

# Recent Trends in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament A New Millennium, a New Beginning?

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**T**his very brief survey of recent developments in New Testament textual criticism inevitably concentrates on the Greek tradition, although the Latin is given a place; in its first part I describe the somewhat negative view of this discipline as it was being portrayed towards the end of the last millennium. In Part II I show how the 21<sup>st</sup> century now proffers more confidence and optimism in a discipline that in many observers' opinions had sunk to an abysmally low ebb.

## I

Theologians and even New Testament scholars whose labours have not exposed them to what is still actually being achieved by New Testament textual critics have all too readily been inclined to opine, mistakenly (if ever they felt obliged to pass an opinion on New Testament textual criticism at all), that its work had all but been completed. We have a serviceable Greek testament (Nestle<sup>27</sup>) which, to their blinkered eye, seems to be the very apogee of the genre, as they may see it, and thus there should be no need or room for any rival. Such a view could even have been reinforced in 2010 when the Society of Biblical Literature (= SBL) in its home city (Atlanta, GA) distributed to the thousands of delegates at its annual conference a gratis copy of the SBL *Greek New Testament* edited by Michael W. Holmes<sup>1</sup>. Those who deigned to open and read it could see that its 'new' text is but an amalgam of four previously published editions (two from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (!): Westcott and Hort's text and the lesser-known edition by Tregelles, and two 20<sup>th</sup>-century texts, the relatively unknown edition of the Greek behind the *NIV* of 1973 and (most surprisingly) Robinson & Pierpont's Byzantine text from 2005). This SBL edition has no *apparatus* of manuscripts whatsoever and there are only some eighteen places where Holmes prints as the text a reading independent of and differing from his four base texts or their marginalia. No wonder outsiders could think New Testament textual criticism had nothing new to say, if one of the leading professional Biblical societies could sponsor and parade such an edition. [Casual observers could conceivably be forgiven (if one felt charitable) for surmising, again mistakenly, that a dwindling band of delusional text-critics are concerned only with conserving manuscripts and perhaps occasionally reporting the re-emergence of a long-lost witness.]

Such a negative view of New Testament textual criticism seemed to permeate the opinions of many theologians and Biblical scholars until recently. The closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century saw the deaths of some of the European giants of the discipline; among the most prominent and influential text-critics was Kurt Aland, a powerful and entrepreneurial figure, who died in 1994. Five years earlier George D. Kilpatrick of Oxford had died, and a few years previously France had lost its most prominent text-critic, Jean Duplacy. Carlo Martini's translation to high ecclesiastical office in his church about this time deprived scholarship in Italy of a powerful voice in New Testament textual criticism. These losses came at a time when New Testament textual criticism could ill-afford to lose such innovative and productive scholars as it was already in the doldrums.

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<sup>1</sup> See my review in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 62, 2011, p. 288-294.

The discipline had but recently felt the wounding criticisms of Eldon Jay Epp, expressed more in sorrow than in anger, but none the less telling for all that, in his *Harvard Theological Review* article of 1974 “The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism” based on his W.H.P. Hatch memorial lecture delivered in Chicago the previous year. Epp who has continued to be the sharpest commentator on developments in this discipline and who may now properly be described as its doyen, was then of the opinion that, despite the many recent finds of early New Testament papyri, New Testament textual criticism had barely advanced in the production of new texts, or in its methodologies or text-critical theory beyond the achievements of Westcott and Hort one hundred years earlier. Although some felt that Epp had been unduly pessimistic, his views were generally seen to ring true. They had touched a raw nerve. In the most recent reprinting of that 1974 article (in his collected essays of 2005<sup>2</sup>) Epp’s *Added Notes* there show that he still largely maintains the views he had first expressed some thirty years previously.

Epp also wrote two other influential articles along these lines. The title of his article “New Testament Textual Criticism in America: Requiem for a Discipline” of 1979 tells its own sorry tale, and his more substantial “A Continuing Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism?” of a year later reiterates many of the points from the Hatch Lecture, but this later article was now goaded by Kurt Aland’s acerbic and tactless reaction to the 1974 *Harvard Theological Review* article found in the entirely inappropriate context of a *Festschrift* to honour Matthew Black. These and other of Epp’s articles, including his influential pieces on defining the meaning of terms like ‘original text’ and ‘textual variant’ are also contained in his edited volume *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism*.

When Epp published his article describing the ‘interlude’ his was an analysis of what was or, rather, was not happening in the study of the New Testament, its manuscripts, and theories relevant to the establishing of a critical edition; his assessment was seen as a moratorium on the discipline of textual criticism. The IGNTP (International Greek New Testament Project) Luke was overdue; and, as we shall see below, progress in the publication of the volumes in *Vetus Latina* (= *VL*) was lacklustre. The pioneering age of Westcott and Hort had well passed but in Epp’s view there was no comparable development in the 1960s-1970s. The initial excitement over the 20<sup>th</sup>-century publication of recently discovered New Testament papyri from the Chester Beatty or Bodmer collections seemed to him not to have been the catalysts for transforming or even informing textual criticism in ways which some may have hoped. The editing of a new New Testament had not happened; there was catalepsy. Coupled with this, there was a reluctance to share with Kurt Aland that his co-edited

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<sup>2</sup> E.J. EPP, *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays 1962-2004* (*Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 116), Leiden, 2005.

