

THE EVOLUTION OF CODEX VATICANUS AND CODEX SINAITICUS IN RELATION TO AN UNDERLYING UNIVERSAL TEXT

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The purpose of this article is to draw attention to an overlooked phenomenon that attaches to any pair of very closely related manuscripts, such as codex Vaticanus and codex Sinaiticus, or any group of closely related manuscripts that form a distinct family of manuscripts in any text-type. The observation is this. When bifurcation occurs one branch will contain the non-Byzantine reading, while the other branch will agree with the Byzantine text. This applies to all cases of bifurcation in any sub-group in any text-type.

The essence of any text-type is disagreement with other text types. The essence of any sub-group is disagreement with its larger family grouping. All groups express their identity through disagreements. Disagreement or deviation is the fundamental reason why the original writings have not survived as they were originally written. Even if the first thirty copies of, say, Luke's Gospel, contained only one mistake each, this would accumulate to thirty mistakes because the chances of all thirty copies making the same mistake in the same place is negligible. But once these thirty copies have been dispersed over the Roman Empire, the single error that each contained is likely to be increased by one or more clerical errors in the next copy no matter how carefully it has been copied and checked. Consequently we would expect to find a host of clerical errors spaced out randomly in each of the second generation copies. It is likely that some of the clerical errors would be repeated independently. But it is unlikely that another of the original thirty copies would contain the exact same deviations in the second generation in the exact same place. Each of the thirty will contain its own, unique set of deviations in the course of being recopied over the centuries. And if we correctly assume that each of the original thirty copies gradually increased the number of clerical errors in the recopying process, then we will end up with a situation where all of the original thirty copies will have hundreds of clerical errors between them. Once an exact copy has been made of the original thirty copies, these thirty would immediately lose their 'glory' because this has been transferred to the next copy by the community that commissioned the copy. In this way all the early copies would be left behind as the community focused on the fresh copy.

How then can the original text be restored given that each of the thirty first copies have gradually increased the number of human errors in the copying process?

An experiment was carried out by the author when he learned from a mathematician that if a man bought ten identical jig-saw puzzles, each containing 1000 pieces, and he opened up all ten puzzles and took a fistful from each box and threw them into a fire, and say each handful contained fifty pieces, he claimed that from the remaining pieces he could reconstruct a perfect, 100% complete likeness to the picture that was on the lid of the box without a single piece missing, even though each box had fifty missing pieces to begin with. Indeed, he claimed he could reconstruct five complete jig-saws using the remainder of the pieces. So, although it was not possible to complete the picture on the lid by taking each jig-saw *in isolation from the others*, yet once it was realised that all ten jig-saws contained the same picture, then by comparing each of them after each had been assembled, there would be no doubt what the original picture looked like. To check the mathematician's assertion, the author completed a 1000-piece jig-saw that was 100% complete. The jig-saw was then turned on its face and on the back of each jig-saw piece was written a number from 1 to 1000. The jig-saw was then broken up completely so that no two pieces stuck together. The pieces were put into a bag and thoroughly shaken. Fifty pieces were then randomly picked out of the bag and their numbers noted down. The fifty pieces were then put back into the bag and the same procedure was repeated nine more times, assimilating ten complete jig-saws. When the experiment was completed it was found that six complete jig-saws could have been completed, which proved the mathematician's assertion. The lesson was that out of imperfection could come perfection.

Now the ten jig-saw puzzles may be likened to ten identical copies of the original autographs, except that due to human error, each copyist made fifty dispersed errors. Despite this initial carelessness and the fact that not a single one of the first ten copies was an exact replica of the original autograph, it is possible to recover the exact text of the autograph by comparing all ten copies, because the chances of all ten copies containing the exact same error in exactly the same place is negligible. From this we learn that the more copies there were made of the original autographs the greater are the chances of recovering the original text. Now in the next round of copying out the ten original copies, if ten copies are made of each of them then we would have 1000 copies in the second generation. Now even if each of these 1000 copies have numerous human, clerical errors, the chances of each of the 1000 copies having the same set of error in exactly the same place is infinitesimally small. So that with each passing generation of copying and dispersion, the chances of losing a single

word of the original writing recedes. So the way to recover the original text is to compare the disagreements, and to trace their lineage.

Copies of manuscripts can be likened to an army on the move. Occasionally a soldier might get out of step with his mates and if he is not paying attention he might carry on being out of step with his regiment. It is obvious to the onlooker who is the one out of step. But in textual criticism this does not matter. The soldier out of step is often considered to be the only one in step and the rest of the regiment are out of step with him!

Unfortunately, no two scribes can produce flawless copies of their exemplar, and if left unchecked, these clerical mistakes can accumulate with each subsequent copy. In the better managed scriptoria, there was a checking procedure in place to eliminate these clerical errors. Where there was no such checking procedure in place then we gradually get an inferior copy, which, when discarded, or given away, or sold on, were likely to be taken up and treasured in a period when *all* copies were laboriously handcopied on scarce writing material, using specially prepared ink. It has been estimated that to produce a complete New Testament in Greek would require the lives of hundreds of sheep, or goats, or small deer, whose skins had then to be cleared of all hair, a labour intensive procedure, and then it was expensive to have a handwritten copy of it made by professional scribes.

From this we gather that it was beyond the reach of most families in New Testament times, to purchase a complete copy of a single Gospel, let alone a copy of the entire New Testament, which only churches could afford to commission. In an age when vellum, or animal skins, underwent a stringent preparation procedure to prepare the surface to take the ink, any copy, no matter how badly copied was someone's precious Bible and revered and treasured as being a flawless copy of the inspired writings of the Holy Spirit. How could it be otherwise?

Within Paul's own lifetime his epistles—which were sent to specific churches—were duplicated and sent on to neighbouring churches, who duplicated their copy and sent it on to another neighbouring church, greatly encouraged by Paul to do this, and in this way all his epistles would have been duplicated scores of times and distributed all over the Roman empire within the lifetime of Paul. As the copies of Paul's letters multiplied at the church level it is very likely that Elders and Deacons in each of Paul's churches would want to have their own personal copy of what Paul had written, and even rich church members would have wanted their own personal copy (done professionally, of course).

Regarding the early Church's interest in producing exact copies, we have the statement of the *Didache* (c. AD 100): "Do not abandon the commandments of the Lord (εστυλα; κυριου), but guard (φυλασχει) what you have received, neither adding to them (προστιθει;) or taking away (ασφαιρωλν)." Also the *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. AD 130): "Guard (φυλασχει) the injunctions you have received, neither adding (προστιθει;) to them nor taking away (ασφαιρωλν)(19:11). *Dionysius of Corinth* (c. AD 170): "The apostles of the devil have filled them with tares, by leaving out some things and putting in others. But woe awaits them. Therefore it is no wonder that some have gone about to falsify even the scriptures of the Lord." *Irenaeus* (c. AD 180): "There shall be no light punishment [inflicted] upon him who either adds or subtracts anything from the Scripture." *Anonymous critic of Montanism* (c. AD 196): "Not from the lack of any ability to refute the lie ... but from timidity and scruples lest I might seem to some to be adding to the writings or injunctions of the word of the new covenant of the gospel to which no one ... can add and from which he cannot take away." These quotes come on top of the severe warnings in the OT (Deut 4:2) and the NT (Gal 3:15/dated c. AD 55; and Rev 22:18-19) not to interfere with sacred communications between God and man.

Now given the multiplicity of human copies within Paul's own lifetime (pre-AD 70) it was inevitable that there would be a range of accuracy in the copying procedure. On the one hand, one would presume that the vast majority of copies would be extremely accurate, given the knowledge that what Paul had written was nothing less than a Spirit-inspired reply to problems in the churches he had founded in Christ's name, but on the other hand, we should expect to find less accurate, and even very bad, copies of Paul's writings being produced and they in turn being multiplied. Now provided the good and the bad copies made only clerical errors, then the science of textual criticism can be used to undo these mistakes one by one, until we arrive at the original text itself. This procedure can be applied to any manuscript, secular or sacred, no matter how badly copied provided the scribes are just being careless. Textbooks on textual criticism can plot the stages by which all

¹ *Didache* 4.13. THIS WORK IS IN TYNDALE.

² *Hist. eccl.* 4.23.12.

³ *Haer.* 5.13.1.

⁴ *Hist. eccl.* 5.16.3.

clerical errors can and do occur across the world of literature, where often only a handful of copies have survived in the case of scores of Latin and Greek classical works.

Where textual criticism breaks down is when a scribe deliberately (for whatever reason) changes the wording of the text as it passes through his hands. This applies whether he is transcribing the secular classics of Rome or Greece, or the sacred writings of the Old and New Testaments. This is a very dangerous scribe. However, by a careful analysis of such a scribe's deliberate alterations scholars can build up a profile of his attitude toward his secular or sacred material and his mindset (arrogant, sense of his own importance, thinks of himself as superior to the secular/sacred writer, believes he has authority to edit his copy in the interests of clarity, etc.). This is an important chapter within textual criticism, and requires new skills to distinguish between clerical and non-clerical deviations from the original text.

In the case of textual analysis of biblical material, this will mean that the identification number or letter given to such a manuscript should bring to mind the profile of the scribe who wrote that manuscript. The two should always go together when comparing one manuscript with another. It is when the profile of the scribe becomes detached from the manuscript number, that we enter the murky numbers game of simply totting up the number of manuscripts on each side of a disputed reading. We have to be more sophisticated in our approach and evaluation of each scribe *as a person* and his *attitude* or *mindset* toward his task of making a new copy for the next generation. When comparing two manuscripts we should also be comparing the two scribes who copied them.

Following on from the identification of accidental clerical mistakes, and the identification of deliberate alterations, comes the skill of grouping all manuscripts into families. All families will have their own DNA profile, as it were. Clerical mistakes can be a very quick means for grouping manuscripts into families and also to identify sub-groups within families, but so can deliberate alterations. It on the basis of these two categories of deviations from the original wording of the sacred writings that a solid foundation can be laid, out of which will emerge the restoration of the original wording of the New Testament writings in the 10 per cent that separates the four text-types in the Gospels (Byzantine, Caesarean, Western and Egyptian), and the three text-types in Paul's Epistles (Byzantine, Western and Egyptian).

Long experience in doing textual criticism of the Septuagint manuscripts of Genesis 5 and 11, and 1 Samuel to 2 Chronicles, as well as in New Testament manuscripts, reminds me of the World War II victory parades, where all the mothers, wives and daughters of the returning soldiers lined the streets of London to cheer on their returning, victorious army. The scene switches to a group of such female admirers and as soldiers they recognise come along, marching with heads held high, arms swinging in perfect unison to the sound of a drum beat, they wave and cheer and throw flowers at them. Then one woman, seeing her husband, Johnny, marching along very smartly, turns to her female companions and shouts, "Look, they are all out of step with my Johnny." She is incensed that the entire regiment is out of step with her Johnny, and she points out that her husband is twice the age of all those young 'uns around him. How dare they make fools of themselves by being out of step with her husband? she demands. Now, is it likely that they are all out of step with her Johnny, or is her Johnny out of step with the rest of the army?

Unfortunately, this is the current state of affairs with regard to the text of the New Testament. When Westcott and Hort selected a single manuscript, codex Vaticanus, to be the only manuscript consistently in step with the original writings, they were in effect saying that their chosen manuscript was the only one in step, and that the entire regiment of manuscripts were out of step with his Johnny. It shows just how moribund is the state of textual criticism today that there is not a single voice raised among non-Majority Text scholars to question the dominance of Vaticanus to represent the true march of the manuscripts.

A comparison between the latest scholarly edition of the Greek New Testament, Nestle-Aland's 27th edition (1993), and Westcott and Hort's 1881 edition shows that Hort's criterion totally dominates both editions, and will do so to the end of time, unless there is a reappraisal of the narrow criterion that Hort has imposed on the vast army of manuscripts which are marching to a different drum beat. A summary of Hort's criterion reads as follows: Vaticanus is never to be departed from except in the case of self-betraying clerical errors. Where Vaticanus has the support of Sinaiticus, then

⁵ The Executive Editor (Wm. David McBrayer) of the work by Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Text According to the Byzantine/Majority Textform* (Atlanta: The Original Word, 1991), calculated that there are about 5,000 complete or partial ancient manuscripts in existence today of which 5% support the Egyptian text-type and 90% support the Byzantine text-form.

⁶ Hort wrote: "Even when B [Vaticanus] stands quite alone, its readings must never be lightly rejected, though here full account has to be taken of chances of clerical error, and of such proclivities as can be detected in the scribe of B, chiefly a tendency to slight and inartificial assimilation between neighbouring passages: the fondness for omissions which has sometimes been attributed to him is imaginary, except perhaps as regards single petty words." Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Text* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), p. 557.

there is absolute certainty that they have preserved the original text.⁷ Their combined witness must never be set aside unless it can be proved beyond doubt to be in error. Sinaiticus, however, even with considerable support from other Western and Alexandrian witnesses and versions, cannot set aside the witness of Vaticanus, even if its support is not as extensive or as ancient as those supporting the text of Sinaiticus.⁸ In all cases where the Byzantine text-type agrees with the Western and/or Alexandrian texts, over against Vaticanus, Vaticanus is to be preferred as the original text. *The rule of thumb was that the non-Byzantine variant was to be preferred every time.* So on the rare occasions where B agreed with the Byzantine text over against the Western text, the Western text was to be preferred to Vaticanus because of the governing rule of thumb that the non-Byzantine reading has been suppressed by the regime at Constantinople, which replaced all Greek copies of the New Testament with their recently (i.e., late 4th cent.) produced Lucian recension.

Hort's controlling belief was that the Byzantine text was an artificial creation, and hence all its differences with B could only take it *away* from the original text, which he identified with Codex Vaticanus. This belief set the trend for all future studies in the search for the autograph text of the Spirit-inspired writings of the New Covenant Scriptures. This fixed belief dominates the thinking of all modern studies, and has controlled every edition since Hort's day,⁹ and there is no hope that it will ever be abandoned in the foreseeable future. Every scholar is bound by Hort's belief. It is above criticism. It stands supreme. It can never be toppled from its pedestal. To begin to question Hort's foundation would be to commit academic suicide.

How did Hort manage to shackle the minds of virtually all textual scholars who succeeded him? I would suggest five reasons. First, it was the sheer volume of his presentation *in very small print*. This caught his readers in the headlights of his single-track, dedicated mind. His contemporaries, no doubt, made valiant attempts to get a grasp on his long-winded, tortuous sentences, some of which take up ten or more lines! Unable to get a handle on his verbose English, many just gave in, and were content to follow the crowd.

