

GIGO: Unearthing a Decisive New Tipping Point for Textual Criticism

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Introduction

The New Testament books were seen as Scripture from the very beginning.[\[1\]](#) They were passed around from church to church[\[2\]](#) and copies must have been made of the originals (i.e. the “autographs”) from the very beginning. Manuscripts of the NT proliferated through the centuries as copies were made of earlier copies, and copies made of those. The large number of such manuscripts that survive to this date - some 5,795 are currently known - guarantee that the text has passed down to us exactly, despite the fact that the original autographs are long since gone.[\[3\]](#)

The fact that the autographs and the earliest copies no longer exist[\[4\]](#) is not surprising. They were written on papyrus, a paper (below, left) made of transverse layers of the pith of the papyrus plant (below, right).



This material is not very durable and eventually crumbles into dust. It can survive for millennia only in very dry climates, such the Egyptian desert. It is not surprising that all of our extant NT papyri, which are the earliest remaining manuscripts, were found in Egypt. The following chart[\[5\]](#) shows how few manuscripts have been found from the earliest Christian centuries:

Century	New Testament Manuscripts			Lectionaries							
	Papyri	Uncials	Minuscules	Uncials	Minuscules						
2nd	2	-	-	-	-	9th	-	53	13	113	5
2nd/3rd	5	1	-	-	-	9th/10th	-	1	4	-	1
3rd	28	2	-	-	-	10th	-	17	124	108	38
3rd/4th	8	2	-	-	-	10th/11th	-	3	8	3	4
4th	14	14	-	1	-	11th	-	1	429	15	227
4th/5th	8	8	-	-	-	11th/12th	-	-	33	-	13
5th	2	36	-	1	-	12th	-	-	555	6	486
5th/6th	4	10	-	-	-	12th/13th	-	-	26	-	17
6th	7	51	-	3	-	13th	-	-	547	4	394
6th/7th	5	5	-	1	-	13th/14th	-	-	28	-	17
7th	8	28	-	4	-	14th	-	-	511	-	308
7th/8th	3	4	-	-	-	14th/15th	-	-	8	-	2
8th	2	29	-	22	-	15th	-	-	241	-	171
8th/9th	-	4	-	5	-	15th/16th	-	-	4	-	2
						16th	-	-	136	-	194

Now,

while the original text of the NT has been preserved *in toto* among the many extant manuscripts, and especially among the so-called Byzantine manuscripts, it is noteworthy that **most of the earliest manuscripts, both papyri and uncials, are noteworthy for their corrupt character.**

For example, consider the 2nd-century papyrus P⁶⁶. In its extant length of 808 verses, this manuscript has 400 hundred itacisms and another 482 “singular readings,” 40% of which are nonsense readings (which makes for one singular error for every 17 words - and that doesn’t include errors in it that may also be found in other manuscripts), and another early papyrus, P⁷⁵, dated ca. AD 200, has 145 itacisms and 257 other singular readings, 25% of which are nonsensical.[\[6\]](#)

Meanwhile, the 4th-century uncials, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, which are touted by textual critics as the “most reliable manuscripts” are also extremely corrupt:

Codex Vaticanus omits words or whole clauses 1,491 times in the Gospel accounts alone and is “disfigured throughout with repetitions.” Codex Sinaiticus ‘abounds with ‘errors of the eye and pen ...’ On many occasions ten, twenty, thirty, forty words are dropped through very carelessness. ‘Letters and words, even whole sentences, are frequently written twice over, or begun and

immediately cancelled: while that gross blunder ... whereby a clause is omitted because it happens to end in the same words as the clause preceding, occurs no less times than 115 in the new Testament.'[\[7\]](#)

Herman Hoskier did a careful comparison of these two codices and found more than 3,000 significant disagreements between them in the Gospel books alone,[\[8\]](#) which actually exceeds the number of times they agree with each other.[\[9\]](#)

The idea, then, that the vast majority of NT manuscripts, the so-called Byzantine ones, are “secondary and corrupt”[\[10\]](#) and are to be ignored, and the true, original text of the NT is to be sought among the early, so-called Alexandrian manuscripts, is lunacy. The idea was promoted by liberal German rationalists as a ploy to convince people that the original text of the New Testament was actually error-ridden; why evangelical scholars have accepted and embraced this lunacy is not clear. Yet lunacy it undeniably is.

