

METHODOLOGIES IN NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS TO THE INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL TEXT

JOSHUA OLUWASEYI ADEJARE

Global Scholars, Department of Religion and Philosophy
University of Jos

Abstract

The Bible we have today is the product of many biblical manuscripts which were discovered many years ago from the period of the early church patriarchs. The manuscripts were recopied by hands from one century to another century consecutively even though the New Testament original manuscripts were no longer in existence. The problem is that there are many New Testament manuscripts and in an attempt to regain the autograph or manuscripts close to the original manuscript, scholars have proffered methods or possible solutions in constructing the biblical text since we no longer have the autograph. The question arises, what is the best approach in textual criticism in interpreting the biblical text and why is it the preferred approach? The methodologies in textual criticism to be examined are the majority text, thoroughgoing eclecticism, reasoned eclecticism, genealogical or stemmatic and conjectural emendation. The strength and weakness of each method are also examined. The purpose of this work is to examine the different methods textual critics use to reconstruct the biblical text and to know the most preferred or adopted method. The methodologies employed in this work are analytical, descriptive and text critical methods. This work discovers that among the five approaches used in Textual criticism, the most preferred method is the reasoned eclecticism. This is because this method makes use of both internal and external evidences to reconstruct the biblical text which has the highest tendency of producing the manuscripts close to the autograph. Although textual critical methodology is mainly applied where a passage has textual variants, this work also extracted useful insights or guidelines from the studies of the methodologies of textual criticism and related how these insights could help a contemporary reader in the understanding and interpreting the scriptures. The use of combined measures, with the awareness and restriction of assumptions, and the dependence on the Holy Spirit are the best approaches in the interpretation of the scriptures. This work will be of benefit to biblical students, scholars and theologians.

Key Words: Textual Criticism, Manuscripts, Methodology, New Testament and Interpretation

Introduction

Textual criticism is a crucial and relevant field of study in contemporary religious and theological education in Nigeria. Textual studies entail the theoretical and practical aspect or study of textual criticism. The practical aspect of textual criticism deals with the studies and scrutinizing of ancient biblical manuscripts. This practical aspect is a reality in Nigeria through the Centre for the Study of Ancient Religious Scrolls and Manuscript, Department of Religion and Philosophy University of Jos. Several theological institutions and religious studies of universities in Nigeria and Kenya have been trained in this aspect for over a decade. The researcher affirms in this article *'The Impact of New Testament Passages with Textual Issues to Contemporary Biblical Scholarship'* that textual studies is one of the constructive tools in history over the years and to this present time that has helped in the critical study and understanding of the New Testament. This is because it gives students and scholars the avenue to explore the opportunities of studying or scrutinizing ancient and recent manuscripts that are in one way or the other connected to the Bible. Textual studies give the knowledge of how the Bible came into existence with the production of various versions and translations. This made the researcher to recommend the introduction of Textual studies in theological institutions and religious department of universities in Nigeria.

A manuscript is a work documented with bare hands. In the primitive times before the dispensation of print, people wrote with their hands. The scribes copied and recopied manuscripts with their hands. These manuscripts were not void of human tendencies like alteration or omission. The Old Testament scribes wrote with great care and manuscripts which have obvious alteration and errors were immediately destroyed by the scribe, however, the New Testament scribes retained all manuscripts irrespective of these tendencies. There are many New Testament manuscripts and in an attempt to regain the autograph or manuscripts close to the original manuscript, scholars have proffered methods or possible solutions in constructing the biblical text since we no

longer have the autograph. Each textual methodology has its own strength and weaknesses and scholars have used the combination of more than one approach in reconstructing the biblical text. Although textual critical methodology is mainly applied where a passage has textual variants, this work also extracts useful principles or guidelines from the methodology that can help the reader in the interpretation and understanding of the Bible. The purpose of this work is to examine the different methods textual critics use to reconstruct the biblical text and to know the mostly recommended method. The methodologies to be used in this paper is analytical, descriptive and text critical methods.

