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TRENDS IN THE TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF THE ILIAD, THE MAHABHARATA, AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

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AN ever present danger besets the investigator in any field: the tendency to neglect taking into account trends of research in other fields. Conversely, cross-fertilization of ideas and methods has often provided a stimulus to research in a related area, and such redirected effort has not infrequently attained a new milestone in the related field of research.

Ever since the Renaissance, the study of the classics has more than once furnished the biblical scholar with new methods of criticism, as the following two instances may illustrate. At the end of the eighteenth century, F. A. Wolf's theory of the composite authorship of the Homeric poems¹ indirectly stimulated the inquiry into the composition of the Pentateuch. Later, New Testament scholars began a similar systematic analysis of the sources of the Synoptic Gospels. Again, it was the great German classicist of the past generation, Eduard Norden, who first applied to Graeco-Roman literature the discipline of *Gattungs-geschichte*, the study of the categories of literary genre and style.² Shortly thereafter Hermann Gunkel, who had been thinking along

¹ *Prolegomena ad Homerum*, 1795, chapters xii-xxxv; a good summary can be found in H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Literature from Homer to the Age of Lucian* (New York, 1934), 36 f.

² *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leipzig and Berlin, 1898; reprinted with supplements, 1909). Prior to Norden the method had found a limited use by Germanists investigating the fairy tales in German folklore.

somewhat parallel lines, made use of the same principles in his study of the sagas of Genesis.³ About a score of years later Martin Dibelius⁴ and Rudolf Bultmann⁵ applied Norden's (and Gunkel's) methods to the study of the transmission of the Gospel materials. Thus *Formgeschichte* as well as the earlier efforts directed toward the solution of the Synoptic Problem, were begotten, so to speak, of classical and Semitic parents.

Likewise, in the sphere of textual criticism New Testament scholars have profited from the work of editors of classical texts. Westcott and Hort adopted and refined the genealogical method of classifying manuscripts — a method which, ever since the classicists Immanuel Bekker⁶ and Karl Lachmann⁷ first devel-

³ *Genesis* in Nowack's *Handkommentar zum Alten Testament* (Göttingen, 1901; 3rd ed., 1910). The introductory material setting forth Gunkel's theory was translated by W. H. Carruth and published serially in *The Open Court*, XV (1901), 261–283, 385–398, 450–463, 526–539, 582–595, and 650–673, as well as in a separate volume entitled *The Legends of Genesis* (Chicago, 1901). For further developments at the hands of Old Testament scholars, see R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York, 1941), 48 f.

⁴ *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen, 1919); the 2nd ed., 1933, was translated into English by B. L. Woolf under the title *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York, 1935).

⁵ *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen, 1921; 2nd ed., 1931).

⁶ Bekker (1785–1871) was the editor of sixty volumes of Greek texts and the collator of some 400 manuscripts, many made available by their transfer to public libraries as a result of the upheaval following the French Revolution. Discovering that many received texts rested on an unsound foundation and that a mass of earlier material existed, he analyzed available manuscripts of an author and grouped them into families where one derived from another. He made the mistake, however, of thinking that the oldest manuscript was necessarily the best.

⁷ In textual criticism Lachmann (1793–1851) went further than Bekker. He showed how, by comparison of manuscripts, it is possible to draw inferences as to their lost ancestors or archetypes, their condition and pagination. Besides his famous edition of Lucretius, Lachmann distinguished himself by critical editions of Propertius, Catullus, Tibullus, Gaius, the *Nibelungenlied*, Walther von der Vogelweide, and Wolfram von Eschenbach; he edited Lessing's complete works. As is well known, the beginning of the downfall of the supremacy of the *textus receptus* of the Greek New Testament dates from the work of the same scholar: his object was to restore the text to the form in which it had been read in the ancient Church about the year 380 (see his article, "Rechen-

oped it in a systematic way, has been taken for granted by almost all⁸ editors of works whose autographs have perished. More recently, still another classicist and humanist has advanced the science and art of textual criticism. The New Testament scholar may read with pleasure and profit A. E. Housman's pungent and piquant, not to say caustic, paragraphs exposing the absurdities involved in following mechanically and blindly certain stereotyped canons of textual criticism.⁹ An extremely small but none the less important advance in the study of manuscripts was Housman's recognition that not only were homœoteuton and homœoarchon predisposing factors in the production of

schaft über seine Ausgabe des Neuen Testaments," in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 1830, 817–845, and the preface to his larger edition of the Greek New Testament [2 vols., Berlin, 1842–1850]). For a glowing appreciation of Lachmann's erudition, see Sir J. E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, III (Cambridge, 1908), 127–131, who writes, *inter alia*, "Lachmann was the true founder of a strict and methodical system of textual criticism" (130).

