

NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

**by
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**Cover: detail from the “Gangsters’ Bible,” the Argos
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**This book is dedicated to the people of earth
who lack clean water, nourishing food,
and warm clothes and blankets.
May the Christian church share the gospel
with you all in a tangible form.**

**TRUST JESUS CHRIST
AND WORK HARD.**

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SNAPP'S CANON:
Prefer the less specific reading.

CHAPTER ONE

New Testament Textual Analysis – What and Why?

Our heavenly Father, make this book a blessing to your people. Through the true written word, draw us closer to the living Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Textual analysis is the attempt to reconstruct the original contents of a text – usually an ancient text. This is a specialized field, with specialized terminology – jargon – some of which you will learn in this chapter, and some of which you will read in the next chapter, which consists of a glossary. More terms will be learned and appreciated as you will acquire more knowledge chapter by chapter.

Textual analysis is sometimes called “lower criticism” – analysis focusing on events which occurred *after* the production of the original document that contained the text. “Higher criticism” focuses on events which occurred *before* the production of the original document that contained the text.

The term “criticism” in this context is synonymous with the careful analysis of evidence.

The first step in the enterprise of carefully and correctly analyzing the text of the books of the New Testament is to collect extant (known to exist) witnesses to the text. Witnesses to the text of the New Testament exist in five forms.

(1) MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

The paramount witnesses are Greek **MSS** (MS, MSS)– handmade books. A Greek manuscript (MS) may contain the entire New Testament. Many manuscripts (MSS) contain the four Gospels. Many MSS contain the Acts of the Apostles and General Epistles and Pauline

Epistles (such is called a *Praxapostolos*). Some MSS contain the book of Revelation.

A MS may contain combinations of all of the above. A MS, particularly an early one, may contain a small portion of text. Every MS, when catalogued, receives its own number. Some MSS receive names, often connected to the library where they reside, or the name of their discoverer, or the sponsor who aided in their discovery, or a special feature of the text in the manuscript.

The earliest known witnesses are texts written on papyrus. Papyrus MSS are relatively rare. Each has its own number preceded by the letter "P" (P1, P2, P3, etc.).

Next are the uncial MSS written on parchment (or vellum). Uncial MSS are also called **majuscules**, written in capital letters. Later the Greek minuscule script developed. MSS written in smaller and (usually) connected letters are called **minuscules**.

(2) VERSIONAL EVIDENCE

The earliest versions of New Testament books were Old Latin, Coptic, and Syriac. There were others but those were the main three.

(3) PATRISTIC EVIDENCE

Often an early Christian (and sometimes non-Christian) author quoted from the New Testament, and made allusions to specific passages.

(4) LECTIONARY EVIDENCE

The text of a Gospels-lectionary contains a series of readings arranged for the lector (reader) to read in church-services throughout the year.

Synaxarion: church year, beginning on Easter, movable dates

Menologion: immovable, fixed dates (like, July 4th).

(5) TALISMANS AND INSCRIPTIONS

These witnesses consist of amulets, grave-stones, epitaphs, etc.)

After the evidence is collected, each part must be compared with the others. Shared error often indicates shared origin. Shared *rare readings* often indicate shared origin.

Witnesses with shared errors can be collected into groups.

Third, groups of witnesses must be compared, to do three things:

(a) Reconstruct the ancestor of all groups (and of all witnesses)

An ancestor of a single group is a sub-archetype.

(b) Identify general scribal tendencies of each group. The textual analyst should ask, "What are the predominant characteristics of each group's text?"

(c) Reconstruct a history of readings. (Asking, *when and where does a specific reading first appear in the extant evidence?*)

The ancestor of all witnesses in all groups is the **archetype**.

Up to this point, textual analysis is a "soft science." It is not the kind of science that does not involve probabilities. Textual criticism deals with observations – but because these are observations about the activities of copyists in past generations, these observations can only convey degrees of probability about the causes of what is observed in the evidence. Up to this point textual criticism is nevertheless a science, **not** an art. Art involves construction, or creation, whereas on the path to the

archetype, the textual critic who reaches the correct conclusions is engaged in **reconstruction**; he is not creating something that was not found in the evidence.

Fourth, make all necessary conjectural emendations to the archetype. A conjectural emendation is a reading that is not found in the physical evidence, but which seems warranted by internal evidence.

Kirsopp Lake wrote that in New Testament textual analysis, “the work of conjectural emendation is very light, rarely necessary, and scarcely ever possible.”

I say that it is **never** necessary to introduce a conjectural emendation into the New Testament text. This was not something I assumed on the way toward the evidence. It is something that was observed on the way from the evidence. In rare passages there are understandable differences in the degree of confidence with which this idea is or is not maintained.

After all four stages are completed, as far as the evidence warrants, the result is the reconstructed autographic text, the text of the autograph: the text as it appeared in the original documents.

If we aim for the archetype, then the text-critical enterprise will initially and mainly involve a study of scribal errors, and their causes, contrasted with rival readings, which are either the original reading, or else other scribal errors.

All non-original readings fall into two categories:

(1) Thoughtful/intentional changes: These had a variety of motives.

- A desire to **augment/clarify** the meaning of the original text.

A rare word might be exchanged for a better-known word. A reading which expressed, or seemed to express, a doctrinal complexity to a scribe might be exchanged for a simpler, or simpler-seeming, expression.

A non-specific reference might be exchanged for a more specific reference.

- A desire to adjust the Greek text to the meaning in a version.

In many locales in the ancient world, there was more than a simple binary Greek-and-Latin situation. The local linguistic situation might be Coptic (Egyptian)-and-Greek, or Coptic-and-Latin-and-Greek, or something similar. A copyist aware of variants in Latin (or Coptic or other languages), while producing a Greek manuscript, might think, *I know what was expressed in Latin; I shall conform the meaning of the Greek text to the meaning of the Latin version.*

- A desire to adjust the text to convey the meaning found in a *Harmony*.

Justin Martyr, in the 100s, is thought to have possessed a three-gospel harmony (a blended narrative combining the text of Matthew-Mark-Luke). After the martyrdom of Justin, a man named Tatian created the *Diatessaron*, combining all four canonical Gospels (Matthew-Mark-Luke-John). A copyist who was very familiar with the *Diatessaron*, in the course of replicating the text of the exemplar of a single Gospel, might desire to adjust or expand the text to convey what was conveyed by the blended-together text.

- A desire to increase the text's liturgical clarity.

A copyist preparing a text for use by a lector (public reader) in a congregation might desire to specify who was speaking to whom at the beginning of segments of text, especially segments read annually on special occasions.

- A desire to **obscure** the meaning of the original text.

This was undertaken by heretics (and sometimes by the orthodox) in the 100s. These included Marcion of Pontus, an early adoptionist, in the 100s.

(2) Thoughtless/Careless/Accidental changes.

Orthographic variation (involving spelling) was the most common kind of variant. Orthographic changes are the most common type of variants in the text.

Word-division was also a magnet of variation.

The original Greek text was written in a continuous majuscule script. For the most part there was no, or very little, punctuation, and no, or relatively few, spaces between words.

Dittography also occurred – when a copyist wrote twice what should be written once.

Haplography also occurred – when a copyist wrote once what should be written twice.

Parablepsis also occurred – when a copyist skipped material because of **homoeoarcton** (same beginnings) or **homoeoteleuton** (same endings). A peribleptic error could involve a word, a phrase, a sentence, or a small segment of text.

Metathesis also occurred – when a copyist reversed letters.

Confusion also occurred – when a copyist mistook similarly shaped Greek letters (such as Λ and A and Δ, or Γ and Π).

EXTRA CREDIT

Download Dr. Kirsopp Lake's *The Text of the New Testament: The Object and Method of Textual Criticism* and read chapter one.

https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Text_of_the_New_Testament/Q3YNAAAAYAAJ

CHAPTER TWO

Glossary of Terms

“Understandest thou what thou readest?”

That was Philip’s question to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:30 (as rendered in the King James (Authorised) Version). Every field of scientific study involves some specialized terms, or jargon, which might initially be difficult to understand, and New Testament textual criticism is no exception. It is easier when you know the jargon.

The website of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library offers a helpful multi-part review of terminology relevant to the study of Latin MSS. The British Library’s online glossary of terms used in its descriptions of illuminated MSS, and the glossary at the online Medieval MSS Manual are also informative. And Robert Waltz’s Encyclopedia of New Testament Textual Criticism includes a very thorough review of the terminology used in this field. Supplementing those worthy resources, this concise introductory list of some of the technical terms used in New Testament textual criticism are provided with their definitions.

Alexandrian Text: The form of New Testament text which was dominant in Egypt in the early church, displayed most accurately by Codex Vaticanus and the early Sahidic version. Since papyrus tends to naturally rot away except in low-humidity climates such as the climate of Egypt, almost all surviving papyrus MSS – especially the ones found as the result of excavations in or near Oxyrhynchus, Egypt – support the Alexandrian Text. Where Alexandrian readings deviate from the Byzantine Text, the Alexandrian reading frequently has internal characteristics that commend it as original. In

some cases, however, Alexandrian variants can be plausibly attributed to scribal carelessness and conscious editing. The Nestle-Aland compilation of the Greek New Testament, the primary basis for most modern English versions (the ESV, CSB, NIV, NLT, etc.) is mainly based on the Alexandrian Text.

Ammonian Sections: The segments into which the text of the Gospels was divided for identification in the cross-reference system developed by Eusebius of Caesarea. There are 355 sections in Matthew, 234 in Mark, 343 in Luke, and 232 in John – at least, these are typical. This system of text-segmentation is named after Ammonius of Alexandria, who, according to Eusebius in his letter *Ad Carpianus* (which often precedes the Canon-Tables), developed a cross-referencing method in which the text of Matthew was supplemented by the parallel-passages, or the numbers of parallel-passages, in the other Gospels. It was Eusebius, however, who developed the Sections as we know them, for they cover passages in Mark, Luke, and John that are not paralleled in Matthew.

In very many Gospels-MSS, the Section-numbers appear in the margin alongside the text, accompanied by the canon-number (written below it, separated by a horizontal line). The numerals are typically written in red. It is not unusual to see that in the text itself, the first letter on the first line after the beginning of a Section is given special treatment – either by being written larger, or by being written in different ink (often red) slightly to the left of the left margin, or both.

Antiquing: The scribal use of a script typical of a previous generation (probably done to sentimentally make the manuscript appear older than it is).

Bifolio: A sheet of writing-material (whether parchment, or papyrus, or paper), vertically folded in the middle so as to form four pages upon which text could be written. Typically, groups of four bifolium were combined – picture a stack of four flat sheets; then picture them vertically folded, all at once, so as to form a small blank 16-page book. Such a 16-page book is called a quire, or quaternion. (Quires could take other forms – consisting of different numbers of sheets – and could be supplemented and repaired in a variety of ways.)

Another way to picture a quire is as a booklet consisting of eight *leaves*, or *folios*, each leaf consisting of the front (*recto*) and back (*verso*) of half of a bifolio. To prepare books large enough to contain all four Gospels, or large enough to contain the book of Acts and the Epistles, or even the entire New Testament, quires were sewn together to make a multi-quire codex. Not all quires consisted of only four sheets – for example, Papyrus 45 is a single-quire codex; all its sheets were laid flat in a single stack before being sewn together.

Breves: chapter-summaries, especially those that appear in Latin MSS. Some forms of breves appear to have originated very early in the Old Latin transmission-line, including one form – developed in the mid-200s or slightly thereafter – that includes a reference to the *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53-8:11, which is absent from most early Greek MSS of the Gospel of John) in its usual location in the text of John.

Byzantine Text: The Greek text of the New Testament that is supported by a strong majority of MSS, as represented in the Byzantine Textform compiled by Robinson and Pierpont. This form of the text was dominant in Constantinople and its environs

(i.e., Byzantium) from the 400s onward. Many Byzantine readings are supported by patristic testimony from the 300s and earlier; the Gothic version and the Peshitta version also provide strong (but not uniform) support for the Byzantine Text. Compared to the Alexandrian Text, the Byzantine Text tends to be longer and easier to understand. This is, however, a general description; there are variant-units in which the Alexandrian reading is longer.

When Westcott and Hort issued the 1881 Revised Text, Hort maintained that all distinctly Byzantine readings (which he described as “Syrian,” reckoning that the core of the Byzantine Text had previously been developed at Antioch, in Syria) should be rejected, on the grounds that the Byzantine Text as a whole was the product of a recension, that is, a carefully edited form of the text made by someone – perhaps Lucian of Antioch – whose editorial work consisted of selecting variants from exemplars drawn from Alexandrian and Western transmission-lines. Readings that deviated from the Alexandrian and Western variants, Hort theorized, must have originated in the mind of the editor who produced the Antiochan text. Since Hort proceeded to reject the Western Text as having been thoroughly contaminated by expansions, the 1881 Revised Text was almost 100% Alexandrian at points where these three major forms of the text disagree – and distinctly Byzantine readings, despite being supported by almost all surviving Greek MSS, were very few and far between.

Hort’s theory, however, was greatly weakened by the discovery – in papyrus MSS which had been excavated in Egypt, and which appeared to have been produced before or during the lifetime of Lucian of Antioch – of readings which did not agree with the flagship MSS of the Alexandrian Text, nor with the Western Text. This implied

that whatever the origins of every distinctive Byzantine reading might be, they could not all have originated during the undertaking of a recension made in the late 200s or early 300s, because at least some distinctive Byzantine readings already existed at that time. If the Lucianic recension ever happened, it had to involve the consultation of not only Alexandrian and Western exemplars, but also exemplars containing at least some Byzantine readings – in which case, Hort’s basis for rejecting all distinctive Byzantine readings falls to the ground.

Nevertheless, even after the discovery of distinctive Byzantine readings in Egyptian papyri, the heavily Alexandrian Revised Text continued to be promoted, especially in Nestle’s *Novum Testamentum Graece*, and in the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament*, which are the primary base-texts currently used by most translators. In *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, author Bruce Metzger – a member of the UBS compilation-committee – defended over 1,000 rejections of Byzantine readings that have an impact on translation.

Caesarean Text: The form of the text of the Gospels displayed in MSS 1582, 1, and some Armenian and Georgian MSS. The testimony of MSS 1 and 1582 is augmented by support from an assortment of other MSS including 118, 131, and 209). Researcher Kirsopp Lake established that the distinct readings shared by 1, 118, 131, and 209 descend from a shared ancestor in 1901 in the volume *Codex 1 of the Gospels and Its Allies*. (The recognition of 1582 as a member of the same family – and as its best Greek representative – came later). This cluster of Greek MSS is called *family 1*, and is generally (but not always) characterized by its members’ unusual treatment of

the *pericope adulterae*: the passage is put after the end of John 21, having been uprooted and transplanted as the note in 1 and 1582 explains:

“The chapter about the adulteress: in the Gospel according to John, this does not appear in the majority of copies; nor is it commented upon by the divine fathers whose interpretations have been preserved – specifically, by John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria; nor is it taken up by Theodore of Mopsuestia and the others. For this reason, it was not kept in the place where it is found in a few copies, at the beginning of the 86th chapter [that is, the 86th Eusebian Section], following, ‘Search and see that a prophet does not arise out of Galilee.’”

The Caesarean Text is also notable for referring to “Jesus Barabbas” in Matthew 27:16-17. Advocates of the genuineness of this reading argue that early Christians suppressed it, considering it to be embarrassing that a criminal such as Barabbas had the same name as the Messiah. Others (such as Kirsopp Lake) have noted that appearance of the name “Jesus” in this passage may have originated when an early scribe accidentally repeated the letters IN at the end of the word YMIN in verse 17, and this was misunderstood as the contraction for the word Ἰησοῦς (“Jesus”).

It is evident that a Caesarean Text exists for all four Gospels. It is less evident that there is a Caesarean Text of Acts and the Epistles. However, minuscule 1739 represents a distinct transmission-line, and it was copied by the same copyist who made minuscule 1582, so this should not be ruled out.

NOTE: I suspect that a full Caesarean form of the text of the Gospels did not exist before Eusebius of Caesarea prepared 50 books for Emperor Constantine.

Cancel-sheet: a parchment sheet, folded in the middle and written on both sides, so as to constitute four pages of a manuscript, made to replace the work of the main copyist. The most well-known examples of cancel-sheets are in Codex Sinaiticus, including the bifolium that contains Mark 14:54-Luke 1:76 (without Mark 16:9-20).

Catena: A commentary consisting of a series of comments by patristic authors who accompanies the Biblical text. Unlike commentaries written by a single author, a catena combines extracts from the writings of several authors, forming a chain (Latin: *catena*) of comments. The identity of the writer being quoted is sometimes, but not always, written in the vicinity of his comments. The earliest known Greek catena is in Codex Zacynthius (040, Ξ), an incomplete copy of the Gospel of Luke.

Codex (plural: Codices): A handmade book.

Colophon: a note added to the text of a manuscript. The contents of such notes can vary. The most useful colophons are those which mention the year and location where the manuscript was produced. They may also convey the name of the scribe, the name of the patron who sponsored the manuscript's production, and even declare a curse against whoever might think about taking the manuscript away from the library to which it was entrusted.

Commentary MSS: A MS in which the text of a commentary by one individual accompanies the Biblical text. Such material is similar to a catena, especially since although a commentary may be written by a single

individual, that individual may make free and generous use of the works of other commentators, sometimes acknowledging his source and sometimes not. As Robert Waltz mentions in his article on Commentaries in the online Encyclopedia of New Testament Textual Criticism, MSS with commentaries tended to have one of two forms: one in which the commentary frames the text, and one in which segments of the text and segments of the commentary alternate. Frame-commentaries were capable of accompanying texts unrelated to the commentary itself; alternating-commentaries, meanwhile, were always copied at the same time as the Scripture-text they accompany. For this reason, whenever the same alternating-commentaries accompany the same text, their testimony should be “boiled down,” so to speak, to the testimony of their shared ancestor.

Some commentaries were more popular than others. For the Gospel of Matthew, John Chrysostom’s commentary was most popular; for Mark, the *Catena-Commentary* of Victor of Antioch (a.k.a. the *Catena in Marcum*) was widely disseminated (and sometimes wrongly attributed to other authors/compilers such as Cyril of Alexandria or Peter of Laodicea). The commentary of Titus of Bostra was the dominant commentary on Luke. And for the Gospel of John, copies of both the commentary by John Chrysostom and the commentary by Theophylact are abundant; the latter appears mainly in the alternating format. Among the other commentators whose work accompanies the New Testament text in some MSS are Andreas of Caesarea (in specially formatted copies of Revelation), Andreas the Presbyter (in some copies of Acts and the Epistles), Oecumenius, and Euthymius Zigabenus.

Conflation: a reading which is a combination of two earlier readings. The presence of confluations implies that the text containing them emerged later than the text that contains its component-parts. Eight apparent confluations in the Byzantine Text of the Gospels, comprised of component-parts that appear to be combinations of component-parts consisting of Alexandrian and Western readings, were a major part of Hort's case against the Byzantine Text.

However, confluations appear in major representatives of all text-types, not just in the Byzantine Text. In Codex Sinaiticus, in John 13:24, where the Alexandrian Text reads *και λεγει αυτω ειπε τις εστιν* and the Byzantine Text reads *πυθεσθαι τις αν ειη*, Sinaiticus' text appears to combine those two phrases, reading *πυθεσθαι τις αν ειη περι ου ελεγεν, και λεγει αυτω ειπε τις εστιν*. A conflation also appears in Codex Vaticanus at Colossians 1:12: the Western Text reads *καλεσαντι*, the Byzantine Text reads *ικανωσαντι*, and Vaticanus reads *καλεσαντι και ικανωσαντι*, a combination of the Western and Byzantine readings. And in Codex D, a conflation appears in John 5:37: the Alexandrian Text (supported by Papyrus 75) reads *has εκεινος μεμαρτυρηκεν*, and the Byzantine Text (supported by Papyrus 66) reads *αυτος μεμαρτυρηκεν*; the reading in Codex Bezae is *εκεινος αυτος μεμαρτυρηκεν* and this is precisely what would be produced by a copyist wishing to preserve two different readings in two different exemplars.

Researcher Wilbur Pickering, in Appendix D of his book *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, investigated several more cases of apparent conflation in non-Byzantine MSS; while some of his examples are capable of more than one explanation, it seems sufficiently clear that the appearance of confluations in a manuscript or text-type

cannot validly condemn the entire text-type as late or as posterior to other text-types.

Conjectural emendation: A reading which is proposed as original but is not supported in any extant Greek manuscript. The apparatus of the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* mentioned many of these from a wide variety of sources, but only one was adopted in the text (in Acts 16:12). In the 28th edition, all mentions of conjectural emendations were removed from the apparatus – and one conjectural emendation was adopted into the text of Second Peter 3:10, altering the meaning of the sentence.

Diorthotes: The proof-reader and general overseer of the production of MSS in a scriptorium.

Dittography: A scribal mistake in which what should be written once is written twice. This can describe the repetition of a single letter, a line, or even (rarely) a whole paragraph.

Eusebian Canons: A cross-reference system for the Gospels, devised by Eusebius of Caesarea to help readers efficiently find and compare parallel-passages (and thematically related passages). The basic idea is that numbers were assigned to every section of every Gospel, and each number was put into one of ten lists, or canons, in a chart at the beginning of the Gospels. The first list presented the identification-numbers of passages in which parallels exist in all four Gospels; the tenth list presented the identification-numbers of passages which appear in one Gospel only, and lists 2-9 present the identification-numbers of passages in combinations of Gospels (such as Matthew+Mark+Luke).

The Eusebian Canons were often prefaced by Eusebius' composition *Ad Carpianus*, in which an explanation was given of how to use the cross-reference chart. In some Greek MSS, some Latin MSS, and especially in Armenian MSS, the Eusebian Canons are elaborately decorated. In a few deluxe copies, the text of *Ad Carpianus* appears within a quatrefoil frame.

Also, in some MSS, the copyists have put extracts from the Canon-tables below the main text, relieving the reader of the need to consult the Canon-tables in order to identify parallel-passages. This is called a *foot-index*, because it appears at the foot of the page.

Euthalian Apparatus: A collection of supplemental study-helps and systems of chapter-divisions for Acts and the Epistles, developed by an individual named Euthalius (who to an extent adopted earlier similar materials prepared by Pamphilus). Little is known about Euthalius and the extent to which his initial work has been adjusted and expanded by others; the detailed analysis *Euthaliana*, by J. A. Robinson, remains an imperfect but valuable resource on the subject.

Family 35: A cluster of over 220 MSS which represent the same form of the Byzantine Text. Wilbur Pickering has reconstructed its archetype.

Flyleaves: Unused pages at the beginning and end of a manuscript. In some cases, these pages consist of discarded pages from older MSS, glued into or onto the binding.

Genre distinction: The practice of recognizing each genre of literature in the New Testament (Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation) as having its own transmission-history.

Gregory's Rule: An arrangement of the pages of a manuscript in such a way that the flesh-side of the parchment (i.e., the inner surface of the animal-skin from which the parchment was made) faces the flesh-side of the following page, and the hair-side of the parchment (i.e., the outer, hair-bearing surface of the animal-skin from which the parchment was made) faces the hair-side of the following page. Only a few MSS, such as 059, do not have their pages uniformly arranged in this way. (Named after Caspar R. Gregory.)

Harklean Group: A small cluster of MSS which display a text of the General Epistles which is related to, and strongly agrees with, the painstakingly literal text of the Harklean Syriac version (which was produced in A.D. 616 by Thomas of Harkel, who made this revision of the already-existing Philoxenian version (which was completed in 508 as a revision/expansion of the Peshitta version) by consulting Greek MSS in a monastery near Alexandria, Egypt which he considered especially accurate). The core members of the Harklean Group are 1505, 1611, 2138, and 2495. Some other MSS have a weaker relationship to the main cluster, including minuscules 429, 614, and 2412.

Although the Greek MSS in the Harklean Group are all relatively late, they appear to echo a text of the General Epistles which existed in the early 600s, and perhaps earlier, inasmuch as Codex Sinaiticus (produced c. 350) contains in the third verse of the Epistle of Jude a reference to "our common salvation and life," a reading which appears to be a conflation between an Alexandrian reading ("our common salvation") and the reading of the Harklean Group ("our" (or "your") "common life").

Headpiece: A decorative design accompanying the beginning of a book of the New Testament in continuous-

text MSS, and sometimes accompanying the beginnings of parts of lectionaries. These may sometimes be extremely ornate, especially in Gospel-books.

Homoioarcton: A loss of text caused when a copyist's line of sight drifted from the beginning of a word, phrase, or line to the same (or similar) letters at the beginning of a nearby word, phrase, or line. Often abbreviated as "*h.a.*"

Homoioateleuton: A loss of text caused when a copyist's line of sight drifted from the end of a word, phrase, or line to the same (or similar) letters at the end of a nearby word, phrase, or line. Often abbreviated as "*h.t.*" (Many short readings can be accounted for as *h.t.*-errors, such as the absence of Matthew 12:47 in some important MSS.)

Initial: A large letter at the beginning of a book or book-section, especially one enhanced by ornateness and color. In some Latin codices an initial may occupy almost an entire page.

Interpolation: Substantial non-original material added to the text by a copyist. Although patristic writings utilize several sayings of Jesus that are not included in the Gospels, Codex Bezae is notable for its inclusion of interpolations in Matthew 20:28 and Luke 6:4. Due in part to Codex Bezae's text's tendency to adopt longer readings, Hort proposed in the 1881 Introduction to the Revised Text that Codex Bezae's shorter readings in Luke 24 are original, and that in each case, the longer reading is not original, despite being supported in all other text-types. Hort labeled D's text at these points "Western Non-Interpolations."

Itacism: The interchange of vowels, such as the writing of ει instead of ι, ε instead of αι, and ο instead of ω.

Jerusalem Colophon: A note which, in its fullest form, says, “Copied and corrected from the ancient MSS of Jerusalem preserved on the holy mountain.” Fewer than 40 MSS have this note, including Codex Λ/566, 20, 117, 153, 215, 300, 565, 1071, and 1187; in 157 it is repeated after each Gospel.

Kai-compendium: An abbreviation for the word και (“and”), consisting of a *kappa* with its final downward stroke extended.

Kephalaia: Chapters. In most Gospels-MSS, each Gospel is preceded by a list of chapters: Matthew has 68 chapters; Mark has 48, Luke has 83, and John has 18 or 19. Chapter-titles typically appear at the top (or bottom) of the page on which they begin, with the chapter-number in the margin.

Lacuna: A physical defect in a manuscript which results in a loss of text.

Lectionary: A book consisting of sections of Scripture for annual reading. Scripture-passages in lectionaries are arranged according to two calendar-forms: the movable feasts, beginning at Easter, contained in the *Synaxarion*, and the immovable feasts, beginning on the first of September (the beginning of the secular year), contained in the *Menologion*.

Lectionary Apparatus: Marginalia and other features added to New Testament MSS in order to make the MSS capable of being used in church-services for lection-

reading. These features usually include a table of lection-locations before or after the Scripture-text. Symbols are inserted in, or alongside, the text of each passage selected for annual reading: αρχη for “start,” “υπερβαλε” for “skip,” “αρξου” for “resume,” and τελος for “end.” Rubrics are sometimes added to identify readings for Christmas-time and Easter-time, and holidays considered especially important by the scribe(s). *Incipits*, phrases to introduce the readings, often appear alongside the beginning of lections, or alongside the rubric in the upper or lower margin.

Letter-compression: A method writing in which letters are written closer to each other than usual, and some letters are written in such a way as to occupy less space than unusual, This indicates that the scribe was attempting to reserve space. It occurs especially on cancel-sheets made to remedy omissions by the main scribe.

Majuscule: A manuscript in which each letter is written separately and as a capital. These are also known as uncials. Many majuscules, or uncials, are identified by sigla (singular: *siglum*) such as the letters of the English alphabet, letters of the Greek alphabet, and, for Codex Sinaiticus (א), the Hebrew alphabet. All uncials are identified by numbers that begin with a zero.

Miniature: An illustration, often (but not always) situated within a red frame. The term has nothing to do with the size of the illustration; it is derived instead from the red pigment, *minium*, which was often used to render the frame around the picture. (This pigment was famously used in the Book of Kells to make thousands of small dots in the illustrations.) Miniatures of the evangelists frequently appear as full-page portraits, showing each

evangelist in the process of beginning his written account; John is typically pictured assisted by Prochorus.

Minuscule: A manuscript in which the letters of each word are generally connected to each other. The transition from majuscule, or uncial script, to minuscule script, occurred during the 800s and 900s, and was led by Theodore the Studite. Uncial script was still used, however, for lectionaries in the following centuries.

Mixture: A combination of two or more text-types within the text of a single manuscript. When mixture occurs, it normally is manifested as readings from one text-type sprinkled throughout a text which otherwise agrees with another text-type. In *block-mixture*, distinct sections represent distinct text-types. Codex W exhibits block-mixture; in Matthew and in Luke 8-24 its text is almost entirely Byzantine, but other text-types are represented in the rest of the Gospels-text.

THE NOMINA SACRA (SACRED NAMES)	Lord – Κυριος	$\overline{\text{ΚC}}$
	God – Θεος	$\overline{\text{ΘC}}$
	Jesus – Ιησους	$\overline{\text{ΙC}}$
	Christ – Χριστος	$\overline{\text{ΧC}}$
	Father – Πατηρ	$\overline{\text{ΠΗΡ}}$
	Son – Υιος	$\overline{\text{ΥC}}$
	Spirit – Πνευμα	$\overline{\text{ΠΝΑ}}$
	heaven – ουρανος	$\overline{\text{ΟΥΝΟC}}$
	man – ανθρωπος	$\overline{\text{ΑΝΟC}}$
	Israel – Ισραηλ	$\overline{\text{ΙΗΛ}}$
	David – Δαβιδ	$\overline{\text{ΔΔΔ}}$
	Jerusalem – Ιερουσαλημ	$\overline{\text{ΙΛΗΛ}}$
	mother – μητηρ	$\overline{\text{ΜΗΡ}}$
cross – σταυρος	$\overline{\text{CΤC}}$	
Savior – Σωτηρ	$\overline{\text{CΗΡ}}$	

Nomina sacra (singular: *nomen sacrum*): sacred names which were usually written in contracted form by copyists. Usually the contractions consist of two letters – the first letter of the word and the final letter – but in some MSS the contractions have a three-letter form. The terms Κύριος (“Lord”), Θεός (“God”), Ιησούς (“Jesus”), and Χριστός (“Christ”) are almost always contracted, with a horizontal line written over them. References to the three Persons of the Trinity – Πατήρ (“Father”), Υἱός (“Son”), and Πνεῦμα (“Spirit”) – are also contracted in most MSS. With less uniformity, terms that were associated with titles of Christ are also contracted, such as “Man” (due to the title “Son of Man”), “David” (due to the title “Son of David”), and “Savior.” Most copyists also contracted the words “Israel,” “Jerusalem,” “Mother,” and “Cross.”

Novum Testamentum Graece: A compilation of the Greek text of the New Testament equipped with (a) symbols in the text which convey specific kinds of textual variants, and (b) a basic textual apparatus listing the main support for the adopted reading, and for rival readings. Eberhard Nestle published the first edition of *NTG* in 1898, drawing on three independent, but similar, compilations by other scholars (specifically, Tischendorf, Westcott & Hort, and Weymouth). In 1927, Eberhard Nestle’s son, Erwin Nestle, took over the task of editing the thirteenth edition of the compilation, changing the textual apparatus so as to include a more detailed presentation of evidence, listing MSS, versions, patristic writers, compilations by earlier editors, and theoretical recensions that had been posited by researcher Hermann von Soden.

Kurt Aland was given supervision of the compilation in 1952, and its textual apparatus was expanded considerably. The *NTG* achieved relative stability in 1979,

and was now known as the Nestle-Aland NTG. The text of the 26th edition was basically retained in the 27th edition, although the textual apparatus was changed (and some Byzantine witnesses were removed from the apparatus) and miscitations were corrected. In the 28th edition (2012), only about 35 textual changes were introduced, all confined to the General Epistles.

The 28th edition of NTG, though technically an eclectic compilation, has a very strong Alexandrian character, differing only slightly from the 1881 compilation of Westcott and Hort.

Nu ephelestikon: The Greek letter *nu* (ν) placed at the end of a word before another word that begins with a vowel, and at the end of sentences. Also called moveable *nu*.

Overline: A horizontal line added above characters to signify that the letters underneath it are to be read as numerals or as a *nomen sacrum*. An overline at the end of a line of text represents the letter *nu*.

Paratext: Features in a manuscript other than the main text, such as illustrations, notes, canon-tables, chapter-titles, arabesques, and marginalia.

Paleography: The science of studying ancient handwriting and inscriptions. Paleography is useful for estimating the production-dates (and in some cases the locale) of MSS by making comparisons between the handwriting they display and the handwriting of dated documents. Paleographers also study inks and paratextual features of MSS. Paleographically assigned production-dates should generally be given a range of 50 years both before and after the assigned date, on the premises that (*a*) copyists

tended to write in basically the same script throughout their careers, (b) a typical copyist's career lasted 50 years, and (c) we cannot determine if a copyist wrote a specific manuscript at the beginning, or end, of his career.

Palimpsest: A manuscript which has been recycled, and contains two (or more) layers of writing. The parchment of a palimpsest has been scraped once, in its initial preparation, and later scraped again, when someone scraped off, or washed off, the ink, in order to reuse the newly blank parchment to hold a different composition. (The word is derived from Greek: *palin*, again, and *psaw*, scrape.) The text that was written first on a palimpsest is called the *lower writing*; the more recently written text is called the *upper writing*. The application of ultraviolet light (and multi-spectral imaging) can in some cases make the lower writing much more visible than it appears to be in normal light.

Papyrus: (plural: papyri) Writing-material made from tissues derived from the inner layer of papyrus plants. Papyrus-material tended to rot away in high-humidity climates, which is why practically all surviving New Testament papyri were found in Egypt, where the humidity-level is lower. MSS made of papyrus are also called papyri.

Parablepsis: The phenomenon which occurs when a copyist's line of sight drifts from one set of letters to an identical or similar set of letters, skipping the intervening text. This may occur due to homoioarcton, homoeoteleuton, or simple inattentiveness.

Provenance: The place from which a manuscript came.

Quire: A collection of bifolia (usually four) which have been stacked and folded together in the process of codex-production.

Recto: The side of a leaf in a manuscript that is viewed when the outer margin is to the viewer's right.

Rubric: Text written in red, usually found in the margins, mainly serving to label portions of the main text. Rubrics may include chapter-titles, the lectionary apparatus, and miscellaneous notes.

Reinforcement: The re-inking of the lettering of a manuscript, after the initial lettering has faded.

Ruling: Horizontal lines and vertical borders added to writing-material as guidelines for the text which was intended to be written upon it. Hundreds of different ruling-patterns have been identified. They vary in complexity, depending on how much supplemental material was intended to accompany the main text.

Scriptorium: A manuscript-making center, usually located in a monastery.

Stichometry: A calculation of the number of standard lines (about 15 or 16 syllables), or *stichoi*, of text in a book or book-portion. The conclusions of New Testament books are sometimes accompanied by notes mentioning the book's length, in line-units. This suggests that such MSS were copied by professionals who were paid on a *per-stichos* basis.

Singleton: a single folded bifolium in a manuscript – a quire consisting of a single sheet.

Staurogram: A combination of the Greek letters *tau* and *rho*, thought by some researchers to be a pictogram of Christ's crucifixion.

Textual Apparatus: Notes in a compilation, listing variants and the witnesses that support them. Witnesses are usually listed in the order of uncials, minuscules, versions, and patristic references. In the textual apparatuses of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* and the UBS *Greek New Testament*, Byzantine witnesses tend to be presented collectively.

Textus Receptus: This term is generally used to refer to the base-text of the 1611 King James Version. It is also used to refer to any of the compilations of the Greek text of the New Testament published in the 1500s and early 1600s, beginning with Erasmus' first edition in 1514, continuing with the Complutensian Polyglot, several editions by Stephanus, several editions by Beza, and the 1624 and 1633 editions by the Elzevirs, the last of which was declared to be "the text received by all." These compilations were not entirely identical but all contained a basically Byzantine text influenced by readings selected from the editors' materials, which included important witnesses such as minuscule 1, minuscule Codex Bezae (D), Codex Regius (L, 019), and Codex Claromontanus.

The 1551 edition issued by Stephanus is notable for the introduction of verse-numbers, essentially the same enumeration still used in most English New Testaments.

UBS *Greek New Testament*: A compilation of the Greek text of the New Testament prepared by a team working for the United Bible Societies. Now in its fifth edition (2014), the UBS *Greek New Testament* contains the same

text presented in the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*. The textual apparatus of the UBS Greek New Testament covers far fewer variant-units (about 1,400), but in far greater detail. Bruce Metzger (1914-2007), a member of the UBS compilation-committee, wrote *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, explaining the committee's general text-critical approach and specific decisions.

Uncial: A manuscript in which each letter is written separately and as a capital. These are also known as majuscules. Many uncials, are identified by sigla (singular: *siglum*) such as the letters of the English alphabet, letters of the Greek alphabet, and, for Codex Sinaiticus (א), the Hebrew alphabet. All uncials are identified by numbers that begin with a zero.

Verso: The side of a leaf in a manuscript that is viewed when the outer margin is to the viewer's left.

Watermark: In medieval paper, a design embedded in the fibers of the paper, visible when a page is held up to light. Watermarks often indicate where the paper was made.

Western Order: The arrangement of the four Gospels as Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark. This order is found mainly in representatives of the Western Text, such as the Old Latin Gospels and Codex Bezae.

Western Text: A text-form, or forms, characterized by expansion, harmonization, and simplification in comparison to other text-types. Codex Bezae and the Old Latin version are the primary and most extensive

witnesses to Western readings, but several early patristic writers frequently utilize Western readings as well.

Zoomorphic Initial: An initial which takes the shape of an animal, animals, or bird.

CHAPTER THREE

What Is a New Testament Witness?

I have described five kinds of witnesses to the New Testament text:

- (1) MSS,
- (2) versions,
- (3) patristic writings,
- (4) lectionaries, and
- (5) talismans and inscriptions.

We now take a closer look into the distinct characteristics of each kind of continuous-text Greek manuscript.

First I must you a story (I forget the name of the person from whom I heard it):

In ancient China, a young man showed up at the palace where a master jade-carver lived, and said, "Master Jade-Carver, I want to become a jade-carver; please teach me." So the old master jade-carver told him, "All right; show up tomorrow morning at sunrise and I will give you your first lesson."

The next morning, they met, and the jade-carver told the young man, "Let's go for a walk in the palace garden. Hold this piece of jade and keep moving it in your hands while I talk." And as they walked, he talked all day about the history of China. Then he took back the piece of jade and said, "That's all for today; come back tomorrow."

The next day, they met, and the jade-carver said, "Hold this piece of jade and keep moving it in your hands while I talk," and they strolled through the garden, and he talked all day about the wildlife of China. Then he took back the piece of jade and said, "That's all for today; come back tomorrow."

The next day, they met, and the jade-carver said,

“Hold this piece of jade and keep moving it in your hands while I talk,” and they walked through the garden, and he talked all day about the food in China. Then he took back the piece of jade and said, “That’s all for today; come back tomorrow.”

This went on for thirty days, with a new topic each day.

The apprentice began to think that maybe he should have phrased his request differently. But the next day, when the jade-carver handed him the piece of jade, the apprentice blurted out, “This isn’t jade!”

The old jade-carver had indeed handed him a different kind of stone, and he said, “That is right! On to the second lesson!”

Before we do anything else – before we learn the guidelines of how to make text-critical decisions – before we learn about the impact they can have upon the text – and before we investigate controversies in the field, **we get to know the materials.**

A New Testament Greek manuscript is a witness that contains the Greek text of one or more New Testament books, initially formatted as one or more New Testament books. For everything else I shall describe in this chapter, it is safe to add the words: “*There are some exceptions.*” In this chapter we are not exploring exceptional cases. They’re out there, but we can look into them later.

With some exceptions, every substantial New Testament manuscript in existence was a codex when it was produced. A codex is a handmade book, as opposed to a scroll. Some witnesses used to be codices but only a single fragment of a single page has survived.

If a fragment has writing on both sides, from the same composition, that's a giveaway that it was part of a codex.

If an early fragment has writing on just one side, and it's not the end of the composition, that indicates that it was part of a scroll.

If an early fragment, such as Papyrus 13, has writing on both sides, but the writing on one side is from a different composition compared to the text on the other side, that indicates that it was part of a scroll, which first had writing on one side, and then someone decided to recycle it, and wrote on the other side.

Our earliest witnesses were written on **papyrus**, pages made from the processed fibers of papyrus plants that grew along the Nile River.

In the 300s, after Christianity was legalized, books continued to be made out of papyrus, but **parchment** began to be the preferred material for New Testament manuscript-makers. Parchment is made out of animal-skin. At the end of the lecture, I will mention some resources that should give you a good idea of what goes into making papyrus, and what goes into the process of turning the skin of an animal into the pages of a book.

In the Middle Ages, MSS began to be made out of a different material, called **paper**. Some MSS have portions that are parchment, and portions that are paper, especially in cases where a parchment manuscript was damaged, and paper was used to replace the damaged pages.

Now consider the different kinds of continuous-text Greek MSS.

First, there are the **papyri**.

Papyrus MSS of New Testament books have their own catalog-numbers or names in the libraries where they

reside, but for general purposes they are known by the letter “P” and a number, which represents the order in which they were found. So, Papyrus 52 was approximately the 52nd New Testament papyrus to be found, identified, and catalogued.

Papyrus MSS are typically the first witnesses mentioned when comparing the support for rival readings. The *earliest* papyri echo a period that is earlier than all other MSS. It is natural to give them a high level of importance. But there are seven things that should be kept in mind about the papyri.

- First, it is not unusual for papyri to be cited for readings that *do not appear* in the surviving part of the manuscript. When it comes to papyrus fragments, there is often more to see than just what you can see. Depending on how much text survives in a fragment, on how many pages, it is sometimes possible to create what is called a **codicological reconstruction** of part of the non-extant part of the manuscript. For example, if you have fragments of two pages of a manuscript, you might be able to tell approximately how much text was on each page of the manuscript, and approximately how many pages it had. The further the reconstruction gets from the extant text, the less useful it is for text-critical purposes. But if a variant is large, and relatively close to the extant text, codicological reconstruction can serve as the basis on which to form a strong suspicion about whether the variant was present or absent in the manuscript, on the basis of space-considerations.

- Second: there is nothing magical about papyrus. Copyists did not suddenly become more accurate by writing the text on papyrus. Papyrus 72 was probably made in the 300s, and it is one of the earliest MSS of the books that it contains. But if you compare its text of the

Epistle of Jude to the text of Jude in an ordinary late medieval manuscript, you will find that the text in the medieval manuscript resembles the original text far better than the text of Jude in Papyrus 72.

- Third: while the papyri are very old, many of them are not *remarkably* old. We have about 140 papyrus MSS. Forty of them were produced after the fall of the Roman Empire, in the 500s or later.

- Fourth: almost all of the papyri are fragmentary, and most of the papyri are **very** fragmentary. Less than 30 early papyri – and here, by “early” I mean, “earlier than Jerome” – before the late 300s – consist of more than two pages.

- Fifth: the primary value and use of the papyri, by far, has been **to confirm readings** that were already known from other witnesses. The number of readings found exclusively in papyri that have been securely adopted in any major edition of the Greek New Testament is **zero**. In the late 1800s, textual critics had practically no papyri to work with; now we have 140, and in terms of the contents of the text, they have made very little difference.

- Sixth: almost all of the papyri were found in Egypt. Papyrus tends to gradually decay in climates that are not very dry, and the climate in parts of Egypt is very dry. So if a textual critic were to say, “*Let’s reconstruct the text based on the earliest manuscript,*” he would produce a text based on evidence from Egypt, at least in the passages for which there is an early papyri – because that is where papyrus lasted longer than in other places.

That kind of approach gives us a good look at the texts that were used in Egypt, but it does not really help us see what the text looked like in other locations, where there was more rain – such as the location of every church mentioned in the New Testament. Saying, “*Let’s depend primarily on the oldest evidence*” is like saying, “*Let’s*

depend primarily on the evidence that experienced the best weather.”

- Seventh, the production-date assigned to a papyrus manuscript is usually an estimate, with a range of 100 years. The analysis of ancient writing, called **palaeography**, is used to arrive at these production-dates. In rare cases, the circumstances in which a New Testament manuscript has been found sets some parameters for its production-date. For example, if a manuscript is found in the ruins of a city that was destroyed in a particular year, we can deduce that it was not produced after that year. But usually, palaeographers assign production-dates according to the Greek script that the copyist used.

If you look at printed English fonts from 300 years ago, and compare them to fonts in use today, you will see some differences. The same sort of thing is true of ancient Greek handwriting. Different styles of script were dominant at different times. Palaeographers study the script in detail. But they can't look at a script and tell you how old a copyist was when he wrote it.

If you reckon that a copyist in the ancient world engaged in a peaceful profession that involved copying books, he could copy a book at age 20, or at age 70 – and use the same handwriting he had learned when he had first learned to write. There's no way to tell if he was young, and would go on using that handwriting for another 50 years, or if he was old, and had been using that handwriting for 50 years. So this range of about 50 years in both directions is built into most palaeographically assigned production-dates.

Let us next consider the uncial MSS, also called **majuscules**. When you read the textual apparatus in a Nestle-Aland or United Bible Societies or Tyndale House Greek New Testament, you can tell when a witness is a papyrus, because it is identified by a number after the

letter P. Similarly, you can tell when a witness is an uncial, because all uncials are numbered with numbers that begin with the numeral 0. Codex Sinaiticus is 01, Codex Alexandrinus is 02, Codex Vaticanus is 03, and so forth. Whether an uncial is a massive codex like Codex Sinaiticus, or a Gospels-book like Codex Cyprius, or a small fragment like 0315, every one gets its own number. These numbers are called the Gregory-Aland numbers, because this kind of identification-system was developed by the scholar C. R. Gregory and expanded by Kurt Aland. Different identification-systems were used before this became the standard identification-method. (A comparison-chart of the obsolete methods and the standard method can be found online at the *Encyclopedia of New Testament Textual Criticism*.)

That is the first standard way in which uncials are identified. But there is another method: some uncials are also represented by letters of the English alphabet, and some uncials are represented by letters of the Greek alphabet. Codex Alexandrinus is Codex A, Codex Vaticanus is Codex B, and so forth. Codex Sinaiticus is represented as Ⲛ, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Generally, the more important an uncial is, the more likely it is to be better-known by its letter than by its number.

There are only 26 English letters and 24 modern Greek letters, and we have a lot more than 50 majuscule MSS. Sometimes the same letter is used for different MSS in different parts of the New Testament. For example, "D" is Codex Bezae in the Gospels and Acts, but in the Epistles, "D" represents Codex Claromontanus. "E" is Codex Basiliensis in the Gospels, but in Acts, "E" is Codex Laudianus.

The numerical system is less likely to cause confusion, because each number represents exactly one manuscript. But the letter-based system is easy to

remember and it is used in the printed textual apparatus of the major editions of the Greek New Testament. The only safe course of action is to learn both identification systems.

It is not unusual for an majuscule of the four Gospels to contain more than just the text of the four Gospels. A Gospels-codex may begin with the Eusebian canons before the text of the Gospels begins, introduced by Eusebius' letter to Carpian explaining how to use the Canons as a cross-reference tool. Each Gospel may also be preceded by a list of its chapters; these chapter-lists are called *Kephalaia*. The chapter-titles may be repeated at the top or bottom of the page of text where they begin; at these locations, they are called the *titloi*. And at the end of each Gospel, one usually finds the closing-title.

Next come the minuscules. Whereas majuscule script consists of large letters that are usually separated from one another, minuscule script is written in small letters that tend to be connected to one another in words. Minuscule copies of New Testament books go back as early as the early 800s. Majuscules continued to be made after that, but by the 1000s, minuscule script became dominant. It took less time and required less materials to make a minuscule MS.

Here are a few things to know about minuscules:

- Minuscules should not be belittled simply because they are minuscules. Kirsopp Lake wrote, "It is neither the date nor the script of a MS which determines its value for the critic, but the textual history of its ancestors."

- Some minuscules are not technically continuous-text MSS: they are commentaries, in which a portion of the New Testament text is written, followed by a portion

of commentary, followed by the next portion of New Testament text, followed by a portion of commentary, and so forth. This is not much different from a truly continuous-text manuscript that has the same commentary-material in the outer margins. When several copies of the same commentary also share the same form of the New Testament text, divided into the same portions, it is clear that they share the same ancestry, and their weight should be boiled down.

- Some minuscules contain a high amount of abbreviation.

- Some uncials are partly minuscule. It is not rare to see uncial letters and minuscule letters on the same page – occasionally, comments are written in minuscule script and the text is written in uncial script, to help prevent readers from getting them confused.

- Some minuscules are illustrated. Minuscule copies of the Gospels may include full-page **miniature** portraits of each Evangelist before his Gospel begins. In this context, the term “miniature” does not describe the size of the portrait; a “miniature” is a picture framed in pigment that contains red lead – a pigment called *minium*.

Often each evangelist in these pictures is accompanied by a symbolic representation: usually for Matthew, it is a man or angel. For Mark, it is a lion. For Luke, it is an ox. And for John, it is an eagle. The symbolism is based on the visions of the seraphim around God’s throne in the books of Ezekiel and Revelation.

Also, the initial letter of a book, or in some cases, many of the initial letters at the beginnings of sections of a book, may be artistically stylized. When an initial is made to resemble an animal, this is called a **zoomorphic initial**. In many MSS, at the beginning of a book, there is a large

ornamental design, called a **headpiece**, accompanied by the title of the book.

- In some minuscules of the Gospels, in addition to the Eusebian Canons and chapter-lists, there are book-introductions, or summaries. Sometimes there are lists of rare words. In some copies of Acts, there is an itinerary of the journeys of Paul. And sometimes, at the end of the book, there is a scribal note, or colophon, which might include information about when and where it was copied.

Regarding all other witnesses to the Greek New Testament: we will hopefully look into them in future lectures. Representatives of the Greek text of the New Testament tend to take center stage, because everything else does not contain the text that is being reconstructed. But other witnesses are extremely important when it comes to tracking specific readings and building a history of separate forms of the text. For example, when you see a rare reading in a Coptic manuscript from Egypt, and it also shows up in a Latin manuscript that was made in Ireland, it raises a question about how the text in these two geographically separated places is connected. And if you see that the same reading in the same passage was quoted and interpreted by two early writers in two different locations, you can thus observe that the reading was widely distributed – and sometimes this evidence is earlier than any extant evidence from continuous-text Greek MSS.

EXTRA CREDIT

Download Charles F. Sitterly's 1898 *Praxis in MSS of the Greek Testament* at https://www.google.com/books/edition/Praxis_in_MSS_of_the_Greek_Testa/0wEVAAYAAJ . Read chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Watch (8 minutes 44 seconds) – “Beloved Essences How To Make Papyrus” –

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c9bRpv_vFs .

Watch (3 min. 42 sec.) “Texas Film Studio How To Make Papyrus” – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mziRLWQUok> .

Watch Mike Rowe’s Dirty Jobs 426 “Vellum Maker,” Season 4, Episode 26 –

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ujH1gi_LKQ
(beginning at 4:15)

Watch (15 min. 18 sec.) “Papermaking by Hand at Hayle Mill” –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs3PfwOltto>

Read Larry Stone’s *The Story of the Bible*, chapters 1 and 3, and be sure to look inside the pouches.

CHAPTER FOUR

How New Testament Manuscripts Were Made

Our heavenly Father, as we consider how to examine ancient books, and how they were made, help us remember that our lives will also be examined when we all stand before the judgment seat. We thank you for providing the blood of Christ, by whom our sins are washed away. The new text has been written – one that will be presented without fault and with great joy in your glorious presence.

Amen.

We have reviewed five kinds of witnesses to the New Testament text, and the characteristics of Greek papyri, majuscules (uncials), and minuscules. The MSS that we have looked at so far are codices.

Today, we will take a closer look at how a codex was made, once the papyrus or parchment or paper had been provided.

In John Donne's *Meditation 17*, he wrote, "All mankind is of one author, and is one volume. When one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice. But God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again, for that library where every book shall lie open to one another."

What did John Donne mean by "all our scattered leaves"?

He wasn't referring to the leaves of trees. He was referring to the leaves of books.

One sheet of parchment = a bifolium, a sheet folded vertically in the middle.

Half a bifolium = a folio = a leaf.

This has an effect on how pages are numbered:

It used to be the norm for the *folios* of a handmade book to be numbered.

Now it is the norm for the pages of books to be numbered; they are *paginated* rather than *foliated*.

When a codex lies open, the page on the left is called the verso, and the page on the right is called the recto.

One leaf, or, one folio, of a Greek manuscript, has a front – “recto” – and back – “verso.”

(For MSS in languages read from right to left and back to front, such as Hebrew or Syriac, this is reversed.)

The best way to refer to the pages of ancient MSS is not to refer to a page-number, but to refer to the folio, recto or verso.

When we are dealing with a single fragment of a single text that can be identified, the part of the text that comes first in the composition is regarded as the recto.

