



The Recensional Nature of the Alexandrian Text-Type: A Response to Selected Criticisms of the Byzantine-Priority Theory

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Many years have passed since the publication of the first edition of Wilbur Pickering's *The Identity of the New Testament Text*.¹ Over seventeen years have passed since the first publication of *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text*, edited by Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad.² Over six years have passed since the publication of *The New Testament in the Original Greek according to the Byzantine/Majority Textform*, edited by the present writer and William Pierpont.³

During the intervening years, numerous critiques have been made of the Byzantine-priority (or "Majority Text") theory as espoused by its varied partisans.⁴ A recent critique was presented by Daniel Wallace at the November 1993 ETS Annual Meeting.⁵ To the present writer's knowledge, not one of these critiques have deterred pro-Byzantine (or "Majority Text") adherents from their advocacy of what to most scholars must appear a wholly untenable position.

Why do pro-Byzantine scholars doggedly maintain their stance? Certainly not because of a saintly desire to suffer academic martyrdom or a masochistic mentality questing for persecution or deprecation; rather, the pro-Byzantine scholars persevere in their position because they are convinced that the case for the Byzantine-priority hypothesis is stronger and sounder than that proposed for the various eclectic alternatives as currently practiced. Utilizing the same data regarding the Greek manuscripts (MSS), Fathers, Lectionaries, and versions, pro-Byzantine scholars argue that the extant evidence directly suggests a hypothesis contrary to that currently practiced by modern eclectic critics. Significantly, virtually all current pro-Byzantine advocates were schooled first in current eclectic methodology and only slowly altered their stance after reflecting on the data as it had been interpreted to them. Few if any modern eclectics were first pro-Byzantine partisans who then altered their stance as a result of a fair evaluation of the extant data and hypotheses.

The present paper will demonstrate by example some of the reasoning which led the present writer to abandon the current hypotheses of modern eclecticism as well provide a response to some criticisms advanced by opponents of the Byzantine-priority hypothesis.

The Failure of Contemporary Eclecticism

Although some contemporary text-critical scholars (Elliott, Kilpatrick) practice what has been termed "rigorous" eclecticism and determine the presumed autograph text solely by internal criteria, most practicing textual critics have adopted a "reasoned eclecticism,"⁶ which purportedly strives to

balance the documentary evidence of MSS, versions, and Fathers with the same internal criteria utilized by the rigorous eclectics. Although the following list is not exhaustive, it provides the principles most generally followed by the advocates of "reasoned eclectic" methodology, divided into internal and external criteria:

Internal Criteria:

1. That reading which best conforms to the usual style and vocabulary of a biblical author is to be preferred.
2. That reading which best explains the rise of all other readings is to be preferred (also termed the "genealogy of readings" principle).
3. The reading deemed "more difficult" for a scribe to accept is to be preferred.
4. Readings which do not harmonize parallel passages or smooth out harsh syntax are to be preferred.
5. The shorter reading is generally to be preferred over one that is longer, since scribes were more likely to expand the sacred text than to abridge it.

External Criteria:

1. Other matters being equal, the reading found in the oldest MSS is to be preferred.
2. A reading found in MSS of more than one early text-type (Alexandrian, Western, or Caesarean) is to be preferred.
3. A reading supported by several ancient version or early church Fathers is to be preferred.
4. Readings found only in MSS of the Byzantine text-type are late and secondary and are to be summarily rejected.

This summary should be considered a fair statement of procedural methodology by those who currently practice reasoned eclecticism. As a beginning student of New Testament textual criticism, the present writer held to the very same principles for textual restoration. These principles have been advocated in varying degree since Griesbach and Lachmann in the late 18th and early 19th centuries; their codification was complete by the time of Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, and Warfield.

The question asked by advocates of the pro-Byzantine hypothesis is whether these principles are sufficient to practice New Testament textual criticism in an accurate and comprehensive manner. The answer to this question is important: should serious weaknesses exist in the modern eclectic approach, by such a degree will the value and authority of biblical translation and exegesis be affected.

Eldon Jay Epp continually has excoriated the modern "reasoned eclectic" methodology for its failings; yet Epp himself fails to provide a solution.⁷ Should a Byzantine-priority hypothesis be urged

as an alternative option, Epp instantly rejects such as "a curious and regrettable retrogression emphasized by a few North American scholars of a conservative theological persuasion."⁸

But, as Epp has demonstrated, modern eclectic methodology has failed at precisely the point where it was most needed, namely, in the establishment of a viable transmissional history of the text. Epp spoke to this need:

The establishment of the NT text can be achieved only by a reconstruction of the history of that early text and by extracting the earliest text from manuscripts which have been clearly located in that reconstruction and found to be integral parts of a stream of tradition which flows continuously from the earliest points which can be documented (or which can be recognized or established on adequate and reasonable grounds).⁹

Calvin L. Porter has spoken even more directly to this point: "Textual criticism without a history of the text is not possible."¹⁰ Without a theory of transmissional history which possesses an objective basis and which corresponds with known historical circumstances, the current practice of giving variant units alone ultimate worth, with no consistent pattern of linkage between witnesses from one reading to another, simply cannot stand as a viable critical option. Such a method of textual determination becomes subjective in the extreme, making textual criticism more the pawn of the critic rather than the tool of the exegetical, historical scholar.

Scientific textual criticism has been abandoned by modern eclecticism to flounder in a sea of fluidity; objectivity has been surrendered to the whim of individual critics. Long ago, Kenneth W. Clark spoke regarding the ongoing situation in these words:

A subjective element plays a considerable part in the eclectic procedure of recent textual revision. . . . Furthermore, such tentative changes as have appeared do not represent an integrated theory of the text and therefore can have no such basic theory to validate them as improvements.¹¹

Modern eclecticism was forced upon the twentieth century by both the internal subjectivity of Westcott and Hort and the failure of their genealogical method. Yet modern eclecticism offers no integrated solution or way of escape from the subjective morass in which it is mired. Instead, most eclectics have deceived themselves into believing that the critical texts we currently possess (i.e., UBS 4/Nestle 27) are virtually identical to the autograph. The presumption could not be farther from the truth, since the text found in the current critical editions, taken as a whole, is not one found in any extant manuscript, version, or Father, nor ever will be. Modern eclecticism proceeds on the assumption that very early in transmissional history the true (autograph) text was summarily dissected and scattered to such remote regions of the Empire that only the enlightened scholars of modern eclecticism could possibly have the revealed insight whereby to reassemble it for our own day and time.¹²

Kenneth W. Clark spoke pointedly to this situation, declaring that "we require a critical history of transmission," and that

some new angle, some novel experiment must be tried if we would in our time achieve a breakthrough to cast light upon the history of transmission. This is the fundamental need before we may move on to a thorough and systematic revision of the critical text.

The remedy we need can only come through a better diagnosis. The true diagnosis will of necessity be a new and different one.¹³

It barely need be mentioned that, so long as they stand intact, the internal and external principles of modern eclecticism enumerated above utterly preclude any such progress as Epp or Clark desiderate. Rather, they serve merely to confirm and guide the presuppositions of their own practitioners and are assiduously applied to attain that end.

The "interlude" or "eclectic bottleneck" which Epp, Clark, and Porter have lamented is simply due, in the present writer's opinion, to the utter unwillingness on the part of modern critics seriously to consider the Byzantine-priority hypothesis (or any alternative hypothesis) on its own claims and merits. Yet, as regards Byzantine-priority, there is ample reason for reconsideration:

(1) The Byzantine-priority theory does offer a transmissional history which accords with the known data of MSS, versions, and Fathers preserved from antiquity.¹⁴

(2) The Byzantine-priority theory is in full accord with known historical circumstances and theological controversies which affected earliest Christianity, especially as regards Egyptian Christianity in general as well as the Christological controversies which permeated the Empire in the first three centuries.¹⁵

(3) The Byzantine-priority theory remains within the scope of legitimate text-critical praxis, maintaining the necessary application of key text-critical principles (both external and internal) when evaluating evidence for or against a reading.

(4) Byzantine-priority theorists claim that external and internal criteria cited in defense of Byzantine readings have fewer inherent difficulties than those given in favor of eclectically preferred non-Byzantine readings.

For modern eclectics legitimately to approach and evaluate the Byzantine-priority hypothesis, they must be willing to suspend judgment and to abandon all presuppositions assumed by the external/internal list given above. The scientific method requires that a hypothesis must be considered and tested on its own merits without any presuppositional prejudice being initially directed against that hypothesis. Modern eclecticism should be evaluated in the same unbiased manner. If such testing of the hypothesis is performed accurately, then the hypothesis which incorporates the best explanation of the extant phenomena and which provides the best defense to various objections normally should be adopted.

The near-absolute rejection of the MSS comprising the Byzantine/Majority Textform (external principle four) is the crux of modern eclectic theory, even though external principle one would in most cases eliminate the Byzantine MSS from consideration. The earliest preserved MSS are claimed to be mostly a blend of the Alexandrian or Western text-types. Whether this is a completely accurate statement requires more detailed research, but the present writer has argued elsewhere that there exists a built-in prejudice in modern eclecticism which disallows Alexandrian-Byzantine or Western-Byzantine readings from being at all considered as Byzantine.¹⁶ Yet under the current hypothesis, such readings must be so considered in order for a just and fair evaluation of the hypothesis to occur.

Byzantine-era minuscule MSS number over 2,700 (bolstered by another 2,500+ Lectionary MSS of virtually the same text-type). Thus, the question of the Byzantine Textform is quite complex. Modern eclecticism, by eliminating the Byzantine text-type from serious consideration, reduces the remaining material to "manageable proportions," generally utilizing fewer than a hundred "significant" MSS or other witnesses for the determination of the autograph text at any given point of variation. The

favored sources, of course, include the earliest papyri and vellum MSS, as well as readings found in the early versions and Fathers. But why is the Byzantine Textform summarily dismissed?

Westcott and Hort carefully discredited the Byzantine text-type on both genealogical (external) and transcriptional (internal) grounds. The relative lateness of the Byzantine MSS was further discredited by a hypothetical genealogical stemma and the supposed evidence from conflation." On internal grounds, they characterized the Byzantine (= "Syrian" in their terminology) readings thus:

Syrian readings hardly ever offend at first. With rare exceptions they run smoothly and easily in form, and yield at once to even a careless reader a passable sense, free from surprises and seemingly transparent. But when distinctively Syrian readings are minutely compared one after the other with the rival variants, their claim to be regarded as the original readings is found gradually to diminish, and at last to disappear.