⁸ The qualification is intended to take care of an editor like Joseph Bédier, who, in his edition of *Le Lai de l'Ombre par Jean Renart* (Paris, 1913), denounces the genealogical method of textual criticism as a snare and delusion for the reason that in many instances one can argue well for several methods of classification. His own method is to choose what seems to him to be the best manuscript, making the choice on the basis of grammar, coherent sense, simple and regular orthography, and to use the other manuscripts eclectically. His opinions are set forth more fully in an article (*Romania* 54 [1928] 161–181, 321–356) entitled "La tradition manuscrite du Lai de l'Ombre: réflexions sur l'art d'édition des anciens textes." It may be mentioned that this scepticism of the validity of the orthodox methods of textual criticism has influenced at least one New Testament critic, Leo Vaganay, who asserts that "applied to New Testament text this system [Lachmann's genealogical method] is useless" (*Initiation à la critique textuelle néotestamentaire* [Bibliothèque catholique des sciences religieuses, LX] Paris, 1934, 60; Eng. tr., *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* [London, 1937] 71). For a refutation of Bédier's scepticism, see Paul Collomp's *La critique des textes* (Paris, 1931), 65–72. It would be going too far afield to examine here the theory and method of Giorgio Pasquali, who, in his *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo* (Firenze, 1934), lays very little emphasis upon the technique of building stemmata of codices.

⁹ A. E. Housman, *D. Iunii Iuvenalis satirae*, (2nd. ed., Cambridge, 1931), xi–xvi; see also the preface of his edition of Lucan (Oxford, 1926) and the preface of his edition of Manilius (new ed., Oxford, 1937) for many wise and witty observations concerning the art and science of textual criticism.

errors in transcription, but that homœomeson must also be taken into account as liable to occasion parablepsis.¹⁰

It is the purpose of this article to inquire whether recent textual investigation in two great epics of ancient Greece and India, the Iliad and the Mahābhārata, may offer the textual critic of the New Testament helpful suggestions as to methodology.

I

Of all the literary compositions by the Greek people, the Homeric poems are the best suited for comparison with the Bible. In antiquity men memorized Homer as later they were to memorize the Bible. Each was held in the highest esteem and quoted in defence of arguments pertaining to heaven, earth, and Hades. Homer and the Bible served as primers from which different generations of school boys were taught to read. Around both there grew up a mass of scholia and commentaries; they were provided with glossaries. Both fell into the hands of allegorists. Both were imitated and supplemented — one with the Homeric Hymns and writings such as the *Batrachomyomachia*, the other with apocryphal books. Homer was available in prose analyses, the Gospel of John was turned into epic hexameters by Nonnus of Panopolis. The manuscripts of both Homer and the Bible were illustrated. Homeric scenes appeared in Pompeian murals; Christian basilicas were decorated with mosaics and frescoes of Biblical episodes.¹¹ Moreover, Homer and the New Testament exhibit many similarities in their textual transmission.

Of all ancient Greek and Latin literature, the Iliad ranks next to the New Testament as possessing the greatest amount of manuscript testimony. The most recent figures for the Greek New Testament are: 52 papyri, 212 uncial manuscripts, 2429

¹⁰ *M. Annaei Lucani belli civilis libri decem*, pp. xix f.

¹¹ For other comparisons, see Ernst von Dobschütz, "Homer und die Bibel, eine überlieferungsgeschichtliche Vergleichung" (*Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung* 1 [1925] 331 ff.).

minuscule manuscripts, and 1678 lectionaries.¹² In 1932 Paul Collart listed 288 papyri of the Iliad.¹³ Besides these the Iliad is contained in two uncial and 188 minuscule manuscripts.¹⁴ Certain passages are without fixed location in the manuscripts. For instance, as the *pericope de adultera* appears at various places in different manuscripts of the Fourth Gospel and after Luke 21 38 in the Ferrar group of manuscripts, so the section concerning the Trojan scout, Dolon, probably did not always appear as the tenth book of the Iliad, as in printed editions.