Everyone likes to be associated with a man of learning, which, indeed, Hort proved himself to be, and he lived in an age of comparative ignorance of textual matters, and so he had no peer rival to contend with, except, maybe Scrivener and Burgon. This circumstance, plus the headlight effect, meant that Hort, like a new comet in the sky, sucked in a horde of disciples in his wake, each of them struggling to climb the academic ladder, and this they did by basking in Hort's achievement and reputation. There is not a single recorded case that I know of, from Hort to the present day, where a fully committed Hortian disciple has turned against Hort, and demolished his case. A Hortian disciple, in practice, is one who has lost the faculty to question Hort. The headlight effect is still as strong today as it was in the day that Hort published his work in 1881. Once caught in his headlights, history shows that there is no escape from him. The rabbit can no more neutralise the effect of the headlights on his mind, than the Hortian student can neutralise the effect of the Hort's arguments on his mind, once he gives unthinking submission to Hort's tenets. Most students are followers of Hort because "it is the done thing" since Hort's day. It is the very rare student who can stand back and think for himself, and seriously question the status quo and the Hortian consensus that everyone takes for granted. Unfortunately, such students are as rare as hens' teeth. If such students are to be found then they will come from institutions whose tutors encourage such to question the consensus using the essays of Maurice A. Robinson, in particular (more on that below).¹⁰

A second reason why Hort was so successful was his strategy to get the beginner nodding his head in affirmation from page one onwards, as he built up a case from the obvious to the not so obvious. This we can call the "Nodding Head Syndrome" (NHS). Hort has his inexperienced reader nodding up and down in agreement with him as he turns each page, and the nodding becomes so repetitious that even where the reader should hesitate to keep nodding, the habit of nodding carries

⁷ Hort believed (wrongly as it turned out) that Vat. and Sin. constituted two "entirely separate lines of transmission," and so where these two mss agreed, there, he held, you have "a very pure text," and because they disagreed he deduced that this pointed to a divergence at a date very near the autographs, and after they diverged they "never came into contact subsequently." Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Text* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), p. 556.

⁸ Hort wrote: "With certain limited classes of exceptions, the readings of aB combined may safely be accepted as genuine in the absence of specially strong internal evidence to the contrary, and can never be safely rejected altogether." Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Text* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), p. 557.

⁹ The first edition of the Nestle-Aland text was published in 1898, and the 27th edition was published in 1993. Hort's principles have dominated every edition, even if there has been some minor tampering with his text. Hort's foundation can never be questioned by any modern textual scholar without serious repercussions to his standing as a credible textual scholar among the Hortian community. We might paraphrase Paul's words and apply them to Hort, "According to the grace of God that was given to me, as a wise master-builder, a foundation I have laid, and other scholars do build on it, for other foundation no one is able to lay except that which is laid by me."

¹⁰ It shows how deeply Hort's influence has penetrated evangelical circles that there is an "Evangelical Textual Criticism" web-site devoted to spreading Hort's tenets among conservative-evangelical students!

its own momentum, so that Hort is given the benefit of the doubt, and the reader resumes his nodding, until slowly but surely he is nodding through stuff that is beyond his understanding, and he has lost the ability to shake his head sideways in disagreement, because he is lost in the vastness of the small print, and, after all, he has been reading it for about a week as a special class assignment, and he has forgotten what Hort said at the beginning, except to remember that he nodded his assent at the time, and that memory, plus his tiredness, and the long sentences, and the sheer boredom of the subject, plus the fact that no one was objecting to Hort's case anyway, played into Hort's hands, and the student closes the book and turns away a convert, but not sure how he got to that stage. He is comforted by the thought that his tutors are happy with Hort's case, so he lapses into the usual pattern of following the crowd. In his turn he becomes a lecturer in textual criticism, and the students follow him because they think he understands Hort's case, which he doesn't.

The third reason how Hort managed to dominate future scholarship was the use of apparently knock-down examples of conflation in the Byzantine text, and apparent cases of expansion of the text, smoother Greek sentences, etc. The case was one-sided. He did not present an opposing interpretation. There are no footnotes in his work which would permit the student to examine other interpretations. Hort locked them into one interpretation—his interpretation. Inexperienced, and all at sea, the first to present his case seemed right, and so Hort captured the student market, because he did not permit them to explore alternative explanations.

A fourth reason why Hort was so successful in turning his generation against the *Textus Receptus* (which represented the Byzantine/Syrian text), was Hort's belief that the Byzantine text-type was the work of a single individual called Lucian in the late fourth century, who is mentioned by Jerome as the originator of a new recension of the Scriptures. The identification of Jerome's Lucian with a recension of the Greek New Testament was a misunderstanding on Hort's part but it was to play a controlling influence on the whole of his thinking. Any manuscript which agreed with the Byzantine/Syrian text, over against Vaticanus, was deemed to have been contaminated to a greater or lesser extent by this late, Lucian recension, he believed. So a Byzantine variant which had the support of Sinaiticus or the Western text, or both, was deemed to be an inferior reading if it did not agree with Vaticanus. This fatal misunderstanding lies behind the text of Westcott and Hort and its direct descendant, the Nestle-Aland 27th edition. Unfortunately this misunderstanding of Jerome's statement by Hort still dominates the classroom, where the next generation of textual scholars will emerge. Consider the following quotation.

Many scholars consider that the Byzantine text goes back to the recensional work of Lucian of Antioch. According to Jerome (see his introduction to his Latin translation of the Gospels—see *Patrologia Latina* 29, col. 527), Lucian of Antioch was responsible for producing a major recension of the New Testament. . . . This text was a definite recension (i.e., a purposely created edition), which displays a popular text, characterized by smoothness of language, harmonization, and conflation of variant readings.

Lucian's text was produced before the Diocletian persecution (ca. 303), when many copies of the New Testament were confiscated and destroyed. Not long after this period of devastation, Constantine came to power and then recognized Christianity as a legal religion. There was, of course, a great need for copies of the New Testament to be made and distributed to churches throughout the Mediterranean world. At this time Lucian's text began to be propagated by bishops going out from the Antiochan school to churches throughout the East, taking the text with them. Lucian's text soon became the standard text of the Eastern church and formed the basis for the Byzantine text. Century after century—from the sixth to the fourteenth—the great majority of New Testament manuscripts were produced at Byzantium, all bearing the same kind of text."

This quotation shows that the myth that Lucian produced "a major recension of the New Testament" is still alive and assumed to be the Byzantine text-type. It is a pity to see such myths written up as facts in a work designed as an introduction to textual criticism. The only Lucian known to scholars who produced a recension of sacred writings had nothing to do with the New Testament. He produced a recension of the Greek Old Testament before the time of Josephus and Jesus Christ, because Josephus used Lucian's recension. The idea that the Byzantine Text was created in the latter part of the fourth century¹¹ was conjured up by Hort to ensure that a Byzantine Text could never be traced back *directly* to the autographs. Indeed, he went further, and suggested that there were no distinctive Byzantine readings. He claimed that all distinctive Syrian/Byzantine readings will be found to have been culled from Western, Alexandrian or his Neutral texts, or a combination of them, or a modification of them. "In fact," he argued, "the Syrian text has all the marks of having been carefully constructed out of materials which are accessible to us on other authority, and apparently

¹¹ Philip Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography & Textual Criticism* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), pp. 97-98.

¹² So Hort, *Text*, p. 547.

out of these alone. All the readings which have an exclusively Syrian attestation can be easily accounted for as parts of an editorial revision."¹³

It is one thing to conjure up a scenario to disenfranchise the Byzantine text, and an entirely different thing to prove it. If the Greek Church did produce a brand new, carefully constructed, edition of the Greek New Testament in the "latter part of the fourth century" to replace all existing copies of the NT, there would, surely, have been a special church council convened to commission such a major undertaking, and then another follow-up council to authorize the copying and distribution of the new Byzantine edition. Unfortunately for the theory, no such council was ever convened, nor is there the hint of such a project ever having been proposed in any province of the Greek or Roman churches. Not a single Church Father makes mention of a new edition of the Greek New Testament. There is not a scrap of evidence in any writing of any heretic or faithful Christian, that the Church in the fourth century commissioned a brand new revision of the inspired writings of the New Testament. The theory is without foundation. It was the figment of Hort's imagination with the express object of promoting his Neutral text.

While some scholars have distanced themselves from Hort's mistake about a Lucian recension, the majority keep a low profile, because it plays into their hands to promote a minority text. It would not do to expose the mistake of Hort lest this would undermine his academic standing, or it might lead some younger textual critics to begin independent investigations into the pivotal role that this mistake played in turning Hort against the Byzantine text. Such investigations are not encouraged lest they could lead to further undermining of Hort's dominant role in his own generation, and his continuing, restrictive legacy today, which restricts the younger text critics to working solely within his set parameters. Their young minds are imprisoned within Hort's parameters, and like their tutors, it would never occur to them to question the god-like status that Hort has achieved, or to throw his Introduction in the trash can, and adopt an independent approach freed from the shackles of Hort's myths and faulty assumptions. Unfortunately the submission of each generation of text critics to Hort's corset-style restrictions has meant that no outstanding text critics have emerged since his day, nor can any emerge because they suffer from NHS, caught in the classroom before their minds had time to develop an independent, critical approach. NHS robbed them of this facility and faculty.

The fifth argument that Hort used was the age of his chief witness, Vaticanus. He made the mistake of assuming that the closer a manuscript was to the date of its writing, the closer it must be to the original wording of the autographs. This is a common fallacy in textual studies. Indeed, there is no relationship between the date of a manuscript and the text of the original writing. In a list of canons of textual criticism one of them should read: "Ignore the age of all manuscripts. The age of a manuscript is unrelated to the purity of its transmission of the original text. A bad copy can be made directly from the original text, and a good copy may be transmitted for a thousand years. Age and purity are not directly related."

Hort made great play on the age of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, and in the nineteenth century this would have carried a lot of weight. He wrote: "A presumption of relatively high authority is conferred by priority of date."¹⁴ This is a fallacious assumption, but it is one you meet with in every English translation of the New Testament made from Hort's Greek text. Thus, for instance, the NIV has the note, "The most reliable early manuscripts do not have Mark 16:9-20." Behind this seemingly decisive statement lies the fact that only two manuscripts, B and a, omit the longer ending. What Hort did not know was that both of these manuscripts go back to a common exemplar, and both were written in the same scriptorium. Hort wrongly, as it turned out, believed that they were two, *independent* witnesses. What has misled the editors of the NIV is the date of B and a. They may be older than A D W C L Θ, all of which have the longer ending. This seemingly authoritative statement is in effect saying that anything written on an animal skin which is older than another skin, must have a superior text written on it. This is a *non sequiter*. Unfortunately for this argument, there is yet another problem. There is a gap of 300 years between Ba and the autograph texts, and that is sufficient time to corrupt any transmission which was not doubly checked as it left the hands of each scribe in the chain of descent. Three hundred years means nothing if the exemplar behind Ba was descended from a sloppy copy. Over one hundred papyri have been discovered since Hort's day, and the majority of the them pre-date Vaticanus. But no scholar has ventured to suggest that we replace the text of Vaticanus with the text of these much older copies. Why? because studies of these older texts show that they are very careless copies of the same text that lies behind Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. They are all descended from a single Egyptian copy of the autograph text, but the rate of

¹³ Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Text* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), p. 547.

¹⁴ Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Text* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), p. 542.

corruption in the copying process got so completely out of hand that it is now impossible to reconstruct the text of the original Egyptian exemplar. It is beyond recovery unless some new papyri finds come to light, which are older than our oldest Egyptian papyri.

James R. Royse studied six Egyptian papyri in detail. These were Π^ε (III); Π^ϵ (about AD 200); Π^ϵ (late III); Π^ϵ (about AD 200); Π^ζ (III/IV); and Π^η (early III). Now every one of these texts pre-dates Vaticanus, so on Hort's tenet that priority of date confers a higher authority, the text of these papyri ought to replace the text of Vaticanus. However, Royse discovered "that all six of the papyri analyzed here omit more often than they add," which he regards as negating one of the cardinal canons of textual criticism that the shorter text is to be preferred.¹⁵

Royse's study of Bodmer Papyri 72 (Π^ζ), shows "that the scribe of Π^ζ was extraordinarily careless," and that this increases the further the scribe went in his copying. Royse adds that this careless pattern can be traced in Jude and 1-2 Peter. His analysis concluded that the scribe was "more careless towards the end of each epistle." He also noted that "the varying form of individual letters, ligatures and other textual features gives an overall impression of an inexperienced and careless scribe displaying all sorts of irregularities."¹⁶ He observed that even early Egyptian scribes were not above altering the text, because the scribe of Π^ζ edited his text to equate Jesus with God, as in Jude 5b, which reads "God Christ." See also 1 Pet 5:1 where "the sufferings of God," replaced "the sufferings of Christ." Although we might commend the scribe of Π^ζ for his exuberant defence of Jesus' deity, and his spiritual insight, is it ever legitimate for a scribe to interfere with his copy in this manner? Some might see this unauthorized editing as proof of theological interference to counter anti-adoptionistic writings.¹⁷

E. C. Colwell made an attempt to reduce thirteen Egyptian manuscripts to an archetype using the first chapter of Mark as his control text. He found that the texts were so wild that he discarded the seven worst ones and started over again with the remaining six. The result led Colwell to conclude that an Egyptian archetype never existed. Vaticanus diverged from the collated mean text 34 times in just the first chapter of Mark. This confirms the research of James Royse. Indeed, it is worthwhile drawing the reader's attention to the details of Royse's findings. His six chosen manuscripts represent a fair sample of the scribal activity involved in copying out the New Testament in Egypt in the years from 175 to 300.

	Π ^ε	Π ^ϵ	Π ^ϵ	Π ^ϵ	Π ^ζ	Π ^η
Additions	29	52	6/7	15/16/17	14	11
Omissions	60	161	15/16	20	22	34
Omissions/Additions (ratios)	2 to 1	3 to 1	2.1 - 2.7	1.2 - 1.3	1 to 6	3 to 1
Net Words Lost	90	244/245	29/31	16/17/18	26/27	32
Significant Singulars	210	452	53	109	74	106
Net Words Lost Per Significant Singulars	.43	.54	.55-.58	.15-.17	.35-.36	.30

The most careless is Π^ϵ and Π^ϵ who lose more than one word per two errors. The next careless are Π^ζ, Π^η and Π^ε who lose roughly one word per three errors. The least careless is Π^ε. And Π^ε and Π^ϵ omit more than twice as often as they add. Π^ζ omits more than he adds. Π^ϵ omits only slightly more than he adds. Regarding all six papyri, he noted: "it would seem that their common habit of shortening the text is a general habit, and not an anomalous feature of one or two particular scribes." Royse concluded, "that the burden of proof should be shifted from the proponents of the longer text to the defenders of the shorter text."¹⁸

A similar study was carried out by Kyoung Shik Min on Matthew's Gospel. The 14 manuscripts he collated were: Π¹, Π², Π³, Π⁴, Π⁵, Π⁶/Π⁶, Π⁷, Π⁸, Π⁹, Π¹⁰, Π¹¹, Π¹², Π¹³, Π¹⁴, and 0171. His results were: 18 additions; 42 omissions; 13 transpositions; and 57 substitutions. Except for 0171,

¹⁵ James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 705-42.

¹⁶ James R. Royse, "Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri" (Th.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1981), 476.

¹⁷ See Tommy Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission* (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006), pp. 43-7.

¹⁸ James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 735, 717-18.

which has 1 addition and 1 omission, each of the manuscripts has more omissions than additions.¹⁹ Unfortunately, Min made his comparison with NA27. But Aland's text favours the principle of *lectio brevior potior*, so that the omissions may be many more. In any case, the figures show that the transmission within the local Egyptian text was careless. Choosing the Aland text as the collation base may understate the tendency to omit.²⁰

We have highlighted five reasons which resulted in the dominance of one man's opinion and text, and given reasons why his dominance is acquiesced in by modern disciples of Hort. It is time to probe the foundations of Hort theory of a Lucian recension, because on this platform he built his case.