The qualities which the authors of the Syrian text seem to have most desired to impress on it are lucidity and completeness. They were evidently anxious to remove all stumbling-blocks out of the way of the ordinary reader, so far as this could be done without recourse to violent measures. They were apparently equally desirous that he should have the benefit of instructive matter contained in all the existing texts, provided it did not confuse the context or introduce seeming contradictions. . . . Where [omissions] occur [they] are usually found to contribute to apparent simplicity. . . . Interpolations on the other hand are abundant, most of them being due to harmonistic or other assimilation, fortunately capricious and incomplete. . . . In matter and diction the Syrian text . . . delights in pronouns, conjunctions, and expletives and supplied links of all kinds. . . . As distinguished from the [other text-types], the spirit of its own corrections is at once sensible and feeble. Entirely blameless on either literary or religious grounds as regards vulgarised or unworthy diction, yet shewing no marks of either critical or spiritual insight, it presents the New Testament in a form smooth and attractive, but appreciably impoverished in sense and force, more fitted for cursory perusal or recitation than for repeated and diligent study.¹⁷

Underlying this comment is Westcott and Hort's view that the Byzantine Textform is the direct product of a formal, deliberate revision which occurred around A.D. 350. By this hypothesis, the Byzantine readings were merely culled and/or combined (conflated) from the readings of Alexandrian and Western MSS which previously had dominated in a competing role. The Byzantine editors were at the most redactors, smoothing and harmonizing as they proceeded.

Westcott and Hort's discountenancing of the Byzantine text-type was effective. Their conclusions are maintained today, even if their critical methodology and preferred text (i.e., Codex Vaticanus, slightly improved and refined) is no longer formally maintained. Yet, if the theory that provided such conclusions is no longer considered viable, the conclusions themselves must be questioned. It becomes incumbent upon the scholar to enquire into and test the various principles of contemporary text-critical praxis cited above. Should these be found wanting in any degree, the alternative hypothesis regarding Byzantine-priority must be given serious consideration.

To illustrate a cross-section of the various problems with current eclectic methodology, five instances of Byzantine versus Alexandrian readings will be cited. In some cases, the Nestle/UBS text agrees with the Byzantine text, but the principle of evaluation of external witnesses and internal

evidence remains. These examples clearly display certain weaknesses in modern eclectic methodology as well as the strength of the Byzantine-priority assertions. The reader should note that this sample is not intended to reflect only the "best" or strongest cases which could be amassed; rather, the instances cited are merely typical, and can be multiplied regarding virtually every textual difference between the Byzantine Textform and the MSS generally underlying the current critical texts.

Item 1: Internal Stylistic Criteria vs. Preferred MSS Groupings

The simple inclusion or omission of οὐν within the Gospel of John admits of little doubt on internal grounds: on the positive side, οὐν occurs approximately 200 times in John's Gospel as opposed to a relatively low total in each of the Synoptics. In most cases, style, vocabulary, and context will favor its inclusion rather than omission. On the negative side, the omission of οὐν will not only be the "shorter" reading, but also "more difficult" for the scribe, since the presence of the word would befit John's usual style. On balance, however, in places of variation, the inclusion of οὐν would be more likely than its omission.

The word count for οὐν in the respective texts of the four gospels and Acts is as follows:

| | Mt | Mk | Lk | Jn | Ac |
|-----|----|----|----|-----|----|
| Byz | 54 | 10 | 44 | 196 | 67 |
| N27 | 56 | 6 | 33 | 200 | 61 |

Although from this chart the Byzantine Textform may appear to add οὐν in Mark, Luke, and Acts, and omit οὐν in Matthew and John, the chart does not reflect absolutes. Rather, the status of the text fluctuates greatly in both the Byzantine and critical texts.

Regarding the Gospel of John specifically,

(a) the Byzantine Textform reads οὐν where Nestle omits in Jn. 5.12; 6.42, 43, 45, 68; 8.42, 48; 9.12, 41; 10.19, 31; 12.4; 13.22; 16.19; 18.25b, 31b; 19.4; and 21.13.

(b) The Nestle text reads οὐν where the Byzantine omits in Jn. 1.39; 4.52b; 6.11; 7.15; 9.11, 17, 20, 26; 12.34; 13.25, 26, 31; 18.24; 19.15, 16b; 21.11, and 21 (the Nestle text brackets οὐν where the Byzantine has it in Jn. 8.41, 52; 9.10b; and 10.39.

The only variant unit discussed in the textual commentary concerning any of these differences appears at Jn. 6.42.¹⁸ There the Byzantine reading is rejected by Metzger as an attempt "to ameliorate the reading" of nun (which appears in p⁷⁵ B C T W Theta 1241, with minor versional and patristic support). This "amelioration" is blamed on "several copyists," even though it is supported not only by the entire Byzantine/Lectionary tradition (5,000+ MSS), but by witnesses ranging from the 2nd century (p⁶⁶) onward, from all the major text-types (Aleph A D K L Delta Pi Psi f¹ f¹³ 28 33 565 700 892 et al.). Further, this Byzantine inclusion of οὐν is found also in the Latin tradition, Athanasius (divided against himself), Chrysostom, Cyril and the Diatessaron (the Ethiopic version conflates, οὐν nun, while a few witnesses omit either or both terms).

In any other situation with such attestation, οὐν would be preferred on both internal and external grounds. The unmentioned truth in the present case is simply that the external p⁷⁵-B combination was considered overwhelming and rode roughshod over the internal criteria altogether. Such methodology clearly demonstrates the editors' preference for their specifically favored external witnesses not only

over principles of internal evidence, but also over external principles one, two, and three, which in the present case do not helpfully support their favored p⁷⁵-B combination.

Note that in the very next verse (Jn. 6.43), the Byzantine Textform again includes οὐν in the phrase οὐν ο. Aleph plus a few others read οὐν, while p⁶⁶ C K f13 pc read ο alone. Here also the editors chose to follow p⁷⁵ B L T 28 33 892 1241 al in omitting both οὐν and/or ο. Two verses later (Jn. 6.45), the Byzantine οὐν is once again omitted by virtually all Alexandrian and Western witnesses.

If one must consider the "several copyists" who originated the Byzantine reading in Jn. 6.42 to have been "ameliorating" the text by merely preserving a Johannine stylistic reading where οὐν was involved, why then should such "amelioration" continue over the next several verses? If indeed these scribes were stylistically guilty of deliberately adding a characteristically Johannine word in these instances (or in any of the eighteen cases listed above), why then did they fail to preserve οὐν in the seventeen cases where the Nestle/UBS text has the word and the Byzantine Textform omits? Such editorial inconsistency certainly is not a presumed hallmark of Byzantine-era scribes.

Further, in Jn. 5.12 (following the Nestle 27 apparatus), p⁷⁵ reads οὐν in place of the Byzantine οὐν αὐτον. Yet the editors here chose to read αὐτον alone (omitting οὐν), following p⁶⁶ Aleph B D pc plus the Latin and sy^c sy^p. Obviously, certain esoterically favored manuscript combinations are the deciding factor rather than internal criteria. The key MS in all of this remains Vaticanus. A combination of one early papyrus with Vaticanus appears to be the coalescence which is preferred. Thus, p⁷⁵-B or p⁶⁶-B will outweigh all other combinations. The lesson to be derived from this is that internal evidence is useful to the contemporary "reasoned eclectic" methodology only insofar as it happens to coincide with the reading preferred on external combinatory grounds. In any case, the most highly favored manuscript remains Vaticanus. If this be so, one might legitimately ask how far textual criticism really has come since Westcott and Hort.

The truth is that the MS evidence fluctuates greatly, and the reader continually must puzzle out how the Nestle 27/UBS 4 editors balanced the external and internal evidence in any given case. There is no consistent method of evaluation or procedure provided by Metzger in his *Textual Commentary*; and beyond the 1440+ UBS variant units therein discussed, the users of the Nestle 27 or any other detailed apparatus are on their own. Since most modern translations either accept without question the Nestle/UBS reading or else make their own eclectic decisions on a case-by-case basis, the reader of such translations is justified in asking on what external and internal criteria decisions were made which affect the translation so provided to him or her.

The following tables 1 and 2, constructed from the Nestle 27 apparatus, clearly demonstrate the fluctuation of the MSS regarding the inclusion or omission of οὐν among the significant witnesses regularly-cited in that edition.¹⁹

Note that there is no internal consistency between the Nestle 27 text and the readings found in even a single MS or versional witness (even B departs from the N 27 text one time). It remains obvious from the comparison of tables 1 and 2 that the internal criteria regarding style and vocabulary are readily abandoned in deference to specifically favored MSS or groupings of MSS. Yet, as has been demonstrated, even grouping preferences remain as unstable as the opinion of the editors in any given instance.

So how far have we come since Westcott and Hort? Westcott and Hort, after speaking in glowing terms of various combinations and of "genealogical groups" which are to be preferred, culminated by claiming that the B-Aleph combination was best and to be implicitly followed in almost all cases. Should those two MSS diverge, then B should generally be followed, except in cases of plain and clear transcriptional error (a degree in textual criticism is not required to calculate that this Hortian principle simply states "follow B so long as the text makes sense").²⁰ The preference given Codex Vaticanus is readily demonstrable. Table 3 (taken randomly from Mark 6 in the UBS apparatus) makes this abundantly clear.

