

## CHAPTER THREE

### METZGER ON TRIAL: REDEFINING THE HISTORY OF TEXT-CRITICAL STUDIES IN AFRICA

Gideon Ibn Tambiyi  
Apokalupsis Theological College  
Kafanchan, Kaduna, Nigeria

A survey of modern works in the field of text-critical studies reveals that Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament* has not been fully appreciated despite the fact that the book has become a significant manual for scholars and students. Chapter five which is entitled "The Origins of Textual Criticism as a Scholarly Discipline" needs a re-evaluation in textual scholarship in order to reinstate Metzger's position on patristic textual criticism in Africa. Using the historical analytical method, this chapter evaluates Metzger's position on early patristic textual criticism of the Greek New Testament. It argues that since scholars (for instance, Epp and Holmes) believe that relying on the history of the manuscripts will serve as a means for the restoration of the text of the Greek New Testament, 'history' in textual studies should be retraced to include the early contribution and paradigms of patristic text-critical scholarship.

**Key words:** Bruce M. Metzger, Patristic, Textual Criticism, Age of Enlightenment, Alexandria, original text, manuscripts, Homer, NA<sup>28</sup>, UBSGNT<sup>5</sup>

#### **Introduction**

With modern textual reconstruction which sprang from the Age of the Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it becomes clear that an appraisal of the history of the text of the New Testament would do a great deal in restoring the original intention of textual criticism as emphasized by a

number of scholars.<sup>48</sup> To ensure an effective history of the text and the original intent to be achieved, it also becomes necessary that a prominent New Testament textual scholar Bruce M. Metzger's original intent be stated concerning patristic textual studies, with the intention of making it relevant to modern textual studies.

This chapter challenges modern text-critical literature on the misrepresentation associated with the works of Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament*.<sup>49</sup> It also argues that textual scholars from the Age of the Enlightenment only imitated and continued what was earlier developed by the patristic scholars (predominantly Africans), rather than laying down new thoughts. Proper historical credit, concerning the origins of textual criticism, needs a fresh look at patristic textual scholarship.

### **Early Waters in Textual Scholarship**

Bruce M. Metzger (1914-2007) was a professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary where he worked for 46 years altogether but spent 30 years serving as a Professor at Princeton where he obtained his PhD (Classics) in 1942 and also served in other institutions. Metzger has been a force to reckon with in the field of language and literature of the New Testament. He was one of the foremost New Testament text-critical scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and has published over 30 books in the field of textual studies and New Testament studies generally. One of his popular works is *The Text of the New Testament*. The first edition was published in 1964 and the second edition in 1968. The fifth printing was in 1978. The third edition of this book was published in 1992. The fourth edition was co-authored with Bart Ehrman in 2005. The book has undergone different stages of reprinting and editions simply because of its significance and contribution in the fields of New Testament literature and textual

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<sup>48</sup> Michael W. Holmes, "The Case for Reasoned Eclecticism," *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (David Alan Black ed., Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 78. Eldon J. Epp, *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays, 1962—2004* (NovTSup 116; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 656.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

criticism. It has been a “fountain” from which many academic works in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have drunk<sup>50</sup> and it has been considered as a ‘manual’ by Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland.<sup>51</sup>

However, it appears that the book has not been given the full attention it deserves in scholarly configurations. Only portions of the book have been critically studied by many scholars. As this book has become a textbook or manual for beginners and scholars in the field of text-critical studies, which is searching for the original text of the New Testament,<sup>52</sup> one expects this book to have been studied and analysed in its entirety.

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<sup>50</sup> Metzger’s book has been cited in many works. For example, see Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Textual Criticism: Recent Developments,” *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne eds., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 59, 64, 66-67, 69, 72. Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 95, 208, 211-12, 214-15, 217, 223, 248, 250, 252-3, 256, 258-9, 264, 268, 321, 332-3, 335, 422. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 18, 185. Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee, *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 99, 150. Michael W. Holmes, “Textual Criticism,” *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation* (David Alan Black and David S. Dockery eds., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 102-5, 109-10.

<sup>51</sup> Aland and Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 185.