NOTE: See our companion article to our article “[A PRIMER ON NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM \(IN MANAGEABLE, BITE-SIZED CHUNKS\)](#)” for details

The Question of Early Corruption

One crucial question remains: **Why are the earliest manuscripts so corrupt? As the earliest, *shouldn't* they be the best?**

Let's answer the second question first; the answer is “no.” The answer might be “yes” if we had a statistically significant and properly stratified data set of manuscripts from the earliest centuries, but we do not; we have already seen that we have very, very few manuscripts - and most of them are mere fragments - from the first few centuries.

We can illustrate this point briefly by considering the *Pericope Adulterae*, the story of Jesus confronting the adulteress in John 7:53-8:11. Textual critics claim that this story is not authentic because it is not found in our “earliest

manuscripts,” yet Jerome, in compiling the Latin Vulgate around AD 384, said that it was in “**many manuscripts,**” both Greek and Latin,[\[11\]](#) and, in fact, on that basis put it into the Vulgate. The significance of this cannot be overlooked. We have four extant, and demonstrably very corrupt, NT manuscripts of the Gospel According to John antedating AD 384, none of which includes the *Pericope Adulterae*, but Jerome had access to far more manuscripts as old and probably much older than the ones we have, and those ones *did* include the *Pericope Adulterae*. **The fact that we no longer have those manuscripts does not mean that we can ignore the fact that they did exist.**

And the upshot of all this is this: **the vast majority of the earliest material must have been very good, or it could not have given rise to the huge number of very good later Byzantine manuscripts that we do have today.** Unfortunately, these very good early manuscripts have not survived to our time, due to the fact that the material on which they were written, papyrus, simply is not durable enough to last through centuries except under very special circumstances.[\[12\]](#)

On the other hand, **the earliest material available to us,** that small fraction that did survive, is not necessarily the best – and, based on its obviously corrupt character, **clearly is not the best.** Yet there is still **the question of why the earliest material that has survived is so corrupt.** The answer to that is of profound significance, and involves a fact that in retrospect is abundantly obvious. Yet very few scholars have even taken note of it, and none has pursued it to its logical conclusion. Let us do that now.

The Matter of Provenance

We begin by considering the provenance of the early NT material. Provenance is “**the place of origin, derivation, or earliest known history, esp. of a work of art, manuscript, etc.; a record of the ultimate derivation and passage of an item through its various owners.**”[\[13\]](#) It is of crucial importance in the assessment of antiquities, indeed

many scholars ... are skeptical of any item that does not come from a licensed, supervised excavation where its provenance can be proved.[\[14\]](#)

Yet in the case of the early NT manuscripts, unfortunately, the provenance is

generally unknown - “with one major exception.”[15] That exception is the numerous finds made at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt.[16] Oxyrhynchus was “one of the major cities in Egypt for many centuries and the metropolis of the homonymous nome ... a fully orthodox Christian city ... [with] a bookish milieu and a Christian scriptorium as early as the third quarter of the third century.”[17] In fact, it was a city in which “copying and securing works of scholarship were subjects of letters by scholars and where critical editing and annotating of literary texts took place, with much of this evidence from the second century.”[18] The city is shown below, in an old steel engraving (l.) and a 19th-century photo (r.):



It is impossible not to notice the large number of mounds all around the outside of the ancient city ruins.

Excavations (below, right) were first carried out at Oxyrhynchus by two British archaeologists, Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt (below, left), beginning in 1896.[19]



And where exactly did they dig? Not on the site of the ancient city itself, for a modern city had already been built over it. No, they dug in some of the many mounds outside the ancient city. And what were these mounds?

Rubbish mounds.[20] *Trash heaps. A thousand years' worth of*

GARBAGE.[\[21\]](#)

So virtually all of the earliest NT manuscripts we have came out of a garbage dump. And they did not end up there by accident:

entire Christian literary manuscripts were discarded deliberately as trash by Christians themselves.[\[22\]](#)

Notice each point:

- **Entire** Christian literary manuscripts.
- Discarded **deliberately**.
- As **TRASH**.
- By Christians **themselves**.