But why do we not have very old copies of the Byzantine Text? We can learn a lesson from the transmission of the Hebrew text. Up until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1948 the oldest surviving Hebrew Bible was dated to about AD 890. The text of this Hebrew Bible differed considerably from its Greek translation (Septuagint), so much so that some Early Church Fathers accused the Jews of having edited their Hebrew Scriptures in order to discredit Christianity. For centuries this allegation was handed down in the Christian Church, much to the annoyance of the Jews who strenuously denied that they had tampered with their Scriptures. The Dead Sea Scrolls vindicated the Jews because it was found that their text of Isaiah differed only in the manner in which they spelled some few words, yet there was a 1000-year gap between their latest copy and the oldest Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah. But among the DSS were found other deviant copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, so that they too have a pedigree of antiquity, but they were truly 'dead' in that they had no offspring. We could re-bury all the DSS tomorrow and it would not affect the 'live' Hebrew Scriptures that the Jews read in their synagogues today and did so in Jesus' day. Even if another hoard of Hebrew scrolls were found in a sealed cave tomorrow, they would not replace the 'live' text that has been in the hands of a living community in unbroken transmission from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (if not further back in time).

The reason why there is a 900-year gap between the birth of the Christian Church and the oldest copy of the Jewish Scriptures is wear and tear. A 'live' text, that is, one used constantly by a worshipping community, will wear out through use, and be replaced with a newer copy, but a discarded Bible could survive through sheer neglect. The Hebrew Scriptures were securely transmitted with the greatest of care by a Hebrew-speaking people, among whom it was read on a weekly basis. Likewise, the Greek Scriptures of the New Covenant were transmitted by Greek-speaking people, among whom it was read on a weekly basis. Their text was the Byzantine Text. Now just as there was a 900-year gap between the oldest and latest Hebrew Scriptures, yet nothing was lost in that time, so likewise there is a 500-year gap between the writing of the autographs of the Greek New Testament and the earliest extant Byzantine copy of them (though we have fragments going back earlier), and the reason is the same, namely, a 'live' text, that is, one used constantly by a worshipping community, will wear out through use, and be replaced with a newer copy, but a discarded Bible will survive through sheer neglect. *A 'live' text will not be eaten by bookworms.* In the case of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Augiensis (MS F) both manuscripts were attacked and partly eaten by bookworms, showing that they were discarded by God's people.

It is worth repeating the truth once again: any argument in favour of the purity of a text based on the age of the material on which it is written is a false argument. The material and the text are totally unrelated items. The most that a (carbon) date can tell us is that at the time the text was written on the animal skin, the text on its surface was in existence at that time. The date, throws no light on the quality of the copying process. Even if another hoard of New Testament Greek scrolls were found in a sealed cave tomorrow, they would not replace the 'live' text that has been in the hands of a living community in unbroken transmission from the time of the Apostles. *A 'living' Hebrew and Greek text is to be preferred over a worm-eaten text, or one rescued from a rubbish dump or graveyard in Egypt.*

It is disingenuous and deceptive to keep repeating Hort's false statement: "A presumption of relatively high authority is conferred by priority of date." to students when it has been shown to be blatantly false and misleading. Consequently to find this statement, using different words and phraseology, but with the same import, on the page of printed Bibles is irresponsible.²¹

¹⁹ Kyoung Shik Min, *Die früheste Überlieferung des Matthäusevangeliums (bis zum 3./4. Jh.): Edition und Untersuchung*. ANTF 34. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005). This is his published thesis on 13 papyri and one majuscule from before the fourth century that contain part of Matthew.

²⁰ It is worth noting that compared to the *Textus Receptus*, NA27 and UBS4 have 1,672 additions, and 4,168 omissions. This three-to-one ratio of omissions to additions, bears out the findings of studies done on the Egyptian papyri pre-dating Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Scribes are more prone to omit text than admit text into their copies.

²¹ The first version to reflect Hort's view that age confers priority and superiority was the RV (1881), which reads: "The two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some other authorities, omit from ver. 9 to the end." Ignorance led the editors of *The Jerusalem Bible* (1968) to add the footnote: "Many MSS omit vv. 9-20." Similarly, the *ESV* reads: "Some of the earliest manuscripts do not

But why do we not have support for the Byzantine Text by the early Church Fathers?

This question has often been asked without any attempt to look at the evidence. Wilbur Pickering and Jack A. Moorman have brought this topic up to date in their works.²²

Among the 5000 or more manuscripts that make up the army of textual evidence, there will always be a 'Johnny' that is out of step with the rest. Do we latch on to that single manuscript and say that it is the only one in step with the original text, or do we look at the bigger picture and ask how the entire army got out of step with Johnny? The most likely solution is that Johnny is out of step with his army than that they are out of step with him.

This analogy illustrates the danger of focussing on the evidence of a single soldier (or manuscript) and subjectively deciding that he (it) alone is in step, and all the other soldiers (manuscripts) are out of step. The lesson is clear: no one soldier must be followed to the exclusion of the army among whom he is marching, because at any point in a long march any soldier could get out of step with his comrades. The 'beat' to follow is the one of the *whole* army, not individuals, or groups, within that army. It is the army *as a whole* that will determine who is out of step. The same applies to individual manuscripts within a vast host of manuscripts.

The danger of choosing one or two manuscripts out of thousands and declaring that these alone have transmitted the original text with the least amount of contamination or corruption is a highly subjective decision to make. We see the disastrous effects of this pinhead foundation in Erasmus's Greek NT, and in Nestle-Aland's 27th edition, both of which are built on Johnny texts.

In any attempt to recover the text of the autographs only the entire 'army' of Greek manuscripts should be used, not early translations of single Greek manuscripts.

Caution should be exercised when claiming that such and such an early translation supports this or that text-type. Early translations do not translate the 'army' of manuscripts. They may not even translate the archetype of a text-type. A translation will usually only reflect the Greek text of a single Greek manuscript. So every translation will go back to a single 'Johnny' who will belong to a particular regiment or text-type. In the case of Jerome's Latin Vulgate, it is clear that he used a Greek manuscript(s) that was closer to the Caesarean text-type (as represented by *f*13) than it is to the Egyptian text-type (as represented by *Ba*). While Jerome's Greek manuscripts appear to have perished, his text-type still survives. However, the lessons are these. First, early versions would have been made from a single Greek manuscript. And secondly, no single, early translation can be promoted over the 'army' of Greek witnesses.

Transmission of clerical errors and transmission of deviant copying errors (i.e., editing the text, deliberate or accidental) will produce signature variants at the sub-group level. Further signature variants will permit sub-groups to come together, and finally signature variants will link all the sub-groups together into a distinctive text-type, of which there are four in the Gospels: Egyptian, Caesarean, Western, and Byzantine, but only three in Paul's Epistles, Egyptian, Western, and Byzantine as there is no representative of the Caesarean text-type.

Since by man came the errors; by man comes their undoing.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

The long, dark night of the reign of Hort cannot go on indefinitely. There is the glimmer of light presaging the dawn of a new era on the horizon. The glimmer of hope is made up of three significant developments in textual research. The first of these was the publication of the Majority (Byzantine) Text by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur Leonard Farstad in 1982.²³ This was the first time that the Majority Byzantine Text was printed. The presentation note on the dustcover makes the point that

The Majority Text, similar to the kind of text found in the King James Version, has never before been printed; . . . yet Hodges and Farstad make no claim that this text in all its particulars is the exact form of the originals. Continued on the back cover is the note: 'The Majority Text—A Landmark Edition. This publication of *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* marks the first time in the twentieth century that a critical edition of the Greek New

include 16:9-20." And the NASB (1971) reads: "Some of the oldest mss. do not contain vv. 9-20." So in a short time "two" becomes "some" and then "many," creating the strong impression that Mk 16:9-20 is not Scripture.

²² Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text III* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012), pp. 88-96; Jack A. Moorman, *Early Manuscripts, Church Fathers, and the Authorized Version* (Collingswood, New Jersey: The Bible For Today Press, 2005), pp. 313-432; *ibid.*, *Forever Settled: A Survey of the Documents and History of the Bible* (Collingswood, New Jersey: The Dean Burgon Society Press, 1999), pp. 85-100; *ibid.*, *Missing in Modern Versions: The Old Heresy Revisited* (Collingswood, New Jersey: The Dean Burgon Society Press, 2009), pp. 61-63. Dean John Burgon cited 4,383 Scripture quotations from 76 writers who died before AD 400. Edward Miller carried on Burgon's work and tabulated 2,630 quotes for the TR, and 1,753 against it, or 3 to 2 in favour of the TR among Church Fathers before AD 400. To neutralise this embarrassing evidence it was suggested that later editors must have adapted the Fathers' quotations to the TR! It was better to say that, than say nothing.

²³ Arthur L. Farstad (1935-1998) and Zane C. Hodges († 24 Nov. 2008), *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (2nd ed.; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985 [1st. ed. 1982]).

Testament has used the vast bulk of extant manuscripts as a basis for its text. This text therefore represents a sharp departure from the kind of text found in the currently popular third edition of the United Bible Societies Greek Testament and in the twenty-sixth edition of the Nestle-Aland text.

The Majority Text New Testament abandons the one-hundred-year-old theories of Westcott and Hort and the resulting reliance on a few older Egyptian-based manuscripts.⁵

This is followed by a recommendation from Professor G. D. Kilpatrick (Oxford, England), which reads: "This edition is a real contribution to New Testament textual criticism. Not only does it distinguish between the Majority Text and the *Textus Receptus*, a necessary distinction, but it encourages us to reconsider readings of this text without prejudice."⁶

The words 'a sharp departure' sum up the significance of this milestone publication in the long road to the recovery and reinstatement of the Majority Text as the inspired record of the Spirit's revelation to the Church. The editors are to be praised for their ingenuity and industry in extracting the Majority Text from Von Soden's apparatuses, and for presenting the reader with a double apparatus (two sets of footnotes). The first gives the variations within the Majority text tradition in a reader-friendly format. The second apparatus presents major differences between the Majority Text and other Greek New Testaments, revealing the depth, diligence and patience of their endeavours to put into the hands of their readers contrary evidence. Unfortunately, the presentation leaves room for improvement.⁷ In 1991 Robinson and Pierpont produced their unpointed edition of the Majority Text, which they had been working on from 1976 to 1991. The design of their edition was "to resemble an ancient Greek manuscript. To achieve this end, the best features of uncial and miniscule manuscript style have been combined into one whole."⁸ Prefaced to this edition is one of the clearest essays ever written by a Majority-text scholar setting out Hort's case and replying to each of his points. Every effort has been made in Robinson and Pierpont's edition of the Majority Text to present an accurate representation of the Greek as it would have been written originally (except for the warranted changeover to the cursive script). This edition was of no practical use because it was unpointed. This was rectified when in 2005 they produced a good quality edition with pointed text and a useful apparatus setting out the differences between their edition and the text of NA27.⁹

If there is a weakness in the presentation of the Majority Text it is that the editions of Hodges and Farstad, on the one hand, and Robinson and Pierpont, on the other hand, have not derived their Majority Texts from a thorough-going collation of all the Byzantine manuscripts, but both sets of editors have extracted their Majority Texts from the apparatuses of Hermann F. von Soden and Herman C. Hoskier.¹⁰ Now von Soden was a thorough-going Hortian, and he had little time for the niceties of the differences within the Byzantine tradition, so these were generally ignored. By default, therefore, the Majority Text (called the Koine Text, K-text, by von Soden) was assumed to be his main printed text *unless he drew attention to deviations in the four sub-groups of the Koine Text* (Kx, Kr, Kl and Ki). This is a very important point, because it means that we are not yet at a stage where we can be sure we have control of the exact spelling of each Koine word. If von Soden overlooked the readings of these K-groups (which he regarded as inferior, anyway), or misrepresented their evidence, then, by default, his main text was presumed to represent the Majority Text. This is one of the weaknesses of the printed Majority Texts: we are still totally reliant on von Soden's apparatuses.¹¹

⁵ There are 1861 differences between the *Textus Receptus* and the Majority Text (699 in the Gospels alone).

⁶ For the purist H-F's edition contains some irritation innovations which are imposed on the Greek text, such as the use of English quotation marks to indicate direct speech style (cf. Mt 21:16). Allowable are their French quotation marks (similar to small double chevrons) to identify quotations from the Old Testament, since in most of the early uncial manuscripts a single chevron is placed against every line containing the OT quotation. Other impositions are the use of Greek capital letters for "Son of Man," "Son of God," "Father," "God," etc. The use of capital letters for "Scripture," "Law" (when referring to the Pentateuch), and "Law and Prophets." No Greek manuscript displays this mixture of cursive and uncial script. Too much English punctuation has replaced the Greek forms of punctuation, including the whimsical use of the exclamation mark. To find this in a Greek text would be bizarre. A more serious defect in H-F's edition was their policy decision to eliminate the $\nu\text{-}\epsilon\sigma\phi\epsilon\lambda\kappa\upsilon\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma\nu$ (movable Nu).

⁷ Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont [† 20 Feb. 2003], *The New Testament in the Original Text According to the Byzantine/Majority Textform* (Atlanta: The Original Word, 1991), p. xliii.

⁸ Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont (compiled and arranged), *The New Testament in the Original Text* (Southborough, MASS.; Chilton Book Publishing, 2005).

⁹ Hermann Frieherr Von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt*, 2 vols. in 4 parts (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1911); and Herman C. Hoskier, *Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse*, 2 vols. (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1929).

¹⁰ One of the weaknesses of R-P's edition is the blanket policy to insert the $\nu\text{-}\epsilon\sigma\phi\epsilon\lambda\kappa\upsilon\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma\nu$ (movable Nu), at every available place, which is the exact opposite to the blanket policy of H-F. Blanket, editorial policies should be eliminated entirely. Scribal practice, after a thorough examination, should alone determine when and where the moveable letters ν and ~ should be inserted or withheld. Editorial policies can be used to avoid the hard work of laser-focus attention to detail. At Mt 6:5 von Soden's text is $\phi\alpha\nu\omega\sigma\iota$. There is no variant in his apparatus, but R-P arbitrarily decided to add a final ν , because of their blanket policy decision. It is possible that von Soden's evidence is correct, in which case H-F got it right, and R-P got it wrong. Swanson, *Matthew* p. 45 gives $\phi\alpha\nu\omega\sigma\iota$ as the Majority Text spelling (cf. other cases in Mt 5:15, $\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota$; 6:16, $\phi\alpha\nu\omega\sigma\iota$; 6:24, $\delta\upsilon\sigma\iota$; 7:15, $\epsilon\nu\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\sigma\iota$; 12:10, $\sigma\alpha\beta\beta\alpha\sigma\iota$; 12:30, $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota$; 13:15, $\iota\delta\omega\sigma\iota$, $\alpha\kappa\omicron\upsilon\sigma\omega\sigma\iota$, $\sigma\upsilon\nu\omega\sigma\iota$; etc. etc.) On the other hand, if von Soden couldn't be

The second significant event which holds out hope for the recovery of the original texts was the ambitious vision of Reuben J. Swanson, a committed Hortian, to produce the text of the entire Greek New Testament using about 80 manuscripts in each Gospel or epistle. The full text of each of his 80 selected manuscripts is given in horizontal lines against Codex Vaticanus (which occupies the first line). Before his death on 23 March 2009 at 91 years of age, he produced nine volumes covering 74% of the New Testament.³⁰ I consider these volumes to be the most significant contribution that any scholar has made toward the recovery of the wording of the original autographs since Von Soden's work (1890–1910). It was not Swanson's intention that his work would be the greatest tool that he could hand to scholars working on the recovery of the Majority Text, but the grouping of manuscripts according to their agreement in divergent readings, highlighted the four text-types in the Gospels, and the three text-types in Paul's Epistles, in a way that no scholar before him had ever achieved. Every student who aspires to proficiency in handling variant readings should have these volumes.