Hurtado explains that the sacred book which the followers of Christ make use of today did not fall from heaven but were documented by people in this present world (287). The New Testament from the primitive period was documented in Greek (Tenny 842). Alfred is of the opinion that majuscules or uncials style of writing were used for private use while cursive or minuscule style of writing were used for public use such as “correspondence, business or household” (1). This view by Alfred is subject to supposition and approval other scholars. One of the reasons why Textual criticism focuses on the recovery of the main intent of the author is that the autograph of manuscripts connected to New Testament for some reasons such as “wear and tear, persecution, war, fire and as well as others causes ” as indicated by Croy are not in existence (138). Some are of the opinion that the efforts to regain the original intent of the author may not be a reality. Although scholars like Cole in his book *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* has postulated that the desire of textual specialist to gain the main idea of the author is “laudable but impossible” (33), but studies have shown that the discoveries of recent and better manuscripts which are close to the original has given the privilege to have access to better translations and versions of the scriptures. Blomberg affirms that “The existing texts of the Gospels are generally in as good shape as any portion of the ancient copies of the scriptures and in better shape than in many part” although the autograph does not exist but the earliest fragment of the New Testament exist such as P⁵² (84).

If manuscripts were not discovered, studied and preserved, the reality of believers having the written Word of God will be uncertain. In ancient times, Scriptorium was the place large number of scribes rewrote biblical manuscripts (McCain and Keener 55). Bock ascertains that “The Gospels present the life of Christ thematically and thus is to be viewed a complementary and supplementary rather than contradictory” (23). However, over the years, there have been remarkable successes by some scholars to achieve this aim. The variations we have in the manuscripts are as a result of the deliberate and non-deliberate changes that arise due to the recopying of the manuscripts over the years (Preus 64). Most recent scholarly Bible translations at the end of each page of the Bible indicates the necessarily variations that are present in the text (Blomberg22). Tambiyi identified the common textual methods used by recent textual scholars as Byzantine Priority, reasoned and thoroughgoing eclecticism. He further explains that these approaches look into the internal and external witnesses in connection to a text (64). Ngadda and Adejare add that the Eclectic western approach supports the short reading of translations and the church fathers quotation as evidence in other Western witnesses(48). Since many biblical manuscripts are being discovered and recovered from the enlightenment period to this dispensation, it has become necessary to investigate various approaches or methods that are prevalent in the past and present which aids the effective studies of manuscripts and to know the generally accepted method.

1. Methodologies in New Testament Textual Criticism

Byzantine Priority or Majority Text

Ladd indicates that the source of the Textus Receptus or Received Text which produced the King James or Authorized version is from the Byzantine or Syrian group of manuscripts which contains several intentional and unintentional changes and these changes are embedded in the version although widely acceptable but the changes makes the version of a lesser value (78).The majority text which is also known as the Byzantine text proceeds from numerous manuscripts of the New Testament. In 1561, Erasmus produced his Greek New Testament which was derived from two main Byzantine documents and other documents. It is from this Byzantine text that the Received text or

Textus Receptus is derived. Metzger reflects that within the jurisdiction of Byzantine, a large proportion of the existing document has some features of the Byzantine.(Evans and Porter 1211).

Maurice presents that this approach which is known as Byzantine Text form may look outdated and not generally accepted by scholars but it has the tendency to restore the real text of the New Testament. The Byzantine Text form takes into critical examination the variations embedded in a text or manuscripts as documented by the scribes whether deliberately or not deliberately (127). The Byzantine witnesses claims that since many manuscripts are brought together irrespective of the families they belong, this approach has the highest tendency of discovering the manuscripts that is close to the original, “These witnesses appears to preserve the basic Transmissional form of the text far more accurately and consistently than witnesses of any other text-type” (Maurice 128).Kilpatrick argues that the Syrian or Byzantine text which is known as the Textus Receptus is not accepted by Westcott and Hort but for some reasons. Scholars like Bover, Merk, Vogels and von Soden do not completely condemn the Byzantine text. There are deliberate and un-intentional missing words in the New Testament and at times when comparing the Received Text which other witnesses, the Received Text seems to be right. No manuscripts or witnesses are completely free from the changes and omissions (33-39).

Maurice really writes to defend the usefulness of the majority text method. He affirms strongly that despite the fact that many scholars seems not to appreciate this method, the usefulness of this method is still very evidence. He portrays this by extracting the weakness or confusion of the eclectic method which is mostly upheld by scholars that sets in when manuscripts which do not pass the criteria of the eclectic are well supported by other patristic and relevant manuscripts.