There is no room for doubt about the fact that these manuscripts were discarded deliberately as garbage. Ms. Luijendijk points out that their scraps are found amid broken pottery, straw, broken glass, and other discarded household items in what were “**actual trash heaps**.”[\[23\]](#)

Furthermore, Christians didn’t simply throw out these manuscripts; ***they tore them to shreds prior to throwing them out***, just as everyone else did with their manuscripts:

[I]n their archaeological reports, Grenfell and Hunt indicated repeatedly that manuscripts had been torn to pieces ... this seems to have happened not just to manuscripts with classical literature but also to those with Christian scriptures.[\[24\]](#)

It should be emphasized that

Christians at Oxyrhynchus are using the same methods of disposing of manuscripts as the other inhabitants of the city for their texts ... the Oxyrhynchites often tore up rolls or codices before disposing of them, a practice that the people discarding biblical manuscripts also seem to have shared with their neighbors of different religions.[\[25\]](#)

Now, we must ask whether these facts are significant, and here’s where things

become very interesting. **Scholars have long been aware of the fact that the early NT papyri are in reality ancient trash,**[\[26\]](#) **but no one seems to want to consider the implications of this fact:**

*in the more than hundred years that have gone by since the initial find at Oxyrhynchus and the publication of hundreds of biblical fragments, **no one has systematically researched the question of why these manuscripts ended up in the trash.** Many papyrologists and textual critics share this lack of interest in garbage.*[\[27\]](#)

On the contrary, they tend to brush the issue aside.[\[28\]](#) Eldon Jay Epp, for example, is well aware that almost all of the NT papyri of known provenance were found in the garbage dumps of Oxyrhynchus,[\[29\]](#) yet he only focuses on our lack of knowledge about their “origin or use” and asserts that “**In the final analysis, this lack of context for our NT papyri does not greatly affect their use in establishing the earliest attainable NT text on a case-by-case business**”[\[30\]](#) – which, as we shall see, is surely one of the most profoundly idiotic statements ever made in the history of textual criticism.

Proposed Explanations

We cannot simply ignore these facts. As Ms. Luijendijk points out, “**The fact that sacred scriptures were discarded as garbage is surprising in view of the holiness of Christian biblical manuscripts, intrinsically and physically,**”[\[31\]](#) and **it requires a viable explanation.** Let us, therefore, examine and assess those that have heretofore been proffered.[\[32\]](#)

- These early NT papyri “**are the remains of books that were seized by the authorities in times of persecution**”[\[33\]](#) and destroyed.
- These early NT papyri “**are the remains of books that had been thrown out by their owners because they were worn out.**”[\[34\]](#)
- These early NT papyri were not the remains of complete manuscripts, but only of pages that had become damaged and so were removed, discarded, and replaced.[\[35\]](#)
- These early NT papyri were being desacralized as they were discarded.

The first proposed explanation for the fact that the early NT papyri were torn up and then thrown into the garbage, that it was down by officials of the state

persecution Christians, is a non-starter. Even if we ignore the fact that officials were supposed to burn the Christians' manuscripts, not tear them up and throw them out, there is the far more significant detail that **“the disposal of manuscripts as trash happened not only in the earliest centuries of our era, in the period of persecutions, but the presence of manuscripts that date to the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries found also at the Oxyrhynchite rubbish mounds means that they were copied and discarded after the persecution.** What we have here is thus a continuous practice.”[\[36\]](#)

The second suggestion is that the manuscripts were being discarded because they were worn out. Comfort glibly appeals to this, asserting that

A text found in a rubbish heap does not indicate that it was indeed ‘rubbish’ or defective. When a copy of a piece of literature became old and worn, it was customary to replace it with a fresh copy and then discard the old one. The Egyptians are known to have disposed of such copies, not by burning them, but by putting them into rubbish heaps.[\[37\]](#)

There are several problems with this suggestion. First, the fact that Egyptians disposed of their manuscripts (the vast majority of which were mundane things such as private letters, bills of sale, and census records)[\[38\]](#) by tearing them up and dumping them in a garbage heap is no reason to think that Christians would do such a thing with sacred Scripture. Second, handwritten documents were not as cheap and readily available as today's supermarket paperbacks, and may not have been so easy to replace.[\[39\]](#) Third, even after all these centuries the early NT papyri are still very legible, so there is no reason to believe that they were worn out!