In order to appreciate fully the most recent trends in the textual criticism of the Iliad, a brief résumé must be given regarding the present state of the text of Homer as the result of ancient and modern criticism.¹⁵

The earliest critics of Homer were certain members of the famous Alexandrian School¹⁶ and included Zenodotus of Ephesus (*fl. c.* 285 B. C.), his pupil Aristophanes of Byzantium (*fl. c.* 195 B. C.), and the latter's pupil, Aristarchus of Samothrace (*fl. c.* 150 B. C.), all of them librarians of the great Alexandrian

¹² Sir Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (New York, 1940), 106 and 124. No account is taken of the versions, for one of the striking differences between Homer and the Bible is that translation of the former played a very minor role in antiquity. It ought to be observed that although Eltester assigned the siglum P³ to the Michigan fragment 6653 containing verses of Matthew 26 and Acts 9 (so K. W. Clark, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Greek New Testament Manuscripts in America* [Chicago, 1937], 350), which H. A. Sanders edited in *Quantulacumque*, Kirsopp Lake's *Festschrift* (London, 1937), 151–161, and although Kenyon (*op. cit.*, 124) states, "Fifty-three [papyri] are now included in the official lists," the actual number of papyri must be reduced by one, because the fragment of Mark 14 edited by Carl Wessely (*Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde*, 15 [1914], 102, no. 233b), which was assigned the siglum P⁴ by von Dobschütz (*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 32 [1933], 187), is Coptic and therefore has no place in a list of Greek papyri.

¹³ "Les papyrus de l'Iliade" (*Revue de Philologie*, III^e ser., VI [1932] 318).

¹⁴ T. W. Allen, *Homeri Ilias*; I, *Prolegomena* (Oxford, 1931), 55.

¹⁵ It need scarcely be mentioned that theories regarding the origin of the Homeric poems — whether they are the work of one poet or many — do not come into the orbit of the present article.

¹⁶ For a good account of this School reference may be made to Sandys, *op. cit.*, I (2nd ed., 1906), 105 ff., esp. 119 ff.

Library. Zenodotus produced the first critical edition of the Iliad and the Odyssey, and all three scholars invented and used certain explanatory symbols in the margin of manuscripts to denote various conditions of the text thus marked.¹⁷

In modern times the printed text of the Iliad which has come to be regarded as the vulgate or *textus receptus* is that which was drawn by Wolf from the mediæval manuscripts known to him, with the addition of a few lines known only from quotations. Within the last fifty years it has been discovered that this Wolfian text, which contains 15,693 lines, is substantially the same as that found in all papyri from about 150 B. C. on.¹⁸ So far as can be determined on the basis of evidence contained in Homeric scholia,¹⁹ the text which Aristarchus annotated and that of the papyri subsequent to about 150 B. C. were identical and contained about 15,600 lines. Thus, only about 100 lines have been added by interpolation into the accepted text of the Iliad during the course of the last two thousand years.

Regarding the state of the text prior to about 150 B. C. Homeric scholarship has been sharply divided. The difference of opinion arises from the varying weight accorded to the evidence derived from certain Ptolemaic papyri and from quotations made by pre-Aristarchian authors. It was Grenfell and Hunt who saw clearly that the Homeric papyri before about 150 B. C. possess an "eccentric" text which differs from that which is found in later papyri and mediæval manuscripts. The divergence is particularly marked in the insertion of new lines.²⁰ Some scholars immediately concluded that these Ptolemaic papyri represent a

¹⁷ For an account of these symbols see, e. g., Arthur Ludwich, *Aristarchs Homerische Textkritik nach den Fragmenten des Didymos*, I (Leipzig, 1884), 19–22 and 94, and R. C. Jebb, *Homer, an Introduction to the Iliad and the Odyssey* (Boston, 1887), 94, note 2.

¹⁸ The bulk of the papyri is quite considerable; Collart (*op. cit.*, 317) reports that 13,207 lines of the Iliad are represented in papyri.

