

Chapter Twenty

Alexandrian Papyrologico-Traditional Involvement with Ancient Manuscripts in Hellenistic Egypt

Dr. Gideon Ibn Tambiyi

Introduction

Man was created to worship and serve God using the words which are given as guide and light. This act of worship and service unto God and humanity cannot be faithfully done without possessing and understanding the exact words which are meant to be guiding principles. Current discoveries have shown the emergence of various variant readings to the Greek text of the Christian Bible as part of the scribal practices in Hellenistic Egypt. The Greek text witnessed interpolations, dittography and reduction by scribes during Hellenistic Egypt. Using the historical critical method, this paper evaluates the ancient Egyptian scribal intentions on the Greek text and how such affect the modern editions of the Christian Bible. It also argues that the early Egyptian Christians were the earliest emendators, papyrologists and engaged in textual critical studies through the preservation and transmission of the ancient biblical manuscripts which have come to be appreciated among modern textual scholars.

Quite a number of textual issues have been raised by textual scholars as close attentions have been given to the text of the Christian New Testament. These issues are related to the variants whose numbers have been considered to supersede the actual number of the words in the Christian New Testament. Such attentions have generated mind-blowing conclusions upon the Greek text of the Christian New Testament. These were caused by efforts to emend among the early Christian scribes and emendators (Comfort, 2001:1179; Comfort, 2012:191-2).

The results of this long and tedious process called textual criticism is reflected in many modern English versions of the New Testament with critical statements in the text or the footnotes as: "The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20" (NIV, 721). Another example is in NIV between John 7:52 and 53 with the statement, "The earliest manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11" (755). Also "Late manuscripts of the Vulgate 'testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these are one. And there are three that testify on earth: the' (not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century)" (1 John 5:7-8) (NIV, 866). The NIV notes that "Some manuscripts have *prayer and fasting*" (714) on Mark 9:29 and a different reading as in 1 Corinthians 11:4-7, a result of variants whether it is "long hair" or "head covered" (NIV, 808). In Philippians 1, "Some late manuscripts have verses 16 and 17 in reverse order" (NIV, 829). These explanatory statements cut across different English versions as seen in NLT and NKJV. For examples, "The most ancient Greek Manuscripts do not include John 7:53-8:11" (NLT) and the NLT recognizes the longer ending of Mark (Mk 16:9-20) with special reference to verse 14 at the footnote rather than in the text (NLT; Blomberg, 2003:23).

The Christian New Testament at the earlier stage was written in pieces in the first century before the composition. Copies and copies of those books have been duplicated through scribal copying and recopying. Quite a number of copies were produced which somewhat

reflected the original copies of the Christian New Testament; hence, copying is not an exact science (see Blomberg, 2014:13-42; Ankerberg and Burroughs, 2009:129-39).

The corruption of the text surfaced as the Alexandrian Christians attempted to engage the early papyri. Majority of the copies witnessed interpolations, dittography and reduction from the 'original text' of the New Testament, predominantly by Alexandrian Christians; because of the extent of literary involvement in Hellenistic Egypt. In the midst of that, the Alexandrian Christians became the earliest people to engage in the task of emendation of the text of the New Testament through their unique skills as the Christian movement expanded to the Egyptian territories (Comfort, 2001:1179; Comfort, 2012:191-2). Such an effort has been recognized by few textual scholars and those in the studies of the origin of ancient Christianity. Such an Alexandrian effort, instead of rendering solutions to the text, ended up compounding issues of variants to the manuscripts of the Christian New Testament as this paper would discuss.

Early Coptic Religious Expansion in Hellenistic Egypt

Egypt has been one of the famous countries for religious activities in early Christian times. It has emerged as the favourite county in the development of ancient manuscripts. Egypt accepted Christianity shortly as the message of Jesus circulated in Jerusalem under the evangelistic involvement of John Mark (Oden, 2011:17-59). It is clearly stated by William Lyster (2001:7-8) that "Egypt was one of the first countries to convert to Christianity." This gospel's acceptability gave rise to the Coptic movement which has been known for centuries. Lyster (2001:7-8) puts it that "The Coptic Church prides itself on being an apostolic foundation that has endured for nearly two thousand years...The Copts were usually in religious opposition to the faith of Egypt's foreign rulers."¹ The focus was the search for a religious activity which was foreign to the rulers. This brought about religious tension between the rulers and the new faith of the Copts. The religious tension was tough because "at the beginning of the Christian era, most 'Copts' still worshipped the gods of the pharaohs and spoke Egyptian" (Lyster, 2001:8).