The third suggestion is that the early NT papyri were not the remains of complete manuscripts, but only of pages that had become damaged and so were removed, discarded, and replaced. Yet we have already seen several examples of groups of fragments that come from so many different folia or from the beginning, middle, and end of written works that the only reasonable conclusion is that they are the remains of entire manuscripts that were discarded.[\[40\]](#) So while in some cases individual pages may have been discarded and replaced, there is no question but that in other cases Christians were tearing up and discarding entire manuscripts.

The final suggestion comes from Ms. Luijendijk, who posits that the destruction of

the manuscripts may have had the symbolic function of “desacralizing” them, i.e. the Christians “purposely shredded sacred scriptures when they discarded them in order to definitely break the link between sacred text and sacred manuscript.”[\[41\]](#) This suggestion, however, can only be described as bizarre.

First, Ms. Luijendijk offers no actual evidence for her theory. The best she does is try to draw an analogy between the treatment of manuscripts and of icons, yet she fails to make the case that icons were thus desacralized. All she offers is the following quote from scholar Antony Eastmond:

Views differed as to how damaged icons should be treated ... One interpretation, promoted by John of Damascus among others, argued that damaged icons should be destroyed. In this view, the presence of damage meant that the image was no longer a true representation of the prototype, and so it could no longer function as an icon: the link between image and prototype was severed.[\[42\]](#)

It is passing strange that this should be offered as evidence for Ms. Luijendijk’s desacralization theory. First, it is anachronistic, coming from the eighth century. Second, it shows that some people argued for the destruction of icons on the basis that “the link between image and prototype was severed,” and not that this view prevailed or was widely accepted. Third, and most important, Scripture and icons are not the same thing. Icons had no other function than to serve as representations of a prototype, whereas Scripture had standalone merit as communication and instructions from God.

Furthermore, one would think that if there had been a process of desacralization of Scripture, it would (a) be talked about among the Christian writers - though there is no such record; and (b) involve more dignity than ripping the Scripture to shreds and throwing it in a garbage dump.[\[43\]](#) Indeed, citing the reverent burial of Christian manuscripts, Ms. Luijendijk tells us that these practices “clearly indicate the reverent treatment these manuscripts as physical objects received at the end of their lives.”[\[44\]](#) It seems clear that this cannot be reconciled with the idea of shredding such manuscripts and throwing them into a garbage heap as desacralization.

There is a final point that buries Ms. Luijendijk’s proposal. She has repeatedly told us that what Christians did with these manuscripts was the same thing that

the other Egyptians did with theirs:

Christians at Oxyrhynchus are using the same methods of disposing of manuscripts as the other inhabitants of the city for their texts ... the Oxyrhynchites often tore up rolls or codices before disposing of them, a practice that the people discarding biblical manuscripts also seem to have shared with their neighbors of different religions.[\[45\]](#)

Yet we have already seen that most of these manuscripts were non-literary, so **unless Ms. Luijendijk wants to argue that Egyptians were desacralizing their grocery lists and bills of sale, her desacralization suggestion is dead in the water.**

The Obvious Explanation

Now that these various proposed explanations have been examined and it has been found that none of them is viable, let us turn our attention to the elephant in the room, a simple and obvious explanation (indeed, more readily obvious than any of the others) that textual critics seem loathe to countenance. In light of the failure of all other proposals, however, we can no longer avoid this one, and here it is:

Is there any conceivable reason one can think of to explain why someone would tear something up and throw it in the garbage? Well, why does someone *normally* tear up paper and throw it in the garbage? **BECAUSE HE THINKS IT'S GARBAGE.** There, I said it. That wasn't so difficult, was it?

