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**RULE 9, ISOLATED VARIANTS, AND THE "TEST-TUBE" NATURE  
OF THE NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> TEXT:  
A BYZANTINE-PRIORITY PERSPECTIVE**

Vouloir proposer des corrections qui n'ont pour elles  
le témoignage d'aucun document, manuscrit, version  
ou écrivain ecclésiastique, c'est faire oeuvre  
d'imagination et non de critique.<sup>1</sup>

It is beyond question that the text presented in the current Nestle-Aland 27th (NA<sup>27</sup>) and United Bible Societies' 4th (UBS<sup>4</sup>) editions<sup>2</sup> is regarded by many throughout the world as the closest possible approximation to the New Testament autographs or at least the best text that can be constructed by modern methods of New Testament textual criticism.<sup>3</sup> Such assumptions are drawn without regard for the clear statement presented in the introduction to NA<sup>27</sup>:

It should naturally be understood that this text is a working text . . . : it is not to be considered as definitive, but as a stimulus to further efforts toward defining and verifying the text of the New Testament.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E. Jacquier, *Le Nouveau Testament dans L'Église Chrétienne. Tome Second: Le Text du Nouveau Testament*, 3rd ed. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1913), 314.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Aland, et al., eds., *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed.; 8th rev. and exp. printing (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), hereafter cited as NA<sup>27</sup>; idem, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed.; 5th rev. and exp. printing (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001); hereafter cited as UBS<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Wim Weren, "Textual Criticism: Mother of all Exegesis," in Wim Weren and Dietrich-Alex Koch, eds., *Recent Developments in Textual Criticism, New Testament, Other Early Christian and Jewish Literature: Papers read at a NOSTER Conference in Münster, January 4-6, 2001*, *Studies in Theology and Religion*, 8 (Assen, NL: Royal Van Gorcum, 2003), 3-16, states: "Nowadays, exegetes from various Christian denominations worldwide make use of the Nestle-Aland text . . . . Because of its broad acceptance, the NA<sup>26</sup> has been referred to as the new "standard text" . . . . Faith in the reconstruction of the original text of the Greek New Testament that has so far been achieved is so great that some researchers conceive the Nestle-Aland text as the *Ausgangstext*, . . . which in its turn can be compared to the texts of actually existing manuscripts . . . . This *Ausgangstext* . . . is seen as the potential predecessor of all actually existing textual witnesses" (5, 8).

<sup>4</sup> NA<sup>27</sup>, 45\*. In a similar manner, the UBS<sup>4</sup> preface declares (viii), "The text of the edition has remained unchanged. This should not be misunderstood to mean that the editors now consider the text as established. Work on the text of the Holy Scriptures continues to be a task of concern for each of the editors who will offer the results of their research in future editions."

Despite this caution, the *de facto* conclusion of most students, instructors, and scholars – including members of the Münster *Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung*<sup>5</sup> – appears to be that this NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> text *does* represent the epitome of New Testament text-critical scholarship: it indeed *should* be used and regarded as a quasi-“original” text unless specific (and mostly minor) alterations be suggested and accepted (such as those noted in the fascicles of the *Editio Critica Maior* [ECM]).<sup>6</sup> In the general consensus, there exists little room for scholarly doubt regarding this matter,<sup>7</sup> and thus the deeper issues of theology and exegesis can proceed apace, with little regard given to any variation from the base

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example Kurt Aland, “The Significance of the Papyri for Progress in New Testament Research,” in J. Philip Hyatt, ed., *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 28-30, 1964* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 325-346: “The aim which we want to achieve . . . can be so defined: *to establish the original text of the NT, that is, the text-form in which the NT writings were officially put into circulation*” (341); Klaus Junack, “The Reliability of the New Testament Text from the Perspective of Textual Criticism,” *BT* 29 (1978) 128-140, “The purpose of textual research is to . . . *to achieve a reconstruction of the original wording of the text, or at least the form of the text used by the scribes of the oldest surviving copies of the text*” (129); Barbara Aland, “New Testament Textual Research, its Method and its Goals,” in Tai-il Wang, ed., *Tell Me the Word Easy to Understand. Textual Criticism and Bible Translation: In Honor of Young Jin Min*, 2 vols. (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2000), 1:63-77: “The ultimate goal of New Testament textual research . . . is *to discover the original text of the New Testament or, to put it more modestly, to come as close as possible to the lost autographs of the authors*” (1:63); “Do we know the original text of the New Testament? . . . I believe *we are very close to it* although we do not have it in all its details” (1:72); Gerd Mink, “Editing and Genealogical Studies: The New Testament,” *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 15 (2000) 51-56: “The initial text [NA<sup>27</sup>], called A [= *Ausgangstext*] . . . is not necessarily identical to the original text . . . [but] may be hypothesized as representing *the starting point of the tradition at each passage*” (52); Klaus Wachtel, “Colwell Revisited: Grouping New Testament Manuscripts,” in Christian-B. Amphoux and J. Keith Elliott, eds., *The New Testament Text in Early Christianity: Proceedings of the Lille Colloquium, July 2000*, HTB 6 (Lausanne: Éditions du Zèbre, 2003), 31-43, states that one must “reduce the material to those documents which are needed for the reconstruction of a text *as close as possible to the original*” (39) [emphasis added throughout].

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Aland et al., eds., *Novum Testamentum Graecum: Editio Critica Maior, IV, Die Katholischen Briefe: 1, Der Jakobusbrief; 2, Die Petrusbriefe; 3, Der Erste Johannesbrief* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997-2004). The ECM volumes so far published have suggested that the NA<sup>27</sup> base text be changed in Jas 1:22; 2:3, 4; 1Pet 1:6, 16 (2x); 2:25; 4:16; 5:9; 5:10; 2Pet 2:6, 11, 15; 3:6, 10, 16 (2x), 18; 1John 1:7; 5:10, 18. Otherwise, NA<sup>27</sup> = ECM = the *Ausgangstext*. Thus NA<sup>27</sup> in general is considered to represent the source text from which all other readings in each variant unit have derived (“a reconstruction which we believe to be the best hypothetical initial text that has been reached up to now without the knowledge of the extensive material being offered in the ECM,” 1John ECM, 28\*).

<sup>7</sup> Chrysostom C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission*, WUNT 167 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), states, “Commentators as a rule follow the text of the GNT [= UBS<sup>4</sup>] or NA<sup>[27]</sup> without further ado. Where they do take up a variation unit for discussion, they normally accept the verdict of the editors and the explanation supplied by Metzger’s commentary, which they express in their own words” (518).

NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> or ECM text, except here and there as minor exercises in eclectic ingenuity considered worthy of publication in various journals.<sup>8</sup>

To be sure, various issues can and have been raised regarding inadequacies when using UBS<sup>4</sup> and NA<sup>27</sup> as hand editions (*Handausgaben*), particularly in regard to the limited number of variant units cited (the same editorial team's UBS<sup>4</sup> cites far fewer than NA<sup>27</sup>; NA<sup>27</sup> cites fewer than the *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*;<sup>9</sup> and these cite far fewer than the comprehensive apparatuses of Tischendorf, Tregelles, or von Soden). The NA<sup>27</sup> preface specifically states (following the previously quoted portion) that

It intends to provide the user with a well-founded working text together with the means of verifying it or alternatively of correcting it. The edition contains all the variants necessary for this purpose in as complete a form as possible within its limitations. The variants included are important either for their content or for their historical significance. The user can also gain an accurate impression of the amount of variation in the New Testament textual tradition, as well as of the general character of these variants, and of the motives and origins they reflect.<sup>10</sup>

Yet the claims so made raise valid questions, since the NA<sup>27</sup> edition is highly limited in its selection of variant units. When contrasted with the various editions of the Byzantine Textform,<sup>11</sup> for example, one finds that a large number of variant units – many of them significant for text-

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<sup>8</sup> Frederik Wisse, "The Nature and Purpose of Redactional Changes in Early Christian Texts: The Canonical Gospels," in William L. Petersen, ed., *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission*, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, 3 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1989), 39-53, suggests that, in many cases, "we are dealing with nothing more than educated guesses which lead nowhere and needlessly clutter the scholarly literature" (40). See also Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 8-9, where he draws a close parallel between the Q hypothesis and New Testament textual criticism: "[Most scholars] will accept its broad finding and debate just a point here or a point there. The impression given is that the argument concerns merely the finer details of a text, the existence and overall character of which is unshakeable. In this important aspect, Q scholarship is aligning itself with the discipline of textual criticism; the broad consensus is established in the near unanimous use by scholars of the latest version of Nestle-Aland's critical text, but individual scholars will debate about one reading or another."

<sup>9</sup> Kurt Aland, ed. *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, 15th rev. and exp. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), hereafter SQE. Allowing that the SQE contains a larger number of variant units than does NA<sup>27</sup>, had the SQE been used for the Gospels section of the present paper, additional whole verses with zero support likely may have appeared.

<sup>10</sup> NA<sup>27</sup>, 46\*.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, eds., *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2005* (Southborough, MA: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005); Zane C. Hodges and Arthur I. Farstad, eds., *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985).

critical purposes – are *not* cited in the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus. To illustrate, in Mark 11, NA<sup>27</sup> in 31 instances fails to cite differences between its text and the Byzantine Textform;<sup>12</sup> in Luke 7, NA<sup>27</sup> fails in 23 such instances;<sup>13</sup> in John 7, NA<sup>27</sup> fails in 18 such instances.<sup>14</sup> The same situation prevails in almost every chapter throughout the New Testament.<sup>15</sup>

A more basic question exists, however: just how *reliable* and *secure* for text-critical, exegetical, and hermeneutical purposes – even as a “working text” – is the main text of NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>/ECM as currently printed? Statistical comparison against a contrasting text such as the Byzantine Textform demonstrates that *all* texts share an approximate 90% (or greater) identity of wording.<sup>16</sup> However, such a large amount of common agreement does *not* reflect the central area of concern for those involved in New Testament textual criticism. The primary issue involves the resultant base text and the *means* by which that text – whether NA<sup>27</sup>, the Byzantine Textform, or any other – has been established, including the underlying theory, methodology, and applied praxis, since all these have coalesced to produce a text that is regarded either as “original,” “closest to the original,” a “base” or *Ausgangstext*, or simply a reasonably reliable “working text.” The present essay addresses one aspect of the NA<sup>27</sup> text, since its text as published apparently stands in opposition to the text-critical rules established by Kurt and Barbara Aland in their *The Text of the New Testament*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Seven of these differences are merely orthographic; the remaining 24 cases reflect more significant changes involving word order, substitution, and matters of inclusion or omission.

<sup>13</sup> Six of these differences are orthographic; the remaining 18 cases are more substantial.

<sup>14</sup> Seven of these differences are orthographic; the remaining 11 cases are more substantial.