A gathering = several sheets stacked upon each other, and folded vertically down the middle.

Sometimes a gathering is made from a stack of three sheets, and this is called a **ternion**.

Sometimes a gathering is made from a stack of five sheets, and this is called a **quinion**.

But usually a gathering is made of four sheets, called a **quaternion**,

for a total of 16 pages.

This kind of gathering is the standard **quire**. (Q-u-i-r-e.)

If a man in ancient times wanted to obtain four folded sheets of parchment to make a 16-page booklet for a group of singers at the cathedral, then he desired to acquire a quire for a choir.

Some early codices had quires made of much more than four sheets. A codex can be made with only one quire, folded in the middle. Such a codex is, understandably, called a **single-quire codex**. This kind of book has two disadvantages: the more pages are folded together, the more “creep” there is – the part that sticks out in the middle-pages past the edge of the lowest and uppermost page when the quire is folded. Also, the thicker a single-quire codex is, the harder it is to keep it closed, and to make its pages lay flat.

When the sheets of a quire were stacked together, it was customary for the book-maker to arrange the parchment so that the parchment page that was from the outside of the animal, where the hair had been, faced another page from the outside of the animal, and the opposite side of the page, from the inside of the animal, faced another page from the inside of the animal.

This custom, which could be summed up as, “Hair faces hair, flesh faces flesh,” is called “**Gregory’s Rule**,” because it was first detected (as far as western Europeans are concerned) by C. R. Gregory. Papyrus is a plant and thus papyrus-pages have neither hair nor flesh, but papyrus sheets in a codex tended to be arranged using the same principle, so that the smoother side of each folio faced the smooth side of the next folio, and the rougher sides of the folios faced each other.

To avoid the problems that arose with single-quire codices, the Multi-Quire Codex was invented: instead of beginning as one stack of sheets, the book began as two or more stacks of sheets, folded in the middle. These

booklets, each consisting of one quire, were then sewn to each other to form a book, which was usually given a protective binding or cover of some sort. In some cases, the book was kept in a special leather pouch or satchel.

The multi-quire codex had some advantages over scrolls. For example: when reading a codex, it is much easier to page through a codex of the Gospels and compare parallel-passages, than with a scroll. Also, if one folio of a codex is damaged, it can be removed and replaced. Scrolls can be repaired too, but it's more trouble.

When making a codex, if the main copyist were to make a mistake so bad that it ruined the entire page, the proof-reader, or whoever noticed the mistake, could remove the individual sheet, and replace it with one in which the mistake had been corrected. This meant replacing not only the text on the page where the mistake had appeared, but also the text on the other folio on the sheet – four pages of text in all. Such a replacement-page is called a **cancel-sheet**.

Before a copyist wrote the text on a page, the page first had to be ruled – that is, the page need to be marked with lines for the copyist to follow. Some codices have the text arranged in just one column on each page; some codices have the text in two columns. Codex Vaticanus is almost unique by having the text formatted in three columns on most pages, although in its Old Testament portion, in the Books of Poetry, the format is two columns per page. If a manuscript was intended to feature commentary-material in the margins, this usually had to be anticipated and the page-format had to be adjusted accordingly.

Some MSS appear to have been prepared quire by quire before the quires were sewn together. Quires were typically numbered. It was not unusual, at the end of a

quire, for the copyist write the first word of the next quire. These are called “**catchwords**,” and along with the quire-numbers, they helped the person who assembled the book – and people who later repaired the book – avoid getting the quires in the wrong order. But sometimes the quires got mixed up anyway.

There was more to the production of a book besides the reproduction of the text of its exemplar. If a manuscript was the product of a **scriptorium** – a center for producing MSS – then after the initial production of the quires, a supervisor proof-read the work of his assistants, correcting their mistakes. The proof-reading supervisor is called the *diorthotes*.

Embellished letters were often written in different ink – red, or golden – after the main text was written. If there were illustrations, some space had to be left for them. In some MSS, the space has been left for illustrations, but the illustrator apparently never showed up. And some MSS have apparently cannibalized illustrations from other MSS: pictures have been cut from other parchment pages, and have been glued down onto pages in a manuscript.

Another thing to consider, when we look at what went into the production of a manuscript, is that we are not always looking at the result of a single production-event. Some MSS were made by more than one copyist, and the larger a manuscript is, the more likely this is to be the case.

Sometimes, the text of a manuscript was adjusted to conform to a different exemplar. In cases where this was attempted, the person who made the adjustments is called a “corrector,” whether or not he was indeed making the text in the copy more like the original text. A corrector might work on a manuscript before it left the scriptorium, or hundreds of years later.

A manuscript might be damaged, and also be repaired, long after its initial production. A manuscript might be supplemented with lectionary-related material long after it was first made. And sometimes, if the script that had been initially written on the page had faded, a later copyist might trace over, or “reinforce,” the old lettering. So we need to be on the lookout for indications of changes that a manuscript has undergone after it was made.

This can involve not only alterations to the text, but also physical changes to the book. Books and their binding were occasionally damaged, whether by fire or water or simple wear-and-tear, and they needed to be repaired. Sometimes, the pages were re-trimmed, and in some cases, the person doing the trimming was careless, and trimmed away not only some material in the outer margins, but also lines of text.

Sometimes the covers of New Testament MSS feature a layer of padding on the inside, and sometimes this padding was made of pages from discarded MSS. In some rare cases, the cover of a New Testament manuscript may contain pages of another New Testament manuscript.

But being turned into binding-padding is not the most drastic post-production change that could happen to a manuscript. Some MSS were recycled. There were times and places where parchment was scarce or expensive or both, and if a copyist possessed a parchment book that he did not consider valuable, he might dismantle it, and wash or scrape the ink off of its pages, in order to obtain its parchment. Why would anyone recycle a New Testament manuscript?

(1) The manuscript might be **written in an unfamiliar language**. A Latin-speaking copyist might not

see a Greek manuscript of the Gospels as valuable if he did not read Greek.

(2) The manuscript might be **considered surplus**. A pragmatic Greek-speaking copyist might not consider a Greek manuscript of the Gospels as valuable if he worked at a monastery where there were dozens of Greek MSS of the Gospels on hand.

(3) The manuscript might have been **damaged**. A copyist might possess a manuscript that has been damaged beyond repair, but still have some intact pages which could be re-used. Why throw away valuable parchment when it can be made into useful parchment by scraping off the ink?

For whatever reason, copyists recycled quite a few MSS of books of the New Testament, washing and scraping off the ink, which rendered the parchment blank so that it could be re-using as material to hold a different text. At least, it *looked* blank for a while – but in the course of time, the ink that had bonded to the parchment became perceptible again. Because the parchment of these MSS have been scraped twice – once in the initial production, and again when they were recycled – they are called **palimpsests**, from the Greek words for “scraped again.”

On a palimpsest, the earliest layer of writing is called the **lower writing**, and the more recent layer of writing is called the **upper writing**. The parchment of some palimpsests has been recycled more than once, which can present a challenge to those trying to read the earliest layer of text. A relatively new method of detecting the lower writing, involving some special equipment, is called **Multi-Spectral Imaging**.

EXTRA CREDIT

For details about a specific single-quire codex, visit the University of Michigan's website that describes the structure of P46. All of the pages about P46 there are worth exploring –

<https://www.lib.umich.edu/reading/Paul/codex.html>

Watch (7 min. 35 sec.) *C-SPAN Cities Tour - Ann Arbor: P46 - The Pauline Epistles* –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNf1dikLQHM>

Watch (2 min. 8 sec.) *The Structure of a Medieval Manuscript*, made available at YouTube by the Getty Museum –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKBJkf2xbql>

Watch (1 min. 40 sec.) *Making MSS: The Page*, by the British Library –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRIWpKRm0WU>

Watch (5 min. 16 sec.) *Codex Zacynthius MS Add. 10062, Recovering the Text of the Oldest New Testament Catena Manuscript* – by the Cambridge University Library –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxXb8qBYgPQ>

CHAPTER FIVE

Versional Evidence

Our heavenly Father, your commandments are pure. They enlighten the eyes. Guide us now to consider how your word was taken to many places in the ancient world and how it was expressed in different languages to shine your light to those who walked in darkness. Shine upon us, that we may reflect your light upon everyone around us
In Jesus' name, Amen.

In the early 1900s, a scholar named Alexander Souter wrote, "The history of the New Testament text cannot be understood without a knowledge of the history of the church." Part of that history is the history of the early translations of the New Testament text. In this chapter we take a closer look at some of the early versions of the New Testament – especially early translations of the Gospels.

This involves mainly the study of early translations into Latin, Coptic, and Syriac, but there are other important versions of the New Testament too.

The Old Latin, also called the *Vetus Latine*, was referred to in a composition called the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* (180). This is a transcript of a trial during a persecution in Carthage: Saturninus the governor, presiding, asked, "What sort of things do you have in that case of yours?" Speratus, a Christian, answered, "Books and letters of Paul, a righteous man."

Referring to "*The*" Old Latin is potentially misleading. There were several Latin transmission-lines: African, European, Italian, & Spanish.

(Note: “African” in this context does not refer to the continent of Africa, but to the Roman province of Africa, including Numidia.)

Do they all descend from one Latin text? Do they all descend from one Greek text? In Mark 9:15 the term *gaudentes* (“rejoicing” instead of “running”) is found in the Latin text. It is also found in Greek in Codex Bezae.

One way to tell how closely Latin translations of the same composition are related is to compare how the translators rendered once-used Greek words. The higher the number of rare Greek terms are rendered the same way, the closer two Latin translations were related.

The earliest Latin Gospels-text tends to be “Western.” Here I will introduce the concept of “text-types.”

The Western text was tweaked to increase clarity and specificity, especially in the Gospels and Acts (as shown in Codex Bezae).

The Byzantine text was in dominant use in the vicinity of Byzantium (Constantinople) in the time of John Chrysostom.

The Alexandrian text is represented by Codex Vaticanus (and allies) and the early Sahidic version.

The Caesarean text (of the Gospels) is represented by the core members of family-1 and by the Armenian and Old Georgian versions.

In Greek witnesses to the Western form of the text, the Gospels often appear in the order Mt – Jn – Lk – Mk.

By the late 300s, two prominent writers, Jerome and Augustine, mentioned that there was a great variety of Latin translations, so many that it seemed that anyone who considered himself proficient at translating Greek made a Latin translation of New Testament books.

By the 400s, Jerome and some other individuals completed the Vulgate (“common”) Latin translation. It took some time to dominate transmission-lines in Europe. Gregory the Great (590 to 604) was still referring to the Vulgate as the “new” version over two centuries later.

We cannot simply pick up any Vulgate manuscript and expect to see every reading that Jerome adopted. Some Old Latin readings were mixed into Vulgate texts. And there were later revisions undertaken by Alcuin, Theodulf, and others.

The representation of Old Latin witnesses can be a little complicated. The old identification-method represented witnesses by lower case letters, by lower case letters with superscripted numerals, and by short abbreviations.

The newer identification-method involved the Beuron numbers, so-called because this method was developed by members of the Vetus Latina Institut in Europe. Gospels MSS have numbers 1-49; Acts/Catholics/Revelation are 50-74; Pauline Epistles are 75-99.

A lot of Old Latin witnesses are only partly Old Latin, side-by-side with Vulgate texts. When looking into Old Latin witnesses, it must be emphasized that a witness’s production-date does not automatically render it important or unimportant.

We now turn to the **Coptic** versions. This involves seven transmission-lines in different dialects.

(1) Sahidic. Several manuscripts of the Gospels in Sahidic reside in Barcelona. The copies representing the earliest layer of the Sahidic text tend to agree with the Greek Alexandrian text of the Gospels, with some Western mixture. In Acts

27:37 there is a rare reading in which the Sahodic version agrees with Codex B (03) regarding the number of souls aboard the ship. This indicates a close relationship between the two. In Codex T (Borgianus, 029 – 500s), which is a diglot in which Sahidic and Greek appear side by side, the historical connection is obvious.

(2) Middle Egyptian. The Western text also circulated in Egypt: the copy known as G67 (the Glazier Codex) contains a portion of Acts written in “Middle Egyptian.”

Other Middle Egyptian witnesses are Codex Schoyen 2650 (Matthew), and the Schiede Codex (Matthew).

(3) Lycopolitan (a.k.a. Sub-Achmimic). This version is represented by the Qua Codex (300s), which is very early as far as versional witnesses go.

(4) Proto-Bohairic. This is represented by the papyrus Bodmer III (300s), a copy of the Gospel of John. Its text is Alexandrian and it features a strange treatment of sacred names in John in John 1:1 & 1:18.

(5) Bohairic. This is represented by later MSS, especially by Huntington MS 17 (from 1174).

(6) Achmimic. This version is incomplete, containing text from Matthew, Luke, John, Romans, Galatians, James, Jude.

(7) Fayyumic. This too is fragmentary.

Syriac. Here again we are dealing with not just a single version, but with versions. The earliest Syriac witness to the Gospels was Tatian's *Diatessaron*, which appears to have been the dominant Gospels-based text in Syria until the Peshitta emerged in the late 300s. The *Diatessaron* did not have the genealogies. The Syriac author Aphrahat (in the 330s) apparently had something else which included the genealogies.

The Old Syriac is not widely attested. We know of three manuscripts that attest to its existence: the Sinaitic Syriac MS, the Curetonian Syriac MS, and, at St. Catherine's Monastery, Syriac MS 37.

Peshitta. The Peshitta is very widely supported by dozens and dozens of copies. It usually agrees with the *Byzantine* Text – although it must be kept in mind that the books of Second Peter, Second John, Third John, Jude, and Revelation were not initially included in the Peshitta. Most copies of the Peshitta are remarkably uniform. Peshitta MSS of special interest include Codex Phillips 1388, B.L. Add MS 14470, and the illustrated Rabbula Gospels.

Philoxenian. Whereas the Peshitta tends to agree with the Byzantine text, this version included the full 27-book canon of the New Testament.

Harklean Syriac: This version echoes an ancient Greek text in the General Epistles. It was translated in an *extremely* literal method. It was completed by Thomas of Harkel in 616; ancient Greek MSS near Alexandria. Its text is supplemented by a marginalia mentioning alternative readings in the margin.

Palestinian Aramaic: this used to be categorized as a Syriac version but the nomenclature has shifted as people acknowledged that it is indeed Aramaic, not the exact same language as Syriac. It is mainly extant in lectionaries. In the Gospel of John the story about the adulteress appear at the end of the book.

Other versions should be mentioned:

Gothic: this version is nearly extinct. It was produced in the mid-300s by Wulfilas, who is known to have become an Arian. One question that has been raised is, *Was Wulfilas an Arian before, or after, he completed his translation-work?* In my view the evidence is inconclusive. The Gothic version of the Gospels is extant (mostly) in Codex Argenteus in Scandinavia.

Armenian: Armenia was the first Gentile nation to formally convert to Christianity. Before Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, Armenia was already Christian earlier in the early 300s. Mesrop Mashtots was responsible for making the Armenian alphabet and for translating New Testament books into Armenian in the early 400s. This first attempt is thought to have been based upon a Syriac text, possibly one which was influenced by the *Diatessaron*. This first edition was completed in, or about, 411. In the 430s, some of Mesrop's assistants visited Constantinople and found a Greek codex, which they brought back to Armenia and used as the basis for a revision of the earlier Armenian text. (I suspect that this was one of the fifty copies prepared for Constantine under the supervision of Eusebius of Caesarea in the early 300s.)

Georgian: This was based on an Armenian text.

Regarding Armenian manuscripts, aside from a few fragments, a MS from the 800s or 900s is considered old. And again the point must be emphasized: there was more than one Armenian version. There were later revisions, especially in Cilician Armenia, toward the Byzantine text (by Nerses of Lambron) and toward the Vulgate (in the 1100s/1200s), as different influences from Europe influences the churches in Armenia.

A variety of scripts were used for writing Armenian:

erkat'agir = iron letters (because of the ink?) –

has a better chance of not being a medieval revision.

bolorgir = rounder and smaller

notrgir = cursive (later)

shghagir = modern slanted cursive

The older an Armenian Gospels MS is, the more likely it is to display agreements with the text of *f*¹. The same is true of Old Georgian Gospels-MSS' textual character.

Although the Old Georgian text was translated from Armenian, some Georgian witnesses are older than most Armenian witnesses. The oldest substantial Gospels-MS in Georgian is the Adysh MS (897). The Old Georgian is an echo of an echo, but the voice is old.

The Old Georgian also goes back to the 400s. George of Athos, in the 1000s, made a revision of the Gospels in Georgian. His revision made the Georgian text more Byzantine. In the Armenian and Georgian versions, Revelation has a different kind of base-text with a different transmission-history than the rest of the New Testament.

Armenian and Georgian copyists went all over the place – Egypt, Jerusalem, *etc.*

Some quirk-readings may have been acquired from the particular locale where the manuscript was made.

Ethiopic (Ge'ez): Christianity has been verified by extra-Biblical evidence to be in Ethiopia in the early 300s (at the Beta Samati site). John Chrysostom (c. 380) mentioned that the Gospel of John had been translated into Ethiopic. The Ethiopic version of the Gospels is not a secondary version; it has been translated directly from Greek.

Every time the Ethiopic version becomes the center of attention of researchers, its significance increases. The Garima Gospels, which used to be assigned to the 1000s, has been shown to have been made in the 500s. It is a well-written manuscript with the decorated Eusebian Canon-tables and illustrations. Most Ethiopic MSS of the Gospels were produced in the 1300s or later. Their text tends to align with the Peshitta – it is primarily *Byzantine* and does not include the *pericope adulterae*. Over 500 Ethiopic New Testament MSS have been catalogued, and many more are being studied at the HMML. The text of the Gospel of John is less Byzantine than the text of the Synoptic Gospels.

Arabic: The first indication of the existence of an Arabic version of the Gospels comes from the 600s. Najran, in southern Arabia, was a Christian center in the 400s. Different groups of Arabic MSS cluster into families of different ancestors. Some are based on the Peshitta, and at least two echo Greek texts. GA 0136/0137 is a fragmentary Greek-Arabic diglot with text from the Gospel of Matthew. Sinai Arabic MSS 8 and 28 combine under the name **Codex Sinaiticus Arabicus** (or CSA). Families A and C echo Greek texts and are more than 70% Byzantine. Family B has an interesting feature in common with the

Sahidic text (and the text of P75) in Luke 16:19: the rich man's name in the parable is given as "Nineveh."

Old Church Slavonic: This began in the 800s. It was written using the Glagolitic alphabet and the Cyrillic alphabet.

Nubian: This version is almost extinct. It circulated in the area of modern-day Ethiopia and Sudan. We have a Christmastime lectionary and assorted inscriptions. At some point, there was a Nubian New Testament, or at least a collection of MSS written in Nubian which included a substantial part of the New Testament.

Caucasian Albanian: This version is almost extinct. MSS written in Causasian Albanian were discovered in 1975 at Saint Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula. Dr. Jost Gippert has admirably publicized its text.

Now let us consider some questions to take away from this chapter.

(1) Early versions can be extremely valuable to track the scope of readings and groups of readings. We should ask, when we encounter a reading in a versional witness, *"What was the early range of rival readings?"* – *"Was this particular reading limited to one locale, or do we see this reading all over the place?"*

(2) Early versions should not be asked to do things that they can't do. Sometimes, articles are not transferable. Sometimes word-order cannot be expected to reflect the Greek word-order. Some languages don't have exact parallels for the nuances of Greek.

(3) Early versions should be considered with an awareness of stages in their histories.

If you pick up a copy of the Vulgate, as revised by Alcuin, do not expect its text to be exactly like a Vulgate copy made 300 years before Alcuin. Early versions' testimonies should generally be boiled down to reflect the history of the text of the version, keeping in mind when and where the versional text was revised, in cases where this can be observed.

(4) Early versions should generally be separated into Gospels, Acts, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and Revelation, and not be presumed to have the same text-type in all of their component-parts.

CHAPTER SIX

Patristic Evidence

Our heavenly Father, we seek your guidance in everything we attempt. Fulfill your promise to your people. Strengthen and guide the reader of this chapter. Uphold us both with your ever-present righteous right hand. Amen.

In this chapter, we shall investigate one of the most neglected subjects in the field of New Testament textual criticism: the study of patristic evidence. The term “patristic evidence” refers to the writings of early Christians and their contemporaries when using the New Testament text.

The patristic era overlaps the end of the apostolic age in the late first century, and continues in the east to the death of John of Damascus, in 749, or, in the west, to the death of the Venerable Bede in 735.

It will be easier to digest the patristic era if we divide it into four parts.

- **The Sub-Apostolic Age** begins in the late first century and includes part of the second century. The writings of this early period are among the earliest witnesses to the text of the New Testament.

- **The AnteNicene Age** runs from the mid-100s to the Council of Nicea in 325. Technically, every writer before the Council of Nicea was “AnteNicene.”

- **The Nicene Generation** includes the writings of those who attended the Council of Nicea in 325, and their contemporaries.

- **The Imperial Age** covers the writings of Christians from 379, when Emperor Theodosius I began to reign, until 749.

Let's take these parts one by one, briefly mentioning some of the most important writers in each period. This might be a little tedious, but it is important to frame these writers in their historical context, and not see them as a list of names. This is not an attempt to present all the patristic writers, or even half of them – just some that were more influential than others, and some who provided significant materials that are used in textual criticism.

The Sub-Apostolic Age

(1) Clement of Rome might be the same Clement who is mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:3. He presided at the congregation in Rome in the last decade of the first century. He wrote one letter to the church at Corinth, which is known as *First Clement*.

There is another early writing, from another source, that has come to be known as *Second Clement*. Here we meet one of the challenges in patristic studies: it is not rare to find that some compositions attributed to a popular writer are not really his work, and it is not rare to find that an early author's genuine work has been embellished by a later writer. In the second century, many compositions were written in the names of earlier writers. Sometimes this was a gesture of respect, but sometimes it was subterfuge to give authority to what would otherwise be a non-authoritative composition.

(2) Ignatius was a leader in the church at Antioch. In the early second century, the 100s, he was martyred in the city of Rome, during the reign of the Emperor Trajan. On the way from Antioch to Rome, he wrote six letters to congregations in Asia Minor – southwest Turkey – and to one individual, Polycarp. His writings do not contain very

many direct quotations from the New Testament, but they are important indicators of the concerns that were harbored by a Christian leader at that time.

Ignatius was concerned about the false teaching known as *docetism* – a belief that Jesus merely appeared to have a physical body. As a safeguard against false teachings, Ignatius promoted the idea that an individual bishop, instead of a group of elders, should oversee each congregation.

(3) The *Epistle of Barnabas* was written sometime after the year 70 and before the year 132. Its author may or may not have had the same name as Paul's fellow missionary Barnabas. He had a heavily allegorical method of interpreting the Old Testament. This writing was considered authoritative in some parts of the early church.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* is unrelated to the text known as the *Gospel of Barnabas*, which is a very late forgery.

(4) Papias was bishop of Hierapolis, in Asia Minor. The best estimate of when he wrote is somewhere around 110, no later than 120. Papias wrote a five-book series called *Expositions on the Sayings of the Lord* – but no copies of this text are extant; it is only preserved in extracts made by later writers. Some later writers considered him a student of the apostle John.

(5) The *Didache* is a relatively brief early catechism, or teaching-text, composed to represent the teachings of the apostles. It is not impossible that it was composed in the late first century, but the early second century is probably a better estimate.

(6) The *Shepherd of Hermas* is a much longer book, consisting of three main parts: *Visions, Mandates, and Similitudes*. This was a very popular text in the early church. Parts of the *Shepherd of Hermas* are preserved in Codex Sinaiticus.

Now we come to the **AnteNicene Age**.

(1) Marcion was the son of a Christian bishop in the city of Sinope on the southern coast of the Black Sea. In the 130s, he travelled to Rome, and taught that the God who created the physical universe, and who gave the Law to Moses, was an entirely different heavenly being from the God who sent Jesus.

Marcion developed his own collection of authoritative books: a drastically edited form of the Gospel of Luke, and ten edited letters of Paul. The orthodox reaction was to say that God the Father almighty is the Creator of heaven and earth. Marcion was declared a heretic in 144. His edition of authoritative books was thoroughly rejected, and the church more aggressively promoted the four Gospels as the canonical core of the New Testament. Marcion's main work, *Antithesis*, is not extant, but extracts from it were made by some other writers later in the early church.

(2) Polycarp, who was martyred in about 160, had once met Marcion. Later writers report that on that occasion, when Marcion asked Polycarp, "Do you know who I am?", Polycarp had replied, "Yes; you are the firstborn of Satan." Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor, and he had been taught by John. He left behind a letter to the church at Philippi.

(3) Justin Martyr got his surname by being martyred in 165 or slightly earlier. Justin left behind mainly three works that have survived: the *First Apology*, the *Dialogue With Trypho*, and the *Second Apology*.

In this context, an “apology” is not a statement of regret like “I am sorry.” It is a defense, ἀπολογία, like what is referred to in First Peter 3:15 – a systematic explanation of what Christians believe, why they believe it, and the positive effects of their beliefs upon their lives.

Justin used material from the Gospels a lot – but he usually did not say which Gospel he was using. Justin simply wrote that he referred to the remembrances of the apostles. Justin used a harmonized account of Matthew, Mark, and Luke – the Synoptic Gospels – and this inspired one of his students to produce a similar text, in which all four Gospels are combined.

(4) Tatian was the name of that student, and his four-Gospel Harmony was the *Diatessaron*. Tatian was an Assyrian who resided in Rome for a while, and then returned to Assyria. Probably. He probably made the *Diatessaron* around 170, and he probably made it in Syriac. Tatian’s *Diatessaron* was very popular in Syria for more than two centuries, but Tatian was suspected of heresy – partly because he had not included the genealogies in the *Diatessaron* – and his work was eventually suppressed.

(5) Melito of Sardis, like Justin Martyr, was an apologist. He composed a written defense of Christianity around 170. He also wrote a composition called *Peri Pascha*, offering a Christ-centered interpretation of the Passover.

(6) Irenaeus was also from Asia Minor, and he heard Polycarp before moving west to what is now the city of Lyons, in Gaul (France). Irenaeus defended Christianity and counter-attacked false teachings, such as the heresies taught by Marcion and by a group generally known as Gnostics. Around the year 180, he wrote a five-book composition commonly known as *Against Heresies*.

Some of the Gnostic doctrines that Irenaeus described are so unusual that some readers questioned whether Irenaeus was representing them accurately. Beginning in the late 1940s Gnostic literature was found at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, which tended to confirm that Gnostic theology was as strange as Irenaeus had said.

Irenaeus made abundant use of the books of the New Testament. One of his most famous and influential statements is his affirmation that the church recognizes four Gospels, no more and no less: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Except for fragments and extracts from later Greek writers, most of *Against Heresies* is not extant in Greek. It is preserved in an early Latin translation. Irenaeus also composed a text called the *Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching*, which is preserved in an Armenian translation.

(7) Athenagoras was another apologist in the second half of the second century. He is remembered for two works: *Embassy on Behalf of Christians*, and *On the Resurrection of the Dead*. A later writer reports that Athenagoras began studying Christian writings in order to oppose them, but became a believer in the course of studying them further.

(8) Clement of Alexandria, an influential writer in the late 100s and on into the early 200s, could be re-named Clement of the Open Road, because he traveled a

lot. He is best known for six compositions, one of which is the *Stromateis*.

Clement's Gospels-text is interesting because it appears to change from one book to another. His text of John was Alexandrian, but his text of Luke was more Western; he used Mark only sparingly, and his text of Matthew agreed with the *Textus Receptus* – which we will look at later – as often as it agrees with Codex Vaticanus.

(9) Meanwhile, further west, a Latin apologist named **Tertullian**, based in the city of Carthage in North Africa, produced many works between 198 and 220 – sometimes targeting heretics, but also addressing what he saw as moral compromises by fellow believers. He wrote very many doctrinal compositions.

(10) Hippolytus, who lived at about the same time as Tertullian, inherited the tradition of apologetics handed down from Irenaeus. In the extensive composition *Philosophumena*, Hippolytus critiqued ancient religions and philosophies, especially the beliefs of the group known as Gnostics.

(11) Origen, was extremely productive. Origen was born in Alexandria to a Christian family. His father Leontius was martyred in the year 202.

When persecution became less intense, Origen did some traveling. He visited Rome, Antioch, Greece, and other places, before focusing on writing at Alexandria, where he studied under Clement and produced many works, including *First Principles*.

Around 232, Origen moved to Caesarea. He continued to write until, as a result of physical suffering endured during the Decian persecution, he died in 254.

Although Origen had written against heretics – most notably in his work *Against Celsus* – some of his own teachings were considered highly questionable. Centuries later his teachings were condemned as heretical at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 in the reign of Emperor Justinian. As a result, most of his works were lost. Besides *First Principles*, many more of Origen's works have survived, including *Discussion With Heraclides*, *On Prayer*, and several commentaries. An edited collection of extracts from Origen's writings was released in the 300s as *Philocalia*.

(12) Turning back to Carthage, we meet **Cyprian**, who presided there in 249-258. Cyprian had the difficult task of guiding the church through two waves of persecution: the persecution under Emperor Decius, and the persecution under Emperor Valerian. Cyprian was martyred in 258. Before his departure, he wrote some books in Latin, including *Three Books of Testimonies*, and *On the Unity of the Church*. Cyprian was a big fan of Tertullian.

(13) We are indebted to **Pontius the Deacon**, an associate of Cyprian, for composing a biography of Cyprian shortly after he was martyred.

(14) In the city of Rome, **Novatian** was also martyred in 258. Novatian was involved in a power struggle in Rome, and took a very harsh attitude not only against believers who fell away under persecution, but also against fellow clerics who forgave them. His most important surviving work is *Treatise on the Trinity*.

(15) In the second half of the 200s, a philosopher named **Porphry** wrote a book called *Against the*

Christians. A substantial portion of it, including some objections that involve textual variants, can be reconstructed from citations made by Christian authors responding to his work.

(16) Methodius was a Christian bishop who responded to his contemporary Porphyry. Methodius was very critical of some of Origen's teachings. His refutation of Porphyry has not survived, but his composition *The Banquet* has survived.

(17) Gregory Thaumaturgus was a student of Origen and wrote a lengthy composition to honor his teacher. Writing 50 years before the Council of Nicea, he maintained Trinitarian theology in *Exposition of the Faith* and other works.

The next group represents the generation of writers who either attended the Council of Nicea in 325, or were the contemporaries of those who did so.

(1) Eusebius of Caesarea was the first Christian historian. He worked mainly in the early 300s, and wrote *Ecclesiastical History*, in which he preserved excerpts of earlier source-materials which are now lost. With his mentor Pamphilius, he wrote a composition *In Defense of Origen*. He also made the Eusebian Canons, a cross-reference system for the Four Gospels, which is included in many MSS of the Gospels.

(2) Aphrahat, a Syriac author, wrote a series of compositions called the *Demonstrations* in the 330's and 340s. Aphrahat's main Gospels-text was the Diatessaron.

(3) Athanasius of Alexandria was the most vocal opponent of Arius at the Council of Nicea. He ardently defended orthodox Trinitarian theology, especially the point that there was never a time when the Word did not exist. Athanasius composed many influential theological works, including *Orations Against the Arians, Against the Heathen*, and his *39th Festal Letter*, in 367, in which he listed the books of authoritative Scripture.

(4) Ephrem of Syria was trained by Jacob of Nisibis, one of the signatories to the Council of Nicea. Ephrem wrote many hymns and commentaries, including a commentary on the *Diatessaron*. He died in 363.

(5) Near the western end of the Roman Empire, in what is now France, **Hilary of Poitiers** was known for enthusiastically opposing Arianism, even when the Emperor was an Arian and Hilary was in exile. His compositions include *On the Trinity*.

(6) At about the same time, **Fortunatianus**, in northern Italy, wrote a Latin commentary on the four Gospels, either quoting or alluding to many New Testament passages.

(7) Lucifer of Cagliari, on the island of Sardinia, wrote in Latin. He was a vigorous and verbose defender of Trinitarian theology, and took a hard line against Arianism. He died around 370.

As we approach the *Imperial Age*, things get a little crowded. You could say that this era began when Theodosius I became Emperor in 379, or two years later at the Council of Constantinople – or that it began with the

converging careers of several remarkable leaders in the church.

- (1) **Basil of Caesarea**, the younger brother of Theodosius,
- (2) **Gregory of Nyssa**, and their fellow-worker
- (3) **Gregory of Nazianzus** are known as the Cappadocian Fathers. Basil's "Caesarea" is not Eusebius's Caesarea on the coast of Israel; it is another city with the same name in central Turkey.

These three men consistently maintained Nicene theology. Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus were fellow students at Athens, and one of their classmates was the future emperor Julian the Apostate.

When Basil was not opposing Arianism, he made efforts to help the poor and the sick. He wrote many letters and books on practical ministry as well as doctrine.

Gregory of Nazianzus was influential in solidifying Constantinople as a center of Trinitarian theology. He died in 390, after writing many theological discourses.

Gregory of Nyssa outlived the other two Cappadocian Fathers. He was not disposed to aggression in doctrinal disputes, but he framed the orthodox position effectively. Gregory of Nyssa is suspected of favoring Origen's concept of *apokatastasis*, the idea that everybody will be eventually restored to harmony with God.

(4) **Epiphanius**, bishop of Salamis, on the island of Cyprus, in the late 300s, took it upon himself to take up the task of opposing heresies, using the writings of earlier apologists as his model. He presented his most important work, *Panarion*, as a medicine-chest, full of antidotes against the poisons of a variety of animals, which were

metaphors for various heresies and heretics, including Origen. He also wrote *Anchoratus*.

(5) Diodore of Tarsus, who met Basil while they were both exiled in Armenia, organized a school at Antioch, where his students included a promising young man named John, who had started his service in the church as a lector, or Scripture-reader.

(6) Cyril of Jerusalem, meanwhile, had to deal with accusations of unlawfully selling church property. His accuser was a nearby rival bishop, Acacius of Caesarea, who was an Arian. Exiled three times, Cyril of Jerusalem composed a substantial series of *Catechetical Lectures*, which has survived. He died in 386.

Meanwhile meanwhile, in the city of Milan – which was politically more important than Rome at the time –

(7) Ambrose was recruited to be the bishop in 374. He was phenomenally successful. On one occasion he obligated Emperor Theodosius I to openly express repentance after ordering Roman troops to massacre rebellious citizens in the city of Thessalonica. He wrote *On the Faith*, *On the Holy Spirit*, and many other works.

(8) Didymus (“the Blind”) composed many doctrinal works in Alexandria in the 300s. These works, like the works of Origen, were condemned in 553, even though Didymus’ theology was strongly Trinitarian. Some of his compositions were preserved nevertheless, and some were discovered on papyrus in the 1940s in Egypt, including his *Commentary on Psalms*. Didymus’ ability to produce many theological writings is rendered more impressive when one appreciates that he was blind from early childhood.

By the time Didymus the Blind died in 398, John, the student of Diodore, had become an extremely popular preacher in Antioch.

(9) John Chrysostom (the “Golden-mouthed”) was so popular that when he was called to serve as archbishop of Constantinople, he left in secret to avoid an uproar. In Constantinople, Chrysostom preached an abundance of sermons. He preached not only about theological intangibles but also about helping the poor, the dangers of luxury, and the responsibility of the clergy to live exemplary lives. Eventually he was exiled, and he died in exile in 407. Chrysostom’s legacy endured, and hundreds of his sermons have survived.

(10) Theodore of Mopsuestia, one of John Chrysostom’s friends, outlived Chrysostom by 20 years. Whereas Chrysostom departed from Antioch to serve at Constantinople, Theodore remained at Antioch a while longer before relocating to Mopsuestia (now Adana, Turkey). He died in 428, leaving behind many works, including a commentary on the Minor Prophets and a commentary on most of the Epistles of Paul.

(11) Jerome, at about the same time Ambrose became bishop of Milan, had a dream, in which he was accused of being a follower of the Roman writer Cicero, instead of a follower of Christ. This began a very productive career. In 383, Jerome produced the Vulgate Gospels. The Vulgate eventually became the standard Latin text of the Western church. Jerome traveled widely, and wrote on a very wide variety of topics, including the history of the church from the days of Eusebius of Caesarea up to his own time. He wrote very many letters

and commentaries, some of which were modeled on the work of earlier writers, including Origen.

(12) Pelagius, a monk, was one of the targets of Jerome's criticisms. Pelagius was probably originally from Britain, and moved from Rome to Carthage to Jerusalem, where he died in 418. He was known for advocating a doctrine of free will. Pelagius was eventually condemned as a heretic. Nevertheless some of his writings have survived.

(13) Augustine of Hippo was another individual who energetically opposed the teachings of Pelagius was. Augustine was converted by Ambrose. The city of Hippo was located in what is now the northeastern coast of Algeria.

Pelagius raised some interesting questions like, *"Does God hold people accountable for failing to obey commands that are impossible to obey?"*. By the time Augustine was done answering them, he impacted church doctrine more significantly than any other writer of his time. Among Augustine's many surviving works, *Confessions*, *City of God*, and the *Enchiridion* are among the most important. He also wrote many letters. Augustine died in 430.

(14) Nestorius (who was trained at Antioch), shortly after the death of Pelagius, promoted some controversial teachings. After he became archbishop of Constantinople, his orthodoxy, especially regarding the nature of Christ, was openly challenged. He was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431, and was sent back to Antioch, and from there to Egypt, where he died in 450.

(15) Cyril of Alexandria was Nestorius' most energetic opponent. Almost none of Nestorius' works have survived, but Cyril of Alexandria is admired for his many theological works. However he was one of the most ruthless archbishops ever.

(16) Shenoute was already an experienced leader in the church in Egypt when he attended the Council of Ephesus. In Upper Egypt, Shenoute promoted a strict form of monasticism, encouraging and exemplifying not only dedication to the study of Scripture, but also to acts of charity. When he died in 466 after living 118 years, he left behind many writings.

Researcher W. E. Crum observed in 1904 that "Students of the New Testament will find in Shenoute's endless quotations a highly valuable witness, as yet wholly unexplored, to the text of the most important of the Egyptian versions." Anthony Alcock has rendered some of Shenoute's writings into English.

(17) Theodoret of Cyrrhus was not a fan of Cyril of Alexandria. Like John Chrysostom, early in his career he was a lector at Antioch. By 423, Theodoret was put in charge of Cyrrhus in northwestern Syria, which gave him plenty to do, not only in terms of correcting false doctrines, but also in terms of practical ministry. It was Theodoret of Cyrrhus who mentioned that in 800 congregations in the area, he found 200 copies of the *Diatessaron*, which he replaced with copies of the four Gospels.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus died in the 460s. Although he was eventually declared a heretic many of his compositions and letters have survived.

(18) Theodoret's career in the east overlapped the career of **Leo the Great** in the west. Leo was invited by Cyril of Alexandria to intervene in his dispute against Nestorius. His writings had a heavy influence at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

(19) While Emperor Justinian ruled in the East, a scholar named **Cassiodorus** founded the Vivarium in southern Italy. It was partly a monastery, partly an educational center, and partly a scriptorium. Cassiodorus left behind several important works in Latin, including *Institutiones*, and various letters.

(20) Finally, the **Venerable Bede**, in the late 600s and early 700s, had the sort of broad knowledge of history, theology, and science that Cassiodorus had hoped to inspire. Bede left behind several important works.

I have covered very briefly **50** writers: **6** from the Sub-Apostolic Age, **17** who wrote before the Council of Nicea, **7** in the Nicene generation, and **20** from the Imperial Age. There were many others.

Some precautions are in order when using patristic evidence. Nine questions should be asked about an author's testimony regarding a specific passage of the New Testament.

(1) Has the reference been accurately reconstructed using all helpful materials?

(2) Has it been verified that a particular text attributed to a specific author really is the work of that author? For a variety of reasons, many works have been attributed to some writers who cannot be their actual source.

(3) Is the reference preserved in the language in which it was originally written by the author? Many patristic references are versional, and the same limitations that apply to versions, ought to be applied to versional patristic writings. This applies not only to works that were *composed* in languages other than Greek, but also to works that are *preserved* in languages other than Greek.

(4) Does the writer make a *quotation*, or an *allusion*, to a discernible New Testament passage?

(5) Does the writer explicitly comment on a contested reading, or does he simply use it without comment?

(6) Has the writer borrowed or adapted material from another writer? If this has occurred, then in the borrowed material, we might encounter the text of the source-material's author.

(7) Does the text used by the writer change in accord with changes in the location of the writer? A mobile writer might use whatever New Testament MSS happened to be on hand.

(8) Is a particular quotation from the New Testament made in a composition engaging an opposing view, or in a composition written to a friendly reader or readers unlikely to challenge a loose paraphrase?

(9) Ninth, does a writer repeatedly use and comment upon the same form of the same New Testament passage?

When all this is taken into consideration, patristic evidence constitutes a major source of data about what forms of the text were used where, and when, and by whom, in the early church. Many of the echoes, the extant copies of patristic compositions, are late, but the voices are early.

To an extent, this evidence counter-balances the inordinate weight that has been put on MSS that tend to represent one particular locale that was blessed with low humidity. It facilitates a more panoramic view of the text in the early church.

EXTRA CREDIT

At the Extra History channel on YouTube:

(1) *Early Christian Schisms – Before Imperium –*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1ZZeCDGHJE>

(2) *Early Christian Schisms – The Woes of*

Constantine –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZsZXHPDwsW>

(3) *Early Christian Schisms – The Council of Nicea –*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6d2lOQpuq4>

(4) *Early Christian Schisms – Ephesus, the Robber*

Council, and Chalcedon –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9lEcwLnwfg>

(5) *Early Christian Schisms: Lies –*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dnECIPXIRY>

Read Hort's *Six Lectures on Early Patristic Writers*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Some Important MSS

Our heavenly Father, before we called out to you, you called us. May our zeal to work for your kingdom be matched by peaceful confidence that you have already prepared the way for us to take and that you will bring to completion every work that you began. Make the imprint of your Son be seen in every step along the way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In this chapter we meet some MSS. Some of their names (or symbols and numbers) will be encountered very often in the apparatus of the Greek New Testament. Others, though relatively small, are among the earliest witnesses to the readings they support.

I shall mention links to supplemental materials. It is up to you, O reader, to pause and consider the supplemental materials.

I shall refer to the Alexandrian Text, the Western Text, and the Byzantine Text. In a future chapter I will go into more detail about these terms. For now, picture three forms of the text: the Alexandrian Greek text was used in Egypt, and influenced the Sahidic version there. The Western Greek text was used mainly (but not exclusively) in the Western part of the Roman Empire, and influenced the Old Latin text and was then influenced by the Old Latin text. The Byzantine Greek text was used in the vicinity of Constantinople, and is generally supported by the majority of Greek MSS.

- **Papyrus 52** is perhaps the oldest manuscript that contains text from the New Testament. It is small – about the size of a playing card. It contains text from John 18:31-33 on one side, and on the other side it contains text from

John 18:37-38. It was brought to light by Colin H. Roberts in 1935.

The importance of Papyrus 52, which is at the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England, is its age: it is probably from about the first half of the 100s.

Papyrus 52 (and many other fragmentary papyri) is described online. See for example the following materials:

From Robert Waltz:

<https://www.skypoint.com/members/waltzmn/MSSPapyri.html>

From Dirk Jongkind:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyfR0AsRaX4>

● **Papyrus 104** is a top contender for the title “earliest New Testament manuscript.” It was excavated at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt by Grenfell and Hunt, and was brought to light in 1997 by J. D. Thomas. Papyrus 104 is the earliest manuscript with text from the Gospel of Matthew. The handwriting used for P104 was executed in a fancier style than what is seen in most other MSS. Similar handwriting appears in some non-Biblical MSS excavated at Oxyrhynchus, including one in which a specific date (from the year 204 or 211) has survived.

Papyrus 104 contains text from Matthew 21:34-37 on one side. The text on the other side is very extremely badly damaged. The surviving damaged text probably contains text from Matthew 21:43 and 45. Papyrus 104 is thus both the earliest manuscript of Matthew 21 and also the earliest witness for the non-inclusion of Matthew 21:44.

Greg Lanier’s detailed analysis of Papyrus 104 can be found online in Volume 21 of the TC-Journal, for 2016.

<http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/v21/TC-2016-Lanier.pdf>

<http://jbtc.org/v21/TC-2016-Lanier.pdf>

- **Papyrus 23** is a fragment of the Epistle of James made (probably) in the early 200s. It contains text from part of James chapter 1. You can get a very good look at Papyrus 23 by visiting the website of its present home, the Spurlock Museum in Urbana, Illinois.

<https://www.spurlock.illinois.edu/collections/search-collection/details.php?a=1914.21.0025>

- **Papyrus 137** received some fame, before its official publication, by being heralded as if it was from the first century. It was called “First Century Mark.” It turned out to not be from the first century. This MS – a very small fragment containing text from Mark 1:7-9 and Mark 1:16-18 – is the oldest copy of the text it preserves. Like several other early fragments, it has made no impact on the compilation of the text of the New Testament.

- **Papyrus 45** is much more substantial – but it is still very fragmentary. When it was made in the first half of the 200s, Papyrus 45 contained the four Gospels and Acts. The order of books, when the manuscript was made, is unknown. Its surviving pages at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin contain text from Matthew 20 and 21, Mark 4-9, Mark 11-12, Luke 6-7, Luke 9-14, John 4-5, John 10-11, and Acts 4-17. A leaf in Vienna contains text from Matthew 25-26. P45 is the earliest known manuscript that contains text from all four Gospels.

Papyrus 45 has several readings that are especially interesting due to the impact they have on Hort’s theory of the Lucianic Recension. A future chapter is devoted to that subject. Here, I shall sum it up as the theory that the Byzantine Text – the text in the vast majority of Greek MSS – originated as the result of an editorial effort by someone

in the late 200s – possibly Lucian of Antioch – who was combining readings from two earlier forms of the text: the Alexandrian Text, and the Western Text.

Hort, advocating this theory, rejected readings in the Byzantine Text that were neither Alexandrian nor Western, reckoning that they did not exist before the Byzantine Text was made.

In Papyrus 45 there are some readings that are not supported by the flagship MSS of the Alexandrian Text or the Western Text. Readings in Mark 7:35, Acts 15:40, and many other passages show that it is hazardous to assume that non-Alexandrian, non-Western readings should be rejected.

The text of Papyrus 45 does not agree particularly strongly with Codex Vaticanus, and it does not agree particularly strongly with Codex Bezae either. In the parts of Mark where Papyrus 45 is extant, its closest textual relative is Codex W – but Codex W's text in those parts of Mark is not particularly Alexandrian or Western either.

When Papyrus 45 was first studied, after it was brought to light in the 1930s, there was a tendency to call its text Caesarean, like the text of family-1. But the late Dr. Larry Hurtado showed that whatever Papyrus 45's text is, it is not closely related to the Caesarean Text. While it repeatedly agrees with the Byzantine Text, it is not consistently Byzantine either.

● **Papyrus 46** is the earliest substantial copy of most of the Epistles of Paul, basically arranged in order according to their length, with Hebrews between Romans and First Corinthians. There is some uncertainty about how many epistles the copyist intended to include in the codex. Part of this manuscript is at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, and part of it is at the University of Michigan (USA). Its most likely production-date is around 200, give

or take 50 years. The text of Papyrus 46 tends to agree with Codex Vaticanus, but not as closely as one might expect. For example, in Ephesians 5:9, Papyrus 46 agrees with the Byzantine Text, reading “the fruit of the Spirit” instead of “the fruit of the light.”

- **Papyrus 66** contains most of the Gospel of John, with gaps due to incidental damage. It was found in Egypt in the early 1950s, and was published in 1956. Its production-date was initially assigned to around 200, but a wider range is possible. The copyist who wrote the text in Papyrus 66 made over 400 corrections of what he had initially written.

- **Papyrus 75** is also assigned to around 200. It is a damaged but substantial codex which contains text from Luke and John. Its surviving text of Luke begins in chapter 3; its surviving text of John ends in chapter 15. The text of Papyrus 75 is close to the text found in Codex Vaticanus, but the two MSS are not related in a grandfather-and-grandson kind of relationship. Page-views of Papyrus 75 can be found online at the website of the Vatican Library.

Each of the next three MSS was designed as a pandect, that is, a large one-volume collection of the entire Bible. Modern minds tend to assume that it is not unusual to have a single volume that contains all of the books of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. That is because we are a post-printing-press generation. In the world of MSS, Greek pandects of the Bible are rare.

- Codex Vaticanus (B, 03) is a very important manuscript of the Bible, housed, along with many other MSS, at the Vatican Library in Rome. Its New Testament portion was not the subject of scholarly study until the early 1800s.

Since then its reputation has grown. It is generally regarded as the most important manuscript of the New Testament.

Codex Vaticanus is the paramount representative of the Alexandrian Text.

Vaticanus was produced in the early 300s. Its text, in the New Testament, is formatted in three columns per page. This is usually its format in the Old Testament books too, although in the books of poetry the format is two columns per page. Codex Vaticanus does not contain the entire New Testament; it has no text from First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, or the book of Revelation; a text of Revelation is in the codex, written in minuscule lettering, but it is not really the same codex. Vaticanus also does not contain the text of the book of Hebrews after Hebrews 9:14.

The lettering in Codex Vaticanus has been extensively reinforced. Someone, long after the codex was made, traced over the lettering, except where, rightly or wrongly, he thought that the text was inaccurate. The exact date when this was done is a matter of debate.

I suspect that Codex Vaticanus, before it ended up at the Vatican Library, was previously in the hands of an important character in the 1400s named Bessarion, and scribes working for Bessarion may have been responsible for sprucing it up a bit. This did not materially affect its text.

The entire manuscript can be viewed page by page at the website of the Vatican Library.

- Codex Sinaiticus is the wingman of Codex Vaticanus. Its text is not as good, but it is more complete. The New Testament text of Codex Sinaiticus has survived in more or less the same form in which it left its scriptorium in the mid-300s. "More or less," that is, because a few centuries

after its production, someone attempted to adjust many of its readings. Those attempts can be detected. In addition to containing the text of every book of the New Testament, Codex Sinaiticus also contains the *Epistle of Barnabas* and part of the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

Most of the text of Codex Sinaiticus is Alexandrian. However in the first eight chapters of John (more or less) its text tends to be more like the Western Text. It is as if the copyists' main exemplar of the Gospels that was Alexandrian, but in these opening chapters of John, their main exemplar was damaged, and so they used a drastically different exemplar as their back-up.

That is consistent with a historical scenario that was mentioned by Jerome, who states that Acacius and Euzoius, at Caesarea in the mid-300s, labored to replace texts written on decaying papyrus in the library there with more durable parchment copies. Whereas Codex Vaticanus does not have the Eusebian Section-numbers in its margins in the Gospels, Codex Sinaiticus does – but in a somewhat mangled form.

This indicates that Eusebius of Caesarea was not involved in the production of Codex Sinaiticus. It is extremely unlikely that he would have allowed his own cross-reference system to be presented so carelessly. At the same time, as the place where Eusebius was bishop until his death, Caesarea was one of the first places where the Eusebian Canons were used.

There are several clues embedded in the text of Codex Sinaiticus that suggest that it was made at Caesarea during the time when Acacius, an Arian, was bishop there. It is very probable that this is when and where it was made.

Details about the origin of Codex Sinaiticus, and the quality of its text have been overshadowed by stories about its discovery in the 1800s by Constantine

Tischendorf at Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. Here I shall not go into detail about all that, except to say:

- (1) the most generous interpretation of Tischendorf's account of his first encounter with pages from Codex Sinaiticus is that he did not understand what he was being shown and what he was being told, and
- (2) all of the pages that Tischendorf took should be returned to the monastery from which they came.

Codex Sinaiticus has a secondary set of section-numbers in its margin in Acts that is, for the most part, shared by Codex Vaticanus. This demonstrates that when these numbers were added, probably in the 600s, these two MSS were at the same place.

Codex Sinaiticus has its own website, CodexSinaiticus.org, and there one can find not only good photographs of the manuscript but also some interesting information about its background and how it was made.

● **Codex Alexandrinus.** Produced in the early 400s, Codex A has undergone significant damage. It is missing the first 24 chapters of Matthew. The surviving Gospels-text of Alexandrinus is particularly important because it tends to support the Byzantine Text, unlike Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. In Acts and the Epistles, its text agrees much more often with the two flagship Alexandrian codices. This is a *tendency*, definitely not a two-peas-in-a-pod level of agreement. In the book of the Apocalypse of Saint John (Revelation), Codex A is the best manuscript we have. The entire New Testament portion of Codex Alexandrinus can be viewed page by page at the British Library's website.

- The worst manuscript of the Gospels is **Codex Bezae**, a diglot manuscript, with alternating pages in Greek and Latin, which was produced in the 400s. It has undergone some damage, but still contains most of the four Gospels, in the order Matthew – John – Luke – Mark, part of Third John in Latin, and most of the book of Acts.

More important than its production-date is the date of the readings that it supports. Many of them are supported by Old Latin witnesses, and by early patristic writers who used what is called the Western Text.

The high level of textual corruption in Codex Bezae makes the text found in relatively young MSS look excellent in comparison. Codex D's text demonstrates that what matters is **not** the age of a MS, but the quality of work performed by the copyists in the transmission-line of a MS's text.