<sup>52</sup> Alexander Souter, *The Text and Canon of the New Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1913, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1954), 3. George E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1967), 3. J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to the New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964), 11. Holmes, “Textual Criticism”, 101. Gordon D. Fee, “Textual Criticism of the New Testament,” *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 3. Schnabel, “Textual Criticism: Recent Developments”, 59, 69. S. P. Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament; with Remarks on Its Revision Upon Critical Principles* (London: Bagster, 1854), 174. See also, Eldon Jay Epp, “Multivalence of the Term ‘Original Text’ in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92:25 (1999), 252.

Interestingly, most chapters have been cited and duplicated on a small scale in recent works as stated above. They have been thrown into the contemporary “recycling machines.” However, chapter five which is titled “The Origins of Textual Criticism as a Scholarly Discipline” has been thrown into the “waste basket.” This chapter comprises only 7 pages but it is rarely cited in Western textual scholarship as stated above,<sup>53</sup> which informs the intention of the author in this chapter.

In this chapter, Metzger explores the origins of textual criticism and how it developed in ancient writings, particularly in connection to the Homeric epics among the Greeks as students were publicly reciting and copying portions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Several variant editions of the texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* came up and there were attempts to recover them.<sup>54</sup> There were also editions by Theagenes of Regius, Stesimbrotus of Thasos and Aristotle (prepared for his pupil Alexander).<sup>55</sup>

A more advanced scientific criticism of Homer developed during the Hellenistic Age at the library in Alexandria; a library Metzger calls the “famed library,”<sup>56</sup> which was one of the important parts of Egypt during the Hellenistic reign. A lot has been written about this library,<sup>57</sup> yet Alan

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<sup>53</sup> Of the citations from Metzger’s *The Text of the New Testament*, it becomes clear that other chapters of the book have been cited but of the popular sampled books in the field of New Testament studies, particularly text-critical studies, one hardly found a quote from this chapter on early patristic textual studies.

<sup>54</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 149.

<sup>55</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 149.

<sup>56</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 149.

<sup>57</sup> Christoph Kapeller, “The Architecture of the New Library of Alexandria,” *The Massachusetts Review* XLII:4 (winter 2001-2002): 573-584. Ron Chepesiuk, “Dream in the Desert: Alexandria’s Library Rises Again,” *American Libraries* (2000), 70-73. Joseph M. Graham and Eva Cormaroski, “Alexandria: A Virtual Repository of Knowledge,” *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research* 8:1 (2015), 1-15. Birger A. Pearson, “A New Alexandria Library: Promise or Threat?” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 56:2 (Jun., 1993), p. 106. Daniel Heller-Roazen, “Tradition’s Destruction: On the Library of Alexandria” *October* 100 (Spring 2002), 133-153. Monica Berti and Virgilio Costa, “The Ancient Library of Alexandria. A Model for Classical Scholarship in the Age of Million Book Libraries 1” [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/publications/Berti-Costa\\_Alexandria\\_Kentucky.pdf](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/publications/Berti-Costa_Alexandria_Kentucky.pdf) accessed 7th November, 2016.

Millard, a rankin Professor of Hebrew and Ancient Semitic Languages at the School of Archaeology, Classics and Oriental Studies, University of Liverpool, England, opines that the whole written enterprise concerning the library is not told with absolute sincerity when he stated, like Metzger, that “The history of the library is not well recorded.”<sup>58</sup> Many scholars know the library to be famous when “Caliph Omar sealed the fate of the greatest collection of books made in the ancient world and of the library of Alexandria.”<sup>59</sup> This library contained more than 500,000 rolls, including the Greek translation of the books of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint<sup>60</sup> and by the first century BC, according to Millard, the Library contained 700,000 books.<sup>61</sup>

As the library became a famous research centre, the city, according to Millard, became a “goal for military adventures and so open to the risks of attack and capture pillage and fire” and “several times before the Muslim conquest it fell into enemy hands and the library suffered.”<sup>62</sup> However, Millard makes plain that, although “Alexandria held the greatest library”, it was not the only city that contained a library for “there were many others in major cities of the Roman world, each holding hundreds, if not thousands of books.”<sup>63</sup> A famous example would be the library which was situated in Pergamum. But, does this library of Alexandria experience its fame as Metzger observed, even when Millard suggests that the story of the Library is historically becoming irrelevant? The effort put in those days for this library has been diminished and made void in the modern age.