<sup>15</sup> David Trobisch, “From New Testament Manuscripts to a Central Electronic Database,” in Johann Cook, *Bible and Computer: The Stellenbosch AIBI-6 Conference. Proceedings of the Association Internationale Bible et Informatique “From Alpha to Byte”*. University of Stellenbosch 17-21 July, 2000 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 427-433, notes: “The Nestle-Aland edition collates a selected number of witnesses at a selected number of places. If the editors decided not to document variants for a specific text, there is no way for the users to know whether this text is transmitted without variants or not” (429). Even while acknowledging that “editors have to choose where they want to note variants and where not” (429), when speaking of the much more extensive but chronologically restricted ECM apparatus, Trobisch declares, “Ideally scholars should be presented with the complete data. To a Byzantine scholar, for example, the restriction [in ECM] to the first nine hundred years of transmission may limit the usefulness of this edition considerably” (430).

<sup>16</sup> For example, when compared against the Byzantine Textform, Matt 13 in NA<sup>27</sup> has 94.8% of its wording (including word order) in common; in Acts 13, the same comparison finds 92.1% of the wording in common; Rom 13 finds 94.1% in common; Heb 13 finds 96.8% in common; and Rev 13 finds 91.6% in common.

<sup>17</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

The Alands list "twelve basic rules for textual criticism"<sup>18</sup> – many of which even Byzantine-priority advocates would accept.<sup>19</sup> Yet, whether consciously or not, one rule in particular continually is violated within NA<sup>27</sup>, Aland/Aland rule number nine:

Variants must never be treated in isolation, but always considered in the context of the tradition. Otherwise there is too great a danger of reconstructing a "test-tube text" which never existed at any time or place.<sup>20</sup>

By neglecting this rule when constructing the NA<sup>27</sup> text as an *Ausgangstext*, the NA<sup>27</sup> text itself becomes the very "test-tube text" that two of its editors warned against. Why is this so?

Basically, the NA<sup>27</sup> main text, taken sequentially, represents a connected series of variant units, in which the main text in each individual variant unit bears the reading that has been determined as that from which all remaining variants in that particular unit are derived.<sup>21</sup> Little or no thought appears to have been given to the witnesses supporting one variant unit in conjunction with the witnesses supporting the surrounding variant units in the sequential connection of the overall text. This practice leads to contradictory levels of external support, whereby one variant unit's external support effectively cancels that of another neighboring variant unit. This situation progressively worsens as additional variant units are added to the overall sequence. The resultant text – even within relatively short segments – becomes an entity that apparently never existed at any time or place.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 280-281.

<sup>19</sup> A similar tabulation of text-critical principles appears in Maurice A. Robinson, "New Testament Textual Criticism: The Case for Byzantine Priority," *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 6 (2001) <<http://purl.org/TC/vol06/Robinson2001.html>>. The same list appears in the summary abridgement, Maurice A. Robinson, "The Case for Byzantine Priority," in David Alan Black, ed., *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 125-139.

<sup>20</sup> Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 281. See also the same rule in the German original, Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments: Einführung in die wissenschaftlichen Ausgaben sowie in Theorie und Praxis der modernen Textkritik*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1989), 285: "Varianten dürfen nicht isoliert behandelt, sondern es muß stets der Kontext der Überlieferung beachtet werden, sonst ist die Gefahr der Konstituierung eines »Textes aus der Retorte«, den es nirgendwann und nirgendwo real gegeben hat, zu groß."

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, 2 vols., ed. John H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), s. v. "Textual Criticism, New Testament," by Kurt Aland (rev. Beate Köster), 2:546-551: "A reading is most probably original if it easily explains the emergence of the other readings (the genealogical principle) . . . . Textual criticism must always begin with the findings in regard to manuscript transmission. Only then can internal criteria . . . be considered, for they alone cannot substantiate a text-critical decision" (551).

<sup>22</sup> Goodacre, *Case Against Q*, 8, correctly states: "The system inevitably tends to obscure the hypothetical nature of the document to which it refers. It has the clear

The evidence by which to establish this repeated violation of Aland/Aland Rule 9 is the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus, in particular its attestation of "consistently cited witnesses."<sup>23</sup> Using the evidence presented in both the positive and negative apparatuses of the NA<sup>27</sup> edition,<sup>24</sup> it can be demonstrated with success that more than 100 whole verses as printed in NA<sup>27</sup> have *no* apparent support within the Greek manuscript tradition; in most (if not all) cases, no support exists for such whole verses even within the versional or patristic traditions.

Such a statement might seem puzzling and peculiar, since supposedly the only "conjectural"<sup>25</sup> reading in NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> appears in Acts 16:12.<sup>26</sup> Yet the actual situation is not difficult to comprehend, since

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potential to mislead students by giving them the impression of an established document, . . . the existence of which it would be foolish to question." So also 161-162: "Nestle-Aland<sup>27</sup> offers at best only an approximation to the original texts of the Gospels. The sophistication of the critical text can all too easily seduce scholars into imagining that they are dealing with something far more concrete and stable than is in fact possible."

<sup>23</sup> See NA<sup>27</sup>, 50\*: "The witness of these [consistently cited] manuscripts is always cited in the passages selected for the apparatus." The two "orders" of consistently cited witnesses include (1) "the papyri and the uncials which are independent of the Byzantine Koine text type, and a small number of minuscules which preserve an early [by this is meant non-Byzantine] form of the text"; and (2) "the more important uncials of the Koine text type, and a group of minuscules . . . related to the Byzantine Koine text type" (NA<sup>27</sup>, 51\*). Normally the MSS under group (2) are subsumed under the Gothic  $\mathfrak{M}$  symbol [which includes the Byzantine Textform] where they do not otherwise explicitly deviate (*ibid.*, 51\*).

<sup>24</sup> The positive and negative apparatuses are described in NA<sup>27</sup>, 51\*. The *positive* apparatus gives specific support for the NA<sup>27</sup> main text reading (*txt*); the *negative* apparatus gives specific support *only* for variants from the NA<sup>27</sup> main text. The consistently cited witnesses for the NA<sup>27</sup> main text generally can be calculated from the evidence of the positive and negative apparatuses, coupled with the list of manuscript lacunae appearing in NA<sup>27</sup>, 684-713. A caution in this regard concerns the Gothic  $\mathfrak{M}$  symbol and the negative apparatuses: due to various "flaws affecting the text of a manuscript, . . . the possibility should not be ruled out that on occasion a consistently cited witness is neither subsumed in the symbol  $\mathfrak{M}$  nor in agreement with the text of this edition" (51\*); this suggests that additional instances of zero support for whole verses may exist beyond those demonstrated in the present essay.

<sup>25</sup> In 2Pet 3:10, ECM substitutes a conjecture for the NA<sup>27</sup> main text, choosing to follow certain Philoxenian Syriac MSS and the Sahidic/Dialect-V Coptic reading  $\sigma\chi$   $\epsilon\upsilon\rho\epsilon\theta\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$  instead of the NA<sup>27</sup>  $\epsilon\upsilon\rho\epsilon\theta\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$  (supported by  $\mathfrak{B}$  B K P 0156<sup>vid</sup> 323 1241 1739<sup>txt</sup>  $pc$   $sy$ <sup>ph, hmg</sup>), or the Byzantine  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\kappa\alpha\theta\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ .

<sup>26</sup> The reading  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\eta[\zeta]$   $\mu\epsilon\rho\iota\delta\omicron\varsigma$   $\tau\eta\varsigma$  is a conjecture made by Le Clerc (= Clericus) and later by others; at best this conjecture finds strained support in three late Vulgate manuscripts. UBS<sup>4</sup> provides a more comprehensive statement of the evidence regarding the various readings in this unit; text-critical issues and historical matters are discussed in Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 393-395. A signed and strongly-worded dissent in that volume by K. Aland and B. Metzger opposes such "ill-advised" conjecture; such becomes peculiar and ironic when the end product of the NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>

it reflects an inherent problem within the various forms of eclectic methodology:<sup>27</sup> because the system works primarily with individual variant units, the left hand has little or no regard for what the right hand may have done in a neighboring variant unit. The pattern is consistent: a decision regarding the "best" reading in one unit of variation normally is made on the basis of internal and external principles that pertain to that *specific* variant unit. These principles assign localized authority and "weight" *only* to the manuscripts whose general character and value happen to support the internal criteria favored within that particular variant unit.<sup>28</sup> Once this has been accomplished, the procedure commences anew for the next sequential variant unit, with little or no regard for what just had been determined, on what principles, or what witnesses may have supported the previous decision. Thus, it often happens that all or nearly all supporting witnesses for the "best" reading in one variant unit vanish from the list of witnesses supporting the eclectically determined "best" reading of the next sequential variant unit. As a result, while the witnesses cited in support of isolated variant units might appear significant, the level of overall support rapidly diminishes or vanishes once neighboring variant units are added to the totals. To illustrate this point, consider John 9:4f:<sup>29</sup>

John 9:4f (a) ημας δει εργαζεσθαι τα εργα του πεμψαντος (b) με (c) εως ημερα εστιν ερχεται νυξ οτε ουδεις δυναται εργαζεσθαι (d) οταν εν τω κοσμω ω φως ειμι του κοσμου

9:4f (a) txt: Ɔ<sup>66</sup> Ɔ<sup>75</sup> Ɔ\* B (~D) L W 070 *pc sa pbo bo*  
 (b) var: Ɔ<sup>66</sup> Ɔ<sup>75</sup> Ɔ\* L W *pc pbo bo*  
 (c) var: C\* L W 070 33 *pc b d sy<sup>hmg</sup> pbo bo*  
 (d) var: sy<sup>s</sup>

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editorial procedure creates what amounts to conjecture in the aggregate in more than 100 whole verses of their shared New Testament text.

<sup>27</sup> These include "rigorous" or "thoroughgoing" eclecticism; "reasoned" eclecticism; and the "local-genealogical" or "Coherence-based genealogical" methods. Each of these leads to equally problematic results when the overall sequential context is considered.

<sup>28</sup> Beyond the internal criterion of favoring the reading supposedly most likely to have given rise to all other readings within a particular variant unit, other internal criteria strongly influence such decisions. These include principles relating to the "more difficult," the "harmonizing," or the "shorter" reading, as well as other minor principles that in their subjective application remain subservient but highly necessary to the establishment of this initial overriding eclectic principle.

<sup>29</sup> The NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus treats John 9:4 and John 9:5 as a single entity. This study considers such cases extended forms of single-verse support, following the decision of the NA<sup>27</sup> editors. In the present instance, the only variant unit occurring within John 9:5 is (d), and that unit does not affect the discussion regarding diminishing support in John 9:4.