Once one comes to terms with the awful quality of Codex Bezae's text, many of its readings are awfully interesting. It echoes a time in the text's history when copyists prioritized conveying the meaning of the text – or what they thought was its meaning – above the form of the text found in their exemplars.

Codex Bezae can be viewed online page by page at the University of Cambridge's Digital Library.

- **Codex Washingtonianus** is also from the 400s (probably earlier than Codex Bezae). Codex W was acquired by the American businessman Charles Freer in 1906. It is the most important Greek Gospels-manuscript in the United States. Part of what makes Codex W important is not only its age, but its attestation to different forms of the text collected in a single volume: its text in Matthew is strongly Byzantine. Its text in Mark 1:1 to the end of Mark 5 is similar to the Western Text. Its text in the rest of Mark tends to agree with the surviving text of Papyrus 45 in the

parts where P45 is extant. In Luke, up to chapter 8, its text is Alexandrian, but the rest of Luke tends to agree with the Byzantine Text. In the first four chapters of John, Codex W has supplemental pages, copied from a different exemplar than the rest. In the rest of John, it tends to agree with the Alexandrian Text.

This has led some researchers to suspect that although most of Codex W appears to have been made in the 400s, it may be a copy of an earlier codex that was based on exemplars that had been partly destroyed in the Diocletian persecution, in the very early 300s, just before Codex Vaticanus was made. Page-views of Codex W can be accessed at the website of the Center for the Study of New Testament MSS.

- **Codex Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus**, also known as Codex C, is a palimpsest. Its surviving pages contain text from almost every book of the New Testament, as well as pages from some of the books of Poetry in the Old Testament, and two apocryphal books. It was made some time in the 400s. Its text is somewhat Alexandrian, with significant Byzantine mixture. It is one of the few Greek MSS that support the reading “six hundred and sixteen” as the number of the beast in Revelation 13:18.

The parchment of Codex C was recycled to provide material on which some of the works of Ephraem the Syrian were written. (This accounts for the name of the manuscript). Its Biblical text was established in the 1840s after much effort by Constantine Tischendorf, the same individual who brought Codex Sinaiticus to the attention of European scholars. The text has undergone extensive correction.

- **0176** is a fragment, probably produced in the 400s, that contains text from Galatians 3:16-24. This manuscript was

excavated from Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, which is intriguing, because the text of this fragment is thoroughly Byzantine, not Alexandrian.

- The **Purple Triplets** is my pet name for three majuscules from the mid-500s: **Codex N**, **Codex O**, and **Codex Σ**.

Codex N is also known as 022, Codex Petropolitanus Purpureus.

Codex O is also known as 023, Codex Sinopensis. It contains text from the Gospel of Matthew.

Codex Σ is also known as 042, Codex Purpureus Rossanensis, or the Rossano Gospels. It contains text from Matthew and Mark.

These are not the only Greek majuscules written on purple parchment. What is especially interesting about these three is that they are related to each other like siblings, copies of the same master-copy. Codex Σ is known not only for its mainly Byzantine text but also for its illustrations, which can be viewed at <http://www.codexrossanensis.it> .

- **Codex Regius**, also known as Codex L (019), contains most of the text of the four Gospels. It was probably made in the 700s by an Egyptian copyist. Codex L is one of eight Greek MSS that attest to both the Shorter Ending and the Longer Ending of Mark. Codex L also has a large distinct blank space in the Gospel of John where most MSS have John 7:53-8:11 (the story of the adulteress).

- **Codex Pi (Π)**, also known as Codex Petropolitanus, is a Gospels-manuscript assigned to the 800s. Its text is a very early form of the Byzantine Text.

- **Codex K**, also known as Codex Cyprius, is another Gospels-manuscript that was also probably produced in

the 800s. In the first 20 verses of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, compared to the text in Codex Sinaiticus, the text of Codex Cyprius is much closer to the original text.

- **Minuscule 2474**, the Elfleda Bond Goodspeed Gospels (from the 900s) contains an example of the text of the Gospels that dominated Greek MS-production in the Byzantine Empire. This MS can be viewed page by page at the website of the Goodspeed Manuscript Library of the University of Chicago.

There are also several clusters of MSS, that share readings that indicate that they share the same general line of descent:

In the Gospels, the text of some members of a group of MSS that display a note called the **Jerusalem Colophon** is above average importance.

Readings shared by the main members of **Family 1** in the Gospels (best represented by minuscule MSS 1, 1582, and 2193) echo an ancestor-manuscript produced at the scriptorium supervised by Eusebius of Caesarea in the early 300s.

Members of **Family 13** in the Gospels tend to echo an ancestor-MS with many reading that diverge from the Byzantine standard.

In the General Epistles members of the **Harklean Group** echo a form of the text that has some unusual readings that are earlier than Codex Sinaiticus.

Some other minuscules, such as 6, 157, 700, 892, and 1739, are as important as some of the uncials. Their existence should remind us that when we ask how much weight ought to be given to a particular MS, the primary consideration should not be “How old is it?”, but “*How well did the copyists in its transmission-stream do their job?*”.

No MS sprang into being out of nothing, and any MS, early or late, if it is independent from another known MS, has the potential to contribute something to a reconstruction of the text of the New Testament.

EXTRA CREDIT

I encourage the exploration of online presentations of MSS at the following institutions:

Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai,
The Vatican Library,
the British Library,
the National Library of France,
the Walters Art Museum,
the Goodspeed Manuscript Collection at the
University of Chicago,
the Kenneth W. Clark Collection at Duke University,
and the
Center for the Study of New Testament MSS.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Codex Vaticanus: From Where?

Our heavenly Father, your servant Paul instructed the Thessalonian Christians to test all things. Guide us to test the voices we listen to, and the books we read, and the hands we touch, and our own thoughts and our own hands also. Amen.

The provenance of a MS, when it can be ascertained, is an important thing to know. When Codex W came to light in Egypt, the discovery of its essentially Byzantine text of Matthew and most of Luke (alongside the mainly Alexandrian text of the opening chapters of Luke and most of John) showed that before the mid-400s (working on the premise that Codex W has been correctly dated to the early 400s), a well-developed Byzantine Text of the Gospels existed in Egypt by the time Codex W was made.

Many textual critics consider no manuscript more valuable than Codex Vaticanus. But what is Codex Vaticanus' provenance? It has been at the Vatican Library ever since the Vatican Library was founded in 1475 (using earlier library-collections) under Sixtus IV. There is no record of Codex Vaticanus' presence in Rome prior to that time. Juan de Sepulveda drew attention to Codex Vaticanus in the 1530s, and informed Erasmus of some of its readings. (Sepulveda is responsible for the distigmai in the margins of Codex Vaticanus.)

Is there anything we can say about where Codex Vaticanus was before that? Perhaps.

It may have been in the possession of Basil Bessarion (1403-1472), who lived a very interesting life in the 1400s. Born in Trebizond (modern Trabzon on the Black Sea), he became a monk and worked his way up through the ranks, so to speak, becoming metropolitan of Nicea in 1437. In the same year, Bessarion traveled

to Italy to take part in the Council of Ferrara-Florence. By 1440, Bessarion had become a Cardinal and had even composed and signed a statement of unity (*Oratio dogmatica de unione*) which was perhaps the strongest formal expression of a desire for the reunion of the Western Roman Catholic Church with the Eastern Orthodox Church since the earlier schism about the *filioque* clause.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the fall of Trebizond in 1461, Bessarion's efforts to promote a formal ecclesiastical reunion foundered, but his influence in the West continued to rise. He nearly became pope, but some bishops were averse to giving such a position to a man who was from the East.

In 1468, Bessarion donated his personal library (which included more Greek MSS than any other European library at the time) to the Republic of Venice, and this became the core of the Biblioteca Marciana (a.k.a. the Sansovino Library). Among the volumes which can now be found at the Biblioteca Marciana is the MS known as Codex Venetus Marc. Gr. 6 (Old Testament Manuscript 122), in which, according to T.C. Skeat (in his essay "*The Codex Vaticanus in the Fifteenth Century*"), the text of Esther, Sirach, Judith, and Tobit was copied from Codex Vaticanus. Skeat went so far as to state that Codex Venetus Marc. Gr. 6 was among the MSS that had been owned by Bessarion.

If Bessarion was responsible for bringing Codex Vaticanus to Rome, this elicits another question: where was Codex Vaticanus before that? If we look at the data in *Euthaliana*, by Joseph Armitage Robinson, published in 1895 as Text & Studies, Vol. 3, (beginning on digital page 448 of the download) we will see proof, in a sub-chapter titled "Chapters of the Acts in \aleph and B," that the chapter-numbers in part of the book of Acts in Codex Sinaiticus (up

to 15:40) are the same as the chapter-numbers in the book of Acts in Codex Vaticanus.

Robinson reasoned: "Where did this system of numbers, common to \aleph and B, come from? The two codices have got hold of it quite independently of one another. It cannot have been copied from B into \aleph , for \aleph has one number (M) [i.e., 40] which is not found in B : nor can it have been copied from \aleph into B, for nearly a third of the numbers (from MB onwards) are not found in \aleph . We must go back to a common source – some MS which gave its numeration to them both : and this seems to imply that the \aleph and B were at an early stage of their history lying side by side in the same library."

What library? The library at Caesarea. Sinaiticus was probably made there (not by Eusebius, but slightly later when Acacius was bishop). J. R. Harris argued for a connection between Sinaiticus and Caesarea in 1893 in his composition "Stichometry" in the chapter "The Origin of Codices \aleph and B," on the basis of a small detail in Sinaiticus' text.

In Matthew 13:54, the scribe of \aleph initially wrote Ἀντιπατρίδα instead of πατρίδα. Antipatris (mentioned in Acts 23:31) was not far from the city of Caesarea, and the scribe's thoughts may have wandered a bit, eliciting this blunder in \aleph . Harris put his suspicion this way: "It is to my mind much the same as if a printed text of Shakespeare should put into Mark Antony's speech the line "I come to Banbury Caesar, not to praise him." Such a text would probably be the work of Oxford printers." (Harris' meaning may be better appreciated if one understands that the town of Banbury is about 20 miles northwest of Oxford, and Antipatris is about 25 miles from Caesarea.)

The force of Harris' argument increases when two other readings in κ are noticed:

- In Luke 24:13, Codex κ says that the distance between Emmaus and Jerusalem was 160, rather than sixty, stadia. This reading almost certainly originated after Nicopolis was recognized (incorrectly) as being the same place as Emmaus, as Eusebius mentioned in his composition *Onomasticon*.

- In Acts 8:5, the scribe wrote Καίσαριας where he should have written Σαμαριας.

If Caesarea was the place where Sinaiticus was made, what evidence is there that Vaticanus (which supports none of \aleph 's readings in Matthew 13:54, Luke 14:13, and Acts 8:5) was also produced there? One item may point in this direction: One of Bessarion's better-known MSS, known as minuscule 205, was made for Bessarion in the 1400s by John Rhosus. Its Gospels-text is Caesarean, agreeing at many points with the Armenian version. 205 was copied from 2886 (formerly called 205^{abs}); re-numbering was called for after Alison Sarah Welsby showed in 2011 that earlier scholars who had stated that 205abs was copied from 205 had gotten it backwards (at least, as far as the text of the Gospel of John is concerned).

There is another possibility. Codex Vaticanus' format is nearly unique (having most of its text, other than the books of poetry in the Old Testament) written in three columns of text per page. B. H. Streeter wrote (on p. 113 of *The Four Gospels – A Study of Origins*, 1924 ed.), "It is stated in the Menologies – short accounts of a Saint for reading on his day – that Lucian bequeathed his pupils a copy of the Old and New Testaments written in three columns in his own hand." (The day assigned to Saint Lucian is either January 7 or October 15.) Bruce Metzger (in *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual*

Criticism, in the chapter *The Lucianic Recension of the Greek Bible*, p. 6) referred to the same report, and added the detail that the Menaeon states this three-column manuscript written in three columns per page ended up at a church in Nicomedia. Prior to becoming cardinal of Nicea, Bessarion may have encountered what we know as Codex Vaticanus (and obtained it) at Nicomedia, and took it to Italy.

Considering that the three-column format is nearly unique to Vaticanus and the manuscript attributed to Lucian, they are probably one and the same. This implies that Lucian of Antioch, rather than being the initiator of a recension that begat the Byzantine Text of the New Testament, perpetuated the mainly Alexandrian text he found in exemplars at Caesarea which had been taken there from Egypt about a hundred years earlier by Origen. If these MSS were also the ancestors of Codex Sinaiticus, then the genealogical connection between Sinaiticus and Vaticanus does not go back to the second century (as Hort seems to have thought) but to the third century.

To review the steps in Vaticanus' history that I have deduced:

(1) Vaticanus was produced at Caesarea under the supervision of Lucian of Antioch, no later than 312 (when Lucian was martyred), using as exemplars MSS that had been brought to Caesarea by Origen in 230-231.

(2) Before Vaticanus was taken from Caesarea to Nicomedia, its text in Acts was supplemented with chapter-numbers from the same non-extant source which supplied the chapter-numbers to Acts in Codex S.

(3) Vaticanus was taken to Nicomedia. (Meanwhile, Codex Sinaiticus was taken to St. Catherine's monastery.) Much later, in the 1400s, Bessarion acquired it and took it

with him to Italy, where, via means unknown, it was placed in the collection in the Vatican Library.

CHAPTER NINE

Lectionaries

Heavenly Father,

You give food to the beasts of the field and to the young ravens when they squawk. Young lions may go hungry, but those who seek You shall not lack any good thing. As we thank You for giving us our daily bread, we also thank You for giving us our ration of your word. Grant that we may taste your word and see that you are good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

What is a lectionary?

Over 2,400 MSS of the New Testament are lectionaries. Let's make some estimates: we have about 140 papyri. We have about 320 uncials. We have about 2,600 minuscules. Four out of every ten Greek New Testament MSS is a lectionary. We should probably look into what they are.

A lectionary is a book of selections from the New Testament for reading in church-services.

That's the simple part. The task of categorizing New Testament lectionaries is somewhat complicated. One way to differentiate them is to picture one group of lectionaries that contain readings taken exclusively from the four Gospels. This is called a Gospels-lectionary, or an *Evangelistiar*y. The non-Gospels lectionary is called an Epistolary.

Another way is to picture one kind of lectionary as a book of selections mainly for the weekends, that is, for Saturday and Sunday, and the other kind of lectionary as a book of selections for every day.

The best way is to categorize the lectionaries according to whether they begin on Easter, or on September 1. The Orthodox way of determining the date

of Easter is to calculate the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. This is different from the other way, in which Easter is assigned to the first Sunday after the 14th day after the first new moon that occurs after March 6. Sometimes both calculations arrive at the same day, but usually not.

If a Gospels-lectionary begins on Easter, that is a clear sign that it is a **Synaxarion**. In a Synaxarion, the readings are not assigned to a specific date on the calendar, like “the fourth of July” but every date is variable, depending on when Easter arrives each year, Because this schedule changes year by year, the feast-days that are observed in the Synaxarion are called the “*movable feasts.*” The Synaxarion begins with a reading from John 1:1-17, and the next six readings, for each day of the week after Easter, are from the first, second, and third chapters of John.

The reading for the first Sunday after Easter is John 20:19-31, about Thomas’ encounter with the risen Lord. The readings for the rest of the week are taken from John 2, 3, 5, and 6.

The reading for the second Sunday after Easter, starting the third week, is from Mark 15:43-16:8, about the women who brought myrrh to Jesus’ tomb. The rest of the readings for the third week are from John 4, 6, 15, and 16.

The reading for the third Sunday after Easter, starting the fourth week, is John 5:1-15, about the paralytic. The rest of the readings for the third week are taken from John 6, 7, and 8. The Wednesday that is the fourth day of the fourth week is given a special designation, “Mesopentekostēs,” conveying that we’re halfway to Pentecost Sunday.

The reading for the fourth Sunday, beginning the fifth week, is from John 4:5-42, about the Samaritan

women. The rest of the readings for the fifth week are from John 6, 7, 9, and 10.

The fifth Sunday, starting the sixth week, has its reading taken from John 9:1-28, John's account about the blind man. Most of the readings for this week are from John 9, 11, 12, and 14, but if we jump to Thursday of the 6th week after Easter, that is, Ascension-Day, we find that the main reading is from Luke 24:36-53, and the morning reading is from Mark 16:9-20.

The reading for the sixth Sunday is John 17:1-13, in honor of the 318 men who attended the Council of Nicea. The rest of the selections read during the sixth week are taken from John 14, 16, 17, and 21.

That bring us to Pentecost Sunday, 50 days after Easter. The reading for this feast-day consists of John 7:37-52, plus John 8:12. A lectionary that begins at Easter, and continues to Pentecost, is called a Pentecostarion, and it may have supplemental features besides the main readings.

The next 17 Sunday-morning readings are from Matthew. After the series of readings from Matthew is completed, each daily reading is taken from the Gospel of Luke for the next thirteen weeks. After that, the Saturday and Sundays reading continued to be from Luke, but the weekday readings are from Mark chapters 8 through 14.

As Lent approaches, the schedule of readings becomes a little more complicated, but the selections continue to be mainly from Luke and Mark. During Lent, most of the Gospel-readings for Sundays are from the Gospel of Mark.

Then comes Holy Week. During Holy Week, beginning on Palm Sunday, each day's reading-selection is more complicated than normal. On Maundy Thursday, John 13:3-10 is designated as the reading about the foot-washing. This begins a twelve-part series of readings

about the sufferings of Christ, taken from all four Gospels. There follows another series of readings, called the Good Friday Vigil, that is also extracted from all four Gospels.

Finally, there is the Eleven-part Heothina cycle – readings about the resurrection of Jesus, which consist of excerpts from the closing chapters of all four Gospels.

That bring us back to Easter.

Besides the Synaxarion, there is another part of the lectionary which overlaps it. This is the Menologion. In the Menologion, feast-days commemorate particularly important events in the Gospels, and honor the lives of various saints and martyrs. Some other events are also commemorated. These commemorations are scheduled for the same day every year, which is why they are called the “*fixed* feasts” – fixed in the sense that they are set in place.

The Menologion begins on New Years Day, which, in this calendar, is September 1, not January 1. Because the Feast-days in the Menologion honor a variety of saints and martyrs, it is important to regard the Menologion as an expression of a mutating tradition: As more things happened that warranted assigning a Feast-Day in their memory, the Menologion grew.

Viewers of historical pictures that depict the American flag can estimate when the picture was made according to how many stars are on the flag – one per state. Similarly, you can estimate the age of the text of a Menologion-manuscript by noticing the most recent event that is the focus of a feast-day.

I shall draw attention to some of the annual Feast-Days that are especially notable.

Simeon Stylites was honored on the first day of September. The birth of Jesus’ mother Mary, traditionally called the Theotokos, is observed on the 8th. The

conception of John the Baptist, the Forerunner, is celebrated on the 23rd.

In October, the apostle Thomas is honored on the 6th, the soldier-saints Sergius and Bacchus are honored on the 7th, and Saint Pelagia is honored on the 8th. The selection for Saint Pelagia's Day is usually John 8:3-11. On the 23rd of October, James, author of the book of James, is honored, as well as the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus – a set of individuals in the reign of Decius whose story may remind one of the story of Rip Van Winkle. (The legend about them is also found in the Quran, in surah 18.)

In November, the first Sunday of the month is celebrated as All Saints Sunday. This is slightly different from the Western custom of making the first day of the month All Hallows' Day, and the last day of October being All Hallows' Even, known in popular culture as Halloween. The apostle Matthew is honored on the 24th, and the apostle Andrew is also honored, on the last day of the month.

In December, Saint Nicholas of Myra (the historical Santa Claus) is honored on December 6. Also in December, the birth of Jesus is celebrated: Christmas Eve is on December 24, Christmas is celebrated on the 25th, and Theophany – the visit of the magi – is celebrated on January 6.

Just as the celebration of Easter sort of stretches things out in the Synaxarion, the celebration of Christmas sort of stretches things out in the Menologion. There are special pre-Christmas services on the two Sundays before Christmas, a series of readings for Christmas Eve from Matthew 1 and 2, and Luke 2, and a series of readings for Christmas Day from Mark 1, Matthew 3, and Luke 3. On the Eve of Theophany and on Theophany, additional series of readings concludes the Christmas Feast. Almost.

Readings from Matthew 4 are designated for the Saturday and Sunday after Theophany.

In the late eleventh century, a feast-day was introduced for January 30 to specially honor Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and John Chrysostom.

In February, Candlemas is observed on the second day of the month. While some people celebrate Groundhog's Day, the Menologion mainly commemorates the encounter between the elderly Simeon and the infant Jesus.

The feast for March 9 honors the forty martyrs of Sebaste. They were martyred in 320. The commemoration of their martyrdom goes back at least to Basil of Caesarea in the 370s. The Annunciation is commemorated on March 25.

In the spring and summer months, the Menologion covers mostly minor saints, but some important ones are honored too, including Saint Mark on April 25, and May 8, for John the Theologian. On June 24, the birth of John the Baptist, the Forerunner of Christ, is celebrated, six months before Christmas Eve.

Some feast-days honor relics of special significance, especially relics associated with Mary, who is traditionally called the all-holy Bearer of God, the Theotokos, whose death, better called her Dormition, is commemorated on August 15. July 2 commemorates the Placement of the Robe of the Theotokos at Blachernae, and a relatively recently established feast-day is August 31, which commemorates the Placement of the Waist-Sash of the Theotokos at Chalcoprateia, near Constantinople.

In addition, the Menologion may be slightly adjusted to honor individuals, or to commemorate events, of special significance in the place where a lectionary was intended to be used.

It is not unusual to find, in continuous-text MSS of New Testament books, indications in the margin, and embedded directly in the text, of where lections for each day start, with the word “Αρχη,” and stop, with the word “Τελος.” Some readings combine two or more passages, so you might see “Start here” and then, further down, “Jump ahead,” and then, further down, “Resume here,” and then finally, “Stop.”

Lections are typically identified according to when it is to be read relative to Easter: like, “This is a passage from Luke, *κατα λουκαν*, and it is to be read on Day X of week Y after Easter.” Major feast-days are often given a little more detail, not only in their titles, but also in the margins of continuous-text MSS. For example, the first reading from Mark, Mark 1:1-8, is for the Sunday before the Feast of Lights, or Theophany, and it is not unusual to find a reference to this in the margin of continuous-text MSS of Mark. Similarly, the first reading from John, the first 17 verses, is for *the Holy and Great Sunday of Easter*, and this title is found not only in lectionaries but also in the margin around the beginning of John in many continuous-text Gospels MSS.

A form of the lectionary known as the Horologion, or Hours-book, developed in the Middle Ages in the West, into the Latin devotions-book known as the Book of Hours, which contains excerpts from Scripture and from accounts of various saints’ martyrdoms. Some Books of Hours are known for the remarkable artistry of their illustrations.

In addition to the text, lectionaries often have what is called “ekphonic marking,” or “neumes.” These marks were intended to convey to the lector how the text was to be intoned when it was read out loud in the church-service. This pronunciation-guide was well-developed by the 700s. Neumes eventually contributed to the development of what we know as musical notes.

Lections typically have an introductory phrase to let the listeners know the context of the Scripture-passage being presented. These introductory phrases are called "incipits." They are usually very simple, such as, "At that time," and, "The Lord said to His disciples," or just, "At that time, the Lord said." When a lection from the epistles is read, it usually starts with "Brethren."

Lectionaries give us a New Testament text that has been broken up into individual passages, and each passage is designated to be read out loud in church-services on a specific day of the year. Each passage is introduced with an introductory phrase, to provide a heads-up about what the passage is about. Once one takes these aspects of the text into account, a lectionary provides as much information on the texts of Scripture it contains as a continuous-text Greek MS with the same production-date.

How far back do lectionaries go? This is a bit like asking how far back does the nation known as the United States of America go. One *could* say that the United States of America did not consist of 50 states until 1959, but one could also say that the United States began in 1776, with 13 states. And there were British colonies before that.

Similarly there is a difference between the developed Byzantine lectionary, which probably was first produced as a lectionary in the 600s, and the informal lection-cycle, or cycles, upon which it was based. Also, there is a difference between the development of the lectionary in the East, and the lectionary and liturgy in the West. For example the Luxueil Lectionary (made in the early 600s) includes readings from Revelation, which is practically unheard of in Greek lectionaries. The Bobbio Missal, produced in the 600s in Latin, also displays a developed lection-cycle. Around the mid-500s, Germain of Paris described something that resembles a standardized annual cycle of lections.

In the late 300s, something like a schedule of lection-cycles was used by John Chrysostom in Constantinople in the late 300s. Part of the lection-cycle preserved in Lectionary 846, also known as Sinai Greek MS 212, from the late 700s, is similar to a lection-cycle that was used in Jerusalem in the time of Cyril of Jerusalem, that is, in the mid-300s. The pilgrim lady Egeria, in the late 300s, mentioned some celebrations that fit the annual Byzantine schedule fairly well. The Chronography of 354 features an entry for the annual celebration of Christmas on December 25, and calculations for the date of Easter.

Justin Martyr stated in his *First Apology*, ch. 67, in the first half of the second century, "On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits."

A few lectionaries are especially noteworthy.

Lectionary 1599 (the Argos Lectionary) is assigned to the 900s. It was written in majuscule lettering. This lectionary is also known as the Gangster's Bible, because according to a former owner of the manuscript, when people were initiated into the criminal organization led by Al Capone in the city of Chicago, they took oaths of loyalty on this manuscript. It can be viewed online at the website of the Goodspeed Manuscript Collection at the University of Chicago.

Lectionary 1276 is only a small fragment, but it is one of the oldest Greek MSS of any kind for the text that it contains – including text from Matthew 10:2-4 and 10:11-15, and John 20:11-15. It is assigned to the 500s. It was excavated from the Cairo Genizah, and was published in 1900 by Charles Taylor.

Lectionary 300, kept at Saint Catherine's Monastery, was not shown to Tischendorf, but J. Rendel

Harris saw it and described it in detail. It is written in gold, on excellent vellum, in large round uncial lettering, about a thousand years ago. It contains 71 selections from the Gospels, including readings for Easter-time. Its text is supplemented with beautiful illustrations.

Lectionary 35, at the Vatican Library, is a Festal Lectionary – neither a full Synaxarion, nor a Menologion, but a small collection of lections mainly for the twelve major annual feasts.

Other noteworthy lectionaries include lectionaries 1, 17, 63, 64, 150, 279, 525, 627, and 735.

EXTRA CREDIT

Read the entry about lectionaries at *A Site Inspired By The Encyclopedia of New Testament Textual Criticism* (conceived by Rich Elliott of Simon Greenleaf University) – credit given to Robert B. Waltz (2013).

CHAPTER TEN

Text-types (Why Quantities Do Not Matter Very Much)

Our heavenly Father, as we study the text of what was written by those who followed your son long ago, make us consider our lives a continuation of the message of your love for mankind, written in large letters in our acts of compassion and generosity. Amen.

You have been introduced to the basic *materials* involved in the field of New Testament textual criticism: MSS, early versions, patristic writings, and lectionaries. In this chapter, we shall look at one of the *issues* in the field: the concept of text-types.

I have referred to the Alexandrian Text, the Western Text, and the Byzantine Text.

A “text type” is a form of the text shared by witnesses that tends to support the same readings.

Imagine a handwritten book, which I call Abraham. Picture three more hand-written books, each of which is a copy of the book called Abraham. I name these three sons of Abraham “Frank,” “George,” and “Henry.” These three sons are sent to three cities, which happen to be called Frankville, Georgeville, and Henryville. At this point we have three copies. Fifty years later, Abraham and his sons have gone the way of all parchment, but in each city a new generation of hand-made copies are still alive, and each one says that it is a copy of Abraham – but in Frankville, they are copies of Frank. In Georgeville, they are copies of George. In Henryville, they are copies of Henry. At this point, we have copies of copies of Abraham.

Fifty years later, those copies have begotten children, so to speak: now we have three groups of copies of copies of copies of Abraham.

Another fifty years go by, and now we have, in each city, copies of copies of copies of copies of Abraham.

Fifty years later, a textual analyst comes along who wants to reconstruct the text of Abraham. So he collects a variety of the descendants of Abraham: some from Frankville and some from Georgeville and some from Henryville.

He notices that none of the MSS has the exact same text as any other MS. He also notices that the text in MSS from Frankville is usually longer than the text in the other two groups.

He also notices that the MSS from Georgeville tend to include phrases here and there that are not in the MSS from Frankville and Henryville. And He notices that MSS from Henryville do not have a paragraph that is supported by the MSS from Frankville and Georgeville, and they tend to be more concise.

Working on the premise that **shared traits imply a shared origin**, the textual analyst makes a deduction: the MSS departed from the original like three branches from the trunk of a tree: there are three *groups* of MSS that descend from three different points of origin. Each such group, consisting of MSS that tend to contain the same readings that set them apart from the MSS in other group, is called a text-type. The idea is not that all of the members of a text-type agree, but that they consistently agree at some specific points where the members of the other text-types consistently tend to disagree.

Each reconstructed earlier ancestor of each text-type is called a sub-archetype. And the reconstructed ancestor of the sub-archetypes is the archetype.

That is a convenient picture of text-types: Frankville is the Byzantine Text. Georgeville is the Western Text. And Henryville is the Alexandrian Text. But drawing

a convenient picture, and drawing a picture that fits the real historical series of events that produced the existing evidence, are two different things.

In real life there is **one** form of the text for which the sub-archetype can be reconstructed: the Byzantine Text. Even in the case of the Byzantine Text, which is generally supported by over 85% of the existing Greek MSS, there are some passages where the MSS are fairly closely divided between two, or sometimes three, rival readings. Because so many MSS have a Byzantine Text, quirks can be filtered out by a process of comparison.

Regarding the Western Text and the Alexandrian text-types, there aren't enough Greek MSS to make that kind of history-based reconstruction. We shall consider the Western Text and the Alexandrian Text separately.

There are not a lot of MSS with a Western text that can be arranged into stages of transmission. In the Gospels and Acts, there is basically one Western Greek manuscript: Codex Bezae, with far more Western readings than any other Greek manuscript. There is also the Old Latin version, and patristic writings by writers who used a text that contained many Western readings, in the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries.

After the 400s, the dominant text-type in Greek MSS was the Byzantine Text. It is as if the citizens of Frankville invaded Georgeville and Henryville, and pretty soon, everyone spoke the language of Frankville, no matter where they were. After the time of John Chrysostom, the Western Text died out in Greek, and the Byzantine Text eclipsed the other two forms of the text (as far as Greek transmission was concerned).

The Western form of the text did not go away entirely. It was **mixed** with the texts of Byzantine MSS. When this kind of mixture happened, most of what had previously been distinctly Western readings, or distinctly

Western readings, were replaced by Byzantine readings – but there were still Western readings that did not make much difference to the meaning of the text, and some of those were allowed to slip through.

Copyists did **not** adopt a policy of “*When in doubt, don’t throw it out.*” Many Western readings are longer than their Byzantine rivals. When a series of long Western readings appear in a manuscript’s text, that is unusual. Again: there is basically one Greek manuscript that displays the Western Text in the Gospels and Acts – Codex Bezae. If copyists had retained the longer Western readings, the longer Western readings would have become the *normal* reading. Instead, we see shorter Byzantine readings being perpetuated instead – not in just a few contests, but in hundreds of cases.

To emphasize this in other words: some textual critics (such as Dr. Daniel B. Wallace) have accused Byzantine copyists of approaching textual variants with an approach that said, “*When in doubt, don’t throw it out.*” In real life, that was **NOT** a normative guiding principle used by copyists making decisions between rival readings in their MSS.

For your consideration:

(1) In Matthew 1:22, Codex D and the Sinaitic Syriac add the name “*Isaiah,*” identifying the prophet who is quoted in the next verse. This makes the text more specific. The Byzantine Text does not have this reading. The Western reading, *if* it was ever considered, was rejected.

(2) In Matthew 2:8, Codex D adds the detail that Herod spoke “*to them,*” that is, to the wise men, as he gave instructions. This is a harmless detail. But the Byzantine Text does not include this reading.

(3) In Matthew 2:17, Codex D states that Jeremiah’s prophecy came from the Lord, like Isaiah’s

prophecy in Matthew 2:15. But the Byzantine Text does not include this reading.

(4) In Matthew 3:16, Codex D adds the detail that the Spirit of God came down “*from heaven.*” The Byzantine Text does not include this detail.

(5) In Matthew 3:6, the Alexandrian Text does not say that people came to John the Baptist to be baptized “in the Jordan” but, “in the Jordan **River.**” The word “river” is not in the Byzantine Text.

(6) In Matthew 6:15, Codex D adds “you” in the final phrase, so as to say, “forgive **you** your trespasses.” The Byzantine Text does not include this detail.

(7) At the end of Matthew 8:13, Codex Sinaiticus and several other MSS smuggle part of Luke 7:10 into the text to round off the account of the healing of the centurion’s servant. This attempt at harmonization is not in the Byzantine Text.

(8) At the end of Matthew 9:15, Codex D has a Western reading that is longer than the Byzantine reading: Codex D adds “in those days,” making the text a little more explicit. This is not in the Byzantine Text.

(9) In Matthew 10:30, Codex D has the word “your” in the phrase “the hairs of your head.” It’s a natural supplement to make; we see it in some English translations of the verse. It is not in the Byzantine Text.

(10) In Matthew 10:42, Codex D specifies that a cup of *water* is being given in the name of a disciple. Clement of Alexandria quoted the verse in this form also. But although this detail is often supplied by English translators, it is not in the Byzantine Text.

Those ten examples are just ten of *hundreds* of golden opportunities to expand the text by adopting a longer reading, but that opportunity was not taken in the Byzantine Text. The expansion was not made. Byzantine

copyists did not typically settle textual contests by saying, “*You both win,*” and retain both readings. That does not mean that they *never* did this. But it was not their normal procedure.

The Western Text is an ancient form of the text. It is a *designed* text: a text that has been deliberately adjusted, sometimes drastically adjusted, to emphasize the *meaning* of the text. Its adjustments did not occur in a single step. When we consider the amount of variation in the Old Latin versions, it looks like the Greek Western text was never fully standardized; it was adjusted and *readjusted* to emphasize its meaning. In the book of Acts, the Western Text is much longer than the text of Acts in the other two main text-types.

Despite the name “Western Text,” it was used in the east, as well as in the West – including in Egypt. Papyrus 38, which was probably made in the 200s, supports the Western Text of Acts.

At about the same time P38 was made, copies were being made in Egypt that displayed what is called the Alexandrian form of the text. Whereas adjustments in the Western Text tended to be made to enhance clarity, adjustments in the Alexandrian Text tended to be much less drastic and more technical – making the text appear professionally produced. The Alexandrian Greek text of the New Testament circulated in Egypt and influenced the earliest layer of the Sahidic version.

There are not very many Greek copies of the Alexandrian Text. If you want to talk about an “embarrassment of riches” regarding the number of Greek MSS that support the branch of text you want people to adopt, you want the Byzantine Text, not the Alexandrian Text.

The two fourth-century MSS Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus are the flagship MSS of the Alexandrian text. Where these two MSS share a reading that disagrees with the reading found in 95% of the Greek MSS, the Nestle-Aland compilation almost always adopts their reading – rejecting the reading found in Dr. Wallace’s “embarrassment of riches.”

For textual analysts who consider the Alexandrian Text to be the least corrupted form of the New Testament text, even readings found in earlier papyri are often rejected in favor of readings that are supported by Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Where these two MSS both display the Alexandrian Text, it has the best chance of appearing in its unmixed form.

Speaking of mixture: let’s look into what happens when text-types collide.

In Codex Regius (L, 019) the Gospels-text starts off mostly Byzantine, but it becomes more and more Alexandrian as you go. This suggests that a process of *correction* influenced the text in L: somewhere along the line, someone who was used to the Byzantine Text encountered a manuscript that contained the Alexandrian Text, and tried to adjust it to make it more like the Byzantine text that he was used to – but eventually he gave up, leaving a text that was mixed: partly Byzantine, and partly Alexandrian. The text in Codex C is also regarded as an echo of an Alexandrian Text that was partly conformed to a non-Alexandrian standard.

The text of Codex W is block-mixed, and has Byzantine, Western, and Alexandrian blocks, as well as a block which could be described as “non-Alexandrian Egyptian” that tends to be allied with Papyrus 45 in part of the Gospel of Mark.

In none of the Greek MSS that are categorized as having a non-Byzantine Text after the 500s is the

Alexandrian Text presented as clearly as it is in Codex Vaticanus. The text of substantial Alexandrian witnesses besides Codex Vaticanus almost always has a degree of mixture with either the Western Text, the Byzantine Text, or both. Some minuscules, such as 6 and 33 and 81 and 104 and 892 and 1241, have enough Alexandrian readings to justify categorizing parts of their text as Alexandrian, but as a whole they are not Alexandrian enough to justify calling them good examples of the early Alexandrian Text from beginning to end.

I have already referred several times to the Byzantine Text. The “Byzantine” form of the text could also be called the “Antiochan” form of the text – the idea being that before this text dominated the churches in the region of Byzantium, or Constantinople, it was already in use in churches in the vicinity of the city of Antioch in Syria.

A form of an essentially Byzantine text was used in the 300s by Basil of Caesarea, and by John Chrysostom, and, slightly later, by Theodoret of Cyrillus. The base-text of the Gothic version of the Gospels, produced in the mid-300s, and the base-text of the Peshitta, probably prepared in the late 300s with some tweaking in the 400s, also tends to agree with the Byzantine Text much more than with the Alexandrian or Western forms of the text.

By the time of the Emperor Justinian, in the mid-500s, the Byzantine Text was more or less **the** Greek text being copied. The text that is on display in most of the later minuscules is Byzantine, not because the Byzantine Text itself is late, but because **the minuscules are echoes of their Byzantine ancestors**. What else could they be? Their text did not come into existence in a flash of lightning.

We have basically three competing early forms of the Greek text:

Alexandrian, circulating in Egypt,

Western, circulating in a variety of locales, and

Byzantine, circulating in Syria and in the territory around Constantinople.

The relationship of these three forms of the text to one another is one of the primary issues in New Testament textual criticism.

But before we take a closer look at that, there are three more forms of the text to investigate: the Caesarean Text, the text of family 13, and the Harklean Text.

The Caesarean Text is a *designed* text, but it is different from the Western Text, and it does not seem to be attested outside the Gospels. It is best known in Greek in the group of MSS called family 1: especially MSS 1, 1582, 2193, 118, 131, 205, 209, and several others, including Codex Θ (Koridethi, 038). This group is sometimes called the Lake group, because the link between some of the most closely aligned copies in this group was brought to light with particular force by researcher Kirsopp Lake in 1902, in the volume “Codex 1 of the Gospels and Its Allies.”

This cluster of MSS used to be represented in the apparatus by a lower-case *lambda*, but nowadays that has been replaced by the designation f-1, as in, **family 1**. The Armenian Gospels were translated from a form of the Caesarean Text, and the Old Georgian Gospels were translated from Armenian.

Because the Greek Caesarean Text subsequently underwent considerable Byzantine mixture, the early Armenian and Old Georgian versions preserve the most Caesarean text – but it is written in Armenian and Georgian instead of in Greek.

Although the individual MSS in family-1 are medieval, *some* of the unique readings in the text of family-1 go back pretty far: as far back as Origen, in the first half of the 200s.

For instance, in Matthew 27:16-17, Barabbas is named “Jesus Barabbas.” This reading was specifically mentioned by Origen. It is usually not found in the Western or Byzantine or Alexandrian Texts.

In the main copies of family 1, the story of the adulteress (known as John 7:53-8:11) is located at the very end of the Gospel of John, accompanied by a note that says that because it was not found in most copies, and is not commented upon by esteemed writers such as John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, it was taken from its usual location in John (after 7:52) and moved to this location at the end of the book.

The family-13 text is a frequent ally of family-1, and its text has been classified as “Caesarean” by some researchers, but its main members – minuscules 13, 69, 124, 346, and 543, plus some secondary group-members – share a different line of descent, and thus they share some unusual readings, most of which look artificial, and some of which look like the result of adjustments made for the sake of making the text easy for lectors to utilize in the annual reading-cycles.

For example, in the margins of some Byzantine MSS of Matthew, there is a note alongside Matthew 26:39 that states that at this point, the lector is to jump to Luke 22:43-44 and read those verses, and then return to Matthew 26:40. In some of the members of family-13 the text of Matthew has been adjusted so as to contain the text of Luke 22:43-44 in Matthew between Matthew 26:39 and 26:40. In addition, in the main members of family 13, the passage about the adulteress is found at the end of Luke 21.

In the General Epistles, there is the Harklean Group, the Greek text of which tends to agree with the Harklean Syriac version. The Harklean group is represented by some relatively late Greek minuscules, including 429, 1505, 1611, 2138, and 2412. Although these witnesses are relatively late, the text they contain has been proven to have existed in the early 600s, when the Harklean Syriac version was made.

It is far earlier than that.

In Jude verse 3, where most MSS refer to “salvation,” the flagship members of the Harklean group refer to “life.” This reading existed, not just in the early 600s when the Harklean Syriac version was made, but in the mid-300s when Codex Sinaiticus was made: Sinaiticus’ text of Jude verse 3 combines the two readings, in what is called a “conflation” – “our common salvation and life.”

The model of text-types in the Gospels is different from the model of text-types in Acts. The Western Text in Codex D is constantly anomalous in the Gospels, but in the book of Acts, the Western Text is not only unusual in its *form* but often in its *meaning* also. In Acts, the Western Text is about 8% longer than the rival forms of the book. In the Pauline Epistles, the Western Text is still recognizably different, but it is much less remarkable than it is in Acts. The picture is a little different in the General Epistles (there is one more horse in the race).

In Revelation, for which there are about 300 Greek MSS, the picture changes. Instead of having one fairly uniform majority text, like in the Gospels and Acts and the Epistles, there are two popular forms of text, one of which tends to reflect the text that was used by Andreas of Caesarea in the early 600s, and one of which tends to be allied with the uncial 046. In Revelation, the “majority” text is often not much of a majority, and where there are three or more rival readings, there might not be a majority

reading at all. The text of Codex Alexandrinus is especially valuable in this book.

In each genre – Gospels, Acts, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and Revelation – not only do textual critics need to account for differences among MSS, but for differences among text-types, and this presents a different challenge in each genre.

In the first half of the 1700s, a scholar named Johann Bengel worked out some general guidelines on how to approach textual variants. Bengel deduced that when a single manuscript has a reading that is otherwise unsupported – that is, it has a *singular reading* – such a reading should be rejected as the effect of a copyist's mistake.

This instantly dispells a significant number of textual variants.

Bengel attempted to approach the text not just in terms of contests between individual MSS, but between the forms of text shared by groups of MSS – in other words, by text-types. This was comparable to a shift from comparing the twigs on a tree to other twigs, to comparing one branch to another branch.

Bengel proposed one of the most fundamental canons, or guidelines, for the field: ***difficult readings tend to precede easier ones.***

In the late 1700s, a researcher named J. J. Griesbach, expanded upon Bengel's approach. Griesbach realized that the witnesses tended to fall into three groups, and he thought that this echoed three early attempts to standardize the text. But how, when all three text-types disagreed with one another, could one decide which one was more likely to be the original reading?

Instead of simply favoring the reading supported by the most MSS, Griesbach developed fifteen canons, or

guidelines, to evaluate readings on the basis of internal evidence. Griesbach's Fifteen Canons go something like this:

ONE. (This guideline has more qualifications than the others.) In a contest between a short reading and a long reading, if there is early support for the shorter reading, the shorter reading is to be preferred over the more verbose reading. The assumption here is that although accidental omissions happened, copyists hardly ever intentionally removed text, but they tended to add text, making harmonistic additions by remembering one passage while they transcribed a similar one.

Copyists may have lengthened short readings in order to clarify a Hebrew expression, or to clarify something that seemed otherwise ambiguous, or to make one passage more closely resemble a parallel passage.

On the other hand, *if* it looks like an accidental error has occurred – in which a copyist skipped from the end of one word to the similar ending of a following word or phrase – or, *if* it seems plausible that a copyist could omit something that seemed obscure, harsh, superfluous, contradictory, or downright offensive – then the longer reading should be adopted.

And, *if* the shorter reading constitutes a unique expression, whereas the longer reading is characteristic with the author's usage, the longer reading should be preferred. And, *if* the shorter reading conforms the passage to a parallel-passage, the longer reading should be preferred.

TWO. A difficult and obscure reading should be preferred over a rival reading that is easy and clear. The thinking here is that copyists did not deliberately make the text harder to understand; when they prioritized meaning over

exact form, they tried to make the text easier to understand.

THREE. When one reading is stylistically more harsh than another, in terms of grammar, idiom, and vocabulary, it is to be preferred over rival reading which have no such stylistic difficulties that would provoke any change.

FOUR. Rare words and rare expressions are preferable to ordinary words and common expressions.

FIVE. Where the flow of an author's argument does not demand emphasis, readings that express less emphasis are to be preferred over rival readings that are more vigorous.

SIX. A reading that is agreeable to the concept of piety, especially monastic piety, is preferable to rival readings than are not as agreeable.

SEVEN. Readings that have a superficial falseness, though actually true, are preferable to other readings which pose no difficulty.

EIGHT. Readings that do not explicitly express orthodox doctrine are to be preferred over readings that do.

NINE. Readings that look like repetitions added for the sake of symmetry probably are.

TEN. Readings that look like they are the result of a copyist losing his place probably are, especially if the reading constitutes the loss of a word or syllable that begins or ends like the preceding syllable.

ELEVEN. The reading that accounts for its rivals is to be preferred.

TWELVE. Readings that appear to be additions made to define or interpret the nearby text, probably are.

THIRTEEN. A reading that looks like it was extracted from, or based upon, a patristic writing, probably was.

FOURTEEN. A reading that looks like it originated as a phrase added to begin or conclude a lection, probably did.

FIFTEEN. A reading that looks like it originated in the Latin text, and was introduced from there into the Greek text, probably did.

Using these principles, Griesbach made a compilation of the New Testament that gave decisive weight to internal considerations. Some of his principles are just different ways of saying “*Prefer the shorter reading unless it can be explained by scribal carelessness,*” and, “*Prefer the more difficult reading,*” and “*The reading that is most likely to be original is the reading that best accounts for its rivals.*” These guidelines had a heavy impact on Griesbach’s compilation of the New Testament, the second edition of which was completed in 1806.

Before Codex Sinaiticus had been obtained by Tischendorf, and before any New Testament papyri were discovered – and while most of the MSS known to scholars today were uncataloged – Griesbach had organized the external evidence into three basic types, or branches – *Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine* – and had proceeded to use internal evidence to decide textual contests in which each branch had its own reading.

Although the *quantity* of MSS always favors a Byzantine reading (in Matthew-Jude) in Griesbach’s

judgment, internal considerations often favor non-Byzantine readings.

To restate: Griesbach showed that a considerable number of non-Byzantine readings appear to be secondary on the basis of internal considerations, even though they are supported by the great majority of Greek MSS.

Griesbach showed that the *Textus Receptus* – the base-text for the King James Version – is different from the original text, and that it is different from the earliest form of the Byzantine Text.

Shortly after Griesbach published his Greek New Testament, more information on the New Testament in Codex Vaticanus became available. The **weight** of the Alexandrian Text was gradually being recognized as being heavier and heavier, supported now not only by Griesbach's internal evidence, but also by the external evidence of Codex Vaticanus.

In 1809, a Unitarian New Testament was published, prefaced by an introduction that described the *Textus Receptus* as "capable of very considerable improvement," and which restated Griesbach's idea that every ancient New Testament manuscript supports one of three editions: either the Alexandrian form, or the Western form, or the form from Constantinople. It referred to Griesbach's text as one which "corrected" the *Textus Receptus*.

Within a few decades, new English versions were produced which wholeheartedly embraced the text that Griesbach had edited: Abner Kneeland (the last man legally convicted of blasphemy in the United States of America) made an English translation in 1823, based mainly on Griesbach's text. In 1826, Alexander Campbell published an English translation called *Living Oracles*, also based primarily on Griesbach's compilation.

In 1831, a researcher named Carl Lachmann published an edition of the Greek New Testament that he had compiled using only ancient evidence, setting aside all of the minuscule MSS. Lachmann's compilation was built upon entirely different Greek evidence than what had been used as the basis for the New Testament portion of the King James (or, Authorised) Version.

In 1836, Granville Penn took things a step further by producing his *Book of the New Covenant*, which was, except for the books that are not in Codex Vaticanus, basically an English translation of an imperfect transcript of Codex Vaticanus – putting the Alexandrian Text in the spotlight and rejecting the Western and Byzantine readings.

These developments may have seemed somewhat disturbing to the Englishman or American whose New Testament – the King James Version – was being called “very capable of improvement” and “not based on the best MSS,” and so forth, especially since Griesbach had connections with the theological liberalism of Johann Semler.

For over 300 years, Protestant English Bibles had been based off one form or another of the *Textus Receptus* – that is, with a relatively small smattering of variations, the base-text of the Tyndale New Testament, the Bishops Bible's New Testament, the Geneva New Testament, and the New Testament in the Authorized Version, also known as the King James Version. To most English-readers, that was THE Greek New Testament.

How did the *Textus Receptus* obtain this prominence? We shall explore that question in the next chapter.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The *Textus Receptus*

Our heavenly Father, as you have prepared this day for us, you have also prepared us for this day. Guide us to make the most of it that we can, confident that “the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places,” and confident that we have a good inheritance in your kingdom. Show us the path of life, and guide us to your presence, where there is fullness of joy. In Jesus’ name – Amen.

We now look into the background of what is known as the *Textus Receptus*. In Latin, “*Textus receptus*” means “the received text.” There are two ways to define the *Textus Receptus*.

The simpler way is to say that the *Textus Receptus* is the base-text of the New Testament in the King James Version, also known as the Authorised Version, which was published in 1611 and was tidied up in 1629 to remedy printing errors and similar glitches.

In 1633, the Elzevir family printers issued an edition of the Greek New Testament that was accompanied by a reassuring statement that its reader had “the text now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted.” This was the first Greek New Testament that one could say called itself the Received Text.

For the most part, the Greek text of 1633 published by the Elzevirs was not drastically different from several earlier editions which had been used by earlier translators in the 1500s. A variety of printed editions of the Greek New Testament were in circulation before 1633, but three editors stand out:

- Erasmus
- Stephanus
- Beza.

Desiderius Erasmus, born in 1467, grew up in an environment of scholarly challenges to sacred traditions. The Latin Vulgate had acquired a *de facto* status as the authoritative text of the New Testament in western Europe, but in the 1400s a scholar named Lorenzo Valla (who died ten years before Erasmus was born) had used Greek MSS to draw into question a variety of renderings in the text of the Vulgate that was current in his time. Valla wrote notes about the Greek New Testament and pointed out various discrepancies between the meaning of the Greek text and the meaning of the Vulgate text.

Some of Valla's observations eventually had great significance. In Martin Luther's "95 Theses," nailed to the church door at Wittenburg, Germany in 1517, his first three points focused on the meaning of repentance. In this respect, Luther echoed a clarification that Valla had already made in the 1450s about the meaning of the Greek text.

Valla never published his notes about Vulgate readings that needed to be improved to correspond better with the Greek text. In 1504, when Erasmus found a manuscript that contained Valla's *Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum* – Notes on the New Testament – it inspired him to make the study of the Greek text of the New Testament his life's work.

Erasmus traveled extensively, studying in Italy, in France, and in England, investigating New Testament MSS wherever they could be found, including the unusual minuscule 69. Erasmus was also very well-acquainted with the works of Jerome and the patristic writer known as Ambrosiaster. In 1514 and again in 1515, the subject of improving the Vulgate, using the Greek text, came up in conversations Erasmus had with his friend Johann Froben,

who ran a distinguished printing-house in the city of Basel, Switzerland.

In July of 1515, Erasmus began the final stage of making a Greek text of the New Testament, using a small collection of Greek MSS at Basel. The uncial Codex Basiliensis (E, 07), produced in the 700s, was at Basel at this time, but there is no evidence that Erasmus ever used it. The MSS housed at Basel that Erasmus used were a collection of minuscules:

Codex 1. This manuscript contains the New Testament except Revelation; it is an important member of family-1.

Codex 2 contains the Gospels.

Codex 2105 contains the Pauline Epistles.

Codex 2815 contains Acts and all Epistles (2^{ap}). (not from John of Ragusa)

Codex 2816 – containing Acts and all Epistles (4^{ap})

Codex 2817 – contains the Pauline Epistles (7^p)

There was no Greek manuscript of Revelation in the library at Basel, so he borrowed a manuscript of Revelation (now known as GA 2814, from his colleague Johann Reuchlin, the great-uncle of the influential Reformer Phillip Melanchthon.

These were not the only sources used by Erasmus for his first edition, but they were the MSS he had on hand at Basel.

What were Greek New Testament MSS doing at Basel? Most of them had been donated to the Dominican monastery there by Ivan Stojkovic, also known as John of Ragusa, in the 1400s. Before his death in 1443 he had joined a vigorous effort, led by Basil Bessarion, to re-unite the church. As a means of showing what the Eastern

churches had to offer to churches in the West, he brought some MSS to Europe from Constantinople in the 1430s.