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TABLE 1:
Nestle 26 omits οὐν—Byzantine retains οὐν:

c = corrector of a MS; s = supplied by different scribe;

* = original hand; () = supports text with slight differences

| Jn. | 5.12 | 6.42 | 6.43 | 6.45 | 8.42 | 8.48 | 9.12 | 9.41 | 10.19 | 10.31 | 12.41 | 13.22 | 16.19 | 18.31* | 19.4 | 21.13 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|-------|
| p ⁶⁶ | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| p ⁷⁵ | (*) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | c | |
| aleph | | * | * | | * | | | | | | | ** | | * | | * |
| A | (c) | * | * | * | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | | | |
| B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| C | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| D | | * | * | | * | | * | | (*) | * | * | * | | | | |
| K | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | | | |
| L | * | * | | | | | | | | | | * | | * | | |
| w | | | * | | | | | | | | | * | | * | * | |
| delta | | | | | * | * | | | | | | | | | | |
| theta | * | | * | * | | | * | | * | * | * | (*) | | * | * | |
| psi | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 28 | * | * | | * | * | | | | * | | | | | | | |
| 33 | * | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 700 | | | | * | * | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 892 | * | * | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1241 | * | | | * | | | | | (*) | | | | | | | |
| l ¹ | * | * | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | | | | |
| l ² | * | * | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| Byz | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| it | | | | | | * | | | * | | | | | | | |
| lat | * | * | * | | * | | | | | | | | * | | | |
| vg | | | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sy ^c | | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sy ^p | | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sy ^h | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | | | * | |
| sa | | | | | | | | | * | | | | | | | |
| bo | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 2
Nestle 27 includes ουυ—Byzantine omits:

| Jn. | 1.39 | 4.52 ^b | 9.20 | 12.34 | 13.25 | 18.24 | 19.15 | 19.16 ^b | 21.11 | 21.21 |
|-----------------|------|-------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|--------------------|-------|-------|
| p ⁶⁶ | • | c | • | • | c | | | | | |
| p ⁷⁵ | • | • | • | • | | | | | | |
| aleph | • | | • | • | •* | | • ² | • ² | • | • |
| A | • | | | | | | | | | |
| B | • | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | • |
| C | • | • | | | | •* | | | • | • |
| D | | | | • | | | | s | | • |
| K | | | | | | | | | | |
| L | • | • | | • | | • | • | (•) | • | |
| W | s | s | | • | • | • | | | • | |
| delta | | | | • | | | | | | |
| theta | • | | | | • | | | | | |
| psi | • | • | | • | | • | • | • | | |
| 28 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 33 | • | • | | | | • | (•) | • | • | • |
| 700 | | | | | | • | | (•) | | |
| 892 | • | | | • | | | | (s) | | |
| 1241 | | • | | • | | | | | | |
| f ¹ | | • | | • | • | | | | | |
| f ¹³ | • | | | • | | | | | | |
| Byz | | | | | | | | | | |
| it | | | | | | • | • | • | | |
| lat | | | | | | | | | | • |
| vg | | | | | | | | | | |
| syc | | | | | | | | | | |
| syp | | | | | | | | | | |
| syh | | | | mg | • | | | • | •* | |
| sa | | | | | | | | | | |
| bo | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 3: The Fifteen UBS4 Variant Units in Mark 6
as Supported by Its Regularly Cited Witnesses

• = supports the UBS reading
(•) = general support for the UBS reading
* = original hand c = corrector
? = support is questioned
% = percentage of agreement with UBS4

| % | Reading | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|----|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----|------|------|------|-------------------|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | MSS | 6.2 ^a | 6.2 ^b | 6.3 | 6.14 | 6.20 | 6.22 | 6.23 ^a | 6.23 ^b | 6.33 | 6.39 | 6.41 | 6.44 | 6.47 | 6.50 | 6.51 |
| 44 | p ⁴⁵ | | | | | | | • | • | | | • | | | • | |
| 60 | aleph | • | * | • | | • | • | | | • | | | | • | • | • |
| 47 | A | • | | • | | | | | | • | | • | • | • | • | |
| 73 | B | | • | • | • | • | • | | • | • | (c) | | • | • | • | • |
| 13 | C | • | | • | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 33 | D | | | • | | | • | • | | | • | • | | | | |
| 47 | K | • | | • | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 60 | L | | (•) | • | | • | • | | | • | | • | • | • | • | • |
| 47 | W | • | | • | • | | | | | • | • | | • | • | • | • |
| 53 | delta | | (•) | • | | • | | • | | • | | • | | • | • | • |
| 33 | theta | | | • | | • | | • | | | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| 40 | pi | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 27 | f ¹ | • | | • | | | | | | | | • | | | • | |
| 20 | f ¹³ | | | | | | | | | | | • | | • | • | |
| 27 | 28 | | | • | | | | | | | | • | | | • | • |
| 47 | 33 | • | • | | | | | | * | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 27 | 565 | | | | | | • | • | | | | • | | • | | |
| 27 | 700 | • | | | | | | • | | | | • | | • | | |
| 53 | 892 | | • | • | | | | | | • | * | | • | • | • | • |
| 47 | 1009 | • | | • | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 40 | 1010 | | | • | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | | |
| 40 | 1071 | • | | • | | | | | | | • | • | • | • | (•) | |
| 47 | 1079 | • | | • | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 47 | 1195 | • | | • | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 40 | 1216 | | | • | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 47 | 1230 | • | | • | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 47 | 1241 | • | | • | | | | • | | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 33 | 1242 | | | • | | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 33 | 1253 | • | | | | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 40 | 1344 | • | | • | | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 40 | 1365 | • | | • | | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 47 | 1546 | • | | (•) | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | (•) | |
| 40 | 1646 | • | | • | | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 40 | 2148 | • | | | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 40 | 2174 | | | • | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 47 | Byz | • | | • | | | | | | • | • | • | • | • | • | |

| % | Reading | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|----|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----|------|------|------|-------------------|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | MSS | 6.2 ^a | 6.2 ^b | 6.3 | 6.14 | 6.20 | 6.22 | 6.23 ^a | 6.23 ^b | 6.33 | 6.39 | 6.41 | 6.44 | 6.47 | 6.50 | 6.51 |
| 40 | Lect | * | | * | | | | | | | * | | * | * | * | |
| 20 | a | | | | * | | | * | | | * | | | | | |
| 27 | aur | | | | | | | | * | | * | | * | (*) | | |
| 20 | b | | | | * | | | * | | | * | | | | | |
| 20 | c | | | | | | | | | | * | | * | | * | |
| 13 | d | | | * | * | | | * | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | e | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 40 | f | | | * | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | (*) | |
| 40 | ff ² | | | * | * | | | * | | (*) | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 20 | i | | | | | | | * | | | * | | | | * | * |
| 47 | l | | | * | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 27 | q | | | * | | | * | | | | * | | * | | | |
| 7 | r ¹ | | | | | | | | | | * | | * | | | |
| 47 | vg | | | * | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 53 | sa | | * | * | | * | | | (*) | ? | | | * | * | * | * |
| 53 | bo | | * | * | | * | | | (*) | | | * | * | * | * | * |
| 13 | goth | * | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 27 | arm | * | | | | | * | | | | | | * | * | * | * |
| 27 | sy ^p | | | * | | | | * | | (*) | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 27 | sy ^h | | | * | | | | * | | (*) | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 0 | sypal | | | | | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 47 | geo | | | * | | | | | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |

Note especially the percentage of support given in the leftmost column: only Vaticanus (B) exceeds 70%. The other close Alexandrian relatives, Aleph and L, alone exceed 60% (MS C is fragmentary, hence its low percentage). The conclusion is obvious: the Nestle/UBS editors simply prefer Vaticanus in most cases; their application and interpretation of internal criteria is clearly designed to safeguard this preference.

This chart can be recreated using any given chapter of the Gospels or Acts. Codex Vaticanus will continually head the percentages whether papyri are present or not. If the case be such, the question remains: how far have we come since Westcott and Hort?

Item 2: The Recensional Nature of Vaticanus and the Alexandrian Text

If Vaticanus is supposedly the "best" MS, and other MSS are valued or devalued as a result of their agreement with or against Codex Vaticanus, then the character of Vaticanus must be precisely as Westcott and Hort described it:

a very pure line of very ancient text, and that with comparatively small depravation either by scattered ancient corruptions otherwise attested or by individualisms of the scribe himself.²¹

Of significance, therefore, is the fact that some current scholars openly challenge this "majority consensus" of contemporary eclecticism and maintain not only that Vaticanus is a localized product of the Egyptian region, but also that it bears on its face clear evidence of deliberate recensional activity.²²

First, even though Kurt Aland, Gordon Fee, and others make a strong attempt to persuade their readers that the Alexandrian text has no necessary tie to or origin in Egypt, recent scholars such as Timothy Barnes state expressly that

the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus of the Old and New Testaments and Apocrypha could be one of the codices which Athanasius sent to the West, since its Alexandrian origin seems certain.²³

Secondly, J. C. O'Neill has made a very strong case that Codex Vaticanus is a formally edited and revised MS.²⁴ Although O'Neill is fully aware of Fee's assertion that there is no evidence of Alexandrian revision in Egypt, let alone in Codex Vaticanus, and although O'Neill agrees with Fee that "P⁷⁵ is a good manuscript made by a careful scribe copying a good manuscript," he nevertheless maintains a "doubtful" attitude "about the conclusion that the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus is an example of a carefully preserved text and not the result of deliberate recension."²⁵ On the contrary, O'Neill argues that

the Codex Vaticanus is the work of scholarly scribes who knew the manuscripts they were comparing were corrupt at various points. They used good rules to sort out the variants, often successfully.

But sometimes their rules led them to error, and we can see the rules from their mistakes. . . . They tried to make pertinent (if difficult) sense at all times—and we should watch to see that this . . . did not lead them to be too neat, too clever.²⁶

O'Neill suggests that Codex Vaticanus was the product of a larger monastery containing "more than one copy of each part of the Bible," and that the monk(s) who copied Vaticanus "would have to

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compare manuscripts.²⁷ Further, "the easiest way" for this comparison editing to occur "would be for him and a fellow monk to read aloud together from two manuscripts. That would enable them quickly to find which manuscripts were better than others in point of carefulness of copying."²⁸ Significantly for the Byzantine-priority hypothesis, O'Neill claims that "by this process careless manuscripts would be set aside," even though such MSS would "of course" not be destroyed.²⁹

All this is highly significant, since a similar scenario has been postulated by the present writer in presenting his Byzantine-priority theory:³⁰ "good" MSS (i.e., carefully copied and easily legible MSS) would normally be used for copying purposes whereas less carefully copied MSS would be set aside. Also, the cross comparison and correction of MSS would serve to improve and help preserve MSS otherwise deemed deficient. Although O'Neill does not follow this out to the obvious conclusion, his hypothesis greatly aids and abets that of the Byzantine-priority school.