testament, Nestle<sup>26</sup>, had established a longed-for Standard Text capable of toppling earlier editions - including Westcott and Hort's of 1881. This new Nestle text was being shamelessly exploited to serve as the base text for a concordance, lexicon, and gospel synopsis. In Kurt and Barbara Aland, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments*<sup>3</sup> it was speciously claimed that the term, standard text, was the invention of reviewers and it looked as if Kurt Aland used the expression allegedly only reluctantly and usually in inverted commas, but that foolish mask of pretence was soon swiftly exposed for what it was. (Cf. the introduction to Aland and Aland, *Text* 1<sup>st</sup> German edition p. 41 and K. Aland's preface to his *Synopsis* 10<sup>th</sup>. ed. p. xi<sup>4</sup>.) Some critics even had the temerity to assert that Nestle<sup>26</sup> was a Westcott and Hort *redivivus*.<sup>5</sup> Nestle<sup>26</sup> p. 43\* says that such a judgement is ironic, but Matthew Black, one of its co-editors categorically described the new text as a Westcott and Hort type of text, *without* any apparent irony, thereby deflating the earlier explanation. (For Black, see *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 19, 1976, p. 467 and *Bible Translator*, 28, 1977, p. 120.) The term, standard text, used unashamedly as a puff for Nestle<sup>26</sup> has now generally been abandoned<sup>6</sup>, but in 2010 the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament Reader's Edition with Textual Notes* (Stuttgart) p. 9\* still parades it! This (general) abandonment of such an imperialistic claim is another welcome development in New Testament textual criticism. Its use was presumably intended to shackle critics, but far from being manacled many reviewers bridled at this presumption just as much as an earlier generation was appalled at Westcott and Hort's effrontery in including "...in the *Original Greek*" in the title of their New Testament.

The improved tone came in the newly written introduction to Nestle<sup>27</sup> where on p. 3\* = p. 45\*- 46\* we are now informed that the Nestle text "... intends to provide the user with a well-founded working text, together with the means of verifying it *or alternatively of correcting it* (italics mine)." So far so good! The obnoxious term 'Standard Text', when used of the text of Nestle = United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* 4<sup>th</sup> edition (hereafter UBS), had thus been given an unceremonious interment.

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<sup>3</sup> Published originally in Stuttgart in 1983 with a revised English translation (Grand Rapids MI and Leiden, 1987); 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Stuttgart, 1988) and revised English translation (Grand Rapids MI and Leiden, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> And *inter alia* see Aland's article in the first Metzger *Festschrift*: « Der neue 'Standard-Text' in seinem Verhältnis zu den frühen Papyri und Majuskeln », in Eldon Jay EPP and Gordon D. FEE (eds), *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis*, Oxford, 1981, p. 257-275.

<sup>5</sup> For a delicious flavour of the tone of exchanges savoured in those days there is no better place than K. Aland's riposte to H.W. Bartsch in an article « Ein neuer Textus receptus für das griechische Neue Testament? », *New Testament Studies*, 28, 1982, p. 145-153 – a poignant vignette that is a real connoisseurs' delight!

<sup>6</sup> See for example the self-conscious rebranding of the *standard* text as the *new* text by comparing the first and second editions of the Alands' *Text* ET (e.g. p. 24, 34-6 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. with p. 25, 34-5 in the first).

We now also await the promised fifth edition of *UBS* to see if that edition at long last lives up to its oft-trumpeted but not as yet fulfilled promise to be an edition of value first and foremost to *translators*. If it really does so, then *UBS* may finally justify its publication separate from the Nestle text. We shall see!

Aland's *Liste*, now our standard reference work for investigation into New Testament manuscripts was promoted in its first edition as only the first of two volumes. Its title page in 1963 claimed that this *Kurzgefasste Liste* was only part I *Gesamtübersicht* and would swiftly be followed by a more detailed sequel, as we read in the *Vorwort* and *Einführung*. That promise never materialised, leaving researchers disappointed and let down. The second edition of the printed *Liste* in 1994 now silently and surreptitiously dropped from the title page the suggestion that this was only the first part of a larger work. A new preface was concocted and the earlier introduction jettisoned. Coupled with that, Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland's aforementioned *Text* was seen to be in effect (a) a thoroughgoing glorification of the achievements of the Münster Institut which Kurt Aland had founded and, in concert, (b) a denigration of others' work in the field, such as, say, Heinrich Greeven's. These biases lost the discipline many sympathisers. But even more galling to readers was a declaration and promise – once again – that this book was only the first of a two-part work. This preliminary beginners' textbook was intended to be followed by a more advanced work for professionals. These professionals were wise not to hold their collective breath – the second volume like the sequel to the *Liste* was forgotten and never appeared nor was it ever referred to again. No wonder Epp was despairing. Once again, it looked as if that powerhouse of New Testament textual criticism in its Mecca, Münster, had run out of steam. It seemed to some reviewers, dissatisfied by Nestle and even more so with the flawed *UBS*, that they were now stuck with those publications with no apparent escape in sight.

But things were actually changing in the time since Epp's 1974 piece, as I trust we can demonstrate in part II below. Epp's former student Larry Hurtado was also pleased in 1999 to report on new green shoots emerging from Epp's wasteland and could declare that the interlude had passed<sup>7</sup>. That assessment can be updated somewhat. Epp's earlier pieces though were a shrewd assessment of the *status quo* in the 1970s, and served as a welcome wake-up call. The sea-change now readily observable in the discipline should make the casual observer imagined in my opening words reassess the current status of New Testament textual criticism, now that the present and future outlooks are awash with innovation, development and sheer interest. The aforementioned SBL conferences now host an impressive number of sessions on

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<sup>7</sup> L.W. HURTADO, « Beyond the Interlude? Developments and Directions in New Testament Textual Criticism », in D.G.K. TAYLOR (ed.), *Studies in the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts* (Texts and Studies 3.1), Birmingham, 1999, p. 26-48 (reprinted in the SBL *Textual Criticism Series*, Atlanta, 1999).

New Testament textual criticism that attract large numbers in attendance including many, often younger, scholars, as speakers. Epp's theatrical intermission has now finished; the curtains have now been raised on a new act. Action is indeed evident.

### ECM

But before we accentuate the positive, we need to speak of the *Editio critica maior* and of the Latin New Testament, some of whose problems, though now less dire, nonetheless still continue to blight our new century.

