

The Relevance of Textual Criticism in Biblical Interpretation

Victor Umaru

Department of Biblical Studies and Theology, Baptist College of Theology, Obinze, Owerri, Nigeria.

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Abstract: Textual criticism refers to the techniques used by biblical scholars in interpreting a given text of the Bible to ascertain its original wording, the nature of its composition, sources, date, and authorship. Textual criticism is an essential aspect of biblical interpretation, which some interpreters technically dodged from it thinking that the word “criticism” is negative. Far be it from this assertion, biblical criticism is relevant, and it remains relevant. Textual criticism is significant; it helps us understand that Scripture cannot be overestimated. It is vital to the understanding of Scripture as the Word of God. It seeks to investigate and understand the situation of the original recipients of the word to discover precisely what the original writers of the scriptures meant by their words. From this Spirit, the writer would shed light on the importance and relevance of biblical criticism, especially to the interpretation of the Bible. To achieve the aim of the writing, the writer uses the narrative-critical analysis method to present the paper’s idea.

I. Introduction

Today, many biblical preachers regard biblical criticism as only an academic exercise, as if it has nothing to do with preaching. Far be it from this assertion, biblical criticism is relevant, and it remains relevant. From this Spirit, the writer would shed light on the importance and relevance of biblical criticism, especially to the interpretation of the Bible. To achieve the aim of the writing, the writer uses the narrative-critical analysis method to present the paper’s idea. The paper is structured into eight sub-sections; the Introduction; the Concept of Textual Criticism; the Indispensability of Textual Criticism; the Limitation of Textual Criticism; the Nature of Textual Errors; the Nature of Textual Criticism; The Relevance of Textual Criticism in Biblical Interpretation; and finally, Conclusion.

II. The Concept of Textual Criticism

Greenlee says, “Textual criticism is the study of copies of any written work of which the autograph (the original) is unknown, to ascertain the original text.”¹ Textual criticism refers to the techniques used by biblical scholars in interpreting a given text of the Bible to ascertain its original wording, the nature of its composition, sources, date, and authorship. It also refers to an expert’s judgment exercise about the text and should not be confused with —criticism in making damaging statements. Technically, biblical criticism refers to the scholarly approach of studying, evaluating, and assessing the Bible as literature to understand it better.²

It is a critical way to reconstruct how and means the text came to be in its present form. These are referred to as —diachronic approaches that explore the text’s history and meaning in previous forms and settings. Other methodologies are concerned with the history of the text and seek meaning in the form of the text that currently appears. These approaches see the text as self-sufficient, requiring no outside information for interpretation by considering it in its final form, and are referred to as —synchronic. Textual criticism builds upon a wide range of scholarly disciplines; it covers; anthropology, folklore, linguistics, archaeology, oral tradition studies, and religious studies and history.³

There are two forms of textual criticism: higher and lower; the former deals with why and how the biblical text was written, while the latter is concerned with the actual wordings of its authors.⁴ Textual criticism helps theologians analyze the Bible to understand and comprehend it better. Mather describes Higher criticism as the study of the sources and literary methods employed by the biblical writers, while Lower criticism is defined as —the discipline and study of the precise and primitive wording of the Bible, a quest for textual purity and understanding.⁵ Since there are several manuscripts of the New Testament, it is natural to raise the question of the authoritative text.⁶

¹ J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, Revised Edition (Peabody, Massachusetts, 1995), 1.

² D.R. Wood, et al (eds.), *New Bible Dictionary* (3rd ed) (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 138-140.

³ R. N. Soulen, & R K. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical criticism* (Louisville, London: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1993), 23.

⁴ Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, Revised Edition, 1.

⁵ G. A. Mather & L. A. Nichols, (eds.) *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult* (Zondervan. N.p., 1993), 456.

⁶ H.I. Hester, *The Heart of the New Testament* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1981), 78.

III. The Textual Criticism is Indispensable

Textual criticism is significant; it helps us understand that Scripture cannot be overestimated. It is vital to the understanding of Scripture as the Word of God. It seeks to investigate and understand the situation of the original recipients of the word to discover precisely what the original writers of the scriptures meant by their words. Whenever texts are copied, mistakes are liable to creep in. Textual criticism is a branch of Biblical criticism that traces this error.