In John 9:4, the NA<sup>27</sup> "best" sequence of variants (the *Ausgangstext*) reads (a) ημας δει followed by (b) πεμψαντος με (the intervening common text, εργαζεσθαι τα εργα του, has no variant units cited).<sup>30</sup> In variant unit (a), the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus shows the main text reading ημας to be supported by Ϝ<sup>66</sup> Ϝ<sup>75</sup> ϝ\* B (~D) L W 070 *pc* sa pbo bo (D in fact reads δει ημας instead of ημας δει and thus differs from the NA<sup>27</sup> text as printed).<sup>31</sup>

In the second variant unit (b), the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus shows the NA<sup>27</sup> main text reading με to have the support of the majority text (℞, including the Byzantine Textform). Yet the alternate (b) reading, ημας, is supported by Ϝ<sup>66</sup> Ϝ<sup>75</sup> ϝ\* L W *pc* pbo bo. That group is almost the same as that which supported variant unit (a); the only defection is by B (D) 070 and the Sahidic version.<sup>32</sup> When the NA<sup>27</sup> external support for *both* variant units is combined, the apparent greater degree of support for each unit taken separately is reduced in the aggregate *only* to that of B (D) and 070. The larger combination of witnesses Ϝ<sup>66</sup> Ϝ<sup>75</sup> ϝ\* L W *pc* pbo bo actually read the pattern (a) ημας and (b) ημας. Yet one cannot readily observe from the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus the actual degree of support for the NA<sup>27</sup> main text combined reading, nor the combined support for the significant Alexandrian alternate, due to the manner in which the apparatus presents the data on a per-variant-unit basis.<sup>33</sup>

Further, the support of B (D) 070 *pc* for the NA<sup>27</sup> main text reading of the combined variant units is reduced by the word order disagreement of D to only B 070. Then, if the third sequential variant unit (c) of John 9:4 is included (involving the NA<sup>27</sup> main text εως versus the alternate ως),

<sup>30</sup> The Byzantine Textform at the same location reads the sequence (a) εμε δει and (b) πεμψαντος με. The Byzantine reading εμε in variant unit (a) is supported by ℞ ϝ<sup>1</sup> A C Θ Ψ f<sup>1</sup> f<sup>13</sup> 33 lat sy ac<sup>2</sup> bo<sup>mss</sup>. Variant unit (b) is read in common by both the Byzantine Textform and NA<sup>27</sup>, and shares the same supporting witnesses in that unit.

<sup>31</sup> NA<sup>27</sup> Appendix 2, *Variae Lectiones Minores*, 733, provides a full delineation of the readings of Greek manuscript witnesses enclosed in parentheses. As for the "*pc*" (= *pauci*) that indicates additional minor or insignificant minuscule support for this variant reading, the forthcoming *Text und Textwert* volume for John shows the NA<sup>27</sup> text reading in John 9:4, variant (a), to be supported additionally by only MS 849. Thanks are extended to Klaus Wachtel and the Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung for graciously providing this pre-publication information.

<sup>32</sup> The forthcoming *Text und Textwert* volume for John shows the *pc* in the alternate reading of NA<sup>27</sup> John 9:4, variant unit (b), to be supported once more only by the additional MS 849 (which again represents the whole of the "*pc*" for this unit).

<sup>33</sup> The UBS<sup>4</sup> apparatus is more precise in addressing this sequence of variants, since it treats as one variant unit what NA<sup>27</sup> (and *Text und Textwert* for John) cites as two. UBS<sup>4</sup> clearly shows that the main text reading (a) ημας δει followed by (b) πεμψαντος με is supported by "B (D δει ημας) 070 (it<sup>d</sup>) syr<sup>pal</sup> geo<sup>1</sup>" and no other witnesses. However, due to its limited citation of variant units, the UBS<sup>4</sup> apparatus does *not* include the variant unit immediately following (εως versus ως), and thus cannot show that the verse as printed is supported only by Codex Vaticanus.



even the support of 070 is lost, since 070 in variant unit (c) joins C\* L W 33 *pc b d sy*<sup>hmg</sup> *pbo bo* in reading  $\omega\zeta$ .

Thus, in the space of three sequential variant units within the single verse John 9:4, the NA<sup>27</sup> text as printed is apparently supported by *only* Codex Vaticanus.<sup>34</sup> It thus is not surprising to find hundreds of similar cases of single-manuscript support for whole verses of NA<sup>27</sup> throughout the New Testament.<sup>35</sup>

An even greater problem occurs when the tabulation of all variant units in sequence results in whole single verses that lack support from *any* existing Greek manuscript. In such cases, *no* commonality of support exists for that verse. Yet such a puzzling scenario is clearly demonstrated in the NA<sup>27</sup> main text in more than 100 whole verses, deriving the results directly from the positive and negative apparatuses of NA<sup>27</sup>. Further, in most of these cases no support is forthcoming even from the various versional or patristic traditions.

The methodological requirements for establishing this evaluation are simple:

(1) A given New Testament verse must have at least *two* variant units cited within the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus.<sup>36</sup>

(2) At least *one* of the variant units within the verse *must* be supplied in the apparatus with a statement of support for the NA<sup>27</sup> main text reading (i. e., the last entry of at least one variant unit *must* be "*txt*,"

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<sup>34</sup> This result is determined solely from the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus concerning the three variant units involved; comparison against the actual text of Vaticanus might show additional deviation from the NA<sup>27</sup> main text as printed. Such, however, transcends the purpose of the present essay.

<sup>35</sup> The present writer's tabulations show more than 180 (current count 190) whole verses in NA<sup>27</sup> that have their aggregate support apparently in only one Greek manuscript. These single-support witnesses range from the papyri and old uncials (e. g.,  $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ ,  $\mathfrak{B}$ , B, C, D) to later uncials and minuscules such as L, W,  $\Theta$ ,  $\Psi$ , 0161, 0274, 0281, 33, 892, 2427, the archetype of  $f^1$  or  $f^{13}$ , and other witnesses. Such instances of single-manuscript support for an entire verse occur primarily in the longer NT books: Matt has 35 such verses; Mark has 13; Luke has 27; John has 24, Acts has 15, and Rev has 38. In many of these cases, as soon as one or more variant units from the verses immediately preceding or following are included in the sequential tabulation, the amount of support drops from that single Greek MS to *zero* Greek MSS. In such cases, the result for the sequential variant units involved once more becomes a *de facto* conjectural text set forth as the supposed source (*Ausgangstext*) from which all other readings have derived. Such a scenario does *not* appear to reflect a proper view of historical textual transmission.

<sup>36</sup> Except for the acknowledged conjecture at Acts 16:12, the NA<sup>27</sup> main text does not present (a) an entire NT verse containing (b) but a *single* variant unit in which (c) the reading of the NA<sup>27</sup> main text lacks the support of *all* known Greek manuscripts. All remaining instances necessarily occur in verses containing more than one variant unit.

followed by the witnesses supporting the NA<sup>27</sup> main text reading for that variant unit).<sup>37</sup>

(3) The remaining variant unit(s) within the verse must contain either

(a) a *positive* apparatus (showing NA<sup>27</sup> *txt* support) for direct comparison with the other variant unit(s) containing *txt* support; or,

(b) a sufficient number of consistently cited witnesses in a *negative* apparatus (one without the citation of *txt* support) so as to permit the elimination of witnesses otherwise cited as *txt* in the other variant units within the same verse.<sup>38</sup>

Once all these conditions are present, it becomes a matter of comparison and reduction by elimination to determine the resultant support within any verse. The case of John 9:4 cited above showed how the process of elimination functions, even though its end result was single-manuscript support for a whole verse (Codex Vaticanus).<sup>39</sup>

The simplest demonstration of zero support for the NA<sup>27</sup> main text wording of an entire verse occurs when a verse contains two variant units, where the witnesses supporting one unit mutually exclude the witnesses supporting the other unit.<sup>40</sup> As an example, the NA<sup>27</sup> main text of Mark 11:3 contains only two variant units (indicated here by English

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<sup>37</sup> A verse without an explicit "*txt*" statement in at least one variant unit *may* have zero support, but such would have to be determined by careful calculation. Wherever the *txt* reading – with or without other witnesses – is supported by "*rell*" (= *reliqui*, the remainder of the manuscript tradition), the support of the consistently cited witnesses must be determined by calculation.

<sup>38</sup> Any main text support by the collective symbol  $\mathfrak{R}$  somehow must be eliminated (either in the positive or negative apparatus) in a competing variant unit within the same verse in order to establish zero-support. One also must calculate whether any consistently cited witnesses of the second order are subsumed in  $\mathfrak{R}$  (not always an easy task). If so, such might preclude zero support.

<sup>39</sup> This method assumes only the accuracy of results determined on the basis of the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus. Many other whole verses may have single- or zero-manuscript support that cannot be determined solely from that apparatus. Further examination of other text-critical resources would be necessary in order to determine additional cases.

<sup>40</sup> The NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus presents 9 cases in which (a) the NA<sup>27</sup> main text displays only two variant units in a single verse, *and* in which (b) *none* of the witnesses supporting the first unit are identical to those supporting the second unit (i. e., they mutually negate each other). These 9 verses of "mutual exclusion" are the following: Mark 11:3; Luke 17:23; 24:50; John 5:2; 16:23; 18:1; Acts 27:8; 2Cor 5:3; Rev 20:11. Some of the variant readings in these units indeed are minor, reflecting orthographic issues (such as  $\alpha\nu$  versus  $\epsilon\alpha\nu$ ) or the presence or absence of an article before proper names (this type of variant seems overly-emphasized in the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus). The essential point remains: the NA<sup>27</sup> main text of these whole verses *as printed* finds *zero* Greek manuscript support for its purported archetypal or *Ausgangstext* reading. This not only demonstrates wide-ranging (even if unconscious) conjecture, but calls into question the historical and transmissional likelihood of the NA<sup>27</sup> main text as published.

letters),<sup>41</sup> and the external support for each is mutually exclusive of the other. The portion of text involved in each variant unit is underlined for ease of reference:<sup>42</sup>

Mark 11:3 και εαν τις υμιν ειπη τι ποιειτε τουτο (a) ειπατε ο κυριος αυτου χρειαν εχει και ευθυσ (b) αυτον αποστελλει παλιν ωδε

11:3 (a)\* txt: B Δ 2427 *pc* it  
(b)\* txt: ⚭ D L 579 892 1241 *pc* UBS<sup>4</sup> = {B}

The support for the NA<sup>27</sup> text reading (*txt*) in the first (a) variant unit is B Δ 2427 *pc* it. The NA<sup>27</sup> text reading in the second (b) variant unit (rated {B} in UBS<sup>4</sup>)<sup>43</sup> is specifically stated to be ⚭ D L 579 892 1241 *pc* (the support for alternate readings is not relevant to the discussion, and is not presented). Obviously, the NA<sup>27</sup> text support for each variant unit is mutually exclusive, and thus – unless by sheer chance the relatively few and insignificant “*pc*” (*pauci*) minuscules that support variant unit (a) coincide with the limited “*pc*” minuscules that support variant unit (b) – a very unlikely scenario – the verse as printed in NA<sup>27</sup> has apparently zero support from *any* known Greek manuscript, version, or father.<sup>44</sup> On a *de facto* basis, the NA<sup>27</sup> main text *as printed* for this verse becomes a matter of *conjecture*, differing in its own manner very little from the acknowledged conjecture at Acts 16:12. The only real difference here is that the conjecture is spread among more than one variant unit.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> By text-critical convention, the Greek New Testament text is presented without capitalization, punctuation, or diacritical marks, following the pattern demonstrated in the early papyrus and uncial manuscripts.