With the quest for originality on the Homeric texts, Metzger posits that Zenodotus of Ephesus (c. 325-c. 234 B.C) involved himself in the collation of manuscripts with the purpose of restoring the original text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>64</sup> One sees the task embarked in our days, called textual critical studies, to have been undertaken by Zenodotus, a task

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<sup>58</sup> Alan Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>59</sup> Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, 17.

<sup>61</sup> Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, 161.

<sup>62</sup> Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, 18.

<sup>63</sup> Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 149.

which has been reconstructed as A, B, C, and D in the modern critical editions of the Greek New Testament (UBSGNT<sup>5</sup> and NA<sup>28</sup>) as criteria for judging and endorsing the texts.

Apart from the strong historical tie to Ephesus, Africa was at the forefront of affairs in textual studies; hence, there were a consortium of scholars, Greek philologists, theologians and philosophers who were engaged with the texts. The Alexandrian scholars expanded the scope of textual studies to a more complicated, unconventional and advanced form of studies. Metzger properly notes that Alexandria developed a more advanced form of textual, critical and literary studies, concentrated on the works of Homer.<sup>65</sup> He states that “It is common knowledge that Philo Judaeus and many church fathers, influenced by the philological scholarship current at Alexandria, utilized in their interpretation of the scriptures the methods of allegorical exegesis which had been applied to certain stories of the gods and goddesses included in the Homeric cycle.”<sup>66</sup> Metzger states that such an Alexandrian textual criticism “is less widely appreciated –indeed” on the ground of “how far the methods of textual criticism current at Alexandria were adopted by scholars in the Church and applied to the text of the New Testament.”<sup>67</sup>

It is certain that textual studies in Alexandria were not widely accepted on the ground of methods, but it can be said that such studies were unjustly judged at that initial stage. The questions and issues should be on the origin and practice and how to move the studies forward rather than on methods at that incipient stage. When a theory is started, it concerns itself with how to advance its frontiers in terms of the aims, laying the initial foundation and setting the pace for the next steps ahead. Textual criticism in Egypt started with initial enquiry on the foundational issues and aims at restoring the original readings of the text. Preliminary methods were adopted by early church fathers to restore the text. Issues of methods are so enormous that even today, we are still concerned about the best methods and the history of the text as a means to reach the purported goal of textual criticism. Even when the whole ancient textual preliminary attempts in Egypt are questioned, one appreciates the

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<sup>65</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 150.

<sup>66</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 150.

<sup>67</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 150.

initiative employed at the beginning for engaging in such a task which today has witnessed expansion. The role played by the early church fathers, who were predominantly Africans in the initial stage of the discipline, needs to be appreciated as recognized by Metzger and affirmed by Philip W. Comfort who said that “The Alexandrian Christians were probably the first ones to attempt a recovery of the wording of the Greek New Testament. From the second century to the fourth century, the Alexandrian scribes worked to purify the text from textual corruption.”<sup>68</sup>

In that second century, although in ironic terms, Metzger suggests that Marcion’s effort in the early second century was to restore the original text,<sup>69</sup> for in the work of A. G. Padgett, Marcion sincerely believed it was a restoration of “the true gospel of Jesus from the corrupting influence of Judaizers and pseudoapostles.”<sup>70</sup> Of course, Marcion has never been judged in critical terms.<sup>71</sup> There were no criteria to judge heretics in the Early Church. His intentions are judged with biased presuppositions without appreciating his influence upon the canon, the text of the New Testament and his legacy which prompted the Church Fathers to have selected their canon,<sup>72</sup> an act which could be considered also as heretical.

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<sup>68</sup> Phillip W. Comfort, “Textual Criticism and Theology,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Walter A. Elwell ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 1179.

<sup>69</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 150. Also see, E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London: SPCK, 1948), 128-71.