Furthermore, even in this age of computer typesetting, very odd mistakes still occur occasionally. Similar things also happened in copying the biblical text, consciously or unconsciously. The original text of Isaiah or Paul's epistles etc. are nowhere to be found, only copies; indeed, copies of copies of copies, which increase the chances of errors creeping in. The case mainly concerns the NT, partly because there are many manuscripts, and the copyists were less careful than the Jews. However, these errors can be spotted through the textual critics' skills, and the text is recovered or restored to nearly its original purity. Accordingly, Wenham asserts, "The various readings about which any doubt remains ... affect no material question of historical fact or Christian faith and practice."⁷ Christians can, in other words, be very confident that their restored texts are so close to the original that there is not much significant difference in meaning between them and the originals.

How do preachers⁸ establish what the original text meant in their attempt to restore it? This brings one to the science of philology and linguistics, proposed by James Barr, which has been most fruitfully used to understand the Scriptures; in particular, it has made an immense and positive contribution to biblical interpretation. His studies have transformed the method of determining the exact meaning of words in Scripture. Many sermons are based on shallow etymologies, words, and phrases taken out of context, but linguistics has proven this inaccurate. So crucial to the central terms in the Bible's theological vocabulary, such as soul, faith, redemption, and justification, may have been misunderstood by amateurs who fail to understand how language works. Modern linguistics has taught one to examine the context in which words are used rather than their etymology to determine their meaning. It has taught one to study language synchronically before studying it diachronically. In practice, this means one must examine the usage of a word in a particular book of the Bible to examine its usage and meaning elsewhere. Because a word may mean one thing to one writer, it does not necessarily follow that another writer uses it precisely the same way. Furthermore, once one recognizes this principle, one may be on the way to resolving the apparent contradictions between different sections of Scripture, like between Paul and James.

Another area of textual criticism has burgeoned in the last few years: the new literary criticism, significantly associated in Britain with Sheffield University. Biblical expositors are one of the disciplines in textual criticism of most potential value that opens up a whole new prospect in the biblical narratives so that characters of the Bible come alive as actual characters, not as common names on the page. The new literary criticism has made one much more sensitive to the inner feelings of the actors in the Bible so that one can identify with them more closely.⁹

Literary critics are concerned with repetition within a story that offers valuable clues to people's attitudes. One must examine closely who says what and what phrases are used. Another area of criticism that sometimes raises problems but has produced many valuable insights, indispensable to a fair and proper understanding of Scripture, is historical criticism. This includes source criticism, dating issues in biblical texts, and the writing of textual history. To understand the readings of the Bible, it is vital to have little understanding of the social setting in which its texts were recorded. Otherwise, one shall import their twentieth-century models, impose them on the text and come up with quite a misleading interpretation. According to Wenham, biblical scholars should read in the context of Old Testament society rather than modern ideas. Historical criticism is vital in delineating the nature of biblical society.¹⁰ Without such sociological study, they can make severe mistakes in interpreting and applying Scripture today to life and ministry.

⁷ G. J. Wenham, "The place of Biblical Criticism in Theological Study." Retrieved from http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_criticism_wenham.html - 11/11/2021

⁸ According to A.T. Robertson, It is impossible for the preacher to escape the issues of New Testament textual criticism. In Luke 2:14 shall he say "men of goodwill" or "goodwill among men"? In Matthew 6:13, shall he use the Doxology as a part of the text? In Matthew 6:4 and 6 shall he use the words "openly" or not? In John 7:8, did Jesus say "I go not up" or "I go not yet up"? In John 9:4, shall we read "We must work the works of him that sent me," "We must work the works of him that sent us," or "I must work the works of him that sent me"? In John 7:53-8:11 what shall we do about the story of the woman taken in adultery? Did Mark end his Gospel at 16:8 or not? In Romans 5:1, did Paul write, "We have peace," "Let us make peace," or "Let us keep on having peace"? In I Timothy 3:16, did Paul write "God manifest in the flesh," "Which was manifest in the flesh," or "Who was manifest in the flesh"? Did Paul leave out "at Ephesus" in Ephesians 1:1? In John 1:18, did John write "Only begotten Son," or "Only begotten God"? These instances are sufficient to show how important the subject of textual criticism is to the minister. *Studies in the Text of the New Testament* (U.S.A: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1926), 56.