The third significant event was the publication of a paper by Maurice A. Robinson, entitled, "The Case for Byzantine Priority." This seminal paper was published in the internet resource *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 6 (2001). This work set out to demonstrate the weaknesses of current theories and methodologies behind the Nestle-Aland text. Although the paper has been in circulation for a full decade, no Hortian textual scholar has ever attempted to reply to it. It has stood unchallenged, and it is doubtful if its incisive dissection of the Hortian and the "process" theories can ever recover again from this demolition job. Wherever Hort's work is forced on students as a course requirement, then this article should also be required if only as a counter-balance to the one-sided presentation of Hort's opinions. This important paper has been printed as an Appendix to Robinson and Pierpont's Greek New Testament.³¹

These three landmark publications are all pointing in the one direction, namely, that the Byzantine text-type should be treated as an independent text-type that has its roots in the autograph text itself. The compass used by modern textual students is one that points unswervingly toward Hort. Their compass needles never deviate from pointing at him. It is like students on a beach standing by a large dead metal object (say, an old buried anchor) and looking at their compasses and noting that all their compasses point north, i.e. at dead metal Hort. Even when they encircle dead metal Hort their compass needles follow him unswervingly, even though the dial of the compass says otherwise. If one of their number walks a hundred yards away from the buried metal object he discovers that his compass needle no longer points to dead metal Hort, but his mates jeer and sneer at him and point to their majority compass readings which unswervingly point only in one direction no matter how many times they walk round in a circle. When it is pointed out to them by the stray student that maybe there is a hidden lump of metal below their feet which is distorting the ability of their compasses to find true, magnetic north, they howl and hoot in derision and derisive laughter, and take another long swig on the drink in their hand. One cannot blame the majority of students because the evidence of their eyes shows them where the needle of their compasses is pointing; that they cannot deny, and it is because the needle is so unswerving in pointing in only one direction that they feel confident to shut their ears to other voices further down the beach that 'north' could be in a different place to what they, as a majority, believe. Consulting one another's compasses time and time again convinces them that their majority consensus is unerringly pointing to magnetic north and the minority is wrong.

Now if for the 'compass' we read 'the critical faculties to examine textual data,' then we can see how the spell of Hort and his dominant position among textual scholars has distorted the 'compass' of modern-day scholars. *They are standing too close to Hort to be able to use their critical faculties in an undistorted manner.* Hort is controlling the needle and not allowing it to point to where the true magnetic north pole lies. All scholarly needles point in one direction—toward him, and to

bothered to note such trivial matters, then we do not know what the Majority Text should read at these places. The letter -v- has the numerical value of 50, and the letter -σ- has the value of 200. Majority Text scholars should not be sloppy in their care for every letter of the autographs. Who knows what treasures there are yet to be discovered in the numerical value of names and places? The numerical value of Jesus' name is 888, and 8 was associated with resurrection. The numerical value of David's name is 14, and this has influenced Jesus' genealogy in Matt 1, with its scheme of 3 x 14 generations. It is the duty of Majority Text scholars to be as precise as it is possible to be in recording the exact spelling of every single word of the inspired Scriptures.

³⁰ Reuben J. Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts* (Pasadena, CAL; William Carey International University Press, 1995–2005). The nine volumes cover the four Gospels (1995), Acts (1998), Galatians (1999), Romans (2001), 1 Corinthians (2003), and 2 Corinthians (2005).

³¹ Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2005* (Southborough, MASS: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005), Appendix: The Case for Byzantine Priority (pp. 533–86). Alongside this, the beginner in textual criticism should consult Maurice Robinson's introductory essay to his 1991 edition of the Greek NT (pp. xiii–lvii).

him alone. Concentrating on the 'evidence' of their compasses shows that Hort is the centre of the universe; everything revolves around him. There is no other solution. They must remain in orbit around him because this is where their needles are pointing. What Darwin is to the sciences, Hort is to textual criticism. Neither must be questioned or doubted. All must bow down to these two gods of knowledge and wisdom. To doubt Hort is to commit academic suicide in the field of textual studies and be the object of scorn and ridicule for not following the academic herd. In today's academic atmosphere, anyone who rejects Hort is himself rejected by his academic community, and ostracised.

The object of this paper is to encourage all those engaged in textual studies to distance themselves from Hort, to step away from his god-like status, to break his hold over them—to break his spell, and begin to analyse his simplistic opinions critically, in the light of new evidence and new research findings since his day. It is only when a new generation of textual scholars comes into being who fearlessly attack Hort's position from every angle and end his long reign by taking his sceptre and smashing it to smithereens and dumping it unceremoniously into the dustbin of rejected theories, that a new age will dawn and produce an entirely new environment free from the oppressive shackles that have held down the true state of things from seeing the light of day.

Hort should be likened to a man whose ship has foundered in a violent storm just offshore and he has managed to find a rock whose top is just barely visible above the crashing waves. He has no shoes but with his fingers and toes he locks himself on to the rock like a limpet and for many hours clings ferociously and doggedly to the rock's surface, until eventually the storm subsides and he is able to scramble to safety. The rock, unfortunately, is called "Lucian." And worse still, when Hort wakes up from his nightmare, he discovers that it does not exist! It was all in his mind; not in reality. But scholars, as we noted above, still believe that the rock of their theory does exist, because if it does not then their theory is all at sea, and their hopes of a solution drown with it. There are some Hortian disciples who, having examined the paucity of evidence for it, agree that the Lucian rock never existed, and clinging to it is futile. But because Hort used it as his bedrock it would be rocking the boat too violently for these Hortian disciples to demolish it before their peers, who cling tenaciously to its existence. The vast majority of Hortian students desperately want the Lucian rock to stay as a fact of history, because it is the bedrock for demolishing all other rival text-types. They cannot contemplate the unacceptable consequences for Hort's theory if Lucian did not exist. It would mean that the Byzantine recension did not emerge for the first time as a brand new creation in the late fourth century which the Greek Church at Constantinople then imposed on the church universal, ousting Hort's Neutral Text. The possibility that the Byzantine Text could go all the way back to the autograph texts is so obnoxious a thought to all Hortian students that it is dismissed out of hand. This is the dead hand of Hort on the shoulder of all his disciples, and that hand has a death-like grip to hold all of them firmly enthralled to him. Once a Hortian, always a Hortian, for Hort is a magnetising force that few can wriggle free from, especially if the indoctrination begins in the classroom, before the student can get on his feet.

The dead hand of Hort is also an icy hand in that it freezes the mind of all those who are gripped by him. They are unable to shake him off and they have no desire to do so, as they fall into a deep coma and their minds freeze up. When some of them speak, we hear the ghost of Hort speaking, because they have no minds of their own. Some of them are walking zombies, going about still searching for Lucian. For those who have seen the light and come to terms with the fact that Lucian never existed, the need becomes desperate to find some other barrier to prevent the Byzantine originating in the autograph text itself. Any theory, any conjecture, any conjured up scenario, any "process" will do to get a barrier in place and prevent the Byzantine Text from originating directly from the autograph text. Is this an honest way to keep out the Byzantine Text?

Before I move on to an examination of the Western Text in Paul's Epistles a word is necessary to explain some technical terms that I have created for this subject.

Historically, it is inappropriate to use the term 'Byzantine' to refer to a text-type that clearly predates the Byzantine Period. We need another term which will cover the period of transmission before AD 350, which is generally agreed the Byzantine Period began. We need a term which will cover the possibility that the Byzantine Text stemmed directly from the autographs themselves, right through to the printing press, when handwritten copies virtually died out. The following idea suggested a possible solution.

In the Book of Revelation there is no single representative "Byzantine/Majority Textform" such as exists in the rest of the New Testament; rather, two major and complementary textual traditions exist, each supported by an approximately equal number of manuscripts. One tradition is termed the "Av" text (named after the church father Andreas); the other tradition is called the "Q" text. Where the "Av" and "Q" groups agree, a true "Byzantine/Majority" consensus text exists.²² Now, the procedure adopted above provides us with an analogy for the four text-types in the Gospels, and the three text-types in Paul's Epistles. Where all four text-types agree a true "universal text" can be

²² Taken from Maurice Robinson's introductory essay in his 1991 edition of the Greek NT, p. xv.

agreed upon. The same goes for Paul's Epistles. So I have employed the term "universal text," using lowercase letters, to refer to the text that is not disputed by the majority of the text-types (which is 90% of the text of the NT); and I reserve the term "Universal Text," using capital letters, to refer to the Byzantine text which has its roots in direct copies of the original autographs. Thus the term "Universal Text" will replace the term Byzantine which is not exact enough to cover the whole period from the autograph stage right through to the printing press stage in the early sixteenth century. This puts the Byzantine Text on the same footing as the Egyptian, Western, and Caesarean texts, as text-types that have all stemmed directly from the autograph texts, in the opinion and judgment of their backers.

The justification for renaming the Byzantine text the Universal Text, has its roots in the early history of the Church. When the twelve apostles went out into all the world, they took the Gospel and the Spirit's teaching and promised guidance with them, and in a very short space of time we are informed that it reached the furthest ends of the Roman empire. It went out "into all the world," in other words, it was universal. A universal gospel, had a universal, geographical spread, with universal, church traditions very soon in place. It was not long, therefore, before there was a universal library of sacred literature of all that Jesus began to teach and to do, spreading out into all the earth, while the twelve apostles were still alive, and certainly while Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, was alive. He even encouraged the churches he wrote to, to circulate his letters to all their neighbouring churches. In a very short space of time we had a universal Church reading a universal account of the Gospels and other apostolic writings. We have plotted—albeit very briefly—above, how this universal text diverged into four distinct streams of manuscripts, sharing 90% of undisputed text between them. It is the remaining 10% that the four differ among themselves.

The goal of text-critical studies is to determine which of these four text-types is more likely to be a faithful presentation of the text of the autographs.

One important factor needs to be kept in mind at all times, and it is this. The majority of textual work is done at the word level. Words are viewed as if they were sent down from heaven as individual units, like snowflakes, or manna. But all words are transmitted in a complete document, never in isolation, therefore they should be looked at within the text-type where they are found. It goes against the normal procedure of transmission to select one word from one text-type and insert it into another text-type. That is not how text-types were transmitted. Most scribes are honest men and the presumption is that they will faithfully endeavour to make an exact copy of what has been handed to them. The procedure that will recover the original text is one that will rewind the stages of copying for each text-type until the purest form of that text-type is arrived at. Simply isolating one word from different text-types and asking how all the forms arose from that one form, as if discovering what that one form is, would lead to the original text, is wrong.

Introduction to the Western Text

F. J. A. Hort had a high regard for the Western Text

Great care should be taken when using the Migne collection on quotations of the Church Fathers to support any text-type.³³

Hort's clearest evidence for the posteriority of the Syrian text was found in the conflate readings of that text.³⁴

The archetype for the Byzantine text would have been the original autographs.

"...all Greek New Testament editions since Westcott and Hort have increasingly adopted Byzantine readings." So wrote the Executive Editor (Wm. David McBrayer) in a foreword to the work of Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Text According to the Byzantine/Majority Textform* (Atlanta: The Original Word, 1991), p. xi.

³³ See Tommy Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission* (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006), p.238 n. 8, who noted that the Migne edition of Pseudo-Oecumenius (PsOec) is inferior because the citations from the NT betray influence from Erasmus' *Novum Testamentum* (cf. Jan Krans, *Beyond What Is Written* [NTTS 35; Leiden: Brill, 2006], 131, n. 132).

³⁴ Introduction, 94; the whole section, 93-107, is devoted to this evidence.

REACTIONS TO DANIEL WALLACE'S ARTICLE

While at Tyndale (21 Nov. 2010) I saw a book on the New Accessions Shelf, edited by Gary T. Meadors, *New Testament Essays in Honor of Homer A. Kent, Jr.* (BMH Books: Winowna Lake IN., 1991) in which Daniel B. Wallace wrote a long article, "Inspiration, Preservation, and New Testament Textual Criticism," (pp. 69-102). I had a quick scan of it and he seemed to be making a good case, so I photocopied it to read this evening, which I did. I took copious notes to make a reply to it. He is on the side of the evangelicals (being a Dallas lecturer) but he is anti-Majority Text. He creates a lot of worst-case scenarios (quotes extremists) to knock down, but behind it all he does make a good case that we cannot latch on to one text-type and say that God has favoured that above all the others. He has a case, and as in most cases regarding the 'hand of God', God seldom can be "proved" to be behind anything, even the Iraqi War. Did God give the Allies the victory, or did their superior power give them the victory? He is best seen when the odds are stacked against the man of faith who goes forward in God's name to fight His battles. That is when you do see Him, as in the case of Jonathan and David's battles for the Lord.

I began to formulate a reply to Wallace, who clearly thinks the MT was a late arrival, though he does not commit himself to say if it was a creation by the Byzantine Church in the fourth or fifth century or not, which is the scholarly consensus. My view is that the MT *in its purest form* is the original text. My strategy is to argue that we should reduce all mss to genealogical trees, which would be major text-types, and then reduce each text-type further into its sub-types. You then look at the major text-types and accept or reject them *as a whole*, and debate the merits of each on the number of errors they contain. When you do that, you discover that the Byz. Text comes out top every time.

My case is this.

(A) *All documents are copied as a whole*

God did not send down His words like a storm of hailstones where we have to go out and gather up all the individual hailstones to reconstruct the complete hail-storm, by putting them together again. Neither is it like the farmer sowing his seed which he takes out in a single container and scatters them over the ground. Textual criticism is not the job of tagging along behind the farmer and collecting up every seed that he scattered with the object of putting them all back together in the single container that the farmer used, so that the unit can be analysed and appreciated.

Often TC is approached from the 'soldier' or the 'farmer' analogies, as if God's Word was conveyed in single words, like single seeds, when, in reality, His Word comes already as a packaged collection, and it is as a package, a single unit, that these documents from God are copied and recopied. Consequently, each document of God must be treated as a unit, as He conveyed it to us.

The majority of textual work is done at the word level. Words are viewed as if they were sent down from heaven as individual units, like snowflakes, or manna. But all words are transmitted in a complete document, never in isolation, therefore they should be looked at within the text-type where they are found. It goes against the normal procedure of transmission to select one word from one text-type and insert it into another text-type. That is not how text-types are transmitted. The procedure that will recover the original text is one that will rewind the stages of copying each text-type until the purest form of that text-type is arrived at. Simply isolating one word from different text-types and asking how all the forms arose from that one form, as if discovering that one form would lead to the original text, is wrong.

(B) *The original scriptures were meant to be intelligible and cannot contain gobbly-gook or factual errors*

God's Word comes to us through the mind of the Holy Spirit, who is God's Spirit. Because God does all things perfectly, what He conveys to us will never be gobbly-gook, nor will it contain errors of fact, nor will He contradict Himself. Throughout human history God has channelled His Word through the minds of human beings, such that the personality, language ability, vocabulary range of the speaker, etc., are utilised to convey His thoughts. Those who have been so used by God to convey His thoughts to His people will do so with the utmost integrity and honesty, and the outcome is guaranteed to convey what God wants conveyed to His people. Often God will put the exact words into the mouths of His prophets and saints; often the speaker is borne along by the Holy Spirit to utter things that even he does not understand. Jesus reminded His persecuted followers not to formulate their defence in advance of their trials, but allow the Holy Spirit to give them the words when the time comes.