According to O'Neill, the motivation for accurate copying, correction, and preservation of the Scriptures was twofold: (1) devout scribes would not desire to be numbered among those who "adulterated the word of God" (2 Cor. 4.2), nor (2) would they willingly be placed under the curse regarding the unlawful addition or subtraction of words from the sacred text (Rev. 22.18-19). Such concerns would be overarching indeed to the average medieval scribe. Yet as O'Neill points out, the MSS bequeathed to these copyists by their scribal predecessors were already recognized as adulterated to various degrees because of human scribal failings or deliberate alteration (with good or evil intent).³¹

By means of cross-comparison and correction, the conflicting texts of two or more MSS could be partially "restored" for the better. In cases of serious conflict, a third or fourth MS might be sought to arbitrate the textual impasse created by conflicting readings in various exemplars. More MSS might be utilized if available. Such a procedure would possess a strong tendency continually to restore whatever text might be numerically predominant in a local area (in keeping with the sentiment of B. H. Streeter's "Local Text" theory).³²

The present writer has hypothesized that such a state of affairs would predominate in localized form at least until the legitimization of Christianity under Constantine. Once the doors of Empire-wide communication were more widely opened, the potential for cross-comparison and correction on a far wider scale would dramatically alter the text of those previously "localized" MSS into a text more reflective of that predominant in at least the Greek-speaking segment of the Empire as a whole.³³ Although O'Neill fails to take his own hypothesis to what should be its logical conclusion, he nevertheless successfully reflects upon the localized Egyptian region in the period before and immediately following the fourth-century legitimization of Christianity, during which the Alexandrian text-type remained primarily a regional issue.

As O'Neill posits the scenario regarding the creation of Codex Vaticanus, the monks chose not to arbitrate the differences by "counting noses" among available MSS, but rather determined to apply known Alexandrian text-critical principles in a manner similar to that performed on classical literature in order to create a new text which presumably would then be of excellent quality.³⁴ O'Neill boldly suggests that the Alexandrian text of both Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus could have been produced independently from a selective comparison of early papyri similar to p⁴⁵, p⁴⁶, p⁶⁶, and p⁷⁵.³⁵

After examining various places where he believes Codex Vaticanus to offer "a reading unlikely to be correct," and therefore the product of deliberate revision, O'Neill suggests a reconstruction of the rules the Vaticanus scribe(s) followed, noting that "the only way we can penetrate to their rules . . . is when the good rules led them to make bad decisions."³⁶ The "Alexandrian rules" were but two:

1. Prefer the shorter reading, and
2. Make pertinent (if difficult) sense always.³⁷

The reasoning behind such rules strongly resembles that proffered by modern eclectic theorists: the scribes simply "reckoned that their predecessors were more likely to have added than subtracted, and they aimed for small-scale lucidity."³⁸

In support of his claim that Vaticanus is the product of deliberate recensional activity, O'Neill lists several "bad decisions" made by the editors of Codex Vaticanus, wherein the Byzantine Textform is considered to preserve the true (unrevised) reading. Those specific recensional readings are listed below; the reader is urged to read O'Neill's full discussion of them in his article:

1. Jn. 3.13, where the Egyptian/Alexandrian MSS omit the closing phrase "who is in heaven" (ο ων εν τω ουρανω)³⁹
2. Jn. 14.4, where the longer reading found in the Byzantine Textform is preferred: "and where I am going you know, and the way you know" (O'Neill prefers a minor variation in word order found in only one MS though he still accepts the longer reading).
3. Mt. 1.18, where B reads γενεσις (by attraction to γενεσεως in Mt. 1.1) rather than the Byzantine γεννησις primarily because Jesus was not engendered by normal human means. O'Neill argues here that this demonstrates that "the scribes of the Codex Vaticanus text seem . . . to show subtle and sophisticated minds."⁴⁰
4. Mk. 6.20, rejecting the ηπορει of B for the more difficult επορει of the Byzantine text.
5. Mk. 11.24, favoring the Byzantine λαμβανετε on the assumption that the Alexandrian ελαβετε was theologically motivated.
6. 1 Cor. 13.5, where O'Neill notes that p⁴⁶ erred in changing the Byzantine τα into το, which B later corrected into το μη from a preceding exemplar (might O'Neill be suggesting that p⁴⁶ was possibly one of the exemplars used by the scribes of Vaticanus?).

Item 3: Alexandrian Recensional Activity in the Removal of a Difficulty

In Lk. 6.1 a strong internal case in favor of the Byzantine reading is overturned by modern eclectics due to their partiality for their favored Alexandrian MSS. Luke 6.1 reads as follows in the Byzantine Textform: εγενετο δε εν σαββατω δευτεροπρωτω διαπορευεσθαι αυτον δια σποριμων.

The Nestle/UBS editors, following Westcott and Hort, omit the word δευτεροπρωτω from the text. The following witnesses omit the term altogether: p⁴ p^{75vid} Aleph B L W f¹ 33 1241 1365 it(5) sy^s sa bo eth Diatessaron. Some MSS read σαββατω δευτερω πρωτω (f¹³ 28 1344*), while one MS (1253) reads σαββατω δευτερω πρωτον. All other witnesses read σαββατω δευτεροπρωτω, including A C D K X Delta Theta Pi Psi 565 700 892 it(5) vg sy^h goth arm geo Patr(8).

Westcott and Hort rejected the Byzantine variant primarily on internal grounds:

The excellence and comprehensiveness of the attestation of text is decisive against this curious reading. . . . [The Alexandrian omission] is commended by transcriptional evidence alone. . . . No evidence is extant from any source that δευτεροπρωτος, or any similar word in Greek or Hebrew, was a term of the Jewish calendar; nor, to judge by

the usual practice of the evangelists, was a technical term of this kind likely to be employed in this manner. . . . The intrinsic difficulty of the reading lies in the context as well as in the word itself.⁴¹

Yet Westcott and Hort also note that the Byzantine reading "certainly could not have been introduced in its integrity through any of the ordinary impulses that affect transcribers, and its patent difficulty might have led to omission."⁴²

This thereby creates a problem—how does one settle a division within the internal evidence? Westcott and Hort readily resolve the difficulty by their primary reliance on genealogical stemmatics: "all known cases of probable omission on account of difficulty are limited to single documents or groups of restricted ancestry, bearing no resemblance to the attestation of text in either variety or excellence."⁴³

Speaking plainly, this means that since (in their estimation) the Byzantine reading reflects merely a single genealogical witness which had been established by genealogical stemmatics as "late" and therefore subsequent to the Alexandrian and Western witnesses, there need be no further consideration of the Byzantine reading; it must be flagged as an error and summarily eliminated.

Today, however, Westcott and Hort's hypothetical genealogical argument is no longer retained from their perspective. Thus, modern eclectics cannot simply render the Byzantine reading null and void. Indeed, all editions of the Greek New Testament since the time of Westcott and Hort have progressively added more and more Byzantine readings to replace certain of Westcott-Hort's Alexandrian preferences. When it is thought essential to eliminate the Byzantine reading, modern eclectics follow a different route. Metzger's explanation is straightforward: "Although σαββατω δευτεροπρωτω is certainly the more difficult reading, it must not for that reason be adopted. The word δευτεροπρωτος occurs nowhere else and appears to . . . [have arisen] accidentally through a transcriptional blunder."⁴⁴

The principle of the "more difficult reading" is usually urged to defend a "difficult" reading found in the few MSS over against an "easier" reading found in the vast majority of MSS. Such a principle presupposes a universal "tendency" of scribes to smooth out what they perceived as difficult or impossible readings. In the current situation, the "difficult" reading is found in the mass of Byzantine MSS, while only a small group of Alexandrian MSS provides the "easier" reading. Under normal eclectic principles, the Byzantine scribes presumably would be the ones unwilling to allow such difficulties to stand uncorrected.⁴⁵ Why they failed to follow their "normal" inclinations at this particular juncture is puzzling.

Metzger's explanation of how the "Byzantine blunder" came to occur is more problematic than the simple acceptance of the Byzantine text as the "more difficult" (and therefore original) reading:

Perhaps some copyist introduced πρωτω as a correlative of εν ετερω σαββατω in ver. 6, and a second copyist, in view of 4.31, wrote δευτερω, deleting πρωτω by using dots over the letters—which was the customary way of cancelling a word. A subsequent transcriber, not noticing the dots, mistakenly combined the two words into one, which he introduced into the text.⁴⁶

Such explanation is a noble attempt: the origin of a difficult reading is explained by means of compounded transcriptional errors in a single exemplar. These errors plus their attempted correction were then miscopied not only into its immediate product, but from there into all further MSS of the Byzantine Textform. The logic simply does not follow.

A more likely scenario is as follows: unless a formal revision clearly occurred wherein that single exemplar or immediate product became the "mother of all Byzantine MSS," the odds are utterly overwhelming against the massive perpetuation of such a "nonsense" word. Under normal transmissional

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circumstances, any corrupt hapax legomenon would be immediately obelized and the error systematically and speedily corrected in all future copies by the usual scribal diligence. Such an error would not survive more than a few copying generations, and only a few copies would ever bear traces of such an egregious error.

Here as elsewhere, modern eclecticism demonstrates a failure to follow its own hypothetical conjectures to their logical conclusion, whether such concerns the speculated origin of variants or the scribal proclivities in dealing with such. Were the manuscript evidence reversed and Metzger's identical argument to be urged by Byzantine-priority advocates, they would be severely criticized and even ridiculed for proffering such "fanciful speculation" as a serious defense of their preferred reading. Due to the questionable reconstruction given in the *Textual Commentary*, it appears that modern "reasoned eclecticism" is even less persuasive in the defense of its own preferred text than its Hortian forefather.

In a related matter, the Septuagint version preserves a difficulty similar to that found in Lk. 6.1. The title headings of certain Septuagintal Psalms differ significantly from those in the Massoretic Hebrew text. The following enigmatic headings are pertinent to the present discussion:

(1) LXX Psalm 23 (MT 24)/title mentions "the first of the sabbaths" (της μιας σαββατων);⁴⁷

(2) LXX Psalm 47 (MT 48)/title speaks of the "second sabbath" (δευτερα σαββατου); and

(3) LXX Psalm 93 (MT 94)/title reads "the fourth of the sabbaths" (τετραδι σαββατων).