⁹ D. Wenham, "Source Criticism," in I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1977), 139-152.

¹⁰ Wenham, "The place of Biblical Criticism in Theological Study," 86.

Other disciplines, including source, form, and redaction criticism, can contribute to interpreters' understanding of the Bible.¹¹ Form criticism can make one aware of the processes that guided the biblical authors, and it is helpful for the biblical critics to appreciate why they arranged the material in the way they did, like the laws, the psalms, and the epistles. Interpreters can be more explicit about the writers' intentions through form criticism, including specific details and omitting others. Furthermore, this knowledge should keep them away from misinterpreting and misapplying biblical texts today.

IV. The Limitations of Textual Criticism

Textual criticism is primarily sensitive to the dating of the biblical material, and any attempt to assess its historicity by establishing the historical setting of a book is often of great value in interpreting it. For example, it makes a vital difference in interpreting the book of Revelation whether NT scholars date it before AD 70, when Jerusalem fell, or afterward. In the former view, some can read and interpret it as a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem, of the great whore Babylon, while some consider it more natural to read it as futuristic anticipation of the end of the Roman Empire. Furthermore, many other books in the Bible make a considerable difference to one's understanding of them when one dates them.¹²

While dating and authorship are paramount in understanding the message of the Scripture, textual critics are encouraged not to dwell on them. Heidelberg says, "... hardly any reliable criteria for the dating of Pentateuchal literature..." dating of the texts and "sources rests on purely hypothetical assumptions which only have any standing through the consensus of scholars in the field," which means no one knows the date of writing precisely.

The second issue is that historicity concerns reality issues, of course, whether Jesus lived, died, and rose and ascended to heaven; a Jewish scholar, as reported by Stern, that Pinhas Lapide believes in these facts without being a Christian.¹³ It is most heartening when archaeologists find evidential remains corroborating the historical narratives of the Bible, such as the names of the patriarchs, the ashes of towns sacked by Joshua, the pool of Bethesda, and the house of Peter in Capernaum. All these discoveries confirm Christians' faith in the historical reliability of the Bible. However, the Bible is much greater than a human history book. It claims to provide a divine interpretation of public historical events, an interpretation beyond the scope of human verification.

Finally, interpreters should not spend too much time on critical issues: it can easily divert their attention from the purpose of Scripture. Instead, they should be searching the Scriptures to find eternal life. As Paul said, 'Whatever was written in former times was written for our instruction, that we might have hope' (Rom. 15:4). One of the significant purposes of the Scriptures is not to stimulate scholars academically or provide a living for expert biblical scholars; instead, it is to lead one to God. Textual criticism offers believers, especially preachers, indispensable aids to interpreting and understanding the Bible. When the academic study of Scripture diverts one's attention from loving God with all their heart, soul, and strength, one should pause and take stock. They should ask themselves whether they are using it as it was intended. It is both a sacred and human book; they cannot understand it because it is a human book unless they employ all textual criticism to the full. Nevertheless, because it is also a holy book, they must recognize that these tools are insufficient by themselves for them to grasp and apply their message. To do that, they must have a humble mind and a heart open to the guidance of the Spirit.

V. Textual Errors and Their Causes

It is essential to highlight some causes of textual errors in the New Testament. It is paramount because textual criticism is set to identify them and how they affect the textual integrity of the Bible. According to Hulley, historical evidence of textual errors is sometimes derived from Jerome's comments on translators' work rather than copyists transcribing a text. He exhibits a degree of caution and restraint that should characterize the work of a competent critic. Being convinced of the necessity of correcting errors, he was careful to accept that an attempt at emendation might bring an error where none had existed before. Since Jerome's time, separating words in texts was little practiced; it is only natural to refer to copyists' errors of word division rarely. Only once does a statement of this kind imply that copyists were responsible for this mistake.¹⁴

1. Faulty Accentuation: These errors involved a faulty accentuation of words. The signs for the accents seem to have been relatively limited in the NT time, though a more unrestricted use of them in the MSS. The importance of accentuation is vital to Hebrews because Hebrew accentuation sometimes aids in determining the meaning of words.¹⁵

¹¹ J. Tigay, *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 54.