So the Christians at Oxyrhynchus tore up these early NT papyri and threw them into the garbage because they thought they were so corrupt they were not worth keeping; **it is the only reasonable explanation** for the phenomenon we have been examining.[\[46\]](#)

And the significance of this cannot be overstated. These Christians were in a position to know the true text of the NT in the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries.[\[47\]](#) **They were not dependent on a handful of scraps, but were surrounded by fellow believers in churches with a plethora of complete copies of the NT from the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries.** And, armed with this knowledge, **they clearly concluded that the**

few scraps we have now, which are viewed with such reverence by today's textual critics, are, in fact, garbage, fit only to be torn up and thrown into the town dump. In light of this, it is absolutely illegitimate to claim that the form of text in these papyri is the original form of the NT text and should be used as the basis of our Greek text of the New Testament.

Why modern textual critics are loathe to face this simple fact is not difficult to understand. After accepting the canons of textual criticism invented out of whole cloth by liberal German rationalist scholars, canons designed to place errors into the putative original NT text, and following them for decades, textual critics were beguiled into accepting the two 4th-century uncials Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus as the "most reliable" manuscripts of the NT, despite clear evidence of their thoroughgoing corruption.[48]

When the papyri were subsequently discovered, they eventually came to be seen as allies of these uncials; in particular, P⁷⁵ is supposed to be "remarkably similar" to Codex Vaticanus, so that "we have a second-century MS showing great affinity with a fourth-century MS whose quality has been highly esteemed." [49] **The NT papyri have thus become an integral part of the case for modern textual criticism**, the offspring of German rationalism that is unable ever to come to the definitive original text of the NT, but only to a constantly changing text whose one unchanging feature is the presence of errors that have been introduced into the word of God. As Comfort said back in 1990,

*This Greek text - the UBS³/NA²⁶ - came to be recognized as the text accepted by most of the academic community as representing **the best attempt at reconstructing the original text** of the Greek NT. This text, however, is by no means 'inspired' or infallible - as many scholars will readily attest ... But whatever the criticisms, the UBS³/NA²⁶ is the best critical Greek NT available today.[50]*

We are now up to the fifth edition of UBS and the 28th edition of NA, both published in 2014. Both boast on the packing wrap that they are "NOW THOROUGHLY REVISED" and both boast that "Papyri 117-127 are now cited." How is it that what was touted as "the best critical Greek NT available" can be

“thoroughly revised”? And will UBS⁵/NA²⁸ also be “thoroughly revised” some day? No doubt, as this method of textual criticism cannot recover the original NT text. Truly, this approach to textual criticism is “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7).

With all this invested in this approach to textual criticism, it is exceedingly unlikely that textual critics will face the fact squarely that the NT papyri were torn up and thrown into the garbage dump because the people on site, in a position to know, saw their text as so corrupt that they needed to be discarded. It would lead to the realization that they have built their theories and texts largely on garbage, and their texts would have to follow those early papyri into the trash heaps. And, as M.J. Harper rightly points out,

To you and me, a paradigm crack-up would appear to be the most exciting thing imaginable in an academic career; but that's because we love intellectual excitement. To an academic it's pure poison, and that's because he has a mortgage to pay ... an intellectual mortgage - an academic has invested his whole life in the learning and exposition of a certain set of facts and it's too much to ask that he retrain at his time of life.[\[51\]](#)

So we return to Epp's statement, viz. “In the final analysis, this lack of context for our NT papyri **does not greatly affect their use in establishing the earliest attainable NT text on a case-by-case business,**”[\[52\]](#) and now we see why I said that this is one of the most profoundly idiotic statements ever made in the history of textual criticism. The “context for our NT papyri” is of *crucial* importance in determining their utility for establishing the NT text; **if they are garbage, then they cannot be used for this purpose** - as made clear by the well known GIGO principle from computer science:[\[53\]](#)

GIGO** - (computer science) a rule stating that the quality of the output is a function of the quality of the input; **put garbage in and you get garbage out.

Conclusion

As discussed elsewhere,[\[54\]](#) the modern approach to textual criticism, based on the canons invented by German rationalists, on the championing of the 4th-century uncials Codex, and the pontifications of Westcott and Hort, is a false trail leading

to a false and errant New Testament.[\[55\]](#) It is unsustainable in light of the facts.