Equipped with a familiarity of various MSS in various scholarly centers in Britain and continental Europe, and equipped with the MSS at Basel, Erasmus hammered out the first edition of the Greek New Testament, confirming his Latin translation alongside it, with explanatory notes after it. On March 1, 1516, *Novum Instrumentum* became the first Greek New Testament available for purchase from Froben.

Another Greek New Testament had already been printed: the Greek New Testament was part of the *Complutensian Polyglot*, a text of the entire Bible, printed in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, prepared under the supervision of Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros, with help from Lopez de Stunica. "Complutensian" means that it was made in Complutum (the city of Alcala, near Madrid, Spain). "Polyglot" means that its text appeared in several languages. The New Testament portion of the Complutensian Polyglot was printed in 1514, but it was not formally approved for ecclesiastical publication until 1522.

The first edition of *Novum Instrumentum* encountered some resistance. Some readers saw Erasmus' Latin translation not as a corrective supplement to the Vulgate, but as a rival. Others asked, *why settle for the echo in Latin when you can hear the voice in Greek? Why drink from a dirty stream when you can drink from the fountain?* Erasmus made a second edition, *Novum Testamentum*, in 1519, correcting many of the printing errors that had marred the first edition, and improving his Latin translation.

Some critics accused Erasmus of displaying negligence by failing to include a reference to the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit in First John 5:7, a reading in the Vulgate text that was very common in the early 1500s.

Erasmus replied that he had no basis for such a Greek text because he had found no Greek manuscript that had those words at that place: *if* he had possessed a Greek manuscript with that passage, he wrote, *then* he would have included them, but since he had no such thing, no one could reasonably charge him with negligence for paying attention to his MSS.

In 1522, Erasmus released a third edition, refining the Greek compilation, his Latin translation, and the annotations. He acquired more manuscript-evidence at the library of St. Donatian's College at Bruges, and he was given access to the Golden Gospels of Henry III, an ornate Vulgate Gospels codex produced around the year 1000.

By this time, he had been informed of the existence of a manuscript in Britain (now known as minuscule 61, Codex Montfortianus) that contained the passage known as the *Comma Johanneum* in First John 5:7, and so he included the phrase in the third edition. In 1521, Erasmus was also informed by Paul Bombasius, who oversaw the Vatican Library at that time, about the existence of Codex Vaticanus, and about Vaticanus' testimony *against* the *Comma Johanneum*. Erasmus had NOT explicitly promised to include the passage. But he did so anyway. To *not* include it, now that it had been shown that at least one Greek manuscript supported it, would have put him in a position that would have been difficult to defend.

A fourth edition was issued in 1527. By this time, Erasmus had become acquainted with the Complutensian Polyglot, and he made some changes to the Greek text as a result, especially in Revelation.

Erasmus also became better informed about the text of Codex Vaticanus, thanks to some correspondence with Juan Sepulveda, who was at Rome at that time. Despite Sepulveda's praise of the manuscript, Erasmus

(mostly) dismissed its testimony, supposing that it was one of a group of Greek MSS that were adjusted to agree with a Latin text.

Finally a fifth edition was issued in 1535, one year before the death of Erasmus.

All this time, Erasmus took all comers in defense of his compilation, vigorously responding to criticisms from friend and foe, including Stunica, who had worked on the Complutensian Polyglot. Erasmus found it convenient to repeat the gist of the answer that Lorenzo Valla had prepared against those whom he had anticipated would accuse him of tampering with established tradition: Valla had written, "If I am correcting anything, I am not correcting Sacred Scripture, but rather its translation. In doing so I am not being insolent toward Scripture, but rather pious, and I am doing nothing more than translating better than the earlier translator. Therefore, if *my* translation is correct, *that* is what ought to be called Sacred Scripture, not his."

Erasmus also explained his predicament by telling a story about a priest who somehow had gotten used to saying "*mumpsimus*" in the Latin Mass. When another clergyman informed him that the correct word is "*sumpsimus*," he replied, "You can keep your new-fangled *sumpsimus*; I want good old *mumpsimus*." This was Erasmus' way of explaining that the fundamental question is not "What are you used to?" but "*What is original?*".

Erasmus and Froben had been very much aware that thanks to the potential of the new technology of the printing press, their publication of the printed Greek New Testament had the potential to culminate in the ordinary person having the New Testament in his own language. In *Paracelsis*, the preface to his New Testament, Erasmus wrote that it was his desire that men and woman would know the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul in their own

languages – that they would be known not only to the clergy but to farmers and fabric-makers, and that they would be read and understood not only by Scots and Irish but also by Turks and Saracens.

Earlier in the 1400s, before Erasmus was even born, another scholar, named Giannozzo Manetti, had compiled a Greek base-text and translated it into Latin – but no one had used it. The text of Erasmus' second edition was obtained by Martin Luther, and when an opportunity came, Luther used it: before the end of September 1522, Luther had translated the Greek New Testament into German.

William Tyndale, an English scholar, gained access to a copy of Luther's German New Testament, and then he acquired a copy of the third edition of Erasmus' Greek New Testament. Tyndale finished translating this into English before the end of 1525. It was reprinted in 1526.

Newly produced unauthorized English Bibles were highly illegal in England at the time. Most copies of Tyndale's English New Testament were burned whenever they were found. William Tyndale was condemned as a heretic and was eventually captured. In 1536, he was executed. His last recorded words: "Lord, open the king of England's eyes."

By 1539, the Great Bible, which tended to echo Tyndale's English New Testament, was being openly distributed in England.

Jacques Lefèvre, known as Stapulensis, oversaw the translation of the Vulgate New Testament into French, in stages, consulting Erasmus' work as a secondary source. His printed French New Testament was published in 1523. He was extremely influential in the Protestant Reformation in other respects, although, like Erasmus, he never officially left the Roman Catholic Church. Stapulensis' translation of the New Testament was

adjusted in a more Greek-dependent direction by Robert Olivetan, a cousin of John Calvin. It was later revised again by Theodore Beza.

With French, German, and English New Testaments already in print, the next generation of textual critics was led by Robert Estienne, also known as Stephanus. Stephanus' skill in printing and typography was at least as good as his expertise in textual criticism, and after publishing Greek New Testaments in 1546 and 1549, he outdid himself in the edition of 1550, his third edition, also called the *Editio Regia*, or "Royal Edition."

In this publication, Stephanus included a textual apparatus, providing alternate readings from the Complutensian Polyglot and from an assortment of fifteen Greek MSS, including several MSS in the royal library, which included the Gospels-Codex L (019) and minuscule 6. Codex Bezae (now usually assigned to the 400s) was also cited.

Codex Bezae was called Codex Bezae because it was the property of Theodore Beza.

Born in 1519, Beza became an influential ally of John Calvin during the Reformation. From the 1550s up to 1598, Beza issued multiple editions of the Greek New Testament. He utilized not only Codex Bezae, but also Codex Claromontanus. Nevertheless his compilation did not drastically veer away from the standard set by Erasmus and Stephanus. Beza's 1598 edition is probably the closest thing there is to a pre-KJV base-text of the KJV New Testament.

While Protestants were producing translations in several European languages, based on several editions of the Greek New Testament, Roman Catholic scholars tended to emphasize the Latin Vulgate. In the mid-1500s, Nicholas Zegers, an excellent scholar, attempted to filter mistakes out of the Vulgate text on the basis of Greek

readings. When the Rheims New Testament was published, in 1582, based on the Vulgate, it was prefaced by an explanation of why the Vulgate was being translated instead of the Greek text.

The preface to the Rheims New Testament called the Protestants' Greek text hopelessly corrupt, and stated that some of its readings had been invented by the editors, and that the compilations did not always agree with each other. Examples of inconsistency were cited from Mark 7:3, Luke 3:36, Second Timothy 2:14, James 5:12, Revelation 11:2, and Romans 11:21, where Stephanus' text meant, "serving **the time**," and Erasmus' text meant, "serving **the Lord**."

Erasmus was indeed guilty of putting some conjectures into his text. In Acts 9:5-6, he made a harmonization in the Greek text, so as to make it resemble the parallel-passage in Acts 26. In James 4:2, instead of saying "you kill," the second edition of Erasmus' Greek New Testament reads, "you are jealous." Erasmus believed that the Greek MSS he used contained a corruption at this point, and that their copyists had written a Greek word that means "you kill," where James had written a similar Greek word that means "you are jealous."

The most famous example of hypothetical reconstruction of the text without Greek MS support involves the last six verses of the book of Revelation. The MS that Erasmus had borrowed from Johann Reuchlin (GA 2814) was damaged, and did not have this part of the book or the commentary that accompanied it. Erasmus, in order to finish the first edition of his compilation, used Valla's notes and a Latin Vulgate text to reconstruct the Greek text of verses 16-21. He acknowledged in his annotations that he had done this.

Erasmus reckoned that any shortcomings in his retro-translation could be corrected by using the Aldine

Bible, an edition of the Greek Bible that was released in 1518 in Venice, Italy. What Erasmus did not realize was that the New Testament in the Aldine Bible was dependent to a large extent upon his own compilation.

Greek copies of Revelation were rare. Erasmus' compilation was so widely accepted that his retro-translation of Revelation 22:16-21 continued to be reprinted in one edition after another, including the reference to the "book" of life, instead of the tree of life, in the second half of verse 19.

It was these editions, and the earlier English translations based upon them, that were consulted by the translators of the King James Version in 1604 to 1611. Some readings were very poorly attested, such as *koinōnia* in Ephesians 3:9. Some readings had no Greek manuscript support at all, especially in Revelation.

But for the most part, the *Textus Receptus* – whether one defines it as the base-text of the KJV, or as the multiple printed editions of the Greek New Testament prepared from 1516 to 1633 – is a good representative of the Byzantine Text of Matthew-Jude – and most of its readings can be found in manuscript evidence much older than the minuscule MSS upon which it was based.

In the Gospels, there is very little difference between the meaning of the text printed in the *Textus Receptus*, based on no more than 25 copies, and the meaning of the Byzantine Text found in 1,500 copies.

Even though the *Textus Receptus* was initially compiled on the basis of relatively few MSS, and even though it has some readings that are only supported by a small minority of Greek MSS, and even though a few of its readings are not supported by any Greek MSS at all, if you compare the *Textus Receptus* and the Nestle-Aland compilation at any given point in Matthew-Jude, it is the reading in the *Textus Receptus*, not the reading in Nestle-

Aland, that will usually be supported by at least 85% of the relevant Greek MSS known today.

Fast-forward to April of 1853.

At Cambridge University, a young professor wrote about a text-critical project he intended to undertake with another professor: “Our object is to supply clergymen generally, schools, etc., with a portable Greek Testament, which shall not be disfigured with Byzantine corruptions.” His name was Fenton John Anthony Hort. His approach to the New Testament text, and his involvement in the Revised Version, will be the subject of the next chapter.

EXTRA CREDIT

Read pages 1-36 of Samuel Tregelles’ 1844 *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament* – https://www.google.com/books/edition/An_Account_of_the_Printed_Text_of_the_Gr/uwc_AAAAYAAJ

CHAPTER TWELVE

F. J. A. Hort and the Revised Version

Heavenly Father,

Every good and perfect gift is from you. Often your gifts benefit everyone, like the sunshine and the gentle rain. We thank you for these things. We also thank you for the small favors, unknown to the crowd, that remind your children that you are the God who hears us. They remind us that each of us can say, "Although I am poor and needy, the LORD takes thought of me." We ask for Your guidance and protection in the tasks we undertake today.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

In this chapter we shall examine the Revised Version of the New Testament of 1881, and two scholars who influenced the Greek text upon which it was based. First, it is important to be aware of some factors that led up to the 1881 Revised Version.

By 1650, every printed English New Testament was translated directly from Greek was based on a form of the *Textus Receptus*, represented by the editions made by Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza in the 1500s. The main translation of the New Testament in English was the 1611 King James Version. This was produced with the hope that it would supersede previous English versions, and it did. Although rival translations have appeared, for many English-speaking Christians today, the King James Version continues to be regarded as **the** English New Testament.

Shortly after the publication of the KJV, Codex Alexandrinus, a manuscript from the 400s, was brought to England by Cyril Lucar, and although its text in the Gospels tended to confirm readings in the Byzantine Text, its text in Acts and the Epistles tended to support non-Byzantine

readings. In the 1700s and early 1800s, diverse MSS were discovered, and more detailed study of versional evidence was undertaken. Textual researchers such as Bengel, Wettstein, Griesbach, and Scholz used this data to develop a reconstruction of the text's early history, separating readings into three basic groups: Western, Alexandrian, and Byzantine.

Griesbach's text was used in the 1800s by a few scholars as the base-texts of new English translations, but they never had anything close to the popularity-level of the King James Bible. In 1833, Noah Webster produced a mild revision of the KJV in America (basically an update rather than a textual revision) in which the English text was adjusted to a less Jacobean-sounding standard. This did not satisfy scholars who wanted a new English text of the New Testament to conform to a newly compiled Greek text.

In 1844, Constantine Tischendorf visited Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai and obtained some of Codex Sinaiticus' pages from the Old Testament. In 1853 he visited Saint Catherine's again. In 1859, he visited Saint Catherine's Monastery for the third time. On this visit, he obtained much more of Codex Sinaiticus, including the portion that contained the New Testament. In 1862, he published its text. Now the flagship manuscript of the Alexandrian Text (Codex Vaticanus) had an ally that was almost as old, far older than most Greek MSS. Vaticanus is assigned to the early 300s; Sinaiticus is probably slightly later, from the mid-300s. One strong reason for thinking that Sinaiticus is slightly younger than Vaticanus is that Vaticanus does not have the Eusebian Section-numbers in the margin, but Codex Sinaiticus does.

Before discovering Sinaiticus, Tischendorf had already done important research on a variety of important MSS, including Codex C, and he had published several

editions of the Greek New Testament. In 1866, in a publication that included his account of how he discovered Codex Sinaiticus, he mentioned that he and several of his contemporaries intended “to set aside this *textus receptus* altogether, and to construct a fresh text, derived immediately from the most ancient and authoritative sources.’

The impact of the discovery of Codex Sinaiticus, which confirmed many Alexandrian readings also found in Vaticanus, may be shown by a consideration of the differences in Tischendorf’s own published compilations of the Greek New Testament: after discovering Sinaiticus, Tischendorf changed the text of his own compilation in over 3,400 places.

In 1857, before Tischendorf obtained the New Testament portion of Codex Sinaiticus, five British churchmen published a revised text of the Gospel of John in English, titled, “*The Gospel according to St. John, After the Authorized Version, Newly Compared With the Original Greek, and Revised by Five Clergymen.*” Those five clergymen were John Barrow, George Moberly, Henry Alford, William Humphry, and Charles Ellicott. They similarly updated some of Paul’s epistles later in the 1850s.

These mild revisions assured readers, as stated in the brief Preface to the revision of the Gospel of John, that errors in the Authorized Version “are very slight and few in comparison of its many and great excellences.” Brief notes in the margin informed readers about some of deviations from the *Textus Receptus*, but as a whole, there were not drastic deviations from the King James Version. John 7:53-8:11 was framed within brackets, but the text was essentially unchanged at John 1:18, 1:34, 3:13, 5:4, 9:35, 14:14, etc. Readers were given the impression that a revision would only minimally affect the English text.

Meanwhile in 1864 in the United States of America, an organization called the American Bible Union issued a New Testament which mildly updated the text of the KJV. The American Bible Union's revision was not particularly popular, but it was consulted by British translators later on.

Charles Ellicott, one of the five clergymen responsible for the mild revisions presented in the 1850s, wrote a series of commentaries in which he consistently advocated non-Byzantine readings. Encouraged by Ellicott and other researchers, the Church of England sanctioned and sponsored the production of a revised version of the Bible. It was understood that the revisors would operate within a set of rules, of which I will list three:

- (1)** The translators are to introduce as few alterations as possible into the text of the authorized version consistently with faithfulness.
- (2)** The translators are to limit, as far as possible, the expression of such alterations to the language of the authorized or earlier versions.
- (3)** The text to be adopted is to be that for which the evidence is decidedly preponderating, and when the text so adopted differs from that from which the authorized version was made; the alteration is to be indicated in the margin.

Some fine print, open to interpretation, accompanied these general rules. The fine print went along these lines: "The members of the Revision companies should not be guided by any other principle than the desire to bring the translation as near as they can to the original texts."

In 1870, the revision-work began, and it was generally expected that the result would resemble the

samples that had already been produced by the five clergymen. Of those five, four of them – Charles Ellicott, George Moberly, William Humphry, and Henry Alford – were on the new translation-committee, although Alford passed away in 1871.

A Unitarian named George Vance Smith was also on the translation-committee. When a resolution was passed by the Church of England stating that no person who denies the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ should be on the translation-committee, several Anglican committee-members threatened to resign if George Vance Smith was not allowed to be a member. By a three-vote majority, the Lower House of Convocation allowed George Vance Smith to participate.

Once the project began, with expectations of a modest revision in which every divergence from the *Textus Receptus* would be noted in the margin, things changed. By the 1870s, Western scholars were aware of the existence of about a thousand MSS, but the translation-committee of the New Testament tended to focus especially upon Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, and tended to prefer readings shared by these two MSS.

This was due to a large extent to the influence of two committee-members named Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort. In 1851, Hort had already referred to the New Testament base-text of the KJV as “that vile *Textus Receptus*.” In 1853 Hort had written about his intention to work with Westcott to “supply clergymen generally, schools, etc., with a portable Greek Testament, which shall not be disfigured with Byzantine corruptions.”

Inasmuch as most of the New Testament in the King James Version consists of Byzantine readings, this meant that the Revised Version of the New Testament was not going to be a mild *revision* like what had been

presented in the 1850s by the five clergymen. It was going to be a version based on a **replacement** of the Byzantine Text with the Alexandrian Text – the kind of compilation that Hort had intended to make ever since 1853.

Westcott and Hort were two of the translation committee-members who had threatened to resign if George Vance Smith were not given a seat on the committee. Did that mean that they were theologically liberal? Many letters of both Hort and of Westcott have been collected and published. At some points they both make statements that seem perfectly orthodox, at other times, but Hort says things that would probably cause most conservatives to think that they detected a doctrinal problem.

Here I cite a few statements from Hort's letters. These letters are all available online, so I leave it to interested listeners to investigate the context if they imagine that context will somehow make them seem more palatable:

- First, regarding politics during the American Civil War:

“The American empire is a standing menace to the whole civilization of Europe.” And, “It cannot be wrong to desire and pray from the bottom of one's heart that the American Union may be shivered to pieces.” And in 1865: “I cannot say that I see much as yet to soften my deep hatred of democracy in all its forms.”

- Regarding racial equality:

“Black people everywhere, not in slavery only, have surely shown themselves only as an immeasurably inferior race, just human and no more; their religion frothy and sensuous; their highest virtues those of a good Newfoundland dog.” [This is a misquote. Hort did not write “Black people.” He used a word that rhymes with “chiggers” and begins with “N.”]

- Regarding the nature of hell, in 1859 Hort wrote, "I do not see how to dissent from the equally common Universalist objection, that finite sins cannot deserve an infinite punishment."

- Regarding the historicity of events in Genesis 3, in 1848, Hort wrote, "I am inclined to think that no such state as Eden (I mean the popular notion) ever existed, and that Adam's fall in no degree differed from the fall of each of his descendants." Westcott expressed a similar position.

One reason why we have little more than these indications of unorthodox beliefs in the public works of Westcott and Hort is that Hort realized the advantages of strategic discretion when it came to promoting their doctrinal beliefs: Hort advised Lightfoot, "Depend on it, whatever either you or I may say in an extended commentary, if only we speak our mind, we shall not be able to avoid giving grave offence to . . . the miscalled orthodoxy of the day."

In 1861 Hort wrote to Westcott: "I have a sort of craving that our text should be cast upon the world before we deal with matters likely to brand us with suspicion. I mean, a text, issued by men already known for what will undoubtedly be treated as dangerous heresy, will have great difficulties in finding its way to regions which it might otherwise hope to reach."

Hort also wrote to Lightfoot, advising him that "if we speak our mind, we shall not be able to avoid giving grave offense."

That is not very far from saying, "Let's keep quiet about our beliefs regarding some doctrinal subjects, so that people will not use that as an objection against the textual revision that we intend to publish."

Hort was officially Anglican. He sympathized with Unitarians. And Universalists noticed: in 1875 in *The*

Unitarian Review, textual scholar Ezra Abbot commented, “Every scholar must look with great interest for the publication of the long-promised critical edition of the Greek Testament undertaken by Dr. Westcott and Mr. Hort.”

Looking at Hort’s letters, and his disposition toward Unitarianism, a reasonable case can be made that Hort harbored some unorthodox beliefs.

Some writers have accused Westcott and Hort of being associated with the occult. Part of the reason for this seems to have been some confusion of Brooke Westcott, the Oxford professor, with W. W. Westcott, an entirely different person.

Two other reasons are more concerning.

First, in 1851, Hort and Westcott were both charter members of a club at Oxford called the *Ghostlie Guild*. Hort referred to it openly in his letters, and described it as “*a society for the investigation of ghosts and all supernatural appearances and effects, being all disposed to believe that such things really exist, and ought to be discriminated from hoaxes and mere subjective delusions.*” It is entirely possible that Hort changed his view later, but in December of 1851, he described his position as follows: “*we all are disposed to believe that ghosts really exist.*”

Second, Hort mentioned in a letter written to his wife in October of 1864 that he attended an event with the De Morgans. He stated, “We tried to turn tables, but the creatures wouldn’t stir.” Hort thus referred to Augustus and Sophia De Morgan, who were spiritists who conducted seances (as anyone can see by consulting their 1863 book “*From Matter to Spirit: The Result of Ten Years of Experience in Spirit Manifestations*”). That book’s opening chapter contains instructions about how to conduct a table-tipping session in which one attempts to

communicate with spirits. That is what Hort was referring to in his reference to “turning tables.”

In Hort’s defense, he might have attended the séance out of courtesy to his friends. He mentioned no other seances in his other letters. But if a Baptist preacher today told his congregation, “*I am disposed to believe in ghosts, and I just finished attending a séance the other day,*” it would be a concern. It seems strange that so few people today seem willing to acknowledge that it is a valid concern when the compiler of a New Testaments base-text has said the same thing.

Objections of this sort are typically dismissed as examples of the genetic fallacy. The idea is that “Just because a fox is a fox, that doesn’t prove that it cannot guard the henhouse.”

Crying “Genetic fallacy!” does not settle all concerns about Hort’s doctrinal views. But to fairly evaluate Hort’s approach, we need to separate it from Hort himself: many textual critics in Hort’s generation, and afterwards, found Hort’s approach persuasive, and *their* doctrinal views vary from one individual to another.

What about Westcott? Westcott was generally conservative and devout. Some of his views on technical subjects fluctuated: in 1855, Westcott told his readers that it was an “almost universal opinion” that the Syriac Peshitta was “assigned to the most remote Christian antiquity,” but at some point before 1881 he must have changed his mind.

Some of Westcott’s letters from 1870 reveal a deliberate strategy on the part of Westcott, Hort, Charles Ellicott, and Joseph B. Lightfoot, to make the Revised Version a much more extensive revision than its sponsors in the Church of England had initially expected it to be. In 1871, Lightfoot wrote in detail about the need for extensive revision of the Greek New Testament.

These four scholars – Westcott, Hort, Ellicott, and Lightfoot – made such a heavy impact upon the Revised Version of the New Testament that it pounded out the counter-impact of the other scholars on the translation-committee. Some of the other committee-members were not very active. Scrivener was on the committee, but he was often out-voted regarding questions of what Greek text was to be translated into English.

When the English Revised Version was published in 1881, it was only a few days after Westcott and Hort's revised Greek New Testament was also published, in May of 1881. This had the effect of preventing the public from being aware of the extent of the revision until its publication.

In the 1870s while the Revised Version was slowly being made, an Anglican scholar named John Burgon discerned what kind of New Testament text the Revisers were likely to produce, considering what members of the revision-committee had already written about the Greek text. Burgon anticipated what was coming.

In 1871, he wrote a very detailed defense of Mark 16:9-20, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark Defended*, and along the way he expressed strong support for the Byzantine Text. Burgon also pointed out problematic readings in the Alexandrian Text, such as its unusual reading in Matthew 27:49.

After the Revised Version was published, Burgon published a series of essays offering the basis for the position that the Revised Version was “untrustworthy from beginning to end.”

The Revised Version was not a success. This was due in part to Burgon's strident and detailed opposition, but primarily it was a consequence of the poor quality of the English translation itself. Reviewers inevitably compared it to the KJV, and tended to conclude that while

reading the KJV was like riding in a royal carriage on a paved road, reading the Revised Version was like riding in a broken-down carriage on a rough dirt road. Some readers also observed that although the Revised Version of the English text did not *fully* reflect the Greek text edited by Westcott and Hort, it deviated chronically from the *Textus Receptus*, and footnotes to indicate where this was done were very frequently absent.

The Revised Version was a textual bait-and-switch: the revisions in the 1850s were very mild, and the Revised Version of 1881 was unquestionably drastic. And if that is how it seemed in English, to readers of the KJV and the Revised Version, it was even more obvious to scholars who could read the *Textus Receptus* and the new compilation from Westcott and Hort.

Although the Revised Version in English did not dethrone the King James Version, the Greek text of Westcott and Hort was rapidly embraced by scholars as a Greek New Testament superior to the *Textus Receptus* – even if the claim built into its title – that it was the original text – was treated with skepticism.

What was revolutionary about the approach advocated by Westcott and Hort? The Greek text that went into the 1881 Revised Version was primarily Byzantine. The Greek text that came out of the Revised Version was primarily Alexandrian.

What happened? Why was the revision made by Westcott and Hort considered superior to the compilations made by earlier researchers such as Griesbach and Scholz?

What happened was the adoption of Hort's model of textual transmission, which Hort explained in an Introduction that appeared about six months after the compilation itself in 1881. We will look into details of

Hort's model of the history of the Greek text in the next chapter.

It is customary in some circles to criticize the tone that Burgon frequently used in his writing. I slightly paraphrase him here:

“If anyone complains that I have sometimes hit my opponents rather hard, I take this opportunity to point out that ‘To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun’ – a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embracing – a time for speaking smoothly, and a time for speaking sharply. And when the words of inspired Scripture are seriously endangered, as now they are, it is scarcely possible for one who is determined to effectively preserve, in their integrity, the words that God has entrusted to His church, to hit either too straight or too hard.”

EXTRA CREDIT

Download Hort's *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (easily found online), and download John Burgon's *The Revision Revised*, and read its 32-page Preface, including the opening remarks from Scrivener.

Tour the following:

<https://www.lib.umich.edu/blogs/beyond-reading-room/500-years-erasmuss-new-testament>

https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/dawn_of_the_reformation/2/

<http://vuntblog.blogspot.com/2010/11/erasmus-new-testament-editions-online.html>

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Hort and the Alexandrian Text

Our heavenly Father, arm us today with the mind of Christ. Strengthen our resolve to spend our time not in the distractions of the world but as those who have been called out of the world, that in all things, you may be glorified. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

The Revised Version of 1881 did not replace the King James Version, but the Green New Testament released by Westcott and Hort in the same year replaced the *Textus Receptus*, among scholars, as a superior representation of the Greek text of the New Testament. Why?

The main reason for this was the cogency, or apparent cogency, of the model that was proposed by Westcott and Hort for the historical development of the text. Previous researchers had separated MSS and other witnesses into groups, according to readings that they had in common that were not shared by the other two groups. This had the effect of rendering the simple quantity of MSS in favor of a specific reading relatively unimportant.

One of Griesbach's Canons, or text-critical guidelines, had been to prefer the reading that best accounts for its rivals. If a reading that was attested in only a small proportion of early MSS accounted for a rival reading that was supported by twenty times as many MSS, the minority reading was regarded as more likely to be original. This approach tended to allow **internal** considerations – the intrinsic quality of a reading, relative to the quality of its rivals – to decide textual contests that otherwise were not decided by external evidence.

That was part of Westcott and Hort's approach, but it was nothing new. What **was** new was the idea that the

Byzantine Text (represented by between 85% and 99% of the Greek New Testament MSS, depending on what part of the New Testament one looks at) was the result of a deliberate editorial effort to produce a new form of the text, undertaken by someone in the late 200s (possibly Lucian of Antioch) using as his sources MSS that had forms of the text that were either Western or Alexandrian. Westcott and Hort both advocated this idea, but it was Hort who wrote a detailed introduction to their compilation of the Greek New Testament in which he went into detail about its components.

Hort argued for this position in three ways.

- First, Hort proposed that the Byzantine Text contained confluents, that is, readings that were basically combinations of shorter readings found in the Alexandrian and Western forms of the text. Hort listed four textual contests in Mark – in Mark 6:33, Mark 8:26, Mark 9:38, and Mark 9:49 – and four textual contests in Luke – in Luke 9:10, Luke 9:54, Luke 12:18, and Luke 24:53 – as examples of this phenomenon. Hort argued that in each of these eight passages, the Byzantine reading is a combination of the readings in the other two forms of the text, and that from this it follows that the Byzantine form is later than the other two. Hort mentioned in his *Introduction*, “To the best of our belief the relations thus provisionally traced are never inverted,” that is, neither the Alexandrian Text nor the Western Text has any readings that look like they are the result of a combination of the Byzantine reading and a reading from another form of the text.

- Second, Hort proposed that no patristic writer from before the 300s used Byzantine readings that are not shared by either the Alexandrian or Western forms of the text. When the quotations made by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Novatian, Methodius, and (in the early 300s) Eusebius of Caesarea are examined,

none of them contain distinctly Byzantine forms of the text. They only agree with the Byzantine reading when the Byzantine reading agrees with either the Western or Alexandrian reading.

“Before the middle of the third century, at the very earliest,” Hort wrote, “we have no historical signs of the existence of readings, conflate or other, that are marked as distinctly Syrian.” (“Syrian” was Hort’s term for the early Byzantine Text.)

- Third, Hort proposed that when Byzantine readings are compared to their rivals, internal considerations consistently indicate that the Byzantine reading is not the original reading.

Thus Hort argued that the evidence from conflations, the evidence from patristic evidence, and the evidence from internal considerations all pointed toward the same hypothesis: that the Byzantine Text did not spring up independent of the Alexandrian or Western forms, but was deliberately created from those forms by an editor, possibly Lucian of Antioch, in the late 300s.

From that premise Hort argued, “It follows that all distinctively Syrian readings may be set aside at once as certainly originating after the middle of the third century, and therefore, as far as transmission is concerned, corruptions of the apostolic text.” (*Introduction* p. 117)

Hort emphasized this point: “All distinctively Syrian readings must be at once rejected.”

With all distinctively Syrian (that is, Byzantine) readings thus disqualified from being original on the grounds that they did not exist until the Byzantine Text was created in the late 200s, the larger textual contest became in general a contest between the Alexandrian Text and the Western Text. The Western Text, Hort argued, was manifestly inaccurate, and habitually expanded and paraphrased, while the Alexandrian Text was precise and

generally unembellished. Although the Western Text occupied much more territory in the second and third centuries, the Alexandrian Text, according to Hort, was intrinsically superior.

Furthermore, Hort argued that the superior representatives of this superior text, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, echoed a shared ancestor which cannot be a close ancestor like a father or grandfather, on the grounds that they simply have too much disagreement between themselves for that. Where they agree, they must both be echoing a very ancient ancestor, probably from the second century.

And thus, readings shared by Vaticanus and Sinaiticus were assigned special importance.

However, there was one major exception to Hort's general favor toward the Alexandrian Text over the Western Text. Here, it is a good idea to slow down and critique Hort's terminology, remembering the axiom, "He who controls the terms of the argument controls the argument."

Hort called the shared text of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus the "Neutral Text," which is a loaded term. With that in mind: Hort gave special weight to the Western Text when it did the opposite of what it usually did. The Western Text was typically more embellished than the Alexandrian Text, but when the Western Text was plain and undecorated, Hort was willing to grant that at some of those points, especially in Luke 24, the Western reading was original. At those points where the Alexandrian reading was longer, he did not want to refer to "Neutral Interpolations," because that would sound silly. It would have been like saying "Original Corruptions," or "Chocolate Vanilla." So instead Hort invented the term "Western Non-interpolations" to refer to a series of shorter Western readings. Except for these "Western Non-interpolations,"

the compilation produced by Westcott and Hort was almost entirely Alexandrian.

Although the nomenclature used by Hort was immediately seen as problematic, the idea that the Byzantine Text was dependent upon the Alexandrian and Western forms of the text was widely received with favor. There were exceptions: Frederick Scrivener, who had been on the translation-committee of the Revised Version, (and who composed an introduction to New Testament textual criticism that remains valuable to this day) considered Hort's case far from secure. John Burgon (who wrote a detailed defense of Mark 16:9-20 in 1871) wrote a series of essays in which one objection after another was made against Hort's model of the early transmission of the text of the New Testament. Throughout the 1880s, while some scholars regarded Hort's *Introduction* as a masterpiece that brought the field of New Testament textual criticism into a new era, others were not convinced.

Westcott and Hort were not the only scholars working on a compilation of the Greek New Testament in the late 1800s. In Germany, a researcher named Eberhard Nestle produced a Greek New Testament using three editions of the Greek New Testament made by other textual critics – the idea being that this would reduce the impact of “pet theories” advocated by individual scholars. The editions initially used by Nestle were Tischendorf's eighth edition, Westcott and Hort's edition, and an edition by Richard Francis Weymouth, which was itself a sort of consensus-text based on previous editions. Nestle also used a compilation made by Bernhard Weiss, which in later editions replaced Weymouth's compilation.

In 1898, Nestle wrote a brief article in *The Expository Times*, an influential journal, that was basically an invitation to the British and Foreign Bible Society to

distribute his compilation instead of the *Textus Receptus*. In 1904, the British and Foreign Bible Society began to distribute Nestle's edition of the Greek New Testament.

Before that happened, two things happened which, although they are often seen as minor events, or footnotes, had lasting significance. These two crucial small events were the 1897 Oxford Debate on New Testament Textual Criticism, and F. C. Burkitt's 1901 analysis of the Gospels-text used by Ephrem Syrus.

John Burgon died in 1888, and Fenton John Anthony Hort died in 1892, without any direct head-to-head debate occurring between them. Hort and Westcott both seemed content not to address Burgon's protests against their work, except for some brief dismissive remarks. Charles Ellicott was more vocal – but not particularly persuasive.

Strictly speaking, Burgon was **not** a champion of the *Textus Receptus* as a whole. He favored the traditional text, which is basically synonymous with the Byzantine Text. He insisted that the *Textus Receptus* contained some non-original readings, and he also maintained that the *Textus Receptus* should be revised – but he also insisted that scholars in his day were neither sufficiently equipped, nor sufficiently adept with the textual resources they had, to undertake a thorough revision with a realistic chance of reconstructing the original text. In other words, Burgon, who is sometimes characterized as rash and impatient, was so patient that he preferred to have an excellent revision happen after his death, rather than have a premature revision happen within his lifetime.

Burgon's *de facto* successor was Edward Miller, and in 1897, Miller squared off in a debate at New College, at the University of Oxford, against some proponents of Hort's text, and of the model of the Lucian Recension on which it was based. This brief debate transpired on May

6, 1897. It started out as a discussion between Miller and William Sanday, the Margaret Professor at Oxford.

Sanday, somewhat surprisingly, made several concessions to Miller. When Miller protested that Westcott and Hort put too much weight on agreements of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, Sanday basically agreed: "I can for myself go with Mr. Miller to a certain extent in thinking that Dr. Westcott and Dr. Hort have pressed their preference for these MSS rather too far."

When Miller argued that Hort seemed to adopt readings merely because they were the readings of Vaticanus, Sanday granted that Hort had made some arbitrary assumptions, stating, "It is, I think, not a safe inference that because a manuscript is right in nine cases out of ten, therefore it will be right in the tenth."

Sanday voluntarily claimed that the traditional text – the text that Miller was defending – is no doubt found to a considerable extent in the writings of Gregory Nazianzus (329-390) and Gregory of Nyssa (335-395). Practically the same point had been granted by Hort, but this is often minimized by those who want to frame the Byzantine Text as if it is something medieval.

It may be helpful to see the claim in Hort's own words: "The fundamental text of late extant Greek MSS generally is beyond all question identical with the dominant Antiochan or Graeco-Syrian text of the second half of the fourth century." To put it another way: generally speaking, **the text of the medieval minuscules is the Greek text that was in use in Syria in 350-400.** Again: that's a quote from Hort..

When Miller argued that that eight conflations from two Gospels are simply not nearly enough grounds upon which to build a theoretical revision of the entire New Testament, Sanday conceded, "I am prepared to admit for myself that the conflations are not conclusive

proof of the rightness of Dr. Hort's theory ; they could only belong to the region of hypothesis. It is all hypothesis."

Before Miller could reply to this frank admission, the discussion was taken over by Syriac specialists who apparently took offense at a phrase that Sanday had used to describe the Peshitta (he called it the "sheet anchor of Mr. Miller's theory").

A "sheet anchor" is an anchor of last resort – seldom used except in emergencies. The idea is that defenders of the Byzantine Text tended to point to the Peshitta for support, but did not use it frequently. For Syriac specialists who read the Peshitta every day, calling the Peshitta a "sheet anchor" probably seemed dismissive – and the debate began to orbit the Peshitta. Following that, Miller only had time to make a few brief remarks before dinner-time arrived.

It might seem like the debate was pushed into a detour, but the focus on the Peshitta was a completely logical progression: **if** the Peshitta was translated before the year 200 – as Westcott himself had thought in the 1850s – **then** a mainly Byzantine Greek text had to also be just as early, to be the Peshitta's base-text. And then Hort's approach becomes *impossible*.

If the Peshitta is a translation made around 300, this would still make Hort's approach *unlikely*, inasmuch as the novel Byzantine Text would have to somehow suddenly and silently be favored over whatever text had previously been in use in the ancient churches of Syria.

One of the Syriac specialists who supported Hort's position argued that the uniformity of the text of the earliest MSS of the Peshitta implies that their source "could not have been very remote." Was this really true? Closer study of the early Syriac text was needed.

Miller, in his closing remarks, had alluded to the Syriac writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem Syrus as ancient

evidence for the Peshitta. Was this really true? Closer study of the writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem was needed. One afternoon of vigorous discussion had isolated and identified the questions that needed to be answered for a resolution, one way or another.

This brings us to the second crucial small event: in 1901, a Cambridge scholar named F. C. Burkitt published a study of the Gospels-quotations in the writings of Ephrem Syrus. He concluded that out of 48 Gospels-passages studied, only eight of them were capable of implying dependence upon the Peshitta, and all eight are more likely quotations of passage where an earlier form of the text, used by Ephrem, simply happens to agree with the Peshitta. In addition, Burkitt extrapolated that the earlier form of the Gospels used by Ephrem was neither the Sinaitic Syriac, nor the Curetonian Syriac, but was the Diatessaron.

This was a pivotal point. It indicated that the production-date of the Peshitta was not in the second century, or early in the 300s, but sometime later than Ephrem Syrus, who died in 373. Burkitt proposed that without support for the Peshitta from Ephrem Syrus, “we are free to bring down the date of its appearance to a later period, to the fifth century.” He proceeded to propose that the Peshitta is the version that was attributed to Rabbula, who was the influential bishop of Edessa in 411-435.

Hort had already granted that the Byzantine Text was in circulation in the second half of the 300s, so positing the production of the Peshitta in the early 400s was no obstacle for Hort’s general theory. But embracing a fifth-century date for the Peshitta meant that the Byzantine Text appeared to no longer have a historical anchor in the second century.

In 1904, after Burkitt's analysis of Ephrem's Gospels-quotations had been published and reviewed, the British and Foreign Bible Society began to distribute Nestle's compilation of the Greek New Testament, which by that point was already in its fifth edition.

Several other things were happening that seemed to forecast that the dominance of Hort's approach might be short-lived:

In 1890, Herman Hoskier published a detailed study of the text of Gospels-manuscript 700, known at the time as minuscule 604. GA 700 is a medieval manuscript, but its text has an abundance of readings that diverge from the Byzantine Text. Hoskier demonstrated, Q.E.D., that early readings are preserved in later MSS: minuscule 700 deviates from the *Textus Receptus* in 2,724 places.

In 1893, J. Rendel Harris published *Four Lectures on the Western Text*, which had the effect of saying "Not so fast" in regard to the dismissal of the Western Text as if its readings can be easily dismissed as embellishments. (J. Rendel Harris was also instrumental in the European discovery of several MSS.)

In 1902, Kirsopp Lake published *Codex 1 and Its Allies*, which focused on the Gospels-text in family 1. Lake's findings indicated that the map that Hort had drawn had some blank spaces that were yet to be filled in.

In addition, important materials came to light that Westcott and Hort had not used: the Arabic Diatessaron was published in an accessible format in 1888, the Sinaitic Syriac was discovered and translated, Codex Macedonianus was made public, and Codex Washingtonianus was obtained by Charles Lang Freer in 1906. All these things happened in the 40-year period that followed the publication of the Westcott-Hort compilation in 1881.

Yet the text was not significantly changed.

Part of the reason for that is that some scholars had hopes that another researcher, Hermann von Soden, was going to produce a definitive edition of the Greek New Testament, with a massive textual apparatus. When von Soden's text was released in the early 1900s, it was clear that Von Soden did not adopt Hort's theory of the Lucian Recension. Von Soden's text was rejected almost as soon as it appeared. Scholars criticized three negative aspects of Von Soden's work: first, he had created a new method of identifying MSS that was difficult to use, second, his apparatus was very inaccurate, and third, Von Soden proposed unlikely theories about the extent of the impact of Marcion and Tatian upon the text in the second century.

Instead of embracing the much-anticipated text of Von Soden, most textual critics returned to the Westcott-Hort text, which had been rendered somewhat more plausible by Burkitt's removal of the objection of an early production-date for the Peshitta.

Several textual critics in this period wrote new introductions to the field of New Testament textual criticism: Scrivener's *"Plain Introduction"* appeared in four editions in the second half of the 1800s – but Scrivener passed away in 1891, still maintaining that the Byzantine Text was generally superior to the Alexandrian Text, and still maintaining that the main idea driving Hort's approach – that the Byzantine Text was the result of a recension – was wrong.

New critical introductions appeared, written by Caspar Rene Gregory, by Eberhard Nestle, by F. C. Kenyon, and by Alexander Souter, and a brief handbook was written by Kirsopp Lake. But no matter whose name was on the outside of the new introductions, Hort's basic approach was on the inside, and at the core of that approach were two ideas: **(1)** the Byzantine Text should

be set aside and almost entirely replaced with readings from the Alexandrian Text, and **(2)** the best Greek representatives of the Alexandrian Text, by far, were Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus.

The pro-Byzantine school of thought that had been upheld by Scrivener, Burgon, and Miller was not intently interested in producing new English versions, or new revisions, on the grounds that the means to undertake a revision had not yet arrived. There were still many Greek MSS that had not been collated or transcribed. There were still patristic writers whose works had not been carefully edited. And there were rumors that researchers and excavators in Egypt might find new and important materials. The pro-Byzantine school tended to stand still, maintaining, in the words of Burgon, that “An authoritative Revision of the Greek Text will have to precede any future Revision of the English of the New Testament,” and “For such an undertaking the time has not yet come.”

Burgon’s school of thought did not suddenly vanish. But it was fairly clear that if the Revised Version, or *any* English version based primarily on the Alexandrian Text, were adopted, there would not only be no going back to the *Textus Receptus*, but there would be no going back to an academic environment that was open to consider the Byzantine Text.

Instead of proposing a new revision or a new version, Burgon had proposed new preparation, Perhaps this inexact quotation will give some idea of what he had in mind:

“Let a generation of students give themselves entirely up to this branch of sacred science. Let 500 more copies of the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles be diligently collated. Let at least 100 of the ancient lectionaries be very exactly collated also. Let the most important of the

ancient versions be edited afresh. Above all, let the fathers – [the patristic writers] – be called upon to give up their precious secrets; let the MSS of their writings be inspected and indexed. Only so will it ever be possible to obtain a Greek text on which absolute reliance may be placed, and which may serve as the basis for a satisfactory revision of our Authorized Version.”

Because a primary aspect of this strategy – to wait patiently while evidence was accumulated that could facilitate a definitive and better revision – implied being content with the Greek text on hand, it also tended to encourage being content with the Greek base-text that was on hand prior to Westcott and Hort.

To some extent, this meant that for those who rejected Hort’s approach, the practical thing to do, at least until the resources necessary to proceed with a revision were in place, was to continue to use the King James Version of the New Testament, on the grounds that it was safer to tolerate its quirks (such as the retro-translation at the end of Revelation) than to embrace a revision in which almost every reading was a minority-reading, formed on the basis of a theory for which there was not credible historical support – a model which, to repeat a phrase from the Oxford Debate, was “all hypothesis.”

Meanwhile, the rumor that new excavations in Egypt would turn up important materials turned out to be true.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Challenging Hort's Approach

Our heavenly Father, you reveal yourself in your word as the God who heals those he has torn – as a lion, and as a shepherd. Guide us to pursue a fuller knowledge of you. Put us in your light and do not allow our faith to disappear like dew, but let us fully become what you, the potter, have designed us to be. In Jesus' name – Amen.

In the first decade of the 1900s a new era appeared to be underway in the field of New Testament textual analysis: a text resembling the compilation made by Westcott and Hort had been used in 1881 as the base-text for the New Testament of the Revised Version, and in 1901, the American Standard Version was published for American readers, using a similar New Testament base-text. In 1901, F. C. Burkitt seemed to have effectively removed an objection against the text of Westcott and Hort by showing that the Peshitta originated in the early 400s, instead of sometime before the 200s.

A new compilation of the Greek New Testament which depended heavily upon the 1881 text of Westcott and Hort was being distributed by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In several new introductions to New Testament textual criticism, writers promoted the theory that the Byzantine Text was made from the Alexandrian and Western forms of the text, based on three lines of evidence:

- (1)** by confluents – readings in the Byzantine Text that appear to combine Alexandrian and Western readings –

- (2) by the non-use of the Byzantine Text in patristic writings composed before the late 200s, and
- (3) by the internal quality of readings.

Most textual analysts at the time considered this plausible, although some considered the evaluation of internal qualities of rival readings to be rather subjective. Hort's theory that the Byzantine Text was made by an editor, possibly Lucian of Antioch, working in the late 200s, was soon being presented as a **fact**.

But things were happening that would eventually show that Hort's theory was an oversimplification. Beginning in the late 1890s, Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt oversaw the discoveries of early papyrus MSS, some of which were New Testament MSS, at the site of the ancient Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus.

One of the first MSS they found was the parchment fragment 069, which contains a few verses from Mark 10 and 11. Assigned to c. 500, 069 displays a consistently Byzantine Text. For example, in Mark 10:50, the text in 069 disagrees with the *Alexandrian* codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, with the *Western* codex Bezae. They have the Greek equivalent of "he rose up," whereas the Byzantine Text and 069 both read, "he arose."

This reading is distinctly Byzantine. But it did not pose a problem for Hort's theory of the Lucianic Recension because the production-date of the MS. 069 appears to have been produced a few centuries *after* the lifetime of Lucian.

What *could*, and *would*, pose a significant problem for the theory of the Lucianic Recension? **Early** readings, that agree with the Byzantine Text, but disagree with the Alexandrian Text and the Western Text. This is not an easy thing to find – for at least three reasons:

(1) Scholarly reluctance to acknowledge early Byzantine readings as Byzantine. When a researcher encounters an early reading that agrees with the Byzantine Text, and disagrees with the Alexandrian Text, he might say, “Oh, that is just a Western reading that we are encountering for the first time.” As long as everything that is not Alexandrian is indiscriminately thrown into the “Western” basket, ancient Byzantine readings might as well be invisible.

(2) The physical climate of Egypt. In parts of Egypt, the climate is very dry, and this allows papyrus to last a very long time. Almost everywhere else, the conditions are more humid. Because of humidity, papyrus naturally decays more quickly. The early papyri thus tend to give us a picture of what the text was like *in Egypt*, but they do not necessarily provide a picture of the text that existed in the second and third centuries in other locations. MSS with the Byzantine Text have not been found *in Egypt* from the 100s and 200s, but that does not mean that it was not circulating in other places.

In the 100s and 200s, Christians in Syria, Greece, Cyprus, Crete, and the area that is now Turkey – covering several Roman provinces – had papyrus copies of New Testament books. But humidity contributed to the natural decay of their New Testament MSS, just as it contributed to the decay of other texts written on papyrus.

(3) Roman persecutors’ policy of manuscript-destruction. During Roman persecutions, especially the ones instigated by the Emperors Decius (around 250), and Diocletian (around 300), it was Roman policy to obtain Christian compositions and destroy them. We should not be surprised to *not* find copies of Christian Scriptures from a time and place where we possess historical evidence that it was the policy of the Roman government to destroy such documents.

With these factors, and others, tending to reduce the chance of finding MSS made before the 300s in Syria, in Greece, and in the Roman provinces of Asia, Galatia, Lycia, Pamphylia, Pisidia, Cilicia, Lyconia, Pontus, and Cappadocia, it probably seemed safe and reasonable in the early 1900s to agree with Hort's proposal that there are no documents earlier than Lucian that contain distinctly Byzantine readings.

But later in the 1900s, more MSS were discovered in Egypt.

One of those MSS was **Papyrus 45**, a heavily damaged, but substantial, manuscript, of the Gospels and Acts – the earliest known manuscript to contain text from all four Gospels. Its text was published in 1933, and it was assigned a production-date in the early 200s. Papyrus 45 wrecked the theory of the Lucianic Recension as proposed by Hort.

In Papyrus 45, in the fragments of chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the Gospel of Mark, there are at least 17 readings that are not supported by the leading MSS of the Alexandrian Text and Western Text, but which *are* supported by the Byzantine Text. I will mention some of them:

(1) In the closing phrase of Mark 6:45, Papyrus 45 supports the Byzantine reading, disagreeing with the reading that is supported by the Alexandrian Text and the Western text.

(2) In Mark 7:5, Papyrus 45 supports the Byzantine reading that means "answering," which is not supported by the Alexandrian and Western Text.

(3) At the beginning of Mark 7:12, Papyrus 45 supports the Byzantine reading "And," which is not in the flagship MSS of the Alexandrian Text and Western Text.

- (4)** In Mark 7:30, Papyrus 45 supports the word-order in the Byzantine Text, disagreeing with the word-order in Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Bezae.
- (5)** In Mark 7:31, after the word “Tyre,” Papyrus 45 supports the Byzantine reading. Both the form and meaning of this passage are different in Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Codex Bezae.
- (6)** In Mark 7:32, Papyrus 45 and the Byzantine Text do not have the word “and,” where it appears in Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Bezae.
- (7)** In Mark 7:35, Papyrus 45 has the word “immediately.” The Byzantine Text has this word here too. But the Alexandrian Text and the Western Text do not.
- (8)** In Mark 7:36, Papyrus 45 is difficult to read but it appears to support a reading that agrees with the Byzantine Text and disagrees with the flagship MSS of the Alexandrian Text and Western Text.
- (9)** In Mark 8:19, Papyrus 45 and the Byzantine Text share the same word-order, disagreeing with the word-order in the Alexandrian Text and also disagreeing with the word-order in Codex D.
- (10)** In Mark 9:6, the wording in Papyrus 45 agrees with the Byzantine Text, disagreeing with Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Bezae.
- (11)** In Mark 9:20, the word-order in Papyrus 45 agrees with the Byzantine Text, disagreeing with the reading in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus and also disagreeing with a different reading in Codex Bezae.

(12) And, again in Mark 9:20, the Byzantine Text has a reading that is supported by Papyrus 45 but which is not found in Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, or Codex Bezae.

This is a long way from proving that the fully formed Byzantine Text existed in Egypt in the early 200s. But Papyrus 45 was found in Egypt. It is not from a locale where we would *expect* the Byzantine Text to be found. The thing to see is that in the world according to Hort – a world in which the Byzantine Text is a combination of Alexandrian and Western readings – ***none of these readings should exist before the late 200s.***

If Papyrus 45 had been discovered before 1881, nobody would have dreamed of proposing a theory that the non-Alexandrian, non-Western readings found in the Byzantine Text did not exist before the lifetime of Lucian of Antioch. If anyone ***had*** said that, people would look at readings such as the ones I just listed, and say, “***What about these?***”

Support for distinctly Byzantine readings in Papyrus 45 does not stop in Mark 6-9. The fragmentary pages of Papyrus 45 in Luke 10-13 have a dozen distinctly Byzantine readings. For example:

(1) In Luke 10:39, Papyrus 45 agrees with the reading “Jesus,” where Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Bezae have the reading “Lord.” Papyrus 75 also reads “Jesus.”

Notice the lack of a conflation in the Byzantine Text here. It would have been very easy to create the reading “the Lord Jesus” if the Byzantine Text came from someone telling himself, “When it doubt don’t throw it out.”

(2) In Luke 10:42, Papyrus 45 and the Byzantine Text share the same word-order that is not supported in the flagship

MSS of the Alexandrian or Western forms of the text. In addition, where there is damage to Papyrus 45, Papyrus 75 has the Greek equivalent of the word “from” before “her” at the end of the verse, agreeing with the Byzantine Text. “From” is not supported by Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, or Bezae.