Thoroughgoing Eclecticism

Elliot defines thoroughgoing eclecticism as a method that examines the differences in textual manuscripts by a persistent and continuous use of transcriptional and intrinsic

evidence (103). This school of thought focuses more on the understanding of variant than the understanding of the script. He states that examples of those who are unknowingly thoroughgoing criticizers are learned and unlearned readers of the scriptures and those that are involved in Greek New Testament exegesis (105). Elliot specifically explains that the procedures and pattern for the use of this textual method as he has indicated in the past in not an irrational exercise (110).

Thoroughgoing eclecticism is also referred to as rigorous eclecticism which G.D Kilpatrick and J.K Elliott defend. The internal evidence is majorly used and considered in making sensitive decisions on a text. It depends mainly on the contents of the scribes in manuscripts (Evans and Porter 1212 Porter 1213). In explaining the variations in some pages of the New Testament, Elliot affirms that “Thoroughgoing eclecticism explains the change from the original singular to have been motivated by the common scribal tendency to harmonize parallel passages” (112). This method is an orthodox of text-critical analyses. It is necessary to highlight Elliott’s position on Thoroughgoing eclecticism which include there are no numerous manuscripts newly discovered that comes with a real and unique contents but only few manuscripts do. Newly authentic discovered manuscripts may not necessarily render established truth derived from older manuscripts null and void (120). Elliot profess that “it may well be that modern textual criticism is less confident about the need to or ability to establish the original text and that its best contributions to biblical studies is to show how variation arose, ideally in what directions, and to explain the significant of all variants (124).

This approach is one that stands alone. It focuses and values only what is written in the text that is, it critically examines the vocabularies in the text, the style of writing, the grammatical structure of the text and the errors if any to understand what the intent of the author or deduce which manuscripts is closer to the original or to detect the cause of variations in a text. Some scholars sees the use of only internal criteria to verify the authenticity of a manuscripts as a serious flaw because there could be other relevant data connected to the text which is not literally written in the text.

Reasoned Eclecticism

Martins and Davids document that subjective criticism is a rule that makes use of internal criticism whereby any chosen variants for the text can be derived from any determined document. Reasoned eclecticism makes use of both the internal and external evidence in examining different manuscripts (1172). Reasoned eclecticism is a method in textual criticism that takes into consideration all evidences which includes other manuscripts that traces or supports the manuscripts under study and the addition of the literal characteristics such as the idea, changes or forms of documentation of the writer. The former is known as external evidence and the latter internal evidence. The principles of this method states that the reading that is close to the original is one that has the full support and backing of both the internal and external evidence. Thoroughgoing or rigorous supports mainly the proofs that proceed from within the text. Historical-documentary or majority text method focuses on the proof that comes from outside the manuscripts (Black 79).

Metzger depicts that it has been called eclecticism because in its application textual critics pay less attention to questions of date and families of manuscripts than to internal or contextual consideration. The use of the adjective rational in this connection is not to suggest that all other method of criticism are irrational but that the critic is concerned primarily with finding plausible reasons based on internal consideration to justify in each case his choice of one reading as original and the other as secondary (175-6).

Reasoned eclecticism cherishes and values written materials and manuscripts. Thoroughgoing eclecticism focuses mainly on common proves in manuscripts. Scholars like Epps have categorized those who support and make use of the former as eclectic generalists and the latter eclectic specialist. Another factor that makes thoroughgoing eclecticism not to be completely reliable is that it only focuses on internal proves and Hort has indicated that authors are not always accurate in the usage of words that they use in a text which makes it not always authentic to depend only on what is present in a particular text. More ideas about that text in study could be derived by studying other related manuscripts connected or related directly or indirectly (Black 81). The difference

between the two methods is also traced to the source of the history of the manuscript formed. The differences between Reasoned Eclecticism and Documentary Approach are while the first supports both internal and external evidence; the second accepts only evidences that come outside the text. This method gives little or no focus on the theoretical and pragmatic aspect of it (Black 82).

