

Q. Mythicists seems to often uses the interpolation theory to explain away NT texts that are inconvenient to their agendas. Yet it is also true that some NT scholars use interpolation theories to the very same end, even when there is apparently no textual basis for the interpolation theory. Explain how the mythicists appeal to interpolation is special pleading, whereas it is not when some NT scholars resort to such a theory (take for example the case of 1 Cor. 14.33b-36, which is displaced in some manuscripts but to my knowledge there are no manuscripts that omit it altogether).

A. A theory of interpolation argues that there are passages in the New Testament that were not originally there, even though they are still found in all the surviving manuscripts. When a passage (whether several verses, a single verse, or part of a verse) is not found in one or more manuscripts, then the decision whether it was originally in the NT is based on textual criticism. Scholars have to decide then which manuscript(s) more likely presents the oldest form of the text. But when all the manuscripts agree, and one wants to claim that they are all wrong with respect to the oldest form of the text, that involves arguing that at a very, very early stage of the transmission of the text (when it was being copied), someone inserted a verse (or verses, or part of a verse) that came to be found in all our surviving manuscripts. That would be what we mean by an interpolation.

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