When we come across a copy of God's communication to man and that copy contains gobbly-gook, we can be certain that this confusion cannot be from God, nor can errors of fact be from Him. Consequently, manuscripts which show evidence of gobbly-gook, or contain errors of fact, these should not be trusted, but the entire copy should be laid aside as defective in the copying process,

and the Christian should move on to find a *complete* document which contains no such gobbly-gook and no errors of fact, because only such copies can be trusted to have been faithfully copied in an unbroken line of transmission from the beginning.

(C) *God committed the copying of His scriptures to fallible human beings*

All copies will contain clerical errors because they are copied by fallible human beings. This applies to the very first copies made of the original, inspired documents of God for the Church. By comparing the best efforts of each scribe to reproduce an exact copy of his original, totally free from error—because a system of checking was in place to ensure an error-free copy was made—it is possible to convey to the next generation an exact reproduction of the original writing. Now even if the first copy of the original document passed through a thorough checking process and one or two mistakes were not picked up by the checker and the document went out abroad to be copied and recopied with its initial mistakes taken to be original, and therefore unchangeable, there was another safeguard in place to ensure that there would not be a cumulative rise in the number of errors creeping into that first copy. That other safeguard would be that multiple first copies would be carefully made of the original document before it disintegrated. An original document may have a hundred or more exact copies made from it before it disintegrated. Even if a dozen minor errors got past the scrutinisers into *each* of these first copies, the chances of every single one of those first one hundred copies containing the same error in the exact same place is virtually impossible. But that is what would be required to lose a single word of the original document. Thus, if every one of the first one hundred copies of the original Gospel of John contained a clerical error in every chapter, it would be possible to arrive back at the exact original text by comparing three copies. That is all it would take. Therefore there was no need for the Holy Spirit to stand by the elbow of every copyist and ensure that no mistakes crept in. So long as there was no deliberate attempt to alter the text, then all clerical errors can be cancelled out by examining any three manuscripts whose copyists were determined to produce an exact copy. We know the frailties of the human mind to spot how mistakes can and do occur, even with the best intentions to make an exact copy. What will cause confusion is when the scribe departs from the object of reproducing a perfect copy of his exemplar and he starts interfering with the text, thinking he has the right to ‘improve’ it. When such copies are discovered they should be removed to a second-class status.

To return to the original thought, now as each of those one hundred first copies made its way into all the world, they would each be eagerly copied with the same degree of respect and accuracy, as the first copiers showed, that is what one would hope and expect of these new-born Christians, eager to learn all they could about their Lord and Master.

But given human nature, and maybe a rush to acquire Christian documents very quickly—by the fastest growing religion in the world at that time—good and bad copies were bound to occur. The Holy Spirit did not guarantee that every copy would be error-free, nor did He superintend every copy that was made to ensure that it was error-free. He did not need to. As noted above, the multiplicity of copies alone would ensure that no word of His would or could be lost. Because the majority of early copyists would be men of integrity and they would know the spiritual value of what they were copying and being men of faith they would be thoroughly honest, God-fearing, and righteous men, having the Spirit of Christ within them. That was sufficient to ensure that the first copies of all of God’s documents to His Church would pass through the hands of men like Stephen and the rest of the apostles.

Paul’s instruction to Timothy could be applied to copying out Scripture: “And the things that you heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). Paul had an eye to the future, when he would not be around to safeguard the Spirit-led teaching he had passed on orally to the Church universal. He took precautions to ensure that there would be continuity between him and the third generation of Christians (Timothy being the second generation). Paul had his letters circulated among all his churches, even though they were sent to specific churches and dealt with issues peculiar to that church, because, having been given wisdom from God, he knew that the same issues would arise in all the churches he founded. Each church would make a copy of his letter (as we would do) before sending it on to the neighbouring church, and very possibly members in each church would acquire their own personal copy of Paul’s letter to them, as well as making copies of other circulating letters from Paul.

Thus we see that the mathematical chances of an error creeping into every single copy of one of Paul’s letters is negligible. The negligibility was high-lighted when I carried out an experiment using a 1000-piece jig-saw puzzle. When it was completed, I turned it over and numbered every single piece from 1 to 1000. Then I broke it up and put all the pieces in a bag, which I shook vigorously. I then counted out 50 pieces from the bag and noted in a long column of paper what number was on the back of each piece. The idea was that these fifty pieces had been destroyed.

However, I put the fifty pieces back in the bag, shook it vigorously, and repeated the procedure nine more times. That was the equivalent of having ten identical, 1000-piece jig-saws, and

taking fifty out of each and throwing them in the fire, so that each jig-saw was defective of fifty pieces, and consequently no jig-saw was perfect. Yet, because all ten jig-saws showed the same picture when complete, I was able, by comparing the numbers in the ten columns, to say that I could make six perfect jig-saws out of ten imperfect ones. So it is possible to bring forth perfection out of imperfection provided you have multiple copies of the same thing, and the more copies ones has the more certain one is to achieve perfection, because the chances of every scribe in the world making the same clerical error in the same place is infinitesimal.

The Holy Spirit does not have to do anything to safeguard the perfection of transmission: it is done through the sheer volume of copying and recopying Scripture. Not a single word of Scripture can be lost by this simple procedure. Clever.

But this level of perfection can only be reached provided each copyist was/is a faithful copyist. If a copyist deliberately alters his copy to suit his pietistic or theological beliefs, or for some other reason, then when his copy goes out he is cheating those who receive it. But the cheat will not last, because sooner or later, some sharp-eyed Christian leader will spot the difference between his copy and the cheat's copy, and the result will be that the cheat's copy will not be at the centre, but laid to one side where it may survive for centuries.

(D) *Living copies cannot be eaten by bookworms*

All copies in daily use by a community will disintegrate quicker than those which have been discarded. It is for this reason that *all* the original documents of the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments, disintegrated (or were destroyed by enemies). We cannot point to the survival of a single, original document. God did not require the *original* document of any of His messages to stay in existence, even if He wrote them on stone tablets. They have all perished, but His Word did not. The materials on which they were written may have perished but the contents were saved and captured on new materials. It was sufficient that they were handed to *faithful* men who would ensure that an exact copy would be made of them, and they in turn would hand them on to *faithful* men, who would repeat the process. In this way God ensured that what He conveyed to His people in the first document was carried forward into each new generation. Multiple copies was all that was needed to ensure that nothing could be lost, not even a single jot or tittle (as Jesus put it).

A codex which is continuously in the hands of the living people of God cannot be eaten by bookworms. A codex which has been discarded by God's people can be, and were, eaten by bookworms. Bookworms are a sure sign of neglect. Such codices are out of circulation. They are unused by God's people, and it is this factor that often contributes to their survival, if the bookworms cannot eat the lot, compared to the codex used by the living Church which has to be replaced every generation with a fresh copy. It is for this reason that we do not have many ancient copies of the Universal (Byzantine) Text. *They have been worn out through use.*

We find a similar situation with the Hebrew Scriptures. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the earliest, extant copy of the OT was dated to the late 9th cent. AD. This was because they were worn out through continual use. But the faithfulness of the Jews in transmitting their Scriptures as accurately as they could, was thoroughly vindicated with the discovery of copies one thousand years older than the earliest extant copy. It turned out that over a thousand years of transmission the Jews had lost practically nothing. This is an astonishing feat of careful copying, and it shows that when men revere something as coming from the hand of God, they treat it with the greatest respect and reverence and they guard it carefully from all careless copying. It is to be expected that the writings of the Apostles and other Spirit-led NT writers would be held in exactly the same regard and guarded with the same show of watchfulness, lest any corruption should spoil what was handed on to them, to hand on to the following generations. Just as the Hebrew Scriptures were spoiled by rival Hebrew texts, as evidenced by the DSS scrolls, and these did not enter the mainstream of Judaism, but remained on the outside, just so with the Universal Text. It has been spoiled by careless copyists, but it has survived in unbroken use in the Greek Orthodox Church to the present day. This is the only part of the original Church of the Apostles to retain the reading of the Scriptures in the language in which it was written, and to do so in an unbroken tradition.

(E) *Early translations of the Greek New Testament*

Greek was the universal language of God's Church for the first three centuries. The entire revelation of the New Covenant was given in Koine Greek, apart from some Aramaic words, transliterated into Greek letters. Paul talks about the Gospel having going out in his own lifetime "into all the world" (Col 1:6). One might have expected Paul to have written in Latin to the church in Rome, the centre of the Roman Empire, but he wrote to the common people of that church in Koine Greek. *There was no need for a Latin translation.* There was no need for a Syrian translation, because there too, the universal language was Greek. Greek was the universal language for a universal

church, and they all read a universal text of the sacred writings of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

It was not until many centuries had passed that Greek began to lose its universal status, and with the rise of this loss came the need to translate the Old and New Testament scriptures into local languages. It was at this time that Latin translations began to appear, and maybe from as early as the third century, for there are always precursors before the main evidence appears. These early Latin translations show, according to Origen [*d.* 254], that variant readings had already entered the universal text of the NT scriptures very early, but the variants were never such as to cast doubt on the integrity of these translations. And once the translation was made there was no further need of the Septuagint and Greek scriptures, just as we see in the English-speaking church of today. We can get by on translations. But it should be noted that it is likely that *one* Greek manuscript was used for each of the early translations, and as we know the *single* Greek manuscript that lies behind each of these early translations contained many errors, and one would hope that they were of a clerical nature. The disadvantage of making a translation from a single Greek manuscript is that it will be a defective copy because its Greek foundation is defective. The imperfections of the Greek original will be transmitted into the early translation, and be perpetuated for all time to come, unless it is revised according to a collective reading of many Greek manuscripts.

When Greek replaced Hebrew as the language of God's people during the domination of Alexander the Great's Greek Empire (foretold in Daniel), the Jews translated the Old Testament into Greek, but they did not neglect to read the original, Hebrew scriptures in their synagogues.

God did not preserve the early versions of the NT from error, any more than He preserved the Septuagint translation from very serious blunders (especially in the case of the chronology of the Hebrew kings, which is a total mess). The LXX translators added and subtracted from God's Word. It was a thoroughly bad piece of work, and done with the motive of removing all apparent contradictions from the Hebrew text in order that their finished product would not be a cause of sport among the Greeks. God, however, is not obliged to follow man around. He is sovereign. He is not at the beck and call of any man's initiatives, or any Bible translation committee's initiatives. Let them do what they want, He will still guide His people toward His Word.

(F) *Early corrupters of the Greek New Testament*

Heretics like Marcion corrupted God's Word, and corrupters were in the majority in Paul's day for he could write, "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God" (2 Cor 2:17). Jesus was very much aware that there many out to deceive His followers in all sorts of ways, and no doctrine or practice was immune from their attacks. Nothing would be sacrosanct or left alone by His enemies, and that must include the written record of His teaching. We should expect to find copies of Scripture altered by those who could get their hands on a copy. That is one source of corruption of the Greek text. This corruption is from outside the church. Fortunately, no such corrupted copies have survived.

But inside the church we should also expect to find the full range of human attitudes among copyists toward God's Word. These will range from the most meticulous and accurate copying to the most careless and sloppy copying, because this is the range found among humans. Fortunately, few examples, if any, have survived of the worst kinds of copying, and the vast majority of extant copies fall into the topmost range, but even here there are representatives of appalling carelessness. We should expect to find this, and it is the task of textual scholars to identify these (mainly) clerical errors, and restore each badly copied manuscript back to its more pristine exemplar.

As soon as the Kingdom of God was established on this earth, beginning in Jerusalem, it was assailed on every side, and the enemies of the Cross even penetrated into membership of the Jerusalem church in order to wreck it from the inside, hence Paul's caution when he met the apostles in Jerusalem. On the beach at Ephesus, he became acutely aware that corrupters and wreckers would arise from within his own churches and lead many astray, and that awareness was soon confirmed in reality.

In Paul's own lifetime, the enemies of the Cross (inside and outside) were impersonating his. So corruption of the Old and New Covenant scriptures began immediately. We should not assume that there was a gap of a few decades before the start of the interference with the Spirit-inspired correspondence of the apostles, John, Peter, James, and Paul. The enemies of the Cross were vigilant and aggressive, and Jesus predicted that His followers would be expelled from their synagogues in their lifetimes. Following the ascension of Jesus His church was plunged in a cauldron of boiling hatred, but the church survived and grew. We should expect to find that not one of the NT documents was exempt from corruption without by heretics, or corruption from within by sloppy copyists. The 'eternal' struggle between the 'sons of light' and the 'sons of darkness', first seen in Genesis, and continued unabated into the time of Jesus, erupted into a global animosity between Jew and Christian. Scurrilous, mocking documents were written and circulated widely by the Jews, such

as the “Toledoth of Jesu.” This was most likely written to counteract Matthew’s Gospel, which appears to have been written in Hebrew for Hebrews, and which opened with a “Toledoth of Jesus,” connecting Him to Abraham and David.

(G) *The date of a manuscript has no bearing whatsoever on the quality of its transmission*

Because the corruption of the written revelation of God, and the corruption of church membership were both under attack from the moment of their inception, it will not surprise us to learn that a first copy of the documents that make up the New Testament would be subject to intense scrutiny by the enemies of Christ to see if they could wreck it and nip this ‘sect’ in the bud. If Paul thought he was doing the will of God in persecuting the first generation of Christians, and the Sanhedrim thought the same when they imprisoned the apostles, and stoned Stephen, then they would have felt they had the divine right to exterminate this ‘sect’ in any way they chose, because they were honouring God, and safeguarding His religion. They had total disdain from Jesus’s followers.

No doubt, many false ‘gospels’ started to appear and circulate like wildfire; many of them purporting to come from leading apostles. So we need to look carefully at the transition from the creation of the original documents of the NT to the making of the first copy. Now if a first copy was an exact replica without any errors of any kind, well and good. Take that first copy and make a copy of it. If the second copy is as exact and accurate as the first copy, well and good. But what happens if the third copy is a sloppy copy? Then we are in real trouble, because if that copy gets into circulation then someone, somewhere, will notice that it does not agree with their copy, and doubt starts to creep in which copy is the correct copy. If the sloppy copy manages to make perfect sense as it stands, this will add to the confusion. Three things could happen next. The owner of the second (perfect) copy would not allow any variant in the sloppy copy to enter his copy, and insist that it be copied as it is. The owner of the sloppy copy would likewise insist that his copy is a direct copy of the original, and so he would refer to allow any interference in the transmission of his copy. A third option is that of the scribe who is confused to know which of the two copies is the perfect copy and he produces a hybrid copy, selecting readings from both copies according to his own judgment of what is likely to have been written. This hybrid copy then takes on a life of its own as it is copied and recopied through the centuries. Likewise the second (perfect) copy and the sloppy copy are faithfully copied and recopied through the centuries, resulting in competing documents each purporting to be exact copies of the original autographs.

Now the gap between the original document and the sloppy copy could be a matter of one or two years, being a first copy, or it could be a sloppy copy of a perfect first copy. In other words, it could be a second generation copy, or it could be a third generation copy. This means that a first generation sloppy copy could be in circulation almost as soon as each NT document came into existence. A sloppy copy could have arisen unintentionally if it was written in a hurry, and there was no checking procedure in place. A sloppy copy could have arisen if non-professional scribes did the first copy, or if it was too expensive to employ professional scribes, or was done by untrained copyists, before the church had organised itself sufficiently well to be able to ensure exact copies were made. The Council of Jerusalem sent out written circulars to all the churches immediately after Paul’s missionary journeys, so they had the means of production to make circulate such documents at will.