<sup>70</sup> A. G. Padgett, “Marcion,” *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* (Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids eds., Downers Grove, Leicester: IVP, 1997), 705.

<sup>71</sup> The term “heretic” which has been used by the Church Fathers to describe Marcion was actually overstretched. It means to choose or select from an option or adopting a particular position at the expense of another. Marcion chose and was considered a heretic. Using the lens of the “heretics”, the church fathers were also heretics. What we have about Marcion has been the writings of opponents (such as Irenaeus and the five books of Tertullian) against him, not his original documents.

<sup>72</sup> Padgett, “Marcion”, 708. Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 11-300. T. Henshaw, *New Testament Literature in the Light of Modern Scholarship* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 37-45. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?* (Nottingham: IVP, 2000), 26-35.

Marcion advanced the study of the scriptures, despite his alteration of the text and excommunication.<sup>73</sup> Metzger's view of Marcion has been duplicated and thought-through by many modern scholars; hence, his broad knowledge and command of the field of the text of the New Testament at that time is widely appreciated and commendable.

On the advancement of textual studies, Metzger writes that Theodotus and his followers took the bold step for a critical recension of the biblical text.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Eusebius engaged in storing a number of words from an excerpt of an anonymous author which engaged in an interaction with the Theodotians who were engrossed in the study of logic, mathematics and empirical science, allegory and exegesis, applying textual criticism to the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament.<sup>75</sup> Despite this, Metzger states that "unfortunately, nothing more is known of this early effort at textual criticism"<sup>76</sup> by the Theodotians. Engaging in the practice of textual criticism by the Theodotians seemed tampering with the text to the Church Fathers in those days. Of course, it is what led to textual studies and it was predominantly in Alexandria.

Since the Theodotians could not wrestle with the orthodoxy of the Early Church, some of the Alexandrian Christians still continued the studies of the text. The failure of the Theodotians prompted the studies which witnessed resurgence dominantly in the works of Origen of Alexandria and Caesarea after the excommunication of the Theodotians.<sup>77</sup>

Metzger states that Origen began the study of the text of the Old Testament in Hebrew and in Greek.<sup>78</sup> He writes that Origen observed that Matthew 18:1 and two variant readings in Hebrews 2:9 "apart from God" and "by the grace of God" though Origen found some "spiritual significance in both readings."<sup>79</sup> Metzger writes that Origen dismissed the reading "Jesus Barabbas" for "Barabbas" in Matthew 27:16-17 with the

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David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2010), 36, 49.

<sup>73</sup> Padgett, "Marcion", 708.

<sup>74</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 150.

<sup>75</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 151.

<sup>76</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 151.

<sup>77</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 151.

<sup>78</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 151.

<sup>79</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 152.



motive that the name Jesus is not associated with evil-doers.<sup>80</sup> This is the problem of allowing our thoughts to influence our judgment of the text as textual critics. Origen also preferred Bethabara instead of “Bethany” in John 1:28 and Origen concluded that “perhaps all of the manuscripts existing in his day may have become corrupt.”<sup>81</sup> This statement opened the gate of suspicion to the text and finding better ways to restoration. It is the origin of knowing the problem i.e. the interpolation to the text of the New Testament, which has engaged textual criticism over the years. It can be stated that such a bold statement by Origen has helped in critical consideration of the portions of the text with the help of discoveries of ancient manuscripts with variant readings.

This is the greatest contribution of Origen to textual studies i.e. the recognition of the corrupt nature of all manuscripts of his day. This is behind the textual studies of our days as well, but Origen’s influence has long been side-lined even by modern scholars who “know the truth.” Origen must be appreciated for such courage to begin the whole conversation on the corrupt nature of the text, which has prompted all textual critical studies in those days before the Islamic conquest of Egypt in AD 641, and what is witnessed in the modern age of the study dominantly by Bart Ehrman.<sup>82</sup> Such an identification of predicted threats in the New Testament resulted in the development of the field of New Testament textual criticism.