(3) In Luke 11:12, Papyrus 45 and the Byzantine Text share the same word-order at the beginning of the verse. The Alexandrian Text has a different reading and the Western Text has another different reading.

(4) In Luke 11:33, Papyrus 45 and the Byzantine Text have the Greek word φέγγος instead of the word φως, which is in Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Bezae. I note that in the Society of Biblical Literature’s *Greek New Testament*, compiled by Michael Holmes, φέγγος has been adopted.

(5) In Luke 12:5, Papyrus 45 supports the same word-order found in the Byzantine Text. Vaticanus and Sinaiticus and Bezae have the opposite word-order.

(6) In Luke 12:22, Papyrus 45 and the Byzantine Text include a word that means “to you.” Vaticanus and Sinaiticus and Bezae do not.

(7) In Luke 12:30, Papyrus 45 has a reading that is in the Byzantine Text but Vaticanus and Sinaiticus have a longer reading, and Codex D has a shorter reading.

(8) In Luke 12:31, Papyrus 45 and the Byzantine Text refer to the kingdom **of God**. Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Bezae refer to “**His** kingdom,” and Papyrus 75 refers to just the kingdom.

Also worth mentioning is a reading in Luke 11:13 where the text refers to “good gifts.” Papyrus 45 and the *Textus Receptus* share the same word-order here. (Yes; in Luke 11:13, the reading in the *Textus Receptus* is supported by the oldest manuscript of the passage, against the flagship MSS of the Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine forms of the text.)

These are the kinds of readings – in MSS made **before** Lucian – that researcher Harry Sturz collected and listed by the dozens in a dissertation in 1967, just a few years after Bruce Manning Metzger had written that it is a **fact** that Lucian of Antioch made the Byzantine Text.

Sturz’s findings were eventually published as a book, *The Byzantine Text-type & New Testament Textual Criticism*. Sturz showed that not only Papyrus 45, but also Papyrus 46, Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, and others, share some readings with the Byzantine Text that are **not** supported in the flagship MSS that represent the Alexandrian and Western Text.

This demonstrates that it is incorrect to assume that readings which only have Byzantine support ought to be set aside as late readings. But **this assumption is at the very foundation of the approach used by Westcott and Hort**. Hort did not have any of these papyri. **If he had**, he would not have proposed that non-Alexandrian, non-Western readings in the Byzantine Text are no earlier than the lifetime of Lucian of Antioch.

Hort’s theory can no longer be maintained. It seems more reasonable to picture an early form of the Byzantine Text – similar, in the Gospels, to the text found in Codex Pi (II) – as the dominant local text of a large territory from Greece to Cappadocia in the 200s.

The evidence from the papyri demands that at the very least, **if** anyone still wants to think that an editor produced the Byzantine Text in the late 200s or early 300s,

then that editor, in addition to having Alexandrian exemplars and Western exemplars, had to also have a third source of readings, to account for the readings found in the papyri that are also in the Byzantine Text.

And if it is granted that at any point, Lucian or someone-like-Lucian used a third source of readings, then there is no longer a basis to reject distinctly Byzantine readings as a matter of course. **At the very least**, the evidence from the papyri requires that distinctly Byzantine readings should not be disqualified merely because they are Byzantine.

However, textual critics of the 1900s tended to reject the Byzantine Text entirely. This is easily shown by consulting Kurt Aland's 1982 handbook *The Text of the New Testament*. Kurt Aland was, by the way, the Aland whose name follows Nestle in the title of the standard critical text of the twentieth century, the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

Aland claimed that minuscule MSS that display the Byzantine Text "are all irrelevant for textual criticism." Regarding majuscule MSS that have the Byzantine Text, I quote Aland, page 104:

"From the sixth century there have been preserved several MSS of consummate artistry (parchment stained purple, inscribed with silver letters, and illuminated with gold), and yet since they offer nothing more than a Byzantine text – even in the renowned Codex Rossanensis – they are in comparison quite irrelevant for textual criticism."

The dominant attitude of the compilers of the critical text in the 1900s was, "MSS that support the Byzantine Text are irrelevant." If this sentence is not *perfectly* precise, then it is very close.

Meanwhile, Burkitt's proposal that the Peshitta was produced by the Syriac bishop Rabbula in the early

400s was effectively challenged. There was a time in the 1900s when the theory that Rabbula created the Peshitta, like the theory of the Lucianic Recension, was presented as a fact. But the Estonian scholar Arthur Vööbus challenged that view, and specialist Sebastian Brock has written that the theory that the Peshitta was the work of Rabbula “now seems unlikely.”

A closer look at conflations is warranted. Hort’s assertion that the Byzantine Text conflates Alexandrian and Western readings, while readings of the Byzantine Text never form part of a conflation in the other two text-types, was a very lawyerly thing to say. It was built on the assumption that when a conflation appears in Vaticanus or Sinaiticus or Bezae, the manuscript does not accurately represent its text-type at that point. The following ten examples show that flagship representatives of the Alexandrian Text and of the Western Text **do** contain readings that appear to be conflations.

(1) In Matthew 3:12, the Byzantine Text says, “He shall gather **His** wheat into the granary.” Codex L and the Middle Egyptian say, “He shall gather wheat into **His** granary.” Vaticanus says, “He shall gather **His** wheat into **His** granary.”

(2) In Mark 1:28, the Byzantine Text, and Codex D, say that Jesus’ fame spread “immediately.” Codex W says that Jesus’ fame spread “everywhere.” Vaticanus says that Jesus’ fame spread **immediately everywhere**.

(3) In John 7:39, Papyrus 75, Codex K, Codex N, and Codex II refer simply to the Spirit, with no verb. The Byzantine Text refers to the **Holy** Spirit, with no verb. The Peshitta refers to the Spirit, and says that the Spirit was not yet **given**. Vaticanus says that the **Holy** Spirit was not yet **given**. Here the shortest reading is in Codex Π, a representatives of the early Byzantine Text – and the

longest reading, which appears to combine readings found in other witnesses, is in Codex Vaticanus.

(4) In Acts 10:48, the Byzantine Text says, “in the name of **the Lord.**” Vaticanus and Sinaiticus read, “in the name of **Jesus Christ.**” Codex Bezae says, “In the name of **the Lord Jesus Christ.**”

(5) In Colossians 1:12, the Byzantine Text, supported by Papyrus 46, says, “Christ has **enabled.**” The Western Text says “Christ has **called.**” Codex Vaticanus has “Christ has **called and enabled.**”

(6) In Colossians 3:17, the Byzantine Text says “in the name of **the Lord Jesus.**” Codex Alexandrinus says, “in the name of **Jesus Christ.**” Codex Sinaiticus says, “in the name of **the Lord Jesus Christ.**”

(7) In John 13:24, where Simon Peter is trying to get some information from the Beloved Disciple, the Byzantine Text has one reading, Vaticanus has a different reading, and in Codex Sinaiticus, **these two readings are combined.**

(8) In Mark 7:5, Papyrus 45 has a longer reading that looks like a combination of two shorter readings: one is found in the Byzantine Text, and one is found in the Alexandrian Text.

(9) In John 16:19, Papyrus 66 has a longer reading that looks like a combination of two shorter readings: one found in Vaticanus and the Byzantine Text, and one found in Sinaiticus and Codex W.

(10) In John 7:46, in Vaticanus, the officers say, “A man never spoke like this.” In the Byzantine Text, the officers say, “A man never spoke **as this man.**” In Codex D, the officers say, “Man never spoke like this one **speaks.**” In Papyrus 66 and Codex Sinaiticus, the officers say, “Man never spoke **like this man speaks.**”

The tenth example illustrates the next point to consider: in some cases, what looks like a conflation may be, instead, the effect of two scribal errors occurring adjacent to one another in two different transmission-lines. The readings that Hort called conflations ought to be re-examined to see if the two shorter readings can be produced from separate treatments of the longer reading.

The “conflation” in Luke 24:53 seems particularly vulnerable to this explanation.

But suppose that in every one of Hort’s **eight** proposed conflations, conflation *has* occurred. Suppose, further, that in each case, the reading in the Alexandrian Text *is* original, and the Western reading *was* created as an attempt at clarification.

In that case, all that has been shown may be that instead of someone combining an Alexandrian reading with a Western reading, what has happened is that someone combined a *Byzantine* reading that was already shared by the Alexandrian Text and the Byzantine Text, with a Western reading, or that someone combined a reading that was shared by the Byzantine Text and the Western Text, with an Alexandrian reading.

To put it another way: picture an early form of the Byzantine Text, circulating in Cappadocia in the 100s and 200s, while the Alexandrian Text was circulating in Egypt, and the Western Text was circulating more widely. So far, no conflations have occurred.

Now picture the conflations happening. Instead of picturing a collision of **two invaders** jousting upon new ground, and crashing together, each conflation may just as easily consist of the collision of an **indigenous** Byzantine reading (that agrees with the Alexandrian or Western Text) and an **invader** that agrees with the Western or Alexandrian Text.

Conflations involving an indigenous text, altered by an invading text, are just a form of mixture, and mixture occurs in witnesses of all text-forms. The existence of conflations – *if* they are indeed conflations – does not mean that the Byzantine Text did not exist until the conflations happened. It just means that the Byzantine Text is ***stratified***.

Some readings are later than others, like young barnacles on the hull of an ancient ship. But **this is something that can be said about the text in every major substantial manuscript of the Gospels**. If the Byzantine Text appears to have a few more barnacles than the other forms of the text, perhaps that is because it has been in the water longer.

With that cornerstone gone, what is still holding up Hort's approach? What about the ***patristic evidence***?

On pages 112-113 of his *Introduction*, Hort listed eleven patristic writers from the second and third centuries, representing different regions. Only ***one*** of those writers, Methodius, represents the regions of Macedonia, Achaia, Thracia, Bithynia, Galatia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Cyprus, and Crete. After characterizing Methodius' text as Western, Hort never mentions it again.

If we were to take the time to walk through Methodius' utilizations of New Testament passages, we would see that Methodius' text has more distinctly Western readings than it has distinctly Alexandrian or distinctly Byzantine readings.

But the evidence does not all point in one direction. Methodius cites the words spoken at Christ's baptism as "*Thou art My son; this day have I begotten thee,*" which agrees with the Western reading of Luke 3:22.

When Methodius uses Ephesians 5:30 with the closing phrase, “of His flesh and of His bones,” and when he uses Ephesians 3:14 with the entire phrase, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and when he uses First Corinthians 13:3, he uses a reading shared by the Western and Byzantine text-forms. His text is definitely **not** Alexandrian.

On the other hand, when Methodius quoted Matthew 25:1, he did not support the reading, “the bridegroom and the bride,” which is in the Western text. And when he used Luke 12:35, it did not correspond to any text-type; he wrote, “Let not your lights be extinguished, and let not your loins be loosed.” (Notice that an agrapha is probably in the picture here.)

In *The Banquet*, Methodius made no explicit quotations from several New Testament books, including the entire book of Mark, the book of Acts, and the books that were not included in the Peshitta.

The thing to see: **there is not a lot of evidence, either in the writings of Methodius, or anywhere else, to show that an essentially Byzantine Text did not exist in the days of Methodius.**

Consider the variety of text-forms recovered from one location, Oxyrhynchus, in Egypt. Why should we think that Methodius’ text was the only text in use throughout this huge area, or that it was typical of the text being used there?

What we have is not evidence of the absence of the Byzantine Text. It is an **absence of evidence** – an absence of evidence that is completely reasonable to expect, when we consider the natural destructive effect of humidity upon papyrus, and the effect of Roman persecutions. Nothing that Hort presented really opposes the idea that a later form of the Byzantine Text emerged, not from a recension, but from an earlier form of the

Byzantine Text, which was affected by mixture with the texts of other locales.

So:

- Hort's theory that all distinct Byzantine readings are late has been shown to be incorrect by the discovery of readings in early papyri that agree with distinct Byzantine readings.

- Hort's claim that conflations occur especially in the Byzantine Text does not imply that the Byzantine Text is late, because conflations, or readings indistinguishable from conflations, also occur in the flagship MSS that represent the Alexandrian Text and the Western Text, and even appear in the papyri.

- Hort's claim that the early patristic evidence shows that the Byzantine Text did not exist until the late 200s does not really show any such thing, because there is a vast area from which we simply have no evidence.

The textual analysts in charge of producing the critical text, such as Kurt Aland and Bruce Metzger, have nevertheless continued to favor the Alexandrian Text – foundations or no foundations. The situation resembled something that the polymath scholar George Salmon had described in 1890, as he foresaw an effect of adopting every detail of Hort's approach.

"Hort's rules," Salmon wrote, "very much remind me of the position taken by the Roman Cato: when he was asked what was the best way a man could make a living, he said, *"It is best to supply food."* What's second-best? *"To supply food."* What's third? *"To supply food."* What's fourth? *"Raising crops."* What about banking? *"What about killing a man?"*

And so Hort, if asked what authority should be followed, might answer, 'Follow Vaticanus and Sinaiticus; accept their readings as true, unless there is strong

internal evidence to the contrary, and never think it safe to reject them absolutely.'

But what if Vaticanus is not supported by Sinaiticus? Still follow Vaticanus, if it has the support of any other manuscript.

But suppose Vaticanus stands alone? Unless it is clearly a clerical error, it is not safe to reject Vaticanus.

But suppose Vaticanus is defective? Then follow Sinaiticus.

What about adopting the Western reading?

What about killing a man?!

It is not much of an exaggeration to say that with a few exceptions, the compilers of the Nestle-Aland compilation and the compilers of the UBS Greek New Testament have treated the idea of adopting non-Alexandrian readings like the idea of killing a man. Even after the foundations for Hort's theory of the Lucianic Recension broke apart, the readings in the very narrow channel of transmission of the Alexandrian Text have still been favored by the majority of the Nestle-Aland team of editors. The Lucianic Recension theory has continued to be promoted as a fact. And the readings of the Alexandrian Text are still promoted on the basis of internal considerations.

Internal considerations, without the assumption that the Alexandrian reading is the reading that ought to win, often point toward the Byzantine reading. In the next chapter I will take a closer look at some passages where this is the case.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Testing the Canons

Heavenly Father, we ask for Your guidance today, and upon every day of our earthly journey, in which we discover more and more of Your manifold grace. Help us to pattern our thoughts, our deeds, and our motives, according to the example of Your Son. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In 1974, the great textual analyst Eldon J. Epp wrote an essay titled, *"The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism."* Epp observed in this essay that many important discoveries were made after 1881. And yet, as far as the text of the compiled Greek New Testament was concerned, these new discoveries seem to have made very little difference. Epp noticed that when Kurt Aland compared the text in Nestle-Aland's 25th edition to the 1881 compilation of Westcott and Hort, he only found 558 differences between the two.

In 1980, Epp re-confirmed what he had written before:

"Our present critical texts have, or could have utilized, more than 80 papyri, more than 200 additional uncials, more than 2,600 additional minuscules, and perhaps 2,000 additional lectionaries that were unavailable to, or were not utilized by, Westcott and Hort."

Epp challenged his peers: we have clearly made progress regarding the available *data*, but what advances have been made where *method* is concerned? Epp made this challenge very openly; these are his exact words: **"Where is the substantive advance if the 'standard' texts of the Greek New Testament then, and now, are so close in character, and if, at the same time, we possess no**

comprehensive and generally accepted theory to support and justify that form of the text?”

To put it a different way: if we don't have valid reasons to perpetuate Hort's model of transmission, then why are we reaching conclusions that are almost the same ones that were reached by Hort?

Epp directed some critical questions at the compilers of the Nestle-Aland text, especially when he pointed out how Kurt Aland seemed to put inordinate weight upon the papyri:

“Can we really be content with Egypt as the exclusive locale for this glimpse into the earliest textual history? Was any New Testament book written there, and does not Egypt therefore clearly represent only a secondary and derivative stage in textual history? Is the accident of circumstance – that papyrus survives almost exclusively in the hot climate and dry sands of Egypt – to dominate and determine how we ultimately write our textual history?”

To a large extent those questions have gone unanswered. Westcott and Hort clearly advocated an approach built on the premises that the text of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus is intrinsically superior, and that the Byzantine Text is a derivative text produced in the late 200s. Most modern-day textual critics claim instead to us a “reasoned eclectic” method. But the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland text remains very similar to the 1881 text of Westcott and Hort. I estimate 695 differences.

The so-called “reasoned eclectic” method continues to yield basically the same results as Hort's method, even though Hort relied upon a model of textual transmission that was historically baseless. Why?

The main reason for this is that most textual critics, or most compilers, have misapplied the canons in a way

that favors the Alexandrian Text. In addition, even after the theory of the Lucianic recension was rejected, the Byzantine Text has continued to be excluded from text-critical consideration, as Kurt Aland acknowledged openly in 1982:

In *The Text of the New Testament*, co-written with his wife Barbara, Kurt Aland made this statement on page 104, which I have slightly condensed:

“From the sixth century there have been produced several MSS of consummate artistry, yet since they contain nothing more than a Byzantine text, they are in consequence quite irrelevant for textual criticism.”

And on page 142: minuscule MSS which exhibit a purely or predominantly Byzantine text **“are all irrelevant for textual criticism.”**

So, while apologists claim that we have an “embarrassment of riches” consisting of huge stacks of MSS, Kurt Aland and other textual critics involved in making the base-text of modern versions, have worked under the premise that 80% of Greek MSS are “irrelevant for textual criticism.”

On one hand, more MSS than ever before are being discovered and studied. On the other hand, more MSS than ever before are being dismissed as irrelevant by compilers of *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

We should take a close look at how textual critics are using the canons, or guidelines, of textual criticism.

Before we begin to discuss the canons, it may be advisable to point out that a *canon* should not be treated as if it is a *rule*. Text-critical canons are **guidelines**. They can point in opposite directions. They are not solutions; they are the means by which to frame textual questions, to compare rival hypotheses, and thus potentially see the way to a solution. But they are not formulas or equations that remove the need to ponder the external evidence,

keeping in mind that decisions about individual contests will cumulative present a larger picture of the history of the text that must be plausible.

Several of Griesbach's guidelines amount to different ways of saying, "*Prefer the reading that best accounts for the existence of its rivals.*" This is the most important thing to consider when internal evidence is analyzed. However, it frequently does not settle the question, because in some cases, a reasonable case can be developed about how Reading A led to reading B, and about how Reading B came from reading A.

For example, in Mark 1:2, there is a contest between the readings, "*in the prophets*" and "*in Isaiah the prophet.*" It has been proposed that the reading "*in Isaiah the prophet*" provoked a scribe to produce the reading, "*in the prophets,*" when he noticed that the prophecy being presented was not entirely from Isaiah; it begins with Malachi 3:1, before shifting to Isaiah 40:3. The idea is that an early copyist sensed that "*in Isaiah the prophet*" appeared to be wrong, and so he replaced it with a reading that posed no such difficulty.

But it has also been proposed that the reading "*in the prophets*" provoked the question "*Which prophet?*" – and so the reading "*in Isaiah the prophet*" was created by an early copyist in order to make the statement more specific, naming the more prominent prophet who was being quoted.

It may be noted that in the Gospels, when a prophet is quoted but not specifically named, it is not rare to see that his name is provided. For instance in Matthew 1:22, where the text normally says "through the prophet," the text in Codex D, the Sinaitic Syriac, and some Old Latin copies is more specific, identifying the prophet as Isaiah. And at Matthew 13:35, where Psalm 72 is quoted as "what was spoken by the prophet," Codex Sinaiticus, and

members of family-1, make the text more specific, identifying the prophet **incorrectly** as Isaiah.

When two rival variants plausibly explain each other, additional canons help sort things out. One of the canons that has had great impact upon the text was, “*Prefer the shorter reading.*” When Griesbach made this guideline, it was heavily qualified, but it has been applied as if the original qualifications were ignored. Eberhard Nestle stated in his 1901 Introduction, on page 323, “**It is a fundamental principle of textual criticism that the *lectio brevior* – that is, the shorter reading – “is to be preferred.”**

It may sound reasonable to assume that copyists tended to augment or expand the text to clarify its meaning, and examples of such expansion undoubtedly are found in MSS. But in 2008 the scholar James Royse (building on some work by Ernest C. Colwell) published research that collided with the assumption that copyists tended to expand the text. In *Scribal Habits in Early New Testament Papyri*, Royse analyzed the text in Papyrus 45, Papyrus 46, Papyrus 47, Papyrus 66, Papyrus 72, and Papyrus 75 – six of the most substantial and most important papyri. He focused on the singular readings in these MSS, that is, readings that are unique to each manuscript.

Royse concluded that the copyists of these early papyri made twice as many *omissions* as they made *additions*.

There is a problem with Royse’s method. We can’t really be sure if the singular readings in a papyri were created by the copyist who produced the manuscript, or if they were already in the text of his exemplar. However, Alan Taylor Farnes, in his 2018 dissertation at the University of Birmingham, investigated the text of some MSS of which the exemplar is extant. In some cases the

scribes of these MSS produced a shorter text, and in some cases they produced a text as long as the text in their exemplars, but none of them produced a manuscript with a text longer than the text in its exemplar. Farnes concluded, “*length is not a valuable metric for determining which reading is more original.*”

Peter Head, Assistant Editor for the Tyndale House Greek New Testament, has stated, “It seems that the evidence suggests that most early scribes are more likely to omit than to add material.”

Michael Holmes, editor of the Society of Biblical Literature’s Greek New Testament, has stated, “**In the light of Roysse’s study the venerable canon of *lectio brevior potior* – that is, prefer the shorter reading – is now seen as relatively useless, at least for the early papyri.**”

When one looks through Bruce Metzger’s *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (in which the author explains the decisions made by the compilers of the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament*) it is not rare to find a statement that the compilers “*preferred the shorter reading.*” It is very hard to resist drawing the conclusion that scholars who made the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies’ compilations have very generously applied a “fundamental principle” that has been shown to be incorrect.

Now let’s look at twelve textual contests, without applying “*prefer the shorter reading*” and instead applying “***prefer the reading that best explains its rivals,***” informed by the observation that early copyists tended to omit rather than to add.

(1) Matthew 12:47 is not present in Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Codex L, and the Sahidic version. These witnesses represent an ancient Alexandrian branch of transmission.

The verse is also absent in the Old Latin Codex Bobbiensis, and in the Sinaitic Syriac and the Curetonian Syriac. It is included in the Byzantine Text – represented by hundreds of MSS – and in Codices C, D, W, family-1, most Old Latin copies, and the Vulgate.

Which reading accounts for its rival? When we notice that Matthew 12:46 and Matthew 12:47 both end with the same word, the longer reading accounts for the shorter reading: all that has happened is that copyists in two transmission-lines have made the same mistake, their line of sight drifted ahead to the second occurrence of the same word.

As a comparison, picture two individuals, both reciting the same poem: one of them has a cold, and the other one has allergies. The one with allergies sneezes very frequently, and the one with a cold sneezes occasionally. Sometimes they will both sneeze at the same time. We should not conclude that when they both sneeze at the same time, that is part of the speech.

(2) Matthew 13:9, in Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Codex L (019), along with some Old Latin copies and the Sinaitic Syriac, reads, “He who has ears, let him hear.” Almost all other MSS read, “He who has ears **to hear**, let him hear.”

Which reading accounts for its rival? When we notice that the Greek word represented in English by “to hear” begins with the same three letters as the following Greek word, the longer reading accounts for the shorter reading: two copyists in different transmission-streams made the same mistake, writing the first letters in the first word, but drifting over to the same letters in the second word, and >poof< the first word disappeared.

It should also be noted that the removal of “to hear” could be considered a removal of superfluity by an

Alexandrian scribe on the grounds that all ears are for hearing.

(3) Matthew 14:30. In Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, minuscule 33, and the Coptic versions, the text merely mentions that Peter saw **the wind**. Almost all other MSS, plus early patristic statements, say that Peter saw **the strength of the wind**.

Which reading accounts for its rival? When we notice that the word for “wind” is *anemon*, and that it is followed in almost all MSS by the word *ischuron*, designating the *strength* of the wind, the longer reading accounts for the shorter reading: an early copyist in the Alexandrian transmission-stream has allowed his line of sight to drift ahead from the final letters of the Greek word *anemon* to the same letters at the end of the next word, *ischuron*.

(4) Matthew 15:6. Almost all MSS have the phrase, “whoever says to his father or his mother,” but in the Alexandrian Text, and in Codex D and a few Old Latin copies, only the father is mentioned.

Which reading accounts for its rival? When we notice that the Greek words for “his father,” and the Greek words for “his mother,” end with the same letters, the longer reading accounts for the shorter reading: copyists in two transmission-libes made the same mistake; they lost their place and skipped ahead in the text, resulting in the accidental loss of the words “and his mother.”

(5) Matthew 20:16. Most MSS conclude the verse with the phrase, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” In the Alexandrian Text, this phrase is not include, and the verse ends with the word “last.” This word in Greek is *eschatoi*.

Which reading accounts for its rival? When we notice that the last word in the second phrase, chosen, *eklectoi*, ends with the same letters as the last word in the preceding phrase, *eschatoi*, the longer reading accounts for the shorter reading. Parablepsis has occurred; an early scribe's line of sight drifted from the end of the first phrase to the identical letters at the end of the second phrase, skipping the words in between.

(6) In the final sentence of **Matthew 24:7**, in most MSS, Jesus says that there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. In the Alexandrian Text, and in some Old Latin copies and the Sinaitic Syriac, there is no mention of pestilences – only famines and earthquakes.

Which reading accounts for its rival? When we notice that the Greek words here for “famines and” are *limoi kai* and the words for “pestilences and” are *loimoi kai*, the shorter reading is accounted for by the longer reading: the same mistake was made in two transmission-lines, as copyists skipped from the six letters at the end of *limoi kai* to the same letters at the end of *loimoi kai*, accidentally omitting the reference to pestilences.

(7) Matthew 27:24. In most MSS, including Codex Sinaiticus and Codex L and Codex W and family-1, Pilate says, “*I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man,*” or, more precisely, “*I am innocent of the blood of this righteous one*” – in Greek the final words are *tou d-ikai-ou tou-tou*. In Codex Vaticanus and Codex Bezae, and in some Old Latin copies and the Sinaitic Syriac, Pilate merely says, “I am innocent of the blood of this one.”

Which reading accounts for its rival? The shorter reading is accounted for by the longer reading: all that has happened is that scribes' line of sight drifted from the *tou*

before *di-kai-ou* to the *tou-tou* after *di-kaiou*, accidentally omitting the words *tou di-kaiou*.

(8) Mark 10:24. In most MSS, Jesus says to His disciples, “Children, how hard it is **for those who trust in riches** to enter the kingdom of God.” But in the Alexandrian Text, Jesus only says, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God.”

Which reading accounts for its rival? The phrase “how hard it is” ends with the Greek word **estin**. The phrase “for those who trust in riches” ends with the word **chrēmasin**. These two words both end with the same letters. The shorter reading is accounted for by the longer reading: an early copyist’s line of sight drifted from the letters at the end of *estin* to the same letters at the end of *chrēmasin*, accidentally omitting the words in between.

(9) Mark 11:26. In the Alexandrian Text, supported by the Sahidic version, Mark 11:26 is not present after Mark 11:25. In most MSS, including Codices A, C, and D, verse 26 is included, in which Jesus states, “But if you do not forgive, neither will Your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Which reading accounts for its rival? When we look at the end of Mark 11:25, and at the end of Mark 11:26, we see that they both end with the same three words. The shorter reading is accounted for by the longer reading: an early copyist’s line of sight drifted from the words at the end of verse 25 to the same words at the end of verse 26, accidentally skipping all the words in between.

(10) Luke 2:15. This example is a little tricky, because it involves a text that is usually not expressed literally in English versions. Luke 2:15 says that when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds spoke to one another. In the Byzantine Text there is a double-

reference to the shepherds, calling them “the men, the shepherds.” This is not in the Alexandrian Text.

Which reading accounts for its rival? When we notice that the Greek words for “angels” and “men” both end with the same letters, the shorter reading is accounted for by the longer reading: an early copyist’s line of sight drifted ahead from the letters at the end of “angels” to the same letters at the end of “men,” accidentally omitting the words in between.

(11) Luke 4:5. The Byzantine Text, with very broad support, says that the devil took Jesus up into a high mountain. The Alexandrian Text only says, “And he took him up.”

Which reading accounts for its rival? In Greek, the first phrase, “*And he took Him up,*” ends with the same letters as the next phrase in the Byzantine reading, “*the devil into a high mountain.*” That is, the Greek words *auton* and *hupsēlon* both end the same way. The reference to the high mountain was omitted when an early copyist lost his place at the end of the word *auton* and picked it up at the end of the word *hupsēlon*.

(12) Luke 23:17. In the Byzantine Text and in Codex Sinaiticus, Luke 23:17 says, “For it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast.” But in the Alexandrian Text as represented by Codex Vaticanus, Codex L, and the Sahidic version, Luke 23:17 is not present at all. In Codex D and the Sinaitic Syriac and Curetonian Syriac, there is no verse 17, but the verse appears after Luke 23:19.

Which reading accounts for its rivals? The first word of verse 17 begins with the same two letters as the first word of verse 18. When a copyist lost his line of sight at the beginning of verse 17, he picked up the text at the beginning of verse 18. In the Western transmission-line that led to Codex D and the Sinaitic Syriac and Curetonian

Syriac, the same thing happened, but a copyist salvaged the omission by putting the missing sentence after verse 19.

In these twelve examples, the shorter reading is accounted for, not by assuming that copyists had nefarious agendas, but by taking into consideration one of the most ordinary forms of accidental scribal error: the omission of text where words or phrases end the same way, or begin the same way, or both. For well over a century, the effects of peribleptic errors in the Alexandrian Text have been excused and defended by textual critics who approached the text with the expectation that the Alexandrian reading **ought** to be the one that accounts for its rivals. Hort's theory of the Lucianic Recension has been the lens through which the internal evidence has been viewed, and that has contributed to an oversimplified tendency to favor the shorter reading.

For textual analysts to continue to approach the text in this way, they would not only need to ignore the observed practice of copyists as shown in the research of Royse, Farnes, and others, but they would also need to ignore internal evidence of accidental omissions that has been there the whole time. Every time the longer reading is rejected, a motive must be asserted, the invention of the longer reading must be asserted, and the acceptance of the invention must be asserted. Meanwhile when the longer reading is accepted, all that needs to be granted is that *accidents happen*.

"Prefer the shorter reading" should no longer be used as a canon. A better canon, or the basis for one, is found on the lips of a character in the story *Logic of Empire* by Robert Heinlein. *Logic of Empire* was published in March of 1941 in *Astounding Science Fiction*. A character named Doc tells another character, "You have attributed conditions to villainy that simply result from

stupidity.” Reworded and applied to textual analysis, one could say, “Do not make theories that involve deliberate mischief to explain what can be explained by carelessness.”

The “Reasoned Eclectic” approach, as applied by the compilers of the Nestle-Aland and UBS compilations, was effectively eclectic in name only. Whether the compilers accepted Hort’s theory that the Byzantine Text arose as the result of a recension, in which many decisions were made to alter the text, or whether the compilers believed that the Byzantine Text arose through a process in which the text was deliberately altered in hundreds of places, they were still finding reasons to reject the Byzantine Text, they were still proposing resolutions that very often involved the *deliberate* corruption of the text.

Having adopted the text of Westcott and Hort as their starting-point, the compilers of the Nestle-Aland and UBS texts looked for reasons to reject the longer reading, at least when the longer reading is Byzantine. This was the option of first resort, instead of looking for ways in which the Alexandrian reading, and in some cases the Western reading – could have been produced accidentally.

Superficially, the Byzantine Text was on the Reasoned Eclectic team, but its representatives were considered “irrelevant” and they only rarely took the field.

In an equitable eclectic approach – one that acknowledges that the Byzantine Text has a substantial and early core that is not derived from the Alexandrian and Western forms of the text – longer readings are given their day in court, and the general principle that shared agreements imply shared origin is qualified, allowing for the possibility that the same scribal error has occasionally been made independently in different transmission-lines, especially in cases where the risk of accidental loss is

increased by the recurrence of the same letters, words, and phrases.

There is one particular phenomenon that seems to be a sort of magnet of textual variation, which is not addressed by the traditional canons: the *nomina sacra*. In Greek New Testament MSS, some sacred names are written in an abbreviated, or contracted, form, with a horizontal line written above the contraction: the words for *God, Lord, Jesus, and Christ* are usually contracted, and in most MSS, the words for *Father, Son, Spirit, heaven, man, mother, cross, Israel, Jerusalem, David, and Savior* are also contracted.

These contractions are involved in a high proportion of textual variants, for instance at Matthew 1:18, Mark 1:1, Luke 23:42, John 1:18, Romans 12:11, Romans 14:10, First Corinthians 10:9, First Timothy 3:16, James 1:12, First Peter 3:15, and Jude verse 5. They always affect good translation-work. Where *nomina sacra* are in the picture, the range of attestation for a variant, in Greek and in early versions, has special importance.

It should be constantly kept in mind that in addition to addressing individual textual contests, the textual analyst is building an implicit theory of the transmission of the text as the text itself is reconstructed. When even a short series of textual variants are adopted, and their rivals are rejected, something is being implied about the history of the text. There is a danger of making a chimera, or a "test-tube text," in which reading from diverse sets of witnesses are combined in sequences that do not resemble anything that is seen in any MSS. The history of transmission that is implied by a compilation ought to be historically plausible.

Maurice Robinson, co-editor of *The New Testament in the Original Greek – Byzantine Textform*, has shown that in 105 verses, the text in the 27th edition of the Nestle-

Aland compilation presents a form of the verse that appears in absolutely no existing manuscript, because the compilers have eclectically adopted so many adjacent readings from different sources. Robinson subsequently examined two-verse segments of the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland compilation, and found more than 210 *additional* instances where two-verse segments are not found in any known manuscript on earth.

It is reasonable to expect a unique combination to occur here and there in a compilation that adopts readings from diverse witnesses. But does it seem reasonable to propose that *so many* original sequences of words were in the original text, but subsequently vanished from the earth, until the compiler came along?

The more weight one assigns to a narrowly supported transmission-line with a small number of key witnesses, the more risk there is of inventing a form of the text that never existed, whether in the autographs, the MSS, the versions, or anywhere else. Meanwhile, the more weight one assigns to a widely supported transmission-line, with a large number of general witnesses, the lower this risk of creating an unsupported form of the text will tend to be – and this risk will tend to be even lower when the scope of the support not only for a reading, but for an extended series of readings, is given special value.

EXTRA CREDIT

Read the essay ***Nomina Sacra: Their Origin and Usefulness*** at

<https://www.thetextofthegospels.com/2015/03/nomina-sacra-their-origin-and-usefulness.html> .)

Read Dr. Maurice A. Robinson's essay, *The Case for Byzantine Priority*, which is available as an Appendix in *The*

New Testament in the Original Greek – Byzantine Textform,
and which can be accessed for free in several online venues.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Textual Variants with Greek Numerals

Heavenly Father, we ask that you will beautify the feet of those who bear good news today. May our lives be in harmony with the word that you have given, and may we say with Saint Paul, “Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.” As your word goes forth, may it fill the hungry and satisfy the thirsty, and build Your kingdom in every way. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Before we focus on two major textual variants, one small concern that still needs to be covered: textual variants that involve Greek numerals. In Greek, numerical amounts were not always written out. In many MSS they were represented by letters of the Greek alphabet that represented specific quantities.

This was not some sort of secret code. This was the ordinary way of writing numerals in Greek. This chart shows the 24 usual letters of the modern Greek alphabet, expanded by the inclusion of three extra letters *stau* (or, *digamma*), *koppa*, and *sampi*. Arranged in three rows of 9 letters, you can see the numerical value that was assigned to each letter:

A = 1	I = 10	P = 100
B = 2	K = 20	Σ = 200
Γ = 3	Λ = 30	T = 300
Δ = 4	M = 40	Υ = 400
E = 5	N = 50	Φ = 500
F, ζ = 6	Ξ = 60	X = 600
Z = 7	O = 70	Ψ = 700
H = 8	Π = 80	Ω, ω = 800
Θ = 9	Q, Ϟ = 90	ϗ = 900

A horizontal line was added above these letters to show that they were being used as numerals. Using these letters to represent quantities, any sum from 1 to 999 could be written using no more than three letters.

With a mark to the lower left of a letter, it signified an amount of thousands. In MSS, large numbers sometimes appear in colophons at the end of a book, where they refer to the year in which the manuscript was made. The standard dating-method in colophons was not a calculation of the number of years from the birth of Christ, but a calculation of the number of years from the creation of the world, which was believed by most Greek scribes to have happened in 5,508 B.C. So if we were to encounter a Greek MS with a colophon stating that the manuscript was made in the 6,508th year of the world, we would feel justified if we gave it a production-date around the year 1000.

One of the earliest textual variants mentioned by a patristic writer involves the numerals in Mark 15:25 and John 19:14.

Mark 15:25 says, "Now it was the third hour when they crucified Him," that is, about 9:00 in the morning. But in John 19:14, John states that it was "about the sixth hour" when Pilate was yet to deliver a sentence regarding Jesus' case, before he finally handed Jesus over to be crucified in verse 16.

Some interpreters have reckoned that John used a different method of hour-counting, starting at midnight, whereas for Mark, the day have 12 hours and began at the beginning of hour #1. Thus Pilate could have made his decision at around the sixth hour – 6:00 a.m. – and after he handed Jesus over to be crucified, some time elapsed, during which Jesus was whipped, given a crown of thorns, beaten, and mocked, and was led through the streets of

Jerusalem, until, at about the third hour – 9:00 a.m. – he (Jesus of Nazareth) was crucified.

A different solution was proposed by the early writer Ammonius, whose proposal was later echoed by Eusebius of Caesarea in the early 300s, and by Epiphanius of Salamis in the late 300s, and by Jerome. Ammonius explained that whereas the letter *gamma* ought to be written, representing the number “three,” so as to refer to the third hour, a copyist wrote the similar-looking letter “*gabex*,” or *digamma*, so as to refer instead to the sixth hour.

Epiphanius indicates that Clement of Alexandria and Origen endorsed this solution to the harmonization-problem. (It is also attributed to Peter of Alexandria, who was martyred in 311.) In Peter of Alexandria’s testimony, preserved in very late MSS as part of the *Chronicon Paschale*, it is stated that in the text that was written by the hand of the evangelist, which is still preserved at Ephesus, and is adored there by the faithful, the reading in John 19:14 is “about the third hour,” and this is the reading in the correct books.

We don’t know if Peter of Alexandria was making an informed statement or not, but this is interesting evidence no matter how you slice it. In a small number of MSS, the text in John 19:14 supports the reading “the third hour,” including Codex L, Codex Delta, and minuscule 72. In the vast majority of MSS, copyists did not give in to the temptation to alter a single letter, or numeral and thus remove the apparent difficulty.

Another interesting textual variant involving a numeral occurs in Luke 24:13: how far was the distance between Jerusalem and Emmaus? The reading “60 stadia” has broad and early support, and represents a distance of a little less than seven miles. Codices Vaticanus,

Alexandrinus, Bezae, Codex W, and most minuscules support this reading, along with the Vulgate, the Peshitta, and the Sahidic versions. The copyist of Papyrus 75 wrote “60” as an overlined letter, Ϟ (chi).

But some MSS, including Codex Sinaiticus and Codex II, support the reading “160 stadia.” This was also initially the reading in Codex N. It is supported by the Armenian version, by the Palestinian Aramaic version, by Codex Fuldensis (from the mid-500s), by a small number of Greek minuscules, and by a significant cluster of Arabic MSS. It appears to have been endorsed by the author of a margin-note in minuscule 34.

This reading probably reflects a belief that the city of Nicopolis and the village of Emmaus were the same place. Nicopolis had been destroyed by forces under the Roman general Quintilius Varus in 4 B.C., and it was rebuilt after a group of citizens, led by the patristic writer Julius Africanus, successfully petitioned for its restoration in the days of the emperors Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, in the 220s and early 230s.

Writing after this restoration of the city, Eusebius of Caesarea advocated the view that Nicopolis and Emmaus are the same place in his composition *Onomasticon*. Jerome, who made a Latin translation of Eusebius’ *Onomasticon*, expressed the same view in his *Epistle 108* and in his composition *Lives of Illustrious Men*. However, 160 stadia is more than 18 miles. That is a long distance for two people to cover in an afternoon, walking from Jerusalem, and then cover again in the evening, going back to Jerusalem – but it is possible.

The view that Nicopolis and Emmaus were synonymous was not exclusive to Caesarea, but seeing it supported in Codex Sinaiticus augments the case that Codex Sinaiticus was produced in that location.

(3) Another interesting textual variant involving numerals appears in Mark 6:41. The original text, with very broad support, refers specifically to the five loaves and the two fish. But the copyist of Papyrus 45 did not write “five” and he did not write “two” in this verse, even though his text does include the same numbers in v. 38. Possibly in his exemplar these words were written as numbers, and the lines above the numerals were very short, and he misunderstood them as if they were dots – that is, as if they were marks that meant, “do not write this.”

(4) Codex Vaticanus is another important MS with an unusual reading involving a numeral. In Acts 27:37, where most MSS state that there were 276 souls on board the ship that was about to be shipwrecked. Codex Vaticanus, however, has “about seventy-six” written out in full. This is also supported by the Sahidic version. What has happened here?

John Burgon perceived the answer: basically, after a transposition of the words in this part of the verse, the number 276, written as a numeral, that is, as *Sigma, Omicron, Stau*, followed the phrase “in the ship.” The letter *omega*, and the end of the word for “ship,” *plóiw*, was misread as if it was part of a word, *hōs*, meaning, “about,” and this left the overlined letters *omicron*, 70, and *stau*, six, creating the reading “about 76.”

Burgon also noted, from a common-sense perspective, “Although one might say, ‘about seventy,’ or ‘about eighty,’ is it not obvious to everyone that ‘about 76’ is an impossible expression?”

Although Westcott and Hort adopted Vaticanus’ reading, against all other Greek evidence, Burgon’s cogent case against Vaticanus’ reading was favored by later writers, including F. F. Bruce and Bruce Manning Metzger.

Another textual variant that involves numerals is in Luke chapter 10, in verses 1 and 17: did Luke report that the Lord sent out 70 individuals, or 72? The Byzantine reading, 70, is supported by Codex Alexandrinus, Codex W, and almost all other Greek MSS. The Western reading, 72, is supported by Codex Bezae, most of the Old Latin copies, and probably by the Sinaitic Syriac. The Alexandrian witnesses are divided: Sinaiticus and Codex C and Codex L support "70." Vaticanus and Papyrus 75 support "72."

Papyrus 45 is not extant in Luke 10:1, but it is extant in verse 17. Unfortunately its testimony was misrepresented when the MS was first published, and the first printings of the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland text continued to misrepresent it, as if it supports "72." This mistake was only recently corrected. In real life, Papyrus 45 supports "70," as Bruce Metzger has observed: the letter *Omicron*, representing "70," is not followed by another numeral, but by an ordinary space-filling mark.

The early writer Tertullian also supports "70." Tertullian drew a parallel to the numbers in Exodus 15:27, in his composition *Against Marcion*, at the beginning of chapter 24 of Book 4. Tertullian wrote that the 12 springs of water at Elim correspond to the 12 apostles, and the 70 palm trees at Elim correspond to the 70 disciples.

The scope of the support for the reading "70" is sufficient to decide the question. "72" probably originated as an allegorical representation of the Gentile nations, as listed in the Septuagint in Genesis chapter 10.

Another textual variant occurs in Acts 13:33, where almost all Greek MSS say that Paul is quoting from the second Psalm. Codex Bezae says that Paul quoted from the first Psalm. Somehow this reading survived to the early 1500s in the early editions of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, and it was featured in William Tyndale's

English translation in 1526. It was indirectly supported by some patristic writers. When Tertullian quoted Psalm 2:7 in *Against Marcion*, Book 4, chapter 22, he did not describe it as part of the second Psalm; he said that he is quoting from the *first* Psalm.

The minority-reading in Codex D echoes the influence of an early tradition that what we know as Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 were considered a single psalm, with what we know as Psalm 1 being a sort of Preface. This tradition had an effect on how the Latin text of Psalms was arranged in the text used by Tertullian in the late 100s, and by Cyprian in the mid-200s, and even as late as the Venerable Bede in the late 600s and early 700s.

The best-supported Greek reading is clearly “the second Psalm.” Some early translators of Acts into Latin were comfortable paraphrasing Paul’s reference so as to adopt the arrangement that they expected their readers to recognize.

Seventh: the most famous textual variant in the New Testament that involves a numeral is without doubt the one that occurs in Revelation 13:18, where the number of the beast is given as 666 in most MSS (including Papyrus 47). In a few important copies, including Codex C and Papyrus 115, the number in Revelation 13:18 is “616,” written as *chi-iota-stau*.

The early patristic writer Irenaeus made a detailed comment on this passage, in what may be the first patristic mention of a textual variant, in *Against Heresies*, Book Four, chapters 29-30.

Irenaeus made several guesses about the name that is represented with the numerical value of 666: *Euanthas* was one guess, *Lateinos* was another one, and *Teitan* was another one. This last possibility, *Teitan*, was the option preferred by Irenaeus, but he emphasized that

it was only a guess, stating that if it were necessary for people in his time to know the name, it would have been revealed in John's vision, instead of just the number of the name.

Irenaeus thus shows that he used the text with "666," because in each of these names, the value of the letters adds up to a total of six hundred and sixty and six. As if more evidence were needed, he also compared this number to Noah's age before the flood (600 years) and the dimensions of Nebuchadnezzar's idol in Daniel 3:1: 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide.

In chapter 30 of Book 5 of *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus' statements are more detailed: he affirmed that 666 is the number that is found "in all the most approved and ancient copies," and that it was endorsed by "those men who saw John face to face." When we consider that when Irenaeus wrote, the book of Revelation was less than 100 years old, this is extremely weighty testimony.

Irenaeus also stated, "I do not know how it is that some have erred following the ordinary mode of speech, and have reduced the middle number in the name, deducting the amount of fifty from it, so that instead of six tens-units, they will have it that there is but one."

To put it another way: Irenaeus referred to approved and ancient copies that support "666," but he was also aware of copies that have the reading "616."

He wrote, "I am inclined to think that this occurred through the fault of the copyists, as it tends to happen, since numbers also are expressed by letters; so that the Greek letter which expresses the number sixty was easily expanded into the letter *iota* of the Greeks."

Irenaeus does not say precisely how the letter *chi* (Χ, Ξ) be accidentally changed by copyists into *iota*. *iota* is a straight vertical line, like the letter "l," but *chi* is very different.

It is unlikely that a copyist could *accidentally* make 616 out of 666. It may be more likely that someone believed that John was referring to the concept of “*Nero redivivus*,” an urban legend that the Emperor Nero, who died in the year 68, was actually still alive and would one day return, leading an army from the east. There are some references to this belief in the composition that is known as the *Sibylline Oracles*. In about the year 420, Saint Augustine, in *City of God*, Book 20, mentioned a belief that he regarded as an audacious conjecture.

Commenting on Second Thessalonians 2:7, Augustine stated that some individuals believe that this verse refers to Nero, whose deeds already seemed to be as the deeds of Antichrist. He continued: “Some suppose that he shall rise again and be Antichrist. Others, again, suppose that he is not even dead, but that he was concealed that he might be supposed to have been killed, and that he now lives in concealment, in the vigor of the same age which he had reached when he was believed to have perished, and will live until he is revealed in his own time and restored to him kingdom.”

It is unlikely that anyone encountering the text of Revelation in Greek would stray from the reading “666,” which fits a pattern in which the Antichrist mimics the true Christ; the characters in the name “Jesus” (ΙΗΣΟΥΣ) in Greek have a numerical value of 888. But someone encountering the text in some other language might look for an alternative explanation. If one writes “Neron Caesar” in Hebrew consonants, their value adds up to 666. If one drops the Hebrew letter *nun*, so as to correspond to a Latin form of Nero’s name, the name’s value thus decreases by 50, yielding the value of 616.

This is a somewhat complicated theory. But it *might* be how the reading “616” was created – via an interpretation that the Antichrist – either literally or

thematically or typologically or some other way – was expected to be the Emperor Nero.

(I shall not, in this book, rule out the possibility that the original reading of Revelation 16:18 was the Greek equivalent of “666 or 616.”)

Finally, a consideration of numerals in Greek New Testament MSS would be incomplete without a description of the Eusebian Canons and Sections.

Technically, the Eusebian Canons and Sections are part of the para-text, or meta-text – not part of the text itself.

They are a guide to cross-references in the Gospels.

At the beginning of many MSS of the Gospels, instead of jumping right into the text, and before a chapter-list appears, there is a composition called “*Ad Carpianus*,” which is Eusebius’ brief explanation of how to use his cross-reference system for the Gospels. In a few MSS (especially MSS with a Caesarean-like text of the Gospels) this material is presented within a fairly unusual frame, shaped like a quatrefoil, or a symmetrical rounded cross. (The Eusebian Canons and *Ad Carpianus* are included in the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland compilation.)

Eusebius began by mentioning that he got the idea for a cross-reference system for the Gospels from Ammonius the Alexandrian, who had arranged the text of the Gospel of Matthew with the parallel-passages from the other Gospels alongside it. Eusebius wanted to keep each Gospel-account intact, and so instead of dividing up the texts of Mark, Luke, and John, he gave each pericopé its own number, and then made a ten-part chart, in which the parallel-passage were listed, by their numbers, side by side.

There are ten parts to this list:

- The first one contains the list of passages for which there are parallels in Matthew Mark, Luke, and John.
- The second one lists passages, or sections, for which there are parallels in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
- The third one lists passages for which there are parallels in Matthew, Luke, and John.
- The fourth lists passages for which there are parallels in Matthew, Mark, and John.
- The fifth lists passages for which there are parallels in Matthew and Luke.
- The sixth lists passages for which there are parallels in Matthew and Mark.
- The seventh lists passages for which there are parallels in Matthew and John.
- The eighth lists passages for which there are parallels in Mark and Luke.
- The ninth lists passages for which there are parallels in Luke and John.
- The tenth lists passages that do not have parallels, but which are unique in each Gospel.

The same numbers are written in the margin alongside each passage. Accompanying these numbers, called the Section-numbers, is a Canon-number, written in red, which identifies the list, one through ten, in which the passage is found. If you see a number from 1-10 in the margin written in red below the Section-number, you will know which list to consult to find the number of the passage.

So: if you open a Gospels-MS with the Eusebian Canon-tables to any passage, and want to see what the other Gospel-writers wrote about the same event, then after you find the Canon-number, written in red, you can consult that list, and see the numbers of the parallel-passages in the other Gospels. Then by finding those

numbers in the margins in those Gospels, you can read the parallel-passages themselves.

After this introductory guide, the Canon-Tables themselves occupy several pages. These can be very plain, or in some cases spectacularly ornate, with complex colorful golden designs, and paintings of animals, birds, and other decorations in the margins. In some cases the artistic effort that was given to the Eusebian Canons resulted in the theft of these pages, as works of art. The tradition of decorating the Eusebian Canons is abundantly shown not only in Greek MSS but also in Latin, Ethiopic, and, especially, Armenian MSS.

Although Eusebius got the idea for a cross-reference system for the Gospels from the earlier writer Ammonius of Alexandria, he clearly did not closely follow Ammonius' Matthew-centered system. As John Burgon pointed out in 1871, in a detailed Appendix to his book about the last 12 verses of Mark, Canon 8 and Canon 9 cannot have been part of a Matthew-centered cross-reference system. In addition, when it is noticed that Mark has 21 unique sections, Luke has 72 unique sections, John has 97 unique sections, and 24 sections are shared by Mark and Luke, and 21 sections are shared by Luke and John, this makes a total of 225 sections which have no parallel in Matthew and thus could not be part of a Matthew-centered cross-reference system.

The Eusebian Canons also have an impact on the testimony of Eusebius regarding Mark 16:9-20. Eusebius is often quoted as if he said, in the composition *Ad Marinum*, that Mark 16:9-20 was absent from almost all MSS. In real life, his statement is much more nuanced: he wrote that that was one of several things that something that someone might say about the passage. Eusebius himself instructed Marinus to retain the passage, and gave

instructions about how Mark 16:9 was to be read, with a pause between “Rising” and “early on the first day of the week.” And further along in the same composition, Eusebius quoted from Mark 16:9. When he wrote *Ad Marinum*, Eusebius appears to favor the inclusion of Mark 16:9-20.

According to a note that appears in some members of the textual cluster known as family-1, Mark 16:9-20 is not included in the Eusebian Canons. In codices 1 and 1582, although Eusebian Section-numbers appear in the margin alongside verses 9-20, these two MSS (along with the MSS 205, 2886, and 209) have a prominent note before Mark 16:9 which states, “In some copies, the Gospel comes to a close here, and so do the Canons of Eusebius of Pamphilus. But in many, this also appears.”

After advising Marinus to keep Mark 16:9-20, it appears that Eusebius changed his mind, and decided not to include these verses in the text upon which he based the Eusebian Canons.

The Eusebian Canons occasionally have text-critical significance where they testify to the presence or absence of other specific passages.