Epp's strictures in 1973 about the lack of developments in textual theory may well still find an echo in the *Editio Critica Maior* (= *ECM*) volumes published from 1997 (James) through to the near completion<sup>8</sup> in 2005 of its first volume<sup>9</sup>. The real and positive achievements behind that first volume in the *ECM* series will be given due weight in part II of this survey, below, but the running text itself, which is probably most readers' first point of interest in the new edition looks disappointingly familiar, despite all the hype about a new methodology, a comprehensive array of often uniquely cited manuscripts, an exhaustive display of witnesses from the first Christian millennium and (at last!) a reliable screening method for coping with the great mass of nearly identical later manuscripts. The James volume has only 3 (originally 2) differences from the current Nestle text, 7 differences are to be observed in I Peter, 8 in 2 Peter, 3 in I John and 3 in Jude – a meagre cull. These are the changes that will influence the text in the hand editions (Nestle/*UBS*) and presumably in time all the allied tools that up to now have relied on the text of Nestle<sup>26=27</sup>, such as the new Bauer's Lexicon, Aland's *Synopsis*, and allied concordances. Possibly the *ECM* volume on John (now identical with the IGNTP John), work on which started nearly a quarter of a century ago, may print as its running head, i.e. its *Ausgangstext*, something rather more reliable than the often discredited readings found as the text of Nestle/*UBS*. A small selection of versional evidence (Latin, Syriac, Coptic and Gothic – fewer than that found in, say, the IGNTP Luke) will be added to the *ECM* John, together with evidence from patristic sources. Although the appearance of the full edition is still awaited – showing that even electronic aids can neither harry nor hurry editors of such a publication – we have already seen spin-off volumes published on the Greek papyri and on the majuscules of John. We await impatiently the publication of *tout le bazar!* Its *Ausgangstext*, scrupulously debated and constructed though it must be, may then serve merely as the hook on to which variants hang and may be displayed. Many of those deviations can then be pounced upon

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<sup>8</sup> The *still* eagerly awaited *Begleitende Studien* section of volume IV has not yet been published!

<sup>9</sup> *Novum Testamentum Graecum. Editio critica maior IV Die katholische Briefe*, Stuttgart.

and pored over to demonstrate the ways in which that initial text inspired and spawned substantial rewriting and rereading. Much theology and history lie in those *variae lectiones*.

### *Vetus Latina*

The gloomy outlook reported by Epp in 1974 could well have been confirmed by those New Testament textual critics who were examining what was happening in the final quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> - century within the contemporary quagmire of Old Latin Biblical scholarship. The flagship series *Vetus Latina*, based in Beuron, seemed to have been cast adrift. Several of its on-going projects had been beached and other volumes becalmed. The volumes on Tobit (vol. 7/1), Judith (7/2), Song of Songs (10/3), Romans (21), I Corinthians (22) seem to have faltered, in most cases after only one or two fascicles had appeared, leaving purchasers, who, not unreasonably, expected instalments to emerge at decent intervals, feeling betrayed that the initial enthusiasm trumpeted in the Beuron *Berichte* to encourage them to start to buy the fascicules had evaporated, and ruing the day they had embarked on subscribing to the volumes. The 1999 and the 2000 *Bericht* reinforced Epp's gloomy prognosis for work on the text of the Bible. There we read of the withdrawing from the end of 2000 of the much needed grants from the Heidelberg Academy. In the 1999 issue we learned of an even more dreadful situation, namely the lack of progress in Beuron's *VL* publications; news on the progress of *any* volumes was conspicuous by its absence. That situation coincided with the demise in 2000 of that useful and groundbreaking series *Biblica patristica* supported by the French CNRS (in which scholars could readily locate Biblical quotations and allusions in patristic writings). Seven volumes had been published. (It is, however, possible that in the foreseeable future a phoenix may arise from the ashes of the *Biblical patristica* project.)

On a positive side – and anticipating the changes in fortunes we shall be reporting in Part II – Roger Gryson of Louvain-la-Neuve was bucking the trend as he had quickly published his impressive *VL* Isaiah between 1987 and 1997; he then immediately set to work on another challenging volume, the Book of Revelation. That too was soon completed with exemplary dispatch (between 2000 and 2003!). Gryson was by then the much respected director of the *VL* project (fully cognisant of the tohu-bohu he had inherited). He wisely placed his two monumental and pioneering companion volumes – one on Apringius and Cassiodorus, among 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> -century minor commentators on the Apocalypse, in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* CVII in 2003; the other on the Venerable Bede in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* CXXIA in 2001 – and not, as at one time advertised by Gryson himself, as no. 37 in the series *Aus der Geschichte der lateinischer Bibel*, the very Beuron monograph series that was intended to support research on its linked *VL* volumes. It is to be

hoped that he can continue to instil vigour into the apparently abandoned *VL* volumes.

We have raked over (c)old embers to point up the contrasting picture we may paint today. The recent past can sometimes be conjured up nostalgically as having been a golden age. Not so in New Testament textual criticism!

## II

### *Vetus Latina*

One of the splendid things to have emerged in the new millennium has been a revived and unexpected vigour in work on this essential and valued tool, *Vetus Latina*, so we start our new section staying with that version. Thanks in large measure to the Beuron project and its leadership having moved from Swabia to Belgium and the fact that many of its contributors are now recruited from abroad as well as Germany, one may now see a lively and active international progression in its publications. Already, Jean-Claude Haelewyck's *Hester* has been completed in record time, and his Mark is well underway. Across the English Channel work in Birmingham on another Gospel, John, has already borne fruit, and its first fascicule, now much longer than the hitherto regulation-sized 80 page issue, has already appeared, and a tranche of similar size to include John 5-9 should appear in mid-2012 *en route* to a total of five fascicules to complete the Fourth Gospel. Bonifatia Gesche's *Ruth* in one volume has been published and her *Esra I* has already started appearing. Plans are advanced for Acts – that work is being undertaken in Mainz under W. Blümer's direction. The major Paulines will soon commence in Birmingham under David Parker's and Hugh Houghton's leadership. Who would have imagined such a *volte-face* in fortunes when reading the 1999 and the 2000 *Bericht*? Walter Thiele, the recent main stalwart of the old Beuron team alongside H.-J. Frede, has recently decided to abandon Sirach. He had published the first fascicule in 1987 and the work ground on until he had reached Sir 24:47 by 2005 (!) in fascicule 9 when he eventually decided to call it a day. That volume has thus petered out with only half of Sirach published, but we can now hopefully await its eventual continuation in the hands of A.J. Forte.