Another figure mentioned by Metzger is St. Jerome. The greatest contribution of Jerome like Origen was, according to Metzger, “the possibility of confusion of similar letters, confusion of abbreviations, accidents involving dittography and haplography, the metathesis of letters, assimilation, transpositions, and deliberate emendations by the scribes.”<sup>83</sup> With this, Jerome introduced the criterion for judging the originality of a manuscript to be reliance “upon the older Greek manuscripts.”<sup>84</sup> This is seen to be behind the external evidence for

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<sup>80</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 152.

<sup>81</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 152.

<sup>82</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>83</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 153.

<sup>84</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 153.

evaluating the text, a task reconstructed by Westcott-Hort (WH) and modern critical scholars, particularly in the search for methodologies for doing textual criticism. However, such thought or criteria did not originate with WH or any scholars, but with Jerome which served as his major contribution to the study of the text of the New Testament.

Furthermore, Metzger states that Jerome identified the addition to the Gospel of Mark, which has been called the longer ending of Mark by modern scholars, although Jerome's source is unknown until the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Charles L. Freer of Detroit bought manuscripts from an Arab dealer in Gizeh near Cairo.<sup>85</sup> With all this information, the modern biblical textual scholars had relied solely on the past, but the veracity of the past is not fully documented and appreciated. The longer ending of Mark was long discovered back in the fifth century.

St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) was a theologian but got interested in the art and science of textual problems.<sup>86</sup> The greatest contribution of Augustine, as stated by Metzger, is the critical criterion that the more difficult reading is to be preferred and that "preference should be given to readings that are current in importance" which has been emphasized by B. H. Streeter in his theory of "local texts."<sup>87</sup> Such criteria continued to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance Period.<sup>88</sup> Metzger's work is a great piece which has become the basis for many resources in the field of textual criticism in our days. Metzger has set the pace, but all his ideas on patristic textual studies are rarely cited in the works of modern scholars.

### **Age of the Enlightenment or Age of Imitation?**

The Age of the Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is known for the development of scientific approaches and new thoughts in many disciplines. Textual criticism and the study of variants in ancient manuscripts also witnessed a scientific and technical approach as an effort to recover the 'original text' of the New Testament. Metzger was also a product of the Enlightenment. His work falls under the scholarly breakthrough of the Enlightenment period. However, Metzger recognized

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<sup>85</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 153.

<sup>86</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 153.

<sup>87</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 154.

<sup>88</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 154-155.

the frontiers laid by the patriarchs in the first five centuries of the Church as discussed above.

In view of the assertions by Metzger, it appears that most of the concepts and theories used by modern text-critical scholarship evolved in the early centuries of the Church, yet these ideas are not properly reconstructed but are construed to be products of the Enlightenment. With this, one wonders whether the Enlightenment has brought new approaches as claimed, or whether it imitated patristic textual studies of the early centuries of the Church. As a result, quite a number of few observations become necessary:

- a. The corrupt nature of all manuscripts was identified by Origen. Origen, with the variants he discovered in the text of the Old and New Testaments, observed the corrupt nature of all manuscripts during that time. Modern critical scholarship undertakes the same task. With the effort of copying the texts by scribes as means of preservation, the texts were corrupted which proper history needs to capture.
- b. There are many variant readings in the text of the New Testament from the twentieth century to the present, which have been identified and captured in the critical apparatus of the NA<sup>28</sup> or the UBSGNT<sup>5</sup>. This effort was started by Origen when he employed a critical sense of judgment. Many variant readings have been preferred today by textual critics of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in the text of the New Testament and few from the Old Testament. Some of them have appeared in the critical apparatus of NA<sup>28</sup> and UBSGNT<sup>5</sup> as credible and some rejected for lack of majority witnesses. It should be said that ‘majority voice’ or *vox populi* of the texts does not guarantee originality, as has been the case with the critical apparatuses of NA<sup>28</sup> and UBSGNT<sup>5</sup>. What is called ‘majority’ depends on the availability of the manuscripts in the copying and preservation processes. The quality of the witnesses needs to be evaluated for a single manuscript might be the original. There are almost 400,000 later and ancient readings in the text which have been identified as many discoveries are made in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which are more than the 140,000 words