<sup>42</sup> The second NA<sup>27</sup> variant unit in Mark 11:3 also appears in the more limited apparatus of UBS<sup>4</sup>, and the main text reading is given a {B} rating as an indication of the editors’ relative certainty regarding such. Further, any NA<sup>27</sup> variant unit paralleled by a UBS<sup>4</sup> reading is discussed in Metzger’s *Textual Commentary* in loc. The present essay cites the UBS<sup>4</sup> evaluations where they occur, although their significance is debatable. See Kent D. Clarke, *Textual Optimism: A Critique of the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament*, JSNTSup 138 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

<sup>43</sup> Many NA<sup>27</sup> variant units with UBS<sup>4</sup> parallels in the present study are rated highly by those editors: 12 units have ratings of {A}; 32 units have ratings of {B}. The lower rated UBS<sup>4</sup> variant units with {C} are strongly represented (35 units), but only 1 unit of the present study (Jude 5) has a rating of {D}. Most NA<sup>27</sup> variant units cited in this study have no UBS<sup>4</sup> parallel. Given Clarke’s questioning of the entire UBS<sup>4</sup> rating system, such ratings likely remain irrelevant.

<sup>44</sup> In the same verse, the Byzantine reading (a) ειπατε οτι ο plus (b) αυτον αποστελλει (without παλιν) is solidly supported within that Textform.

<sup>45</sup> In the same verse SQE presents four variant units rather than the two of NA<sup>27</sup>; this includes the remaining difference in the Byzantine text of this verse (ευθως instead of ευθυσ). The mutual exclusion of support in the two major variants remains unaffected by the additional material in SQE. It remains possible that many additional verses might be shown to have zero support if tabulation were made in the Gospels using the SQE apparatus instead of that of NA<sup>27</sup>.

One should not presume that the NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> editors are unconcerned about extended portions of text that lack Greek manuscript support. The NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus and the "Editionum Differentiae" appendix to that edition note two specific locations where the earlier NA<sup>25</sup> had zero support (*sine test.*) for its printed text – two oversights corrected in NA<sup>27</sup>:

(1) At John 7:46, the NA<sup>25</sup> main text read *ελαλησεν ουτως ανθρωπος ως ουτος λαλει ο ανθρωπος*.<sup>46</sup> Both the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus and the Editionum Differentiae appendix suggest that this wording had zero support.<sup>47</sup>

(2) Likewise, in the NA<sup>27</sup> Editionum Differentiae appendix (but surprisingly *not* in the NA<sup>27</sup> main apparatus), the NA<sup>25</sup> reading of 1Pet 3:18 (*περι αμαρτιων απεθανεν*) also is cited as apparently having zero support.<sup>48</sup> Yet the NA<sup>27</sup> main apparatus presents the NA<sup>25</sup> reading with support *only* from vg<sup>st</sup>, ww<sup>ww</sup> Cyp and *no* Greek manuscripts. It thus appears that this NA<sup>25</sup> reading likewise should have had "*sine test.*" appended.

Since NA<sup>27</sup> expresses such concern regarding zero-support readings found in NA<sup>25</sup> and other editions<sup>49</sup> – as well as noting in its apparatus the ca. 200 conjectural readings made by various commentators – it seems peculiar that the NA<sup>27</sup> editors end up with printing a sequential text of single NT verses that have zero support when considered in their overall sequence – yet their own series of eclectic decisions claim to have determined the archetypal form or *Ausgangstext* for each variant unit within such a verse! That such a text when considered sequentially lacks a demonstrable existence among the Greek manuscript base throughout transmissional history seems not to have been a concern.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> When the text of NA<sup>25</sup> differs from that of NA<sup>27</sup>, the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus indicates such by a dagger symbol (†) preceding the NA<sup>25</sup> reading (which always appears first within a given variant unit). See NA<sup>27</sup>, 57\*, for further explanation.

<sup>47</sup> The NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus has "*sine test.?*" with the question mark suggesting some uncertainty. However, "Editionum Differentiae," in loc. (p. 758), has "T M N (*sine test.*)," *without* the question mark. The other letters indicate the various editions in which this identical zero-support reading (wrongly) appeared as the main text: Tischendorf<sup>8</sup> (T) and Merk (M), as well as NA<sup>25</sup> (N).

<sup>48</sup> "T (H) M B N (*sine test.?*)," NA<sup>27</sup>, Editionum Differentiae, 767. Once more other editions shared the same erroneous reading in their main text: NA<sup>25</sup> (N) here is joined by Tischendorf<sup>8</sup> (T), Westcott and Hort (H), Merk (M), and Bover (B).

<sup>49</sup> Additional "*sine test.*" notes appear in the Editionum Differentiae appendix, but these relate to editions other than NA<sup>25</sup> and do not pertain to the current study.

<sup>50</sup> This assessment does *not* affect the ca. 90% of the NT text that remains basically free of significant variants. Nor does it affect the words in any zero-support verse that sequentially remain well supported apart from the anomalous situation created when the cited sequential variant units clash due to contradictory editorial decisions. Thus, in Mark 11:3, the remainder of the NA<sup>27</sup> main text is unaffected. This assessment does *not* involve to the Byzantine Textform in comparison with NA<sup>27</sup>: SQE

Luke 17:23 demonstrates the same point. Once more, only two NA<sup>27</sup> variant units exist in this verse, and each mutually excludes the other. Thus the overall NA<sup>27</sup> main text as published for this verse presents what amounts to another conjectural reading:<sup>51</sup>

Luke 17:23 και ερουσιν υμιν ιδου (a) εκει [η] ιδου ωδε (b) μη απελθητε μηδε διωξητε

17:23 (a) txt: ϕ<sup>75</sup> B 579 UBS<sup>4</sup> = {C}  
 (b) var: ϕ<sup>75</sup> B 579 f<sup>13</sup> f<sup>1</sup> sy<sup>hmg</sup> / L Δ al

Here the situation differs slightly from the first example, since only the first variant unit has *txt* support for the NA<sup>27</sup> main text reading (the "positive apparatus"); the second variant unit shows only the support for two separate variant readings that differ from the NA<sup>27</sup> main text (the "negative apparatus"), but does not give the supporting evidence for the NA<sup>27</sup> main text reading.<sup>52</sup> However, it is clear that the three MSS supporting the (b) variant reading are the same ones that supported the NA<sup>27</sup> main text in variant unit (a). This therefore leaves the NA<sup>27</sup> main text as printed for this verse once more with zero support.<sup>53</sup>

As one more example of a verse affected by only two variant units, John 5:2 as printed in NA<sup>27</sup> reads as follows:

John 5:2 εστιν δε εν τοις ιεροσολυμοις (a) επι τη προβατικη κολυμβηθρα η επιλεγومهνη εβραιστι (b) βηθζαθα πεντε στοας εχουσα

5:2 (a) txt: ϕ<sup>66c</sup> ϕ<sup>75</sup> B C T Ψ 078 f<sup>13</sup> 38 sy<sup>h</sup>

correctly (and fully) shows that the Byzantine Textform differs from NA<sup>27</sup> in reading ευθεως for ευθους and – in variant unit (b) – in excluding παλιν. But Byzantine support or lack of such remains irrelevant to the internal consistency issues affecting the NA<sup>27</sup> main text.

<sup>51</sup> The Byzantine Textform in variant unit (a) reads ιδου ωδε η ιδου εκει and in variant unit (b) is identical with the NA<sup>27</sup> main text (μη απελθητε μηδε διωξητε).

<sup>52</sup> The NA<sup>27</sup> Introduction, 50\*-51\*, explains its use of positive and negative apparatuses. The positive apparatus explicitly states the main text support by consistently cited witnesses of the first and second order. The negative apparatus requires calculation, leaving one to deduce main text support by subtracting the variant support of the consistently cited witnesses of both the first and second order, while taking account of any lacunae or illegibility in the text of those witnesses (lacunae are listed in NA<sup>27</sup> Appendix 1, "Codices Graeci et Latini," 684-720).

<sup>53</sup> The bracketed [η] in the main NA<sup>27</sup> text of variant unit (a) does *not* affect the mutual exclusion issue, if the NA<sup>27</sup> main text is accepted *as printed*. With the bracketed word removed, the reading reverts to that of ϕ L pc as originally printed in NA<sup>25</sup>. This then would leave ϕ alone in support of the entire verse (MS L in the second variant unit spells διωξητε differently than the NA<sup>27</sup> main text). SQE cites the same evidence for the NA<sup>27</sup> reading in (a), and adds to (b) only the minor witness of 205 and 1506.

(b) txt:  $\aleph$  (L) 33 itUBS<sup>4</sup> = {C}

Again, it is obvious that the NA<sup>27</sup> editors' choice of readings for this verse results in mutual exclusion among the two variant units. As a result, the text of the verse as printed in NA<sup>27</sup> does not appear in *any* known manuscript, nor in any apparent ancient version or patristic writer.<sup>54</sup>

As additional variant units are included in a given verse, the level of mutual exclusion tends to increase, and calculation of overall support becomes more complex. Although one might presume the likelihood of zero manuscript support within a given verse continually to increase as the number of variant units multiply, such tends not to be the case (at least as evidenced by the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus). Most frequently, zero support verses contain 3, 4, or 5 variant units. After that, one finds diminishing results as the number of variant units within a verse increases.<sup>55</sup> A sample of each of the more typical situations is instructive, and illustrates the various types of variant unit support that may be encountered:

*Three variant units within a single verse:*<sup>56</sup>

Matthew 19:29 και πας οστις αφηκεν (a) οικιας η αδελφους η αδελφας η πατερα η μητερα η τεκνα η αγρους ενεκεν του (b) ονοματος μου (c) εκατονταπλασιονα λημψεται και ζωνη αιωνιον κληρονομησει

19:29	(a)* txt:	B (D) pc a n (sy <sup>s</sup> )	UBS <sup>4</sup> = {C}
	(b)* txt:	C D L W f <sup>1</sup> f <sup>13</sup> 33 $\aleph$	
	(c) txt:	$\aleph$ C D <sup>(*)</sup> W $\Theta$ f <sup>1</sup> f <sup>13</sup> 33 $\aleph$ latt sy bo	UBS <sup>4</sup> = {B}

Even though this verse contains three variant units, it requires only units (a)+(b) to establish zero support for the precise wording of the

<sup>54</sup> So also SQE, which similarly cites no version or patristic writer in support of the combined NA<sup>27</sup> reading for this verse. SQE does add to variant unit (a) the support of f<sup>13</sup> 892 1006 and 1342 (in NA<sup>27</sup> the constant witness 892 is subsumed in  $\aleph$ ), and to variant unit (b) the support of MS 1; these do not, however, alter the overall mutual exclusion. The Byzantine Textform in the same verse reads with NA<sup>27</sup> in variant unit (a), but reads Βηθεσδα in variant unit (b).

<sup>55</sup> The totals for NA<sup>27</sup> are as follows: the number of "zero support" verses containing two variant units = 9; three variant units = 26; four variant units = 25; five variant units = 26; six variant units = 11; seven variant units = 5; eight variant units = 1; and nine variant units = 2. These represent all the cases that can be clearly and easily derived from the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus.

<sup>56</sup> Of the 26 zero-support verses containing three variant units, Matt has 5, Mark has 4, Luke has 6, John has 2, Acts has 2, Paul has 3, the General Epistles have 2, and Rev has 2.