Before the coming of Christianity in Egypt, the Copts were the descendants of the Pharaohs who were worshipping the ancient deities of the Egyptians, full of mysticism and myths (Horus, Ra, Orisis, Thoth, Isis and Mut etc. Translation of the Christian Bible started among the Egyptian Jews through the development of the Septuagint (LXX) under the commission of Ptolemy.² Later, a lot of versions surfaced in the development of the early church such as the Coptic versions of the third century (Kenyon, 1926:178; Till, "Coptic":320; Thiessen, 1976:56; Emmel, 2007:83; Aland and Aland, 1987:68).

It can be stated that most of the Copts lived in rural centres and were shepherds. Despite the fact that Christianity was a religion of the elites (Greek-speaking Christians) by the end of the second century AD, Christianity dominated Egypt predominantly the minds of the natives and masses. Lamin Sanneh (1983:7) adds, "For whatever reasons, there was a significant change, beginning about the middle of the third century, when Coptic villages and towns along the Nile embraced Christianity." This Christian expansion led to the translation of the text of the Bible into different Egyptian languages. Walter (2012:320), Aland and Aland (1987:68) and Thiessen (1976:56) state much earlier that the translation of the Christian Bible from Greek into Coptic was perhaps completed by AD 200 contrary to the assertion of Sanneh (1983:8) at the "beginning in the fourth century." That is to say, Coptic Christianity was rooted by the end of the second century for it to have completed the Sahidic Bible at that time. Rachel Scott (2010:8) stresses that "The Copts represent the largest Christian group by

population in the Middle East which, by virtue of their relative size, gives them regional significance.” Such a regional significance became a light to the religious movement in the land of Egypt and gave Egypt its identity and global recognition.

The popularity and religious expansion led to the persecution. The persecution continued among other religions and grew much stronger in Coptic territories. Eusebius states that at times a hundred men would be slain in a single day along with women and children” (Lyster, 2001:10).³ Despite the persecution, the spreading of the Christian message continued among the Copts and many believed and were baptized. Iris Habib el-Masri (2014:16) states that:

Soon, many Alexandrians adopted the New Faith, and as their numbers grew, the authorities became alarmed, for the converts not only increased in number, but their conversion changed them so completely that they seemed as new people, and their newness was very attractive, and the means of winning more people to the Faith, so truthful, so honest, and so contented did they become. It has been argued that these very early periods of persecution and power struggles, and the political authorities solidified the Coptic Church’s place in Egyptian society.

The Christian Church was fast growing in terms of number, in wealth and were able to build many church buildings. Lyster (2001:9) captures it thus: “The Christian community at that time appears to have been large and comparatively wealthy. It possessed its own churches, as well as the most famous Christian School of Alexandria was founded to instruct converts in the tenets of the faith.” The focus was the converts with special concentration on Alexandria. el-Masri (2014:29) adds that “...the School of Alexandria became the Lighthouse of Christianity, and throughout its life of five centuries, it maintained the same reputation of erudition and scholarship.” There was a need for a total reflection upon Christian values which the story of Egyptian Christianity and the flight of the Holy Family have helped to inculcate in the minds of the Copts.

Early Scribal Transmissions of Manuscripts in Egypt

Historically, by AD 300, according to Jenkins (2008:231), Coptic Christianity had penetrated into the hearts of the natives and was strong enough to face Roman persecution and all forms of external challenges during the seventh century. Alexandrian scribes and scholars began to involve themselves in copying and translating manuscripts predominantly Christian manuscripts. This became a strategy which was used to preserve Coptic Christianity and to enable the natives to read and experience God from the texts of the scriptures in their own way. John Gee (2002:2) elaborates the stages during the Coptic translations:

The translation of the Bible into Coptic is seen as occurring in three distinct stages. In the first stage (4th century AD), independent translators rendered portions of the Bible into their native dialects. Most of our Coptic dialectical material comes from translations made at this stage. In the second stage (4th to 5th centuries AD), the Sahidic version was standardized. In the third stage (9th century AD), the Bohairic version was standardized.

Gee (2002:2) underscores the various stages of Coptic translation and confirmed the standardizing process of the Coptic Bible. Whether the effort involved participatory exegesis and participatory translation (Chosefu, 2013), standards would seem vague in view that even the compiler of the Sahidic Coptic New Testament in the twenty-first century believes standards are yet to be maintained (Wells, 2007:1).