Thoroughgoing eclecticism is right to argue that no reading ought to be accepted or rejected merely because it does or does not occur in some favored manuscripts and tradition. At the same time however, the more occurrences of a reading does not give its equal status with other reading, when a reading occur only in a few late witnesses for example, it must be demonstrated and not assumed that it could be an ancient survivor rather than an ancient scribal correction or emendation (footnote 82).

Igbari affirms questions that seek to know the dates of the manuscripts, the extent of geographical location and the numbers of manuscripts that contain the readings are connected to external evidence. These two evidences when used together are referred to critical or reasoned eclectic method (Chap 7). This approach believes that manuscripts which have gone through the screening of both the secret and open principles are qualified to be authentic or close to the original. The fact that this approach is well comfortable with scholars does not mean that it does not have its other side, notwithstanding, the fact that many factors are put into consideration shows that the ground of acceptance are justifiable.

Genealogical or Stemmatic Approach

P. Maas and M.L. West are fans of this approach. This classical approach is focused at repositioning the existing grouped manuscripts by re-examining the various different manuscripts with the purpose of discovering a similar document and the most authentic one. This method entails the different manuscript in the stemma which is also known as a closed Recension (Evans and Porter 1211).

Metzger explains that the profounder of a statistical method known as comparison of trees is Dom Henry Quentin. His theory helps in the classification of text among families. This principle might not be applicable to all situations such as the reading that can be found in numerous manuscripts. Sir Walter W. Greg, a specialist in Middle English came up with another statistical analysis of variant readings. The genealogy of manuscripts can be arrived out by studying the different groups derivable from existing manuscripts. This approach has nothing to do with the authenticity of the variant readings. He came up with workable probabilities of relationships among manuscripts with the help thoughtful and sensual abilities. He also made use of needless increase of false-mathematical objects or figures which made his work meaningful. Burnett Hillman Streeter came up with a tree that shows the connections that exist between a text with corresponding witnesses that support them (164-6). Hillman adds that “A tree (i.e. stemma) is a description of the relationship of readings found in manuscripts, and ought never to be understood as a statement that A was copied from B. It merely states that the readings now found in A are derivable from readings now found in B, after the examination of all the extant evidence” (Metzger 166).

Conjectural Emendation

Textual scholars involve in guess or presupposition of what the real intent of the author might be when the reading in a particular text is unrealistic or unattainable. The purpose of making guesses or speculations is to correct the errors present in the text. Some errors in a text could either be intentional or non-intentional in the sense that the scribe might have deliberately supplied it in the text with the motive of making the reading to be more smooth or acceptable. Some error could be in the text as a result of the degradation of the text over time. A guess can be regarded to be necessary when it fits into the style of the writing and when it is able to bring out the cause of the error in other readings (Metzger 182). “Just as different witnesses in a classroom may give significantly different and yet ultimately complementary accounts of the same event, so the Gospel account can often be sown to fit together in striking ways” (Hurtado 39). Kilpatrick concludes by disapproving the damnation of any text due to its belonging to a particular family of manuscript (50).

2. Strength and Weakness of Methodologies in New Testament Textual Criticism and the best Approach

Byzantine Priority /Majority Text

Maurice extensively writes in favor of the Byzantine Priority in his work “The Case for Byzantine Priority” and ascertains that the use of contemporary approach such as internal and external witness to regain the autograph of the text of the New Testament seems to yield a positive and good result but this approach is not suitable in all situations. Maurice specifies that this type of method is not the same as the one that adopts history as its method. This method has the text form of Byzantine as the major contents of historical process and the text form is not used as a minor or less relevant one. The word Text form as explained by the author indicates the major script which produces other form or categories of scripts. While Byzantine priority views the progressive nature of the scripts in holistic sense, recent eclecticism views the scripts as a unique separate entity (125).

The reason why many scholars have rejected this textual method is that the date, transmission and relationship of the manuscripts completely take the place of the numbering of manuscripts. Metzger reflects that within the jurisdiction of Byzantine, a large proportion of the existing document has some features of the Byzantine. This method does not take into consideration the recent findings of textual transmission of primitive times (Evans and Porter 1211

Maurice a scholar in this field defends the Byzantine or Majority text forms and notes that it is possible to regain the authentic text of the New Testament in an accurate form through the examination and evaluation of numerous texts. He insinuates that it is possible to regain the authentic text of the New Testament in an accurate form through the examination and evaluation of numerous texts.