We today have no indication of the meaning or purpose of these Septuagintal sabbath titles. They remain mysterious, but they also remain within the accepted Septuagintal text. Similarly, the "second-first sabbath" of Lk. 6.1 may have had an understandable and legitimate meaning to the first-century recipients of the Lukan narrative. The term might indicate the "second chief sabbath" or "second high sabbath" of the Jewish festal calendar, perhaps the day of Pentecost (which would not fall on a normal weekly sabbath). While the Authorized Version's "second sabbath after the first" explains nothing, the difficult word at least is retained.

Modern translations and textual critics who have rejected the "more difficult" reading in this instance probably should not have been so hasty in sweeping this peculiar hapax legomenon under their eclectic rug; the Byzantine variant should be accepted and translated in a manner similar to that suggested above.

Item 4: Recensional Harmonization by the Leading Alexandrian MSS

In Mt. 27.49-50 the Byzantine text, every known English translation, and every Greek edition except for that of Westcott and Hort agree in reading the text as follows:

49 οι δε λοιποι ελεγον, Αφες, ιδωμεν ει ερχεται Ηλιας σωσων αυτον 50 ο δε Ιησους, παλιν κραζας φωνη μεγαλη, αφηκεν το πνευμα.

This may be loosely rendered as follows:

49 But the rest said, "Let be; let us see if Elijah comes to save him." 50 And Jesus, again having cried with a loud voice, released [his] spirit.

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The Westcott-Hort text, favoring the solid external evidence of the Alexandrian MSS over internal principles, chose to include (albeit within double brackets) between verse 49 and verse 50 the amazing pseudoharmonistic insertion found in the leading Alexandrian witnesses, Aleph B C L, as well as in MSS (U) Gamma 1010 and minor versional witnesses:

αλλος δε λαβων λογχην ενυξεν αυτου την πλευραν, και εξηλθεν υδωρ και αιμα

By including this insertion, the resultant text makes the spear thrust into Jesus' side the immediate cause of his death:

49 But the rest said, "Let be; let us see if Elijah comes to save him." But another, having taken a spear, pierced his side, and there came out water and blood; 50 and Jesus, again having cried with a loud voice, released [his] spirit.

Were the added words original, certainly some scribes would have seen fit to expunge them from Matthew's narrative. The impetus for excision would be provided first by the obvious internal contradiction between this insertion and the parallel in Jn. 19.34, and secondly by the theological statement in Jn. 10.18 that "no man takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself."

Yet if the words were original and even if some scribes might be so theologically inclined to omit them, it would be difficult to imagine the vast majority of scribes independently following suit. Most scribes would simply remain faithful to their primary duty and would not omit the words at any cost, even if they could not rightly discern the sense (as with Lk. 6.1). Although some scribes might have chosen to alleviate the contradiction by relocating the words to a more appropriate location, none did so; although some scribes might have chosen to alter the wording to make it more conformable to John's narrative, none did so.

According to modern eclecticism's views concerning the "tendencies" of Byzantine-era scribes, few if any scribes would ever have editorially expunged the offending words had they originally stood in Matthew's text. It would have been utterly impossible for nearly all scribes to have omitted such a significant phrase on their own initiative.

The obvious motive for the Matthean addition appears to have been the deliberate editorial supplementing of Matthew on the part of certain Alexandrian revisers. Such scribes might have read the text of Matthew critically and noted an apparent lack of connection between verses 49 and 50. They then might have regarded this apparent break in the narrative as the result of an accidental omission which their recensional creativity readily supplemented from a suitable parallel. No regard would be had for any theological contradictions or problems which might result from such editorial "repair work" so long as the resultant reading appeared to "make sense."

Deliberate recensional activity is further evidenced by the fact that the Matthean insertion is not a direct harmonization from John's Gospel: the wording is significantly different. Although the immediate context of John is perfectly appropriate to his own narrative, such is not the case in Matthew, where the context of Mt. 27.49-50 more closely parallels that of Jn. 19.28-30.

Jn. 19.34 reads as follows (the Alexandrian addition to Matthew appears below the two texts):

| | | |
|-------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Byz | αλλ εις των στρατιωτων λογχη | αυτου την πλευραν ενυξεν, |
| N27 | αλλ εις των στρατιωτων λογχη | αυτου την πλευραν ενυξεν, |
| (Mt.) | αλλος δε λαβων λογχην ενυξεν | αυτου την πλευραν, |

| | | | |
|-------|-----------|---------------|---------------|
| Byz | και ευθως | εξηλθεν | αιμα και υδωρ |
| N27 | και | εξηλθεν ευθως | αιμα και υδωρ |
| (Mt.) | και | εξηλθεν | υδωρ και αιμα |

Apart from the placement of ευθως/ευθως, there is no difference between the Nestle/UBS text in John and the Byzantine Textform. However, the differences between either of the Johannine texts and the Matthean insertion are significant. The insertion exhibits three distinct recensional alterations: (1) the omission of any mention of a "soldier;" (2) the transposition of the Johannine "blood and water" into "water and blood" (perhaps influenced by 1 Jn. 5.8), and (3) the resolution of the syntactical ambiguity as to whether "his spear pierced the side" or "the spear pierced his side." These factors taken together clearly indicate that the Matthean insertion is the result of a deliberately edited text which, from the direct external manuscript evidence, reveals a clear Alexandrian origin.

Westcott and Hort took great pains to justify their inclusion of this theologically problematic insertion in the text of their Greek New Testament. They noted, for example, that

an anonymous scholium in [MS] 72 attests the presence of this sentence "in the historical' Gospel . . . of Diodorus and Tatianus and divers other holy Fathers." Another scholium which follows . . . reconciles [the Matthean statement] with St John's account by supposing St Matthew to have inserted the incident by anticipation. . . . [Severus] mentions the reading as having been vigorously debated at Constantinople. . . . He adds that none of the old expositors mentioned it except Chrysostom and Cyril.

Even if the words . . . had a place here in Tatian's *Diatessaron*, the hypothesis that they originated in its harmonistic arrangement is practically excluded by their remarkable documentary attestation, pointing to the highest antiquity. . . . Two suppositions alone are compatible with the whole evidence. First, the words . . . may belong to the genuine text of the extant form of Mt, and have been early omitted . . . on account of the obvious difficulty. Or, secondly, they may be a very early interpolation. . . . We have thought it on the whole right to give expression to this view by including the words within double brackets, though we did not feel justified in removing them from the text, and are not prepared to reject altogether the alternative supposition.⁴⁸

While Westcott and Hort demonstrated critical integrity in following their preferred source documents wherever they might lead and justifying their decision on the basis of the full conspectus of extant evidence, modern eclectics simply attempt to bypass the external difficulties. Metzger writes in his *Textual Commentary* as follows:

Although attested by Aleph B C L at the words . . . must be regarded as an early intrusion derived from a similar account in Jn 19.34. It might be thought that the words were omitted because they represent the piercing as preceding Jesus' death, whereas John makes it follow; but that difference would have only been a reason for moving the passage to a later position (perhaps at the close of ver. 50 or 54 or 56), or else there would have been some tampering with the passage in John, which is not the case. It is probable that the Johannine passage was written by some reader in the margin of Matthew from memory (there are several minor differences, such as the sequence of "water and blood"), and a later copyist awkwardly introduced it into the text.⁴⁹

Even allowing Metzger's reconstruction, it boggles the imagination to consider the odds of an erroneous marginal gloss falling verbally intact into more than one MS of the same text-type, into manuscripts copied over a space of four centuries (MS L is of the eighth century), and into MSS not copied from the same common exemplar, since their texts otherwise diverge significantly throughout the same NT book. Matters are further complicated when no correction of the obvious difficulty was ever made in those same MSS nor in any other MSS by either rewording or relocating the insertion, by forcing a closer harmonization to the Johannine wording, or by obelizing the passage (as for example with the Byzantine readings in Jn. 7.53-8.11 or Lk. 22.43-44).

The underlying problem with Metzger's reconstruction remains that which consistently manifests itself whenever the Byzantine reading is to be rejected: whenever a single scribal source is theorized to underlie MSS of a particular text-type, a deliberately edited recension must also be presumed in order to produce that text-type. The Byzantine reading is often rejected on this very basis by modern eclectics; yet in the present case the same modern eclectics are unwilling to conclude the same when the Alexandrian text-type would be directly affected.⁵⁰

If the Alexandrian MSS here evince a common reading created by deliberate recensional activity in or around Alexandria, the support of Alexandrian manuscript authorities alone regarding this insertion suddenly makes sense. But if so, the Alexandrian text-type, now seen to be a recensional entity, no longer can possess an exclusive or even dominant claim upon one's text-critical allegiance. Since it is demonstrable that the Alexandrian text-type reflects deliberate recension in this glaring instance, it is equally likely that (at the very least) whatever other common readings are shared among MSS Aleph B C and L will similarly reflect the same recensional activity, and that therefore these witnesses must be regarded with suspicion at such points.

It appears that an early precursor text was produced by recensional activity in or around Alexandria. From this precursor, the later Alexandrian text-type devolved. Our present Alexandrian MSS and versional witnesses (especially the Coptic versions) simply echo back large segments of that early recensional forerunner.

This line of reasoning is similar to that utilized by Westcott and Hort on far less secure grounds when they attempted to discredit the entire Byzantine Textform as the product of recensional activity. Westcott and Hort of necessity argued for such a Byzantine recension; had they not done so, Hort's original "theoretical presumption" would otherwise remain valid, namely, that "a majority of extant documents is more likely to represent a majority of ancestral documents at each stage of transmission than vice versa."⁵¹

The difference in the two approaches is demonstrably significant: the evidence adduced by Westcott and Hort to discredit the Byzantine Textform as the product of recensional activity was basically hypothetical (e.g., the arguments from "genealogy," "conflation," and "internal evidence of readings"). They offered no clear evidence that Byzantine recensional activity ever occurred, let alone that such alteration was willingly adopted on the grand scale by practically all post-A.D. 350 scribes.

