

# A Fresh Look at the Early Text: A Review Article

Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Kruger (eds.), *The Early Text of the New Testament*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 483. Cloth. ISBN 978 0 19 9566365. £ 90.00.

- [1] Once arguably a Cinderella discipline, textual scholarship is now enjoying growing attention within early Christian studies. In addition to the reconstruction of the oldest available text forms, the analysis of manuscripts, their production and use, and their social-historical and theological implications have become important areas of study. Particularly controversial is the freedom or strictness of textual transmission during the first two centuries or so of Christianity. At the same time, the very concept of an ‘original’ text has become questionable. In a situation such as this, every contribution will be welcome which helps to gain an overview of the state of the debate(s) and to foster a broad discussion about new methods and differing approaches.
- [2] The book edited by Ch.E. Hill and M.J. Kruger, entitled “The Early Text of the New Testament,” aims to be such a contribution. According to the editors, the intention of the book is “to provide an inventory and some analysis of the evidence available for understanding the pre-fourth-century period of the transmission of the NT materials” (2). The editors give an overview of some recent developments in NT textual scholarship. They argue that the concept of an “original text” should not be abandoned, even if we cannot reconstruct the original text “*per se*” (4). They specifically highlight what they see as “two promising avenues” for research on early manuscripts, viz., “the investigation of the quality of the work accomplished by the scribes” and “the study of non-textual, scribal conventions” (18). The “distinction between public and private copies,” the editors think, “offers a very credible, partial explanation for why some NT manuscripts appear to have been copied with greater freedom than others” (17). However, individual authors have been free to make their own choices as to the questions asked and the methodologies applied, as will be seen below.
- [3] The book is a collection of 21 articles. It has three sections: “The Textual and Scribal Culture of Early Christianity,” “The Manuscript Tradition,” and “Early Citation and Use of New Testament Writings.” This review article will follow the tripartite structure of the book. For each of the three sections, I will give an overview of the main results of each contribution, followed by a critical discussion. In the final paragraphs I will then look at issues pertaining to more than one section and to the book as whole.
- [4] Section I deals with “The Textual and Scribal Culture of Early Christianity”. The first contribution here is “The Book Trade in the Roman Empire” (23–36) by H.Y. Gamble,

the author of a well-known work on “Books and Readers in the Early Church.”<sup>1</sup> Gamble emphasizes the influence of social status and education on reading habits and on ways of acquiring and using books. He then discusses “The Publication and Dissemination of Early Christian Books.” Early Christian communities were “sub-elite voluntary religious associations,” their literature belonged to “sub-elite genres” “whose texts had no broad appeal for outsiders” (32). Their production and dissemination probably took place through “private channels” (ibid.). Gamble uses the word “private” with varying shades of meaning, including non-commercial, intramural, and group-specific. He highlights the remarkably fast dissemination of some early Christian works and the role of metropolitan centres for the collection and proliferation of Christian books, including their “scriptorial capacity” which also served provincial communities (34–35). Finally, Gamble briefly comments on the “hazards” of textual corruption arising out of the conditions of book production and dissemination in the Roman Empire (36). He thinks that “books valued as authoritative scripture were” not “any more carefully copied or any more immune to textual corruption than other books” (36).

[5] S.D. Charlesworth’s article is entitled “Indicators of ‘Catholicity’ in Early Gospel Manuscripts” (37–48). Substantial portions of material in this article are at least strongly reminiscent of some of the author’s earlier publications.<sup>2</sup> Charlesworth argues that standard sizes of Gospel codices and the systematic use of nomina sacra for some words (while there is variation for others) indicate a degree of consensual standardization (but not formal, detailed agreement). He takes this to be “indicative of an interconnected ‘catholic’ church in the second half of the second century” (41). He also mentions manuscript features such as “hands in the semi-literary to (formative) biblical majuscule range” and reading aids. He thinks that there must have been some “quality control,” and that “codices with informal or documentary hands which lack features conducive to public reading [...] were probably copied in uncontrolled settings for private use” (42). He finally argues that standardized features of canonical Gospel manuscripts, together with the supposed “private” character and smaller number of non-canonical gospel manuscripts, call into question the hypothesis that ‘heterodox’ groups dominated early Christianity (46–48).

[6] Next comes L. Hurtado’s article on “Manuscripts and the Sociology of Early Christian Reading” (49–62). Taking his cue from a study by W.A. Johnson on the sociology of reading in classical antiquity,<sup>3</sup> Hurtado remarks that only members of a highly educated elite could hope to meet the demands which ancient manuscripts containing literary works made on their readers. Early Christian communities, however, Hurtado argues, were sociologically diverse, transcending the boundaries between the social strata. Yet, even in the 2nd/3rd centuries, they included few members of the highly educated elite. Analysing some features of early Christian manuscripts, Hurtado concludes that these manuscripts seem to be “prepared for a certain spectrum of mainly non-elite reader-competence”

---

<sup>1</sup> Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Scott D. Charlesworth, “Public and Private—Second- and Third-Century Gospel Manuscripts,” *BurH* 42 (2006): 25–36. There is also a revised and augmented version: Scott D. Charlesworth, “Public and Private—Second- and Third-Century Gospel Manuscripts,” in Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, eds., *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 148–75. Cf. further Scott D. Charlesworth, “Consensus Standardization in the Systematic Approach to Nomina Sacra in Second- and Third-Century Gospel Manuscripts,” *Aeg* 86 (2006): 37–68.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. William A. Johnson, “Toward a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity,” *AJP* 121 (2000): 593–627.