NA<sup>27</sup> main text.<sup>57</sup> The support for the various combinations of two variant units within this verse fluctuates: (a)+(b) clearly has zero support; (a)+(c) has zero support among Greek manuscript witnesses, (the primary thrust of the current study; at most the combination *may* be supported by it<sup>a</sup>, it<sup>n</sup> and sy<sup>s</sup>); and (b)+(c) has the support of C W f<sup>1</sup> 33 38 (D<sup>l\*</sup> reads εκατονταπλασιον).<sup>58</sup> In any case, the overall NA<sup>27</sup> main text once more clearly is shown to have zero support among the extant Greek manuscript base.<sup>59</sup>

*Four variant units within a single verse:*<sup>60</sup>

Acts 2:7 ἐξίσταντο (a) δε και εθαυμαζον (b) λεγοντες (c) ουχ ιδου (d) απαντες ουτοι εισιν οι λαλουντες γαλιλαιοι

2:7 (a)\* txt: B D 096 614 1241 *pm gig r mae Eus*  
 (b)\* txt: Ɔ<sup>74</sup> Ɔ A B C\* 81 1175 *pc r w vg Eus*  
 (c)\* txt: Ɔ D E 81 1175 1891 *al*  
 (d) txt: Ɔ<sup>74</sup> Ɔ A B<sup>2</sup> C D 096 323 945 1739 *al*

In each case, the NA<sup>27</sup> main text support is precisely stated, and one can readily calculate the degree of support for any combination of witnesses.<sup>61</sup> The appended asterisks show that only the *three* variant units (a)+(b)+(c) are necessary to establish the zero-support nature of the NA<sup>27</sup> main text in this verse.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> The appended tables mark the key variant units that establish zero support with an asterisk. In many verses, the evidence of only two variant units suffices to render the NA<sup>27</sup> main text as zero-support, even if many more variant units exist within that verse. For example, a verse with six variant units may be established as zero-support by only two out of the six (Jas 4:14 is one such case).

<sup>58</sup> Had the spelling variation in D\* not been included, the combination (b)+(c) would have added support from D, but that manuscript still would have been eliminated from whole-verse support by its irregular reading in variant unit (a) (omission of η πατερα; see NA<sup>27</sup> *Variae Lectiones Minores*, 720).

<sup>59</sup> Versional support when all three variants are combined appears to be nil, since variant unit (b) shows no such support. Likewise, patristic evidence appears to be wholly lacking. The evidence in SQE does not alter the overall situation, but at best adds only minor Greek manuscript support.

<sup>60</sup> Throughout the NT, 25 such cases appear: Matt has 1, Mark has 2, Luke has 5, John has 4, Acts has 3, Paul has 4, the General Epistles have 4, and Rev has 2.

<sup>61</sup> Variant units (a)+(b) are supported by B r Eus; (a)+(c) by D; (a)+(d) by D 096; (b)+(c) by Ɔ<sup>74</sup> Ɔ A C\*; and (c)+(d) by Ɔ D. Note that correctors of a given MS are treated as distinct witnesses. For example, the combination of B and B<sup>2</sup> in readings (b) and (d) do *not* demonstrate common support of B for those two variant units. On the other hand, a manuscript cited as \* (first hand) is considered identical with the same MS otherwise unmarked. Thus, in the present example, C and C\* are identical witnesses, while B and B<sup>2</sup> are not.

<sup>62</sup> The combination (a)+(b)+(d) also demonstrates zero-support for this verse, but additional combinatory possibilities need not be marked or noted once zero-support has been established.

*Five variant units within a single verse:*<sup>63</sup>

Rom 2:16 (a) εν (b) ημερα οτε (c) κρινει ο θεος τα κρυπτα των ανθρωπων  
κατα το ευαγγελιον (d) μου δια (e) χριστου ιησου

2:16 (a) var: *conjecture* (Pohlenz)  
(b)\* txt:  $\aleph$  D G  $\Psi$  33 1739 1881  $\mathfrak{M}$  lat sy<sup>h</sup> Spec  
(c)\* txt: B<sup>2</sup>  $\Psi$  6 1241 *pc* ( $\aleph$  A B\* D\* G *sine acc.*)  
(d) var: 69 d\* sa<sup>mss</sup>  
(e)\* txt: ( $\aleph^{*vid}$ ) B [but  $\aleph^*$  omits δια]<sup>64</sup> UBS<sup>4</sup> = {C}

This verse in fact has only four actual variant units, since (a) is an acknowledged conjecture, unsupported by any MS, version, or father. Such acknowledged non-main-text conjectures are *not* counted in the tabulation of zero-support within the present study.<sup>65</sup> This verse remains instructive for two reasons:

(1) The usual practice and preference of the NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> editors is to *reject* conjectures throughout the NT (except in the case of Acts 16:12), even though numerous conjectures are mentioned in the apparatus.

(2) A variant unit may concern *only* the accentuation of a word (here κρίνει versus κρινεῖ). In this situation, the earlier uncials are ambiguous, since they lack accentuation. Thus, those uncials should be considered as supporting either reading, so long as they retain the same orthography of the word(s) in question.

Even so, the verse as a whole *still* lacks support from any Greek MS, as determined by calculation of the various combinations of witnesses.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Throughout the NT, 26 such cases appear: Matt has 2, Mark has 2, Luke has 4, John has 5, Acts has 1, Paul has 2, the General Epistles have 3, and Rev has 7.

<sup>64</sup> Witnesses surrounded by parentheses in the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus differ in some manner from the wording of the reading for which they are cited. These therefore are *not* considered to support the NA<sup>27</sup> main text or variant reading in an identical manner with that of the other supporting witnesses cited for such. See NA<sup>27</sup>, Introduction, 54\*. The *precise* nature of the difference in a parenthetically enclosed MS is displayed in loc. in NA<sup>27</sup> Appendix 2, "Variae Lectiones Minores," 721-749.

<sup>65</sup> Approximately 200 such conjectures are cited in the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus; these "are identified either by their author . . . or by a more general reference" (NA<sup>27</sup> Introduction, 54\*). Since none of these conjectures appear in the NA<sup>27</sup> main text, they are excluded from all tabulation of zero-support.

<sup>66</sup> Variant unit (a) is automatically excluded from calculation due to its conjectural nature. Variant unit (d) shows minor and insignificant support for the reading in question. Variant unit (c) is supported by B<sup>2</sup>  $\Psi$  6 1241 *pc* and is accepted as supported by the old uncials  $\mathfrak{M}$  A B\* D\* G. Only the combinations involving (b), (c), and (e) are relevant, with the following combinatory results: (b)+(c) has support from  $\mathfrak{M}$  D\* G  $\Psi$ ; (c)+(e) from B\*, assuming that B\* in variant unit (c) supports the NA<sup>27</sup> accent; and (b)+(e) supported by *no* MSS, since  $\mathfrak{M}^{*vid}$  is shown by the "Variae Lectiones Minores" (740) to differ from the NA<sup>27</sup> main text by omission of δια. Even though the



Many more NA<sup>27</sup> zero-support examples could be given in detail, but space does not permit such. Instead, the complete list of whole-verse references and the variant units supporting such appears as an appendix. One last "worst-case" illustration still should be cited: 8 variant units in a lengthy 45-word verse<sup>67</sup> that includes bracketed text:<sup>68</sup>

Rev 6:8 (a) και ειδον και ιδου ιππος χλωρος και (b) ο καθημενος (c) επανω αυτου ονομα αυτω (d) [ο] (e) θανατος και ο αδης (f) ηκολουθει (g) μετ αυτου και εδοθη (h) αυτοις εξουσια επι το τεταρτον της γης αποκτειναι εν ρομφαια και εν λιμω και εν θανατω και υπο των θηριων της γης

6:8 (a) var: 1854 2329 2351 ℳ<sup>K</sup> gig vg<sup>cl</sup> Bea UBS<sup>4</sup> = {B}  
 (b) var: C  
 (c)\* var: C 1611 2053 ℳ<sup>A</sup> vg<sup>st</sup> / 1854 pc  
 (d) txt: A ℳ  
 (e)\* var: A  
 (f) var: ℳ<sup>A</sup> sy cop Vic  
 (g)\* txt: A C 1611 ℳ<sup>A</sup>  
 (h) var: 1611 1854 2329 2351 ℳ<sup>K</sup> lat sy cop

The appended asterisks show that the positive apparatus witnesses in variant unit (g) – that is, those supporting the NA<sup>27</sup> main text, A C 1611 ℳ<sup>A</sup> – are negated within that verse when these same witnesses depart from the NA<sup>27</sup> main text in variant units (c) and (e). MS A departs in variant unit (e) and C 1611 and ℳ<sup>A</sup> depart in variant unit (c). The remainder of ℳ (i. e., ℳ<sup>K</sup>) that appears in variant unit (d) becomes a non-issue in view of the departure of ℳ<sup>A</sup> in variant unit (c).<sup>69</sup>

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omission of δια appears to be due to error on the part of the scribe ℳ\* (ευαγγελιον μου χριστου ιησου is near-nonsense), the precise combination (b)+(c)+(e) leaves the verse *as printed* in NA<sup>27</sup> with zero support. Had ℳ\* not committed this error, ℳ conceivably could have supported the entire verse (assuming its unaccented κρινει supported the NA<sup>27</sup> main text).

<sup>67</sup> As noted earlier, within the New Testament 11 zero-support variant units contain 6 readings; 5 zero-support units contain 7 readings; 1 such unit contains 8 readings, and 2 units contain 9 readings.

<sup>68</sup> The NA<sup>27</sup> main text has 37 zero-support verses containing bracketed text (these marked in the appended tables). Although the overall level of support for some of the zero-support verses would be affected were the bracketed words excluded, in the present instance (cf. Luke 17:23 above) the whole-verse zero-support is *not* affected by the presence or absence of the bracketed [ο] in variant unit (d). In the remaining zero-support cases, 68 verses have *no* brackets present; these instances unambiguously demonstrate zero-support.

<sup>69</sup> In Revelation *three* distinct forms of the "ℳ" symbol exist: ℳ<sup>A</sup> (the "Andreas" text), ℳ<sup>K</sup> (the "Koine" text), and ℳ (the Byzantine/*Mehrheitstext*, where ℳ<sup>A</sup> and ℳ<sup>K</sup> coincide). Zero-support calculation in Revelation *must* ensure that the various ℳ-groups are wholly negated within a verse, in addition to tabulation of the constant witnesses. Since ℳ<sup>A</sup> and ℳ<sup>K</sup> are *collective* entities, each comprising some 80 or so MSS,

Although Revelation might be considered a special case since its manuscript support is limited (slightly more than 300 Greek MSS and no lectionaries) and since the Byzantine Textform often is divided in that book, the principle remains stable. As the above example demonstrates, even if a zero-support verse contains 8 (or even 9) variant units, usually only 2 or 3 units suffice to demonstrate the lack of external support. In fact, far more zero-support verses occur in the remainder of the New Testament (88 instances) than appear in Revelation (22 instances). Even in Jude, 2 whole verses (5, 15) have zero support in the NA<sup>27</sup> text as printed.<sup>70</sup>

The *Editio Critica Maior* volumes on James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and 1 John do not address the zero-support issue,<sup>71</sup> even though ECM provides an extremely comprehensive apparatus regarding the six NA<sup>27</sup> zero-support verses within these epistles (Jas 2:3; 4:14; 1Pet 2:5; 5:9; and 1John 3:1; 3:19).<sup>72</sup> Since the *Ausgangstext* was determined in an eclectic

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it cannot be assumed that *every* MS assigned to  $\mathfrak{R}^A$  or  $\mathfrak{R}^K$  necessarily differs from the reading for which the collective symbol is cited. For that, one would have to consult the detailed collations of Herman C. Hoskier, *Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse*, 2 vols. (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1929), and manually make the appropriate calculations (a time-consuming task). For the limited purpose of the present study,  $\mathfrak{R}^A$  and  $\mathfrak{R}^K$  are treated as unified witnesses.