in the New Testament according to Wallace.<sup>89</sup> However, early patristic textual scholarship had started that effort and got reconstructed as many other manuscripts with variant readings were discovered after the Enlightenment to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- c. The discovery of the addition to the Gospel of Mark was accomplished by Jerome although Jerome's source is unknown until the twentieth century when Charles L. Freer of Detroit bought the text from an Arab dealer in Gizeh near Cairo.<sup>90</sup> This is one of the greatest variants<sup>91</sup> in the New Testament alongside the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11) and the Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7-8).<sup>92</sup> This created controversy between critical editions and the King James Version,<sup>93</sup> a task started by Jerome. Some scholars have put in efforts to justify the longer ending.<sup>94</sup> However, a number of text-critical scholars have denied Mark 16:9-20 to be a part of the autograph of Mark.<sup>95</sup> Some believe the ending of the Gospel of Mark was missing<sup>96</sup> while others consider it to have

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<sup>89</sup> Daniel Wallace, "Lost in Transmission: How Badly did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?" *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscripts, Patristic and Apocryphal Evidence* (Daniel Wallace ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2011), 26-7.

<sup>90</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 153.

<sup>91</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Making Sense of the New Testament* (Leicester: IVP, 2003), 23.

<sup>92</sup> Blomberg, *Making Sense of the New Testament*, 23.

<sup>93</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, "The Gospel of Mark in Recent Study" *Themelios*. Vol. 14, No. 2 (1989), 49. N. Clayton Croy, *The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 164-5

<sup>94</sup> T. E. Boomershine and G. L. Bartholomew, "The Narratives Technique of Mark 16:8," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981), 213-23. T. E. Boomershine, "Mark 16:8 and the Apostolic Commission," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981), 225-39.

<sup>95</sup> Blomberg, *Making Sense of the New Testament*, 23. The views of a number of scholars are stated in a more recent work, see David Alan Black, Darrell Bock, Keith Elliot, Maurice Robinson and Daniel Wallace in David Alan Black ed., *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views* (Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2008). Also see Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) (Nottingham: Apollos, 2009), 85.

<sup>96</sup> Hurtado, "The Gospel of Mark in Recent Study," 49.

ended with verse 8.<sup>97</sup> It is likely that a scribe felt it could be embarrassing to have an earlier text without the ending and by so doing, decided to conclude the book and gave it “a suitable ending.”<sup>98</sup> I have had the privilege of working on a text of Mark which has the longer ending of Mark, in fact it closes with *amin* and *euangelion kata markon* and a colophon –typical of ancient manuscripts. However, a careful analysis would reveal that such an additional ending was a later text in the second century and also had a *gnostic* source according to Blomberg.<sup>99</sup> The Great Commission and the command of trampling on snakes sound like what Jesus might have said in the commission to the 70 or 71 in Luke 10 apart from the grammatical and stylistic evidences. Furthermore, the most important codices of the Gospel of Mark do not have the longer ending of Mark.<sup>100</sup>

- d. The greatest contribution of Jerome was the identification of deliberate and unintentional scribal errors in the process of emendation such as confusion of similar letters, confusion of abbreviations, accidents involving dittography and haplography, the metathesis of letters, assimilation, transpositions, and deliberate emendations by the scribes. This is what patriarchal textual criticism could offer. They are the same classes of emendations which are maintained in the Enlightenment textual criticism of the New Testament.
- e. There are quite a number of criteria developed by each approach in New Testament textual criticism. These are reasoned eclecticism,<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> See W. R. Farmer, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (SNTSMS 25; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

<sup>98</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, *New International Biblical Commentary: Mark* (Massachusetts: Hendricks Publishers, 1989), 287.

<sup>99</sup> Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 84-5. J. Hug, *La Finale de l'évangile de Marc (Marc 16:9-20)* (Paris: Gabalda, 1978).

<sup>100</sup> Hurtado, *New International Biblical Commentary: Mark*, 288. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 85.