(55, cf. 59), thus appearing to mirror the sociological setup of early Christianity. Hurtado contends that “these manuscripts reflect and promoted a specifically Christian reading-culture” which “involved the enfranchising and affirmation of a diversity of social strata in the public reading and discussion of literary texts, specifically texts that formed the charter documents of their religious life” (62).

- [7] The last contribution in this section is by M.J. Kruger on “Early Christian Attitudes toward the Reproduction of Texts” (63–80). Kruger first presents a collection of testimonies from early Christian works written before CE. 200 which, he thinks, express an appreciation of the Pauline epistles, of Ephesians, and perhaps of Luke and Matthew, respectively, as holy writ. In the following paragraph, Kruger collects testimonies for the principle of “neither adding nor taking away” which, in his view, show that some early Christians “did not view unbridled textual changes as acceptable” (79), although we know that textual variation does indeed occur in early Christian manuscripts. There is also a collection of “additional testimony” “regarding the transmission of Christian tradition” (77–79).
- [8] Section I is a welcome addition to scholarship investigating the social contexts and implications of NT textual history. Given the growing interest in these matters and the thematic focus identified by the editors themselves, this first section may seem remarkably short in comparison with the other two. While Gamble’s contribution is informative and useful, it is hardly innovative. Those familiar with Hurtado’s earlier work on the codex, on *nomina sacra*, and on the staurogram may well have an experience of *déjà vu* while reading his article.
- [9] The two contributions by Charlesworth and Kruger may be viewed by many as arguably the most controversial articles in the book. Charlesworth’s descriptions and analyses of manuscript features, in my view, are innovative and interesting. However, the inferences he draws from his observations need to be discussed very critically. Can we really draw conclusions from manuscript features as to (ecclesial) organization and oversight? Was the production of manuscripts in the 2nd century an activity of Christian communities, or of copying centres belonging to such communities? Does the adoption of formal standards allow us to conclude that “control” (what kind of “control”?) was being exercised? May not reading aids be considered conducive to reading by the less educated rather than to “public” reading (cf. Hurtado’s article)? Was early Christian worship, in fact, “public”? It is certainly noteworthy that, in contrast to Charlesworth, Gamble emphasizes the private nature of early Christian manuscript production and book trade. Moreover, Charlesworth’s conclusions concerning the organization, structures, and ‘orthodoxy’ of early Christian communities are, in my view, unpersuasive. The choice of the term “catholicity” is infelicitous here. I take Charlesworth to think that ‘heterodox’ groups would not have been interested in the level of collaboration and consensus which (he thinks) is indicated by standard features of some manuscripts. But the production and use of books (later) considered canonical, or of books (later) considered apocryphal, are hardly to be attributed exclusively to (proto-) ‘orthodox’ or to (proto-) ‘heterodox’ groups, respectively.
- [10] I agree with Kruger that we should listen to the testimony of ancient readers and writers on how they saw their texts and concerning the standards applying to textual reproduction. Kruger’s first conclusion—that the core of what became the New Testament was accepted as “Scripture” earlier than is sometimes allowed—is probably correct (I find his argument most persuasive in the case of the Pauline epistles). However, as to “neither adding nor taking away,” I think more attention needs to be given to the contexts (often

polemical) in which the rhetoric of ‘faithful’ transmission occurs and to the functions it serves. It seems questionable whether such statements can in fact be evaluated as direct evidence for actual attitudes to manuscript production. Ironically, the text of Revelation, which contains a sombre warning in Rev 22:18–19, has a particularly complex transmission history. Nor am I convinced that all of the testimonies presented do in fact refer to the question of standards for the reproduction of early Christian texts. Most ancient Christians would perhaps have agreed that “unbridled textual changes” were unacceptable; but the question what would or would not have been considered “unbridled” is precisely what seems so difficult for us to answer.

- [11] Section II, “The Manuscript Tradition,” focuses on Greek manuscripts (mostly papyri) written before the great 4th century codices. Some authors analyse later manuscripts also. Articles in this section usually discuss or at least mention the dating of manuscripts, textual peculiarities and characteristics (scribal errors, corrections, singular readings or the use of *nomina sacra*), and the carefulness or carelessness of copyists. Most contributions in this section contain tables including information on *editiones principes*, dates, provenance, sizes and contents of witnesses. There are also columns containing information on textual quality in terms of the Alands’ categories, “strict,” “normal,” and “free.” These are, in fact, “the Alands’ judgments” on manuscripts, the editors explain (18), not those of the individual authors themselves. There is no such list in Nicklas’ article on the text of Revelation, however, and the table accompanying Elliott’s article on the text of the Catholic Epistles lacks a column for textual quality. Different sets of data are provided by Wasserman in the tables accompanying his article. These contain numbers of variation units, ratios of deviation from the Initial Text, and numbers of omissions, additions, substitutions, and changes in word order, as well as numbers of singular readings. Though no article aims at achieving completeness, the following short summaries cannot do justice to the wealth of information and of important observations they contain.
- [12] Unlike most other authors in section II, T. Wasserman begins his article on “The Early Text of Matthew” (83–107) with a clear outline of the questions he asks and the methods he applies. He analyses the “textual quality” and the “character of transmission” of manuscripts. This method has been applied to early manuscripts of Matthew before by Min;<sup>4</sup> it goes back, ultimately, to Aland and Aland. “Textual quality” refers to correspondence with, or difference from, the reconstructed text as edited in Nestle-Aland. Wasserman is aware of the unavoidable element of subjectivity (perhaps we should rather say circularity) of this part of the method. “Character of transmission” refers to the quality of the work of the individual copyist. The manuscripts analysed are  $\mathfrak{P}^1$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{35}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{37}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{53}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{64+67}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{70}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{77}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{101}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{102}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{103}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{104}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{110}$ , 0171. Wasserman concludes that, while a degree of freedom may be seen in some manuscripts, the meaning of the text was seldom changed, and that some manuscripts have a “strict” text very close to the reconstructed Initial Text. He thinks that these represent “a pure line of transmission from the earliest time” (104).<sup>5</sup> Wasserman looks for indications of “controlled” or “uncontrolled” production. Remarkably, he does find some of the formal features described by Charlesworth (which he believes to be indications of controlled production) in those mss. of Matthew ( $\mathfrak{P}^1$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{35}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{64+67}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{104}$ ) which appear to have the strictest texts. He also finds indications of “uncontrolled”