Thorough going Eclecticism

Thoroughgoing eclecticism does not rely on sensual presuppositions although sensual assumptions were used by primitive scholars of the New Testament some whose presuppositions are still generally accepted and valuable. Although thoroughgoing

scholars do not accept the fact that some manuscripts are superior to the other or well recognized than the others, and the fact that they do not consult other “relevant” manuscripts before making decision does not mean that thoroughgoing scholars are ignorant of the advancement of the past events in relation to the Gospels, epistles and other books of the second section of the scriptures. Thoroughgoing scholars place a high value on the past and present dogmas of the followers of Christ. The aim of thoroughgoing scholars is not to discover and affirm the manuscripts with the wording that is nearest to that of the real writer but their intention is to know the purpose of the variation present in other text. This method follows the procedures and difference embedded in Atticism because the apparatus criticus contains manuscripts that shows the pattern and order of the writer. This method does not make decision on the most important manuscripts or readings based on the time the manuscripts were assumed to be originated and the extent of the wide spread capacity of the manuscripts. This method affirms that the idea of the content of manuscripts should come before the value of the manuscripts. This method is believed to help scholars to come to a logical conclusion and acceptance on the authenticity of any manuscripts or readings (120-3).

Some scholar sees this high dependence of scribe documentation as a key weakness of this method, the textual historical pattern and progress is also not considered when using this method (Evans and Porter 1212-3). Scholars have suggested that one of the disadvantages of using eclectic western approach is that the complete New Testament edition is not valued the way the church fathers and the various editions are (Fee 151).

Genealogical or Stemmatic

Genealogical or Stemmatic approach is aimed at repositioning the existing grouped manuscripts by re-examining the various different manuscripts with the purpose of discovering a similar document and the most authentic one. Some scholars oppose the Genealogical or Stemmatic approach because it is focused on documented history. The use of an opened Recension makes this method hard to accomplish (Evans and Porter 1211).

Conjectural Emendation

There are times when the only option left after an extensive study of the manuscripts is to make some assumptions through the observations. In some cases, the assumptions end up to be true and okay while some assumptions leads to confusion or/and more rhetorical and non-rhetorical questions. However, conjectural emendation is a very vital approach in textual studies. Scholars make use conjectural emendation or guess of what the real intent of the author might be when the reading in a particular text is unrealistic or unattainable. This is to correct any alteration in a text.

Reasoned Eclecticism the best Approach

The common method highly recognized and appreciated by scholars is eclectic method. Eclecticism is derived from the Greek word eklegoma which connotes “to choose.” This textual method ‘reasoned eclecticism’ supports the use of both internal and external approach after a careful examination on them and conclusive statement is made or final decision arrived at pertaining to what needs to be accepted or rejected in a particular reading. Many current textual specialists make use of this approach (Lillo 5). Wallace indicated in his article “*Mark 16: 8 as the Conclusion to the Second Gospel*” that for seventeen years he upheld the Byzantine text approach but when he studied over 10, 000 pages of text critical documents, he discovered that the Alexandrian and Western text is completely different from the Byzantine text and from then, he adopted the reasoned eclecticism approach (Black 8). Fee in his article *Rigorous or Reasoned Eclecticism* explains that eclecticism is a word that has different meaning to different people. From one perspective it is seen as a method used in textual criticism which is also referred to as rational or reasoned eclecticism. Vagrancy supports this method and profess that every aspects such as the internal and external evidence are unique and are very important. The rigorous, thoroughgoing or consistent eclecticism is promoted by Prof. Kilpatrick and Dr. Elliot which neglects the time a document comes up with its non-internal evidence. It upholds mainly the style, vocabularies and changes of the manuscripts (124-5).