<sup>101</sup> See Holmes, “The Case for Reasoned Eclecticism,” 77-100.

thoroughgoing eclecticism<sup>102</sup> and Byzantine priority.<sup>103</sup> All of these depend on different ideologies considering the external and internal evidence supporting the texts. However, Jerome emphasized the reliance “upon the older Greek manuscripts.” Also, Augustine of Hippo was known for the critical criterion that the more difficult reading is to be preferred and that “preference should be given to readings that are current in importance,” which initiated the idea of local texts.<sup>104</sup> It would be good to state that modern textual criticism should recognize and appreciate these early efforts made by these patriarchs as we build on their old foundations. There is a need for a harmonized text, which will inculcate and merge the advantages of these three modern approaches in textual studies rather than being eclectic.

- f. A number of emphases have been placed by 20<sup>th</sup> century textual scholars on the history of the text as a means to construct the originals of the New Testament. However, such historical attempts of textual studies are nothing but compilation of “Western history” of the discipline. Accurate historical collections of textual critical studies should include the earliest textual critics from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and beyond, who started the discipline and transmitted the text, which has become a case study today. The history of the text of the New Testament should include the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and beyond for quite a number of Africans started the ancient textual collations in Egypt as Philip W. Comfort (2012: 191-2) states,

The first ones to attempt a recovery of the original text were scribes in Alexandria or scribes familiar with Alexandrian scriptural practices –for in the hellenized world there were many who had come to appreciate the scholarly practices of Alexandrian scribes, associated with or actually employed by the scriptorium associated with the catechetical school at

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<sup>102</sup> See J. K. Elliot, “The Case for Thoroughgoing Eclecticism,” *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (David Alan Black ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 101-124.

<sup>103</sup> See Maurice A. Robinson, “The Case for Byzantine Priority,” *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (David Alan Black ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 125-140.

<sup>104</sup> Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 154.

Alexandria (called Didaskelion) were trained philologists, grammarians, and textual critics.<sup>105</sup>

The attention of scholars has been shifted to the “history and theory of the text” as an approach for such task of reconstruction of the text of the New Testament.<sup>106</sup> Such a history of the text should be traced to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century; hence, whatever modern textual criticism is offering has been offered years ago before Christianity was invaded by Islam in North Africa which has been surveyed in this chapter. These early patristic efforts need to be recognized and reconstructed.

- g. Conjectural emendation means an academic guess, which is employed by the textual critics in instances where the variants cannot be determined between which one is original and which is a later reading. This approach has been used by the earlier copyists of the texts as others copyists interpolated some words into the text. Modern textual criticism has also employed that approach in dealing with the texts particularly the reasoned eclectic texts (NA<sup>28</sup> and UBSGNT<sup>5</sup>) at the expense of thoroughgoing eclecticism or the Byzantine priority. In conjecturing, there are several factors that could influence the process such as lack of objectivity, one’s doctrinal beliefs and presuppositions accumulated by the conjecturer. When conjecture is involved, instead of precision and accuracy as much as possible, we are likely to create another “original text,” which is far removed from the *autographs* of the New Testament. The two available Greek New Testaments, being eclectic, are likely varied texts of the ‘original’ Greek New Testament, which have been rated highly in good percentage by scholars as being closer to the *autographs* of the first century.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Philip W. Comfort, “Texts and Manuscripts of the New Testament,” *The Origin of the Bible* (Newly Updated) (F. F. Bruce et al. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2012), 191-2.

<sup>106</sup> Epp, *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism*, 364-5, 656. Holmes, “The Case for Reasoned Eclecticism,” 78.

<sup>107</sup> Irving Jensen has this to say: “So when you are holding a copy of the New Testament in your hands, you may rest assured that it is a wholly dependable translation, which represents the original, inspired autographs of the first century” *Jensen’s Survey of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press,

- h. There are a number of classifications when it comes to dealing with ancient biblical texts depending on geographical locations. Some scholars see them as text-types, textual categories or textual families depending on the hand who copied or geographical location from which the manuscripts came from. We currently have four major text-types: Western, Caesarean, Byzantine and Alexandrian texts.<sup>108</sup> These were classified by WH and have been accepted and developed over the years by modern scholars. However, such nomenclatures employed in the categorization of the textual centres and their traditions seem upsetting. It is good to note that part of what was called ‘Western’ witnessed major biblical scholarship and Christian activities which involved major cities in North Africa. Rome was the only site where manuscripts were duplicated, besides the deAfricanization of North Africa which was configured and generalized to be ‘Western.’<sup>109</sup> Alexandria had a famous engagement with manuscripts and gave the best textual traditions (Codex Alexandrianus) in history, because the Alexandrian scribes

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1981), 22. Also see Danny McCain, *Notes of New Testament Introduction* (Revised edition) (Bukuru: ACTS, 2005), 103. Find a contrary view and more conventional by dominant scholars, for example, Eldon J. Epp, “Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism: Moving from the Nineteenth Century to the Twentieth First Century,” *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (David Alan Black ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 44.