<sup>4</sup> Kyoung S. Min, *Die früheste Überlieferung des Matthäusevangeliums (bis zum 3./4. Jh.): Edition und Untersuchung* (ANTF 34; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> While he does not give his reasons for this assessment, Wasserman does refer here to an earlier publication of his, p. 104 n. 80.

production in  $\mathfrak{P}^{37}$ , a ms. of “normal” textual quality and “free” transmission. However, several mss. do not allow a clear distinction between “controlled” or “uncontrolled” production. Wasserman finally opines that the body of evidence pointing in the direction of a non-chaotic textual transmission in early times is growing, and that the coherence of the tradition allows us to reconstruct the Initial Text.<sup>6</sup>

- [13] P.M. Head writes about “The Early Text of Mark” (108–120). While Mark was known and used in early Christianity, Mark was considerably less popular than, e.g., Matthew. Since only one early papyrus with Markan text ( $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ ) is extant, Head also discusses “Mark in the Early Church” and in fourth-century manuscripts ( $\mathfrak{P}^{88}$ ,  $\mathfrak{N} 01$ , B 03). As to the text of  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ , Head notes its paraphrastic character and its similarity to the text of W 032. Assuming that the quality of the texts of the other canonical Gospels in B 03 is high, Head argues that it would seem plausible similarly to assume that the text of Mark in B 03 (and in  $\mathfrak{N} 01$ ) also represents “copies of a well preserved early text of Mark” (120). The more free text forms as known from  $\mathfrak{P}^{88}$  and Clement might also be derived, he thinks, from such a text (ibid.).
- [14] Next comes J. Hernández Jr. on “The Early Text of Luke” (121–38). He analyses  $\mathfrak{P}^4$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^7$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{69}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , and  $\mathfrak{P}^{111}$ . The most important of these manuscripts are  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ . Hernández treats the other papyri much more briefly, though he does mention important questions such as, e.g., the relevance of  $\mathfrak{P}^{69}$  as a witness to the text of Luke 22 (v. 42–44 are missing), concerning which Hernández concludes (correctly, in my view) that “Questions over  $\mathfrak{P}^{69}$ ’s exemplar and whether the omission(s) was (were) deliberate are deprived of a definitive answer” (123–124). Like other authors in this section, Hernández describes scribal features of the witnesses and relates their texts to text types, as far as possible (thus, e.g., the text of Luke in  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  is said to be more or less “Alexandrian”). Regarding the relationship of  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  and B 03, Hernández argues that there is no evidence for an early recension behind their shared textual tradition. He further discusses the so-called Western non-interpolations, as far as pertinent passages of Luke are found in  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ . Hernández argues, on internal grounds, that the longer text forms, despite their presence in  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , are secondary. This is an example for his view that scribal activity (e.g. in  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ ), though it may “serve as a model for understanding the emergence of textual corruption,” “cannot decide particular cases” (138).
- [15] J. Chapa, who deals with “The Early Text of John” (140–56), concentrates on “the two major witnesses” (143),  $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ . In addition,  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and some more fragmentary witnesses ( $\mathfrak{P}^5$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{39}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{52}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{95}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{106}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{107}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{109}$ ) are also discussed briefly. The copyist of  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  is said to be a “liberal” scribe transmitting a “free” text. Chapa mentions that  $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$  has also been called a free text, but observes that it reproduces a typical “Alexandrian” text “with a great degree of faithfulness” (147). Chapa also notes, however, that there are what he calls “Alexandrian” as well as “Western” and “Byzantine” readings, assuming that there was a mixed *Vorlage* or several *Vorlagen*. Thus, the manuscript “reveals two ancient textual traditions and shows a concern to transmit a text responsibly” (147). It seems unlikely that the variants found in this witness betray a theological tendency.  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  is characterised by high quality and faithful copying. The text is a “strict” one and close to that of B 03. There are several orthographic mistakes and nonsense readings. Here, too, variants do not seem to betray any theological tendency. Chapa further notes that all witnesses discussed come from Egypt, and that most of them are from Oxyrhynchus. Much remains

<sup>6</sup> In a blogpost dated March 25, 2013, Wasserman has published a correction to the printed version of his article. He writes, “OUP has managed to duplicate my chart for  $\mathfrak{P}^{77}$  and insert it under  $\mathfrak{P}^{70}$  (including a typo).” A correct chart for  $\mathfrak{P}^{77}$  may be obtained from <http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.de/2013/03/new-review-of-early-text-of-new.html> (consulted 3 December 2014).

unknown about the earliest period of the textual transmission of John. Chapa concludes, however, that many of the earliest manuscripts known to us have texts close to the texts of “Alexandrian” manuscripts, and that the early mss. studied do not point to an uncontrolled textual tradition.