No doubt as soon as Christians throughout the Roman Empire learned that the Gospels were in existence, there would have been huge pressure on the Jerusalem church to make copies of it available to the farthest corners of the Roman Empire as soon as possible. The same would go for the letters of any of the Apostles, especially Paul’s letters. If all the NT documents were written before the destruction of the Second Temple as seems certain, when Greek was still the universal language of the Empire, then we should expect to find that all of them had been copied and recopied well before that event dispersed the Apostolic church for good.

Now, the earliest fragment of any portion of the NT to survive appears to be a fragment of John’s Gospel, which survived in the bone dry ground of Egypt, and dated to within a 100 years of John writing it. We have no way of knowing if this is a third or a fourth generation copy of the original of John’s Gospel. Even a first generation copy could be a sloppy copy. So the status of all manuscripts is uncertain.

Even if we found a copy of John’s Gospel tomorrow purporting to be a direct copy of the original, and dated to a time before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, we would not be able to tell if it was a perfect copy, a slightly defective copy, or a sloppy copy. The date on the manuscript, even if genuine, and if the vellum used could be carbon dated to AD 70 ± the usual 50 years, means nothing, because we do not know the *quality* of the copying process. We are at a loss to know how to proceed. The assumption is that it *could be* a perfect copy because it is dated so close to the actual point of John writing the document, but we lack certainty. The assumption could be wrong. It could be right. It could be a slightly defective copy, or it could be a sloppy copy.

So the date of copying is no guarantee of the quality of the copying process. Date and quality have no direct correlation.

There is a gap of 300 years between the original NT documents and the two manuscripts of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus on which all modern Greek New Testaments and the majority of modern translations (across the world) are founded. How many copying processes did these two manuscripts go through and were all the intermediate copies perfect copies of what went before, right back to the original documents themselves? We have no way of knowing the answer. All we can say is that it just takes one copy in the chain of copies to be an imperfect one (or a sloppy one) and the present quality of the two codices in question is seriously compromised.

Now, if these two manuscripts had independent lines of transmission going back to the original documents, then this would strengthen their case and guarantee the quality of their copying process. Unfortunately, both manuscripts emerged from the same scriptorium, and one scribe had a hand in writing both manuscripts. This seriously compromises their independent lines of transmission, and throws the quality of their final copying into doubt.

Three hundred years of copying and recopying is a long time and if at any time a scribe in copying out the text of Vaticanus or Sinaiticus has a lapse of concentration, or was tired, he may have skipped a word, or a line, here and there through a process known as *homoioioteleuton*, and if the checker is not alert to spot the error, or if the copy is not checked at all, then the future quality of that document is seriously compromised, and if the resultant manuscript gains a reputation for being defective it may be laid aside and not used in public worship again.

The texts of TR and WH have this in common: they are both founded on one or two witnesses. Erasmus had just seven manuscripts in total when he created his Greek NT, and for some parts of the NT he had just one witness to go on. When Westcott and Hort created their Greek NT they relied mainly on just two witnesses, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Unfortunately, their two witnesses were just one witness, because their texts go back to a single exemplar. And, unfortunately, their two witnesses would not agree, so a rule of thumb was created which went like this: *Since the Byzantine Text was an artificial creation by Lucian in the fourth century and was adopted by the Byzantine Church and imposed on the universal church, any variant which disagrees with it is to be preferred as it is likely to be older than it.*

This meant that when Vaticanus and Sinaiticus disagreed, and one of them agreed with the Byzantine text, the reading of the manuscript which disagreed with the Byzantine Text was to be preferred, especially if it was found to have support from the Western Text, or some other witness, such as the Old Latin. This rule of thumb predetermined Westcott and Hort's resultant text. It was an easy criterion to follow, and it is the one still in force today.

(F) The methodology that will result in producing the original text is one that reduces all manuscripts to their individual genealogical sources. At present there are four such genealogical 'trees.' These are Byzantine, Caesarean, Western and Egyptian. These four 'trees' have distinct trunks, but their topmost branches intertwine with each other as to make it virtually impossible to decide which trunk they derive from. This is because there can be block mixtures of text-types, or borrowing from other text-types. But this is where the skill of the textual critic comes into its own.

EVIDENCE OF EGYPTIAN EDITING

All the Egyptian witnesses interpolate John 19:34 into Matthew 27:49. They are: Aleph B C L (W) Theta 33 700 892 pc.

EVIDENCE OF EGYPTIAN SPELLING

F. H. Scrivener lists the different spelling conventions between Koine and Egyptian scribes. The most notable one is that the third person Koine verb $\epsilon\iota\pi\omicron\nu$ is changed to $\epsilon\iota\pi\omicron\nu$ 68 times in Sinaiticus. He gives a number of other consistent changes of spelling between Koine and Egypt Greek.³⁵ It is acknowledged by textual scholars that all the NT writings were written in Koine Greek, thus we see a layer of editorial interference when the NT writings were taken down to Egypt. Consequently, all non-Koine spellings are not the original text.

Most "King James Only" proponents hold that God inspired the translators of the KJV to produce a translation that is inerrant, superceding all other English Bible translations and even replacing the need for Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible.³⁶ This view dismisses all forms of textual criticism, because they believe canonical inspiration continued from New Testament times up to 1611 and then ceased. Majority text scholars, on the other hand, believe that with the completion of the NT canon, God's revelation ceased and that God's inspiration of the original autographs of Scripture, penned by Biblical authors, stopped with the close of the NT canon.

The task of Majority Text scholars is to use the science of lower textual criticism to recover the original text of those autographs. God, in his good providence, moved his Church to make hundreds of copies of the original autographs before they disintegrated through wear and tear. No value was attached to the original autographs once accurate copies were made of them. What has ensured that the text of the autographs can be recovered one-hundred per cent, is the sheer volume of copies that sprang from those original autographs.

The point was made above that Paul encouraged all his churches to share his letters with neighbouring churches, and in this way ensure that what he wrote was not lost. In the providence of God, not all of his letters, or those of the twelve Apostles, survived, but such as did survive eventually formed the canon we now know as the New Testament Scriptures.

At first Jesus' teaching was written in the minds of the twelve Apostles. In John 14:26

The Byzantine Text was investigated by Hermann Freiherr von Soden, with the help of a team of about forty trained helpers over a period of thirty years between 1880 and 1911, the date when he finished publishing his results.³⁷ Von Soden examined more manuscripts than anyone else before or since his day. He has no equal among textual scholars in this regard and rightly deserves the gratitude of all, both Hortian and Majority Text textual scholars. Von Soden's apparatus provided the basis for the 13th edition of the Nestle edition which has continued to be the standard edition for all academic research to the present day. The latest 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland notes:

It was Eberhard Nestle's son Erwin who provided the 13th edition of 1927 with a consistent critical apparatus showing evidence of manuscripts, early translations and patristic citations. Now the "Nestle" met the standards of a scholarly hand edition of the Greek New Testament. However, these notes did not derive from the primary sources, but only from editions, above all that of von Soden.³⁸

³⁵ Chief of these is in $\lambda\alpha\mu\beta\alpha\nu\omega$ and its compounds and derivatives, where μ is always inserted before ψ , e.g. $\lambda\eta\mu\psi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$, $\pi\rho\sigma\omega\pi\omicron\lambda\eta\mu\psi\iota\alpha$. "John" is $\iota\omega\alpha\nu\eta$ (Koine $\iota\omega\alpha\eta$), and "Moses" is $\mu\omicron\omega\sigma\eta$ (Koine $\mu\omega\sigma\eta$). See Frederick H. Scrivener, *A Full Collation of the Codex Sinaiticus with the Received Text of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co., 1864), p. liv.

³⁶ James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), pp. 1-7. Unfortunately for this view, many errors in printing occurred in the first printings of the KJV, for example "she" for "he" in Ruth 3:15, and "printers" for "princes" in Ps 119:161. For the thousands of changes made between the original 1611 version and a modern version of the AV, see Erroll F. Rhodes and Liana Lupas, *The Translators to the Reader: The Original Preface to the KJV of 1611 Revisited* (NY: American Bible Society, 1997), pp. 1-7.

³⁷ Hermann F. von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt*, 2 vols. in 4 parts (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1911). Von Soden was born in Cincinnati, USA, and educated at the University of Tübingen. For a conservative-evangelical assessment of von Soden's work see J. A. Moorman, *When the KJV Departs from the 'Majority' Text* (New Jersey: Bible For Today, 2010), pp. 21-28 (this lists von Soden's 414 mss and gives the breakdown of his K subgroups), and J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964). Von Soden's researches were sponsored by a wealthy German woman.

³⁸ Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), p. 46*. The first edition of the UBS Greek NT appeared in 1966. Its text was established along the lines of Westcott and Hort and differed considerably from Nestle's 25th edition. However Kurt Aland was able to converge the text of the 26th Nestle with the text of the 3rd edition of UBS, and it is unlikely that they will ever diverge again (p. 47*). The strong Hortian bias of the 28th edition underlies the statement that, "The selection of Greek manuscripts cited in the present edition comprises the witnesses that are most important for reconstructing the text" (p. 50*). Majority Text scholars do not 'reconstruct' but 'recover' the text of the autographs in the extant witnesses. It is helpful that the reading of the Byz text is now formally indicated in Nestle 28th by the siglum 'Byz' (but only in the Catholic Epistles). It is a pity that this has not been applied across the entire NT, as a matter of urgency, and that Majority Text scholars will have to wait decades to see the new format applied to the whole of the NT, and especially to the Gospels.

Without the benefit of von Soden's unsurpassed research (except for the recent ECM of the Catholic Epistles³⁹) into the textual families of the 900-plus manuscripts available to him at the close of the nineteenth century there would be no Majority Text in circulation today. He arranged all his material into three main text-types, Egyptian (sigla H), Jerusalem (sigla I) and Koine (sigla K). His Koine text is better known as the Byzantine Text, or more accurately the Universal (Byzantine) Text, because from a Majority Text perspective, the Byzantine text is none other than a direct, accurate copy of the autograph texts of the Greek New Testament, hence it existed before the start of the Byzantine Empire (325-). Just as the Gospel went out to the ends of the civilised world, so also did its texts.

In the Gospels von Soden subdivided the Byzantine manuscripts into four groups, Kx, Kr, K1 and Ki. Von Soden was a fervent supporter of Westcott and Hort and never questioned the assumptions behind their text. H. C. Hoskier wrote:

Von Soden's text is so thoroughly Alexandrian that it falls into line with Hort, irrespective of MS evidence. Among other things, it favours the imperfect over the aorist, just as the Alexandrians did, and favours the historic present on countless occasions.⁴⁰

In another place Hoskier wrote: ". . . instead of writing a eulogy on his work I regret to have to condemn it strongly. . . . after making allowance for the division of work among forty people, it can only be said that the apparatus is positively honeycombed with errors," ⁴¹ He then goes on to illustrate (in 18 pages!) von Soden's eclecticism in which he invents scripture by conflation or combination, yet no known manuscript contains his unique text. Von Soden never collated Sinaiticus for his project. Instead, he relied solely on Tischendorf's faulty collation. Consequently he overlooked 55 readings in Sinaiticus, and ignored Scrivener's 1864 fastidious and accurate collation. Hoskier wrote, "As to *system* there is none. . . . I urge that there is no system in von Soden's text." His choice of final text is arbitrary and sometimes erratic and illogical. Hoskier claims that von Soden constructed his text from the apparatus put together by others and which he did not understand himself. Likening the task of steering one's way through the troubled waters of textual criticism, he accuses von Soden of not having mastered the art of navigation before leaving port and without adjusting his compass to true north. This is severe criticism indeed, and by the volume of examples that he gives, it seems justified.

There is no evidence that Bruce Metzger ever worked through von Soden's text in the sure-footed way that Hoskier did, but he probably sums up the views of other reviewers when he wrote:

Though absolute accuracy in an extensive critical apparatus is probably unattainable, where von Soden's work can be tested it has been found to contain a higher percentage of errors than is usually considered to be consistent with trustworthy scholarship.⁴²

In a study of Acts, J. K. Elliott reported that von Soden correctly recorded the evidence in 235 instances, but incorrectly in 80 other places.⁴³ If true, this would make his apparatus unreliable and useless. Apparently Elliott misunderstood von Soden's notation and misrepresented him and his work according to James R. Royse, who concluded, "In the light of Elliott's confusion here, one hesitates to accept his table of accuracies and inaccuracies in von Soden."⁴⁴

Despite the negative assessment of most reviewers and the steady accumulation of inaccuracies in von Soden's apparatuses, James Royse probably speaks for most of us who use von Soden's apparatus on a regular basis when he writes:

In conclusion, then, von Soden's apparatus, while neither thoroughly perspicuous nor completely reliable, does give us a good deal of information not available in Tischendorf. As long as this is so, and as long as no more recent critical edition of the New Testament exists, von Soden's apparatus must be utilized. This is admittedly a case of making do with

³⁹ *Novum Testamentum Graecum Editio Critica Maior*, ed. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Gerd Mink, and Claus Wachtel (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997-2005). When this is completed it will be the most complete collection of mss ever put together.

⁴⁰ Herman C. Hoskier, *Codex B And its Allies* (London: Quartch, 1914), p. 461.

⁴¹ H. C. Hoskier in *Journal of Theological Studies* 15 (1914) 307-26, esp. p. 307.

⁴² Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (2d ed.; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 142-3.

⁴³ Op. cit., p. 143.

⁴⁴ James R. Royse, "Von Soden's Accuracy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979) pp. 166-71, esp. p. 171.

what we have, but the accuracy of what we have is considerably better than Elliott would have us believe.⁴⁵

What value should be placed on von Soden's own printed Greek text of the New Testament? According to my researches into the Gospel of Matthew, Westcott and Hort departed from the Majority Text in 967 places. This figure does not include the scores of cases where he puts an alternative reading in the margin against his preferred non-Byzantine readings in the main text. Of these unquestioned 967 departures from the Majority Text, von Soden accepted 671 of them, or 69.4%. In the other 30% he preferred the Koine (Byzantine) readings. From these figures it is clear that von Soden's text stands between the Textus Receptus and Westcott & Hort's text, but closer to Hort than Stephens.

It is not clear what criteria von Soden used to establish his text, given Hoskier's assessment of his work. Von Soden's attitude seems to have been one of 'take it or leave it,' and so scholars left it! And rightly so. No scholar should accept the work of another if he cannot verify or check its accuracy, and it was found wanting as soon as it was published.⁴⁶ If a scholar's research work needs to be checked on every occasion it is consulted it becomes a bane.

Frededrik Wisse did not have a high regard for von Soden's work either. He did a test to measure the reliability of von Soden's collations using his Profile Method. He chose Luke 1 as his test chapter because von Soden claimed to use 120 mss in the apparatus to this chapter. Wisse obtained 99 out of the 120 mss, and these he checked against 54 passages, 53 of which von Soden dealt with. He then gave the shocking conclusion:

Once the extent of error is seen, the word 'inaccuracy' becomes a euphemism. Of the 99 checked MSS, 76 were missing one or more times when they should have been cited, or were listed when they should not have been. This breaks down into 59 MSS which were missing in von Soden's apparatus from 1 to 4 times, and 39 which were added incorrectly from 1 to 6 times. . . . von Soden's inaccuracies cannot be tolerated for any purpose. His apparatus is useless for a reconstruction of the text of the MSS he used.⁴⁷

Hodges & Farstad wrote: "For the evidence of the Majority Text, the present edition rests heavily upon the information furnished by Hermann von Soden." Similarly, Robinson & Pierpont, "The primary source for establishing the readings of the Byzantine Textform remains the massive apparatus of Hermann Freiherr von Soden." And again, "Von Soden's data are recognised as having a particular and demonstrated value when presenting the evidence of *groups* of manuscripts; it is primarily from these data that the text of the present edition is established."⁴⁸ Yet von Soden's apparatus was the chief instrument used by HF and RP to establish their Majority Text. This is a totally unsatisfactory way to establish the Majority Text. We need to put von Soden's work to one side and begin his work again from scratch using digitized collations in a thorough, objective, scientific manner.