However, in view of the first stage of Greek-Coptic translations, Stephen Emmel (2007:92-3) explains the important place Coptic translation played on Greek language and the Christian New Testament. Emmel (2007:92-3) states:

Some of this Coptic translation literature is of great value either for things it preserves that we might have had in Greek or some other language ... or for its text- and literary-critical value. Furthermore, there are works, or fragments of works, preserved in Coptic that are thought to be translations (presumably, and most probably, from Greek), but which remain thus far unidentified and therefore might eventually contribute to our knowledge of the corpora of Patristic authors (for example, the so-called 'Berlin Coptic Book').

However, there was persecution in the Coptic towns and villages. The Coptic Church is historically known for the persecutions it endured and power struggles in which it engaged throughout its first three hundred years of existence. Resulting from these periods of persecution, the Coptic Church also was known to be the "Church of the Martyrs for centuries (Smith, 2013:23-31). In addition, Sanneh (1983:8) states that:

Many apparently refused to adjure their faith and accepted death willingly. These persecutions succeeded in driving the Coptic Church into itself so that it became little involved in projects to spread Christianity beyond Egypt, apart from a period of relationship with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Hans Jakob Polotsky (1950:73-90) argues convincingly that the Coptic Bible translators could not possibly have access to the subtleties of the modal system of Classical Greek and based the context of usage of the Sahidic inferential on no longer transparent meaning connotations. Coptic Christianity has been well known for its leadership which has survived centuries. Despite this effort by the Copts to maintain religious significance and leadership, the Coptic version of the Christian New Testament was marginalized. Affirming this, Norman Perrin (1974:340) observes that, "Other ancient versions of the New Testament in Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic and Georgian are less important than the Latin and the Syriac..." (cf. Tenney, 1985:418).

As Christianity grew stronger in Egypt, the copying processes of biblical works also expanded in order to preserve the text of the manuscripts of the Christian New Testament and other non-canonical literature. In the process of engaging the manuscripts of the Christian Bible, the Egyptian Christians attempted the emendation of the text of the Bible; hence, many people wanted to own copies of the biblical manuscripts and also institutions were interested in the manuscripts of the Bible. As a result, there were individual copying and the use of scriptorium to duplicate the manuscripts of the Christian Bible. This made most of the manuscripts in circulation today to be predominantly Egyptian products. Many of them have been discovered from the seventeenth century to the present and are manuscripts that have helped in the modern emendation of the text of the Christian New Testament.

Also, there were manuscripts research centres in the Hellenistic Egypt predominantly in Alexandria. Also, other locations such as; Rome, Antioch, Constantinople, Caesarea had similar centres for the study of ancient manuscripts. Alexandria was known to have been the best centre which produced the best manuscripts in the early Christian era of the Church such as Codex Alexandrianus (Smith, 2014). Critical scholars today have all recognized the influence of the centre for the study of ancient manuscripts in Alexandria. There was also a high level of scholarship in Timbuktu in the fourteenth century where people came, from the

Sahel region of Africa, Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, to study mathematics, science, astrology, jurisprudence, Arabic and the Koran. A lot of scribal activities and transmission of manuscripts took place in the city of Timbuktu.

In the modern age after the Age of the Enlightenment, many centres for the study of ancient manuscripts emerged as ancient documents have been discovered in Egypt. Egypt is known to have preserved manuscripts (parchments, papyri and vellum) in codex forms, single page format and bi-folios. Most of them are literary and non-literary manuscripts. Egyptian scribes engaged in papyrology, palaeography and developed these areas of discipline which reflected in other textual geographical terrains.

Egypt also had the reputation not only in biblical history but in the history of textual discoveries. Egypt has become the most dominant sites for manuscript discoveries since the last century. A good number of documents were discovered outside Egypt and deciphered to have been of biblical and Christian origins.⁴ There are quite era of manuscript discovery and studies in the West since the eighteenth century. These documents survived because climatic weather of Egypt was suitable for preserving documents. Manuscripts were discovered in Oxyrhynchus, Dishna, Aphroditopolis and Nag Hammadi.