¹⁹ Concerning these T. W. Allen admits, "The age and origin of the collections of scholia which we possess upon the *Iliad* is still a mystery," *The Homeric Scholia* (London, 1931), 3 (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, XVII).

²⁰ B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *The Hibeh Papyri*, I (London, 1906), 67–75. The "eccentric" texts have about 70 new lines in 547 lines, i. e. approximately one in eight.

prolix pre-Alexandrian text before it was cut down into the current text by the criticism of Zenodotus, Aristophanes, and Aristarchus. But this conclusion is opposed to the evidence of the scholia which record the readings preferred by the Alexandrian critics and show that the opinions of this School had next to no effect upon the traditional text.²¹ Furthermore, as Grenfell and Hunt observed, "the new lines are in many cases no doubt interpolated from other portions of the poems," and in the remaining cases "are often due to the unconscious influence of parallel passages."²²

On the other hand an attempt was also made to prove from the quotations in pre-Alexandrian authors that their text of Homer was substantially the same as the vulgate. In an elaborate discussion of the subject, Arthur Ludwich offered statistics which show that out of 480 verses quoted by various authors before 300 B. C., not more than 9 to 11 are absent from the vulgate.²³ From this he concluded that, so far from its being true that the Alexandrian grammarians fabricated a unified Homeric text from a chaotic condition, actually most of the pre-Alexandrian writers (24 or 25 out of 29) used the vulgate and not the "eccentric" ("erweiterte oder wilde") texts.

But, as various scholars were quick to point out, Ludwich's conclusion is greatly weakened by the fact that most of the quotations are so short as to afford very slender evidence for or against the vulgate text, and of the remainder a sizeable proportion disagrees with the vulgate.²⁴

Present-day Homeric scholarship seeks to avoid both extreme positions. Although clear evidence for the widespread use of the vulgate can be traced back only to the time of Aristarchus, he

²¹ "The influence of [the Alexandrian] critics on the vulgate was *nil* in antiquity and sporadic in the middle ages" (Allen, *Homeri Ilias*, 204).

²² *Op. cit.*, 75.

²³ *Die Homervulgata als voralexandrinisch erwiesen* (Leipzig, 1898), 67 ff., esp. 140.

²⁴ Only 26 of the total number of quotations contain more than three consecutive lines; see Grenfell and Hunt, *op. cit.*, 72 f., and Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic* (3rd ed., Oxford, 1924), 290 ff.

cannot have been its creator. Nor, on the other hand, did it reign supreme prior to the Alexandrian School.

The most recent significant work in Homeric criticism is George M. Bolling's thorough study entitled *The Athetized Lines of the Iliad*.²⁵ Believing that the whole tradition of the *Iliad* goes back to a single Athenian text not earlier than the sixth century, Bolling attempts to bridge the gulf between this text and the emergence of the vulgate in about 150 B. C. by studying the lines said in the scholia to have been athetized by any one of the Alexandrians. He finds that 764 lines were athetized, or about one verse in 20.²⁶

Why did the Alexandrians mark about five per cent of their text of the *Iliad* with an obelus? In answering this question Bolling postulates that, "Neither Zenodotus, nor Aristophanes, nor Aristarchus would athetize a line unless its attestation seemed

²⁵ Baltimore, 1944. The author, a former editor of *Language* and emeritus professor of Greek in Ohio State University, has long been a student of Homer. Beginning in 1898 he published at short intervals in books, transactions, and journals his numerous and varied Homeric studies. Those which bear upon the textual criticism of Homer include the following. "The Archetype of our *Iliad* and the Papyri" (*American Journal of Philology* 35 [1914] 125-148). "The Latest Expansion of the *Iliad*" (*ibid.*, 37 [1916] 1-30). "The Latest Expansions of the *Odyssey*" (*ibid.*, 452-458). "Vulgate Homeric Papyri" (*ibid.* 42 [1921] 253-259). "On the Interpolation of Certain Homeric Formulas" (*Classical Philology* 17 [1922] 213-221). *The External Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Oxford, 1925). "The New Ptolemaic Papyrus Containing Parts of *Iliad*, XII, 128-263" (*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 14 [1928] 78-81). "Zur homerischen Textüberlieferung" (*Philologische Wochenschrift*, 48 [1928] 1014-1021). "ἸΑΡΑΙΤΕΙΣΘΑΙ = ΑΘΕΤΕΙΝ?" (*Classical Quarterly* 22 [1928] 101-106). "The Quotations from Homer in Polyainos 1. Proem. 4-12" (*Classical Philology* 24 [1929] 330-334).