¹² G. J. Wenham, "The place of Biblical Criticism in Theological Study." Retrieved from http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_criticism_wenham.html - 11/11/2021

¹³ D. Stern, "Recent Trends in Biblical Source Criticism," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* Vol. 36, No. 3, 2008.

¹⁴ K. K. Hulley, "Principles of Textual Criticism Known to St. Jerome," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 55, 1994, 87-109.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

2. Faulty Punctuation: punctuation had some essential effects on the sense of a passage as another source of textual errors. Some of them were familiar, while others were punctuation familiar to readers when discussing punctuation questions. Nevertheless, others can be regarded as the preferable punctuation evidence of the Hebrew, and Greek texts of the Old and New Testaments were not carefully observed.¹⁶

3. Number-Signs: An interesting example of an error caused by the confusion of numerical symbols is why Mark seems to disagree with Matthew and John in his record of the hour when Christ was crucified. Some of these errors and discrepancies in the record upon the copyists whose confusion of the number signs possibly caused an error in the text.¹⁷

4. Similar Letters: These errors were caused by the confusion of similar letters and perhaps most commonly similar Hebrew letters caused by the translators of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the letters *resh* and *daleth* were confused, differentiated only by a small apex, and other letters include *yod* and *vav*, which look alike and are distinguished only in size.

5. Abbreviations: Specific examples of errors caused by a misunderstanding of abbreviations of words, phrases, or even letters contributed to the source of error, either the person dictating the text to be written by a copyist or that the copyist was reading for himself the material to be copied. There were severe errors introduced into a text copied from dictation because the reader, in his haste, misread the abbreviations.

6. Dittography and Haplography: some errors were caused by repetition and the omission of similar letters in a word due to faulty readings, though examples of these specific errors are very few. The copyists may mistakingly write Iudaeae instead of Iudae and omission of letters.

7. Metathesis of Letters: Some textual errors resulted from the transposition of letters in a word, not necessarily from the copyist but from a translator, whose misreading a Hebrew word resulted in an error in the Greek text.

8. Assimilation: sometimes, a copyist who has finished copying a particular line may cause an error in copying the following line; the error may consist of adding a part of the preceding line or substituting it for what should have been written.

9. Omissions: These errors came from omissions, accounting for the same word following before and after the omitted part of the text. Those instances cause the copyist to pass over everything from the first occurrence of the word to the second.

10. Transpositions: several of these errors were caused by disturbances in the arrangement of words, phrases, and larger units of a text, which occasionally caused, explicitly or implicitly, the negligence of the copyists."¹⁸

11. Conscious Emendation: there were times when copyists' put their efforts into amending the readings of a text, resulting in errors. These errors vary in form, some of the most common being the copyist of a familiar word for an unfamiliar one. Alternatively, the copyist may substitute one he judged more appropriate to the context because of a misunderstanding or disapproval of a word. Sometimes copyist deletes words that he assumed to be erroneously repeated in the book, changing a word from the singular to the plural vis-à-vis.

12. Interpolations: there are examples of interpolations in the text of the Bible that are comparatively numerous. Here are three group examples, of which the first comprises some discussions of passages that were taken from one book in the Scripture and inserted into another. In the second group, many passages were made in the Greek version by the Septuagint translators, which were not supported in the Hebrew text to explain. The third group consists of two examples of interpolation that are different from those already mentioned and different from each other. Often has to do with inconsistency of suspected words in the particular passage, that a word was added through the fault of the copyists.

From history to the current studies, scholars agreed that few human errors could be found in the Bible. However, such errors are associated with human activities across the centuries in preserving and transmitting the text of the OT to what it is today. Despite what seems to be errors in the OT, none of it affects the church's core beliefs; that is to say, church doctrine is built on any of the errors. The errors may be there, but it does not affect belief about the existence of God, the Holy Spirit, the Deity of Jesus Christ, or angels.¹⁹ This study has proven that humans are always humans and bound to make mistakes, establishing their frailty nature and proving God to be Supreme forever and ever.

¹⁶ G. H. Schodde, "Old Testament Textual Criticism" *The Old Testament Student*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 44-48.