Today, such discovered manuscripts have lost their africaness and have been denied their African presence and they have been housed in the Western world as evident in the NA²⁸. These are classified manuscripts which are housed in many centres in the West such as Oxford University, *Istituto Papirologico "G Vitelli" Florence*, and the University of Michigan, etc. There are many unclassified ones which are still surfacing and are being published. The *Institute for New Testament Textual Research* in Munich has become the 'ancient Alexandria' in determining and numbering all discovered manuscripts. A lot of the papyri which have been numbered are from Egypt, particularly the Oxyrhynchus Papyri at Oxford University, and the Papyrology Collection in The University of Michigan among many other centres.

From Textual Concern to Textual Corruption

The historical identification of the corrupt nature of the text can be traced to the works of Homer. Bruce M. Metzger (1992:149) posits that Zenodotus of Ephesus (c. 325 - 234 B.C) involved himself in the collation of manuscripts with the purpose of restoring the original text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. There were a consortium of scholars, Greek philologists, theologians and philosophers who engaged the texts. It can be stated that such an attempt with the text of Homer was out of concern for the corruption and the ability to reproduce or improve rather than corrupt the text.

The Alexandrian scholars expanded the scope of textual studies to a more complicated, unconventional and advanced form of studies. Metzger (1992:150) adequately notes that Alexandria developed a more advanced form of textual, critical and literary studies, which earlier concentrated primarily on the works of Homer. The complicity probably was what generated the problem into the text of Homer as they tried to recover the original words of Homer.

Such a Homeric attempt influenced the church fathers as they reconsidered the text of the Christian Bible. Metzger (1992:150) states that "It is common knowledge that Philo Judaeus and many church fathers, influenced by the philological scholarship current at Alexandria, utilized in their interpretation of the scriptures the methods of allegorical exegesis which had

been applied to certain stories of the gods and goddesses included in the Homeric cycle.” Also, Metzger (1992:150) states that such an Alexandrian textual criticism “is less widely appreciated –indeed” on the ground of “how far the methods of textual criticism current at Alexandria were adopted by scholars in the Church and applied to the text of the New Testament.”

Early African Christians’ involvement in the text of the Christian New Testament predominantly in Alexandria started from the second century as a lot of manuscripts were attempted to be emended. Such early efforts among the Christians resulted to interpolated corruption on the text of the New Testament rather than correcting it. Within this confine, Comfort (2001:1179; 2012:191-2) states that “The Alexandrian Christians were probably the first ones to attempt a recovery of the wording of the Greek New Testament. From the second century to the fourth century, the Alexandrian scribes worked to purify the text from textual corruption.” Such efforts did not just create problems to the text but there were traces of recovery and purification to the text.

Because of the efforts put by Alexandrian scribes, a lot of manuscripts are being discovered and considered to be the best texts for the recovery process today particularly Codex Alexandrianus. Comfort (2012) states that manuscripts which are being discovered in Egypt are viable sources for the reconstruction of the text of the New Testament. They have occupied a vast amount of space in the text of the Christian New Testament because of their highly placed category compared to other families of manuscripts. Evidently enough, it can be said that the common notion that many of the early New Testament papyri were produced by untrained scribes making personal copies of poor quality in dealing with the text of the Christian New Testament should be revisited as several of the early New Testament papyri were produced with extreme care by educated and professional scribes predominantly from Alexandria (Comfort, 2012:206-10). The professional role played by the church fathers should be appreciated and recognized as such emended manuscripts have today become the basis for the eclectic text of the Greek New Testament.

It is also evident that most of the textual corruptions behind the text of the Christian New Testament was not intentional. They all came as act of extending goodwill to the text. Another example would be the effort of Marcion in the second century which according to Marcion was an act of emendation (Metzger, 1992:150; Blackman, 1948:128-71; Baker, 2010:36-7) for in A. G. Padgett’s work (1997:705), Marcion sincerely believed it was a restoration of “the true gospel of Jesus from the corrupting influence of Judaizers and pseudoapostles.” Of course, Marcion has never been judged in critical terms² as there were no criteria to judge heretics in the early church. His intentions were and are judged with biased presuppositions without appreciating his influence upon the canon, the text of the Christian New Testament and his legacy which prompted the church fathers to have selected their canon (Padgett, 1997:708), an act which could be considered also to be heretical. Marcion advanced the study of the Christian scriptures despite his alteration of the text and excommunication (Padgett, 1997:708).