- [16] “The early Text of Acts” is the subject of C. Tuckett’s contribution (157–74). Tuckett analyses  $\mathfrak{P}^{29}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{38}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{48}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{53}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{91}$ , and 0189. One area of interest here is the so-called “Western” textual tradition. Tuckett compares his witnesses with later Greek manuscripts such as D 05 and 614 and with versional texts. Tuckett observes that “the Western text form was evidently in a state of flux” (165), and he mentions the “widely held theory that ‘the’ Western text (especially in Acts) was not a single form of the text, but represents a changing trajectory which developed over the course of time” (ibid.). Tuckett finds that many early manuscripts align themselves with the texts of “Alexandrian” manuscripts and that these appear to have been reproduced more strictly than those aligning themselves with “Western” ones, although a degree of freedom may be found in manuscripts with predominantly “Alexandrian” text also. Tuckett thinks this may be due to an attitude to textual reproduction typical of early times.
- [17] J.R. Royse, the author of a widely used monograph on “Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri,”<sup>7</sup> contributes an article on “The Early Text of Paul (and Hebrews)” (175–203). Royse analyses  $\mathfrak{P}^{10}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{12}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{13}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{15}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{16}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{17}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{27}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{30}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{32}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{40}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{49}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{65}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{87}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{92}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{113}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{114}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{118}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{123}$  and majuscule 0220 (here as elsewhere, the age of a manuscript is the criterion for inclusion). Royse provides samples of variants (though not for all manuscripts) and informs us about corrections, singular readings, and textual affiliations with other manuscripts, referring to the concept of text types. He subdivides singular readings into groups such as orthographic variation, omission, addition, etc. There are also some (usually very brief) discussions of non-textual manuscript features, dating, and (sometimes) of difficult readings and reconstructions. While most of the manuscripts analysed come from Egypt, Royse thinks that they “may be representative of manuscripts from throughout the Mediterranean world” (200). Agreement with “the Alexandrian text” is particularly frequent, though there are also agreements with variants found in representatives of “the Western text” (D 06, F 010, G 012) or even of the Byzantine text. But results are sometimes mixed, not least in  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ . About corrections in  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ , Royse remarks: “Here we can see the scribe or other corrector choosing among competing readings, and sometimes these competing readings are later found divided between the Alexandrian and Western texts.” (202) Thus, the texts of the early papyri may offer us a glimpse of the prehistory of what would later become distinct textual trajectories.
- [18] J.K. Elliott writes about “The Early Text of the Catholic Epistles” (204–24), but he also contributes some challenging considerations on methodology. He thinks that the early papyri contribute “[b]ut little” “to our understanding of the textual heritage of the Catholic Epistles” (223), that it is “bizarre” (208) to think that the categories “strict,” “normal,” or “free” should be applicable to the earliest witnesses, and that the use of the reconstructed Initial Text as edited in Nestle-Aland for the purpose of assessing the textual quality of witnesses betrays “an arrogance worthy only of ruthless marketing ploys” (209). Elliott thinks that papyri are “privileged by most textual critics and editors” because (among other reasons) “the gullible believe that there is an unwarranted magic associated with their [i.e. the earliest witnesses’] having been written on papyrus” (224). “By definition,” Elliott writes, “the earliest witnesses cannot be said to exhibit a ‘strict,’ ‘free,’ or ‘normal’

<sup>7</sup> James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (NTTSD 36; Leiden: Brill, 2007).

character, merely that their variants may or may not be found later in a significant number of other manuscripts” (209). In keeping with this understanding, Elliott presents variants found in the early witnesses (P<sup>9</sup>, P<sup>20</sup>, P<sup>23</sup>, P<sup>72</sup>, P<sup>78</sup>, P<sup>81</sup>, P<sup>100</sup>, P<sup>125</sup>, 0206), collated against later ones. These variants are grouped under the headings “With ECM” or “Against ECM,” respectively. Elliott concludes that some papyri “ally themselves with **Ⲙ** B but no clearly consistent pattern emerges” and that “no one witness here can be portrayed as an obvious ancestor of any of the great third-fourth-century codices” (224).