Certain of Bolling's students have likewise published material bearing on the textual criticism of Homer: Barbara P. MacCarthy, "Line Omissions in Homeric Papyri since 1925" (*Classical Philology* 27 [1932] 151-155). Stanley T. Vandersall, "Line Omissions in Homeric Papyri since 1932" (*ibid.* 37 [1942] 299-306).

²⁶ The athetizing of these lines, however, did not have the effect of removing them from the text. In this one observes a parallel to the work of the Masorettes who expressed their disapproval of certain words in their text by applying dots to them, but the words remained in the text.

to him seriously defective.”²⁷ If this proposition is accepted it follows that, “Whenever a passage is presented to us both in a longer and a shorter version, the latter is to be preferred in a reconstruction” of the sixth century text of the *Iliad*.²⁸ Instead of arguing for the probability of the postulate, Bolling, in true Socratic manner, examines its consequences (*τὰ συμβαίοντα*). As he quite correctly points out, “If these are untenable, the postulate falls; if not, the postulate works, and we must, at least tentatively, accept it, and seek for it an explanation.”²⁹ The main bulk of Bolling’s latest book is devoted to just this kind of testing.

It is quite impossible to quote here from the wealth of material which Bolling takes into account in his analysis of the athetized lines;³⁰ it will be sufficient to indicate three of the reasons for which the postulate suggested itself to him: 1) the way in which the text of the *Iliad* was transmitted from about 150 B. C. on, namely, with additions but without excisions; 2) “the fact that the Ptolemaic papyri contain many additions but no excisions”;³¹ 3) the “recognition that the text which Zenodotus is supposed to have produced by ‘hacking’ is often in Wecklein’s phrase ‘ursprünglich und offenbar auf handschriftlicher Überlieferung beruhend.’ ”³²

²⁷ *Athetized Lines*, 30. Earlier Bolling formulated his understanding of *ἀθήρησις* in similar language: “*ἀθερεῖν* is to put a mark (*ὄβελός*) before a line of the text to indicate that it was believed by the editor to be unhomeric” ((*The External Evidence for the Interpolation of Homer*, 46).

²⁸ *Athetized Lines*, 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁰ The validity of his conclusions has impressed reviewers who have a right to an opinion; e. g., John A. Scott, in *Classical Weekly*, 38, 10 (December 18, 1944), 74 f.; and C. Bradford Welles, in *Language*, 20 (1944), 255 f.

³¹ This is not quite correct. The Ptolemaic papyri omit a very few lines; see G. A. Gerhard, *Griechische Literarische Papyri*; I, *Ptolemäische Homerfragmente* (Heidelberg, 1911), 5. Bolling doubtless means that, in his opinion, such lines were not excised from these papyri but have been inserted elsewhere.

³² *Athetized Lines*, 6. The reference to Wecklein (not supplied by Bolling) is his “Über Zusätze und Auslassung von Versen im Homerische Texte” (*Sitzungsberichte der königlich bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil.-hist. Klasse, 1917, 7. Abh., 59).

II

Within the past score of years a group of scholars has been working on the first critical edition of the Mahābhārata, one of the two national epics of India. A word concerning the nature of the Mahābhārata may not be out of place.

The title comes from two Sanskrit words, *mahā-*, "great," and *Bhārata*, "a descendant of a king or a member of a tribe named Bharata," and is susceptible of being resolved into either the "Great Battle of the Decendants of Bharata,"³³ or "The Great Narrative of the Battle of the Bharatas."³⁴ The kernel of this work involves a history of a contest for supremacy between two great regal families of northern India, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kurus or Kauravas, ending in the victory of the former and the establishment of their rule. In reality this narrative occupies but a fourth of the poem, the other three-fourths being a vast number of old legends about gods, kings, and sages; accounts of cosmogony and theogony; disquisitions on philosophy, law, and religion, and the duties of the military caste. Entire works are sometimes inserted to illustrate a particular statement. For example, while the two armies are drawn up prepared for battle, a whole philosophical poem, in eighteen cantos, the lofty Bhagavadgītā, is recited to one of the generals. The Mahābhārata thus became a kind of encyclopedia designed for the religious instruction of those classes who by their position were debarred from studying the Vedas and the Vedānta.³⁵

The magnitude of labor involved in preparing a critical edition of the Mahābhārata far exceeds any of the tasks with which classicists are confronted, both because of the length of the text (it is by far the longest poem known to literary history, being

³³ Arthur A. Macdonell, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (London, 1900), 283.