The act of emendation continued as Theodotus and his followers took the bold step for a critical recension of the biblical text (Metzger, 1992:150). Furthermore, Eusebius engaged in storing a number of words from an excerpt of an anonymous author which engaged in an interaction with the Theodotians who were engrossed in the study of logic, mathematics and empirical science, allegory and exegesis, applying of textual criticism to the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament (Metzger, 1992:151). Despite this, Metzger (1992:151) states that

“unfortunately, nothing more is known of this early effort at textual criticism” by the Theodotians. Engaging in the practice of textual criticism by the Theodotians seemed tampering with the text to the church fathers in those days. Since the Theodotians could not wrestle with the orthodoxy of the early church, some of the Alexandrian Christians still continued the studies of the text.

The failure of the Theodotians prompted the studies which witnessed resurgence predominantly in the works of Origen of Alexandria and Caesarea after the excommunication of the Theodotians (Metzger, 1992:151). Origen is known for beginning the study of the text of the Septuagint and observed that Matthew 18:1 and two variant readings in Hebrews 2:9 “apart from God” and “by the grace of God” though Origen found some “spiritual significance in both readings” (Metzger, 1992:152). Metzger (1992:152) writes that Origen dismissed the reading “Jesus Barabbas” for “Barabbas” in Matthew 27:16-17 with the motive that the name Jesus is not associated with evil-doers. This is the problem of allowing self-thoughts to influence our judgment of the text as textual critics. Origen also preferred Bethabara instead of “Bethany” in John 1:28 and Origen concluded that “perhaps all of the manuscripts existing in his day may have become corrupt” (Metzger, 1992:152). Origen’s statement on the corrupt nature of manuscripts opened the gate of suspicion to the text and finding better ways to restore it. It is the origin of knowing the problem i.e. the interpolation to the text of the Christian New Testament which has engaged textual criticism over the years. It can be stated that such a bold statement by Origen has helped in critical consideration of the portions of the text with the help of discoveries of ancient manuscripts with variant readings.

Origen should be appreciated for such courage to begin the whole conversation on the corrupt nature of the text, which has prompted all textual critical studies in those days before the Islamic conquest of Egypt in AD 641, and what is witnessed in the modern age of the study dominantly exposed by Bart Ehrman (1993). Such an identification of predicted threats in the New Testament resulted in the development of the field of New Testament textual criticism.

St. Jerome was also another figure to consider. Jerome’s greatest contribution like Origen was, according to Metzger (1992:153), “the possibility of confusion of similar letters, confusion of abbreviations, accidents involving dittography and haplography, the metathesis of letters, assimilation, transpositions, and deliberate emendations by the scribes.” With this, Jerome introduced the criterion for judging the originality of a manuscript to be the reliance “upon the older Greek manuscripts” (Metzger, 1992:153). This is seen to be behind the external evidence for evaluating the text, a task reconstructed by Westcott-Hort (WH) and the modern critical scholars, particularly in the search for methodologies for doing textual criticism. However, such thought of criteria did not originate with WH or any scholars, but with Jerome which served as his major contribution to the study of the text of the New Testament.

Furthermore, Metzger (1992:153) states that Jerome identified the addition to the Gospel of Mark which has been called the longer ending of Mark by modern scholars, although Jerome’s source is unknown until the twentieth century when Charles L. Freer of Detroit bought manuscripts from an Arab dealer in Gizeh near Cairo. With all this information, the modern biblical textual scholars had relied solely on the past, but the veracity of the past is not fully documented and appreciated. The longer ending of Mark was long discovered back in the fifth century.

St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) was a theologian but got interested in the art and science of textual problems (Metzger, 1992:153). The greatest contribution of Augustine, as stated by Metzger, is the critical criterion that the more difficult reading is to be preferred and that “preference should be given to readings that are current in importance” which has been emphasized by B. H. Streeter in his theory of “local texts” (Metzger, 1992:154). Such criteria continued to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance Period (Metzger, 1992:154-5). Metzger’s work is a great piece which has become the basis for many resources in the field of textual criticism in our days. Metzger has set the pace, but his ideas on patristic textual studies are rarely cited in the works of modern scholars.