<sup>70</sup> Even though the textual situation in Jude is complex (see the relevant literature), it is somewhat surprising to find that the eclectic (or "local-genealogical") method creates a zero-support *Ausgangstext* for each of these two verses. Even in the textually complicated verses Jude 22-23 (with 4 variant units) the NA<sup>27</sup> main text appears to be supported by  $\Psi$  (and, except for the spelling error ἀρπαζοτεες for ἀρπαζοντεες, by  $\theta$ ). Thus, even in a difficult passage, an eclectic method *could* base its text on at least one extant manuscript throughout an entire verse, with no need to create a *de facto* conjectural text for that whole verse. Each problematic verse in Jude has at least one variant unit fully collated in Kurt Aland, ed., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments. I. Die Katholischen Briefe. Band 1: Das Material*, ANTF 9 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987): Jude 5 (205-209, involving 2 of the 5 variant units in that verse); Jude 15 (210-212, involving 1 of the 4 variant units in that verse). Cf. in the same volume Jude 23 (215-220, involving 2 of the 4 variant units in that verse). *Text und Textwert* does *not* present the data regarding the remaining variant units in the given verses that would confirm (except for Jude 22-23) zero-support. Note that in *Text und Textwert* the NA<sup>27</sup> main text reading is always cited as group 2 (the Byzantine Textform as group 1). Jude 18 also would be zero support except for inclusion of the second order constant witnesses 630 and 1505 within  $\mathfrak{R}$  in one variant unit within that verse. However, the films of those two MSS reveal that even they differ from the NA<sup>27</sup> main text in a non-cited variant unit (reading επιθυμιος αυτων instead of the NA<sup>27</sup> εαυτων επιθυμιος); thus Jude 18 is likewise without support, although not considered so within the present study.

<sup>71</sup> Although ECM offers a far more extensive apparatus than that of NA<sup>27</sup>, the determination of zero support would be more time-consuming due to the ECM inclusion of many more variant units and manuscript witnesses.

<sup>72</sup> In regard to zero-support readings, the ECM base text differs from that of NA<sup>27</sup> in Jas 2:3 and 1Pet 5:9. While the zero-support nature of the NA<sup>27</sup> main text

manner on a per-variant-unit basis (the "local-genealogical" method),<sup>73</sup> once the "best" reading has been established within any variant unit (on the primary ground of variant-based "genealogy"),<sup>74</sup> the methodological task proceeds to the next sequential variant unit without regard for decisions made in the previous unit. Yet the resultant sequential *Ausgangstext*, once established as an entity, then is considered to be the overall hypothetical source text from which the *entire* transmissional tradition is derived.<sup>75</sup> At this point, the situation reverses itself: those witnesses that support any given variant unit are considered to represent only *derivative* and thus less accurate representations of the hypothetically determined *Ausgangstext*. No longer are these extant manuscript witnesses regarded (as they should be) as the basis by which the *Ausgangstext* is established – the manuscripts themselves now are transformed into imperfect reflections of the "more correct" but essentially conjectural *Ausgangstext*.<sup>76</sup> The circularity of this methodology is no coincidence, and yet this flaw propels the system.

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remains unaffected by these changes, the ECM main text in each instance regains minimal support from Greek manuscript witnesses (Jas 2:3 = B; 1Pet 5:9 = P Ψ 1739).

<sup>73</sup> The "local-genealogical" method is now termed the "Coherence-Based Genealogical Method" (ECM 1John, "Preface," 22\* and also 29\*); in general, the same methodology and application is retained. "Coherence" earlier was discussed in ECM 1-2Pet (23\*-24\*), but the terms "local-genealogical" and "Coherence-Based Genealogical Method" did not appear in that volume. The 1997 ECM James volume does not mention either term, nor does the word "coherence" appear therein.

<sup>74</sup> ECM 1John, "Preface," 22\*: "The reconstruction of the text rests on an analysis of the primary transmission using the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method to explore the relationship among the witnesses." The essence of this "local-genealogical" method remains the establishment of the text by determining within each variant unit the presumed archetypal reading which *for that unit* serves as the source of all other manuscript readings that appear therein. This basically retains the older eclectic canon of favoring the reading presumed to have been the source of all others within a variant unit.

<sup>75</sup> Gerd Mink, "Problems of a highly contaminated tradition: the New Testament. Stemmata of variants as a source of a genealogy for witnesses," in Pieter van Reenen, August den Hollander, and Margot van Mulken, eds., *Studies in Stemmatology II* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 13-85, states, "Those witnesses with good genealogical coherencies with A [= the reconstructed *Ausgangstext* underlying ECM and NA<sup>27</sup>] are of course of prime importance, since the variants in those witnesses could be expected to be part of the initial text" (82n71).

<sup>76</sup> ECM 1John, 29\*, states, "A high agreement with A [= the hypothetical *Ausgangstext*] reflects the quality of a witness." But the *Ausgangstext* as constructed is admittedly "an artificial witness" that serves as "the hypothetical initial text," transcending not only the manuscript witnesses that gave it existence, but even the NA<sup>27</sup> or ECM main text. Yet the *Ausgangstext* had to be constructed from the data present among the very MSS determined to be of high quality when compared with the *Ausgangstext*! Such sophisticated circularity not only parallels that of Westcott-Hort, but leaves the method with a questionable foundation and certainly begging the question.

Even while Kurt Aland and Beate Köster affirm that "Internal criteria . . . alone cannot substantiate a text-critical decision,"<sup>77</sup> Barbara Aland declares, "Considerations of the textual value of manuscripts are always dependent on internal criteria . . . . So a high degree of circular reasoning is involved."<sup>78</sup> Gerd Mink discusses the matter more explicitly, addressing the matter of "circular reasoning which cannot be entirely avoided in textual criticism":<sup>79</sup>

There is a circular argument typical of textual criticism: witnesses are important for reconstructing the initial text, and they are important because of the high number of agreements with the reconstructed initial text. In other words, witnesses are good because of their good variants, variants are good because of their good witnesses. This circle cannot be avoided [?], but it has to be controlled. We need a method, therefore, which can provide an overall view of the consequences of all the decisions we take, so that also the overall plausibility of what we are doing can be examined."<sup>80</sup>

In practice, this so-called "local-genealogical" or "Coherence-based Genealogical" method fails – not only does it present the Westcott-Hort circular methodology cloaked in statistical garb, but also because as another form of eclecticism it continues to consider variant units in isolation, ignoring their sequential connection. The method thus abandons any semblance of *real* "coherence" in relation to sequential *external* support when producing its resultant critical text, choosing to place all its trust in statistical alignments. Although Mink repeatedly emphasizes "coherence,"<sup>81</sup> his use of the term relates primarily to a high percentage of agreement among manuscripts, by which the "local genealogies" presumably established for individual variant units are *statistically* but not *essentially* linked with those MSS that support sequential variant units. Yet Mink acknowledges,

A global stemma can only be *true* if the relationships it shows between the witnesses are compatible with the relationships the witnesses have in every single place of variation *according to the relationships between their variants, as represented in the local stemmata*.<sup>82</sup>

Such at best remains a statistical and not an essential relationship in terms of intra-manuscript agreement. This then calls Mink's further claim into question, namely, that

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<sup>77</sup> K. Aland (rev. B. Köster), "Textual Criticism," 2:551.

<sup>78</sup> B. Aland, "New Testament Textual Research," 69.

<sup>79</sup> Mink, "Problems," 46.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 29, 32, 46, 70.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30 [emphasis added].

The general textual flow *corresponds to the development of the text* (i. e. the variants) *throughout its history*. This development can be demonstrated *at every passage of the text* in local stemmata of variants."<sup>83</sup>

Yet when the internally determined *Ausgangstext* or initial reading of an individual variant unit is established as "best" *apart from* the external testimony that sequentially links one variant unit with another, the result becomes that stated by Jacquier in the opening epigram of this essay: "c'est faire oeuvre d'imagination et non de critique."<sup>84</sup>

The ECM editors (including Mink) specifically declare that "Internal criteria were often evaluated in a way similar to that used in NA/GNT," but "External criteria, however, have changed, drawing on much more information and also the perspective of genealogical coherence."<sup>85</sup> A most puzzling comment then follows:

One central external criterion is now whether a plausible textual flow can be assumed in a passage, i. e., transmission of the text by witnesses of high genealogical coherence.<sup>86</sup>

Given the thrust of the present essay and the multiplicity of zero-support verses in both NA<sup>27</sup> and ECM, a pertinent question arises: can "a plausible textual flow . . . be assumed" when the (re)constructed text of a verse in terms of its sequential variants does *not* appear in any known manuscript, version, or father, and apparently has *never* existed within the entirety of transmissional history? A negative answer obviously should be expected – but such is not the case with NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>/ECM. Rather, one finds a purported *Ausgangstext* that not only contains conjectures in specific single variant units (NA<sup>27</sup> Acts 16:12; ECM 2Pet 3:10), but a text that in sequence has created numerous *de facto* whole-verse conjectures in its connected pattern of variant readings. Yet such a pattern of readings can neither be demonstrated ever to have had any real existence within the transmissional history of the New Testament text, nor can the hypothetical existence of such an *Ausgangstext* seriously

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 37 [emphasis added]. For further discussion of Mink's "local-genealogical" theory of "coherence," see Gerd Mink, "Eine umfassende Genealogie der neutestamentlichen Überlieferung," *NTS* 39 (1993) 481-499; idem, "Editing and Genealogical Studies," 53; idem, "Was verändert sich in der Textkritik durch die Beachtung genealogischer Kohärenz?" in Weren and Koch, *Recent Developments*, 39-68; idem, "Kohärenzbasierte Genealogische Methode – Worum geht es?" (2002) <[www.uni-muenster.de/NTTextforschung/Genealogische\\_Methode.html](http://www.uni-muenster.de/NTTextforschung/Genealogische_Methode.html)>.

<sup>84</sup> Jacquier, *Text*, 314.