Luke 22:43-44 is not in Papyrus 75 or Codex Vaticanus or Codex Alexandrinus or Codex W, but in the 100s, Justin and Irenaeus both referred to the passage. In the Eusebian Canons, Luke 22:43-44 is included as Section #283, implying that it was in the text that was used by Eusebius.

Mark 15:28 is not in Codex Vaticanus, or Sinaiticus, or Codex D, and is also missing in over 100 minuscules – but it is listed as Section #216 in the Eusebian Canons.

By not featuring an entry for Matthew 27:49 and John 19:34 in Canon Nine, Eusebius showed that his text did not contain a parallel-passage between those two passages. In Codex Vaticanus and in Codex Sinaiticus,

Matthew 27:49 is expanded. The Alexandrian Text of Matthew 27:49 says that before Jesus died, someone came and pierced Him in the side with a spear, and blood and water flowed from the wound.

By **not** including a reference to this reading in his cross-reference system, where it would have belonged in Canon 7, Eusebius of Caesarea (if he was honest) showed that his MSS did not have this reading. This is a very strong indication that Eusebius did **not** supervise the production of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus.

Finally, although a little anecdote about a detail in the early Christian composition *The Epistle of Barnabas* is not directly related to the New Testament, it illustrates the figurative interpretations some early Christians could give to some numerals. The *Epistle of Barnabas* was written in the early 100s. It appears in Codex Sinaiticus after the book of Revelation.

In its ninth chapter, the author refers to Genesis 14:14, emphasizing the exact number of the men under Abraham's command who went to rescue Lot, who had been captured by a foreign confederation: **three hundred and eighteen**. The number "eighteen" was written as the Greek letters *Iota* and *Eta*, the same letters at the beginning of the name "Jesus," or "Iēsous." The remaining amount, 300, was written in Greek as the letter *Tau*, which looks like the beams of a cross. And thus, the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* implied, even in the days of Abraham, we have an abstract picture of how Jesus, on the cross, accomplished the deliverance of the captive.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A Chapter for Children

Our heavenly Father, we thank you for allowing us to learn the basics of our language, and for letting us learn some of the characters of the ancient Greek alphabet today. We thank you for making people here on earth, and we thank you for the many blessings you have given today. We thank you for the warm sun and the sunlight that rises on the earth each day. We thank you for our friend the cow. We thank you, Father, for sending your only-begotten son Jesus Christ, the eternal uncreated Logos, representing you and revealing your nature to us – righteous and just, and loving and forgiving. Let your children never thank “Luck” or “lucky stars,” because you are the source of all blessings. Watch over the children as they lay down and rest. Amen.

I now present a less formal chapter.

Children, gather together! Tonight we shall have a different kind of lesson.

“Sir James, it is a Bible lesson, right?”

Yes, Timmy, of course! But it's from a very small part of the Bible.

“Sir James, is it a mathematics lesson?”

Yes, Ivy, it's also a math lesson. But it's more than that.

“Sir James, is it an English lesson?”

Amber, I will be speaking English, so, yes. But there's more to it than that.

“Sir James, is it a poetry lesson?”

Yes, Tumbo. It's very poetic if you look at it the right way. But it's more than that.

“Sir James, is it an art lesson?”

You're not wrong, Harry!

“Sir James, I know! It is a history lesson!”

Good answer, Morgan!

Everyone listen.

Consider the word “Amen.” We say “Amen” at the end of our prayers. We read the word “Amen” at the end of the epistle that Jude wrote when he warned about false teachers, teaching the saints to be on guard against those who abandoned their posts.

Now, children, I know that not many of you speak Greek.

Children, look at this chart [the same chart of letters in the previous chapter.]

It lists 27 Greek letters in a grid of three columns, with nine letters in each column. When a Greek child – whether he or she was in Athens, or Corinth, or wherever – learned his A-B-Cs, he learned his 1-2-3s at the same time, because the Greeks used letters to represent numerals.

I will not teach you the entire Greek alphabet. We shall only learn four letters. The first letter is ALFA. Say “Alfa,” everybody.

“ALFA!”

Very good! “Alfa” means “first.” This is a good name for the first letter of the alphabet. Lots of names in the Bible start with “Alfa.” “Abba,” which means “papa,” and the name of Moses’ brother Aaron, and the name of Cain’s brother Abel, and, of course, the name of Abraham. I could teach lots of lessons about these names that begin with “A.”

“Alfa” also begins the Greek words for some very important things. “Agathos” is a Greek word for goodness. “Agape” is a Greek word for love. “Agape” (Ah-GAh-pee) – is not the kind of love we say we have when we say “I love pizza.” “Agape” is the kind of love that God’s people have

for God and for each other. "Agape" is the love of Christians.

Jesus taught that "Ah-GAh-pee" is the love we share when we commune together at the Lord's table on each Lord's day. When we receive the sacred bread and we receive the sacred wine, we commune together in the presence of Christ. This is the love that is the badge that says "I am a disciple of Jesus."

Children, "Alfa" equals "1." The first commandment is to love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. The new commandment that Jesus taught is to love one another. "Ah-GAh-pee" is the love we should have for one another.

The #1 commandment is to love the one God supremely. The new commandment that Jesus taught is to love one another.

Love is the #1 command. The Greek letter "alfa" is the numeral for "one."

I want you all to remember Alfa as the first letter in the words "Adam," "Abraham," "Aaron," and "Ah-GAh-pee." It is the numeral for "one." Think about when Moses spoke the first commandment: "There is ONE God."

Alfa = the sound "Ah." Alfa is the Greek numeral for "one."

Jump with me children, to the fourteenth letter of the Greek alphabet, as if you're chasing a cow. The Greeks have a word that starts with "Beta" that means "cow" or "cattle" but if I went down every path I could run down, I would never finish today's lesson, and we would never catch this cow! So count to the halfway-point, and look at the thirteenth Greek letter on the grid.

Did you find it?

"Yes, sir James!"

Excellent, Moses! Good student! Moses, tell me what sound a cow makes?

“MOOOOO!!!”

Very good! Now let's all make noise like a friendly cow.

“MOO!!! MOOOO!! MOO! MOO!”

Very good! We have some loud cows! Now listen: the thirteenth letter of the Greek alphabet is named “Mu.”

“Mu” is the first letter in “magi,” the people from the east who brought gifts to give to baby Jesus. They followed the star and they found Mary and Joseph and little Jesus. “Mage” is a word that can also refer to magicians, like the magicians who served Pharaoh in Egypt when the Hebrew children were oppressed. “Maniac” is a word that refers to someone who acts a little crazy, like when a young man sees a pretty young lady and he does things like spend lots of money on a rock just because she says she wants it.

“My dad did that!”

Shh, Juanita! Don't call your father crazy!

“Mu” is also the first letter in the Greek names for “Matthew” and “Mark.” Matthew is the first Gospel we encounter in our Bibles. Peter the fisherman preached the gospel and Mark wrote down what Peter said. Mark was younger than Matthew, though. Peter’s gospel-account, written down by Mark, is shorter than Matthew’s Gospel. Matthew’s Gospel comes first in the books of the New Testament, and this is appropriate, because Matthew was older than Mark.

“M” is also the first Greek letter in the Greek word for “Blessed.” “Mah-KAH-ree-os.” We hear this sound in Greek at the beginning of the first psalm: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of one who scorns. His delight is in the law of YaHWeH, and in his law he meditates day and night.” I will not say more about that today lest I detour from the main points of today’s lesson.

Remember: “MOO” is “Mu,” and mu is the thirteenth letter.

“It’s unlucky!”

Au contraire! In God’s universe, “Mu” is a very blessed letter. The “beatitudes” spoken by Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew begin with this letter. When you think of “mu,” think of all the ways our God has blessed you. There are morons who speak maliciously against us, and there are monsters that might maim us if we get too close. But there are also music and magnificent creatures and manna – the food that the Hebrews ate after they left Egypt – and there are many many blessings when you open your eyes to see them the way God sees them.

So remember: “Moo” is the thirteenth letter of the ancient Greek alphabet, and “mu” begins “magic” and the names “Matthew” and “Mark” and the word “Mak-AH-ree-os.” Blessed.

Children, when someone tell you “You got lucky,” you tell them “There is no such thing as luck. I have been blessed.”

Mu is the thirteenth letter in the ancient Greek alphabet. As a numeral, it represents 40.

Let's back up in the list of letters in the ancient Greek alphabet to the number eight. Here we meet the letter "eta." "Eh'ta."

It's not alpha and it's not mu. It's in between. Eta is the first character in the word "Ethos," good moral habits that we must all learn. Eta is also the first letter in "Hem-EHR-ah," Hem-EHR-ah is the Greek word for "day." "Helios" is the Greek name for the sun. The sun is a radiant thing. It works so hard at producing light and heat and we would all freeze if we didn't have the sun keeping us warm.

The sun keeps us alive. But it is just a big ball of gas, mostly helium molecules. You'll get to learn about molecules in chemistry class if you're blessed with a good educator like Marie here. Marie teaches so many students, she hardly has time to take care of herself. "Hechos" is the Greek word for "roar." Hector, can you roar like a lion?

"RROOOAARR!!!"

Very good!

Our adversary the devil is like a roaring lion who wants to eat God's sheep. But don't worry. We have a stronger lion who protects God's flock. When the Lion of Judah roars, the other lions and fake lions are frightened. When we live the right way with the right heart and the right motive, we might make mistakes, like someone who gets lost on his way to the city because no one showed him which road to take.

We have been introduced to Alfa – A in Greek. A is the numeral for "one." YaHWeH is one God, uncreated and eternal. Adam was the first man created in the image of God. "Helios" is the sun, a star, created by God to warm the earth and to provide light. And "Hechos" is the ROAR of the Lion of Judah who protects his flock.

“Like Haile Selassie!”

Haile Salassie is not the main subject of this lesson.
Children, review:

A is Alfa is the numeral “one.” YaHWeh the Lord is one.

M is Mu is the numeral “thirteen.” The Lord gives you more blessing each day than you can count on two hands.

Eta is the numeral “eight.” God made the sun to shine each day.

The next letter –

“Sir James, that cow is back in the pasture!”

She’s probably walking in her sleep. Let’s try to catch that cow! Wake her up!

“MOO!!”

She’s awake! But you scared her! She’s running away! Chase her!

Okay, stop! She’s with the other cows. She’ll be fine. Let’s look at the next letter, the letter in the ancient Greek alphabet that come after “Mu.” Meet a new character. She’s not a bull. She’s a lady. We shall call her miss “Nu.”

The Greek letter Nu is the fourteenth letter in the ancient Greek alphabet. It is pronounced “new.” Nu begins the Greek word “neos,” which means “new.” Halfway through the alphabet, we make a new start. Jesus our savior was born in Bethlehem but after the holy family returned from Egypt, they were residents of Nazareth. When you think of the letter Nu think of the number fourteen, and think of Nazareth.

Also think of “naus,” the Greek word for “ship.” Nu begins “neos” and “neos” is “new.” Jesus of Nazareth grew up in Nazareth and was a carpenter and one of the things that carpenters build, besides buildings, is ships. Remember, when you go on a voyage in a ship, to take Jesus of Nazareth along with you. Keep the words of Jesus with you in your mind like the cargo in a ship. The words of Jesus Christ the Son of God enlighten us with new fresh light, like the sunlight in the morning.

A is the first ancient Greek letter = 1

M is the thirteenth ancient Greek letter = 40

H is the eighth ancient Greek letter = 8

N is the fourteenth ancient Greek letter = 50

What do we say at the end of our prayers after we thank God for life, and for music, and for the blessing he gives each day and for the new day that is coming?

“AMEN.”

Very good students!

Those four Greek letters spell the word “A M H N.” “Amhn.” In English, we spell that “Amen.” For purposes of teaching Greek letters, when you see the English word “Amen,” think of that “e” in “AMeN” as a Greek “H.” Can you do that for me, Tobia?

“Yes sir James.”

You’re a great student, Tobia!

When we put the letters Alpha and Mu and Eta and Nu together, what word do we get?

“AMEN”

Correct! Reverse the characters up, and you get NEMA. Jumble the letters, and you get MANE or NAME or something else. When we pray, we do not pray to just any deity, such as Apollo or Vulcan or to Sol or Jupiter or Mars, Begin your prays to the one true God: YaHWeH is his N-A-M-E.

We are earthlings. Be humble, children, and call YaHWeH your Father when you begin your prayers. If you are praying about someone else, call him "Our" father.

Pray the exemplary prayer that Jesus taught his listeners to pray. Matthew wrote it all down:

"Our Father in heaven, your name is holy.

Your kingdom come.

Your will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread,

and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, and the power, and the glory are yours forever.

Amen.

Look! At the end of the example that Jesus gave us, we say AMEN! Alfa + Mu + Eta + Nu! What's that spell, children?

"Amen!"

And what do those four letters add up to?

"Ninety-nine, sir James!"

Excellent, Morgan Valentina! You're such a good counter!

Ninety-nine, children. When you score 99% on a mathematics examination, you did very good. Almost perfect.

When we approach God respectfully and we pray with pure hearts and we thank him for the blessings we have and we thank him for opportunities today to do our best and we ask him to help people who need help, that is very good. One more thing needs to be added: asking God to do what he desires to do.

When we end our prayer with "99" – when we say "Amen" – we send our prayer to God and ask that he will finish it and bring it to 100 at his heavenly throne. 99 is almost 100 but not quite. When we say "Amen" we mean that we want God to do whatever he desires to do. We communicate with God. Our Father is not "Miss Luck" or a "Lucky Star" or a "Lucky Star" or any false God. He is the God who made you, who always watched over you, every day, every night, and who hears your prayers and knows what you mean.

There you have it, children. When you know you hear praise to God, and when you know you hear thanks to God, and when you know you need forgiveness, and when you know someone needs forgiveness, and when you know you need food, and when you know you need help fighting temptation, pray to God sincerely.

At the end of your prayer, what do you say?

"AMEN."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Mark 16:9-20: External Evidence

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks for the opportunities that wait for us today to glorify You. You have already opened the door that no one can shut. Stir up our zeal, enlighten our eyes, and invigorate our hands and feet, that we may express today the nature that You have given to Your people as the body of Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter is the first part of a two-part consideration of one of the most famous textual variants in the New Testament: the ending of Mark. I shall look at external evidence. But I begin with a point about internal evidence.

How one answers the question, "*Were verses 9-20 part of the original text?*" depends on how one defines the term "original text." It is sometimes assumed that the original text of a Biblical document is indistinguishable from the text from the pen of the author of the book. If that standard were applied consistently, as if one book can have one and only one author, the field of lower criticism (focused on what happened after a book's transmission-history began) would rapidly blend into the field of higher criticism (focused on what happened when the book was still being prepared for circulation).

If Moses is considered the author of Deuteronomy, and a book can have only one human source, what shall we do with Deuteronomy 34:5-12, verses which describe the death of Moses? If Joshua is considered the author of the book of Joshua, what shall we do with Joshua 24:29-33, where the death of Joshua is mentioned? In the book of Psalms, *Moses* is identified as the source of Psalm 90, but *David* is identified as the author of many other Psalms

– and other Psalms, such as Psalm 137, refer to events that occurred centuries after the time of David. If we insist that the book of Psalms must have only one human author, a substantial number of the psalms must be removed. (I do not advocate this course of action.)

If the “original text” of the book of Proverbs is defined as the work of a single human author, the final two chapters must be jettisoned, for they are specifically identified as the words of Agur, and as the words of king Lemuel which his mother taught him.

In the Hebrew text of Jeremiah at the end of chapter 51 we find a verse that says, “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.” But in the English Bibles of America there is another chapter, consisting of 34 verses, resembling part of Second Kings chapters 24 and 25.

When we ask, “*Is the original text limited to the work of a single human author?*” these examples show that the answer is **No**. The original text is the contents of a document at the point where its production-stage ended, and its transmission-stage began – the point when copies began to be made and distributed for God’s people to use.

I shall revisit this point.

But first, something else ought to be pointed out that pertains to Mark 16:9-20 – the remarkable amount of **misinformation** that has been spread about it. An entire book could be written to point out commentators’ errors regarding Mark 16:9-20.

The late Norman Geisler claimed that verses 9-20 “are lacking in many of the oldest and most reliable MSS.” In Eugene Peterson’s hyper-paraphrase *The Message*, a footnote said that Mark 16:9-20 “is contained only in later MSS.”

Commentators such as N. T. Wright, Craig Evans, and James Edwards have spread a claim that in many MSS

Mark 16:9-20 is accompanied by asterisks or obeli to indicate that the passage is spurious.

It is not uncommon to encounter Bible footnotes (in the NIV, ESV, NLT, CSB, etc.) that say that *some* MSS end the text of Mark at 16:8, and *some* MSS end the text of Mark at 16:20. Why is the footnote phrased so vaguely?

Out of about 1,650 Greek MSS of Mark, **four** Greek MSS end the text at 16:8. (One is GA 304, a medieval manuscript that is a commentary, in which segments of the text of Mark are interspersed with segments of commentary that resembles the commentary of Theophylact, whose fuller commentary includes comments on verses 9-20. GA 239 also ends the text of the Gospel of Mark at the end of 16:8. Dr. Peter Gurry of the Text and Canon Institute and H.A.G. Houghton have written about that.)

The other two MSS are much more significant: Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus are the two earliest MSS of Mark 16. Vaticanus was made in the very early 300s, and Sinaiticus was made in about 350 in the city of Caesarea. There are some unusual aspects of the testimony of both of these MSS regarding the ending of Mark.

CODEX VATICANUS

Although Codex Vaticanus' text of Mark stops at 16:8, followed by the closing title, instead of beginning the following column with the text of Luke, the copyist of Codex Vaticanus left the third column on this page blank. This is the only blank column that was left blank in Codex Vaticanus throughout the entire New Testament.

Codex Vaticanus has three blank columns in its Old Testament portion. Dan Wallace has written that the reasons for these gaps "are anything but clear." Au

contraire, Dr. Wallace. The causes of *those* three blank spaces are easy to see:

- The blank space between Second Esdras and Psalms occurs because the format of the page changes: the text in Second Esdras is written in three columns per page; the text in Psalms is written in two columns per page.
- The blank space between Tobit and Hosea occurs because at this point, one copyist's work ends, and the other copyist's work begins. This is simply leftover space.
- The blank space after Daniel occurs at the end of the Old Testament portion of the codex; there was simply no more Old Testament to write, and it would be remarkable to start the Gospel of Matthew with anything other than a fresh folio.

The blank space after Mark 16:8 in Codex Vaticanus is not a byproduct of factors naturally involved in the production of the codex. It was left blank intentionally. This is an example of "memorial space" – blank space that was left to show that at this point in the text, the copyist recollected a reading that was not in the exemplar that he was copying.

When verses 9-20 are written in the copyist's handwriting, beginning immediately after Mark 16:8, and the letters are slightly compressed, all twelve verses fit into this blank space. This very strongly indicates that the copyist of Vaticanus was aware of the existence of verses 9-20. So in Codex Vaticanus we have support for the text without verses 9-20, **and** support for the recollection of the text **with** verses 9-20.

CODEX SINAITICUS

Codex Sinaiticus has some highly unusual features involving the end of Mark. The four pages of the codex that contain Mark 14:54 to 16:8 and Luke 1:1 to 1:56 are

written on a cancel-sheet. The text on these four pages of text was not written by the same copyist who wrote the text on the pages that appear before them and after them in the manuscript.

These four pages were produced by the proof-reader of the manuscript, the *diorthotes*, or supervisor, when the manuscript was still in production. This individual detected something in the main copyist's work on these pages that led him to remove and replace the pages that had been made by the main copyist.

We do not have the pages made by the main copyist, so we can't see precisely what elicited their removal. But we *can* observe what was done on the replacement-pages. Before engaging in a little detective work to deduce why the scribe did what he did, let's see what he did.

The individual who made the replacement-pages wrote the first three columns normally, with about 630-650 characters in each column. But in column 4, his lettering is drastically compressed: this column contains a little more than **700** letters, far more than the usual rate. On the next page, the lettering is stretched out, averaging a little less than 600 letters in each column.

As the copyist of the replacement-pages was writing Mark 16:1, he accidentally skipped most of the verse. As a result, he only had 589 letters left of Mark to write when he began column 9 at the beginning of the third page.

Normally 589 letters would easily fit within a column. But instead of ending Mark in column 9, the individual making the replacement-pages stretched out his lettering more drastically than before. As a result, column 9 contains only 552 letters. The remaining 37 letters are

written at the top of column 10. After the end of Mark 16:8, an especially emphatic decorative design fills the rest of the line and also fills the following line, which is unusual. This is followed by the closing-title, and the rest of the column is blank.

It is not unusual in Codex Sinaiticus to have blank spaces like this below the closing title. Every book began at the top of a column.

The text of Luke begins at the top of column 11. In every column of the cancel-sheet that contains text from Luke, the lettering is significantly compressed. Instead of seeing 630-650 letters per line, here we see columns with 685, 672, 702, 687, 725, and 679 letters.

This is *remarkable variation*. It implies that the pages made by the main copyist displayed a large omission of text – probably a skip from the beginning of Luke 1:34 to the beginning of 1:38. The individual who made the replacement-pages needed to fit Mark 14:54-16:8 and Luke 1:1-56 into 16 columns with about 311 letters that the main copyist had failed to include.

And now a little detective work.

After the diorthotes calculated that he could fit the text of Luke 1:1-56 into six columns of compressed lettering, he wrote those six columns of text on the replacement-pages, as columns 11-16. Then he went back to column 1 and began to write the text of Mark 14:54-16:8, resuming his normal rate of letters per column.

In column 4, he reverted to compressed lettering. We do not know why.

Did he momentarily consider including Mark 16:9-20?

We do not know. *If* he had continued to compress his lettering in the next six columns as drastically as he does in column 4, he would have been able to include verses 9-20 with room to spare: six columns of 700 letters

each would provide room for 4,200 letters. Mark 15:17-16:8 as written on the cancel-sheet consists of 2,982 letters. Add on the 971 letters in Mark 16:9-20, and you only have 3,953 letters – and you could even throw in the 80 letters that were skipped in Mark 16:1 and still have plenty of room before reaching the end of column 10.

However it is unlikely that the individual who made the replacement-pages would use an exemplar different from what was used by the main copyist. More probably, in column 4, the person making the replacement-pages inattentively reverted to the letter-compression that he had used in Luke. When he reached the end of the page, he realized what he had done, and began to stretch out his lettering.

After accidentally omitting most of Mark 16:1, he needed to stretch out his lettering in column 9 very drastically. He even wrote Jesus' name out in full in verse six. Thus he had 37 letters to put at the top of column 10.

What this shows is that the individual who wrote the text on these replacement-pages in Codex Sinaiticus made a special effort to **avoid** leaving a blank column after Mark 16:8. He also added a distinctly emphatic decoration after verse 8.

As was mentioned earlier, over 1,650 MSS include Mark 16:9-20, or include at least some of these twelve verses (showing that all 12 verses were on the page when the MSS were in pristine condition). These include the MSS Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, Codex Sigma – also known as the Rossano Gospels – Codex Bezae, Codex Basilensis, Codex Seidelianus, Codex Cyprius, Codex Campianus, Codex Nanianus, Codex Washingtonianus, Codex Delta, Codex Macedonianus, and more. In addition, Mark 16:9-20 is a reading for Ascension-Day and is the third reading in the Heothina-series in hundreds of Greek Gospels-lectionaries.

MSS WITH NOTES ABOUT VERSES 9-20

The 1,650 Greek MSS that include verses 9-20 include about 15 MSS that have special notes about the passage. These MSS mainly fall into two groups: the cluster of MSS known as family-1, and a group of MSS featuring the "Jerusalem Colophon."

Minuscule 199, which is related to Codex Λ , has a short note in the side-margin beside v. 9 that says, "In some of the copies, this does not appear, but it stops here," that is, at the end of v. 8. In the upper margin, verses 9-20 are designated as the third reading in the Resurrection-series, and as a reading for Ascension-Day.

Minuscules 20, 215, and 300, which have the Jerusalem Colophon, have a longer note in the margin, at or near Mark 16:9. It says, "From here to the end forms no part of the text in some of the copies. But in the ancient ones, it all appears intact."

Minuscules 1, 1582, 209, 205, and 2886 (a very close relative of 205) are all members of family-1 and each one has a note which says, "*Now in some of the copies, the evangelist's work is finished here, and so does Eusebius Pamphili's Canon-list. But in many, this [i.e., verses 9-20] also appears.*"

Minuscules 15, 22, 1110, 1192, and 1210 repeat most of that note, but do not mention the Eusebian Canons. Their form of the note only says, "In some of the copies, the Gospel is completed here, but in many, this also appears."

Fifteen copyists did not write these notes spontaneously or independently. The witnesses that have this note fall into distinct groups: chief members of family 1, secondary members of family 1, and a few MSS that have the Jerusalem Colophon.

Bruce Manning Metzger described the testimony of this small group of MSS by saying, “Not a few MSS which contain the passage have scribal notes stating that older Greek copies lack it.” **That is not exactly what the evidence presents.** Two forms of the note state that **some** copies do not have verses 9-20 but many do have verses 9-20, and minuscules 20, 215, and 300 say explicitly that this section of text is all there *in the ancient copies*.

MSS WITH ASTERISKS OR OBELI

Dr. Metzger stated, “In other witnesses the passage is marked with asterisks or obeli, the conventional signs used by copyists to indicate a spurious addition to a document.” This conveyed a misimpression, as if there are Greek MSS in which Mark 16:9-20 is accompanied in the margin by nothing but asterisks or obeli.

In real life, there were scribes who used marks to draw the reader’s attention to comments in the margin. Where such marks exist, they typically draw the reader’s attention to part of the *Catena Marcum*. Such is the case regarding GA 2812, the Zelada Gospels.

Dr. Daniel B. Wallace claimed in 2007 that a scribe “might simply place an asterisk or obelisk in the margin, indicating doubt about these verses,” and he listed five MSS as examples: 138, 264, 1221, 2346, and 2812.

Looking at each of these I discover the following facts:

- Minuscule 138 is an annotated manuscript. It has material from the *Catena Marcum* on the same page.

- Minuscule 264 has an asterisk in the margin alongside Mark 16:9. In the upper margin, it has the title of the lection that begins at Mark 16:9. An asterisk appears in 264 alongside Mark 11:12, and in the upper margin, there is the title of the lection that begins there. An asterisk appears at Luke 18:2, and at Luke 19:29, and at

Mark 14:2: and in each case, in the upper margin, there is the title of the lection that begins at that point. These asterisks are clearly not text-critically relevant. They are connected to the lectionary apparatus and have nothing to do with the expression of doubt about the passages where they appear.

- In minuscule 1221, there is no asterisk before Mark 16:9. The mark that appears there – a cluster of four dots – appears at other places in the manuscript: on some nearby pages it can be seen in Luke 1:24, before Luke 1:26, before Luke 1:57, at the beginning of Luke 2:1, at the beginning of Luke 2:42, at the beginning of Luke 3:1, etc. These marks clearly were not intended to convey doubt.

- In minuscule 2346, there is no asterisk. A cluster of four dots appears before Mark 16:9. At the top of the page, the title for the lection is written: *Resurrection-reading #3*. The same symbol appears at John 1:43 and 2:12. Its purpose is not to express doubt but simply to separate one lection from another.

All five of Dr. Daniel B. Wallace's examples are phantoms.

I mention that minuscule 137 (which is sometimes listed as if it has asterisks alongside verses 9-20) is a MS in which the text of Mark is framed by commentary-material, and the commentary includes the same extract from the *Catena Marcum* that appears in GA 2812, appealing to a cherished Palestinian exemplar of Mark to vindicate the inclusion of verses 9-20.

I conclude that the claim that has been spread by Wallace, Evans, Wright, and many other commentators about asterisks appearing alongside Mark 16:9-20, as expressions of doubt about the passage must be retracted immediately. There is no such thing as a non-annotated Greek manuscript of Mark in which Mark 16:9-20 is accompanied by text-critically significant asterisks or obeli.

CLEMENT AND ORIGEN

Patristic writings are another part of the evidence that has received a high level of misrepresentation. Two statements from Bruce Manning Metzger's *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* have been repeated by many other commentators. First: "Clement of Alexandria and Origen show no knowledge of the existence of these verses."

Those who encounter this statement could conclude that these two writers' non-use of Mark 16:9-20 implies that the passage was not in their copies of the Gospel of Mark. But Clement barely made *any* clear quotations from the Gospel of Mark outside of chapter 10. Similarly, Origen does not use a 54-verse segment of text in Mark 1:36-3:16, or a 28-verse segment in Mark 3:19 to 4:11, or a 41-verse segment of text in Mark 5:2 to 5:43.

If Origen did not quote from Mark 16:9-20, then those twelve verses are just one of many 12-verse segments of Mark from which Origen does not quote. There is a passage in Origen's composition *Philocalia* (ch. 5) that may be based on Mark 16:15-20.

EUSEBIUS AND JEROME

Dr. Bruce Manning Metzger stated, "Eusebius and Jerome attest that the passage was absent from almost all Greek copies of Mark known to them."

His statement requires major clarification, especially because it has been misrepresented by some commentators. Dr. Ben Witherington III erroneously stated, "Eusebius and Jerome both tell us these verses were absent from all Greek copies known to them."

In real life, in the composition *Ad Marinum*, Eusebius responded to a question from Marinus about how Matthew 28:2 can be harmonized with Mark 16:9:

Matthew says that Christ arose "late on the Sabbath," but Mark says "early in the morning on the first day of the week." Already we see that Marinus' text of Mark (as old as Eusebius' testimony) included Mark 16:9-20.

Eusebius mentioned two ways to resolve the apparent discrepancy: First, a person could say that the relevant passage is not found in all copies of the Gospel according to Mark, and that the text in the accurate copies ends at the end of verse 8. Almost all copies of the Gospel of Mark end there.

That is what one person might say, rejecting the passage and rendering the question superfluous. But, Eusebius continued, another view is that both passages should be accepted; it is not the job of faithful readers to pick and choose between them.

Granting that this second perspective is correct, the proper thing to do is to interpret the meaning of the passage. If we draw a distinction in the wording, we would not find it in conflict with the words in Matthew's account. We should read the words in Mark, "Rising early in the morning on the first day of the week," with a pause after "Rising," for that refers to Christ's resurrection. The rest, "early in the morning on the first day of the week," pertains to the time of His appearance to Mary Magdalene.

Three things must be noticed whenever Eusebius' testimony is mentioned: **First**, he does not frame the statement about MSS as his own observation. He framed it as something that someone might say. **Second**, instead of advising Marinus to reject the passage, Eusebius recommended that Marinus should retain the passage, and he even told him how to pronounce the passage so as to make it clear that it is harmony with the passage in Matthew 28.

Third, Eusebius himself quoted Mark 16:9 further along in the same composition. Once he stated that “some copies” of Mark say that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene, and once, he says that Jesus cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene “according to Mark.”

Nobody but God and his angels, in the decades after the Diocletian persecution, had the means to survey how many MSS existed throughout the Roman Empire to support particular readings.

What about Jerome? Jerome included Mark 16:9-20 in the **Vulgate Gospels**, which he specifically stated that he prepared on the basis of ancient Greek MSS. Jerome was born in the mid-300s. I hazard a guess that these Greek MSS were older than that.

Again: Dr. Metzger’s statement was, “Eusebius and Jerome attest that the passage was absent from almost all Greek copies of Mark known to them.”

Let’s test that.

The relevant statement from Jerome is found in his composition *Ad Hedibiam*, from about the year 407, in which, among other things, he responds to a broad question about harmonization-difficulties in the resurrection-accounts in the Gospels. In the course of his response, he broke down the question into a series of questions and answers that are clearly patterned on Eusebius’ earlier work to Marinus.

Jerome, like Eusebius, wrote that there are two ways to solve the question. Jerome, like Eusebius, wrote that one way is to reject the passage in Mark, on the grounds that it is absent in nearly all of the Greek copies, and because it seems to narrate things that contradict the other accounts. Jerome went on to write that Matthew and Mark both told the truth, and that when the text is read with a pause after “Jesus arising,” before “on the first

day of the week in the morning appeared to Mary Magdalene,” the difficulty goes away.

Jerome instructed Hedibia to retain the verses.

This is how D. C. Parker explained the situation in 1997:

Jerome’s letter to Hedibia “is simply a translation with some slight changes of what Eusebius had written. It is thus worthless for our purposes.” Parker concluded: “Jerome is no evidence for the Short Ending.”

John Burgon conveyed the same thing over a hundred years earlier. Jerome saved time and effort by condensing part of Eusebius’ earlier composition in his letter to Hedibia – just as he acknowledged, in his *Epistle 75*, that he sometimes dictated to his secretary what he had borrowed from other writers.

In 417, in *Against the Pelagians*, Jerome pictured a champion of orthodoxy explaining where he had seen the interpolation that is now known as the Freer Logion. He located this interpolation “*In certain exemplars, and especially in Greek codices, near the end of the Gospel of Mark*” – and then he quoted almost all of Mark 16:14, and then presented the interpolation.

How could Jerome say that he saw the Freer Logion after Mark 16:14 “*especially in Greek codices,*” and **also** say that almost all Greek codices lack Mark 16:9-20? By making the first statement based on his own experience, and making the second one merely as something extracted from Eusebius’ composition, in which it was framed as something that someone might say.

EARLY PATRISTIC WRITERS

I turn to some patristic evidence from the era of the Roman Empire. These will be described fairly briefly in the interest of brevity. (In every case, see my book *The Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20* for more details.)

(1) ***Epistula Apostolorum***, from about the year 150, echoes the narrative flow of events as recorded in Mark 16:9-20. In this text, and in Mark 16:9-11, the disciples are depicted disbelieving a woman's report that she has seen Jesus.

(2) **Justin Martyr**, in his ***First Apology***, chapter 45, in the course of interpreting Psalm 110, made a strong allusion to Mark 16:20 (blended with Luke 24:52). He referred to how the apostles *went forth from Jerusalem preaching everywhere*, using three words which appear together in Mark 16:20. And in chapter 50 of *First Apology*, Justin alludes to the scene in Mark 16:14, using the phrase, "*And later, when he had risen from the dead and was seen by them.*"

(3) **Tatian**, in about 170, incorporated Mark 16:9-20 into his ***Diatessaron***, a text in which all four Gospels were blended together into one continuous narrative. This is attested in **Codex Fuldensis** in Latin, and in the **Arabic Diatessaron**, which was translated from Syriac, and in Ephrem Syrus' commentary on the Diatessaron.

(4) **Irenaeus**, c. 180, stated in Book Three of ***Against Heresies***, in the tenth chapter: "Towards the conclusion of his Gospel, Mark says: 'So then, after the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God.'" This is confirmed in a Greek margin-note in MSS 1582 and 72 (and at least one other manuscript). Alongside Mark 16:19 the note says, "Irenaeus, who lived near the time of the apostles, cites this from Mark in the third book of his work *Against Heresies*."

Having listed four witnesses from the 100s – *over a century earlier than the earliest manuscript-evidence for the ending at 16:8* – I now list some others.

(5) **Tertullian**, in his **Apology** chapter 21, wrote that after Jesus rose from the dead, “*Afterwards, having commissioned them*” – that is, the disciples – “*to the duty of preaching throughout the world, He was taken up into heaven enveloped in a cloud.*”

In **Scorpiace**, chapter 15, Tertullian appeared to use Mark 16:18 in an allegorical way.

(6) **Hippolytus**, around 235, wrote something similar, in **Apostolic Tradition** 32: “*Let every one of the believers be sure to partake of communion before he eats anything else. For if he partakes with faith, even if something deadly were given to him, after this it cannot hurt him.*”

This part of **Apostolic Tradition** is extant in Greek. Hippolytus’ term for ‘something deadly’ is thanasimon – exactly the term that appears in Mark 16:18.

Hippolytus may also be the source of material that was blended into other material that formed **Book Eight of Apostolic Constitutions**. There we find this quotation:

“*With good reason did He say to all of us together, when we were perfected concerning those gifts which were given from him by the Spirit, ‘Now these signs shall follow those who have believed: in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they happen to drink any deadly thing, it shall by no means hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.’ These gifts were first bestowed on us the apostles when we were about to preach the gospel to every creature.*” No matter how you slice it, **Apostolic Constitutions** is a text from c. 380,

practically contemporary with the scribes of Codex Sinaiticus.

(7) The **Didascalía**, from the early 200s, in chapter 20, echoes Mark 16:15-16: “To everyone therefore who believes and is baptized, his former sins have been forgiven” – and in chapter 23 the apostles are pictured saying, “We were gone forth among the Gentiles into all the world to preach the word.”

(8) **Vincent of Thibaris**, at the Seventh Council of Carthage in 256, stated, “*We have assuredly the rule of truth which the Lord, by His divine precept, commanded to His apostles, saying, ‘Go ye, lay on hands in my name, expel demons.’*”

(9) The author of **De Rebaptismate**, in 258, echoes the scene described in Mark 16:14, describing how Jesus rebuked and reproached the disciples for their unbelief.

(10) **The Cy form of the Old Latin Chapter-Summaries** is called “Cy” because it is assigned to the time of Cyprian or a little later. The last chapter-summary for Mark is #74: “*Wherein He appeared to all the apostles after His resurrection.*”

(11) **Hierocles**, in 305, was a pagan writer, trained by an earlier pagan writer named Porphyry, whose writings he recycled in his own work. It is probably Hierocles’ composition **Truth-loving Words** that was quoted around 405 by Macarius Magnes in **Apocriticus**. Macarius Magnes was unaware of the identity of the author of this book. One of the excerpts that he quoted including the following challenge:

“Consider in detail that other passage, where He says, ‘Such signs shall follow them that believe: they shall lay hands upon sick folk, and they shall recover, and if they drink any deadly drug, it shall in no wise hurt them.’ So the right thing would be for those selected for the priesthood, and particularly those who lay claim to the bishop’s or president’s office, to make use of this form of test. The deadly drug should be set before them in order that the man who received no harm from the drinking of it might be given precedence of the rest. And if they are not bold enough to accept this sort of test, they ought to confess that they do not believe in the things Jesus said.”

(12) **Aphrahat**, a Syrian writer who knew the Diatessaron, used Mark 16:16-18 in the 17th paragraph of **Demonstration 1: On Faith**, in 336: *“When our Lord gave the sacrament of baptism to His apostles, He said to them, ‘Whosoever believes and is baptized shall live, and whosoever believes not shall be condemned.’”* At the end of the same paragraph, Aphrahat said that Jesus said, *“This shall be the sign for those who believe: they shall speak with new tongues and shall cast out demons, and they shall place their hands on the sick and they shall be made whole.”*

(13) **Acts of Pilate**, from the early 300s (also known as the *Gospel of Nicodemus* in a later expanded form) includes a utilization of Mark 16:15-16: two characters in chapter 14 report that they saw Jesus after His resurrection, sitting on a mountain with His disciples, saying, *“Go into all the world and preach unto every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who disbelieves shall be condemned.”*

(14) **The Freer Logion.** This extra material appears in Codex W after Mark 16:14:

“And they excused themselves, saying, ‘This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who, through the unclean spirits, does not allow the truth and the power of God to be understood. So then, reveal your righteousness now.’ Thus they spoke to Christ.

“And Christ told them, ‘The years of the reign of Satan are fulfilled, but other terrors approach. And for those who have sinned, I was delivered to death, that they might return to the truth, and sin no more, so that in heaven they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness. But’” – and then the text continues with verse 15.

There are a few minor differences between this Greek text and the text that Jerome described as something seen “*especially in Greek codices,*” but it is clearly the same material. Therefore it must have been in some Greek copies before the time of Jerome. Dr. Bruce Manning Metzger went further and stated, “*It probably is the work of a second or third century scribe.*” In which case it is yet another witness, earlier than Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, for the surrounding verses.

(15) **Fortunatianus**, a Latin-speaking bishop in northern Italy in the mid-300s, wrote the earliest known Latin commentary on the Gospels, and in it, he stated that it is fitting to connect Mark with the eagle, because Mark demonstrated that Jesus ascended to heaven.

(16) **Ambrose of Milan**, in about 385, repeatedly quoted from Mark 16:9-20. One example, in ***Of the Christian Faith***, section 86, is especially interesting: he says, “*We have heard the passage read where the Lord says, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to all creation.’”*

In Ambrose's time and place, Mark 16:9-20 was read in the church-services.

(17) **Ephrem**, a Syriac bishop in the city of Edessa around 360, wrote a commentary on Tatian's *Diatessaron*. In his commentary, he mentioned that after Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus "*commanded his disciples, 'Go out into the whole world and proclaim my gospel to the whole of creation, and baptize all the Gentiles.'*"

(18) **Epiphanius**, writing in the late 300s on the island of Cyprus, wrote in *Medicine-chest*, "*As the Gospel of Mark and the other evangelists put it, 'And he ascended up to heaven and sat on the right hand of the Father.'*"

(19) **Augustine**, writing in *On the Soul* in about the year 400, used Mark 16:18 as he explained that the cautious reading of heretical books allegorically fulfilled the promise that believers will not be harmed by the poisons of heresy. He also quoted Mark 16:15 in *Fourth Homily on First John, To the Parthians*.

(20) **Augustine's Greek MSS** were mentioned by him in *Harmony of the Gospels*, chapters 24-25, where, in addition to commenting on Mark 16:9-20 in detail, he referred to a detail in Mark 16:12, and wrote, "*In the Greek codices, indeed, the reading which we discover is 'estate' rather than 'country-seat.'*"

(21) In what are called the **Leucian Acts**, *The Story of John the Son of Zebedee* features clear utilizations of Mark 16:15-16.

(22) **Macarius Magnes** (already mentioned as the author of *Apocriticus*), demonstrated that Mark 16:9-20 was in his copies of the Gospel of Mark.

(23) In *The Doctrine of Addai* (which reached its extant form in the early 400s) the character Addai says, “*We were commanded to preach His gospel to the whole creation*” thus echoing Mark 16:15.

(24) **Pelagius** (400-410) in a comment on First Thessalonians 2:13 in his *Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of Saint Paul*, cited Mark 16:17 in a distinctly non-Vulgate form.

(25) **Philostorgius**, (c. 425), mentioned an episode that was regarded as an example of the fulfillment of “*the salvation-bringing Gospel-saying, ‘And they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they eat anything deadly, it will not harm them.’*”

(26) **Eznik of Golb**, one of the Armenian scholars who took part in the revision of the Armenian translation of the Bible in the 400s, used the contents of Mark 16:17 and 18.

(27) **Prosper of Aquitaine** quoted Mark 16:15-16 and stated that this was “according to Mark.”

(28) **Marius Mercator**, writing in around 430, used bits of Mark 16:16 and 16:20, from an Old Latin text, in *Sermon 10*.

(29) **Marcus Eremita** (c. 435), quoted Mark 16:18 at the end of chapter six of his Greek composition *Against Nestorius*.

(30) **Nestorius, as cited by Cyril of Alexandria** around 440, made a clear quotation of Mark 16:20.

(31) **Peter Chrysologus**, bishop of Ravenna from 433 to 450, commented extensively on Mark 16:14-20 in his 83rd *Sermon*.

(32) **Saint Patrick** (in the mid-400s), used Mark 16:16 in his *Letter to Coroticus*, and he quoted Mark 16:15-16 in chapter 40 of *Confession*.

A few other witnesses illustrate the wide scope of the support for the passage. These include

(32) **The Gothic Codex Argenteus**

(33) **The Curetonian Syriac**

(34) **The Life of Saint Samson of Dol**

(35) **Old Latin Codex Corbeiensis II**, identified as ff₂, (VL 8 in the Beuron identification-system)

(36) **The Martyrdom of St. Eustathius of Mzketha**

(37) **The Book of the Enthronement of the Archangel Michael**

(38) **Early copies of the Peshitta Gospels**

(39) **Revelation of the Magi**

(40) **A Nubian Prologue to a Hymn,**

(41) **A Coptic *Homily on the Dormition of Mary*** attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem,

(42) **A wall-inscription in Old Dongola**, in what is now Sudan.

This gives us some idea of the extent of the external evidence that favors Mark 16:9-20: it is very ancient, it is very abundant, and it is very diverse.

There is another ending, called the Shorter Ending, that is yet to be considered. In the following chapter we will look at the evidence for the Shorter Ending, and also consider the internal evidence.

EXTRA CREDIT

Read my book *Authentic: The Case for Mark 16:9-20*, now in its fourth edition.

Read Roger Pearse's book *Eusebius of Caesarea: Gospel Problems and Solutions*.

Consult the English translation of Fortunatianus' commentary by Hugh Houghton in association with Lukas J. Dorfbauer.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Mark 16:9-20 – The Shorter Ending and Internal Evidence

Heavenly Father, thank you for the fellowship that your people share as brothers and sisters in Christ, reborn to a living hope, and set apart to pursue Your will. Help us to proclaim the full counsel of God. And help us to stand in fellowship with one another, knowing that Jesus is not ashamed to call the sanctified His brethren.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

This chapter is the second part of our consideration of the ending of the Gospel of Mark. We have already seen that Mark 16:9-20 has extremely strong external support. It is supported by over 99% of the Greek MSS of the Gospel of Mark. It is supported by over 30 early patristic references (more than 40, if we look closely). It has a wide range of versional support. And in the two early MSS that end the text at verse 8, there are plain indications that the scribes were aware of the absent verses.

Here the main focus is on internal evidence. We begin by looking at the textual variant known as the "Shorter Ending." The "Shorter Ending" goes like this:

"Everything that had been told to them, they related to Peter and those with him. And after this, Jesus Himself appeared to them and sent forth, through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen."

This is found between verse 8 and verse 9 in eight Greek MSS: Codex L (019), Codex Ψ (044), 083 (this is the same manuscript as GA 0112), 099, and 579 and 1422 and 2937. All eight Greek MSS that attest to the Shorter Ending also support the inclusion of verses 9-20, although a few of them are damaged.

Some of the Greek MSS that feature the Shorter Ending between v. 8 and v. 9 also feature notes that introduce each ending. Codex L has a note that says *"In some, there is also this"* before the Shorter Ending, and before verses 9-20, Codex L has a note that says, *"There is also this, appearing after ephoubounto gar."*

This note echoes a situation in which the scribes were aware of some copies in which the Shorter Ending was present after verse 8, and also aware of some copies in which verses 9-20 were present after verse 8.

In Codex 044, there is no such note between verse 8 and the Shorter Ending, but after the Shorter Ending, Codex Psi has the same note that is seen in Codex L: *"There is also this, appearing after ephoubounto gar."*

083 is a damaged fragment. After Mark 16:8, 083 has the closing-title of Mark at the end of a column. In the next column, the Shorter Ending appears, and then before the beginning of verse 9, 083 has the note: *"There is also this, appearing after ephoubounto gar."* It is possible that 083 had the same note that is found in Codex L before the Shorter Ending, but that part of the page is not extant, so it can only be said that there appears to have been enough room on the page for that note.

083 thus testifies to a situation in which copyists were aware of copies of Mark in which the text of Mark ended at verse 8, copies in which the text ended with the Shorter Ending, and copies in which the text ended with verses 9-20.

099 is another heavily damaged fragment (from the White Monastery in Egypt) assigned to the 600s or 700s. After Mark 16:8, 099 had a note that is no longer legible. This is followed by the Shorter Ending. Then the text of most of 16:8 is rewritten, beginning at the words *eichen gar* and continuing to the end of the verse. Verse 8 is followed immediately by verse 9, and verse 9 is followed

by the beginning of verse 10, at which point we reach the end of the fragment.

I now come to the Greek-Sahidic lectionary 1602. In this witness, assigned to the 600s or 700s, the text of Mark 16:8 comes to a close at the end of a page. At the beginning of the next page, a note introduces the Shorter Ending. It says, "*In other copies this is **not** written.*"

Then the Shorter Ending appears. After the Shorter Ending, there is another note – the note also found in Codex L, Codex Psi, and 083: *estin de kai tauta meta feromena.*" Then, like 099, it repeats the second half of verse 8, beginning with the words *eichen gar*, and verse 8 is followed by verses 9-20.

019, 044, 083, and the Greek-Sahidic Lectionary 1602 share the same note after the Shorter Ending. They all introduce verses 9-20 with the note that says, "*Estin de kai tauta meta feromena.*"

099 and Greek-Sahidic Lectionary 1602 both repeat the same part of verse 8 before verse 9.

Thus four of the six Greek witnesses to the Shorter Ending are all connected to **the same locale**, namely, a location in Egypt.

This leaves the two minuscules 579 and 274 (and commentary-MSS 1422 and 2937) as the only remaining Greek witnesses to the Shorter Ending. The text of the Gospel of Mark in 579 has Alexandrian characteristics, and it is known for featuring a rare method of dividing the Gospels-text into segments that is shared by Codex Vaticanus. Even though 579 is from the 1200s, its testimony, in which the Shorter Ending follows verse 8, and the Shorter Ending is followed immediately on the next page by verses 9-20, does not take us away from the influence of a very narrow transmission-line.

Minuscule 274 has Mark 16:9-20 in its main text. Mark 16:9 begins on the same line where verse 8 ends.

The Shorter Ending is featured at the bottom of the page, like a footnote, with a column of five asterisks beside it. An asterisk beside the end of verse 8 conveys that the Shorter Ending was seen in the text at that point.

Thus the Greek evidence points to Egypt as the locale where the Shorter Ending originated. Nothing points anywhere else.

Versional evidence interlocks with this. Codex Bobbiensis (the only MS in which *only* the Shorter Ending is included after verse 8), almost certainly was written in Egypt by a scribe who did not know Latin very well.

The Bohairic-Arabic MS Huntington 17 (made in 1174) has verses 9-20 in the text and the Shorter Ending is in the margin.

The Ethiopic version was closely considered by Dr. Bruce Metzger in 1980, in the course of a detailed essay in which he retracted the claim that some Ethiopic MSS of Mark do not have Mark 16:9-20. Metzger observed that out of 194 Ethiopic MSS consulted by himself and another researcher, 131 included both the Shorter Ending and verses 9-20. (Research on the Ethiopic text of Mark is ongoing at the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library.)

Some copies of the Harklean Syriac version, made in the early 600s on the basis of MSS in Egypt, also feature the Shorter Ending as a supplemental reading; verses 9-20 are in the Syriac text.

According to E. C. Colwell, a medieval Armenian manuscript (Etchmiadzin 303), which has verses 9-20 at the end of Mark, includes the Shorter Ending as the final verse of the Gospel of Luke.

The Shorter Ending clearly had wide distribution in versional transmission-lines. Those lines all echo, in one way or another, a form of the text that began in Egypt (when verses 9-20 were circulating everywhere else).

It must be observed that it is **misleading** to convey that there were “multiple endings” of the Gospel of Mark, as if four or five different endings were written to continue the narrative after verse 8.

Aside from the abrupt non-ending at verse 8, there are **two** independent endings of the Gospel of Mark: one is the Shorter Ending, attested in eight Greek MSS, all of which also support verses 9-20. The other one is verses 9-20.

The Freer Logion is not a different ending. It is a sizeable textual variant. Its existence depends upon the previous existence of vv. 9-20. It does not turn into a “different ending” any more than a whale turns into an eagle when a barnacle attaches itself to the whale.

Likewise, the notes in some members of the family-1 manuscript-cluster do not turn verses 9-20 into something that is not verses 9-20.

The inclusion of both the Shorter Ending and verses 9-20 is also not a different ending. It is the combination of the two endings that circulated side-by-side in Egypt.

Non-annotated Greek MSS in which Mark 16:9-20 is accompanied by asterisks or obeli do not exist, as far as I can see.

When anyone refers to “multiple endings” as a reason to doubt the genuineness of verses 9-20, the first thing to do is to clarify that in terms of independent endings of the Gospel Mark after verse 8, there are exactly **two**.

The Shorter Ending is routinely rejected not only because its Greek support is very slight and very very isolated, but also, as Dr. Bruce Metzger observed, because it has “a high percentage of non-Markan words” and a rhetorical tone that is different from the Gospel of Mark 1:1-16:8. Metzger aimed similar criticisms at verses 9-20,

stating in his *Textual Commentary on the GNT* that several words in this passage are “non-Markan.”

Dr. Bruce Terry in his online essay “*The Style of The Long Ending of Mark*” observed that verses 9-20 have 16 such words. He also observed that in Mark 15:40-16:4, another 12-verse segment, there are twenty to twenty-two once-used words, depending on textual variants.

Karim al-Hanifi, in a 2019 essay “*The End of an Argument on the Ending of Mark*,” compared all 12-verse segments of the Gospel of Mark in sequence, beginning with verses 1-12 of chapter one and continuing to Mark 15:37-16:1, counting the number of once-used words in each passage. He found that there are eleven 12-verse segments of Mark that contain more than 16 once-used words. This nullifies the vocabulary-based objection that was presented by Dr. Metzger.

Some commentators have noticed that Mark 16:9-20 does not feature the words *euthus* – “immediately” – or *palin* – “again.” But Dr. Terry pointed out that if one divides the text of Mark 1:1-16:8 into 640 segments of 12 consecutive verses, 373 12-verse segments do not contain “*euthus*” and “*palin*” either. Dr. Terry astutely observed that it is not really an objection to say that the last twelve verses have a feature that is shared by “more than one-third of the sets of 12 consecutive verses in the rest of the book.”