- [19] T. Nicklas deals with “The Early Text of Revelation” (225–38). The early witnesses discussed are P<sup>18</sup>, P<sup>47</sup>, P<sup>98</sup>, and P<sup>115</sup>. Due to the dearth of early manuscripts, Nicklas also includes early citations and some manuscripts written in the 4th century (P<sup>24</sup>, 0169, 027, but not Codex Sinaiticus). Nicklas notes textual affinities between the early witnesses and important later manuscripts and/or the text types of the text of Revelation defined by J. Schmid, about whose influential work on the textual history of Revelation Nicklas also informs us.<sup>8</sup> The most important early manuscript is P<sup>47</sup>; Nicklas notes its textual affinities with both **Ⲙ** 01 and the text of Origen. Nicklas concludes that Schmid’s work, particularly the text types defined by him, may still be useful to assess the textual character of the earliest witnesses, but that nevertheless a new approach is desirable since manuscripts which were unknown to Schmid may not necessarily conform to his theories, and because the versions (notably the Old Latin version) have hitherto received little attention. It remains to be seen how Schmid’s theories will fare in light of new evidence.
- [20] The last contribution in this section is P. Williams’ article, “Where Two or Three are Gathered Together” (239–58), which deals with the “The Witness of the Early Versions.” Williams stresses the importance of critical editions of the versions and of understanding versional translation technique. He then discusses some citations of versional support in the apparatus of NA<sup>27</sup>, which, in his view, suffer from a lack of critical awareness of translation technique. The remainder of the article is devoted to “Syro-Western agreements” in Mark and Luke, including the so-called Western non-interpolation in Luke 24:51–52 (255–256). Williams concludes that many agreements between Bezan, Old Latin, and Syriac variants may be non-genetic. It would seem reasonable to “conclude that our extant Greek manuscripts contain a greater proportion than previously thought of all the variants that have existed”<sup>9</sup> (258).
- [21] Section II may be considered a handbook on early NT manuscripts. It is this section most of all which distinguishes the book from more or less comparable volumes such as the Metzger *Festschrift* or the pertinent parts of the *New Cambridge History of the Bible*.<sup>10</sup> The articles in this section can only serve, of course, as introductions to their respective fields. Due to restrictions of space, it is impossible to provide full lists of variants or in-depth-studies of all relevant questions concerning individual manuscripts. Nor are there extended discussions of the history of scholarship on the papyri and on the role which some of them have played in important text-critical discussions. Nevertheless, this section alone should suffice to ensure that the book will be widely used for years to come.

<sup>8</sup> Josef Schmid, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Textes* (2 vols.; Munich: Zink, 1955).

<sup>9</sup> He probably means that they contain a greater portion of all variants which once existed in early Greek manuscripts than was previously thought.

<sup>10</sup> Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, eds., *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (NTTSD 42; 2d ed.; Leiden et al.: Brill, 2013); James C. Paget and Joachim Schaper, eds., *From the Beginnings to 600* (vol. 1 of *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*; ed. R. Marsden and E.A. Matter; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

- [22] The editors stress that they “have not asked the individual authors [...] to endorse one approach or method over another” (18). But as a reader, I would have liked to know which questions (if any) all authors were asked to answer, and which common structure (if any) the editors prescribed.
- [23] One question on which scholars disagree is what early manuscripts can or cannot tell us about the earliest period of NT textual history. A grouping of contributions in this section according to their underlying methodologies might result in a broad centre group, the approaches of which we may briefly characterize with the catchwords, “scribal habits,” “transmission quality,” and “textual affinities.” The two contributions diverging most widely from this centre group, though at opposite ends of the spectrum, would be the ones by Wasserman and Elliott, with their very different views of “textual quality” and of the ways early manuscripts may or may not be used to elucidate the earliest textual history of the writings now collected in the NT.
- [24] Another more or less controversial issue is the use of the concept of text types. Elliott includes a short critique of text type theory in his article (207–8), whereas Royse gives a short defense of its use (178–9). We will have occasion to come back to this.
- [25] In addition to Nicklas’ contribution, we may mention here that a new edition of Revelation in the ECM series, ed. by M. Karrer, is under way. We may also expect a *Text und Textwert* volume and editions of the Apocalypse in Coptic and Syriac by C. Askeland and M. Heide among the first fruits of this same project. There already is a volume edited by M. Karrer and M. Labahn on *Die Johannesoffenbarung—ihr Text und ihre Auslegung*. In a recent contribution, J. Hernández Jr. argues that Schmid’s dating of the “Andreas Text Type” to the 4th century was flawed, and that there are no data to support such a dating. Most recently, J.K. Elliott has published “A Short Textual Commentary on the Book of Revelation and the ‘New’ Nestle.”<sup>11</sup>
- [26] I wonder why the contribution on the early versions is placed in section II of the book rather than among other examples of early reception in section III. Moreover, the importance of the versions for the early textual history of the NT, in comparison with the importance of Marcion or of the Diatessaron, is probably greater than the space allotted to them in this volume would seem to indicate.<sup>12</sup> The early versions, after all, are among the earliest text forms we know. To take an example: in Mark, where early Greek mss. are scarce, a text like the North African form of the Old Latin text (known as text type ‘K’ in the Beuron edition) certainly should be of great interest. If we follow the editor of the Mark-volume in the Beuron edition of the *Vetus Latina* (Haelewyck),<sup>13</sup> this Old Latin text shows that the Greek text form found in a comparatively late witness such as W 032 goes a long way back.

<sup>11</sup> See Martin Karrer and Michael Labahn, eds., *Die Johannesoffenbarung—ihr Text und ihre Auslegung* (ABG 38; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012); Juan Hernández Jr., “The Creation of a Fourth-Century Witness to the Andreas Text Type: A Misreading in the Apocalypse’s Textual History,” *NTS* 60 (2014): 106–20; J.K. Elliott, “A Short Textual Commentary on the Book of Revelation and the ‘New’ Nestle,” *NovT* 56 (2014): 68–100.

<sup>12</sup> The most up-to-date introductions to the early versions of the NT may now be found in the 2nd edition of the Metzger *Festschrift* and in vol. 1 of the *New Cambridge History of the Bible* (see n. 10 above).