<sup>85</sup> ECM, 1John, 30.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

be asserted when compared with the hard data of actual transmission.<sup>87</sup> A text that purports to be the genealogical source of all other variant readings theoretically *should* reflect in its archetype a sequence generally maintained among the extant witnesses; otherwise, Calvin L. Porter's description of the eclectic method in general remains apt:

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.<sup>88</sup>

At the very least, this suggests something of a wrong methodological approach, and forces the reconsideration of Aland/Aland Rule 9 (here with added emphasis):

*Variants must never be treated in isolation, but always considered in the context of the [transmissional] tradition. Otherwise there is too great a danger of reconstructing a "test tube text" which never existed at any time or place.*<sup>89</sup>

Yet such remains the situation within modern eclecticism, regardless of methodological approach (reasoned, thoroughgoing, "local-genealogical" or "coherence-based genealogical"). The resultant text – pieced together from disparate variant units – ultimately reflects a series of readings that lacks genuine historical existence, as well as even a plausible transmissional existence. This remains the case whether that text is considered to be the purported autograph, the transmissional archetype, a "working text," or the variant-based *Ausgangstext*. The results obtained within NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>/ECM continue to display what Epp termed a "symptom" and *not* a "solution."<sup>90</sup>

#### *An alternative hypothesis*

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<sup>87</sup> D. C. Parker, "Through a Screen Darkly: Digital Texts and the New Testament." *JSNT* 25 (2003) 395-411, states the fact quite bluntly: "[Modern eclectic] Textual critics, under the guise of reconstructing original texts, are really creating new ones . . . readjusting the textual gene pool . . . I do not mean that the texts we are creating are necessarily superior to earlier creations. It is more significant that they are the texts that we need to create" (401-402). One seriously might ask *why* such a "need" exists, and what is its nature; one then should inquire as to *how* a reconstruction which is *not* a solution can be acceptable (a satisfactory reply perhaps should not be expected).

<sup>88</sup> Calvin L. Porter, "A Textual Analysis of the Earliest Manuscripts of the Gospel of John" (PhD Diss., Duke University, 1961), 12.

<sup>89</sup> Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 281, emphasis added.

<sup>90</sup> Eldon Jay Epp, "The Eclectic Method in New Testament Textual Criticism: Solution or Symptom?" *HTR* 69 (1976) 211-257 (reprinted in Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee, eds., *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism*, SD 45 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 141-173).

In commenting upon the continuing research regarding "singular readings," Barbara Aland has suggested that the paucity of New Testament transmissional information prior to the fourth century permits a wide range of possible scenarios. As she critiques the various studies that have evaluated scribal habits on the basis of a manuscript's singular readings (i. e., the studies of Colwell, Royse, and Head),<sup>91</sup> she states the following:

The method is still useful, although it should be underscored that there are no singular readings in the strictest sense. There is no way of knowing that what we regard as singular readings were not also to be found in the great mass of manuscripts that have been lost.<sup>92</sup>

By saying "no way of knowing," Aland's argument transcends the typical inferences made *ex silentio* and appeals *ad ignorantiam* to multivalent transmissional possibilities, particularly during the pre-fourth century era. But such an appeal makes it impossible to rule out *any* transmissional hypothesis, and alternate possibilities equally can be postulated.<sup>93</sup> In particular, Aland suggests a bizarre sort of a "majority

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<sup>91</sup> Ernest C. Colwell, "Method in Evaluating Scribal Habits: A Study of Ɑ<sup>45</sup>, Ɑ<sup>66</sup>, Ɑ<sup>75</sup>," in his *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, NTS 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 106-124; James R. Royse, "Scribal Habits in the Transmission of New Testament Texts," in Wendy D. O'Flaherty, ed., *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts* (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, 1979), 139-161; idem, "Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri" (ThD Diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, 1981); idem, "Scribal Tendencies in the Transmission of the Text of the New Testament," in Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, eds., *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, SD 46 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 239-252; Peter W. Head, "Some Observations on Early Papyri of the Synoptic Gospels, especially concerning the 'Scribal Habits,'" *Bib* 71 (1990) 240-247; idem, "The Habits of New Testament Copyists: Singular Readings in the Early Fragmentary Papyri of John," *Bib* 85 (2004) 399-408.

<sup>92</sup> Barbara Aland, "The Significance of the Chester Beatty Papyri in Early Church History," in Charles Horton, ed., *The Earliest Gospels*, JSNTSup 258 (London: T.& T. Clark, 2004), 108-121; the quote is from 110n12. A similar statement appears in Barbara Aland, "Neutestamentliche Handschriften als Interpreten des Textes? Ɑ<sup>75</sup> und seine Vorlagen in Joh 10," in Dietrich-Alex Koch et al., eds., *Jesus Rede von Gott und ihre Nachgeschichte im frühen Christentum: Beiträge zur Verkündigung Jesu und zum Kerygma der Kirche. Festschrift für Willi Marxsen zum 70. Geburtstag* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1989), 379-397: "Ich mit 'Kopieverhalten' nicht nur die 'scribal habits' des individuellen Schreibers einer vorliegenden Handschrift meine . . . . Die 'scribal habits' im engeren Sinne . . . von den Singulärlesarten der Papyri ausging . . . . aber der Ausgangspunkt war eng gewählt, und wichtige Lesarten mußten von vornherein wegfallen" (380n3).

<sup>93</sup> Such a line of argument allows anything and everything to be possible; thus, *any* proffered text could be accorded autograph status. In contrast, Wisse, "Nature and Purpose," 43, correctly suggests that one *cannot* "set this *undocumented* period apart from the *documented* history of the transmission of early Christian texts. There would have to be compelling reasons to make such an assumption." Wisse likewise strongly rejects the further Aland/Münster contention that the post-fourth century "emerging orthodoxy" somehow ended "redactional freedom by deciding on a

text" hypothesis: a "great mass of manuscripts . . . have been lost," and that "great mass" *may* (per ignorantiam!) have contained any or all of what are known today only as "singular readings." By extension of the same argument, any or all of today's "singular readings" once *may* have existed in the numerical majority of MSS. If such an appeal to current ignorance were valid, text-critical decisions no longer could be made, since even internal criteria would offer little confidence regarding the plausibility of results.<sup>94</sup> Yet a "best guess" scenario need not be postulated.

Allowing that Aland makes a valid point (even if imperfectly stated),<sup>95</sup> an opposing hypothesis can be presented on a more secure basis. The lack of any thoroughly Byzantine MSS prior to the fourth century often has been urged against the Byzantine-priority

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'standard' text and by suppressing all manuscripts which deviated" (Cf. Kurt Aland [rev. Beate Köster], "Textual Criticism, New Testament," 546: "From the time of Constantine on, . . . the bishops were able to guide the text . . . in a certain direction. They could choose a model text for the official scriptoria . . . and this text served as the basis for the [Byzantine] copies of the NT . . . . The medieval Byzantine church's attempt . . . to create a uniform NT text resulted in the oppressive [?] plurality of preserved NT manuscripts . . . containing the standard Byzantine text"). As Wisse correctly notes (45), "The church was in no position to establish and control the biblical text, let alone eliminate rival forms of the text . . . . Only beginning with the twelfth century, do we have evidence for a large scale effort. This is von Soden's group K<sup>f</sup> which shows evidence of careful control . . . . There is no evidence for the Byzantine period or for an earlier date of efforts to eliminate divergent copies of New Testament manuscripts." Cf. also Wisse's further remarks (52-53): "This lack of evidence cannot be explained away by speculations about an extensively interpolated "standard" text which was imposed by the orthodox leadership . . . . The Church certainly lacked the means and apparently also the will to do this . . . . The transmission process could not be effectively controlled even during the Byzantine period . . . . [Were the case otherwise,] the unanimous attestation of a relatively stable and uniform text during the following centuries in both Greek and the versions would have to be considered nothing short of a miracle."

<sup>94</sup> The same line of argument provides the theoretical basis for conjectural readings: any or all conjectural readings once *may* have existed and even at some point have held "majority" status during the obscure transmissional era prior to the fourth century. By such logic, the number of existing conjectures should be increased, lest a potential "original" reading otherwise be missed! Although such sounds absurd, a similar form of "conjectural originality" not only is permitted by Aland's line of argument, but for all practical purposes already exists in the current NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>/ECM text.

<sup>95</sup> Certainly, various fathers make comment regarding readings known to them that today are found in few, one, or no extant manuscripts. Some of these readings are claimed by individual fathers to have been in "many" or even "most" copies known to them in their day. Yet one must allow that such statements *may* reflect only that which prevailed within a father's localized region, and not necessarily the true proportion of evidence that existed at that time on an Empire-wide basis. Nor do such statements establish that the majority or even a large minority of what are today known as singular readings have not in fact been singular since the time they appeared in the manuscript that presently contains them.



hypothesis.<sup>96</sup> But, by applying Barbara Aland's argument regarding singular readings, the Byzantine Textform itself well may have existed in the pre-fourth century era;<sup>97</sup> it even may have been widespread among a now-lost majority of MSS. Such theoretical speculation differs from that of Aland, however, in the sense that the Byzantine-priority hypothesis represents a *reasonable inference* based upon the *actual state* of the *existing* post-fourth century textual evidence, and not upon a hypothetical assertion regarding what one cannot know due to historical ignorance. It is certain, for example, that now-lost Byzantine parent uncials had to have existed for the "orphaned" Byzantine minuscules of (at least) the 9th-11th centuries.<sup>98</sup> Equally, the parent uncials (or papyri) that once existed for the otherwise unrelated Byzantine uncials of the fourth through the ninth centuries are now lost.<sup>99</sup> An inference thus based upon a sufficient quantity of *existing* evidence provides a historically more reasonable scenario than an assertion *ad ignorantiam* suggesting what the "great mass" of MSS no longer extant *might* have read in quantity in relation to the "singular readings" of today's documents.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Just as some previously assumed "singular" readings now are known from recent discovery not to be singular, so also many Byzantine readings thought (particularly by Westcott and Hort) *not* to exist prior to the fourth century have been found in the early papyri; cf. Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984); Günter Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum*, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1946 (London: The British Academy, 1953). Yet, while the specific Byzantine *pattern* of readings is not found in any extant MS, version, or father prior to the barrier of the fourth-century, it becomes a more serious matter that the NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>/ECM pattern of readings cannot be shown to exist – nor plausibly *ever* to have existed – at *any* point in transmissional history, whether before or after the fourth century.

<sup>97</sup> Jean-François Racine, *The Text of Matthew in the Writings of Basil of Caesarea*, NTGF 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), has demonstrated that the earliest thoroughly Byzantine father is Basil of Caesarea (*ca.* 330-379). It is also plain that Greek fathers after this period (e. g., Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, etc.) generally utilize a form of text that is more Byzantine than anything else. Since no evidence exists to support the notion that any of these fourth-century fathers *created* the Byzantine Textform, it must rather be presumed that they simply used an earlier form of text *already* current and readily obtainable in that specific region in which Greek was the primary language (from which region versional evidence necessarily did not exist and from which region *all* definitive pre-fourth century patristic textual evidence is lacking).

<sup>98</sup> Kirsopp Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Text," Excursus 1 in Kirsopp Lake, Robert P. Blake, and Silva New, "The Caesarean Text of the Gospel of Mark," *HTR* 21 (1928) 338-357, speaks with regard to the minuscules examined at Sinai, Patmos, and Jerusalem: "The amount of direct genealogy which has been detected . . . is almost negligible . . . The manuscripts . . . are almost all orphan children without brothers or sisters" (348-349).

<sup>99</sup> D<sup>abs1</sup> and D<sup>abs2</sup> of the ninth and tenth centuries respectively, as direct copies of the sixth century D/06 (Claramontanus) of Paul, appear to represent the only uncial exceptions to the "orphan" situation described by Lake, Blake, and New.

