fear, this is not necessarily a disadvantage but rather an advantage. Citing specific examples, this study briefly traces the trajectory of scribal activities to illustrate the compositional layering of the New Testament scripture and show that the nuancing of scripture by the later scribes is in keeping with the messages of scripture itself which have always been changing to meet varying human situations. Thus, inspiration may be more of a dynamic phenomenon. In fact, whereas the scribes were authors/scribes, inspiration may need to be seen more as a community process rather than as an individual-centred event. This study explores the complexities of these features of the New Testament books and draw relevant implications there from.