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Claude Haelewyck (ed.), *Evangelium secundum Marcum* (vol. 17 of *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel. Nach Petrus Sabatier neu gesammelt und herausgegeben von der Erzabtei Beuron unter der Leitung von Roger Gryson*; Freiburg et al.: Herder, 2013–2014), of which the first three fascicles have to date been published.



- [27] I come now to section III (“Early Citation and Use of New Testament Writings”). Extra-canonical works written before the production of the earliest NT manuscripts now known are obviously important sources for textual scholars. Does this body of literature in fact allow conclusions concerning the earliest textual transmission of what became the NT? If so, which methods are best suited to assess the evidence? It is with these and similar questions that most contributions in this section are concerned.
- [28] The first article here is “In these very words’: Methods and Standards of Literary Borrowing in the Second Century” by Ch.E. Hill (261–81). Hill provides an overview of citation standards and methods in ancient Greek literature, drawing on the results of modern scholarship. He finds that citations were often very imprecise, and that authors used to change the texts cited with great freedom. This applies to citations from religious sources also. (Examples here include Porphyry, Philo, Josephus, Ps.-Philo, and Justin. The inclusion of Ps.-Philo seems questionable—I would not consider “Rewritten Bible” as an example of citation.) Early Christian authors, Hill argues, were influenced by the standards and conventions of their time. We cannot, therefore, assume that what appear to be variants in the NT passages cited by them necessarily reflect the text of the *Vorlagen* used, nor should the fact of variation as such be used as an argument against the assumption of literary borrowing from one written source. This may also explain the sometimes low rates of correspondence between early citations and extant manuscripts, or with citations in other early Christian authors. However, Hill argues, Christians may have contributed to a new attitude towards citation. Among reasons for this development, he mentions the rise of a new kind of exegetical and polemical literature, which began, roughly, with Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus. Hill also notes the diplé as a citation marker, the use of which in Christian manuscripts, he thinks, may have begun roughly at the time of Irenaeus. Finally, Hill argues that at least some apparent agreements between early citations and so-called “Western” variants may be due to similar tendencies at work in both citing and copying.
- [29] The next article, by P. Foster, is on “The Text of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers” (282–301). It could be said that his is a contribution which tells us next to nothing about the early text of the NT, but this is because he shows that the Apostolic Fathers tell us very little about the early text of the NT. In so doing, Foster is a model of methodological reflection and circumspection. He analyses passages in the Did., 1 Clem., 2 Clem., Herm., Barn., Ign., and Pol., which may contain citations of or allusions to NT passages. He shows that citations in these works can hardly be used to elucidate the textual situation of the 2nd century: The textual transmission of the Apostolic Fathers is itself frequently uncertain, it is not always clear that there are, in fact, citations from NT books, and the authors display considerable freedom in their use of citations, so that it is impossible to reconstruct the text forms which they may have used.
- [30] In “Marcion and the Early New Testament Text” (302–12), D.T. Roth contends that, in spite of the difficulties of reconstruction, Marcion’s text does have some things to tell about the state of textual transmission in the 2nd century. Following U.B. Schmid, he argues that Marcion’s text of the *Apostolikon* was in no way unique or massively emended, but “offers a text not dissimilar to other early witnesses” (304). While (Roth says) there are few remarkable variants, there is some limited agreement here with variants found in “Western” witnesses, so that Marcion’s text seems to belong to an early stratum of proto-“Western” textual development. The same applies also to Marcion’s text of Luke. There is no unequivocal evidence, however, in what remains of Marcion’s Gospel text for the “Western non-interpolations.” Roth concludes that the relationship of Marcion’s

Gospel text with a (proto-) “Western” text should be approached with great caution. In sum, Marcion’s text, according to Roth, is very similar to the early textual development otherwise known.

- [31] “Justin’s Text of the Gospels” is the subject of J. Verheyden’s article (313–35). Justin seems to know all canonical Gospels, but he seems to cite text forms remarkably different from the texts known to us. A number of explanations are possible, as Verheyden knows well: A “free floating” contemporaneous text of the Gospels, the use of oral tradition or of a harmony, citation from memory, and the freedom of the individual author/redactor. Verheyden considers all of these possibilities, but concludes that most of them can hardly be verified. He also argues that, while there will always be a “grey zone,” well-established relative conclusions have value, and that, once a plausible explanation exists, other possible explanations should recede in force (319). After these methodological considerations, Verheyden decides to concentrate on one aspect which he thinks has hitherto been neglected, viz., the ways in which the contexts of citations, Justin’s comments on them, and his theological intentions may help to explain their wordings. Verheyden takes 1 Apol. 15.1–8 as a test case and discusses the examples of Matt 5:28–29, Matt 19:11–12, and Matt 9:13par. Verheyden finds reasons to assume that the texts of the citations may indeed have been shaped by Justin himself.
- [32] T. Baarda writes about “Tatian’s Diatessaron and the Greek text of the Gospels” (336–349). This is a lucid introduction to a highly complex subject. Baarda leads us from the (ssumed) lost Greek original to its lost Syriac translation and further to the Arabic translation (still extant), to Ephrem’s commentary in the original Syriac and to its Armenian translation.<sup>14</sup> Discussing several examples (John 8:57; Mark 2:14; Matt 17:26; John 3:13), Baarda shows the opportunities, but also the difficulties and uncertainties which beset any attempt to reconstruct Tatian’s text. He briefly comments on notations of (purported) diatessaronic readings in the apparatus of UBS<sup>4</sup>, arguing that the 4th edition has brought considerable improvement, but at the same time advising still greater caution. Greek manuscript, early Christian, and versional evidence, he insists, hold greater promise for the reconstruction of the earliest Greek text than the extant remains of the Diatessaron.
- [33] S.E. Porter’s contribution deals with “Early Apocryphal Gospels and the New Testament Text” (350–69). Porter deals with the Gospel of Peter,<sup>15</sup> P. Egerton, P. Vindobonensis Gr. 2325, P. Merton II 51, P. Oxy. X 1224, the Greek fragments of the Gospel of Thomas, and the Protevangelium of James. Porter analyses passages in which (he thinks) these writings draw on NT passages. He argues that differences between the canonical Gospel texts known to us and corresponding texts in extracanonical writings can be explained as due to editorial activity (conflation, harmonization or stylistic improvement). But Porter then goes one important step further, wishing “to illustrate the relatively early fixed state of the text of the New Testament as the source text utilized by the apocryphal documents” (351–2).
- [34] D.J. Bingham and B.R. Todd’s article on “Irenaeus’ text of the Gospels in *Adversus Haereses*” (370–92) begins with an introduction containing useful information on the history of scholarship. The remainder of the article consists mainly of tables, lists, and figures.