<sup>100</sup> Royse, "Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri," 34-36, anticipated Barbara Aland on this point: "The alternative possibility . . . is that a singular reading was really part of a tradition, a tradition including at least the

Since more than 100 whole verses as printed in NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> lack extant manuscript support in the aggregate, to at least that extent the NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> text is based on conjecture and speculation, and not upon a logical inference from the actual data.<sup>101</sup> In contrast, within the Byzantine Textform, nearly every verse of the NT steadfastly retains well over 90% general agreement among its component MSS regarding its text.<sup>102</sup> When contrasted with the situation obtained in regard to the NA<sup>27</sup> text, one has to wonder *how*, under any putative theory of historical transmission, the presumed *Ausgangstext* (NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>/ECM) ever could have existed in actuality, let alone have given rise to all other forms of text while totally losing its own original identity among the extant manuscript base. Lack of perpetuation in this regard strongly suggests a lack of prior existence. It is certain that the NA<sup>27</sup> pattern of readings *cannot* be demonstrated ever to have existed within the whole of transmissional history, even within some shorter portions of text comprising but a single verse.<sup>103</sup>

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manuscript's *Vorlage*, but a tradition which left traces in one manuscript only. Is this alternative likely? . . . The fact that the New Testament has been transmitted by a tradition which is highly 'contaminated' and which has left such vast quantities of manuscript evidence, indicates that there were very few, if any, real 'dead ends' within this tradition . . . Whatever the precise extent of . . . scribal correcting may have been, it would have worked to limit the continuation of one scribe's errors into subsequent manuscripts. And thus it would tend to ensure that some, at least, of the singulars . . . of one manuscript were not in fact part of a wider tradition, but were actually created by that manuscript's scribe." Cf. Royse's entire discussion, 33-41, regarding the likelihood that singular readings never were very widespread; also his concluding comment, 40: "Textual criticism is an empirical, historical discipline, whose results must rest ultimately on the data of the manuscripts . . . Given the mass of data already available, carefully conducted studies of individual manuscripts are not likely to be made completely worthless by future finds."

<sup>101</sup> This situation is exacerbated if one or more additional variant units from neighboring verses are added to the sequential tabulation. In such a case, many more short stretches of text demonstrate zero-support, and further call into question the conjectural nature of the NA<sup>27</sup> (re)constructed text. For example, the NA<sup>27</sup> whole verse Matt 6:21 is supported by  $\mathfrak{B}$  *pc*, while Matt 6:22 is supported by B W *pc*; thus zero-support for the combined two verses. At least six clear instances of this phenomenon appear just within Matthew in NA<sup>27</sup>: Matt 14:3 (MS 33) + 4 (B Z); 15:30 ( $\mathfrak{B}$  *pc*) + 31 (C); 18:7 (L f<sup>1</sup> 892) + 8 ( $\mathfrak{B}$  B); 19:16 (B) + 17 ( $\mathfrak{B}$  L  $\Theta$ ); 24:30 (B L) + 31 (f<sup>1</sup> 892); 28:2 ( $\mathfrak{B}$  B L-2211) + 3 (D 892). The remainder of the NT contains dozens of similar examples.

<sup>102</sup> The general pattern of Byzantine coherence can be seen in the full collation data found in the *Text und Textwert* series. See Kurt Aland et al., eds., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments*; I, Die Katholischen Briefe; II, Die Paulinischen Briefe; III, Die Apostelgeschichte; IV, Die Synoptischen Evangelien: 1, Das Markusevangelium; 2, Das Matthäusevangelium; 3, Das Lukasevangelium, ANTF 8-11, 13, 16-21, 26-31 (Berlin: Walter DeGruyter, 1987-1999). Note that the pattern of Byzantine coherence (as reflected in its overall consensus text) remains relatively stable, even when all Byzantine MSS copied after the 11th century (80% of the total) are excluded from statistical tabulation.

<sup>103</sup> Pertinent is the anecdote related by Merrill M. Parvis, "The Goals of New Testament Textual Studies," in Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Evangelica*, Vol. VI: *Papers presented to the Fourth International Congress on New Testament Studies held at*

In contrast to the *de facto* conjectural nature of the (re)constructed NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>/ECM text, the Byzantine Textform has a demonstrable historical existence: its line of transmission extends from (at least) the post-fourth century era to the invention of printing.<sup>104</sup> Thus, in theory, the Byzantine Textform should retain a greater potential for preserving a preexisting archetype – a *non-conjectural Ausgangstext* that is historically and transmissionally superior to that presented in modern critical editions.<sup>105</sup> Such at least remains more plausible than a hypothetical archetype ultimately derived from sequential conjecture that has *no* demonstrable existence within the whole of transmissional history.

Those who maintain the *status quo* might reject such a claim as exceptional; yet it is the modern critical text that reflects *de facto* conjecture, transmissional abnormality, and historical implausibility.

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*Oxford, 1969* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), 393-407: "Silva Lake told me that she often regretted the fact that she and Kirsopp Lake had 'reconstructed' the Caesarean text of the Gospel of Mark. She said that she realized that they had not reconstructed but had constructed a text of Mark that had never been seen in the ancient church" (397). It would appear that very much the same could be said in regard to the NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>/ECM text as published.

<sup>104</sup> Parker, "Through a Screen Darkly," 403, seems to concede this point: "Texts are not inherently good or bad. The Byzantine text is [in Parker's view] certainly late, and certainly contains features lacking in the oldest copies, but it also happens to have been extremely successful, and to have existed as the honoured text of the orthodox for well over a thousand years." Cf. Günther Zuntz, "The Byzantine Text in New Testament Criticism," *JTS* 43 (1942), 25-30: "The Byzantine Text must be reconstructed . . . [It is] the only universal Greek text of the New Testament that ever existed. This, after all, was the book of books to medieval Eastern Christianity" (26-27).

<sup>105</sup> Even Barbara Aland, "New Testament Textual Research," 69-72, testifies from her own perspective to this point: (1) *The Byzantine Textform is not recensional*: "If the Koine [= Byzantine] text were actually a recension, then one would expect it to have been edited systematically. But that is by no means the case" (71). (2) *Various "atypical" and "difficult" readings persisted without correction within the Byzantine Textform*: "[This] atypical Byzantine reading [εκ in Jas 2:18] . . . was copied throughout centuries by scribes with meticulous care" (71). (3) *The text of the Byzantine tradition remained highly stable*: "No scribe, no corrector dared to alter the sacred text" (71). (4) *Internal criteria utilized to establish the modern critical Ausgangstext are subjective and involve a methodological circularity*: "Considerations of the textual value of manuscripts are always dependent on internal criteria . . . A high degree of circular reasoning is involved . . . Considerations based on internal criteria are often ambiguous" (69-70). (5) *Most of the Byzantine Textform represents a good and valid form of the NT text*: "The Byzantine is not always a poor text. Only a relatively small number of variants, where the Byzantine tradition testifies to a reading as a consistent group against all other manuscripts, are secondary . . . Apart from these passages the Koine text offers a good early textform" (71-72). The Byzantine Textform thus should not be seen as a recensional attempt (systematic or sporadic) to remove perceived difficulties, but instead as a good and stable text that persisted doggedly through the centuries with numerous difficulties left intact. While Byzantine-priority advocates obviously differ regarding Aland's claim as to its "secondary" status, they would welcome a reconsideration of the Byzantine Textform from such a basic perspective.

Ultimately, the question becomes whether confidence should be placed in a text that in the aggregate reflects conjectural speculation and lacks transmissional viability, or in a text with clear historical roots and a potential transmissional plausibility in its favor.<sup>106</sup> Should one be willing to reexamine long-standing scholarly opinion, the Byzantine-priority hypothesis becomes at least reasonably plausible, particularly in view of its actual historical existence when contrasted with the conjectural claims underlying the NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> text. Zero-support conjecture and a pattern of readings found in *no* extant manuscript, version, or patristic writer indeed creates the very "test-tube text" warned against by two of its own editors. If such an *Ausgangstext* lacks historical plausibility, and results in conjecture-based whole verses, a problem exists; and the resultant text raises serious questions regarding whatever underlying transmissional history might be presupposed under the various eclectic theories.<sup>107</sup> In contrast, the overall pattern of readings that underlie the Byzantine Textform is *not* merely "a 'test tube text' which never existed at any time or place," but a text with a demonstrable historical existence and a potential transmissional originality.<sup>108</sup> The Byzantine-priority hypothesis thus is historically and transmissionally more probable than the conjectural vagaries derived from presumed genealogical "coherence" or varying forms of modern eclectic speculation.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> As Herbert C. Youtie, *The Textual Criticism of Documentary Papyri*, Special University Lectures in Palaeography; University of London Institute of Classical Studies, Bulletin Supplement, 6, ed. E. G. Turner (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1958), 37, states, "Anything that goes beyond the minimum hypothesis is in danger of distorting the evidence." Youtie further suggests (37) that "A hypothesis should embrace the data which it is meant to explain as closely as a well-fitting glove embraces the hand"; and (in a different context, but applicable *mutatis mutandis*), "If readings are to be correct, they must proceed from a correct intelligence of the text as a whole" (54).

<sup>107</sup> The questionable historical and transmissional nature of the modern critical *Ausgangstext* finds a parallel in Streeter's comments regarding Fourth Gospel source criticism: "If the sources have undergone anything like the amount of amplification, excision, rearrangement and adaptation which the theory postulates, then the critic's pretence that he can unravel the process is grotesque. As well hope to start with a string of sausages and reconstruct the pig . . . . Even the more sober seeming of these . . . theories appear to me to be based on a method essentially unscientific"; Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, and Dates*, rev. ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1930, rep. ed. 1956), 377.

<sup>108</sup> Parvis, "The Goals," 405, states: "The *textus receptus* [meaning the Byzantine Textform in general] may have a longer and more complicated line of descent than we have been accustomed to think. Beyond this, however, the *textus receptus* is an historical text. It is a text which was used by the Church." Ironically, as the printed TR editions displayed a less accurate form of their base Byzantine text, so also the NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup> ECM "New Standard-Text" editions display a less accurate form of their predominant base Alexandrian text – and the chance that "autograph" status is present in either set of editions remains minimal.

<sup>109</sup> Barbara Aland, "Die Münsteraner Arbeit am Text des Neuen Testaments und ihr Beitrag für die frühe Überlieferung des 2. Jahrhunderts: Eine methodologische Betrachtung," in William L. Petersen, ed., *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century:*

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*Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission*, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, 3. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1989), 55-70, correctly asks: "... zur letzten Frage: Welcher neutestamentliche Text kann überhaupt rekonstruiert werden?" (68). Yet she notes that "Wir in so sehr vielen Fällen ... so nahe an den ursprünglichen Text herkommen!" (69). In response, one perhaps should consider the century-old remark of J. Rendel Harris, *Codex Bezae: A Study of the So-Called Western Text of the New Testament*, TS 2 (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), 235: "In the field of New Testament Criticism, the unexpected is always happening: hypotheses which have been reckoned outworn reappear, and popular and attractive modern theories have frequently to be discarded." Perhaps the time for such reconsideration once more has come around, with Byzantine-priority at the vanguard.