There are a number of classifications when it comes to dealing with ancient biblical texts depending on geographical locations. Some scholars see them as text-types or textual categories or textual families depending on the hand who copied or the geographical location from which the manuscripts came from. We currently have four major text-types: Western, Caesarean, Byzantine and Alexandrian texts (Metzger, 1992:131-3; Ewert, 158-60; Epp, 2002:34-40; Patzia, 1995:131-5; McCain, 2005:100). These were earlier classified by WH and have been accepted and developed over the years by modern scholars. However, such nomenclatures employed in categorization of the textual centres and their traditions seem derailing. It is good to note that part of what was called ‘Western’ were major biblical scholarship and Christian activities which involved major cities in North Africa. Rome was the only site where manuscripts were duplicated, besides the deAfricanization of North Africa which was configured and generalized to be ‘Western’ (Michael, 2011:5-8; Mbiti, 1974:229; Warfield, 2001:518; Jenkins, 2008; Sanneh, 2003). Alexandria had a famous engagement with manuscripts and gave the best textual traditions (Codex Alexandrianus) in history, because the Alexandrian scribes were careful and expert emendators.⁶ Such an important engagement in North Africa with the manuscripts which are generated from Egypt can be reformed as African text rather than classifying the centre as ‘Western.’ If ‘Alexandrian text’ is maintained, ‘Roman text’ should be adopted to replace the designation ‘Western text.’

There are many variant readings in the text of the Christian New Testament from the twentieth century to the present which have been identified and captured in the critical apparatus of the NA²⁸ or the UBSGNT⁵. Many variant readings have been preferred today by textual critics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the text of the Christian New Testament and few from the Old Testament. Some of them have appeared in the critical apparatus of NA²⁸ and UBSGNT⁵ as credible and some are rejected for lack of majority witnesses. It should be said that ‘majority voice’ or *vox populi* of the texts does not guarantee originality, as has been the case with the critical apparatuses of NA²⁸ and UBSGNT⁵. What is called ‘majority’ depends on the availability of the manuscripts in the copying and preservation processes. The quality of the witnesses needs to be evaluated for a single manuscript might be the original. There are almost 400,000 later and ancient readings in the text which have been identified as many discoveries are made in the twenty-first century, which are more than the 140,000 words in the Christian New Testament according to Wallace (2011:26-7). However, early patristic textual scholarship had laid the background which got reconstructed as many other manuscripts with variant readings were discovered after the Age of the Enlightenment to the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

The Alexandrian scholars were famous in their dealing and treatment of the text of the Christian New Testament. The Alexandrian scholars attempt to the text of the Christian New

Testament was not to corrupt the text but to emend it. Corruption of the text of the Christian New Testament sprang up in the midst of the concern to raise the quality of the text to a reliable and acceptable text. This puts the Africans forward in dealing with manuscripts and reproducing them for the betterment of the text of the Christian New Testament, with a similar scribal practice in Timbuktu. The influence of such an eclectic African traditional involvement in ancient studies as setting forth papyrological tradition in Egypt has today given rise to the important witnesses for the modern eclectic text of the Christian New Testament. There is a need for reverberation in order to restructure such an early effort in the twenty-first century to produce a historico-traditional identity which solely relies on the African past. An African scholarly reflection on such a frontier and understanding will give the study of ancient manuscripts some flesh and set New Testament studies to attain its intended height in scholarly configurations.

Notes

1. The Coptic churches, like most houses of Christian worship, are divided into two distinct areas, the nave and the Sanctuary. The nave comprises the main body of the church where the laity stand while attending the liturgy. The sanctuary or *baykal*, is at the eastern end of the church. It is small room containing a freestanding altar. Coptic churches usually have more than one *baykal*, each with its own dedication. Also, see Lyster (2001:11).
2. It is generally thought to have been translated by 70 scholars in Egypt with the intention of providing the Jews with an alternative text; hence, many of them could not speak Hebrew as a result of Hellenism. The *Septuaginta* is the Greek version of the Old Testament which was translated to enhance the religion of the Jews (Judaism); hence, the Diaspora Jews could not speak their original language (Hebrew). It was used during worship in the synagogue and later became the Bible of the young Church in the first century before the composition of the New Testament. Throughout history, besides the *Septuaginta*, there have been various versions of the Bible manuscripts. These are the Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Alexandrinus, the Vulgate Latin version, the Mesoretic Hebrew Scrolls of the Old Testament, Syriac Peshitta, the Targums, Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion and Juxta Hebraica of Jerome for the Psalms. Tambiji (2014:10). Machen (1976:31); Henshaw (1963:32); Hengel (2002); Tov (1999); Tov, (2017); de Vries and Karrer (2013:3-20).
3. The Coptic synaxarium names 381 martyrs venerated by the Egyptian church. Nearly half of these are stated to have suffered in the Great Persecution. Saint Dimyana was martyred in the eastern Delta at Bilqas, a site associated with the Holy Family. Others include Menas, Mercurius, Apa Anub and Theodore. The persecution continued until the conversion of Constantine (AD 307-37). See Lyster, (2001:10).
4. Eldon Jay Epp states that quite a number of manuscripts were discovered outside Egypt. These are those discovered in the Negeb such as P⁵⁹, P⁶⁰, and P⁶¹ at Auja-el-Hafir an ancient Nessana in a collapsed room annexed to a small church; and P¹¹, P¹⁴ and P⁶⁸ at Sinai and two more at Khirbet Mird in a ruined Christian monastery on the site of the earlier fortress, Hyrcania, near the Dead Sea in Judea (P⁸³, P⁸⁴). Epp, (2002:64).
5. The term “heretic” which has been used by the Church Fathers to describe Marcion has been overstretched. It means to choose or select from an option or adopting a particular position at the expense of another. Marcion chose and was considered a heretic. Using the lens of the “heretics”, the church fathers were also heretics. What we have about Marcion has been the writings of opponents (such as Irenaeus and the five books of Tertullian) against him, not his original documents.