### Computing

By the end of the old millennium the increasing use of computers in recording and storing manuscript collations, thereby enabling researchers to print out and record electronically their manuscripts' distinctiveness, proved a boon that was soon to be vigorously exploited. The ability now exists to display as a base for collating against the text of any one manuscript obviously



eliminates the old method of prioritizing a favoured manuscript or printed text. That often derided ‘mechanical’ chore of collating a manuscript – too readily seen as work for a dogsbody – has now been recognised as an essential and valued part of the democratization of the discipline and part of the process of empowering each and every copy of the New Testament text.

### Digitizing

Alongside such work, the digitizing of manuscripts by many leading depositories of Biblical manuscripts was also beginning. What once was the preserve only of those who had the means to travel to a library has now also increased further the democratization of scholarship; anybody with access to the internet can now study these treasures in their own parlour. Tyndale’s hypothetical ploughboy can in the 21<sup>st</sup> -century not only read his Bible in the vernacular but, via his pc, look at an increasing number of manuscript treasures that lie behind his modern translation. This new technology has energised the discipline and attracted a new breed of computer-savvy scholars. The new generation has entered what had become a tired, cosy but diminishing world of older practitioners and it has helped enliven productivity. With it has come a new, hitherto absent, collegiality and international cooperation; old antagonisms gave way, thanks no doubt to the ease of electronic communications, to a genuine transparency and sharing of knowledge, plans and resources. As an example of that, the now venerable (if not always venerated) International Greek New Testament Project (= IGNTP), now based in Birmingham, has paired up with the Münster Institut, due to the collegiality of its current Direktor, Holger Strutwolf building on the openness of his predecessor, Barbara Aland. This close collaboration (at one time utterly unimaginable) will allow the shared publication of the *ECM/IGNTP* John and beyond this the Paulines and Acts. It has already been noted above that scholars in Birmingham, who belong to the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing (ITSEE) have been collaborating with the *VL* Institut to work on the Old Latin John. Other teams of text-critics are now active in Dallas, Texas (under Daniel Wallace’s direction; this has its own New Testament website, where Wallace shares his work on newly photographed manuscripts: [csntm.org](http://csntm.org)) and New Orleans (under Bill Warren’s H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies; see [www.nobts.edu/cntts](http://www.nobts.edu/cntts)). The former in particular has been active in photographing Greek New Testament manuscripts and many of those will be promoted in digitized form; he has in the process (re)discovered some hitherto unregistered manuscripts, especially from Tirana in Albania. The demise of socialism in Eastern Europe more generally has also played its part in enabling western scholars to gain easier access to libraries than heretofore in order to search for Biblical manuscripts.

### Web Sites

Websites accompany this new kindling of interest among younger scholars who have encouraged this electronic medium for intercourse on textual criticism, irritatingly matey though such a form of scholarly contact may be to some of the more “mature members” of the Academy. Nonetheless, a site such as [evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.org](http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.org) which, despite its off-putting and bizarre name, is in effect a valuable source of information about current activity in New Testament textual criticism, attracting as it does a regular number of generally predictable contributors who seem to keep their collective ears to the ground. This instant forum attracts a clutch of coherent, active and aspiring new voices alongside seasoned practitioners and is symptomatic of the revived interest in manuscripts, editions, methodology and variants stimulated by the instant, interactive and flourishing nature of today’s research. Flippant and colloquial though some of the electronic communications be, nonetheless some serious reports of news and developments and often of work in progress are to be regularly seen there.

Outside the chatty sites, scholarly web pages include <http://www.iohannes.com/vetuslatina> cf. <http://www.igntp.org> and <http://www.iohannes.com/IGNTPtranscripts> for the Birmingham enterprises and <http://nttranscripts.uni-muenster.com>, <http://nestlealand.uni-muenster.de>, <http://intf.uni-muenster.de> for the various and varying activities undertaken by the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung, including the opportunity to be allowed a ‘visit’ to its ‘virtual manuscript room’ through the link [vmr/NTVMR/IndexNTVMR.php](http://vmr/NTVMR/IndexNTVMR.php) and elsewhere to the list of registered manuscripts through the link ‘manuscripts’. The work undertaken on Latin Acts at Mainz referred to earlier may be accessed at <http://nttf.klassphil.uni-mainz.de>. These readily available means of learning what is being achieved were unimaginable not so long ago! This has inspired new researchers and has of course broken down any previously cherished possessiveness and protectionism. The ready accessibility of source materials and up to date information on work in progress may be compared with the availability of a growing number of sites which display, often gratis, an increasing number of manuscripts in a digitized form. Possibly the gold standard for such digitized programs is the 2010 site [codexsinaiticus.org](http://codexsinaiticus.org), launched by the British Library and the three other holders of portions of the famous Codex Sinaiticus.

Plans are afoot for my *Bibliography of New Testament Greek Manuscripts* to be made available via BiBIL, the searchable online bibliography maintained by the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. When this is up and running the ability to upload new bibliographical entries will revolutionise a resource that until now has inevitably struggled to keep up to date with intermittent “Supplements” to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the book in *Novum Testamentum*.