In the present instance, the plain and clear verbal/content differences between the Matthean insertion and the Johannine parallel, as well as the erroneous placement of the insertion into Matthew's gospel clearly point to localized recensional activity on the part of the leading MSS of the Alexandrian text-type. Recensional activity limited or restricted to a local area can be expected to reveal itself in a small group of MSS, scattered in a limited, sporadic manner over the centuries as in the present case. Recensional activity on the grand scale cannot occur without official sanction and promulgation.

The intent of any recension is to replace whatever text had previously existed in a given area of dissemination. Localized recensional activity could easily occur, as exemplified by Streeter's theory regarding "local texts."⁵² Recensional activity on the grand scale, involving hundreds of MSS, a wide geographical area, and a high level of textual consistency over many centuries can only occur if official/formal authorization were secured and orders for the promulgation of such a "new text" were

given; otherwise, the normal, conservative tendency of believers would have been to reject such a text out of hand. Believers would have become highly familiar with the text as they were used to hearing it; even literate believers would have a counteractive response against a "new" text which had been altered significantly from that with which they had been familiar.⁵³

Since there is no hint of administrative recensional authorization regarding the Byzantine Textform, most modern eclectic critics have followed Colwell and replaced Hort's Byzantine recension with a problematic "process" view of transmissional history.⁵⁴ Yet the "process" view is deficient in that it explains nothing regarding how the process actually functioned.

Without official authorization, neither a localized "Alexandrian recension" nor a "Byzantine recension" could hope to survive for long on the grand scale, whether by "process" or by random chance. The fact that the MSS of the Alexandrian text-type are few in number, severely mixed in scribal quality, and highly amalgamated with readings from other textual traditions reflects precisely the nonsurvival and nonperpetuation of recensional readings. Had the Byzantine Textform similarly been the product of recensional activity without official authorization and promulgation, its extant descendants would likewise be few and far between. Only if the Byzantine Textform actually reflected the autograph text, and that more closely than any other competing text-type, could its text ever hope to gain and maintain the dominance it demonstrates.

The Alexandrian text-type, on the other hand, can be evidenced to have been the product of a recension, not only by the preceding discussion, but by numerous instances scattered throughout the Greek New Testament, most of these readily discernable in the critical apparatus of various editions. A minority text-type, produced by recensional activity, with a restricted or localized area of transmission, would be expected to remain perpetuated and be circulated predominantly within its original provincial locale with only minor forays into the wider geographical or historical/chronological Greek-speaking world. This clearly appears to be the situation of the Alexandrian text-type, no matter in which direction modern eclectic theorists might choose to look to avert the glance of Byzantine-priority critics.

Item 5: Recensional Agreement in Error by the Alexandrian MSS

Two glaring historical errors occur in the Alexandrian text of Christ's genealogy in Mt. 1.7-8 and Mt. 1.10. In the first instance, the name of the Judean king "Asa" is rendered as "Asaph" by p^{lvid} Aleph B C f1 f13 700 1071 it(5) sa bo arm eth geo; in the second instance, the name of the monarch "Amon" is replaced by "Amos" in Aleph B C Delta Theta Pi* f1 33 1071 1079 1546 it(5) sa bo arm eth. In both cases the Byzantine Textform preserves the historically correct reading.

The confluence here of the three leading Alexandrian MSS (Aleph, B, and C; L reads with the Byzantine MSS in both occurrences) in plain and clear historical error suggests recensional activity identical with that which produced the insertion blunder at Mt. 27.49 in the very same MSS. In light of the evidence adduced hitherto, it appears that a formal recension was prepared in or around Alexandria in the early second century in an archetypal source antecedent to both our extant papyri and the great uncial MSS of the fourth and fifth centuries. That original recension apparently attempted to follow the critical principles of textual revision and restoration which had been applied to the classics by secular Alexandrian scholars. In so doing, O'Neill's rule two was scrupulously observed: "Make pertinent (if difficult) sense always."⁵⁵

If the Alexandrian revisers considered "Asa" and "Amon" to be incorrect forms of the more familiar "Asaph" and "Amos," such ancient scholars would gravitate immediately to the "less difficult" reading. Regard would not be had for the minute details of historical accuracy; this would presuppose a greater familiarity with the historical details of the Old Testament than likely would have been the case.

Note that the sense of Matthew's genealogy (if not the historical accuracy) would be maintained by the Alexandrian alterations. Familiar names are easier to memorize and recall. For example, more early Christians would be familiar with the Psalmist Asaph than with a minor king of Judah.⁵⁶ The name Asaph occurs 41 times in the Massoretic Hebrew text of the Old Testament, with 12 of these in Psalm titles. Asa the king is mentioned 51 times, once in Jeremiah with the remaining citations in Kings and Chronicles.

Similarly, the prophet Amos, mentioned in the OT a mere 7 times, all of those within his own book, would nevertheless for that very reason be far more familiar to most early Christians than the obscure king Amon, even though the latter is mentioned 19 times in Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah.

Despite the fact that "Asaph" and "Amos" would be the more familiar names and hence the "easier" readings, Metzger nevertheless assumes a high level of historical knowledge on the part of the Byzantine scribes and claims the direct opposite:

The tendency of scribes, observing that the name of the psalmist Asaph . . . was confused with that of Asa the king of Judah . . . , would have been to correct the error, thus accounting for the prevalence of Asa in the later Ecclesiastical text and its inclusion in the Textus Receptus. . . . The Committee saw no reason to adopt what appears to be a scribal emendation.⁵⁷

As in each of the preceding instances, the perceived need of modern eclectics to multiply the hypothetical contingencies merely to account for the creation and perpetuation of the Byzantine variant acts to the detriment of their entire case. Why Byzantine-era scribes necessarily would be more likely than the scribes of Alexandria to recognize the historical error is left unexplained. In either case, a level of sophistication surpassing that of most scribes is uncritically assumed, whereas an erroneous reading created by historical ignorance, even in the process of formal revision, is by far the easier explanation.

Surprisingly, Metzger admits that the reading was indeed an error, but he then places the blame for such an error not upon the Alexandrian revisers (who alone appear to have created the error), but upon a secondary and patently erroneous source utilized by Matthew (!) himself: "The evangelist may have derived matter for the genealogy, not from the Old Testament directly, but from subsequent genealogical lists, in which the erroneous spelling occurred."⁵⁸

To turn to the second genealogical variant, Metzger again acknowledges the erroneous nature of the Alexandrian reading but appeals to the identical reasoning in rejecting the historically correct Byzantine reading: "The textual evidence for the reading 'Amos,' an error for 'Amon,' the name of the king of Judah, is nearly the same as that which reads Ασαφ in verses 7 and 8. . . . The Committee was impressed by the weight of the external evidence that attests Αμωσ."⁵⁹

Metzger further suggests that the erroneous reading might not have been perceived as such, since the identical error occurred more than once in the LXX:

In 1 Chr 3.14 most manuscripts present the correct Αμωσ (or its near equivalent Αμως), but Αμωσ is read by A B* (B* and one minuscule read Αμων). In the narrative account concerning King Amon in 2 Kgs 21.18-19, 23-25; 2 Chr 33.20-25 several Greek witnesses erroneously read Αμωσ.⁶⁰

Of course, the mere fact that an error recurs in the relevant texts of similarly ancient witnesses in no way justifies the error nor does this fact suggest that the error should then be considered of "auto-graph originality." Yet this is precisely what the UBS/Nestle editors would have the reader to do. It is to the credit of most modern translations that they have refused to follow the Nestle/UBS in this matter

and have placed the historically correct Byzantine reading in their text, even if their note claims the Greek reads otherwise (the RSV and NRSV are significant exceptions to this rule).

What Metzger writes in the *Textual Commentary* is only a portion of the Septuagintal story, however. A more comprehensive examination of the data reveals some interesting facts:

1. In place of "Ασαμη," Codex Vaticanus reads "Σαφαν" in 2 Kgs. 18.37, Αβιασαφαν in 1 Chr. 26.1, Ασαβ in Neh. 11.22, and Ασα (!) in 2 Chr. 29.13. On the other hand, Codex Vaticanus reads Ασαμη (the easier reading) for Σαφατια in LXX 2 Esdr. 2.4.

2. The LXX reads "Ασα" correctly in each of its occurrences except for 2 Chr. 15.2, where the first occurrence of Ασα και is altered by Codex Vaticanus into αυτων εν. On the contrary, in 1 Chr. 9.16, Codex Vaticanus corrupts Οσσα into Ασα; in Josh. 19.41, Vaticanus reads Ασα for the correct "Εσηταολ"; and in Josh 21.16 the B-Aleph text reads Ασα for the Hebrew יִשָּׁא (Codex Alexandrinus there reads Αω).⁶¹

3. Codex Sinaiticus reads Ασαβ for "Asaph" in 1 Chr. 15.19 (cf. Vaticanus in Neh. 11.22 above).

4. Isaiah the son of "Amoz" is universally the son of Αμωσ in the LXX (2 Kgs. 19.2, 20; 20.1; 2 Chr. 32.20, 32; Isa. 1.1; 2.1; 13.1; 20.2; 37.2, 6, 21; 38.1). Needless to say, the use of Αμωσ in the name of the most popular prophet makes the name "Amos" far more familiar than otherwise might have been the case.

5. Codex Vaticanus was not merely corrected from "Amon" into "Amos" in LXX 1 Chr. 3.14 as Metzger notes. The "several witnesses" which make the same alteration in the other passages cited include Vaticanus and Alexandrinus in 2 Chr. 33.20-25, and Vaticanus and Sinaiticus in 2 Kgs. 21.18-19, 23-25. Also, in 1 Kgs. 22.26, Vaticanus reads Σεμηρ in place of Amon.

6. Both Vaticanus and Sinaiticus also read "Amos" for "Amon" in Jer. 1.2 and 25.3. The corrector of Vaticanus also alters "Amon" into "Amos" in Zeph. 1.1.