The NT papyri collected since 1889 have been portrayed as buttressing the case for modern textual criticism and its errant text. However, the key issue of provenance has been studiously ignored. Scholars have either completely ignored the issue or brushed over it. The few who have addressed the salient fact that these papyri were torn up and thrown into garbage dumps by Christians themselves have proposed fanciful explanations for this fact, but none seems to be willing to face the implications of the only viable explanation for this fact, which is that Christians tore these manuscripts up and threw them in the garbage because they, who were in a position to know the correct text of the NT in the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, considered them to be garbage.

This means that the manuscripts believed by our scholars to be the best are, in fact, the worst, and this should turn the whole field of textual criticism on its head. It is a separate line of evidence that the paradigm assumptions upon which modern textual criticism has been built are completely wrong. No wonder that the opponents of the cause of Christ are so well able to undermine the credibility of the NT by the very tools our textual critics have given them.[\[56\]](#)

It is high time, then, for serious evangelical Christians to reject the modern critical Greek New Testaments and the translations based on them, including the New International Version, the English Standard Version, the New American Standard Bible, the Holman Christian Standard Bible, the Revised Standard Version, the New Revised Standard, *et al.*[\[57\]](#)

Only one question remains:

Who is more wrong?

The liberal skeptic who thinks that the pure Word of God is garbage?

Or the textual critic who thinks that garbage is the pure Word of God?

Endnotes

[\[1\]](#) See 1 Timothy 5:18, where Paul cites Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7, calling

them both “Scripture,” and 2 Peter 3:15-16, where Peter speaks of Paul’s epistles and “the rest of the Scriptures,” thus calling Paul’s epistles “Scriptures.”

[2] See Colossians 4:16

[3] For details about this, see our article Tors, John. “A Primer on New Testament Textual Criticism (in Manageable, Bite-Sized Chunks)” at <https://truthinmydays.com/a-primer-on-new-testament-textual-criticism-in-manageable-bite-sized-chunks/>.

[4] As far as we know; it is not impossible that they will be found some day.

[5] From Aland, Kurt and Barbara Aland. *The Text of the New Testament. Revised and Enlarged*. Erroll F. Rhodes, trans. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989, p. 81. This information is somewhat out of date. Based on information in *The Greek New Testament* (UBS-5). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, United Bible Societies, 2014, pp. 12*-25*, there are more papyri and fewer uncials (perhaps because several fragments of uncials thought to have been different manuscripts have been recognized to be from the same copy. The numbers by century corresponding to the chart is: Papyri: 4 (one is ?); 6 (four “about 200”); 39 (two are “early III” and four are “late III”); 18 (one is ?; one is “about IV”; one is “late IV”); 9 (one is ?; one is “about 400”); 3; 5 (one is “about 500”); 10. For the uncials, the corresponding numbers are: -; 1; 1; 2 (one is “about 300”); 11; 8; 31; 9; 38. UBS-5’s incomplete list of minuscules lists none for these centuries.

[6] *ibid.*

[7] Burgon, John W. *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark Vindicated Against Recent Critical Objectors and Established*. Oxford and London: James Parker and Co., 1871.

[8] Hoskier, Herman C. *Codex B and Its Allies: A Study and an Indictment*. 2 vols. London: Bernard Quaritch, 1914.

[9] Pickering, Wilbur N. *The Identity of the New Testament Text*. Revised edition. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980, p. 218 f.n. 68

[10] Metzger, Bruce M. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*. Third, enlarged edition. New York and Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 136

[11] Jerome, *Against the Pelagians* 2.17

[12] “[P]apyrus MSS survive only if protected from moisture - when placed in protective caves, jars, or buildings, or when buried in the soil of virtually rain-free areas of Egypt, Palestine, or Mesopotamia (though papyri must be neither too near the surface nor so deeply buried as to be affected by a rising water table). Blowing sand can deface papyrus MSS, and white ants can devour them.” Epp, Eldon Jay. “The Papyrus Manuscripts of the New Testament.” in Ehrman, Bart D. and Michael W. Holmes. *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*. Second Edition. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013, p. 7 (MS is an abbreviation of “manuscript,” and MSS for “manuscripts.”)