<sup>14</sup> In addition, we may mention here Ulrich B. Schmid, “In Search of Tatian’s Diatessaron in the West,” *VC* 57 (2003): 176–99; Ulrich B. Schmid, *Unum ex Quattuor: Eine Geschichte der lateinischen Tatianiüberlieferung* (AGLB 37; Freiburg: Herder, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Porter restricts himself to the text of the Akhmim manuscript (P. Cairensis 10759), but also refers to P.Oxy. XLI 2949 “where appropriate” (353).

The authors concentrate on the relationship between Irenaeus' Gospel text and the texts of manuscripts supposed to represent text types. They provide three apparatus, followed by short analyses of the data, for citations from Matthew, Luke, and John, respectively.<sup>16</sup> Bingham and Todd find that Irenaeus' Gospel texts are closest to what they call "Western" text forms and that this is most clearly the case in Matthew and John, and much less so in Luke. The highest percentages of agreement here are recorded for Old Latin mss. Agreement with the Greek text of Codex Bezae is weaker. The authors think that Irenaeus may have used a Greek text closer to the Greek *Vorlagen* of the Old Latin tradition than to the text of Codex Bezae.

- [35] Finally, C.P. Cosaert compares "Clement of Alexandria's Gospel Citations" (393–413) with texts found in manuscripts supposed to represent text types. Cosaert discusses reasons why agreement between Clement's text and the texts of groups of NT manuscripts may sometimes be non-genealogical. He concludes that there is no clear affiliation between Clement's Gospel text as a whole and any one text type. Cosaert thinks that the texts of the synoptic Gospels in Alexandria may have been more or less in flux at Clement's time, and that they were under the influence of two major textual traditions at that time which he calls "Alexandrian" and "Western." In contrast, the "Alexandrian" text of John (Cosaert thinks) seems to have been dominant in Alexandria at Clement's time, resulting in a degree of textual stability. Cosaert also mentions that Clement's citations tend to agree with text forms known from citations in works of other Alexandrian authors over the centuries. This, I think, may point to a degree of stability on a local Alexandrian level.
- [36] Section III helps us to reassess claims concerning textual transmission during the crucial first twenty decades or so of Christianity. It is all the more disappointing, then, that the witness of Tertullian and Origen has been omitted in this section. It is also regrettable that one of the most important questions surrounding the text of Irenaeus, viz., the character of his text of Acts, has not been discussed at all, although the book contains two articles (on Acts and on Irenaeus) in which this might have been done.
- [37] The two last articles (on Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria), providing quantitative analyses of citations from NT writings, differ markedly in approach and methodology from all other contributions in this section. It remains unclear again (as in section II) which general principles or outlines, if any, the editors may have prescribed.
- [38] However, apart from the last two articles, this section does in fact display some coherence in the way different contributions (by Hill, Foster, Roth, Verheyden, Baarda, and Porter) describe aspects of the use of the New Testament text in the first Christian centuries. They stress that it is methodologically difficult to use citations in extra-canonical early Christian writings as a window to the early text, and they call into question evaluations of citations in early Christian writings as indicators of a very free early textual transmission. This is an important result which should help to move forward discussions on the early text of the New Testament.
- [39] Editorial activity, I think, is likely to be a plausible explanation for the text forms found in extracanonical writings. Nevertheless—and I say this mainly with regard to Porter's contribution on "Early Apocryphal Gospels and the New Testament Text"—we should not rule out alternative/additional explanations such as influence from oral tradition or from alternative text forms in manuscripts or from other works, or citation from memory. Note that Porter seems to be using a modern, reconstructed text of the canonical Gospels—the one edited in UBS<sup>4</sup>—and that he rarely considers variants found in the manuscript tradi-

<sup>16</sup> The authors think that the number of citations from Mark is too small to allow for evaluation.

tion or in the versions.<sup>17</sup> Given such uncertainties, is it really justified to conclude that “the evidence from the apocryphal gospel literature is that the text of the Greek New Testament was relatively well established and fixed by the time of the second and third centuries” (369)?