It should be obvious by this point that the accuracy and reliability of the Alexandrian MSS in regard to person and place names is highly questionable insofar as the LXX is concerned. No compelling reason exists to presume Alexandrian infallibility regarding similar matters as soon as the NT text comes under scrutiny.⁶²

The Alexandrian witnesses, due to their unified agreement in plain and clear historical errors, again reflect the recensional nature of an antecedent archetype. The purely accidental scribal consent of the leading witnesses of this minority text-type is precluded—not only in regard to the readings examined within the present study but also in numerous other instances. Not only would accidental agreement in error on the grand scale be well-nigh impossible, but the obvious genealogical interrelationship enjoyed by the members of that text-type betrays its archetypal recensional source. Modern eclectics have not dealt with and cannot successfully deal with such a mass of adverse data. Textual critics and translators who rest upon such a fragile reed should not be surprised when their hands get uncomfortably pierced.

Conclusion: A Byzantine-Priority Method

Supporters of the Byzantine-Priority hypothesis differ in principle from contemporary "reasoned eclecticism" in that they advocate the establishment of a definitive theory of textual transmission which then stands as a coordinating factor for proclaiming an unified "original textform." A leading principle of this hypothesis is that readings cannot be considered in isolation when determining an "original text" (as is the practice of contemporary rigorous or reasoned eclecticism), nor can readings simplistically be associated with a single primary manuscript or any small group of favored MSS opposed by the remainder of the body of manuscript, versional, and patristic evidence.

Contrary to the principles of modern eclecticism, the true autograph text of necessity must be one which is reconstructable, whether by following a single manuscript or the consensus reading of an interrelated group of MSS (i.e., a text-type). Although Westcott and Hort favored this very principle, their failure lay in their prejudiced determination to eliminate the Byzantine Textform from further consideration. Had they not done so, the result would have been inimical to their own preferences concerning Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus since they would have been forced to return to the "theoretical presumption" that the text preserved in a majority of MSS possesses a *prima facie* claim to originality. That text would then be supposed to maintain a similar numerical proportion throughout all copying generations, and the limited and localized extant evidence from the early centuries would not be able of itself to contradict such a view.⁶³

Current critical praxis fails precisely at the point of producing its "final text." By editorial fiat, modern eclectics have created an artificial entity with no ancestral lineage from any single historical MS or group of MSS which have ever existed.

On the other hand, the Byzantine-priority theorists demand as a prerequisite the establishment of a well-organized transmissional history. Only such preliminary groundwork can furnish the exclusive basis from which a single well-defined text-type may properly be claimed to represent the archetypal "Textform" from which all other text-types and sub-text-types subsequently derived.

Regardless of which text-type might be selected for "Textform" status, that text-type must then be rigorously tested to verify whether it can stand on its own merits. This requires that an "original" text-type be able adequately to account for the derivation of all other text-types from that primary Textform, since such are necessarily subsequent to the initial Textform within the established transmissional framework.

If a candidate text-type cannot provide a more reasonable explanation for the rise and/or dominance of any competing text-type, its proposed transmissional theory becomes wanting to a significant degree. In such a case, other text-type candidates should similarly be elevated to hypothetical "autograph status" and themselves tested to see whether a sufficient and convincing account of all other text-type deviations is forthcoming.

Certainly there is nothing inherently significant regarding the Byzantine text-type which demands that it be initially selected as the primary candidate for "original Textform" status. Hort simply dismissed the Byzantine text-type as "late" and therefore secondary. Hort proceeded, however, to construct a plausible transmissional case which he believed would account for the rise and final dominance of the Byzantine text-type in the period following A.D. 350. In creating his hypothetical framework, Hort as a historian attempted to take all known relevant data into account.

Hort certainly followed a proper methodology in his approach, even though his theory was defective due to certain faulty presuppositions. Hort failed to assign the appropriate weight to all the relevant data (i.e., the Byzantine Textform) and therefore incorrectly interpreted the significance of the resultant data. Even though Hort's reconstruction of transmissional history is no longer held, no new transmissional history has emerged to take its place; this crisis will continue to affect the modern eclectic praxis of NT textual criticism as it precipitates into its post-twentieth-century epoch.

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Porter's maxim must be reiterated: "Textual criticism without a history of the text is not possible."⁶⁴ No new or better transmissional-historical theory has taken the place of Hort's simply because there is no uncomplicated way to explain the rise and millennial dominance of the Byzantine Textform.⁶⁵ Hort's postulated mid-fourth-century revision, authorized and supported by the intellectual and spiritual leadership of the Byzantine church aggregate, was the best attempt that could have been made. Yet most of those who currently embrace the B-Aleph type of text have seriously called Hort's "Byzantine Revision" hypothesis into question.⁶⁶

The ongoing anomaly is the continued preference for the B-Aleph type of text without a well-defined transmissional history to support that predilection. Alexandrian advocates have generally turned to a document-oriented method which favors the earliest papyri or vellum MSS whenever such are available in any given portion of text, especially when two or three such early MSS happen to agree on a single reading.

The weakness of such a methodology is obvious: if certain documents are declared most likely to represent the original text solely because of their age, this disregards the possibility that such ancient documents might reflect only localized or defective samples of antiquity. Further, all textual critics recognize that "later" MSS generally contain a far more ancient text than their date of copying might suggest. For example, a 10th-century minuscule document may have been copied from a third-century papyrus, in which case that later document will be equal in value to any extant third-century papyrus document.

Although this principle is commonly acknowledged, modern eclectics interpret it only in one direction, namely that a late MS with a significant number of Alexandrian readings "preserves" such a valuable ancient text, whereas the mass of "late" Byzantine MSS are not allotted the same privilege,⁶⁷ even though in practically all cases one has no way to know precisely how ancient the exemplar of any extant MS might have been.

Modern eclectics also quote the maxim, "The nearer the source the purer the stream." What is omitted is the qualifying phrase, "all other matters being equal." If the Alexandrian MSS bear traces of recensional activity in places where the Byzantine Textform possesses no such indications, their early testimony is directly affected. Even the papyri are not immune: they might be presumed to be "closer to the autograph" by virtue of copying date, yet they also demonstrate (1) a vast amount of scribal corruption (plain and clear errors as well as deliberate editorializing);⁶⁸ (2) a regional and localized nature (all being preserved in the sands of Egypt); and (3) a "mixed" textual diversity which establishes no single text-type as truly dominant in the time and locale wherein they were transcribed.⁶⁹

Modern eclecticism at the close of the twentieth century is impaled on the horns of an unresolvable dilemma. Epp has summed up the modern eclectic situation well: "We simply do not know how to make a definitive determination as to what the best text is."⁷⁰

Byzantine-priority advocates claim to offer a reasoned and reasonable solution which is historically and text-critically viable. Unless modern eclectics become convinced enough to admit a new approach, they will remain in the chaos created by their own subjective predilections. Their future critical editions will tweak, massage, and cosmetically enhance small segments of their favored "standard-text," but the result will remain a proffered "autograph text" which cannot be demonstrated ever to have existed in any document, related group of documents, or text-type in the entire history of manuscript transmissional history. Modern eclectics will continue to justify their decisions on a procrustean bed of subjectivity and will invariably continue to roll their defensive boulders back up the steep hill of speculation, merely to await the next minor disruption affecting their "New Standard Text."

For Byzantine-priority advocates the choice remains far simpler.

Notes

¹ Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980).

² Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, eds., *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980).

³ Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, eds., *The New Testament in the Original Greek according to the Byzantine/Majority Textform* (Atlanta: Original Word, 1991).

⁴ Significant among these are D. A. Carson, *The KJV Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); Gordon D. Fee, "A Critique of W. N. Pickering's *The Identity of the New Testament Text*: A Review Article," *Westminster Theological Journal* 41 (1979) 397-423, as well as the various Fee-Hodges and Taylor-Pickering debates in the pages of *JETS* (1978).

⁵ Daniel Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods, and Critique." Paper presented at the 20th Annual Meeting of the ETS, McLean, VA, November 1993.

⁶ The term is taken from Gordon D. Fee, "Rigorous or Reasoned Eclecticism—Which?" in J. K. Elliott, ed. *Studies in New Testament Language and Text: Essays in Honour of George D. Kilpatrick*, Supplement to *Novum Testamentum* 44 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976): 174-97.

⁷ See for example, Eldon Jay Epp, "The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism," *JBL* 94 (1974): 386-414; idem, "The Eclectic Method in New Testament Textual Criticism: Solution or Symptom?" *HTR* 69 (1976): 211-57; idem, "New Testament Textual Criticism: Requiem for a Discipline," *JBL* 98 (1979): 94-98; idem, "A Continuing Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism?" *HTR* 73 (1980): 131-51.

⁸ Epp, "Requiem," 95

⁹ Epp, "Interlude," 401

¹⁰ Calvin L. Porter, "A Textual Analysis of the Earliest Manuscripts of the Gospel of John" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1961), 31.

¹¹ Kenneth W. Clark, "The Effect of Recent Textual Criticism upon New Testament Studies," in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: In Honour of Charles Harold Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1954), 37-39.

¹² So too Porter, "Analysis," 12: "[Modern eclecticism, though] not based upon a theory of the history of the text, . . . does reflect a certain presupposition about that history. It seems to assume that very early the original text was rent piecemeal and so carried to the ends of the earth where the textual critic, like lamenting Isis, must seek it by his skill."

¹³ Kenneth W. Clark, "Today's Problems with the Critical Text of the New Testament," in *Transitions in Biblical Scholarship*, ed. J. Coert Rylaarsdam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 167-69.

¹⁴ See for example, Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, xviii-xliii, for a brief illustration of a historical/transmissional defense of this position.

¹⁵ See especially C. Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity from its Origins to 451 C.E.*, 3d ed., *Coptic Studies*, vol. 2, ed. Martin Krause (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993, and also Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Although the present writer does not agree with Ehrman's interpretation of orthodoxy (built upon Walter Bauer's thesis that "orthodoxy" is just the name appropriated by the "winners" of a sociopolitical

struggle), nor with his evaluation of certain variant units, Ehrman does present a valuable summation of the leading Christological disputes of the first three centuries and their possible effect upon the text of Scripture. In a forthcoming critical review, the present writer finds much of Ehrman's case to be directly advantageous to the Byzantine-priority position as opposed to the modern eclectic approach (Ehrman, being of the modern eclectic school, is not likely to concur with that assessment).

¹⁶ See Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, xxxv-xxxvi.