### Original Text

Dynamic and pioneering though the electronic aids be, the most tangible step-change for textual criticism in recent years has been its methodology and its very purpose. Let us look first at its aims. Until recently, most text-critics and editors would have declared that their stock in trade was the re-establishing of the original text by which they would mean the authorial text. That is now seen as a chimera, and an increasing number of those writing on textual criticism and therefore its practitioners now state that their aim is to be a plotting of the history of the text from its earliest recoverable form (usually known in the jargon of the trade as the *Ausgangstext*, a supposed initial text from which all extant variants seem to descend). Again, credit for articulating the difficulties in the earlier methodology is due to Eldon Epp, this time in his article "The Multivalence of the Term "Original Text" in New Testament Textual Criticism"<sup>10</sup>. He exposed the unclarity in previous writings about what the vainly sought *original* text may be, and showed it to be a weasel word. There are many supposed 'originals': a predecessor text behind the author's composition, the autograph text as it left our author's desk, a canonical text whose scriptural authority was hailed, and an interpretative text. Epp champions the more sceptical approach of Bart Ehrman who, in his *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* and elsewhere, has shown how many deliberate changes to the Biblical text evident in our *apparatus critici* were due to differing users' doctoring what they were copying to make it conform to the prevailing party line that they espoused at the time. D.C. Parker takes a similar approach in his *The Living Text of the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1997), a title that is intended to suggest that it was precisely because the New Testament was a used *living* text that it spawned variants; throughout the New Testament many extant variant readings may have no relevance whatsoever to the actual wording penned by the evangelists or the other Biblical authors. An increasing number of critics have accepted the validity of these positions. The new textual criticism is therefore reluctant to work towards the elusive authorial text. Instead, what we see is the more creative and rewarding pursuit of the nature of and reasons for the changeability of the wording. When and why was the text altered and which ginger groups undertook such 'orthodox corruption' are the relevant questions now.

The Marc multilingue project started by Christian Amphoux and which he, I and Jean-Claude Haelewyck have written about in *FiNeo* 15 (2002), is independent of the methodological approaches of Ehrman, Parker and others but nonetheless can be appropriately applied to serve the same purpose. In its displays of the full and exact text of half a dozen apparently significant manuscripts of Mark one can see at a glance certain key moments in the evolution of Mark's Gospel. Its presentations need not be

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<sup>10</sup> Originally in *Harvard Theological Review*, 92, 1999 but now reprinted in his *Perspectives*, p. 551-593.

attached to the old nomenclature of text types (about which more shortly), and could chime well with Epp's suggestion<sup>11</sup> that other neutral terms or letters be coined to indicate clusters of manuscripts which hang together with a nominated key manuscript. Marc multilingue certainly allows a reader to examine the chosen texts *in extenso* without there having been the intrusion of critical editorial doctoring. The six manuscripts selected (plus P<sup>45</sup> where it is extant), together with the supporting witness of allied manuscripts, reveal how and where changes to the text are located (in many cases *first* located among our current stock of witnesses). Sample pages of this work may be seen in the publisher's drafts of certain chapters at <http://www.safran.be/marcmultilingue>. That work is still in progress and encompasses not only the history of Mark's text in Greek but in many other languages too, Coptic, Syriac, Latin, Ethiopic etc., each of which is eventually to be published in its own separate fascicule to demonstrate the *history* of Mark within each version.

### Text Types

Another change allied to the above is to be seen in the increasing reluctance to continue using the concept of "text-types" and to cease using the terms Western, Alexandrian, Caesarean, Byzantine (and also those over-sophisticated terms like Proto-Alexandrian, Pre-Caesarean) of groups of manuscripts that seem to share a common ancestry. Most scholars nowadays nuance their uses of such apparently geographical terms by prefacing them by the word so-called or by enclosing them in inverted commas to show they are not to be understood any more as suggestive of a particular provenance let alone the consequence of an ecclesiastical or other approved redaction. The regular use of such terms was most noticeable mainly in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> -century, so the demise of these supposed text-types merely shows that the phenomenon of the theories of text-types to have been short-lived. Such terms as these can still be studied by the nostalgic or the curious in *UBS* and in Metzger's allied *Commentary*. The death throes of this nomenclature were, however, already becoming patently evident once an increasing number of manuscripts, inevitably showing the fissiparous nature of their texts, was emerging. Today's Münster Institut, ever the trailblazer for such progressive thinking, has now explicitly abandoned such terminology and indeed for many years has ignored text-types, as may be seen in their impressive volumes in the *Text und Textwert* series in which *Teststellen* throughout the New Testament (excluding Revelation) set out the *total* manuscript support for a significant number of important places of variation without there being any attempt to separate them into any kind of groupings. The

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<sup>11</sup> For example in his article « Textual Criticism in the Exegesis of the New Testament », now reprinted in his *Perspectives*, esp. p. 490-492, but to be seen elsewhere in that collection (see Index of Subjects / Text-Types).

aim, to expose and then separate the readings of the majority of manuscripts (not a text-type but literally the majority of manuscripts, i.e. the bulk of surviving witnesses), is therefore untrammelled by the herding of all manuscripts into alleged text-types. The dissertation by Klaus Wachtel of the Institut<sup>12</sup> has made it clear that the old theory that the Byzantine text arose as an ecclesiastically redaction was unsustainable, but rather what were to be seen as “Byzantine” readings had actually emerged from a very early date and without any formal church-dominated control. The resultant aim of the *Teststellen*, like many other of Münster’s pioneering publications of the past decades, was to prepare the ground for its ultimate purpose of producing its new Tischendorf – the *ECM* – and it is in the *ECM* volume on the Catholics that we see each selected manuscript in its impressive *apparatus* standing on its feet. However, ‘Byz’ is still in its *apparatus* as a siglum used not to denote a designated number of manuscripts that stand in agreement as the (numerical) ‘majority’ text, but to represent just “a stage in the history of the text”!<sup>13</sup>

Münster’s (general) abandonment of text-types has not met with universal approval. Old habits die hard and many scholars still argue in favour of maintaining a limited use of such a term to show that there are groups, clusters or families of manuscripts which share certain common characteristics not found in other witnesses. As we have already noted above, Epp had come to the rescue once more; in several publications he suggested, not always with immediately observable success, that there is still occasion to speak of common characteristics among manuscripts, and has recommended the adoption of key, meaningful descriptors that avoid the old terms with their now recognised ambiguities. So, instead of using Byzantine, Alexandrian, Caesarean and Western, A, B, C and D could be used to represent broad categories which may also be taken to refer to the manuscripts, Codices Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Koridethianus and Bezae. The merits of such an approach may mollify critics reluctant to abandon completely all earlier talk of text-types, but the suggestions will not wash in Münster.