¹⁷ K. K. Hulley, "Principles of Textual Criticism Known to St. Jerome," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 55, 1994, 87-109.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Eugene Ulrich, "The Old Testament Text and Its Transmission." In *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to 600*, edited by James Carleton Paget and Joachim Schaper, 83-104. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 56.

VI. The Relevance of Textual Criticism in Biblical Interpretation

One of the goals of textual criticism was the establishment of texts as intended by their original authors. The challenge that has always characterized the field was how best to approach this text recovery and whether this goal was proper. The essence of the exercise is without dispute that the work is necessary for textual criticism. The ultimate goal of all biblical study and preaching is interpreting the biblical text. The first requirement for this work is to have the biblical text in its original purity, as it were in the days of the author. Textual criticism has to examine the existing text and find, with the help of all the best instruments at their disposal, whether the form of the words as they have been handed down to this generation are the *ipsissima verba* of the sacred scribes; and if there is legitimate evidence to believe that the text has in centuries changed, to restore, the original readings as it was from the beginning. Textual criticism, therefore, seeks to confirm the traditional texts as the original ones and restore the original where necessary.²⁰ Being such, textual criticism is not a theological discipline but philological, historical, and critical. Indeed, in the New Testament field, textual criticism is almost a *fait accompli*, while in the Old Testament department, the actual scientific work is only beginning.²¹

According to Vincent Taylor, the object of textual criticism is to recover, as far as possible, the original text of the New Testament writings. The need arises from the many corruptions that crept into the text during the long period when copies were made by hand until the discovery of printing about AD 1450. The difficulty of copying a letter or document is well known.²² Taylor further laments that people often read the text amiss and write what is in their minds despite the best intentions. Textual criticism is necessary in the case of all ancient writings, including the ancient classics, but it is indispensable for the New Testament because of its supreme value for the church and the individual reader.²³ Unfortunately, no original manuscripts called “autographs” of the biblical text have been recovered; no extant manuscripts have been found to agree with each other in every detail; textual criticism is essential to resolve questions of existing variations.²⁴

Houseman, one of one text critics of classical works, observes — that “textual criticism is based on common sense and the use of reason.”²⁵ He briefly states “that textual criticism is the science and art that seeks to determine and recover the most reliable wording of a text.”²⁶ The scientific nature of textual criticism is guided by some specific rules that govern the evaluation of different types of copyist errors and readings, but it is also an art because these rules cannot rigidly be applied in all situations. Intuition, common sense, and reason must guide determining and recovering the most plausible reading. Informed judgments and evaluations about a text depend on familiarity with the types of copyist errors discussed earlier, manuscripts, versions, and authors.

There are several benefits of textual criticism; it attempts to establish the most reliable version of the reading of the text, and, in cases where a definitive reading cannot be readily determined, it can help avoid dogmatism. Also, it can help the reader better understand the significance of marginal readings in various Bible translations. Textual criticism is about discovering or restoring possible reading that is close to the original, and it is the method of searching and discovering through the different sources of the biblical texts to determine the most primitive or reliable reading of a particular passage, and not about making negative comments or observations about the text of the Bible. It helps to increase confidence in the reliability of the biblical texts to be as it was. Textual criticism mainly concerns itself with the small portion of the biblical text called variant readings. A variant reading in wording, for example, spelling, added or omitted words, occurs among manuscripts.

Biblical scholars had employed scientific and quasi-scientific methods to respond to issues of authorship and date of when, why, and how single books of the Bible were composed. Mitchel states, “Biblical criticism is a science that helps know much of the Bible’s world, ideas, teachings, and truth.”²⁷ Therefore, the point of departure for any biblical criticism is the human desire to know whatever can be known about the Bible and its original renditions.

The quest to know the origin of biblical traditions went beyond establishing a reliable text and investigation into the sources of the stories and narratives included in the Bible. Often comparing biblical texts with other ancient kinds of literature or texts in the Bible helped isolate subtle differences among these texts. The notable differences became essential clues. They may indicate that some biblical stories did not originate only with their written transmission. These stories and some parts were likely, at first, handed orally. Alternatively, the observed differences in style, vocabulary, and viewpoint may indicate that a biblical story has been passed on in multiple forms.

²⁰ Leon Vaganay & Christian-Bernard Amphoux, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5-13.