¹⁷ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988 repr. ed. [1882], 115-16, 134-35. The same sentiment is stated in Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), xx, where he states that "the framers of this text sought to smooth away any harshness of language, to combine two or more divergent readings into one expanded reading, . . . and to harmonize divergent parallel passages. This conflated text, produced perhaps at Antioch in Syria, was taken to Constantinople, whence it was distributed widely throughout the Byzantine Empire.

¹⁸ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 213.

¹⁹ Note especially in table 1 that wherever Byz reads οὐ, MS B omits it, and in table 2 that wherever Byz omits οὐ, B almost always includes it. The true criterion for the modern eclectic editorial decisions seems here plainly to be revealed.

²⁰ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 225, 244, 250-51. Although Hort specifically states that "to take it [Vaticanus] as the sole authority except where it contains self-betraying errors . . . is an unwarrantable abandonment of criticism, and in our opinion inevitably leads to erroneous results" (251), no one who compares the Westcott-Hort text against the readings of Vaticanus would have doubts concerning their actual methodology. Hort immediately justified their modus operandi by stating, "A text so formed would be incomparably nearer the truth than a text similarly taken from any other Greek MS or other single document" (Ibid.).

²¹ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 251. The same sentiment is shared by Gordon D. Fee, "P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶, and Origen: The Myth of Early Textual Recension in Alexandria," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 44.

²² Ehrman in his *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* at times argues that Vaticanus or the Alexandrian witnesses have deliberately (recensionally?) corrupted the text in the interests of orthodoxy. For example, even though virtually all modern eclectics and recent translations have accepted the Alexandrian reading of "only begotten God" in Jn. 1:18 without serious question, Ehrman accuses the Alexandrian reading of being a deliberate doctrinal modification of the Byzantine Textform's "only-begotten Son" (78-82). In Ac. 10:37, Ehrman accuses Codex Vaticanus of doctrinally motivated recensional activity by subtly altering the βαπτισμα of John into κτηνισμα, "making the passage less susceptible to an adoptionistic use" (Ehrman, 69; cf. Richard J. Erickson, "The Jailing of John and the Baptism of Jesus: Luke 3:19-21," *JETS* 36 [1993]: 455-66, who shows that an anti-John sentiment already exists in Luke-Acts; perhaps the antiadoptionistic alteration by Codex Vaticanus three centuries later was nourished by this same tendency?).

Ehrman nevertheless is selectively guided by modern eclectic blinders: while he notes that second-century adoptionist scribes desired to eliminate or minimize the Virgin Birth, he believes that only the orthodox would alter the text (e.g., Lk. 2:33), and that in the direction of orthodoxy (54-58). Yet the Alexandrian readings which obscure that doctrinal distinction might equally stem recensionally from adoptionist scribes. On another front, Ehrman suggests (104, n. 71) that the scribe of MS W deliberately omitted πρωτοτοκος in Lk. 2:7 to protect the dogma of Mary's "perpetual virginity"; yet Ehrman nowhere mentions the identical omission of πρωτοτοκος by the Alexandrian MSS in Mt. 1:25—an omission that may have been intentionally created for the same reason.

²³ Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 40. Barnes expressly notes in n. 24, 251, that "the Alexandrian origin of the Codex Vaticanus, already a very strong probability, was rendered certain by P. Bodmer XIV, published in 1961."

²⁴ J. C. O'Neill, "The Rules Followed by the Editors of the Text Found in Codex Vaticanus," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 219-28.

²⁵ Ibid., 220.

²⁶ Ibid., 227-28.

²⁷ Ibid., 221.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See Robinson and Pierpont, *The NT in the Original Greek*, xxviii-xxxii.

³¹ O'Neill, "Rules," 221.

³² Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study in Origins*, 4th impression rev. (London: Macmillan, 1930), 26-76. Regarding cross-comparison and correction of MSS by using multiple exemplars, see Robinson and Pierpont, *The NT in the Original Greek*, xxix-xxx.

³³ Robinson and Pierpont, *The NT in the Original Greek*, xxx-xxxii.

³⁴ O'Neill, "Rules," 221.

³⁵ Ibid., 222.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ O'Neill, "Rules," 222. Note that O'Neill is not a Byzantine partisan but instead maintains that "the responsible scribes had good copies to follow and they had good rules for using what was at their disposal: that is why they produced such a good text" in Codex Vaticanus.

³⁹ The Byzantine reading is also defended in David Alan Black, "The Text of John 3:13," *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 49-66. Black similarly argues for deliberate recensional activity and notes "the improbability of an accidental omission" by the Alexandrian MSS (65).

⁴⁰ O'Neill, "Rules," 225. See also Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 75-76, 137-39.

⁴¹ Westcott and Hort, "Notes on Select Readings," appendix 1 of their *Introduction*, 58

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 139.

⁴⁵ There may be a subtle analogy between the Byzantine reading of Lk. 6.1 and the text of its parallel narratives (Mk. 2.23 and Mt. 12.1). Those parallels read the idiomatic plural τοῖς σαββάσιν to describe a single instance. Most English versions render the parallel narratives as singular, "on a Sabbath"—translationally and idiomatically smoothing another "difficulty," but this time without Greek manuscript evidence.

⁴⁶ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 139.

⁴⁷ In the Massoretic text of the Psalms, the only occurrence of the word "Sabbath" occurs in the title of Psalm 92, written "for the day of the Sabbath." Here in Psalm 23 LXX, the phrase could mean "the first day of the week," following NT usage (e.g., Mt. 28.1, Mk. 16.2, Lk. 24.1, Jn. 20.1), but considering the plain Jewish context of the Psalms, this is most unlikely.

⁴⁸ Westcott and Hort, "Notes on Select Readings," 21-22.

⁴⁹ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 71.

⁵⁰ For example, Fee, in his "P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, and Origen," 23, 40, 44-45. On p. 33 Fee expressly states, "There are no patterns or directions of editorializing in B that are not already anticipated by [p⁷⁵], . . . which simply underscores . . . the nonrecensional character of B."

⁵¹ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 45.

⁵² See once more Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 26-76.

⁵³ Spurgeon's presumption that the early oral proclamation of the scriptural text created a distinct familiarity with its verbal contents cannot be far from the mark (Charles H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries: Lectures addressed to the Students of the Pastor's College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* [New York: Sheldon & Co., 1876], 42): "I suppose that the sermons of the primitive Christians were for the most part expositions of lengthy passages of the Old Testament; and when copies of gospels, and the epistles of Paul, had become accessible to the churches, the chief work of the preacher would be to press home the apostolical teachings by delivering an address, the backbone of which would be a complete passage of Scripture: there would probably be but faint traces of divisions, heads and points, such as we employ in modern discoursing, but the teacher would follow the run of the passage which was open before him, commenting as he read."

⁵⁴ See Ernest Cadman Colwell, "Method in Establishing the Nature of Text-Types," in his *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament, New Testament Tools and Studies*, vol. 9, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 53.

⁵⁵ O'Neill, "Rules," 222.

⁵⁶ Monks of even the earliest period would commit the entire Book of Psalms to memory before ever tackling any other Old or New Testament book.

⁵⁷ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 1. Note that the mention of the Textus Receptus is text-critically irrelevant and can only serve to prejudice the reader further against the authenticity of the historically correct Byzantine reading.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ These errors are not surprising once one recognizes the vast amount of proper name errors in both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus throughout the Old and New Testaments. In the LXX, for example, Sinaiticus attributes Psalm 79 not to "Asaph," but to "David"; and Vaticanus in 2 Chr. 13.19 alters the obscure locale Ισάβα into the more familiar Kava of Galilee.

⁶² Any presumed infallibility vanishes quickly: Nazareth is a city of Judea in Lk. 1.26 according to Codex Sinaiticus. In Mk. 1.28, the same scribe makes Jesus' Galilean ministry occur in Judea once more. In Lk. 4.44 both

Vaticanus and Sinaiticus substitute Judea for Galilee. In Mk. 7.31 both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus have Jesus head toward the Sea of Galilee by going north from Tyre through Sidon (!). In Ac. 8.5 both MSS attempt to resurrect the ancient city of Samaria (B Aleph*), though Aleph* reads (also incorrectly) "Caesarea." p⁷⁵ and Aleph agree in error in calling the entire region of Samaria by the name Sychar in Jn. 4.4-5. In Ac. 28.1, Paul's shipwreck occurs at the land-locked Armenian city of Melitene (μελιτηνη) rather than Malta (μελιτη) in Codex Vaticanus, the Old Latin, sy^a and bo.

⁶³ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 45.

⁶⁴ Porter, "Textual Analysis," 31.

⁶⁵ It strikes one as highly peculiar that Fee claims "proper eclecticism plants its feet firmly on the manuscript evidence, including an adequate theory of textual transmission and an evaluation of the relative merits of the witnesses" (Fee, "P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶, and Origen," 45, emphasis added) when Fee nowhere offers any reconstruction of transmissional history which would serve to defend his preferred text.

⁶⁶ Kurt Aland has of late returned to suggestions of a Byzantine-revision hypothesis by terming the Byzantine Textform the "Byzantine Imperial Text." However, Aland offers no delineation of a formal revision placed within any historical transmissional framework to bolster such a suggestion. See Kurt and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2d rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 69-71.

⁶⁷ This is exemplified in Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, 3d ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), xix, where minuscules chosen for systematic citation were chosen specifically "because they exhibit a significant degree of independence from the so-called Byzantine manuscript tradition." So too Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, xx, "Except for an occasional manuscript that happened to preserve an earlier form of text, during the period from about the sixth or seventh century . . . the Byzantine form of text was generally regarded as the authoritative form of text and was the one most widely circulated."

⁶⁸ See Ernest C. Colwell, "Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 370-89.

⁶⁹ Actually, the early vellum MSS reflect a greater scribal care and concern for the text than do the early papyri. This may be traced to the intended use of the different type of documents: the papyri may have been copied for church, missionary, or personal purposes. The early vellum MSS, on the other hand, were certainly copied for formal ecclesiastical use, since the expense of production as well as the use of professional or semitrained scribes was generally beyond the means of the average individual. P⁷⁴ demonstrates the continuing personal use of papyrus in Egypt through at least the seventh century, even though vellum by that time was the most common and durable material available for Scriptural copying.

⁷⁰ Epp, "Interlude," 390-91.