The jettisoning of theories about text types, their supposed histories and relative ranking in terms of reliability or access to the elusive original text, has fitted in neatly with the allied, albeit later-emerging, coherence-based genealogical method (= CBGM), the brainchild of one of Münster’s *Mitarbeiter*, Gert Mink. His methodology has been gradually evolving and may be seen in several publications.<sup>14</sup> Even while preparing the *ECM* volume on

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<sup>12</sup> K. WACHTEL, *Der byzantinische Text der katholischen Briefe: Eine Untersuchung zur Entstehung der Koine des Neuen Testaments* (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung, 24), Berlin – New York, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> To quote the Introduction to the Text volume on James, p. 11\*f.

<sup>14</sup> See [http://www.uni-muenster.de/INTF/Genealogical\\_method.html](http://www.uni-muenster.de/INTF/Genealogical_method.html) or the extensive contributions about CBGM in K. WACHTEL and M.W. HOLMES (eds.), *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research* (SBL Text-Critical Studies, 8), Atlanta, 2011.

the Catholic Epistles Mink's work was beginning to bear fruit and to influence decision-making and thereby informing the presentation of the *ECM* text, as is evident from the "Notes on the Reconstruction of the Text" which preface each of the text fascicules. We await with keen interest how it may influence what emerges as the running text of the *ECM* = IGNTP John. Mink's theory plots the textual flow between manuscripts, declaring the likeliest direction of change and seeing how that trajectory is paralleled elsewhere in the textual tradition. The relevant genealogical connection is seen between the *texts* and not the palaeographical dating of the manuscripts that happen to bear those texts. There is thus no room for text-types in such a methodology.

### Thoroughgoing Eclecticism

While remaining open-minded about Mink's CBGM until I see the resultant text editions, I, as a so-called thoroughgoing text-critic who prefers to accept as the earliest recoverable text one that may be demonstrated to have caused the creation of the alternative readings independent of where these variants are located in the manuscript tradition, can see how Mink's approach to readings is compatible with my preferred and oft-stated approach to textual variation<sup>15</sup>. Thoroughgoing criticism often feels able to pronounce on the original text (a term that must of course be nuanced as the "earliest recoverable text") when it conforms to the author's proven usage. Hence Mink gets my approval, albeit as yet with but two cheers. (*En passant*: Mink's approach has allowed *ECM* to print in its running line a conjectural reading at 2 Pet 3:10. I still remain sceptical that we should ever really ever need to succumb to such inspired guesswork when trying to establish our initial text.)

The new approach with its avoidance of concentrating on one text-type as having the monopoly of authorial readings and its hesitation to establish a critical text which discourages the study of the 'secondary' readings jettisoned or abandoned in the *apparatus criticus* means that, just as Parker or Ehrman do, we may now look at our textual heritage in the round and as a totality. In its entirety one may now discern in a full *apparatus* much information relevant to church history, or fluctuations and fashions in Christian doctrine let alone the more *recherché* pursuits of the development of the Greek language and, indeed, the plotting of our New Testament text's own histories.

So: thoroughgoing eclecticism may find the open approach of Münster's new methodology compatible with our long-held conviction that many textual variants can be resolved by an analysis

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<sup>15</sup> Most recently restated in J.K. ELLIOTT, *New Testament Textual Criticism: The Application of Thoroughgoing Principles. Essays on Manuscripts and Textual Variation* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 137), Leiden, 2010.

of and an appeal to first-century usage and an author's proven preferences in vocabulary, style and usage, and by an appreciation of an author's Semitisms or a scribe's predilection towards atticizing and the like. Thoroughgoing eclecticism, like many another theory, may, of course, be questionable and shaky where irresolvable variation is found, but in any given Biblical writing there are huge swathes without ambiguous variation. My own methodology in tackling many a variation unit is to locate first the author's known style, language, vocabulary or indeed his theological proclivities. Such practices may be discovered in places without variant.

Where I and other critics (not only those, admittedly few, who nail our colours to this thoroughgoing mast) may part company with Bart Ehrman is in his undue pessimism about our inability to recognise a New Testament author's own wording. By contrast, I find that often one may categorically declare a particular stylistic feature to be firm in the tradition – meaning that no known variant is reported. This can be done for example with Mark, whose distinctive literary fingerprints are discernible, as C.H. Turner demonstrated many years ago. Other New Testament writers' characteristic language, style and theology may be plotted using undisputed places in their texts. Ehrman declares such evidence has been obliterated – it is here where I part company with him. Whatever the manuscript we may choose, its wording frequently allows us to hear the original voice of its composer, regardless of and setting to one side the number of disputed readings elsewhere in the witness.

### Scribal Usage

One recent additional area of activity in the discipline, and one that melds in well with a thoroughgoing approach which traditionally has made pronouncements on what motivated scribes and what it was they achieved, is the appreciation of the hallmarks of the individual copyists of a manuscript. The long-awaited thesis by James Royse on this theme has finally been published<sup>16</sup>, and Kim Haines Eitzen's dissertation has also proved influential in this area<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> J.R. ROYSE, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (NT Tools & Studies 36), Leiden, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> K. HAINES EITZEN, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power and the Transmission of Early Christian Literature*, New York – Oxford, 2000.