³⁴ M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, I (Calcutta, 1927), 317.

³⁵ For an outline of the contents of the Mahābhārata reference may be made to Macdonell, *op. cit.*, 291–298, and Winternitz, *op. cit.*, 327–442. The latter discusses its date, *ibid.*, 454–475. Several English translations have been made of the entire epic; a convenient edition in a condensed version in English verse is that prepared by Romesh C. Dutt and published in the Everyman's Library series.

about eight times as long as the Iliad and Odyssey together), and because of the complexity of the tradition. The text exists in about a dozen more or less independent versions, each of whose extreme types, the Northern and the Southern recensions, contains material not in the other. The first two of the eighteen major divisions of the Mahābhārata have now been published. Vishnu S. Sukthankar, the leading spirit of the enterprise, has edited the Ādiparvan³⁶ and Franklin Edgerton has quite recently published an edition of the Sabhāparvan.³⁷

The critical procedure followed by Sukthankar and Edgerton is to favor the shorter reading. A few sentences culled from the prolegomena of each of the volumes will indicate the method. Sukthankar writes, "The main principle underlying all speculation as to authenticity is the postulated originality of agreement between what may be proved to be (more or less) independent versions."³⁸ It is probable that "our manuscripts contain all that was there originally to hand down, and more."³⁹ Edgerton states, "I have come to believe that any passage, long or short, which is missing in *any* recension or important group of manuscripts *as a whole*, must be very seriously suspected of being a secondary insertion. For the Mbh., I should now hesitate long before including any such case in the edited text. This was not a preconceived notion. Indeed I started with a quite different attitude . . . But I should now go so far as to assert that probably not one of the some fifty mss. I have studied for Book 2, nor any of their genealogical ancestors, ever *deliberately or intentionally* omitted a single line of the text."⁴⁰

³⁶ *The Mahābhārata*, for the first time critically edited by Vishnu S. Sukthankar . . . and other scholars, vol. I, *The Ādiparvan* (Poona, 1933).

³⁷ In a letter to the present writer, dated October 15, 1945, Edgerton states that his edition of the Sabhāparvan was published in India in August of 1944 but that, due to difficulties of transportation, no copies have as yet been received in this country.

³⁸ *The Ādiparvan*, pp. lxxxvi f.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xcvi.

⁴⁰ Quoted by Bolling (*Athetized Lines*, 29) from the preliminary draft of Edgerton's introduction. In his letter referred to in note 38, Edgerton indicates that his views as quoted by Bolling remain unaltered in the published edition.

More might be written concerning the ramifications and difficulties met with in applying this principle,⁴¹ but sufficient has been indicated for the present purpose. Sukthankar's edition, it may be mentioned, has met with wide and hearty approval and commendation on the part of reviewers. Moreover, his canon of criticism has received independent corroboration at the hand of an Italian scholar, Ferdinando Belloni-Filippi, who has analyzed a small section of the epic on the basis of intrinsic probability and has come to the same conclusions as Sukthankar regarding the superiority of the shorter form of the text.⁴²

III

The New Testament scholar is struck at once by certain parallels between the textual history of these two great national epics and that of the Gospels. In the case of all three, the material circulated for a longer or shorter time in an oral form. Most of those who retold the material, whether in oral or written form, were interested in preserving all that had been handed down to them. In some instances additional material, more or less similar to the original, was incorporated into the textual transmission. As a result certain "wild" or "eccentric" texts were formed. In the case of the Mahābhārata this process proceeded quite unchecked and produced at least two diverse forms of the text with many sub-varieties, each much mixed with the others. In the case of the Iliad learned recensions were made by Alexandrian critics who athetized lines which seemed to them to be supported by less than adequate testimony. Their work was apparently successful in preventing further heterogeneous accretions of a major sort, but, so far as it is known, their texts were never reproduced without including the lines which they had athetized. That is, the vulgate text, with roots that antedated

⁴¹ Some of these are pointed out by Walter Ruben in his article, "Schwierigkeiten der Textkritik des Mahābhārata" (*Acta Orientalia*, ed. Sten Konow, 8 [1930] 240-256).