- [40] I come, finally, to an assessment of the book as a whole. As the editors say, the aim of the volume is “to provide an inventory and some analysis.” Indeed some articles give a general overview of the *status quaestionis* for their respective areas of study whereas others present original research and further scholarly insight into one particular problem. Moreover, the interest expressed by the editors in “public” and “private” manuscripts or in the “original text” is by no means indicative of a shared perspective of the whole volume. It should be added that the terminology used at one point by the editors seems problematic: Hill and Kruger seem to identify the Initial Text (*Ausgangstext*) with the “original text,” or to think that this is how the term is being used in “the Münster Institut” (pp. 8–9). In fact, in the terminology of the Münster INTE, the *Ausgangstext* (Initial Text) is merely the earliest text which can be reconstructed on the basis of the manuscript tradition as we know it. It should not be identified with the original or authorial text.
- [41] My main difficulty, however, is with what I see as a lack of thematic integrity and conceptual clarity. The title, “The Early Text of the New Testament,” may invite misunderstandings. The early text, strictly speaking, would seem to be a text-critical issue; but the main focus of this book hardly is on textual criticism, narrowly defined. There are, in fact, three different foci: on early *witnesses*, early *texts*, and early *attitudes* to textual reproduction; but these are not, in my view, clearly distinguished and related to each other. This lack of clarity stems from the methodological problem underlying the editorial decision (or recommendation?) to refrain, in section II, from analysing manuscripts produced after the great 4th century codices (though it is not always followed). Early *texts* may be found in late *witnesses*.
- [42] Compare, e.g., the alternative approach of C. Amphoux and J.-C. Haelewyck, the editors of a project called Marc Multilingue, who think that the earliest phase of the development of the Greek text of Mark is represented by D 05 and W 032, the second phase by  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  and  $\Theta$  38, and the third phase by  $\mathfrak{N}$  01, B 03 and A 02.<sup>18</sup> Whatever the merit of this theory, it may illustrate that, in Head’s article on the early text of Mark, the inclusion of later witnesses such as D 05 and W 032 would have been entirely justifiable. Similarly,  $\mathfrak{P}^{127}$ , one of the most important Greek manuscripts of Acts containing so-called “Western” variants, has not been used in Tuckett’s article on the early text of Acts<sup>19</sup> (nor has another important early witness, viz., Irenaeus’ text of Acts as found in his quotations). While  $\mathfrak{P}^{127}$  has indeed been dated to the 5th century, it does not follow that it can be ignored in the analysis of the textual alignments of other manuscripts. Similarly, the fact that Codex Sinaiticus has not been taken into account as a witness to the text of Revelation also highlights the problematic nature of the editorial decision to concentrate on “early” witnesses. Such a decision may be consistent if one wishes to analyze early attitudes to manuscript production (although to draw the line precisely in the early 4th century may be arbitrary). If, however, one wishes to analyze textual relationships and affiliations of

<sup>17</sup> For an alternative approach, cf. Tobias Nicklas, “Fragmente christlicher Apokryphen und die Textgeschichte des Neuen Testaments,” *ZNW* 96 (2005): 129–42.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Christian Amphoux and Jean-Claude Haelewyck, “Marc Multilingue,” n.p. [cited 7 October 2014]. Online: <http://www.safran.be/marcmultilingue/>.

<sup>19</sup> Tuckett mentions  $\mathfrak{P}^{127}$  in his n. 1, p. 157.

manuscripts (and this forms part of most of the articles in section II), then this decision certainly seems inconsistent.

- [43] Related with this is a methodological problem which is common to many (though not all) contributions in sections II and III: the problem of how to describe textual alignments and affiliations of manuscripts. It deserves to be mentioned that three authors (Williams, Hill, and Roth) independently indicate difficulties of applying the concept of a “Western Text” to versional and extra-canonical evidence. But while some authors are acutely aware of such problems, others seem to ignore them altogether. The scholarly community at present is far from agreeing on commonly accepted notions of the origin, character, and evolution of text types (or even on their very existence). Absent such agreement, the import of statements on the alignment of manuscripts or citations with text types seems in need of clarification.
- [44] I wonder why the editors and those among the authors who deal with textual affiliations of manuscripts have not made more use of alternative means of grouping them.<sup>20</sup> The *Text und Textwert* series, for example, includes full collations, for chosen test passages, of all Greek NT manuscripts available at the time of its production.
- [45] In addition to discussions about the adequacy of the concept of an ‘original’ text or different attitudes towards textual reproduction in early Christianity, we also need at this point, I submit, an overview and thoughtful evaluation of concepts, methods and insights in textual scholarship past and present, with a perspective encompassing at least the last 35 years or so. Otherwise we would seem to be in danger of losing valuable insights and of perpetuating methodological problems which, one would have hoped, had already been solved by others before.
- [46] No doubt every reader will be able think of additional subjects which might have merited inclusion. Personally, I would have liked to see contributions on Septuagint quotations in the NT and on non-continuous manuscripts (e.g. amulets).
- [47] Critical remarks notwithstanding, “The Early Text of the New Testament” is a remarkable achievement for which we have reason to be grateful. Let us hope that there will be an augmented second edition.

*Georg Gäbel*

Akademie-Projekt “Novum Testamentum Graecum–Editio Critica Maior”  
 Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung  
 Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität  
 Münster, Germany

---

<sup>20</sup> Elliott, without actually grouping manuscripts, does, however, give us collations based on the apparatus of the ECM of the Catholic Epistles. A brief reference to *Text und Textwert* such as p. 130 n. 52 is exceptional.