## Second Century

Coupled with recent scholars' work on the earliest scribes, an appreciation of second-century Christianity has also been growing apace, and many of the results of such work feed into and even grow from text-critical investigations. A collection of essays edited in 1989 by William Peterson<sup>18</sup> has proved particularly helpful. Another collection arising from a conference in Lille in 2000 on this very topic is also worth the mentioning<sup>19</sup>.

## Fathers

Another productive area where we now see a strong growth is in the study of Biblical citations in patristic sources and the application of such evidence in critical editions.

This increased scholarly appreciation of this vital area of witness and attestation to the text is observable in particular in the series *The New Testament in the Greek Fathers*. These SBL publications are an on-going and reliable monograph series which is making stalwart efforts to bring many a dissertation to the public eye. The volumes set out the text cited in the patristic works; the quotations and allusions are then analysed and quantified. The statistics enable the writer to pronounce on the textual allegiance(s) of the Father, using the now *démodé* text-type labels but increasingly employing sophisticated statistical analyses. Earlier volumes were: vol. 1 on the Gospel text of Didymus the Blind (by B.D. Ehrman) in 1986; vol. 2 on Gregory of Nyssa (by J.A. Brooks) in 1991; vol. 3 on Origen in the Fourth Gospel – originally said to be only the first half of a two-volume analysis – (by B.D. Ehrman, G.D. Fee and M.W. Holmes) in 1992; vol. 4 on Origen in I Corinthians (by D.D. Hannah) in 1997. A surge of publications has been noticeable in recent years – vol. 5 on Basil of Caesarea in Matthew (by J.-F. Racine) in 2004; vol. 6 on the text of the apostolos in Epiphanius of Salamis (by C.D. Osburn) in 2004; vol. 7 on Cyril of Jerusalem (by R.L. Mullen) in 1997; vol. 8 on the text of the apostolos in Athanasius (by G.J. Donker) in 2011; vol. 9 on the Gospel text of Clement of Alexandria (by C.P. Cosaert) in 2008. More are in the pipeline<sup>20</sup>.

The latest volume (vol. 8 in 2011) by G.J. Donker on Athanasius has adopted a three-dimensional presentation of manuscript interrelationships to locate this father's citations, using

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<sup>18</sup> *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 3), Notre Dame (IN) - London.

<sup>19</sup> C.-B. AMPHOUX and J.K. ELLIOTT (eds.), *The New Testament Text in Early Christianity* (Histoire du texte biblique 6), Lausanne, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> InterVarsity Press' series *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* popularises the influence of the Fathers from an exegetical rather than a textual context. Its latest volume (XII *Revelation* edited by W.C. WEINRICH, Downers Grove (IL), 2011) includes a selection of extracts from ancient commentators and this may obviously be read in parallel with Gryson's volume on the Apocalypse in *VL*, referred to earlier.



Tim Finney's pioneering and innovative work in this complex area that had originated at Murdoch University, Perth, W. Australia. (See Donker's ch. 4 dealing with statistical and multi-variate analysis.) Once again, we observe that a new technological device has been harnessed to advance and modernise text-critical study. The old analytical methods previously applied, such as E.C. Colwell's quantitative relationships or the Claremont profiling method, are deemed *passé* - if not plain *dépassé*.

Whereas in the bad old days one was expected to be content to see a reference to, say, Origen or John Chrysostom in an *apparatus* to a Greek New Testament (in some *apparatus* with a tantalizing but a useless or at best meaningless fraction, such as Augustine 3/8, without knowing where, when or how often that father cited the verse in question and the precise wording used to support a variant), we now expect – and can get – fuller documentation. These studies of the Fathers act as a thoughtful clarion call for improvements to our use and appreciation of these New Testament citations. Most published editions include lists of recommendations for adding to or correcting the existing patristic evidence in Nestle or, even more so, in pruning the patristic references in *UBS*<sup>21</sup>.

The days should now well be past when an *apparatus* such as Nestle or *UBS* (singularly prone to overblown listings of Fathers) can pull the wool over our eyes by adding the mere name of a Father to support a given variant. IGNTP Luke quoted patristic witnesses only with the context of the quotation and the latest printed edition shown where the father's work could be consulted. *ECM* does the same, with the detail set out in its accompanying 'Begleitende Materialien' fascicules.

### Publications

Juan Hernández Jr.'s article in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 130, 2011, p. 183-196 ("The Relevance of Andrew of Caesarea for New Testament Textual Criticism") is a good example of a current study of one Father whose work also opens up to us a contemporary's attitude to the text, its copying and scribal activity; Hernández shows how Andrew's approach to scribal and textual change can inform us how textual criticism, at least in the 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> -century, was perceived – with its reluctance to sanction changes (even involving atticizing) and to anathemize those who were deemed to be tampering with holy writ. That is an article which is not untypical of on-going work that may contribute to current debates about the role of the scribe and the nature and consequences of changing an exemplar. Hernández uses examples

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<sup>21</sup> *The New Testament in the Greek Fathers* volumes often now tellingly include a list of *addenda* (and more significantly) *corrigenda* to the patristic references in Nestle/*UBS*.

from Andrew at Rev 3:7; 15:6, variants with which Andrew was familiar, to draw his conclusions. Such studies marry well with the work of Haines Eitzen and Royse referred to above; this kind of analysis is now part of our *nouvelle vague*.

Moving away from Fathers and looking more broadly, we welcome the increase in publications in the field. The electronic journal *TC* (accessed at <http://purl.org/TC>) is devoted, as its initials indicate, to work in textual criticism and seems to be back in business after a lull. More general journals like *Novum Testamentum*, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, *Biblica*, *New Testament Studies* and others have an increased number of articles in the field of textual criticism. Then there are the series *Studies and Documents* and *New Testament Tools and Studies* (now both merged by Brill as a new series *NTTSD* (= *New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents*), while maintaining the old sequence of volume numbers of *NTTS*), *Texts and Editions for New Testament Study* (sometimes abbreviated by its editors as *TENTS* but by the publishers as *TENT* on the books' spines) also from Brill, *Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung* published by de Gruyter (variously abbreviated as *ANTF*, as on the books' spines, or *ANNT* in some bibliographies), and *Texts and Studies* (= *T&S*), revived in a third series and now published by Gorgias Press.