<sup>108</sup> See Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 131-3. David Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible: From Modern Tablets to Modern Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1983), 158-60. Epp, “Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism,” 34-40. Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1995), 131-5. McCain, *Notes on New Testament Introduction*, 100.

<sup>109</sup> Matthew Michael, *Christian Theology and African Traditions* (Kaduna: Yuty Graphics, 2011), 5-8. John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Heinemann, 1969 reprint, 1974), 229. Benjamin B. Warfield, “Africa and Christian Latin Literature,” *Benjamin B. Warfield: Selected Writings* vol. 2 (John E. Meeter ed., New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2001), 518. Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003). Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).



were careful and expert emendators.<sup>110</sup> Such an important engagement in North Africa with the manuscripts which are generated from Egypt can be reformed as African text rather than classifying the centre as ‘Western’. If the ‘Alexandrian text’ is maintained, the ‘Roman text’ should be adopted to replace the designation ‘Western text.’

## **Conclusion**

There is a need for thorough studies of the text of the New Testament with much zeal and exposure as evidently witnessed among the works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century textual critics well-known in history, rather than searching for popularity in the case of scholars in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.<sup>111</sup> Proper envisaging of history of the text of the New Testament

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<sup>110</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland state that the Alexandrian text is known to be a “strict text, somewhat carelessly written; category 1” (100) which P70 belonged and according to the Alands, category 1 consists of “manuscripts of a very special quality which should always be considered in establishing the original text (e.g. the Alexandrian text belongs here)” *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Translated by Erroll F. Rhodes, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 105, 155.

<sup>111</sup> Modern scholars who have attempted to trace first century documents include: Josep O’Callaghan, Carsten P. Thiede, Jesus Family Tomb, the *Titanic*, James Ossuary, and Tomb of Peter, John Dominic Crossan, and “the first century gospel of Mark fragment” discovered, deciphered and announced by Daniel B. Wallace in 2012. Thorough studies have challenged the credibility of these documents and assertions, for example, in the work of Acharya S. Despite these efforts, Millard concluded that such documents dated to the first century have not won support and are disregarded and stated that “no first century Christian books have yet been found although there can be no doubt they existed”. See Carsten P. Thiede, *The Earliest Gospel Manuscript? The Qumran Papyrus 7Q5 and Its Significance for New Testament Studies* (Exeter-Carlisle, 1992), 41. See a confrontation by Craig L. Blomberg, *Making Sense of the New Testament* (Leicester: IVP, 2003), 18. Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Corgi Books, 2003). *The Last Temptation of Jesus* McGirk, Tim. “The Titanic Claim: Jesus Still Dead.” [www.time.com/time/letters/email\\_letters.html](http://www.time.com/time/letters/email_letters.html) Acharya S., “1<sup>st</sup> century Gospel of Mark Fragment Found,” [www.freethoughtnation.com/contributing-writers/63-acharya-s/654-1st-century-](http://www.freethoughtnation.com/contributing-writers/63-acharya-s/654-1st-century-)

should not only make reference to the Age of the Enlightenment, but also take cognisance of patristic efforts to recover the text of the New Testament.

If Metzger is still regarded highly in his manual, *The Text of the New Testament*, abandoning such early textual frameworks, which placed Africans at the forefront in copying, editing, correcting, interpolating, and transmitting the text of the New Testament, would be completely unintelligible to any knowledgeable textual scholar. This means that such eclectic scholarship is incapable of surviving the breeze of academic challenge by emerging biblical scholars, as far as the history and theories of New Testament textual criticism are concerned.

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