6. Aland and Aland (1987: 105, 155) state that Alexandrian text is known to be a “strict text, somewhat carelessly written: category 1” (100) which P70 belonged and according to the Alands, category 1 consists of “manuscripts of a very special quality which should always be considered in establishing the original text (e.g. the Alexandrian text belongs here).”

References

- Aland, K. and Aland, B. (1987). *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*. Translated by Erroll F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.
- Antonson, R. (2008). *To Timbuktu for a Haircut: A Journey through West Africa*. Toronto: Dundurn.
- Ankerberg, John and Dillon Burroughs (2009). *Taking a Stand for the Bible: Today's Leading Experts Answer Critical Questions about God's Word*. Oregon: Harvest House Publishers.
- Appiah, K. A. (1998). "Africa: The Hidden History." *The New York Review of Books*.
- Baker, D. L. (2010). *Two Testaments, One Bible*. Illinois: IVP.
- Blackman, E. C. (1948). *Marcion and His Influence*. London: SPCK.
- Blomberg, Craig L. (2014). *Can we still believe the Bible?* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press.
- Blomberg, Craig L. (2003). *Making Sense of the New Testament*. Leicester: IVP.
- Chosefu, C. (2013). "Challenges of Scripture Use in Sabaoth Translation Project: Towards a Participatory Approach to Bible Translation (PABT)" <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.127.6315&rep=rep1&type=pdf> Accessed 29th May, 2013.
- Comfort, P. W. (2001). "Textual Criticism and Theology" in Walter A. Elwell ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*: 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, pp. 1178-80.
- Comfort, P. W. (2012). "Texts and Manuscripts of the New Testament" in F. F. Bruce, J. I. Parker, Philip Comfort and Carl F. H. Henry. *The Origin of the Bible*. Updated edition. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, pp. 185-213.
- de Vries, J. and Karrer, M. (2013). "Early Christian Quotations and the Textual History of the Septuagint: A Summary of the Wuppertal Research Project and Introduction to the Volume," in Johannes de Vries and Martin Karrer ed. *Textual History and the Reception of Scripture in Early Christianity*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, pp. 3-20.
- Ehrman, B. D. (1993). *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- el-Masri, I. H. (2015). *Story of the Copts: The True Story of Christianity in Egypt*. *Merry Spring, CA: St Annmy Monastery*. http://www.saint-mary.net/coptic_faith/TheStoryoftheCoptstheTrueStoryofChristianityinEgy.pdf Accessed 14th April, 2015.
- Emmel, S. (2007). "Coptic literature in the Byzantine and Early Islamic world," in R.S. Bagnall ed. *Egypt in the Byzantine World - 300-700*. Cambridge.
- Epp, E. J. (2002). "Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism: Moving from the Nineteenth Century to the Twentieth-First Century," in David Alan Black ed. *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*. Michigan: Baker Academic.
- Ewert, D. (1983). *A General Introduction to the Bible: From Modern Tablets to Modern Translations*. Michigan: Zondervan.
- Farouk-Alli, Aslam and Mathee, M. S. (2008). "The Tombouctou Manuscripts Project: Social History Approaches," in Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne eds. *The Meaning of Timbuktu*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Gee, J. (2012). "An Overview of Coptic Literature." <http://www.coptic.org/language/overview.pdf> Accessed 16th March, 2015.
- Gratien, C. (2013). "Race, Slavery and Islamic Law in the Early Modern Atlantic," *Journal of North African Studies* 18:3, pp. 454-468.

