**Abstract**

Over the last several decades, a number of scholars have raised questions about the feasibility of achieving New Testament textual criticism’s traditional goal of establishing the “original text” of the New Testament documents. In light of these questions, several alternative goals have been proposed. Among these is a proposal that was made by Brevard Childs, arguing that text critics should go about reconstructing the “canonical text” of the New Testament rather than the “original text.” However, concepts of “canon” have generally been limited to discussions of which books were included or excluded from a list of authoritative writings, not necessarily the specific textual readings within those writings. Therefore, any proposal that seeks to apply notions of “canon” to the goals and methods of textual criticism warrants further investigation. This thesis evaluates Childs’ proposal by asking two overarching questions. First, is there historical evidence that supports the existence of a “canonical text” of the New Testament as a lost artifact, and therefore a valid object of historical reconstruction? Second, if such evidence exists, should modern text critics and exegetes prefer this textform to more traditional reconstructions? This study concludes that there is little evidence to support the existence of a lost “canonical text” of the New Testament, and that even if one assumes the existence of such a text, there are good reasons for continuing to prefer more traditional reconstructions.