To be fair to the HF editors they recognised an Achilles' heel in their dependence on von Soden's 'magnificent failure.' They wrote:

As all who are familiar with von Soden's materials will know, his presentation of the data leaves much to be desired. Particularly problematical to the editors of this edition was the extent to which his examination of the K̄ [Koine, Byzantine] appeared to lack consistency. As the specific statements show, at times only a few representatives of Kx in the Gospels or of K in the Acts and Epistles were examined by him. How often this was true where he gives no exact figures we are only left to guess. His other K subgroups suffer from the same shortcomings. The generalized data of the other sources (such as Tischendorf or Legg) were of little value in correcting this deficiency. In the final analysis, if the present edition was to

⁴⁵ Op. cit., p. 171.

⁴⁶ For a trenchant criticism of von Soden's work see the review by H. C. Hoskier in *Journal of Theological Studies* 15 (1914) 307-26; Frederik Wisse, *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 16-17; W. J. Elliott, "The Need for an Accurate and Comprehensive Collation of All Known Greek NT Manuscripts with their Individual Variants noted *in pleno*", *Studies in New Testament Language and Text* (George D. Kilpatrick Festschrift), ed. J. K. Elliott (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), pp. 137-43. Hodges [d. 24 Nov 2008] and Farstad [d. 1 Sept 1998] relied heavily on von Soden's apparatus when they remarked, "only rarely can von Soden's data be corrected with confidence" (Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985]), Introduction, p. xv.

⁴⁷ Op. cit., pp. 16-17.

⁴⁸ Hodges & Farstad, op. cit., p.xv. Maurice A. Robinson & William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2005* (Southborough, MASS.: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005), Preface p. ix, and footnote 17.

be produced at all, the statements of von Soden had to be accepted. . . What is urgently needed is a new apparatus covering the entire manuscript tradition. It should include complete collations of a very high percentage of the surviving majority text manuscripts.⁸

The two editions of the Majority Text by Hodges & Farstad and Robinson & Pierpont acknowledge their total dependence on von Soden's apparatuses to extract it.⁹ While Tischendorf and other textual scholars, past and present, were useful in providing collations in support of various readings, they were woefully weak (where von Soden was strongest) in identifying *groups and families of manuscripts*. It is here that von Soden stands out as a giant over all previous textual scholars. He is unsurpassed in delineating the lines of descent of all the manuscripts that passed through the hands of his forty trained helpers.¹⁰

Having taken it upon myself to abstract the Koine text of the four Gospels directly from his apparatuses, without any consultation with the HP and RP editions, I ended up with a Universal (Majority) Text that was barely distinguishable from theirs. The one flaw that I constantly encountered was that where von Soden passed over trifling differences in spellings (final Nu, final Sigma, itacisms, etc.), I was left with no option but to follow his main printed text, and that is an unsatisfactory way to abstract the Koine Text for text-critical purposes. These seemingly trifling differences are not the concern of any other modern critical apparatuses either, so that one is left to rely on Swanson's collations. His collations have picked up every trifling difference because he learned through experience that it is often the trifling details that link groups of manuscripts. Von Soden, on the other hand, had his eye on the bigger prize of establishing the original text without being too concerned about trifling matters, and one of those details was definitely Byzantine spelling conventions. For him, as for Westcott and Hort, the Byzantine Text was a fourth- or fifth-century creation of the Church at Constantinople, and as such was useless to establish the text of the first-century Church. However, to give him his due, von Soden appears to have used a pool of 166 manuscripts belonging to the Kx group because when this group splits, he very frequently gives the ratio of manuscripts, and this ratio constantly adds up to around 160 to 170 manuscripts (see under Lk 18:7), unless he is dealing with trifling matters of spelling (espec. Byz.),¹¹ in which case he may consult just 15-30 mss. He does the same for the Kr group, which may have comprised about 220 mss. His sample ratio for this group comes to a maximum of 73 mss (see under Lk 11:32), but more often than not it is much lower than this.

We noted above that there would have been no Majority Text in circulation today had it not been for von Soden's exhaustive apparatuses accompanying his Greek text. Hodges and Farstad, followed by Robinson and Pierpont, abstracted von Soden's Koine Text from his apparatus, and it is thanks to von Soden's endeavours, in that he was so thorough and exhaustive in his pursuit of the original text, that a fairly complete text of the Koine (Majority) Text has now been established, using the data from his apparatuses. This is very much a case of making do with what we have until a complete digitisation of all known manuscripts has been completed. Only then will come the confirmation that RP have produced the nearest thing to the text of the autographs that the Church can hope to attain.

Given the quantity of manuscripts utilised by von Soden, it is unlikely that Robinson and Pierpont's Majority Text will need a wholesale revision even after every single manuscript has been carefully allocated its family connection.¹² However, there are 649 cases where Robinson and Pierpont's Majority Text express doubt over the original text with their alternative marginal readings. There are 188 of these in the four Gospels (Mt 40, Mk 50, Lk 45, Jn 53), 70 in the Acts of the Apostles, 13 in the Catholic Epistles (James 3, 1 Pet 2, 2 Pet 1, 1 Jn 5, Jude 2), 49 in the Pauline Epistles (Rom 12, 1 Cor 4, 2 Cor 10, Gal 3, Eph 2, Phl 1, Col 3, 1 Th 4, 2 Th 2, Heb 4, 1 Tim 1, 2 Tim 1, Tit 1), and 330 in the Book of Revelation. This is too large a number to inspire confidence that they (or anyone else)

⁸ Op. cit., xxii-xxiii.

⁹ In the footnote region, von Soden used three distinct apparatuses. The first one constitutes his 'margin'; the second is where the bulk of the evidence is given for what he considered to be significant variants. The third is used for trifling matters.

¹⁰ Alas, the ECM has nothing to compare to von Soden's stroke of genius to allocate every one of his mss to its family text-type, and even to sub-groups within each distinct family. Von Soden's categories in James of K (26 mss), K, K, K, and K, are all thrown together in ECM, whose methodology is akin to Reuben Swanson's in his volumes of the *New Testament Greek Manuscripts*.

¹¹ At Lk 8:33 Swanson gives κριμνου with support from Ki (EGHSΩY) in the footnote apparatus, but HF & RP read κρημνου, because von Soden ignored this inner-Byzantine spelling difference (see p. 283), and so anyone abstracting the Majority Text from von Soden's apparatus must follow his printed Greek text in these instances.

¹² A free copy of Robinson and Pierpont's Majority Text can be downloaded from <http://koti.24.fi/jusalak/GreekNT/RP2005.htm>

have got as far as it is possible to publishing the final, complete edition of the Universal (Byzantine) Text.

This article will suggest a way of clearing up the majority of the confusion inherent in these 649 marginal readings without waiting for the full digitisation of every available manuscript held in the Münster collection.

Modern scholarship also owes another indefatigable textual scholar their gratitude. Reuben Swanson produced nine volumes in a series called *New Testament Greek Manuscripts*.⁴ These have proved invaluable to the present writer who would not have been able to publish the present article without this fundamental research tool. R. Swanson, like von Soden, never questioned the assumptions behind Westcott and Hort's text, but this did not distort the presentation of the textual data in any way.

I have brought together the factual data of von Soden and Swanson in the textual apparatus that accompanies this article. I have used a new, visual presentation of the textual evidence. This presents the evidence for the main variants in a horizontal and vertical manner, allowing the user to examine the fluctuating family allegiance of each of Swanson's forty-four manuscripts on the horizontal axis, while giving the supporting manuscripts for any variant on the vertical axis.

I have chosen to use the I-bar to represent the Universal (Byzantine) Text, and the □ key to represent only the αB text, or when they split, to represent the one that carries the non-Byzantine reading. All manuscripts supporting the □ variant show up very clearly among the I-bar variants as a result. This, of course, does not mean that the αB reading has contaminated the other manuscripts, but it does show up possible, independent, convergent variants.

I should point out here that the scope of this article is limited to the whole of the Gospel of Matthew.

Hodges & Farstad wrote, "For the gospels, von Soden's K_i is not considered, since it includes only four uncial manuscripts."⁵ Given that K_i contains the oldest representatives of the Byzantine text (mss EFGH), this seemed a strange decision. Swanson, under the siglum ~, has added mss MSΩY to von Soden's K_i group, giving us a total of eight mss in this group. However, von Soden placed mss SΩ in K₁, and ms M in I^b, where it does not belong, unless the other members in that group (mss 71, 27, 1194, and 692) have an almost identical text to M, in which case they all belong to his K₁ group. That von Soden struggled to place each manuscript in its correct classification can be seen in the way he placed the eight oldest Byzantine uncial manuscripts, EFGHMSΩY, into three distinct groups, as we shall see in this study.

Using Swanson's detailed collation of these eight manuscripts I have been able to show that they divide into two separate families with four manuscripts in each group. I have called the first group family-E, which consists of EFGH, and the second as family-M, which consists of MSΩY.

The purpose of this article is not just to justify this division, which the tables themselves will demonstrate fully, but I intend to go further and show that the eight mss go back to a single manuscript, an archetype (fEM). Two copies were made of this single manuscript, and both copies contained different clerical errors in different places. The archetype was an exact copy of the text as found in von Soden's K_x text, because all eight mss contain 54 clerical errors that unite them (see lists 1-7). 54 errors is tiny, and it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack to find these. It is to Swanson's credit that he noted every single one of them.

Two copies were made of this single archetype (fEM). Scribe E (for such is credited with the sub-archetype of family-E) added a further 47 clerical errors (lists 8-11 in the appendix to this article), making a total of 54+47 = 101 mistakes. Scribe M (for such is credited with the sub-archetype of family-M) added a further 154 clerical errors to his copy (lists 12-21), making a total of 54+154 = 208 mistakes. Unfortunately, mss FGH are missing for Matthew 1:1-6:6, and FH lack a further section up to 9:1, and H only begins at Matthew 15:30, hence list 12 has "n/a" (not available) for family-E (hereafter fE). The cumulative total of clerical errors analysed for K_i's eight manuscripts came to 255 in Matthew's Gospel (54 in the archetype, added to 47 that scribe E made, together with the 154 that scribe M made). Given that there are 18,728 Greek words in the Majority Text (according to HF text), 255 errors is just 1.36% deviation in the whole Gospel.

⁴ R. Swanson died on 23 March 2009 aged 91 years. He was able to complete the following volumes: Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn, Acts, Rom, 1-2 Cor. Gal.

⁵ Op. cit., p. xv.

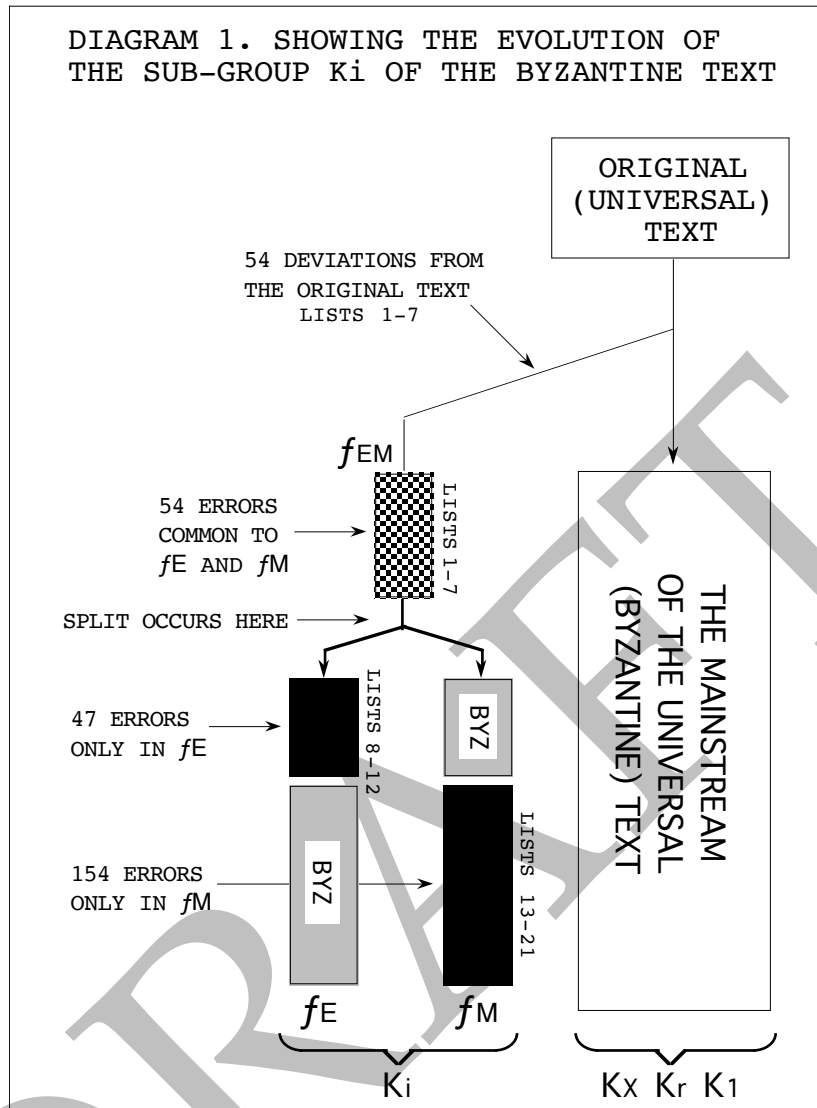


Diagram 1 shows the distribution of these cumulative errors under 21 lists. These lists are tabulated at the end of this article so that it is possible to see exactly the kinds of clerical errors that scribe E and scribe M made to the K_i archetype. From these lists it will not escape the observant reader's notice that many of the clerical errors tabulated under Swanson's eight mss are to be found also under von Soden's K_1 group, which consisted of about 64 mss. This close similarity between K_i and K_1 suggests that a common archetype lies behind these two groups, and certainly behind fE and K_1 (see lists 1,4, 7, 9).

The evolution of the K_i sub-group of the Byzantine text can be easily plotted from the above diagram.

STAGE 1. A copy (archetype fEM) was made of the Universal Text of Matthew's Gospel which contained 54 deviations from that text. These 54 errors are common to the eight uncial manuscripts that comprise fE and fM . (In the course of transmission of mss within fE and within fM , individual mss will often go their own way, but always the majority of mss will indicate what the sub-archetype text should be.)

STAGE 2. This single copy of fEM was then copied by two separate scribes, scribe E and scribe M.

STAGE 3. In copying out fEM with its 54 errors, scribe E made a further 47 errors of his own doing. In these 47 places scribe M retained the text of fEM (i.e., the Universal Text). Consequently scribe E bequeathed to his successor a copy of the Universal Text that had a cumulative total of $54+47 = 101$ errors.

STAGE 4. In copying out fEM with its 54 errors, scribe M made a further 154 errors of his own doing. In these 154 places scribe E retained the text of fEM (i.e., the Universal Text).

Consequently scribe M bequeathed to his successor a copy of the Universal Text that had a cumulative total of $54+154 = 208$ errors.

STAGE 5. Four uncial copies have survived of scribe E's work, and four of scribe M's work.