Dr. Terry also drew attention to internal features in Mark 16:9-20 that favor Markan authorship, such as nine terms that are used by Mark more often, or as often, as they are used by other Gospel-writers.

Dr. Metzger’s second objection based on internal evidence is the same as one that Hort had made in 1881: the contents of verse 9 do not flow naturally from verse 8. The day and time are re-stated. Mary Magdalene is re-introduced. Her companions are nowhere to be seen on

the narrative stage. All of these considerations seem to weigh in very heavily against the idea that verses 9-20 were written together with the preceding verses.

They also weigh in against the theory that they were composed by someone who was cobbling together an ending by piecing together extracts from the other Gospels. A person attempting to extend Mark's narrative from verse 8 would keep the focus on the women as they left the tomb, using Matthew 28 as his template. A person attempting to extend Mark's narrative from verse 8 would describe an appearance of Christ specifically in Galilee, so as to show the fulfillment of the prophecy in Mark 14:28 and 16:7. A person dependent on the other Gospels would not arbitrarily toss in verse 18, with its references to handling serpents and drinking poison.

Against the theory that verses 9-20 are a pastiche drawn piecemeal from the other Gospels, internal evidence shows that while the author of verses 9-20 was familiar with some of the events related in the other Gospels' post-resurrection-accounts, he was *not* familiar with those accounts themselves.

Mark 16:10-11 states that the disciples did not believe Mary Magdalene's claim that she had encountered Jesus, but nothing in Matthew 28 induces such a statement. Nothing in Matthew suggests that the report of Jesus' resurrection was not believed by the disciples, or that Jesus rebuked the disciples for their unbelief.

If the author had depended on the Gospel of Luke, he had no basis to report that Mary Magdalene had seen Jesus. Neither Matthew nor Luke provide a basis for the statement in Mark 16:14 that Jesus "appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table, and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen." Jesus' mild questions in Luke 24:38 focus on the disciples'

hesitance to believe their eyes and ears, not their disbelief of the earlier reports of His resurrection.

In addition: the author of Mark 16:9-20 appears to be unaware of John 21. The last we see of Peter in Mark 14:72, he is weeping in remorse. In John 21, Peter is restored by Christ in Galilee – but this is not mentioned at all in Mark 16:9-20.

Stylistic features of Mark 16:9-20 point toward the same conclusion.

Hort wrote in 1881, “A scribe or editor, finding the Gospel manifestly incomplete, and proceeding to conclude it in language of his own, would never have begun with the words which now stand in verse 9.”

Metzger likewise wrote, “in view of the inconcinnities between verses 1-8 and 9-20” – that is, in consideration of how they don’t seem to naturally fit together – “it is unlikely that that the long ending was composed *ad hoc* to fill up an obvious gap.”

That point should be considered alongside Hort’s statement that “*Anastas de*” – the opening words of verse 9 – “reads excellently as the beginning of a comprehensive narrative,” and that Mark 16:9 appears to be “the initial sentence of a narrative which starts from the Resurrection.”

We must also consider how incredibly abruptly verse 8 ends – with the word *gar*. Various commentators have tried to squint this into an intentional ending, but the question “*What did the author intend?*” has been given almost as many answers as there are commentators. One attempt pictures the evangelist deliberately leaving his account open-ended so as to invite the reader to ask, “*What will I do with Jesus?*” without His post-resurrection appearances, as if reading about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances would be just as convincing as experiencing the appearances themselves.

The ending of v. 8 with *gar* simply does not look like an intentional ending. In other Greek literature, *gar* can end sentences, and in a speech given by Protagoras, “*gar*” is the last word of the speech. But in that speech, Protagoras did not presenting a puzzling cliffhanger. He was adding a point of clarification. Nor did the final detail of his speech convey that the characters to which he referred did not do something that he knows that they did. It is one thing to close a speech with a parenthetical remark. It is a very different thing to stop a narrative with *gar*, especially after recording a prophecy that Jesus will be seen in Galilee.

In comparison, the ending of v. 8 with *gar* looks accidental because if the Gospel of Mark is all that its readers had to go on, the natural conclusion would be that the women who left the tomb said nothing to anyone – because that is exactly what verse 8 says.

Matthew 28:8-9 plainly relates that the women’s fear did not prevent them from running to bring the news to Jesus’ disciples. The interpretation of the ending of Mark 16:8 as an intentional ending of the whole account leaves readers with a misimpression of what the woman did and did not do, and involves positing a rather complexly motivated writer – which is one reason why commentators have offered so many theories regarding the author’s motive. Meanwhile an explanation of the ending of Mark 16:8 as *non-intentional* is very simple.

The internal evidence points to a scenario in which Mark, in addition to preparing his Gospel-account as a record of Peter’s remembrances about Jesus, had composed a short freestanding composition about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, possibly intended especially for church-services at Easter-time.

As Mark was about to finish his record of Peter’s remembrances about Jesus, he stopped unintentionally at

the end of verse 8. This may have been due to the same wave of local persecution which led to the deaths of Peter and Paul in the mid-60s. Mark entrusted his text to colleagues at the church in Rome. Mark's co-workers were unwilling to distribute the text in its manifestly unfinished form, but were equally reluctant to create new material to finish the account.

They took a third option: they attached Mark's resurrection narrative in order to conclude Mark's otherwise unfinished Gospel. The non-transition between the end of 16:8 and the beginning of 16:9 was not considered objectionable. (And the identification of Mary Magdalene as the one out of whom Jesus had expelled seven demons helpfully differentiated this Mary Magdalene from the other one – i.e., Mary Theotokos.)

After this was done, copies of the Gospel of Mark – known at the time as the remembrances of Peter – began to be produced and distributed for Christians to read, from 1:1 to 16:20. This hypothesis very thoroughly explains the internal evidence.

In a transmission-line that influenced the text in Egypt, the resurrection-narrative that we know as verses 9-20 of chapter 16 may have been accidentally lost. Another possibility is that it was recognized as something that had not been part of the Remembrances of Peter, and so these verses were separated from the rest, on the grounds that they did not have the authority of the main author, Peter.

Copyists who regarded verses 9-20 as non-Petrine declined to copy that section of text simply because they did not think it belonged in a composition that they saw as the Remembrances of Peter.

In Egypt, copies of Mark circulated in which the text ended at 16:8, and this affected some Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic texts that were used there. It was not long before an unknown person, unable to tolerate the

abruptness with which the text stopped, composed what is called the Shorter Ending in order to round off the narrative somewhat more smoothly.

That is why the text circulated without verses 9-20 in Egypt, and that is also why the Shorter Ending was written (also in Egypt). The form with verses 9-20 spread everywhere else, and soon re-entered the Egyptian transmission-line as well.

We thus deduce three stages in the Egyptian transmission-line.

First, Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, the Sinaitic Syriac, and Sahidic Codex P. Palau-Ribes Inv. Nr. 182 (at Barcelona) echo the text after verses 9-20 were removed, leaving the abruptly stopping text.

Second (represented by Old Latin Codex Bobbiensis), the Shorter Ending was added to verse 8, but verses 9-20 had not yet re-entered the Egyptian transmission-line. Third, as seen in 019 and the other witnesses with the Shorter Ending in the text before verse 9, both the Shorter Ending and verses 9-20 circulated together for a while after verses 9-20 re-entered the Egyptian transmission-line.

As far as early witnesses are concerned, outside of Egypt, we do not see the Shorter Ending, because it was only in Egypt that the abrupt ending circulated – without which there was no *motivation* to create the Shorter Ending. Everywhere else in the Roman Empire – in Ireland, in Gaul, in Carthage, in Milan, in Ravenna, in Asia Minor, in Cyprus, in Israel, in Syria, **and in Rome**, the Gospel of Mark was circulating with verses 9-20.

In other words, although the Shorter Ending was adopted into quite a few versional transmission-lines, it originated as an isolated Egyptian reading, and the reason why the Shorter Ending originated there is because the form of the text that stopped at verse 8 originated there.

We do not see different endings popping up all over the Roman Empire because outside Egypt, verses 9-20 concluded the text. The rise of the Shorter Ending, as a consequence of the abrupt ending, was an interesting development in the Egyptian text, but this was never typical. The normal form of the text of the Gospel of Mark, from its initial production at Rome, onward, included verses 9-20, and never had anything else.

Most of the evidence, external and internal, is now accounted for. Together, it points to the conclusion that Mark 16:9-20 was part of the original text, while at the same time indicating that the original text was a composite text.

EXTRA CREDIT

Read my book *Authentic: The Case for Mark 16:9-20* (fourth edition),

Nicholas Lunn's 2014 book *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20*,

David W. Hester's book "*Does Mark 16:9-20 Belong in the New Testament?*", and

Clarence Russell Williams' essay *Appendices to the Gospel of Mark*, the last essay in the 1914 issue of *The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* (available online).

CHAPTER TWENTY

John 7:53-8:11

Our heavenly Father,

When the wicked boast that they have killed the widow and the stranger and murdered the fatherless, instruct us from Your Word. Teach us that vengeance belongs to You. Teach us that You have called the powers that be to serve as agents of wrath.

Make your sons gentle in manner, resolute in action, wise as serpents and gentle as doves. We live knowing that You see every injustice. You hear every innocent victim. And you will bring Your kingdom everywhere You are King.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

I now investigate one of the most famous textual variants in the New Testament: John 7:53-8:11, also known as the *pericope* (purr-ICK-o-pay) *adulterae*, the episode about the adulteress. These 12 verses are often introduced to Bible-readers by a heading such as the one that appears in the Christian Standard Bible between John 7:52 and 7:53: "The earliest MSS do not include 7:53-8:11."

In 1982, when the New King James Version was published, its footnote about these verses said that they "are present in over 900 MSS." More recently, Dr. Maurice A. Robinson confirmed that although 270 MSS do not include these verses, they are supported by 1,500 MSS. That is a ratio of 85 to 15, in favor of the inclusion of the passage.

It is a well-grounded axiom that MSS must be weighed, not merely counted. (Of course the best approach is **both**: count the witnesses and weigh them.) Among the early MSS that do not include John 7:53-8:11

are Papyrus 66, Papyrus 75, Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Ephraimi Rescriptus, Codex T, also known as 029, Codex Washingtonianus, and Codex N, also known as 022, a purple uncial from the 500s.

Most of these MSS represent the Alexandrian Text. The early versions based in Egypt (such as the Sahidic version) agree, along with the Ethiopic version. Some relatively early *non*-Coptic versions also agree: Codex Argenteus, the primary witness to the Gothic version of the Gospels, does not have the story of the adulteress. Neither does the Peshitta (which in the Gospels is frequently an ally of the Byzantine Text).

To some researchers who value the flagship MSS of the Alexandrian Text as if their weight is greater than all other MSS put together, the evidence I have just mentioned settles the question of whether John 7:53-8:11 is part of the original text of the Gospel of John. They say that this passage is not original and that the evidence against its genuineness is “overwhelming.”

However, there is other evidence that points in a different direction.

There is also a considerable amount of misinformation circulating about this passage that must be sorted out.

Some researchers have stated that out of the 322 majuscule MSS that were catalogued, as of several years ago, only three support the inclusion of John 7:53-8:11. That statement is built on a false picture of the majuscules, as if they are all majuscule MSS of John.

Most of those 322 majuscule MSS do not have any text from chapters 7 and 8 of the Gospel of John. Using “Three out of 322 majuscules” as a frame of reference is a silly proportion. It is like combining all of the professional baseball games, football games, and hockey games played

in America in 1972, and saying, “The 1972 Miami Dolphins only won 17 out of 500 games.”

Sounds like the 1972 Miami Dolphins weren’t very good.

The claim that only three majuscules include John 7:53-8:11 is simply false. The uncials D, E, G, H, K, M, U, S, G, Γ, Λ, Π, Ω, 047, and 0233 support the passage. Codex F (Boreelianus), included it when the manuscript was in pristine condition. Codex Y (Macedonianus), does not have the passage, but its marginalia expresses awareness of the missing verses. In Codex Delta and in Codex Regius (L, 019), John 7:53-8:11 is absent but a large blank space appears between John 7:52 and John 8:12, obviously (to me) left as memorial-space acknowledging the copyists’ recollection of the missing verses.

The proper way to resolve textual contests is NOT by holding a democratic election with MSS in the role of citizens. But since an appeal to the number of MSS has been attempted, it should be as accurate a tally as possible:

The number of majuscules that have John 7-8, and *include* John 7:53-8:11 or part of the passage, as far as I know, is **16**. The number of majuscules that have John 7 and 8 that do not include John 7:53-8:11 is **18**, but two of those 18 – Codex Regius and Codex Delta – leave memorial-space for the passage. Codex Macedonianus, already mentioned, does not include the passage but has symbols in the margin that appear to refer to it.

In the case of Codex A, Codex C, and 070 (three of the 18 majuscules counted as witnesses for non-inclusion) we don’t *see* a text in which John 8:12 follows John 7:52; we have to depend on space-considerations. Granting that those considerations are correct, the count is 16 for inclusion, 16 for non-inclusion, and a three-vote buffer-zone that both supports a text without John 7:53-8:11

while also supporting a memory of an exemplar with John 7:53-8:11.

In addition, a few MSS (such as Codex A and minuscules 34 and 135) have notes that refer to the presence of the story of the adulteress in earlier copies. I shall revisit these witnesses.

We see the signs of two early forms of the text of the Gospel of John: one based in the West that included John 7:53-8:11, and one based in the East that did not.

The dry climate of Egypt gave longevity to papyrus MSS there, allowing the writing-material to survive longer. Outside Egypt, papyri tended to naturally experience more rapid decomposition. Partly for this reason, the heading that states that the “earliest MSS” do not include John 7:53-8:11 is true. But there is also early evidence in favor of the story of the adulteress.

Jerome (the early 400s) wrote in his composition ***Against the Pelagians, 2:17***: *“In the Gospel according to John, there is found, in many copies, Greek as well as Latin, the story of the adulteress who was accused before the Lord.”*

About thirty years earlier in 383 Jerome had included John 7:53-8:11 in the Gospel of John in the Vulgate Gospels. In his ***Preface to the Gospels***, Jerome wrote that he had revised the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John “*by a comparison of the Greek MSS. Only early ones have been used.*”

In his ***Epistle 27, To Marcella***, Jerome was more candid. He stated, *“The Latin MSS of the Scriptures are demonstrated to be faulty by the variations which they all exhibit, and my objective has been to restore them to the form of the original Greek.”*

When Jerome translated the Vulgate Gospels he did so on the basis of “ancient Greek MSS” – that is, MSS that he considered ancient in 383. This testimony alone

goes a long way toward outweighing the early Egyptian MSS. We don't know exactly how many Greek MSS Jerome would call "many," but if it was more than nine, that would imply that Jerome saw as many MSS, made before the year 400, **with** the passage, as we have seen *without* it.

In a composition from the 200s, called the ***Didascalia Apostolorum***, we find the following, in Syriac, in chapter 7, after the author used King Manasseh as an example of those who have received mercy from God:

"If you do not receive the one who repents, because you are without mercy, you shall sin against the Lord God, for you do not obey our Savior and our God, to do as He also did with her who had sinned, whom the elders set before Him, and leaving the judgment in His hands, departed. But He, the searcher of hearts, asked her and said to her, 'Have the elders condemned you, my daughter?' She said to Him, 'No, Lord.' And He said to her, 'Go your way; neither do I condemn you.' In Him therefore, our Savior and King and God, is your pattern, O bishops."

The author of the *Didascalia* appears to have regarded the scene about Jesus and this woman as if it as well-known as the many other passages that he refers to. He used Jesus' act of forgiveness as a precedent for Christian bishops to follow.

Several significant early witnesses are found in the Old Latin chapter-summaries, or ***capitula***. In some Old Latin copies of John, and in many Vulgate copies that preserve Old Latin supplemental material, before the text of the Gospel, there are lists of chapter-numbers, chapter-titles, and brief chapter-summaries.

There are eleven forms of the Old Latin *capitula* that mention the adulteress, plus one that mentions that Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, referring to what is said in John 8:1.

One of these forms is called the Cy form because it is assigned to the time of Cyprian or shortly later, that is, the *mid-200s* or *late 200s*. In John's chapter-summaries in the Cy-form of the Old Latin *capitula*, the summary of chapter 30 begins like this: "Wherein he dismissed the adulteress, and said that he was the light of the world." This proves that the story of the adulteress was in an Old Latin text in the 200s, right before John 8:12.

Furthermore, as H.A.G. Houghton has confirmed, the chapter-summary in some Latin MSS uses a loan-word based on the Greek word for adultery. The same loan-word also appears in the text of Codex Corbeiensis, from the 400s or 500s, indicating that the Latin text echoes a Greek text.

The testimony of Saint Ambrose of Milan, from c. 380s, deserves attention. Although some commentators have claimed that none of the early writers used the story of the adulteress, Ambrose made several extensive quotations of the story of the adulteress.

Ambrose is widely regarded as the author of ***Apologia David***, in which, in the course of commenting on sub-title of Psalm 51, the author wrote, "Perhaps most people are taken aback by the title of the psalm, which you have heard read, that Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Likewise those with weak faith could be disturbed by the Gospel-reading, which has been covered, in which we see an adulteress presented to Christ and sent away without condemnation."

If Ambrose did indeed write *Apologia David*, this reference shows that the story of the adulteress was routinely read in Milan. If not, it shows that the passage was routinely read somewhere else.

In ***Epistle 25, To Studius***, Ambrose addresses the question of whether a Christian official may pronounce a

death-sentence. In the course of his comments on this question, he refers to how Jesus dealt with the adulteress. Ambrose quotes the words, *“Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at her. And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.”* He continues: *“When they heard this they began to go out one by one, beginning at the eldest.”* And then he quotes, *“So when they departed, Jesus was left alone, and lifting up His head, He said to the woman, Woman, where are those your accusers? Has no man condemned you? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.”*

In his next letter, ***Epistle 26, To Studius***, Ambrose went into even more detail, introducing the passage about the adulteress by saying that it is “very famous.” And once again he quoted extensively from the passage.

Earlier than Ambrose is the writer Pacian of Barcelona, who became a bishop in 365. In his ***Third Epistle to Sympronian – Against the Treatise of the Novatians, in paragraph 39***, Pacian wrote with heavy sarcasm: *“O Novatians, why do you delay to ask an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and to demand life for life? Why do you wait to renew once more the practice of circumcision and the sabbath? Kill the thief. Stone the petulant. Choose not to read in the Gospel that the Lord spared even the adulteress who confessed, when none had condemned her.”*

The early evidence does not all point one way. There is very strong evidence from the East, especially from Egypt, *against* the passage. And there is evidence from the West, in the Old Latin *capitula*, and in the quotations from Pacian and Ambrose, and in the “many MSS, both Greek and Latin,” mentioned by Jerome, *supporting* the passage.

Before considering what caused the difference between these two forms of the text, there are other forms of the text to consider: forms in which the story of the adulteress appears at different places. As a footnote in the *Christian Standard Bible* states, "Other MSS include all or some of the passage after John 7:36, John 7:44, John 7:52, John 21:25, or Luke 21:38."

This is sometimes presented as definitive proof that the passage is secondary. Apologist James R. White (now of Apologia Church, if my information is correct) has commented, "Such moving about by a body of text is plain evidence of its later origin," and these different locations of the story constitute "absolute evidence" that it is not genuine.

In 2008, Dr. Daniel B. Wallace similarly stated that this account "has all the earmarks of a pericope that was looking for a home. It took up permanent residence, in the ninth century, in the middle of the fourth gospel."

This sort of comment indicates to me that some American researchers need to get better acquainted with the influence of early lection-cycles.

What is a lection-cycle? A lection-cycle (as I explained in an earlier chapter) is an arrangement of specific segments of Scripture assigned to be read in church-services on specific days of the year. Eventually lectionaries were developed in which the daily readings were arranged in the chronological order in which they were to be read. Until then, there were simply local customs about which passage was assigned to each day.

Important celebrations were the first days for which specific readings were assigned. Easter-week was a very prominent annual observance on the Christian calendar. The Quartodeciman Controversy (orbiting the question about precisely when the annual celebration of

the Resurrection of Christ should be observed) was a serious dispute in the late 100s.

Another important annual feast-day was Pentecost, a festival inherited by the church from its earlier observance in the old covenant. The Christian church has been celebrating Pentecost ever since Acts chapter 2.

In the Byzantine lection-cycle, the Gospels-reading assigned to Pentecost consists of John 7:37-52, plus John 8:12. Thematically, it is a natural choice: Pentecost was known as the day when the Holy Spirit came to the church, and in John 7:37-39, Jesus speaks about the coming of the Holy Spirit. The inclusion of John 8:12 forms a positive closing flourish for the lection.

When the realization is made that one of the most important annual celebrations in the early church involved reading a passage of John beginning at John 7:37, continuing to the end of 7:52, and concluding with John 8:12, several things are resolved regarding MSS in which John 7:53-8:11 is moved around:

The movement of the passage to precede John 7:37 (in minuscule 225) was done so that the lector – the person who read the text in the church-services – would have the Pentecost-lection all in one piece, without having to stop at the end of verse 52 to find the final verse. This kind of conformation to lectionary usage is also shown in minuscule 225 where it has John 13:3-17 in the text of Matthew, after Matthew 26:20.

So much for the claim that the movement to John 7:37 shows that the story of the adulteress was a “floating anecdote” in the early church. But what about the MSS in which it appears at the end of John, after John 21:25?

These are not a random assortment of MSS. They consist mainly of members of the family-1 group. In the best representatives of this group, minuscules 1 and 1582,

there is a note after John 21:25 that introduces the story of the adulteress there. The note goes like this:

“The chapter about the adulteress: in the Gospel according to John, this does not appear in the majority of copies; nor is it commented upon by the divine fathers whose interpretations have been preserved – specifically, by John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria. Nor is it taken up by Theodore of Mopsuestia and the others. Therefore, it was not kept in the place where it is found in a few copies, at the beginning of the 86th chapter, following, ‘Search and see that a prophet does not arise out of Galilee.’”

This note states that prior to being moved to the end of John, the story of the adulteress was found in a few copies immediately following John 7:52. Although the minuscules that display this note are medieval, their common ancestor was probably produced no later than the 400s. Many Armenian copies also have the story of the adulteress at the end of John. If this echoes the initial form of the Armenian text then this format goes back to the early 400s.

In the Palestinian Aramaic Lectionary, only *part* of the story of the adulteress was transferred to the end of John. In the lection that includes John 8:2, the Palestinian Aramaic text in two MSS says, *“The Gospel of John was completed in Greek in Ephesus,”* and in one manuscript, after John 8:2, it says, *“The Gospel of John was completed by the help of Christ.”*

As J. Rendel Harris deduced back in the late 1800s, this implies that the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary was initially made by individuals using a text of John in which John 8:3-11 had been transferred to the end of John. The individuals who made the Palestinian Aramaic lectionary included in the lection the subscription-note to the Gospel of John, as well as John 8:3-11.

Considering that John 7:53-8:2 is in the Palestinian Aramaic text of John, this shows that the story of the adulteress was in the text of John 7 and 8 before John 8:3-11 was transferred to the end of the Gospel.

John 8:3-11 constituted the lection for October 8, which in the Byzantine Menologion is the feast-day honoring Saint Pelagia. This brings us to the testimony of minuscule 1333, which has been very inaccurately described by some overconfident blatherers as if it has John 7:53-8:11 after the end of Luke.

Minuscule 1333 would be listed among the MSS that do not include the passage, if someone had not written John 8:3-11 on what had been a blank page between the end of Luke and the chapter-list for John. All that has happened in minuscule 1333 is that someone who wanted to read lections from this manuscript added the lection for Saint Pelagia's Day on the blank page. Contrary to Dr. Daniel Wallace's claim that the story of the adulteress stands as "an independent pericope between Luke and John," in minuscule 1333 the lection's title is explicitly provided: "For Saint Pelagia, on October 8, from the Gospel of John."

[“From the Gospel of John,” Dr. Wallace.]

But what about the MSS related to the cluster known as family-13, in which the story of the adulteress appears at the end of Luke 21? This was a later adaptation to the series of lections that honor saints in the Menologion. After John 7:53-8:11 was moved out of the text of John, the passage was transferred to a location where it would conveniently follow the previous day's lection in the Menologion.

Earlier in Luke 21, verses 12-19 serve as the lection for October 7 (the feast-day of Saints Sergius and Bacchus). At the end of the chapter, where v. 38 refers to Jesus teaching in the temple, the text is thematically

similar to John 8:1-2. In the family-13 MSS, when the Pentecost lection was turned into one block of text via the removal of the story of the adulteress, the story of the adulteress was moved to this location, so that the lection for October 8 would be near the lection for October 7.

In the main members of family 13, when we look at the transplanted text of John 8:2-3, we can see that the text has been shortened to create a smoother fit with Luke 21:37-38. After “And early in the morning He came into the temple,” the text in family 13 says, “and the scribes presented to Him.”

We thus see why copyists moved the story of the adulteress, from where it had previously been found after John 7:52, to a location after John 7:36, a location after John 21:25, and a location after Luke 21:38.

One other location has not yet been explained: the Christian Standard Bible’s footnote says that “Other MSS include all or some of the passage after John 7:44.”

There are no Greek MSS in which the story of the adulteress appears after John 7:44. What the CSB’s footnote refers to is a feature in a small number of *Georgian* copies, including Sinai Georgian MS 16. These Gospels-MSS generally support the Caesarean Gospels-text, like the early Armenian MSS and the main members of family-1.

What has happened is that when the Georgian version was revised, the revisor was guided by the same kind of note that appears in minuscules 1 and 1582, stating that the passage had been found in the text “at the beginning of the 86th chapter. This is a reference to the 86th Eusebian Section, which begins at the beginning of John 7:45. The note that guided the Georgian revisor apparently did not get more specific than that. Guided by a note that stated that the story had been found at the

beginning of the 86th Eusebian Section, that is where he put it.

Instead of showing that John 7:53-8:11 was floating around like a butterfly, the transmission-streams that transfer the passage contain earlier evidence of the passage in its usual location position between John 7:52 and John 8:12.

What about the 270 MSS in which the story of the adulteress is simply absent? Before addressing that question, there is another aspect of some of the early MSS that should be pointed out. The Caesarean form of the text had the story of the adulteress at the end of John, introduced by a note that stated that it had been found in a few copies after John 7:52.

If this was where it was in some of those early MSS, there would be almost no way to tell.

- Papyrus 66 is not extant after John 21:17.
- Papyrus 75 is not extant after John 15:10.
- The Lycopolitan manuscript of John is not extant after 20:27.
- Codex T is not extant after John chapter 8.

Considering how the Pentecost lection plays a large part in the displacement of the passage, I submit this hypothesis as an explanation for the initial omission of the passage:

I first propose that John 7:53-8:11 was in the text of John in an exemplar used by a copyist in Egypt in the mid-100s. By the mid-100s, the churches in Egypt already had a basic lection-cycle for their major annual festivals, including Eastertime and Pentecost.

This doesn't mean that each congregation, or each locale, observed exactly the same series of readings on the same feast-days, or that gradual expansion and adjustments did not happen. My first point here is simply

that the celebration of Pentecost was an extremely ancient practice (included among the annual feast-days mentioned in the late 300s by the pilgrim Etheria, also known as Egeria).

In order to make it clear to the lector – the individual responsible for the reading of Scripture in the church-services – what the contours of the Pentecost-reading were, a copyist in the 100s marked his copy of the Gospel of John with simple notes signifying that when he reached the end of John 7:52, he was to jump ahead and resume at chapter 8, verse 12.

Now picture the puzzle that presented itself to a professional copyist who used that exemplar: as he copies down the text of John chapter seven, after the end of verse 52 the copyist sees in the margin the instructions, “*Skip ahead.*” Unaware that these instructions were meant for the lector, he interprets them as if they were meant for him, the copyist. And so he skips ahead until he finds instructions in the margin which say, *Restart here.*

The copyist follows these instructions, and accordingly he does not copy John 7:53-8:11, thinking that he is faithfully following instructions.

And the manuscript – or MSS, if the same copyist made several copies – which contained this mistake proceeded to affect both the main Alexandrian transmission-stream and whatever transmission-streams to which it was exported.

This simple theory explains why the text in the East, especially the text in Egypt, tends to not have the story about the adulteress, and the text in the West does. In addition, the opposite theory – that the story of the adulteress was not known as part of the Gospel of John, but was later inserted into the portion of text that was read on Pentecost – is intrinsically improbable. It would

be as provocative as introducing 12 verses into the passages that were read at Eastertime.

Although the main issue is solved by this theory, there is a residue of five additional points that should also be addressed.

(1) Saint Augustine, writing in the late 300s and early 400s, commented on the story of the adulteress extensively. He stated that some MSS had the passage, and some did not, and he asserted that the passage had been removed by men who thought that their wives would employ it in pleas for clemency after committing adultery.

That was probably Augustine's calculated guess. Elsewhere in Augustine's writings, he shows that his contemporary Faustus the Manichaean, and a local group of people opposed to Christianity, also utilized the story of the adulteress.

Other writers in the Western Roman Empire also used the passage in the 400s, such as **Prosper of Aquitaine**, in *Call of All Nations*, and **Peter Chrysologus**, in a sermon preached at Ravenna.

(2) The early Eastern witnesses are not entirely silent regarding the passage. **Didymus the Blind**, working in Egypt in the mid-late 300s, in his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, states,

"We find in certain gospels: A woman, it says, was condemned by the Jews for a sin, and was being sent to be stoned in the place that was for that. The Savior, it says, when he saw her and observed that they were ready to stone her, said to those that were about to cast stones, 'He who has not sinned, let him take a stone and throw it. If anyone is conscious in himself not to have sinned, let him take a stone and smite her.' And no one dared. Because

they knew in themselves and perceived that they, too, were guilty in some things, they did not dare to strike her."

This is a very loose version of the story, but it should be kept in mind that Didymus the Blind was, well, blind. His reference to "certain Gospels" has been interpreted by some researchers as if he was not referring to the four canonical Gospels, however, since this was the default way to refer to them, I would argue that if anything else were being referred to, Didymus would have specifically pointed it out.

The statement in Bruce Metzger's *Textual Commentary* that "No Greek Church Father prior to Euthymius Zigabenus comments on the passage" should be adjusted to take Didymus' statement into consideration. Metzger might not have been fully informed about this evidence from Didymus when he initially wrote that statement.

(3) Third, another Eastern text that requires Metzger's statement to be adjusted is found in Book Eight of the ***Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah of Mitylene*** in the British Library's Add. MS 17202, produced in the late 500s or 600s.

This is a Syriac translation of an earlier Greek text. The author mentions a Gospels-volume used by Mara of Amid – a cleric who lived in exile in Alexandria from about the year 517 until 527. In this volume, there was, "*in the 89th section, a passage which is related only by John in his Gospel, and is not found in other MSS. This passage goes like this:*

'It happened one day, while Jesus was teaching, they brought him a woman who had been found to be with child of adultery, and told him about her. And Jesus said to them, since as God he knew their shameful passions, and also their deeds, 'What does He command in the law?' And

they said to Him: 'That at the mouth of two or three witnesses she should be stoned.'

"But He answered and said to them: 'In accordance with the law, whoever is pure and free from these sinful passions, and can bear witness with confidence and authority, as being under no blame in respect of this sin, let him bear witness against her, and let him first throw a stone at her, and then those that are after him, and she shall be stoned.'

But because they were subject to condemnation, and blameworthy regarding this sinful passion, they went out one by one from before Him, and left the woman. And when they had gone, Jesus looked upon the ground and, writing in the dust there, said to the woman: 'They who brought you here and wished to bear witness against you, having understood what I said to them, which you have heard, have left you and departed. Do you also, therefore, go your way, and commit not this sin again.'"

This is certainly not a close quotation of John 7:53-8:11. But it is certainly more than nothing. Bishop Mara's Gospels-volume has material that resembles the gist of John 7:53-8:11, found in the Gospel of John.

There is another version of this story in the Armenian manuscript Matenadaran 2374 (formerly Etchmiadzin 229). It goes like this:

"A certain woman was taken in sins, against whom all bore witness that she was deserving of death. They brought her to Jesus to see what He would command, in order that they might malign him. Jesus answered and said, "Come, you who are without sin, cast stones and stone her to death."

But He Himself, bowing His head, was writing with his finger on the earth, to declare their sins, and they saw their various sins on the stones. And filled with shame they departed, and no one remained, but only the woman. Jesus

said, 'Go in peace, and present the offering for sins, as in their law is written.'"

This isn't John 7:53-8:11 either, but it is something similar. An especially interesting feature of this text is that it refers to "A woman taken in sins," and that resembles how Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 39, described a story that he attributed to Papias, stating that it was contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews."

This raises the possibility that after the story of the adulteress dropped out of the text in Egypt and Syria, readers who detected the loss looked for a similar story to serve as its proxy. They may have resorted to using their own inexact recollection of the story, or they may have accessed the episode in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* to which Eusebius referred, and the influence of this material may have led to the high proportion of textual variation in the passage.

(4) English and American commentators sometimes refer to many MSS in which asterisks accompany the passage to convey that it is a suspicious text. However, an examination of the MSS in which all or part of this passage is accompanied by asterisks or marks of some sort reveals that 106 MSS have asterisks in the margin beginning at 7:53, and in an additional 29 MSS, the marks begin at chapter 8 verse 1. But in 132 MSS, the asterisks do not begin until verse 3.

It is unlikely that in 132 cases, copyists regarded 7:53 to 8:2 as genuine but wanted to express doubts about John 8:3-11. John 8:3-11 is the reading for Saint Pelagia's day. I deduce that the marks in the margin of these MSS were intended to draw the lector's attention to the presence of that lection, within the Pentecost lection.

I am not gifted with telepathy to know what the copyists were thinking when they added asterisks or similar marks to John 7:53-8:11 in 106 MSS, but the more likely possibility is that the marks were usually not added to express doubt about the passage. They were part of the lectionary apparatus, intended to make clear to the lector that he was not to read this portion on Pentecost.

In some MSS (a group of MSS with the Jerusalem Colophon) the asterisks or similar marks seem to express a measure of doubt that is assuaged by the contents of a special note.

In minuscule 20, one of the MSS in which the story of the adulteress appears at the end of John, the passage is accompanied by small “x” marks in the outer margin, and is followed by a note that says “The obelized portion is not in some copies, nor in those of Apollinarius. In the ancient ones, it is all present. And this pericope was recollected by the apostles, which affirms that it is for the edification of the church.”

The note also appears in minuscules 20, 215, 262, and 1118, which points to a much earlier source.

In Codex Λ , there is a “*jump ahead*” symbol at the end of John 8:2, and asterisks alongside John 8:3-11. Then Codex Λ has the note that appears in minuscule 20, as if it is referring to verses 3-11. The same note appears in minuscules 1424, 1187, and 1282; in each of these MSS, only John 8:3-11 is marked.

The annotator’s reference to the apostolic recollection of the passage is a reference to the composition *Apostolic Constitutions*, produced in about the year 380. In Book 2, chapter 24, it says the following (after referring to Jesus’ statement in Luke 7:47):

“And when the elders had set another woman which had sinned before Him, and had left the sentence to Him, and had gone out, our Lord, the Searcher of the

hearts, asked her whether the elders had condemned her. And being told, 'No,' He said to her, 'Go your way therefore, for neither do I condemn you.' This Jesus, O you bishops, our Savior, our King, and our God, ought to be set before you as your pattern."

This is clearly based on the earlier *Didascalia*.

(5) Objections based on internal evidence have been answered to a large extent by John David Punch and Alan Johnson. Some internal objections disappear, depending on what form of the text is used: for instance, the objection that John is not in the habit of referring to "the scribes" does not touch the form of the text in Family-1, which refers to the "chief priests" in verse 3 instead.

One claim in particular especially merits a response: the absurd claim made by James R. White that "The primary internal consideration, aside from issues of vocabulary and style, is to be found in the fact that John 7:52 and John 8:12 'go together,'" and that the story of the adulteress "interrupts the flow of the text."

The statement that "everyone went to his own house" in verse 53 is not so much an interruption as much as it is the conclusion of a scene. As Dr. Maurice Robinson has pointed out, what kind of "floating tradition" ever began with, "Then everyone went home"?

There is nothing disruptive or unnatural about the sequence of events described in John 7:53-8:2.

There is something disruptive about the text when the story of the adulteress is removed. In chapter 7, as Jesus was addressing the crowd, the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to take Jesus.

In verse 45, these officers return to the chief priests and Pharisees, and report that no one ever spoke the way Jesus speaks. The conference continues, and Nicodemus joins in, mildly defending Jesus.

The thing to see is that before the story of the adulteress, the Pharisees are having a private discussion with the officers. They are not in the presence of Jesus in verses 45-52. In John 8:12, the text says that Jesus “spoke to them again,” and the Pharisees are named in verse 13 as the ones to whom Jesus spoke.

This makes perfect sense when the Pharisees are re-introduced in verse 3. But where do the Pharisees come from in a form of the text that does not have the story of the adulteress? Where are they re-introduced? They suddenly go from a private conference in John 7:45-52, immediately into Jesus’ presence in verses 12-13. If any form of the text displays a narrative disconnection, it is the one that does not include the story of the adulteress.

In conclusion: the loss of John 7:53-8:11 is accounted for as the effect of an honest mistake made by a very early Egyptian copyist (who misunderstood marginalia intended for the lector as if it was intended for him).

This loss, combined with the influence of the form of the Pentecost reading in early lection-cycles, provoked the transfer of the passage to other locations. But the initial location of the passage can be deduced by a close consideration of the details of the case, such as the note in Caesarean witnesses that explicitly says that the passage was moved from a position after John 7:52.

To ministers of the gospel everywhere: preach this text and give it the respect and reverence that it deserves as part of the inspired Word of God.

EXTRA CREDIT

My book *A Fresh Analysis of John 7:53-8:11, With a Tour of the External Evidence*.

The tables regarding the Old Latin capitula in Donatien De Bruyne's 1914 book *Sommaires, Divisions et Rubriques de la Bible Latine*. (Available online at the Gallica website).

The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels (1899) by Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Luke 23:34a – Jesus’ Prayer from the Cross

Heavenly Father, when we consider the many ways in which Your Word applies to our changing times, make us maintain the message proclaimed by Your apostles, who invited the lost to cast their burdens upon You. Make us never fail to sound the alarm to flee from the coming wrath, and make us never grow tired of telling the lost that Your mercy and love are close at hand.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

In this chapter we investigate a very interesting textual variant in the Gospel according to Luke. At the beginning of Luke 23:34, almost all Greek MSS report that Jesus said, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*” This reading is also supported by the Vulgate and the Syriac Peshitta.

In the 1995 edition of the *New American Standard Bible*, the sentence is in the text and there is no footnote.

The *New Living Translation* also has the sentence in the text, but a footnote says that it is “not included in many ancient MSS.” This footnote is false. Tyndale House Publishers must immediately replace this misleading footnote.

In the text of the New Revised Standard Version, the sentence is placed within double-brackets. This is how it is also presented in the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, which means that the compilers did not consider it part of the original text.

The majuscules for non-inclusion can be listed very briefly: Papyrus 75, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Bezae, Codex W, Codex Koridethi (Θ), and 070. GA 070 is a Greek-Coptic diglot MS from the 500s.

Although Codex Bezae does not have Luke 23:34a in its text, the verse has been written by a later corrector in the lower margin of the page.

Codex Sinaiticus supports the inclusion of the sentence. A later corrector of Codex Sinaiticus marked each line of the sentence with parentheses-marks, as if to draw it into question, but someone else attempted to erase the parentheses-marks.

There are about nine minuscules for non-inclusion, including 579 and 1241. In three minuscules (31, 579, and 1808) a corrector has added the sentence, which was absent when these MSS were made.

Among the early versions, the Sinaitic Syriac, the Sahidic version, and part of the Bohairic version support non-inclusion, plus the early Old Latin witness Codex Vercellensis, from the late 300s, and the Latin part of Codex Bezae. The Curetonian Syriac, almost all Old Latin copies, the Vulgate, the Peshitta, the Armenian and Georgian versions, the Palestinian Aramaic version, and the Ethiopic version support the inclusion of the passage.

The non-inclusions in Codices W and Θ are intriguing, because this part of Codex W is considered Byzantine, and this part of Codex Θ is considered Caesarean, generally allied with family 1.

All of the extant majuscules not yet listed support the inclusion of Jesus' prayer from the cross, including Codices A, C, L, and N. So do almost all of the medieval minuscules, over 95% of the Greek MSS of this passage.

The patristic evidence regarding Jesus' prayer from the cross is extremely early, very widespread, and very helpful. I shall take a close look at the patristic evidence that shows how widely this passage was used.

● **Tatian**, in the 170s, included Jesus' prayer from the cross in his *Diatessaron*, as shown by three uses of the

passage in Ephrem Syrus' *Commentary on the Diatessaron* (which Ephrem composed c. 360). A very clear use of the passage is in the 21st chapter of Ephrem's commentary.

- **Irenaeus**, around 180, in *Against Heresies*, Book Three, referred to Jesus' prayer from the cross, stating first in chapter 16 that Jesus, "when he underwent tyranny, prayed to His Father that He would forgive those who had crucified Him." And in chapter 18, Irenaeus said that when Christ exclaimed upon the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' His longsuffering, patience, compassion, and goodness were displayed.

- The Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum*, composed in the early 200s, includes this imprecise but recognizable statement: "Our Savior made supplication to His Father for those who had sinned, as it is written in the Gospel, 'My Father, they know not what they do, nor what they speak; yet if it be possible, forgive them.'"

- **Hippolytus** (in the early 200s) used the passage in *Contra Judaeos*, Part 3, in the course of interpreting Psalm 69. Hippolytus pointed out that when Jesus said, "Father, forgive them," those to be forgiven were the Gentiles. The authorship of *Contra Judaeos* is disputed. Hippolytus quoted the passage very plainly in *The Blessings of Jacob and Isaac* in the course of an interpretive comment about Genesis 27.

- **Origen** appears to cite the passage sometime between 230 and 250 in the first chapter of his *Homily on Leviticus*. However this appears in a text translated into Latin by Jerome's contemporary Rufinus, and there is a chance that this was a parenthetical comment inserted by Rufinus. In *De Pascha* 2:43, a text recovered among the Tura Papyri and published in 1979, Origen appears to show an awareness of the passage, although it is not a plain quotation.

- In the year 277 a little-known bishop named

Archelaus, in *Disputation with Manes*, quotes the passage. The exact location where Archelaus wrote is not known. It might have been in northeastern Syria. *Disputation with Manes* was initially written in Syriac and was translated into Greek and Latin.

In the course of an extensive comparison between Moses and Jesus, made to illustrate the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15, Archelaus wrote, "Moses prayed that Pharaoh and his people might be spared the plagues, and here, our Lord Jesus prayed that the Pharisees might be pardoned, when he said, "Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do.*"

Elsewhere in *Disputation with Manes*, when Archelaus quotes from Matthew 24, he specifically says that he is quoting the evangelist Matthew, and in another place he refers to John as the greatest of the evangelists, which indicates that his Gospels-text was the four Gospels, not the *Diatessaron*.

- **Eusebius of Caesarea**, in around 330, included Luke 23:34a in the Eusebian Sections, assigning it Section #320 in Canon 10.

- In the 300s, in chapter 10 of the text known as *Acts of Pilate*, also known in a different form as the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the author incorporated the entire text of Luke 23:34 into his narrative, along with some of the surrounding text of Luke.

- In the second book of *Apostolic Constitutions* (a composite work put together in about 380) the sixteenth section echoes the *Didascalía Apostolorum* as it explains how to deal with backsliders who repent and return to the church. It says, "When they come in, let the deacons entreat you on their behalf, for our Savior Himself entreated His Father for those who had sinned, as it is written in the Gospel, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" In Book 5, Section 14, in the course of

a thorough description of the events of Good Friday, the author quotes Luke 24:34a again.

- **Pseudo-Ignatius**, probably writing in the 300s, wrote in *Epistle to the Ephesians*, chapter 11, that Jesus prayed for His enemies, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

- **Hilary of Poitiers**, known as the “Athanasius of the West,” (c. 360), wrote his *Twelve Books on the Trinity*, and in that work he quoted Luke 24:34a three times. It might be worthwhile to show some of the context of his statements:

In **Book 1**, As Hilary takes his theological opponents to task for perverting the meaning of the words of Christ, he emphasizes the importance of interpreting each passage in light of its context. In **Part 32**, he says that his opponents commit blasphemy when they misinterpret the words of Christ, “*Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit,*” and, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*” Hilary writes, “Their narrow minds plunge into blasphemy in the attempt at explanation.”

In **Book 10, Part 48**, as Hilary illustrates the fearlessness and power of Christ shown in the Gospels, he mentions that “He prayed for His persecutors while the nails were driven through Him.”

And near the end of **Book 10**, in **Part 71**, Hilary writes, “Christ prayed for His persecutors, because they knew not what they did.”

- **Ambrose of Milan**, in the 380s, in his *Commentary on Job*, Part Two, Section 6, in the course of offering a rather unlikely interpretation of Job 9:5, quotes Luke 23:34a. He cites the passage again in Part 5, Section 12, stating that he is quoting what the Lord Jesus says in the Gospel.

Ambrose also explicitly quoted Luke 23:34a in *The Prayer of Job and David*.

- **Gregory of Nyssa**, working in the late 300s in what is now east-central Turkey, wrote ***On Christian Perfection***. In this book he presented Christ as a model of longsuffering: Gregory of Nyssa pointed out that the longsuffering of Christ was displayed when He endured chains and whips and various physical injuries, and nails, and His response was “Father, bear with them, for they know not what they do.”

- In the fourth-century ***Acts of Philip***, at one point in the story, persecutors hang Philip by his ankles, and it looks like he is about to die. Philip escapes by cursing his persecutors, causing them to all be swallowed up by the earth. But before he pronounces the curse, his companions John and Bartholomew and Mariamne try to persuade him not to do it: they say, “Our Master was beaten, and scourged, and was stretched out on the cross, and was made to drink gall and vinegar, and said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

- A composition known as the ***Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions***, from the mid-300s, uses Luke 23:34a near the beginning of the fifth part of its sixth book, preserved in Latin by Jerome’s contemporary Rufinus:

“The Master Himself, when He was being led to the cross by those who knew Him not, petitioned the Father for His murderers, and said, ‘Father, forgive their sin, for they know not what they do.’” The author’s memory might have failed him, considering that this statement was given while Jesus was already on the cross – or perhaps Jesus said it twice.

- In the ***Pseudo-Clementine Homilies***, which is basically a different form of the ***Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions***, Luke 23:34a is utilized, specifically in **Homily XI, Part 20**, where the author wrote: “The Teacher Himself, being nailed to the cross, prayed to the Father that the sin of those who slew Him might be forgiven,

saying, 'Father, forgive them their sins, for they know not what they do.'"

- **Amphilochius of Iconium**, who lived from about 340 to about 400, is traditionally identified as the author of a brief sermon called ***Oration #5, On the Holy Sabbath***. In this text, which has been well-translated by J. H. Barkhuizen, after briefly contrasting the divine nature of Christ with His sufferings during His trials and crucifixion, Amphilochius says, "While suffering these things for the sake of those who were crucifying Him, He prayed as follows: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' He conquers the evil through goodness. He speaks in defense of the Christ-murderers while drawing them in His net toward salvation. He brings to naught the accusation by blaming their ignorance."

- The heresy-hunter **Epiphanius of Salamis**, in the late 300s, quoted Luke 23:34a in ***Panarion***, also called ***The Medicine-Chest***; in Part 77, which is about the errors of the Antidicomaniacs. Epiphanius slightly tweaked the text, replacing the reference to "*forgive*" with a different word that means "*bear with*." The same word was used by Gregory of Nyssa.

Epiphanius also reported that James, the Lord's brother, was martyred in Jerusalem when he was thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple, but survived, and knelt and prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and he was then struck on the head with a fuller's rod, and he died.

Epiphanius' main source for this material was probably **Eusebius'** work ***Ecclesiastical History***, Book Two, Part 23. Eusebius acknowledged his own sources for the story: first, Eusebius says that Clement was his source for the report that James was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and then beaten to death with a club. Then he mentions the fifth book of the *Anecdotes of "Hegesippus*,

whom lived immediately after the apostles,” as his source for a more detailed account.

According to Eusebius, Hegesippus specified that it was the scribes and Pharisees who opposed James the Just, and that after he survived the fall from the temple, they began to stone him, at which point he said, “I entreat You, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

● **John Chrysostom**, who became archbishop of Constantinople in 397 after serving at Antioch for about 20 years, quoted Luke 23:34a several times. In ***Against Marcionists and Manichaeans***, he wrote, “He commanded men to pray for their enemies; and He teaches this through His actions, for when He had ascended the cross, He said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

In ***Homily 7 on the Epistle to the Ephesians***, as Chrysostom described the grace given to Israel, he said, “And after He was crucified, what were His words? ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ He was cruelly treated before this, and even cruelly treated after this, even to the very last breath. For them He did everything; He prayed in their behalf.”

Chrysostom also said in ***Homily 14 on the Epistle to the Ephesians*** that the Son of God prayed for those who crucified Him, and shed His blood for those who hated Him.

In ***Homily 79 on Matthew***, Chrysostom mentioned that among the ways in which Christ displayed His meekness, “on the very cross, He was crying aloud, “Father, forgive them their sin.”

In the sixth chapter of ***The Cross and the Thief***, Chrysostom states that during the time when Christ was being nailed to the cross, and His garments were being divided, He did not get angry or have guile in His heart

against them; instead, "Hear Him declaring, 'My Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing.'"

Or does he? The author of ***The Thief on the Cross*** is probably not Chrysostom, but ***Theophilus***, who served as the patriarch of Alexandria from 384 to 412. Or it might be an anonymous author who attributed his work to Theophilus.

In favor of the idea that the author was in a locale where a Coptic form of the text was in use is the observation that in its ninth chapter, the text says that the lost will be swallowed up in the abyss, and go down to the place of their brother Nineveh. A mangled form of the name "*Nineveh*," without its first syllable, is the name given to the rich man, in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, in Luke 16:19 in Papyrus 75. The interpolation "named 'Nineveh'" also appears in this verse in some later Arabic MSS.

- Another author, like Chrysostom, whose name was transferred to material written by someone else, was the second-century writer Justin Martyr. The composition known as ***Questions and Answers for the Orthodox*** was attributed to Justin, but it probably comes from Theodoret of Cyrrhus, who died in 457.

The 108th Question in this composition begins something like this: If the Jews were forgiven, then why did the ancient Jews, who crucified Christ out of ignorance, suffer many unbelievable afflictions, as Josephus testifies in his account of the fall of Jerusalem? And why have those who refuse to obey Christ now been expelled from their homeland?" And it goes on to say, "Wasn't the Lord aware of their condition, when He said, "Father, I say, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"? And doesn't the Apostle say, "If they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory?"

The odds that the author is Theodoret of Cyrhus increase when we compare this to Theodoret's *Commentary on the Letters of Paul*, and see that when he comments on First Corinthians 2:8, he interprets it through the filter of Luke 23:34a, stating that Pilate, Herod, Annas, Caiaphas, and the other rulers of the Jews were unaware of the divine mystery, and that is why they crucified the Lord. Theodoret wrote, "Surely, this is why the Lord, on the cross, also said, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing."

Theodoret went on to say that after the resurrection, and the ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the apostles' miracles, they persisted in unbelief, and so He delivered them to be besieged.

● **Jerome** is another author whose use of Luke 24:34a should not be overlooked (even though we have already seen that he included this text in the Vulgate). In his composition *Ad Hedibiam* (c. 400), Jerome went off on a little tangent, and wrote,

"We should not be surprised that after the death of the Savior, Jerusalem is called 'the holy city.' For before it was completely ruined, the apostles did not have a problem entering the temple, and observing the ceremonies of the law, in order not to offend those among the Jews who had embraced the faith of Jesus Christ.

"We even see that the Savior loved this city so much that the disasters with which it was threatened drew tears from His eyes, and when He was on the cross, He said to His Father, 'Forgive them, My Father, for they do not know what they are doing.'"

Jerome continued: "So his prayer was answered, since shortly after His death, the Jews believed in Him by the thousands, and God gave this unhappy city forty-two years to repent. But in the end, when its citizens had not taken advantage of the opportunity, and still persisted in

their malice, Vespasian and Titus, like the two bears of which the Scriptures speak, 'came out of the middle of the woods, and killed and mauled those children who blasphemed and insulted the true Elisha, when he went up to the house of God.'"

The same line of reasoning that was used by Jerome, specifically mentioning Vespasian and Titus, was used in the composition *In Principium Actorum*, which is often attributed to Chrysostom.

- **Augustine**, in North Africa in the early 400s, wrote in his **Sermon 382**: "Did He not say, as He hung on the cross, 'Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing?'" He continues: "When He was praying as He hung on the cross, He could see and foresee. He could see all His enemies. He could foresee that many of them would become His friends. That is why He was interceding for them all. They were raging, but He was praying. They were saying to Pilate, 'Crucify,' but He was crying out, 'Father, forgive.'"

- There is one patristic writer who challenges the right of this sentence to be in the text: **Cyril of Alexandria** (who, by the way, I hold responsible for not preventing the premature death of Hypatia), as described in the commentary on Revelation produced by Oecumenius in the 500s.