⁴² "L'episodio di Kadrū e di Vinatā nell' edizione critica del Mahābhārata," in the Ascoli Memorial volume (*Silloge linguistica*, 174-180, Torino, 1929).

the Alexandrians, emerged as a compromise between the prolix "eccentric" texts and the purified text not marked with obeli.

In the case of the New Testament, the earliest textual efforts of which we have knowledge were those of Marcion (c. 144), Tatian (c. 170), and certain Monarchian heretics, the disciples of Theodotus, a tanner from Byzantium.⁴³ During the second and third centuries different types of text gained currency in various localities. By about the end of the fourth century a compromise text embodying certain features of the earlier texts gained the ascendancy and became the ecclesiastical text approved for general use throughout the Middle Ages and down to the critical texts of the nineteenth century. It is probably not possible, as von Soden and others attempted to do, to associate the names of specific editors with several of these types of text — such as Hesychius with the Alexandrian, Pamphilus with the Palestinian, and Lucian with the *Koine* or Byzantine type of text.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the text current at Alexandria betrays the editorial care for which the local scholars were famous. The other main types of text, current before the *Koine* type gained the supremacy, exhibit many differences among themselves, but they are frequently opposed, individually or collectively, to the Alexandrian in preferring a fuller, more expanded, form of text. The problem confronting the New Testament textual critic is to evaluate these two main types of text.

New Testament scholars have of course been acquainted for more than two centuries with the canon of criticism, *brevior lectio praeferenda est*.⁴⁵ Except to supply some confirmation of this canon, there is little reason for this article — provided *all* New Testament scholars were in agreement as to its validity. But

⁴³ See Ernst von Dobschütz, *Eberhard Nestle's Einführung in das Neue Testament* (4th ed., Göttingen, 1923), 16 f.

⁴⁴ This last has more probability than the others.

⁴⁵ J. J. Wettstein was perhaps the first editor of the Greek Testament to formulate it fully. In his *Prolegomena ad Novi Testamenti graeci editionem accuratissimam* (Amsterdam, 1730), p. lx, and again in his edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graecum*, II (Amsterdam, 1752), 862, he lays down the rule that, "Inter duas variantes lectiones non protinus amplior atque prolixior breviori est praeferendaes, sed contra potius, "etc.

such is not the case. During the last sixty-five years, since Westcott and Hort exalted the Alexandrian text (their *Neutral* text) above all others, critical opinion, beginning with Salmon and Burkitt, has been more and more inclined to reverse this judgment and, for various reasons, to prefer non-Alexandrian readings. Notable among those who consistently prefer the longer text in one or more books of the New Testament are A. C. Clark, H. A. Sanders, and Robert Eisler. Indeed, the last mentioned scholar goes so far as to suggest a deliberate and drastic shortening of all four Gospels so early as to leave little or no trace in any extant manuscripts, even of the so-called Western variety.⁴⁶

Admittedly the merits and demerits of the Western text of the New Testament must be determined by weighing the evidence for each variant reading and forming from these separate judgments an opinion regarding the text as a whole. Without pretending that the recent textual investigations reported in this article have any more than an analogical bearing upon the work of the New Testament critic, it is surely of interest that, at a time when the editors of two great national epics are impressed by the reluctance of scribes deliberately to omit anything transmitted to them, certain other scholars are prepared to defend the thesis that in the case of the New Testament the longer text is consistently closer to the original. The transmission of the text of the New Testament may conceivably have taken place under circumstances entirely different from those under which the epics of Greece and India were preserved: any comparison of the textual corruption of these texts and of their critical restoration would then be useless, if not foolish. But such a conclusion should not be reached before New Testament critics have given attention to the textual history of the *Iliad* and *Mahābhārata*, and have seriously pondered the methods and results of recent editors of these two epics.

⁴⁶ Robert Eisler, "Albert Curtis Clark†, 21-2 1859 — 5-2 1937" (*Bulletin of the Bezan Club*, XII [December, 1937] 5 f.).