There were no cases where fE differed from fM and both differed from the Universal Text, in other words there was no three-way split in the transmission of the Universal Text in the Ki sub-group.

What is remarkable about this evolution of Ki is that when scribe E made an error in his copying, scribe M did not make a mistake *in the same place*, rather, he retained the Universal Text. The opposite also occurred. When scribe M made a mistake in his copying out the Universal Text, scribe E did not make a mistake *in the same place*, rather, he retained the Universal Text.

What this shows is that scribe E and scribe M were copying out the *exact same archetype text* and where one introduced an error into his text the other did not.

If we did not know that Ki was a sub-group of the larger Koine text-type, and we had just these eight surviving uncial manuscripts, we would be hard pressed to decide which family carried the authentic text. In such cases we would have to fall back on the canons of internal probability to decide which of them was transmitting the text of the autographs. If we were to go down this route it is likely that no two textual scholars would agree in all cases in their application of these canons.

However, knowing the genealogical connection between related groups and the hierarchy to which they belong can cut out the need to apply these canons of internal probability.

In this case we have Kx (550 mss), Kr (220 mss) and K1 (64 mss) united on the one side and whichever family in the split Ki group agrees with it this family has remained faithful, and whichever family disagrees with it has deviated from the K-text. The procedure could not be more simple or foolproof.

The diagram contains three sets of shaded blocks with accompanying lists where the cases may be examined in the appendix to this article.

Lists 1-7 detail the 54 cases where the archetype of fE and fM (fEM) deviated from the Universal Text.

Lists 8-12 detail the 47 cases where fE departed from the Universal Text.

Lists 13-21 detail the 154 cases where fM departed from the Universal Text.

The total number of deviations from the Universal Text is 255 cases. In this instance we can bypass the application of the usual canons of internal probability and declare that in all cases where fE or fM or both depart from the united text of Kx, Kr and K1, these are deviations from the Universal Text.

CRITERION FOR SELECTING THE ARCHETYPES FOR FAMILY-E AND FAMILY-M

The criterion used to obtain the 255 cases for analysis was to select only those readings in fE that had support of all four mss or three out of the four. No cases were chosen if there was a split of 2 mss against 2 mss. The same criterion was applied to fM . The least faithful in fE was ms G (11x), E (4x), F and H both had a lot of missing text.

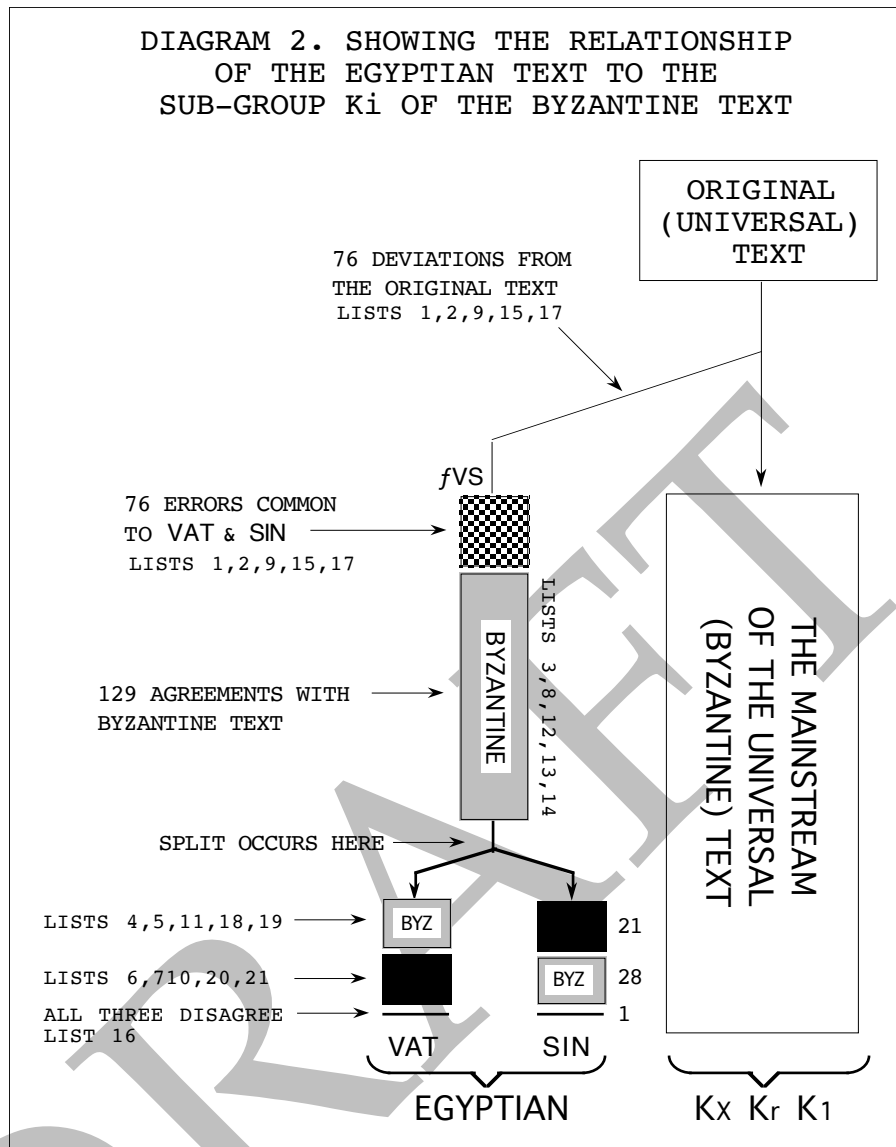
SUB-GROUPS WITHIN FAMILY-E

In order to see if there was any sub-groups with fE and fM all the split cases of 2 mss against 2 mss were tabulated. The result showed that there was no obvious examples where any of the four mss within fE was a close copy of another ms in the same sub-group, as the following pairings show: E and F agree 7x, EG 9x, EF 10x, FH 1x, FG 3x, and GH 3x.

SUB-GROUPS WITHIN FAMILY-M

This group of four manuscripts ($MS\Omega Y$) breaks into two distinct sub-groups where M and Y go together 33x with non-Byzantine variants (half of which involve the absence of final Nu, but 9x they agree with the Egyptian readings), while S and Ω carry the Byzantine alternatives 33x. There is small link between M and S 5x with non-Byzantine variants, while Ω and Y carry the Byzantine alternatives 5x.

In diagram 2. the same 255 variants are analysed with respect to the way Vaticanus (B, Vat, V) and Sinaiticus (S) aligned with the readings of Ki. This shows that BS agree with the Ki Byzantine Text 129 times, and they disagree 76 times. But remarkably, when B and S differ from one another, one of them will agree with the Byzantine Text. Among the 255 readings there was only one case where B, S, and Ki all disagreed with one another (list 14), represented in the chart by a thin line.



NOTE HERE THE OBSERVATION THAT WHEN *fE* disagrees with the Byz. *fM* will agree with the Byz.

Note that there are cases where all three disagree; that it always away from the underlying Byz. text.

THEN GO ON TO SHOW THAT THE SAME APPLIES TO VAT. AND SIN.

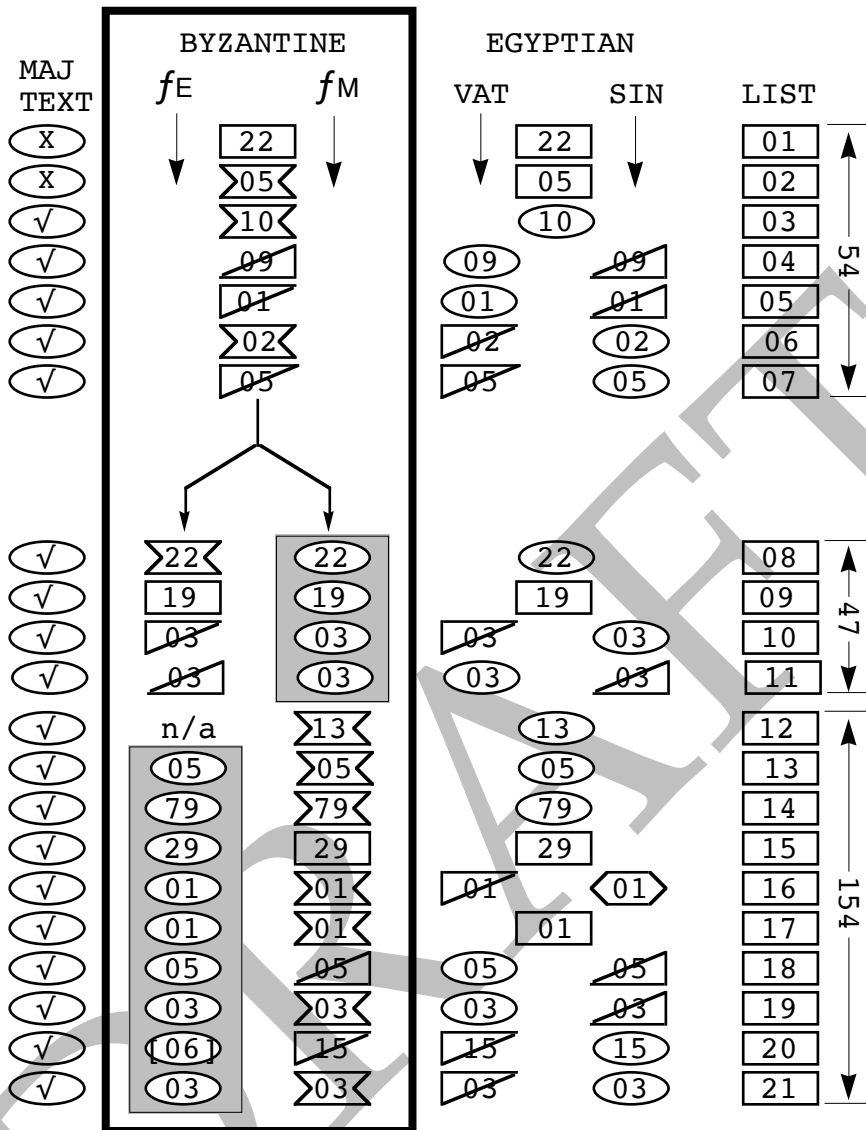
One of the arguments used to discount the Byzantine text is that it has no papyri or uncial text support earlier than the sixth or seventh-century, and this absence of early evidence is seen by most casual observers as detrimental to it being considered a candidate to transmit the original text during the first five centuries of transmission of the autograph text.

This article suggests that codex Vaticanus and codex Sinaiticus are direct witnesses to the existence of the Universal (Majority) Text.

Needless to say, establishing the Universal (Byzantine) Text is the last frontier facing conservative-evangelical textual scholars. Once this has been achieved there is nothing left for textual critics to do. They become redundant at this point. The long, dark Hortian night gave way to the dawn in 1982 when Hodges & Farstad published the first edition of the Majority Text. The future is sunny and bright, because the noonday now belongs to the reign of the Universal Text, and the Church can walk in the light of the unquestionable text of the autographs.

DRAFT

DIAGRAM 1. THE EVOLUTION OF FAMILY-E AND FAMILY-M AWAY FROM THE UNIVERSAL (BYZANTINE) TEXT



INVENTORY OF 255 VARIANTS IN 21 LISTS SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *fE* & *fM* ON THE ONE SIDE, AND THE READINGS OF VATICANUS & SINAITICUS ON THE OTHER SIDE






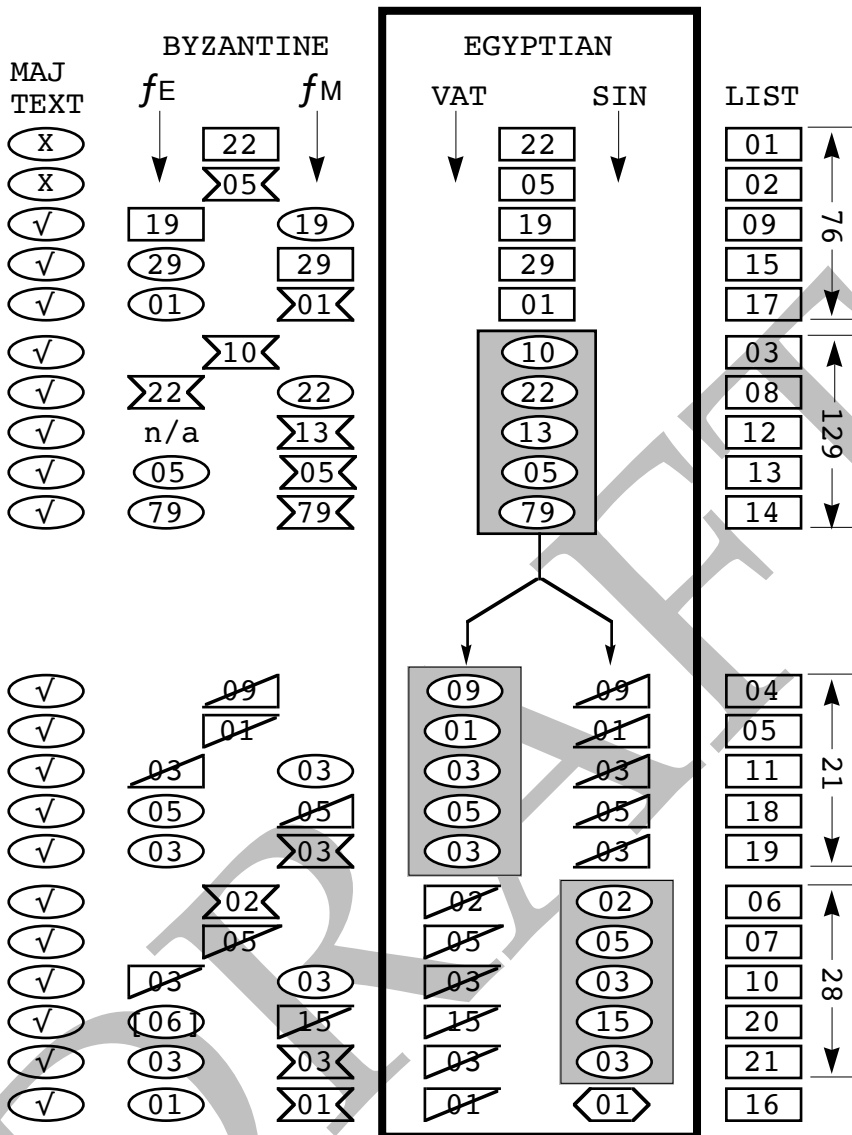
-  EGYPTIAN (a AND B AGREE)
-  NUMBER TOTALS IN EACH LIST
-  VATICANUS DIFFERS FROM SINAITICUS
-  SINAITICUS DIFFERS FROM VATICANUS
-  UNIVERSAL (BYZANTINE) TEXT

DIAGRAM 2. THE EVOLUTION OF VATICANUS AND SINAITICUS IN RELATION TO AN UNDERLYING UNIVERSAL TEXT



INVENTORY OF 255 VARIANTS IN 21 LISTS SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VATICANUS & SINAITICUS ON THE ONE SIDE, AND THE READINGS OF *fE* & *fM* ON THE OTHER SIDE

- (√) UNIVERSAL TEXT FOUND IN AT LEAST ONE OF THE FOUR SOURCES
- (X) UNIVERSAL TEXT NOT FOUND IN AT LEAST ONE OF THE FOUR SOURCES
- ◁ ▷ VARIANT (NON-BYZANTINE AND NON-EGYPTIAN)
- ◁ ▷ ANOTHER VARIANT (NON-BYZANTINE AND NON-EGYPTIAN)