[13] Brown, Lesley. ed. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 2392

[14] Kalman, Matthew. “Putting the case to rest.” *The Jerusalem Post*. Posted on October 7, 2010. Available at <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/uncategorized/judge-considers-verdict-in-5-year-long-jesus-forgery-trial/>

[15] Epp, “*The Papyrus Manuscripts*,” p. 9

[16] *ibid.*, pp. 10-11

[17] Luijendijk, AnneMarie. “Sacred Scripture as Trash: Biblical Papyri from Oxyrhynchus.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2010), pp. 221-223. The author points out that the religious milieu at ancient Oxyrhynchus was diverse, despite the fact that it was described as a “fully orthodox Christian city.”

[18] Epp, “*The Papyrus Manuscripts*,” p. 10

[19] Luijendijk, *op. cit.*, p. 224

[20] *ibid.*, pp. 217-218, 224. There is absolutely no doubt about the fact that these were garbage dumps.

[21] “For a thousand years the inhabitants of Oxyrhynchus dumped their rubbish

at a series of sites out in the desert sands beyond the town limits.” (“The Oxhrhynchus Papyri & The Oldest Christian Hymn.” Posted at <http://www.amaranthpublishing.com/PapyrusHymn.htm>)

[22] Luijendijk, *op. cit.*, p. 218

[23] *ibid.*, p. 226

[24] *ibid.*, p. 244. Ms. Luijendijk (pp. 250-254) offers several examples of groups of fragments that come from so many different folia or from the beginning, middle, and end of written works that the only reasonable conclusion is that they are the remains of entire manuscripts that were discarded. These include P⁵, P¹³, P¹⁵, P¹⁶, P⁷⁰, P⁷⁷, and P¹¹⁵, as well as a couple of non-Biblical fragments. Both Grenfell and Hunt and Ms. Luijendijk note that widely scattered fragments may belong to the same document and be reunited upon publication. (p. 246)

[25] *ibid.*, pp. 248-249. Ms. Luijendijk rightly sees this as “an important observation.”

[26] *ibid.*, p. 221

[27] *ibid.*, p. 220. (Bolding added.) Ms. Luijendijk (p. 221) laments that “no one has problematized and examined this.”

[28] Interestingly, the third, enlarged edition of *The Text of New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, by Bruce M. Metzger (*op. cit.*), widely used as *the* text book on textual criticism for pastors in training in seminary, does not mention Oxrhynchus at all. The fourth edition, credited to Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, also omits any discussion of Oxrhynchus. (It appears only once in the index, referring to a statement on p. 61 telling us that P¹¹⁵ is Oxrhynchus papyrus 4499.) Nor does the other popular work, Kurt and Barbara Aland’s *The Text of the New Testament* (*op. cit.*) say anything about Oxrhynchus. One would think that such an important fact as the provenance of papyri in garbage dumps would be worth mentioning.

[29] Epp, Eldon Jay. “The Oxrhynchus New Testament Papyri: ‘Not Without Honor Except in Their Hometown?’” *JBL* 123 (2004), p. 10

[30] Epp, “*The Papyrus Manuscripts*,” p. 9. (Bolding added.)

[31] Luijendijk, *op. cit.*, p. 217

[32] Some have suggested that early Christians may not yet have thought of the NT as sacred (See Comfort, Philip W. *Early Manuscripts & Modern Translations of the New Testament*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1990, p. 6). While this would explain why they would dispose of copies in such cavalier fashion, I am not aware of anyone who has suggested this as the explanation for the phenomenon at Oxyrhynchus. Not even Comfort attempts that. Furthermore, Ms. Luijendijk (*op. cit.*, pp. 231-239) shows quite clearly from such things as Christian testimony, the use of the physical Bible in rituals, and its actual enthronement at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431 that the Christians in the time period relevant to the Oxyrhynchus discussion did indeed see the NT as sacred.

[33] Barker, Don C. "Codex, Roll, and Libraries in Oxyrhynchus." *Tyndale Bulletin* 57:1 (2006), p. 140 f.n. 33

[34] *ibid.*

[35] *ibid.*

[36] Luijendijk, *op. cit.*, p. 241. (Bolding and underlining added.)