Westcott and Hort support this method but were criticized by some scholars because the practical aspect of this method varies from the exact method. There are other scholars that has worked on this approach and developed it to a more acceptable form, examples of these scholars are E.C Colwell and Gunter Zuntzi. The work of Gunter Zuntz is recognized by scholars to be outstanding because it gives a full explanation of how this method works and what makes it preferable than other methods. In his studies of the epistle, he began by examining critically all other manuscripts that is connected to the epistles, grouped them and generated a means of identification thereby using both the external and internal evidence (Black 80-1). Maurice supposes that one of the disadvantages of the critical eclectic approach as a process whereby manuscripts with different readings are independently studied and classified into groups and the most likely to be the reading which is nearest to the original must have met all criteria including the examination of all witnesses within and outside the manuscripts. He also pointed out that this approach brings confusion and contradiction when the witnesses such as texts, translations and patristic writings that supports a particular manuscripts is completely different from the witnesses that upholds another manuscripts (127). Reasoned eclecticism is believed by most scholars to be the most preferred approach. This is a method in textual criticism that takes into consideration all evidences which includes other manuscripts that traces or supports the manuscripts under study and the addition of the literal characteristics such as the idea, changes or forms of documentation of the manuscript.

Maurice gives the principle of the internal and external evidence. The rules guiding the internal principle are, the main scripts which produce other scripts should be accepted; the hardest scripts written by the scribes are to be accepted; the script which its clavis, words and content is familiar to the real author should be accepted; the scripts with words in one passage which is combined with that of another passage should be rejected; a script that has being influenced or added ideas by the scribes should not be taken as a main source; the major focus of a script should be the contents of the scribes; the major reason for many non-authentic scripts is mainly unintentional errors of the

scribes and not their purposeful corrections; one of the shorter or longer scripts is to be cherished (130-2).

The rules guiding the external evidence are, the amount of text of the New Testament that have been kept are more than those that have been assumed; scripts with many approval of existence should be undoubtedly accepted; if attainable, the physical amount of scripts should be brought low; the scripts are to be valued in terms of their worth and not the quantity; scripts that have lived and survived for years are relevant; scripts which fall into the class of small unit might lack Transmissional approval; a complete dependence of ancient scripts in terms of transmission could be devastating. Maurice proceeds further to give three suggestions on how these two approaches (internal and external) can be equalized. Firstly, the motive of examining manuscripts should be to extract the reason for previous scribal changes. Secondly, the deliberate changes involved in manuscripts should be examined and evaluated. Contemporary guesses or assumption on independent separated manuscripts can be verified or adjusted by the study of the past event of the manuscripts (132-6).

It is interesting that Maurice who deeply supports the Byzantine Priority or Majority Text not only recognizes the relevance of the reasoned eclecticism approach both gives the features of the internal and external evidence. As stated above, these methodologies or approach are used and applied when there is variant readings in the biblical text. These methodologies give the scholar or reader an understanding on how to handle bible passages with textual variant thereby taking into consideration all the necessary factors before determining a better reading in a biblical text.

3. It's Implications in the Interpretation of Biblical Text.

Textual critical methodology is mainly applied where a passage has textual variants, however, this work also extract useful insight or guidelines from the studies of the methodologies of textual criticism and relate how the insights could help a contemporary reader in the understanding and interpreting the scriptures. The useful insight in understanding and interpreting the scriptures are

The Use of other Relevant Materials:

In order to understand the Bible, there is a need of gathering other relevant materials which is related to the subject or text under study. These materials could have relevant and useful information that will help to understand what the scriptures says. At times, the writer may not put down all the details needed to understand the passage but others might have embarked on some intensive, extensive and critical study that interpret the passage in a holistic and applicable sense. The use of Bible commentaries, Bible concordance, Bible dictionaries, Bible atlas, Bible hand book and Word Study etc. should never be neglected in studying a biblical passage.

A Critical Examination of the Contents of the Scriptures:

Examining extensively the written words in a text is capable of giving insight to the message(s) of the writer in the scriptures. The understanding of the use of the vocabulary in the passage of the scriptures is most likely to give the reader an understanding of what is written in the passage. The understanding of the use of figures of speech and idiomatic expression as used in the passage by the writer in most cases gives a better understanding of what the author is talking about. Therefore, all these things should be put into consideration including the style of the writer which has a lot to reveal in some cases about the personality of the writer in an attempt to understand the Bible passage (i.e. in the New Testament the writing style of Apostle Paul is completely different from that of Luke or Peter). The historical use of the commentaries and the Bible references at the bottom of the Bible and middle of the texts in a margin of contemporary study Bibles respectively contributes a lot to the understanding and interpretation of the Bible passages.