- Hammer, J. (2016). *The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu and their Race to Save the World's Most Precious Manuscripts*. New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-New Delhi: Simon & Schuster.
- Hengel, M. (2002). *The Septuagint as Christian Literature: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon*. Edinburgh-New York: T & T Clark.
- Henshaw, T. (1963). *New Testament Literature in the Light of Modern Scholarship*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Jenkins, P. (2008). *The Lost History of Christianity*. New York: HarperOne.
- Kenyon, F. G. (1926). *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*. London: Macmillan and Co.
- Lyster, W. (2001). "Coptic Egypt and the Holy Family," in Gawdat Gabra ed. *Be Thou There: The Holy Family's Journey in Egypt*. Cairo-New York: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Machen, J. G. (1976). *The New Testament: An Introduction to Its Literature and History*. Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1974). *African Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Heinemann, reprint.
- McCain, D. (2005). *Notes on New Testament Introduction*. Rev.ed. Bukuru: ACTS.
- Meltzer, L, Hooper, L and Kinghardt, G. eds. (2008). *Timbuktu: Script and Scholarship*. Cape Town: Tombouctou Manuscripts Project/Iziko.
- Metzger, B. M. (1992). *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*. Rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Michael, M. (2011). *Christian Theology and African Traditions*. Kaduna: Yuty Graphics.
- Naguib, S. (1997). "The Era of Martyrs: Texts and Contexts of Religious Memory." *Between Desert and City: the Coptic Orthodox Church Today*. Nelly van Doorn-Harder and Kari Vogt eds. Oslo: Novus Forlag
- Oden, T. C. (2011). *The African Memory of Mark: Reussessing Early Church Tradition*. Illinois: IVP.
- Padgett, A. G. (1997). "Marcion," in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development*. Leicester: IVP.
- Patzia, A. G. (1995). *The Making of the New Testament* (Illinois: IVP.
- Perrin, N. (1974). *The New Testament: An Introduction*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc.
- Polotsky, H. J. (1950). "Modes grecs en copte?" *Coptic Studies in Honor of Walter E. Crum*. Boston: The Byzantine Institute, pp. 73-90.
- Sadiq, L. (2016). "Plateau JNI Secretary Kidnapped"
<https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/general/plateau-jni-secretary-kidnapped/172243.html> Accessed 9th June, 2018.
- Sanneh, L. (1983). *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Sanneh, L. (2003). *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West*. Michigan: Eerdmans.
- Scott, R. (2010). *The Challenge of Political Islam: Non-Muslims and the Egyptian State*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Smith, J. K. (2013). "Coptic Papacy and Power in a Changing Post-Mubarak Egypt." A Master of Arts' Thesis in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University, 2013. <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/etd.sendfile?accession=osu1366214073&disposition=inline> Accessed 4th July, 2014.
- Smith, W. A. (2014). *A Study of the Gospels in Codex Alexandrinus: Codicology, Palaeography and Scribal Hands*. Leiden-Boston: Brill.

- Tambiyi, G. Y. (2014). *The African Church under Fire: Problems and Prospects*. Kaduna: Tubase Prints and Publications.
- Tenney, M. C. (1985). *New Testament Survey*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Thiessen, C. H. (1976). *Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Till, W. C. (2014). "Coptic and Its Value." <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/api/datastream?publicationPid=uk-ac-man-scw:1m2040&datastreamId=POST-PEER-REVIEW-PUBLISHERS-DOCUMENT.PDF>.
- Tov, E. (1999). *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint*. Leiden-Boston-Koln: Brill.
- Tov, E. (2017). "The Septuagint Translation of the Hebrew Bible: Its Nature and Importance for Scholarship." <http://www.accordancefiles1.com/products/introlxx1.pdf>.
- Wallace, D. B. (2011). "Lost in Transmission: How Badly did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?" in Daniel Wallace ed. *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscripts, Patristic and Apocryphal Evidence*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications.
- Walter, V. (2012). "Versions of the Bible," in F. F. Bruce, J. I. Packer, Philip Comfort and Carl F. H. Henry. *The Origin of the Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Warfield, B. B. (2001). "Africa and Christian Latin Literature," John E. Meeter ed. *Benjamin B. Warfield: Selected Writings* vol. 2. New Jersey: P&R Publishing.
- Wells, J. W. (2007). *Sahidic Coptic New Testament (2007)*. <http://sahidica.warpco.com>. Accessed 15th May, 2014.