[37] Comfort, *op. cit.*, p. 17

[38] "The Oxhrhynchus Papyri & The Oldest Christian Hymn.", *op. cit.*

[39] "Books in late antiquity still cost a considerable amount of money." Kotsifou, Chrysi. "Books and Book Production in the Monastic Communities of Byzantine Egypt." in Klingshirn, William E. and Linda Safran. *The Early Christian Book*. The Catholic University of America Press, 2007, p. 63

[40] See Footnote 24

[41] Luijendijk, *op. cit.*, p. 249

[42] Eastmond, Antony. "Between Icon and Idol: The Uncertainty of Imperial Images." in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*. Studies Present to Robin Cormack. Eastmond, Antony and Liz James. eds. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, p. 75. Cited in Luijendijk, *op. cit.*, p. 249

[43] Indeed, Ms. Luijendijk (pp. 237-2394) tells us how frequently Scriptures were

found buried in cemeteries, often interred with the deceased, buried reverently and wrapped in cloth.

[44] Luijendijk, *op. cit.*, p. 240

[45] *ibid.*, pp. 248-249.

[46] The longer papyri, viz., the Bodmer papyri (P⁶⁶, P⁷², P⁷⁴, P⁷⁵) and Chester Beatty papyri (P⁴⁵, P⁴⁶, P⁴⁷) are of unknown provenance. Scholars offer the factoid that these “must have been” discovered in the library of a ruined church or monastery (Epp, “*The Papyrus Manuscripts*,” pp. 8-9), but Epp understates things when he says, “These identifications lack confirmation” (*ibid.*, p. 9). They were purchased from Egyptian dealers (Comfort, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 51, 60, 62-63), and we have no idea where they found them. They could just as easily have been plucked from a garbage dump as from the library of a ruined church or monastery, though they were discarded without being torn up.

[47] Of course we can know the true text of NT today, but not by the methods used by our textual critics. For an explanation, see Tors, “A Primer on New Testament Textual Criticism,” *op.cit.*

[48] *ibid.* Codex Sinaiticus, it should be noted, was also literally garbage. The original pages (from the OT) were found at St. Catharine’s Monastery in the Sinai Desert “in a waste-basket full of fragments destined to light the oven of the monastery ... the monk casually remarked that two basket loads of similarly discarded leaves had already been burned up!” (Metzger, *op. cit.*, p. 43).

[49] Comfort, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-24. Quotes from p. 20 and p. 21. Note that we have already seen the serious problems with P⁷⁵.

[50] *ibid.*, pp. 23-24. UBS³ is the third edition of the United Bible Societies’ *The Greek New Testament* and NA²⁶ is the 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*. They share the same Greek text, which is based on the methodology of German rationalism and Westcott and Hort. (See Tors, “A Primer on New Testament Textual Criticism,” *op. cit.* for details.)

[51] Harper, M.J. *The History of Britain Revealed: The Shocking Truth About the English Language*. Expanded Edition. Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd., (2006), p. 76.

Harper is speaking about historians, but what he says certainly applies to Biblical scholars and textual critics.

[52] Epp, "*The Papyrus Manuscripts*," p. 9. (Bolding added.)

[53] GIGO. (n.d.) *WordNet 3.0, Farlex clipart collection*. (2003-2008). Retrieved February 12, 2015 from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/GIGO>. (Bolding added.)

[54] See Tors, "A Primer of New Testament Textual Criticism," *op. cit.*, for details.

[55] This is what Enlightenment-era rationalist scholars and their ideological offspring wanted all along.

[56] See, for example, *Calling Christians to the Truth of Islam*: Ahmad, Ijaz.

"Newest Critical Bible to Be Released: UBS 5th Ed. Greek New Testament." Posted at

<https://callingchristians.com/2014/05/05/newest-critical-bible-to-be-released-ubs-5th-ed-greek-new-testament/>.

[57] Pretty much all but the King James Version, the New King James Version, the KJV21, the Modern English Version, the English Majority Text Version, and Wilbur Pickering's *The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken* NT translation.