The Combined use of Materials and Examination of the Passage:

This is an effective approach of studying or interpreting passages of the Bible because the materials consulted for the understanding of the passages do not only contain numerous information but additional details from what has being obtained from the critical examination of the text. The information derived from the two ends joined together hopes to give a better and preferable holistic understanding and interpretation of the scriptures.

The use of both means might not be quite easy depending of the in-depth study it requires however, the combined details should remove every form of confusion or non-clarity about the message the writer is passing across in the passage. Scholars who take good time to dig out the truth in God's word using these means with the help of the Holy Spirit end up becoming more sound and grounded in the truth.

The Awareness and Restrictions of Personal Presuppositions and Worldviews:

Everyone has worldviews or positions about matters that pattern to life. Some world views arise as a result of the background of the person, other may be as a result of the various experiences in life. Another source of presuppositions is the books or materials a person reads. Presuppositions and world views are very good and they have a positive impact in individual's lives. Whatever be the case, a right interpretation of passages of the scriptures begins when we are aware of our various presuppositions and world views and put them aside while studying the Bible. This is to avoid reading into the scriptures which prevents the reader from getting the full idea of the message(s) or motive of the writer. If one pretends about the reality of these presuppositions, one will consciously or unconsciously read into the text, not allowing the text to speak for itself which will end up making the reader to lose vital information or revelation embedded in the Bible. Assumption of the message(s) of the writer most especially in the Bible could be very dangerous because in most cases, it leads to heresy which is in serious conflict with the truth present in the scriptures.

Complete Dependence on the Holy Spirit:

No matter the approach a person uses to study the Bible, the absence of the Spirit of God who is the teacher and revealer of secrets in studying scriptures will end up been an ordinary book or letter which has no impact in the life of the reader. Every book of the scriptures or godly materials and literatures has the ability of transforming lives and meeting the needs of the reader only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Total dependence on the Holy Spirit should be done with any approach of studying the Bible.

“But the Helper the Holy Spirit whom the father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrances all things that I have said to you” (John 14:26 NKVJ).

As indicated in this article *“A Critical Examination of the Synoptic Gospels: It’s Relationship with Textual Criticism and Contributions to Contemporary Biblical Studies.”* that theories or observations has the capacity of impacting lives positively, in the same vein, the applications of these observations/ discoveries or principles will help the reader to efficiently understand the message(s) of the writer in the Bible.

Conclusion

This paper examined the Methodologies in New Testament Textual Criticism and Its Implication to the Interpretation of the Biblical Text. There are several approaches in the studies of manuscripts. Maurice a scholar in this field defends the Byzantine or Majority text forms and notes that that it is possible to regain the authentic text of the New Testament in an accurate form through the examination and evaluation of numerous texts. This textual approach is seen out-dated by majority textual scholars because it does not take into consideration the recent findings of textual transmission of primordial periods.

Elliot defines thoroughgoing eclecticism as a method that examines the differences in textual manuscripts by a persistent and continuous use of transcriptional and intrinsic evidence. Thoroughgoing eclecticism does not consult other important manuscripts before making decision; some scholars see this as a weakness however, this approach is supported by few scholars. Genological or Stemmatic approach is aimed at repositioning the existing grouped manuscripts by re-examining the various different manuscripts with the purpose of discovering a similar document and the most authentic one. Scholars make use conjectural emendation or guess of what the real intent of the author might be when the reading in a particular text is unrealistic or unattainable. This is to correct any alteration in a text. Reasoned Eclecticism is believed by most scholars to be the most preferred approach. This is a method in Textual studies that takes into consideration all evidences which includes other manuscripts that traces or supports the

manuscripts under study and the addition of the literal characteristics such as the idea, changes or forms of documentation of the manuscript.

The use of other relevant materials, critical examination of the content of the passage, awareness and restriction of personal presuppositions, combination of approaches and complete trust on the Spirit of God are the suggested ways to approach passages of the scriptures “But when He the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth... ” (John 16:13 NIV). Therefore, the following of these suggestions listed above will help the biblical students, scholars and believers to interpret and understand any given passage of the scriptures.

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