²¹ G. T. Tanselle, “Textual Criticism and Literary Sociology.” *Studies in Bibliography*, Vol. 44, 1991, 83-143.

²² Vincent Taylor, *The Text of the New Testament: A Short Introduction* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1961), 1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Caspar Rene Gregory, *Canon and Text of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1907), 483-500.

²⁵ E.A. Housman, “The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism.” <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/extras/Housman-Thought.html>. Accessed 15/11/2021.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ A. C. Mitchel, “The Need for Biblical Criticism.” Retrieved from <http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/SFS/an0800.asp> - 7/11/2021

Other scholars were interested in knowing about the kinds of materials found in the Bible and how they were related to the real lives of those responsible for producing them. Because the transmission of biblical tradition may be quite complex, these scholars set out to catalog the various shapes and traditions preserved in the Bible. With the help of comparison with other primitive literature contemporaneous with the biblical text and narrative, they isolated narrative, poetic, cultic, legal, literary, and historical materials, which had definite shapes or forms. They conjectured these functioned concerning the various circumstances of life in the ancient biblical world; such criticism is called form criticism.²⁸ For example, in Philippians (2:5-11), Paul preserved a very early form of a Christian hymn; one might conclude that handing an important tradition about life, death, and exaltation of Jesus related to the early Christian worship experience.

Biblical criticism is also relevant in relating the meaning of the Bible to the contemporary world. The methods employed to connect the Bible with today's experience are usually more literary and less historical. Others, including narrative, rhetorical, and reader-response criticism, fall under this heading. Appreciating these forms of biblical criticism helps one understand how much textual criticism is informed and influenced by the language and interests to make meaning for the day.

VII. Principles of Textual Criticism

The first principle has to do with the title of a work. The title is an important section of the work to which it belonged because it contains such primary information as the author's name, the nature of the subject matter, and the number of the particular book to which it belonged. Either the books are made up of a collection of short poems like Psalms, and sometimes the separate poems might have different titles serving a purpose similar to that of longer works. Therefore, it seems vital to presume that copyists carefully transcribe the title. However, some works might have no title, and occasionally a title might be included without authority, as some psalms, though lacking inscriptions in the Hebrew text, had been given titles in the translations. Such titles can be regarded as spurious.²⁹

The second was the collation of textual readings and is concerned primarily with the readings of Biblical texts in translation rather than the readings of different copies of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament or the Greek text of the New Testament. Hence, the more significant part of the readings is drawn from different translations than the original text. Such a process is only suggestive of collation in a technical sense. However, the similarity of approach involved; some weight may be given as evidence, especially when comparing with the original judges the authenticity of the translation. Preferably and primarily, readings in translation lack the original authority. It is also significant that one should exhibit familiarity with different Biblical texts, both Hebrew and Greek.³⁰

The third is the evaluation of manuscripts. One would not consider all MSS. equally; instead, it should attach considerable weight to the readings of old ones, realizing that errors tended to increase as copies multiplied over time.

The fourth has to do with the importance of *testimonia*. There were quotations found in the works of some authors and are of value in determining the original reading of the source from which they are drawn; this can be helpful on different occasions as evidence in criticism of textual readings. Similarly, one must be aware that quotations might be made from memory or reproduce the thought only and not the exact words of the original passage; they must be used for criticism with due caution. Therefore, it would be helpful to inculcate a habit of comparing all quotations of the Old Testament,³¹ which one found in the New Testament, with the readings of what he terms the original books.

VIII. Conclusion

Textual criticism is the preliminary study for the accurate knowledge of any text. New Testament textual criticism, therefore, is the essential biblical study, a prerequisite to all other biblical and theological work. Interpretation, systematization, and application of the teachings of the New Testament cannot be made until textual criticism has done at least some of its essential work. Therefore, it deserves the acquaintance and attention of every serious student and preacher of the Bible.

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³⁰ Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and historical criticism: Jews and Christians in biblical studies* (1st ed.) (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 123-42.

³¹ Ellis R. Brotzman and Eric J. Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Academic, 2016); Ernst Würthwein, *OT chapter divisions were the work of Stephen Langton* (1150–1228). See *The Text of the Old Testament*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes, 3rd ed. rev. and exp. Alexander A. Fischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

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