There is an increasing number of new books on New Testament textual criticism. Any sampling would be invidious but at the risk of omitting something major I list the following score of titles<sup>22</sup> that have been published this century and which I have randomly plucked from my shelves:

ANDRIST P. (éd.), *Le manuscrit B de la Bible (Vaticanus graecus 1209)* (Histoire du texte biblique 7), Lausanne, 2009.

BIRDSALL N., *Collected Papers in Greek and Georgian Textual Criticism* (Texts and Studies 3.3), Piscataway (NJ), 2006.

CHILDERS J.W. - PARKER D.C. (eds.), *Transmission and Reception: New Testament Text-Critical and Exegetical Studies* (Texts and Studies 3.4), Piscataway (NJ), 2006.

FLINK, T., *Textual Dilemma: Studies in the Second-Century Text of the New Testament* (University of Joensuu Publications in Theology 21), Joensuu, 2009.

GREEVEN H. – GÜTING E., *Textkritik des Markusevangeliums* (Theologie: Forschung und Wissenschaft 11), Münster, 2005.

HERNÁNDEZ J., *Scribal Habits and Theological Influences in the Apocalypse* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.218), Tübingen, 2006.

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<sup>22</sup> This list excludes titles that appear elsewhere in the footnotes. Abbreviations are given only where the full form appears elsewhere in this article.

- HOUGHTON H.A.G. – PARKER D.C. (eds.), *Textual Variation: Theological and Social Tendencies?* (Texts and Studies 3.6), Piscataway (NJ), 2008.
- HULL R.F., *The Story of the New Testament Text: Movers, Materials, Motives, Methods and Models* (SBL Resources for Biblical Study 58), Atlanta (GA), 2010.
- HURTADO L.W., *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins*, Grand Rapids (MI) – Cambridge, 2006.
- JONGKIND D., *Scribal Habits of Codex Sinaiticus* (Texts and Studies 3.5), Piscataway (NJ), 2007.
- KANNADAY W.C., *Apologetic Discourse and the Scribal Tradition* (SBL Text-Critical Studies 5), Atlanta (GA), 2004.
- KRANS J., *Beyond What is Written: Erasmus and Beza as Conjectural Critics of the New Testament* (New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 35), Leiden, 2006.
- KRAUS T.J. – NICKLAS T. (eds.), *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and their World* (Texts and Editions for New Testament Study 2), Leiden, 2006.
- KRAUS T.J., *Ad Fontes: Original Manuscripts and their Significance for Studying Early Christianity* (Texts and Editions for New Testament Study 3), Leiden, 2007.
- MIN, KYIUNG SHIK, *Die früheste Überlieferung des Matthäusevangeliums (bis zum 3./4. Jh.)* (Arbeiten zur Neutestamentlichen Textforschung 34), Berlin – New York, 2005.
- PARKER D.C., *Codex Sinaiticus: The Story of the World's Oldest Bible*, London – Peabody (MA), 2010.
- PARKER D.C., *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts*, Cambridge, 2008.
- RODGERS P.R., *Text and Story: Narrative Studies in New Testament Textual Criticism*, Eugene (OR), 2011.
- SHIN H.W., *Textual Criticism and the Synoptic Problem in Historical Jesus Research* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 36), Leuven, 2004.
- WASSERMAN T., *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission* (Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series 43), Stockholm, 2006.

This arbitrary selection may easily be augmented, but the sample shows just how much publishing activity is generated by text-critics. This is to be applauded.

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This exiguous *tour d'horizon*, like many another such peregrination, leaves much untouched. Further and other work in the discipline is being undertaken, such as the sterling efforts made by scholars in Salzburg on the Coptic, under K. Schlüssler's doughty leadership, or the on-going work on the Georgian version(s) by the Oriani Team at Tbilisi.<sup>23</sup> Other stones lie unturned, but these will doubtless figure under Babelao's microscope in future issues. The very launch of this electronic journal should prove a stimulating forum for such descriptions, analyses and discussions. In this, its first, issue I wish it well!

We conclude that the text-criticism bandwagon is back on track, if ever it was derailed, and more fellow-travellers are welcome to board. To change our metaphor, we may plead that, as the text-critical vineyard is always in need of labourers, now is the time to attract further volunteers; the current climate is conducive. Valued and valuable work is already underway, and many a line of enquiry awaits an indomitable researcher.

Having expressed some doubts above concerning Bart Ehrman's pessimism, I redress that by quoting from the 'Afterword' to the second edition of his *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (New York - Oxford, 2011) p. 361 and allow his concluding positive summary to ring out triumphantly as our conclusion too:

This (shift in orientation in New Testament textual criticism) is a movement away from construing the task of a textual critic in narrow terms as establishing some kind of ostensible "original" text of the New Testament. The material and textual data at our disposal – that is the surviving manuscripts and the texts they contain – can do far more for us than help us know what the authors of the New Testament originally wrote. They can also help us understand the social history of Christianity in many of its forms, some of which are seriously underexamined as yet. They can help us know and appreciate the work, concerns and ideas of otherwise unknown and anonymous scribes. And they can help us appreciate the theological, polemical and other ideological contexts out of which these early Christians (*sic*) copyists worked and lived as they produced the texts that have come down to us as treasures from the past."

To those words we append a resounding 'Amen!'

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<sup>23</sup> See for example Christian-B. AMPHOUX and J. Keith ELLIOTT (eds.), *Textual Research on the Psalms and Gospels. Recherches textuelles sur les psaumes et les évangiles: Papers from the Tbilisi Colloquium on the Editing and History of Biblical Manuscripts. Actes du colloque de Tbilisi, 19-20 octobre 2007* (Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 142), Leiden, 2012.