Oecumenius interpreted the first part of Revelation 7 as if it is part of a figurative re-telling of events related to the fall of Jerusalem in the first century. In the course of some remarks that appear where one would normally expect to find the text of Revelation 7:5-8, Oecumenius used Acts 21:20 in the course of showing that many Jews became believers in the days of Paul, and "were accounted worthy to be saved from the general destruction."

After this, Oecumenius wrote, "It was likely that not only the faithful escaped, but also those who were

deceived and ignorant when they helped crucify the Lord, of whom He said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Cyril says in his thirteenth book of *Against Julian* that this prayer of the Lord is not in the Gospels, but among us it is read."

Embedded in Oecumenius' commentary, along with his quotation of Luke 23:34a and his endorsement of it, there is the notice that Cyril of Alexandria, in the 13th book of his composition *Against Julian*, stated that the prayer from the cross was not found in the Gospels.

A few researchers, working from the premise that Luke 23:34a is not original, have proposed scenarios to explain how this reading originated and became so widely accepted in the early church.

One theory is that someone noticed that there are only six pronouncements from the cross on the lips of Jesus, and supposing that there ought to be seven, this individual created a seventh statement, and inserted it into the text.

It is extremely unlikely that a scribe would be so obsessive about the number of declarations from the cross that he would make up a saying of Christ and add it to the text in order to bring the total number to seven – especially a saying with this level of impact.

Such a motive could only exist in the mind of a reader of all four Gospels. Plus, resorting to creating a saying of Jesus so that there would be seven utterances from the cross instead of six does not seem like a course of action that would be satisfying to the perpetrator.

A second theory is that a copyist was troubled by the idea that Stephen, in Acts 7, appeared more forgiving than Jesus, because Stephen, as he was being stoned to death, prayed to Jesus, "Lord, do not hold this sin to their account." And so he created a similar saying, attributed it to Jesus, and inserted it into the text of Luke.

That is implausible – partly because it would only occur to someone who read the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts together, and partly because what Jesus says in Luke 23:34 and what Stephen says in Acts 7:60 are not verbally similar. Another consideration is that if Stephen’s prayer was answered, Jesus must be as forgiving as Stephen, since Stephen left it up to Jesus.

A fourth reason is that Luke, in both his books, emphasizes what textual analyst Eldon Epp has called the “Ignorance Motif.” Some examples of this feature may be listed: Luke, and only Luke, records the saying of Jesus in which He establishes different measures of judgment for those who know their master’s will, and for those who do not know it.

In Acts 3:14-17, Luke records Peter’s statement that although members of his audience had “killed the Prince of life,” they had acted in ignorance, and so had their rulers. He proceeds to invite them to repent.

In Acts 13:27, Luke records Paul’s statement that the inhabitants of Jerusalem and their rulers handed Jesus over to be executed “because they did not know Him.”

And when Paul addressed the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17:30, he states, “God overlooked these times of ignorance.”

The probability that a later copyist would happen to create a reading that interlocks with this motif is not as high as the probability that Luke himself would include it.

A third theory, and the one that was advocated by Bruce Metzger, and by Hort before him, is that these words circulated as an oral tradition, and someone decided to insert them into the text of Luke at this point. However, they intrinsically require a context: **who** is being forgiven for **what**?

Several alleged sayings of Jesus that are not recorded in the Gospels are mentioned in patristic

writings. When an agraphon invades the text of the Gospels, each manuscript that contains it becomes a novelty. There are a few such readings in Codex Bezae, for example, but they have nothing like the range of support that we see for Luke 23:34a.

Agrapha include (paraphrased), “I judge you however I find you,” and “If you do not know to whom to give your two coins, let them sweat in your hands until you know,” and “Be ye approved moneychangers.” The sentiment of each of these sayings (once the meaning is perceived) is edifying and helpful.

Consider the saying “*Be ye approved money-changers.*” This was attributed to Christ by Clement of Alexandria and was used by several other patristic writers, including Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Cyril of Alexandria, and John of Damascus. But how many copyists inserted it into the Greek text of the Gospels? As far as I can tell, **None.**

The alternative to these theories – and the reason why this reading is supported by such a vast array of evidence – is that Luke 23:34a is original, and was removed in an early transmission-line that influenced not only the text of Codex Bezae and the Sinaitic Syriac, but also Papyrus 75, and Codex Vaticanus, and the Sahidic version.

There was a strong motivation to make this excision: a desire to avoid the impression that Jesus had prayed for the Jewish nation, and His prayer had been rejected.

About 40 years after Jesus’ crucifixion, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and it was devastated again in the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed. The pagan jibe can easily be written: “*Is this what happens when Jesus asks for people to be forgiven? Their city is laid waste, and they and their families are slain or enslaved.*”

His intercession does not seem very effective."

Even without a pagan around to express the objection, an ordinary reader could perceive a difficulty when comparing Jesus' prayer to the history of the Jews in the century that followed.

When we look at how the passage is approached by patristic writers, we see that addressing this misconception is a high priority. Almost all of the patristic writers who comment on the passage regarded it as a petition regarding the Jewish people.

The author of the *Diascalía Apostolorum* slightly modified the prayer, framing it with the words "if it be possible." Epiphanius and Gregory of Nyssa added a slight interpretive nuance, replacing the term "*forgive*" with the term "*bear with*."

Later writers approached the problem thoughtfully, perceiving that the Jews as a nation had been forgiven for what had been done at Calvary, but this did not mean that they were forgiven for later offenses of unbelief.

To a reckless early Western copyist(s), the statement that Jesus asked the Father to forgive those who engineered His death appeared to contradict what they saw God do to the Jewish nation historically. To such a copyist, the easiest way to resolve the tension was to excise the sentence.

Hort's objection to this was and is unsound. He argued that such a thing cannot have happened because such a thing never happened. Similarly Metzger's claim that the shorter reading here "can scarcely be explained as a deliberate excision" is a foolish decree, not an argument.

The effects of anti-Judaic tendencies on the part of some copyists show up occasionally in the form of the text that is seen in the Old Latin version, the Sinaitic Syriac, and Codex Bezae.

Despite its name, the Western Text was known and used in the east, in Egypt. Contrary to the claim that the text in all of the New Testament papyri discovered in Egypt is Alexandrian, Papyri 37, 38, and 48 support the Western text-form.

The Glazier Codex, also known as G-67, written in Coptic in the 400s, strongly supports the Western Text. The anti-Judaic sympathies of its text's producers occasionally manifest themselves. This does not mean that the copyist of this particular manuscript had such views; they could have been held instead by the scribe of a MS further back in the text's ancestry.

For instance, in Acts 10:39 it was not enough for the Western Text to say simply that "*they*" killed Jesus. In the Glazier Codex, the text of this verse is changed, so as to specify that *the Jews rejected Him* and killed Him. Eldon Epp has confirmed that this reading is supported by the Latin Codex Legionensis (the Leon palimpsest, VL 67).

Very early in the history of the text of the Gospels in Egypt, a witness was corrupted with readings that expressed an anti-Judaic prejudice. Much better copies existed alongside it. Although those better copies were preferred overall, here and there a reading supported by this witness was preferred.

As a result, one of those corruptions – the removal of Luke 23:34a – was adopted into the transmission-stream from which came Papyrus 75, Codex Vaticanus, the Sahidic version, and a few other witnesses.

This was also the case at other points of textual variation where we see major Alexandrian witnesses agree with the text represented in the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, and disagree with both the vast majority of early patristic testimony and the vast majority of MSS and versions representing a variety of locales. However this is a more general point that invites separate investigation.

Papyrus 75 and Codex Vaticanus are widely regarded as representatives of a generally reliable transmission-line. This does not make their scribes immune from occasionally creating or adopting corruptions. We should vigilantly avoid giving them an oracular status that they do not deserve.

Inasmuch as Luke's reference to Jesus' saying, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,*" is inspired Scripture, we must not cause Bible-readers to perpetually question its authority by introducing vague footnotes that raise more questions than they solve, pretending that concise footnotes do justice to the evidence.

Luke 23:34a was written by Luke. As part of the original text of the New Testament, it was not given to us so that we could doubt it. It was given to be profitable to us, to teach us, to rebuke us, to correct us, and to instruct us.

EXTRA CREDIT

Nathan Eubank's 2010 essay, "A Disconcerting Prayer: On the Originality of Luke 23:34a," in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (available online at Academia.edu),

Ryan W. Weber's 2012 thesis, "Unforgiven: The Textual Problem and Interpretation of Luke 23:34a and Anti-Judaism in the Early Church,"

Alin Suciú's 2014 research on Pseudo-Theophilus and the Sermon on the Cross and the Good Thief, (available online)

Eldon Jay Epp's *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts*,

John Suggit's 2006 translation of Oecumenius'
Commentary on the Apocalypse

J. H. Barkhuizen's translation and commentary of
Amphilochius of Iconium's Homily #5, and

Carmel McCarthy's 1993 translation of Saint
Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Luke 22:43-44 – Jesus’ Agony in the Garden

Heavenly Father, help us to be sympathetic to Your people. In whatever circumstances we are in, remind us of our connection to one another. Remind us of how Your Son was afflicted in the affliction of Your people. Help us to do what we can to help one another, knowing that it is not when we think about one another’s burdens, but when we bear them, that we fulfill the law of Christ. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

We now investigate a textual variant in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 22. In the vast majority of MSS of Luke, verses 43 and 44 report that as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him, and that as Jesus was in agony, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like great drops of blood, falling down to the ground.

In Papyrus 75, Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Washingtonianus, Codex N, and a small assortment of later MSS, these two verses are not in the text.

The critical texts are not in agreement about Luke 22:43-44. Fifty years ago, the text of the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* did not include this passage. Now it does, although both verses are framed by double-brackets, which, means, as Bruce Metzger wrote in his *Textual Commentary*, the compilers regard it as “a later addition to the text.”

I have only given the names of a few MSS. At the end of this chapter I list some online sources that have more detailed information. The testimony of the MSS is usually straightforward, but in some cases, there are important details that are not conveyed by simple lists.

Consider 0171. This small fragment is assigned to the late 200s or early 300s. It was not mentioned in the textual apparatus for Luke 22:43-44 in some editions of the UBS *Greek New Testament*, or in the first edition of the *Tyndale House Greek New Testament*. 0171 very clearly displays the final words of verse 44, supporting the inclusion of the contested passage.

Next: Papyrus 69. In this fragment from the 200s, verses 43 and 44 are absent – but so is verse 42. This was *probably* the result of accidental line-skipping from a point near the end of verse 41 to a similar point near the beginning of verse 45. This *probably* indicates that P69's exemplar did not have verses 43 and 44 – but that is a guess. The testimony of Papyrus 69 is tenuous.

Third, there is an interesting feature in Codex Alexandrinus. Although Codex A does not have Luke 22:43-44 in its text, it includes section-number 283 in the margin near the beginning of verse 45. The text of Codex A supports the non-inclusion of verses 43 and 44, while the *Eusebian Section-numbers in the margin of Codex Alexandrinus* support the inclusion of verses 43 and 44.

Fourth: in Codex N, there is no Eusebian section-number 283.

Fifth: in Codex Sinaiticus, verses 43 and 44 are in its text as initially written. But someone subsequently placed curved marks around each line of the passage. Then someone else attempted to erase the curved marks.

And in Codex Delta, verses 43 and 44 are included in the text, but someone has added a column of four asterisks in the left column alongside the four lines that are mostly filled by these two verses.

We will consider some other quirks in some other MSS, but first let us turn to the patristic evidence, which includes some evidence earlier than the earliest MSS of Luke 22.

Justin Martyr, who was martyred in the 160s, used this text in his composition *Dialogue With Trypho*, chapter 103. Commenting on Psalm 22:14, he wrote, “In the memoirs which, I say, were drawn up by His apostles and those who followed them, it is recorded that **His sweat fell down like drops of blood while He was praying.**”

Reckoning that the Gospel of Luke was not finished before the early 60s, this implies that Justin’s copy of the Gospel of Luke was separated from the autograph of the Gospel of Luke by less than a century.

About two decades after Justin, Irenaeus composed the third book of *Against Heresies*. In the 22nd chapter, Irenaeus used Luke 22:44, mentioning that if Jesus had taken nothing of Mary, that is, if He had not experienced a physical human nature, he would not have eaten food harvested from the earth, He would not have become hungry, or weary, “Nor would He have **sweated great drops of blood.**”

Irenaeus’ contemporary Tatian included Luke 22:43-44 in his *Diatessaron* around the year 172. Around the year 360, when Ephrem Syrus composed his commentary on the *Diatessaron*, he mentioned the detail about Jesus’ sweat becoming like drops of blood.

Also in Ephrem’s *Carmina Nisibena*, in Hymn 35, part 18, Ephrem pictures the devil saying about Jesus, “While He was praying I saw Him and was glad, because He changed color and was afraid: **His sweat was as drops of blood**, because He felt that His day had come.”

In the early 200s, the writer Hippolytus referred to Luke 22:44, near the beginning of chapter 18 of *Against Noetus*. In the course of giving examples of the contrast between Jesus’ divinity and humanity, Hippolytus wrote that “**In agony He sweats blood, and is strengthened by an angel.**”

The first patristic writer to mention MSS that do not support Luke 22:43-44 is Hilary of Poitiers. Around 350, in Book 10 of his Latin composition *De Trinitate*, in part 41, Hilary wrote, “We cannot overlook that **in very many Greek and Latin codices nothing is recorded about the angel’s coming, and the sweat like blood.**”

Despite acknowledging such MSS, Hilary does not offer a judgment on whether the passage has been omitted in the copies where it is absent, or interpolated in the copies in which it is found. He seems to have been less concerned about reaching a correct verdict on the textual question and more concerned about promoting correct theology.

He said that heretics should not be encourage by the idea that Jesus’ weakness is confirmed by the need for an angel to strengthen Him, and that His sweat should not be construed as a sign of weakness. And like Irenaeus, he points out that the bloody sweat demonstrated the reality of Jesus’ physical body. When he states, “*We are forced to the conclusion that all this happened on our account.*” He seems content to use the text.

In 374, Epiphanius of Salamis made some very interesting statements about Luke 22:43-44. In *Panarion* 19:4, he quoted these verses an example of passages that Arians use to show that Jesus sometimes needed assistance from others, or that He was inferior to the Father: “**And it says in the Gospel according to Luke, ‘There appeared an angel of the Lord strengthening Him when He was in agony, and He sweat; and His sweat was as it were drops of blood,** when He went out to pray before His betrayal.”

It should be noticed that Epiphanius quoted verse 43 with the reading “angel of the Lord.”

In *Panarion* 61, Epiphanius used the passage again in the same way. He used the passage for doctrinal

purposes, and stated that without the display of agony and sweat pouring from His body, the Manichaeans and Marcionites might seem reasonable in their theory that Christ was an apparition, and not completely real.” He emphasized how Jesus’ sweat like blood showed that “His flesh was real, and not an apparition.”

Epiphanius claims in *Panarion* that Arius cited this very passage from the Gospel of Luke in an attempt to demonstrate the subordination of the Son to the Father.

So far we could read Epiphanius’ remarks and think that the only form of the text he knew included verses 43 and 44. But in *Ancoratus*, chapter 31, Epiphanius wrote that the passage “is found in the Gospel according to Luke **in unrevised copies.**” Then he said, “**The orthodox have removed the passage, frightened and not thinking about its significance.**” Coming from someone who seemed ready to blame heretics for bad weather, this was a remarkable statement.

Epiphanius uses Luke 22:43-44 again in *Ancoratus* chapter 37 as evidence that Jesus was truly human, and that His sweat shows that He was physical.

Around the year 405 in Asia Minor, Macarius Magnes, in the third part of the work *Apocriticus*, quoted from a pagan writer, probably Hierocles, a student of Porphyry. Hierocles lived in the late 200s and early 300s.

When this pagan writer objected to Jesus’ statement, “Do not fear those who kill the body,” he wrote that Jesus Himself, “being in agony,” prayed that His sufferings should pass from Him.” The term “*being in agony*” here is probably a recollection of Luke 22:43, because this term is used there, but not in the parallel-passages.

For the testimony of Amphilochius of Iconium, who lived from about 340 to about 400, I rely on a collection of extracts in the medieval manuscript Athous Vatopedi 507,

from the 1100s. A note says: "Of Amphilochius bishop of Iconium, on the Gospel of Luke: it states there, 'Being in agony, He prayed more earnestly.'"

There is some reason to wonder whether Didymus the Blind, or someone else, was the author of the Greek composition called *De Trinitate* that is attributed him. Some interpretations of the author are different from interpretations expressed by Didymus in some other works. But, theologians do sometimes change their views. Whoever wrote *De Trinitate*, he made an accurate quotation of Luke 22:43 in Book 3, Part 21.

Ambrose of Milan, in the late 300s, in his commentary on Luke, used a text that did **not** include verses 43-44; he does not mention the appearance of an angel and he does not mention that Jesus' sweat became like drops of blood.

John Chrysostom is yet another patristic writer who used Luke 22:43-44. Once he did in a comment on Psalm 109. And once he did in the course of his *83rd Homily on the Gospel of Matthew*, which covers the parallel-material in Matthew 26:36-38.

In *Homily 83 on Matthew*, Chrysostom did not say that he had put down the text of Matthew and has turned to the text of Luke. But after referring to Jesus' prediction of Peter's denials, and Peter's insistence that he will never deny Jesus, Chrysostom transitions to the contents of Luke 22:43, stating, "And He prays with earnestness, in order that the thing might not seem to be acting. And sweat flows over Him for the same cause again, even that the heretics might not say this, that His agony was a pretense. Therefore there is a sweat like blood, and an angel appeared strengthening Him, and a thousand sure signs of fear."

After interpreting this for several sentences, Chrysostom returned to the text of Matthew 26:40.

I will reconsider the significance of this after examining the testimony of the cluster of MSS known as family 13.

On to the next patristic reference. The testimony of John Cassian should not be overlooked (his name does not appear in the textual apparatus for Luke 22:43-44 in the UBS *Greek New Testament* or the Nestle-Aland compilation). John Cassian traveled widely: to the Holy Land, to Egypt, and to Rome, before residing in what is now France in about 415. In his *First Conference of Abbot Isaac on Prayer*, also known as the *Ninth Conference*, in chapter 25, Cassian states that the Lord, “*in an agony of prayer, even shed forth drops of blood.*”

Jerome, in *Against the Pelagians*, Book 2, part 16, shows that he was aware of some copies that had Luke 22:43-44, and some copies that did not. In 383, he included this passage in the Vulgate. Later, in *Against the Pelagians*, he wrote that these words – the words we know as Luke 22:43-44 – are “*In some copies, Greek as well as Latin, written by Luke,*” which implies that Jerome also knew of copies in which the verses were *not* included.

Theodore of Mopsuestia, a contemporary of Jerome who worked mainly in Syria and Cilicia, also had Luke 22:43-44 in his Gospels-text. In 1882, the researcher H. B. Swete published a collection of some fragments from Theodore’s works, and one of them includes a full quotation of Luke 22:43-44.

Only slightly later came Theodoret of Cyrrhus, who oversaw the withdraw of 200 copies of the *Diatessaron* in his churches. In 453, Theodoret wrote *Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium*. In this work, after presenting Jesus’ statement in John 12:27, he said that Luke taught more clearly how Jesus was indeed suffering, when He was in agony, and he proceeds to use part of verse 44.

Now comes the testimony of Cyril of Alexandria, who died in the year 444. In Cyril of Alexandria's *Sermon 146* and *Sermon 147* on the Gospel of Luke, Cyril described the events in Gethsemane in Luke 22, but he did **not** mention the appearance of an angel, and he did **not** mention Jesus being in agony or shedding drops of sweat like blood.

He stated, "Everywhere we find Jesus praying alone, you may also learn that we ought to talk with God over all with a quiet mind, and a heart calm and free from all disturbance." That is not the sort of thing one says when one is reading a text that says that Jesus is praying in agony, and sweating huge drops of blood.

Cyril said in *Sermon 147*, "**Let no man of understanding say that He offered these supplications as being in need of strength or help from another** – for He is Himself the Father's almighty strength and power." Cyril did not come out and say that he rejects the idea that an angel appeared and strengthened Jesus, but he came very close to doing so.

Severus of Antioch, in the first half of the 500s, supplied some additional information about the text used by Cyril. In an extract from the third letter of the sixth book that he wrote to "the glorious Caesaria," Severus stated the following:

"Regarding the passage about the sweat and the drops of blood, know that in the divine and evangelical Scriptures that are at Alexandria, it is not written. Wherefore also the holy Cyril, in the twelfth book written by him on behalf of Christianity against the impious demon-worshipper Julian, plainly stated the following:

"But, since he said that the divine Luke inserted among his own words the statement that an angel stood and strengthened Jesus, and his sweat dripped like blood-drops or blood, let him learn from us that we have found

nothing of this kind inserted in Luke's work, unless perhaps an interpolation has been made from outside which is not genuine.

The books therefore that are among us contain nothing whatever of this kind. And so I consider it madness for us to say anything to him about these things. And it is a superfluous thing to oppose him regarding things that are not stated at all, and we shall be very justly condemned to be laughed at."

Then Severus says: "In the books therefore that are at Antioch and in other countries, it is written, and some of the fathers mention it." He names "Gregory the Theologian" and John Chrysostom as two examples. Then he says that he himself used this text "in the sixty-fourth homily."

In this way Severus drew his reader's attention to Emperor Julian's use of the passage in the mid-300s, and to Cyril of Alexandria's rejection of the passage in the early 400s, and to the acceptance of the passage in Antioch, and by Gregory of Nazianzus, by John Chrysostom, and by Severus himself.

Severus' testimony is particularly significant because he specifies that the copies *in Alexandria* lacked the passage.

In the 600s a writer named Athanasius, Abbot of Sinai, is credited with yet another text-critically relevant statement about Luke 22:43-44. Dr. Amy Donaldson, in her brilliant 2009 dissertation, *Explicit References to New Testament Variant Readings Among Greek and Latin Church Fathers*, included his statement:

"Be aware that **some attempted to delete the drops of blood, the sweat of Christ, from the Gospel of Luke and were not able.** For those copies that lack the section are disproved by many and various gospels that

have it; for in all the gospels of the nations it remains, and in most of the Greek.”

There is also a marginal note preserved in minuscule 34, stating that “the report about the sweat-drops is not in some copies, but Dionysius the Areopagite, Gennadius of Constantinople, Epiphanius of Cyprus, and other holy fathers testify to it being in the text.”

We could examine more patristic support for Luke 22:43-44, from Augustine and Nestorius, for example. But let us return to the evidence from Chrysostom.

Why, in *Homily 83 on Matthew*, does he take a detour to comment on Luke 22:43-44? It cannot be absolutely ruled out that he just wanted to cover a parallel-passage. But another possibility is that by the time John Chrysostom wrote *Homily 83 on Matthew*, it was already customary that when the lector read the Gospels-reading for the Thursday of Holy Week, after reading Matthew 26:39, he also read Luke 22:43-44.

John’s brief detour into Luke 22 interlocks very snugly with this custom. In addition, in Codex C, a secondary hand has written the text of Luke 22:43-44 in the margin near Matthew 26:39.

This brings us to the evidence from the MS-cluster s known as family 13. In most members of family-13, Luke 22:43-44 appears in Luke, either in the text or margin after Luke 22:42. Most of the members of family 13 also have these two verses embedded in the text of Matthew after 26:39.

The evidence from minuscule 1689 (a member of family 13) is very helpful. This manuscript was lost for several years, but has been found safe and sound in the beautiful city of Prague. It has Luke 22:43-44 in the text of Luke, and alongside Matthew 26:39, there is a margin-note instructing the lector to jump to Section 283 in the Gospel of Luke – that is, to jump to Luke 22:43-44.

Many other MSS have similar notes in the margin at this point as part of the lectionary apparatus.

It does not require a long leap to deduce what has happened in family 13: instead of resorting exclusively to margin-notes to instruct the lector to jump from Matthew 26:39 to Luke 22:43-44 and then return to Matthew 26:40, someone whose work influenced members of family 13 (or their ancestor) simplified things for the lector, by combining the parts of the lection in order within the text of Matthew.

Some commentaries have misunderstood this, as if it implies that the passage is not genuine. But the evidence in family 13 just shows that a passage that was regarded as part of the text of Luke was embedded into the text of Matthew after 26:39 for liturgical purposes.

On a related point: when Luke 22:43-44 is accompanied by one or more asterisks, (such as in minuscule 1216) the default deduction should not be that the purpose of the asterisks was to express scribal doubt, but to serve as part of the lectionary apparatus, drawing attention to the two verses that were to be read after Matthew 26:39 in the lection for Maundy Thursday.

So: was Luke 22:43-44 initially present, or initially absent? The passage is supported by a broad array of MSS, plus the MSS of over 20 patristic writers, and a couple of non-Christian writers. Four patristic writers – Hilary, Epiphanius, Jerome, and Athanasius of Sinai – show that they were aware that verses 43-44 were not supported in all copies, but nevertheless they favored the inclusion of the verses. Epiphanius even said that orthodox individuals had attempted to remove the passage.

One *Latin* writer – Ambrose of Milan – did not have verses 43 and 44 in his text of Luke 22.

One *Greek* writer, Cyril of Alexandria (in the 400s) definitely did not have verses 43-44 in his text.

The most ancient evidence, from Justin, Tatian, and Irenaeus, includes the passage. The *most geographically diverse* support points in the same direction. And support for these verses does not come only from authors with only one *doctrinal view*. Internally, nothing in the surrounding material calls for the insertion of additional material. Dr. Bart D. Ehrman has proposed that verses 43-44 do not look like something Luke would write, on the grounds that Luke had an interest in portraying Jesus as “imperturbable.” However, Luke reports about several actions of Jesus in which his disposition is far from stoical or disinterested, including His criticism of the synagogue-ruler in chapter 13, and His weeping over the city of Jerusalem in chapter 19. There is no substantial case based on internal evidence for the idea that verses 43-44 could not originate with Luke.

When we look at the external evidence that supports Luke 22:43-44, the question should not be “*Did someone remove these verses from the text of Luke,*” but “*Why did someone remove these verses from the text of Luke?*”

It is virtually unique to see a Christian writer assert that “the orthodox” tampered with the Gospels-text, and to imply that some orthodox believers revised the text in a way that was influenced by their fear.

In the 100s, the second-century writer Celsus, in a statement preserved by Origen, claimed that some believers “*alter the original text of the gospel three or four or several times over, and they change its character to enable them to deny difficulties in face of criticism.*”

There’s no way to tell if Celsus saw what he says he saw, but it can’t be ruled out that he did indeed notice Christians making changes to the Gospels-text, and that

because some of those changes appeared to him to relieve perceived difficulties in the text, he naturally believed that this was the motivation for the changes.

However, he might have seen, and misunderstood, something else: textual adjustments that were not made to minimize interpretive difficulties, but to render the text easier to use when it was read in church-services.

One of those adjustments may have involved a liturgical feature pointed out by John Burgon in *The Revision Revised*. Here I slightly paraphrase his observations:

*“In every known Greek Gospels lectionary, verses 43-44 of Luke 22 follow Matthew 26:39 in the reading for Maundy Thursday. In the same lectionaries, **these verses are omitted from the reading for the Tuesday after Sexagesima** – the Tuesday of the Cheese-eaters, as the those in the East call that day, when Luke 22:39-23:1 used to be read.*

Furthermore, in all ancient copies of the Gospels which have been accommodated to ecclesiastical use, the reader of Luke 22 is invariably directed by a marginal note to skip over these two verses, and to proceed from verse 42 to verse 45.

What is more obvious, therefore, than that the removal of verses 43 and 44 from their proper place is explained as a side-effect of a lection-cycle of the early church?

Many MSS have been discovered since the time of Burgon, but in general what he describes is accurate: Luke 22:43-44 is embedded after Matthew 26:39 in the lection for Maundy Thursday, and it is left out of the lection assigned to the Tuesday after Sexagesima Sunday.

The customary transfer of Luke 22:43-44 into the text of Matthew, when the text was read during Easter-

week, may explain the sudden detour that Chrysostom took into this passage in the course of his *Homily 83*.

A scenario that explains the most evidence in the fewest steps is that when an attempt was made to revise the text for liturgical reading, one group of liturgical revisors took verses 43 and 44 out of Luke 22, but failed to re-insert them into Matthew 26. As soon as these verses dropped out of the text, the shorter reading was defended along the same lines that we see Cyril of Alexandria use to defend it.

We do not have hard evidence of this particular liturgical step of revision being undertaken in the second century. The elegance of Burgon's explanation is a very strong factor in its favor. This theory accounts for the correspondence between this particular feature in the Easter-time lections, and the very similar contrast between forms of the text with and without the passage.

I conclude therefore that Luke 22:43-44 is an original part of the Gospel according to Luke.

I also conclude that its removal, in the second century, was *not* the result of some copyist's desire to get rid of what he considered a problematic passage; *nor* was it the result of a heretic's desire to remove a text that demonstrated the physicality of Jesus' body. It occurred when orthodox believers transferred verses 43 and 44 into Matthew, after 26:39, conforming to their Easter-time custom, but failed to retain it in Luke, again reflecting their early Eastertime liturgy. As a result, these two verses fell out of the text.

This influenced texts known to Hilary, to Ambrose, and especially Cyril of Alexandria. It affected the text that was translated into Sahidic, and the Greek text that was translated into Armenian, and the Armenian text that was translated into Georgian. But as Athanasius the Abbot of Sinai stated, although some attempted to delete the drops

of blood from the Gospel of Luke, the legitimacy of the passage is shown by the “many and various Gospels-MSS in which the passage is read.”

Luke 22:43-44 should therefore be respected and cherished for what it is: part of the Word of God.

EXTRA CREDIT

See the excellent and very detailed article “*Luke 22:43-44: An Anti-Docetic Interpolation or an Apologetic Omission?*” by Lincoln H. Blumell (online as part of Volume 19 of the *TC-Journal* for 2014, at jbtc.org).

Read the detailed analysis of the evidence presented in Wieland Willker’s online *Textual Commentary on the Greek Gospels*.

Read the convenient presentation of some of the data about patristic statements regarding this passage in Dr. Amy Donaldson’s two-volume 2009 dissertation, *Explicit References to New Testament Variant Readings Among Greek and Latin Church Fathers* (links to each part are online at <https://curate.nd.edu/show/5712m615k50>).

Read the English translation of *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II & III*, by Frank Williams, which I have found exceptionally helpful and accurate.)

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Seven Small Variants

Heavenly Father, guide us as we consider the teaching of your Son, “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones.” Whether we have been given five talents, or two, or one – and whether we labor for the whole day, or just one hour, let us be invested in Your kingdom with wisdom and zeal. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Most textual contests do not involve large sections of text. Most of them are small. But even though they are small, many still have an effect on the translation of the passage in which they occur.

Nevertheless they are generally not considered problematic or controversial – because even though the wording is different, the meaning of the passage in which they occur is basically the same.

In this chapter I shall examine seven small textual contests, and reach a decision about each one. In the process, I invite you, reader, to engage the internal evidence: look at the different readings, and ask:

- Which reading appears to account for its rival?
- Why would a copyist create this reading or that reading? Is there something about either reading that could make it more preferable to a copyist, or, is there some feature of either reading that could cause it to come into being by accident?
- Which reading might appear more difficult to a copyist?
- Which reading, if any, is more consistent with the author’s style and vocabulary?
- Which reading, if any, forms a harmonization to a parallel-passage?

- Which reading, if any, can be accounted for as a liturgical expansion?
- And finally, what special factors might be involved that contributed to the creation of one of the rival readings?

Approach each contest in two steps: first, see what impression can be obtained on the basis of internal evidence, and then see where the external evidence points.

(1) Matthew 7:27. Should this verse say, *“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,”* or should it say, *“And the rain descended, and the floods came”*?

The second reading is obviously shorter. If you were to ignore the research of James Royse and several other researchers, and apply guidelines that were used in the 1800s and 1900s, then you might say, “The shorter reading ought to be preferred.” Some copyist probably thought, ‘Most of the time when there’s just rain and high water, houses do not collapse. We need to add an extra detail to make it clear what Jesus is saying.’

What if you apply the canon, “Prefer the early reading,” reckoning that the earlier the manuscript, the fewer opportunities copyists had to introduce mistakes? This is an early reading, found in Codex Sinaiticus. So you might consider adopting the text of Matthew 7:27 that does not mention that “the winds blew.”

But you would be wrong. The main copyist of Codex Sinaiticus made a mistake here: he lost his line of sight. The last three letters of the Greek word for “floods” and the last three letters of the Greek word for “winds” are the same three letters, and both words are followed by the Greek word “*kai*,” the word for “and.”

When we look at early MSS from multiple transmission-lines, the text that includes “and the floods came” is dominant no matter where you look. The other flagship manuscript of the Alexandrian Text, Codex Vaticanus, has the entire passage here in Matthew 7:27, mentioning *rain, floods, and winds*.

Bear in mind that as the number of generations of copies in a manuscript’s family tree increases, the more opportunities there were to *introduce* mistakes, but it is also generally true that the more times the text was read and transmitted, the more opportunities there were to *correct* mistakes.

Proof-reading was usually part of the transmission-process. At some point, someone recognized that the initial copyist of Codex Sinaiticus made a mistake here in Matthew 7:27, and wrote a correction in the margin.

We are blessed that the copyist of Codex Vaticanus did not make the same mistake. If the copyist of Codex Vaticanus had made the same mistake as the copyist of Codex Sinaiticus in Matthew 7:27, Westcott and Hort would have probably introduced a footnote at this point in the text in 1881.

Westcott and Hort valued the agreement of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus so highly that Hort wrote, “No readings of $\aleph B$ can safely be rejected absolutely.” (Hort wrote that on page 225 of his 1881 *Introduction*.)

Hort qualified that statement by saying that readings shared by Vaticanus and Sinaiticus may be placed “on an alternate footing” when they have no patristic support and no versional support. That is still an awful lot of weight to place on two MSS.

A mistake made by a copyist in the mid-300s is still a mistake.

The longer reading in Matthew 7:27 is the original reading.

(2) Matthew 12:35. In the King James Version, this verse refers to the good man who brings forth good things out of “*the good treasure of the heart.*” But if you consult the English Standard Version, the Evangelical Heritage Version, or the New American Standard Bible, you will not find any mention of *the heart*.

In the majority of Greek MSS, there is no mention of “the heart.” The Greek words for “of his heart” are supported by Codex L, and by the manuscript-cluster known as family-1, but this is a small minority. The Syriac Peshitta version does not include the phrase “*of his heart.*” The Sinaitic Syriac and the Curetonian Syriac both include it.

The last word in the Greek phrase for “*of his heart*” ends with the same two letters as the Greek word for “treasure.” Is this another case where a phrase has been accidentally skipped due to parablepsis? Or has something else happened?

Something else has happened. The context, in the preceding verse, shows that Jesus is speaking about what is in a person’s heart. When we look at Luke 6:45 (a parallel passage) this saying is presented with an explicit reference to the heart.

What happened? Someone wanted to make sure that readers of Matthew did not take the verse too literally, and so words already found in the immediate context, or in the parallel-passage in Luke, were added in Matthew 12:35 in order to make it clear that Jesus is talking about the good man’s *spiritual* treasure.

In the *Textus Receptus*, the base-text of the KJV, only the two Greek words for “*of the heart*” are included in Matthew 12:35, not the three Greek word for “of his heart,” as in Codex 019 and family-1. So, the addition in the *Textus Receptus* appears to have been drawn from the

immediate context, unlike the more exact harmonization to Luke 6:45 that we see in Codex L and family-1.

Before anyone is too hard on the copyists who added the words we should notice that in Matthew 12:35, the NIV adds the words “*in him*” – twice – and the New Living Translation includes the words “*of a good heart,*” twice – even though neither reading is supported in the text upon which these two versions were based.

(3) Matthew 13:35. In this verse, one set of MSS describes an Old Testament quotation as something spoken by “the prophet,” but other MSS call it something spoken by “Isaiah the prophet.”

The second reading is much more difficult than the first one, because the quotation is drawn from Psalm 78:2, which is identified in its sub-title as the work of Asaph. It is often claimed that textual variants do not have any impact on important doctrines. However, if this reading were adopted as part of the original text, it would appear to destroy the doctrine of inerrancy.

Eberhard Nestle, in his 1901 *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, called this reading, “certainly genuine,” which indicates where Nestle stood on the question of inerrancy. Hort, in “*Notes on Select Readings,*” similarly said, “It is difficult not to think Ἡσαίου genuine.”

Jerome wrote about this passage, and proposed that the text originally named Asaph as the prophet being quoted. Jerome even stated that this reading was found in all the ancient copies. Jerome also theorized that some copyists, not recognizing Asaph as a prophet, changed it to the better-known “*Isaiah,*” and that this was how the erroneous reading originated.

Jerome mentioned the unbelieving philosopher Porphyry, from the mid-200s, as another person whose text of Matthew 13:35 referenced Isaiah the prophet.

Porphyry used this reference as the basis to accuse Matthew of a lack of familiarity with the sources he cited.

Eusebius (in the early 300s) referred to a Gospels-manuscript with the reading “in Isaiah the prophet,” but he also said that “the accurate copies” do not have the reference to Isaiah.

It is understandable how compilers who put excessive weight on the testimony of Codex Sinaiticus could jettison the doctrine of inerrancy if this reading were adopted. It has extremely limited support. Among Greek MSS it is read by Codex Sinaiticus, and some members of family-1 – and that’s about it. But it is certainly the more difficult reading.

However, this difficult reading, and similar difficult readings (difficult because they are erroneous) are accounted for by a frequently recurring tendency of early copyists: **a tendency to augment the specificity of Old Testament references.**

Consider the feature of Codex Sinaiticus that is seen in the margin beside Matthew 2:15, where Hosea 2:15 is quoted. The quotation is not in the usual form given in the Septuagint version, and so the person who made the note in the margin did not recognize it. Instead of correctly writing “*Hosea*,” he wrote “*Numbers*.”

If that margin-note had been inserted into the text, it would have become a difficult reading.

In Matthew 2:5, another difficult reading was created as the effect of copyists’ desire to make the text more specific. In the Old Latin Codex Vercellensis (probably the earliest Old Latin copy of Matthew) from the 300s, the name “Isaiah” appears in the text, identifying the prophet being cited. That seems to be an error.

For another example of the difficult readings that this scribal tendency can produce, look at Matthew 21:4, where the normal text refers to “the prophet” without

identifying *which* prophet. According to Metzger, a few Vulgate copies, Bohairic copies, and Ethiopic copies add Isaiah's name. The source was Zechariah.

Isaiah's name was probably added in Matthew 13:35 in some early copies by Western copyists who liked their quotations to be specific. This is basically the same tendency that is on display in some modern-day paraphrases: if you look up Matthew 2:5 in *The Message*, you will see Micah's name, even though it is not in the Greek base-text. Look in the English text of *The Message* in Matthew 4:4 and 4:7 and 4:10, and you will see the word "Deuteronomy" – even though it is not in the Greek text.

In passages where Matthew presents a statement from "the prophet" without naming him, it was not rare for Western copyists to supply the prophet's name – or what they *thought* was the prophet's name. Isaiah's name was already given in Matthew 13, in verse 14, so if a scribe was going to expand the text, it is understandable (even though it is not commendable) why he would add Isaiah's name in verse 35.

So: copyists did not *try* to make a text more difficult – but sometimes they did, when attempting to make it clearer or more specific. This ought to remind us that the canons of textual criticism should not be applied mechanically.

(4) Matthew 23:35, which refers to the blood of Abel the righteous, and to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berekiah.

Like the previous variant-unit, this verse has attracted some attention from those who look for errors in the Bible. In Second Chronicles 24, it is reported that the Spirit of God came upon a man named Zechariah, and he protested against the transgressions of the people, and he was stoned to death "in the court of the house of the

Lord.” But that man’s father is identified as Jehoida the priest. The only man named Zechariah in the Old Testament whose father is identified as *Berekiah* was Zechariah the Minor Prophet, who is identified as the son of Berekiah in the first verse of his book.

The Zechariah who was slain in Second Chronicles 24 lived during the reign of Joash, king of Judah, who died around 800 B.C. Zechariah the Minor Prophet wrote in the 500s.

Apologists – those who defend the veracity of the text – have offered several proposals about which Zechariah is the subject in Matthew 23:35. Is it a realistic option to say that the difficulty is superfluous, because in our reconstruction of the original text, the words “son of Berekiah” are not in the text?

In 1864, that was precisely the option taken by the textual analyst F.J.A. Scrivener when he learned that the copyist of Codex Sinaiticus did not write the words “son of Berekiah” in Matthew 23:35. The erudite Scrivener wrote, “Here therefore, for once, Codex Sinaiticus with a very small minority of copies must preserve the Evangelist’s genuine reading.”

The gist of Scrivener’s argument runs like this: God doesn’t make mistakes. The statement that Zechariah was the “son of Berekiah” is a mistake. So that must **not** be the original reading, and the shorter reading **must** be the original reading.

While it is true that God does not make mistakes, people (including ancient copyists and modern textual analysts) are capable of inaccurately interpreting accurate statements, causing it to appear *to them* that they are reading an inaccurate statement. Some copyists were willing to adjust the text at points where it appeared to them that their exemplar contained an error, on the

grounds that the original text simply *couldn't* contain an error.

Ask "Which reading appears more difficult?"

The reading of Matthew 23:35 without "*son of Berekiah*," does not introduce a difficulty. Copyists' misinterpretation of the reading "*son of Berekiah*" was far more likely to provoke copyists to adjust the text: it is the more difficult reading.

Consider internal characteristics of the readings: The short reading in Codex Sinaiticus might have been *accidental*. It is possible that the copyist simply lost his line of sight and drifted from the last three letters of "Zechariah" to the same three letters at the end of "Berechiah," and never realized that anything was missing. But it is also possible that a copyist dropped the words because they seemed to present an interpretive difficulty.

We see, not only in the vast majority of MSS – including Vaticanus – but also in quotations from Origen, and others, that "son of Berekiah" was here in the text in a variety of locales in the early church. On the question of how this should be interpreted, several solutions have been proposed:

- (1) Zechariah's father had two names, and one of them was the same as the name of the father of the Minor Prophet Zechariah. Chrysostom mentioned this solution.
- (2) Jesus was referring to Zechariah the father of John the Baptist. Origen proposed this solution in his *Commentary on Matthew*. Near the end of the *Proto-Evangelium of James*, there is a tradition to the effect that Zechariah was killed in the temple when he did not tell the soldiers where his son was, during Herod's slaughter of

the innocents. Gregory of Nyssa favored this explanation.

- (3) Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the Minor Prophet, is the individual being referenced by Jesus, and his death is simply not mentioned in other sources.
- (4) This verse is a parenthetical phrase, not spoken by Jesus, but written by Matthew, and his subject is not the Zechariah of Second Chronicles, or Zechariah the Minor Prophet, but the individual Josephus refers to in *Jewish Wars*, Book 4, chapter 5, as Zecharias son of Baruch, who according to Josephus was killed in the temple, shortly before the destruction of the temple during the First Jewish Revolt.

Apologists may pick different solutions, but the rejection of “son of Berechiah” does not have sufficient evidence in its favor.

(5) Matthew 25:13. Matthew wrote (in English) “*Watch, therefore, for you know not the day nor the hour*” and (in the Authorised Version) the second part of this verse says, “*in which the Son of Man comes.*” In some copies, there is no second part; the verse ends with the word “hour.”

Internal evidence favors the shorter reading; the longer reading looks like it originated as a scribal attempt to ensure that readers were aware what day and hour was being referred to, causing this verse to resemble verses 42 and 44 of the previous chapter a little more.

The many MSS that support the longer reading in Matthew 25:13 are much more abundant, but they are limited to the Byzantine form of the text. Early representatives of the Byzantine Text such as Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Sigma support the shorter

reading. The Syriac Peshitta version also supports the shorter reading.

When read right after Matthew 24, there is little need to point out that the day when the Son of Man comes is the day being referenced. But the lection for Saturday in the eighteenth week after Pentecost began at Matthew 25:1, and ended at Matthew 25:13. So this final sentence would be the only place in the lection referencing the day of the coming of the Son of Man, emphasizing the point as the lection was brought to a close.

(6) Luke 22:30. Some MSS depict Jesus telling the apostles about a time when *“you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom,”* and some MSS only say *“you may eat and drink at my table.”*

Did later copyists expand the text to emphasize the idea that eating and drinking would be possible in the future kingdom of Christ? If the longer reading is adopted, this is the only point in Luke’s Gospel where Jesus refers to *“My kingdom.”* Or did someone remove the phrase to avoid the appearance of a lack of clarity about whether the future kingdom belongs to the Father or the Son? Or did someone leave out the phrase *“in My kingdom,”* by accident, skipping from one *“my”* to the next one?

A look at the MSS reveals something interesting: different representatives of the Byzantine Text do not agree. The famous *Textus Receptus* supports the longer reading, in agreement with an assortment of uncials: not only the Alexandrian codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, and Papyrus 75, but also Alexandrinus, K, II, M, and Codex W. The Peshitta supports the longer reading, and so do the Old Latin, the Vulgate, and the Sinaitic Syriac.

Codex Bezae and the Curetonian Syriac favor the longer reading, but do not have the word *“My”* to modify

“kingdom,” as if Jesus said, “you may eat and drink at My table in *the* kingdom.” The very late minuscule 69 has Jesus say, “at My table, in *His* kingdom” (referring to the Father, mentioned in the previous verse). Family 13 and Codex N have the longer reading but make it a little longer by the inclusion of the words “with Me” before the rest.

A lot of Byzantine MSS, including a dozen uncials, support the shorter reading.

The Robinson-Pierpont Byzantine Textform disagrees with the Hodges-Farstad *Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* at this point: Robinson-Pierpont has the Greek words underlying “in My kingdom” in the margin, while Hodges and Farstad includes “in My kingdom” in the text. The text of family-35, as compiled by Wilbur Pickering, has the longer reading.

Although the Byzantine Text is stratified here, the range of the support for the longer reading in Byzantine and non-Byzantine witnesses and in early versions firmly establishes it as part of the original text.

(7) Colossians 1:6. The *Textus Receptus* says that the gospel is “bringing forth fruit.” In most MSS, Colossians 1:6 says that the gospel is “bringing forth fruit **and growing**.” The inclusion of the words “and growing” is also supported by the Peshitta. This is one of the relatively rare places in the text where the reading in the *Textus Receptus* is not supported by the vast majority of MSS and is shorter than the reading in the vast majority of MSS. The words “*and growing*” – καὶ αὐξανόμενον – are in the text of the Robinson-Pierpont Byzantine Textform, *and* in the text of Hodges and Farstad’s *Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, *and* in Pickering’s compilation of the archetype of Family 35, and it was in the text of the Complutensian Polyglot New Testament, which was printed in 1514. The reading was in a footnote

in the compilation published by Dr. John Fell at Oxford in 1675. It is also in the text that was compiled in 1904 by Antoniades for the Eastern Orthodox churches.

The range of support for the reading “and growing” is extremely broad and extremely early. It is supported for example by Papyrus 46, Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus.

The words begin with the same two letters that begin the next word in the text, and end with the same five letters that end the word that precedes them in the text. This very clearly indicates that these words were part of the original text and fell out accidentally due to parablepsis.

In conclusion: the textual variants we have reviewed today are small but they teach important lessons to those who are willing to learn them.

- The principle “prefer the older reading” should not be applied without a careful and substantial review of other evidence. Some early copyists made very careless mistakes.

- When the text looks like it has been expanded to increase its clarity, this is often the case, especially where the augmentation involves a harmonization to the immediate context or to a parallel-passage.

- The principle “prefer the more difficult reading” should be applied with an awareness of scribal tendencies that sometimes contributed to the creation of very difficult readings which were created by copyists.

- A reading’s ability to contribute to the resolution of an apologetic difficulty is not a sufficient reason to accept it as original.

- When the utility of a reading interlocks with the beginning or end of a lection, and its shorter rival has

stronger early support, the longer reading probably originated as a liturgical expansion.

- The larger quantity of Greek MSS sometimes fails to support the original reading. And,

- The *Textus Receptus* contains both longer readings and shorter readings that are non-original. Its important role in the history of the English New Testament does not justify treating it as authoritative in every detail.

PREFER THE LESS SPECIFIC READING.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The New Testament in the Marketplace

Heavenly Father, shape our hearts that we may desire to live quiet and peaceful lives, constantly tuned to your holy word. When the rains descend, and the floods arise, and the winds blow, let our minds be at peace, built by Your Spirit, and built upon the Rock. In Jesus' name, Amen.

For many Bible-readers, their first encounter with the field of New Testament textual criticism has involved the realization that modern English versions such as the New International Version differ from the King James Version at many points. Seventeen verses, and many more portions of verses, are included in the King James Version but are not in the text of the NIV. Today, I will take a close look at how the base-text of the King James Version has been misrepresented by materials that promote recently made translations. I will also mention some resources that can contribute to constructive responses to the claims that are frequently made to promote some versions.

Two hundred years ago, there was no competitive Bible marketplace. J. J. Griesbach had released a Greek compilation that tended to favor the Alexandrian Text, and by 1836, the textual critic J. M. A. Scholz had also released a Greek New Testament, which tended to favor the Byzantine Text.

The work of Griesbach and Scholz was eclipsed in 1881 by the Greek text of Westcott and Hort. Westcott and Hort proposed that the Byzantine Text should be categorically rejected wherever it is unique, and that the Alexandrian Text is intrinsically superior, especially as

represented by agreements of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus.

Until 1881, except for English versions such as *The Living Oracles* and the *Book of the New Covenant*, for all practical purposes there was one English Bible: the King James Version, also called the Authorised Version. But in 1881, the *Revised Version* of the New Testament was published. Twenty years later, the *American Standard Version* was published.

Although their Greek base-text was widely accepted in academic circles (despite the protests of John Burgon) neither the *Revised Version* nor the *American Standard Version* had much staying power with the general public. Part of the reason for this was that the translators used a very formal method of translation.

The renowned preacher Charles Spurgeon summed up his view of the Revised Version this way: "*To translate well, the knowledge of two languages is needed: the men of the New Testament company are strong in Greek, but weak in English. Comparing the two,*" – that is, comparing the old King James Version to the just-released Revised Version – "*in our judgment the old version is the better.*"

Spurgeon's rejection of the Revised Version was not absolute: in 1886 he enthusiastically accepted the reading "*and we are*" in First John 3:1, and made it the centerpiece of a sermon. Still, the Revised Version simply did not catch on.

In 1946, another attempt to replace the King James Version on the popular level was attempted with the release of the Revised Standard Version. The Revised Standard Version was aggressively marketed: advertisements called it the "Greatest Bible News in 341 years." In 1971, the preface to the RSV was very candid in its criticism of the KJV. It stated, "*The King James Version has grave defects.*" (Notice the difference in tone from

the 1860s.) It also stated that the Greek base-text of the New Testament in the KJV was “*marred by mistakes containing the accumulated errors of fourteen centuries of manuscript copying.*” It stated that the King James Version’s base-text was essentially the text as edited by Beza in the late 1500s, and that Beza’s text closely followed the work of Erasmus, “which was based upon a few medieval MSS.”

This was technically true, but it was not the whole truth. This incomplete caricature is still used in the promotion of several translations of the New Testament. The King James Version is very frequently misrepresented as if it is only supported by a smattering of late medieval MSS. People are told that scholars today “Now possess many more ancient MSS of the New Testament” than were known in the 1500s.

There are some minority readings in the *Textus Receptus*. At Acts 9:5-6, the *Textus Receptus* has a harmonization which, as far as I can tell, is not supported by any Greek MSS. In Ephesians 3:9 and Philippians 4:3, readings in the *Textus Receptus* look like the effects of spelling-mistakes in the MSS used in the 1500s. In First John 5:7-8, the *Textus Receptus* has a reading that originated in a branch of the Old Latin text, and which only appears in a few late MSS as far as Greek copies are concerned. But these readings do not drastically alter the character of the text: **fewer than 700 readings in the Gospels in the *Textus Receptus* are not supported by a majority of Greek MSS.**

Materials written to promote new English versions routinely avoid drawing attention to the strong level of agreement between the *Textus Receptus* and the majority of Greek New Testament MSS. It is not the Byzantine Text, but the *Alexandrian* Text, that routinely disagrees with over 90% of the Greek MSS.

You would never realize this if you relied upon the marketing of modern Bible versions such as the New International Version. Marketers of modern versions routinely describe the Nestle-Aland base-text as if it is based on very many ancient MSS.

Instead of focusing on the agreements of the *Textus Receptus* with the majority of MSS in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles, attention is given to the most recent layers of corruption in the *Textus Receptus*. As Eberhard Nestle pointed out in 1898: do we really want to offer readers a text of Revelation that was based on a single manuscript? Do we really need to go on distributing a text in which the last six verses of Revelation were based on Latin? Is the *Textus Receptus* really the best compilation that can be produced?

Clearly the answer is no. I have no doubt that Erasmus and Stephanus would agree. I am not convinced that they would agree that the need to refine their work justifies throwing out the Byzantine Text and replacing it with the Alexandrian Text (which is basically what was done by producers of the NIV, CSB, NLT, NRSV, etc.)

Misrepresentation of the quality and age of the Byzantine Text is a tactic that has been used in many attempts to get people to embrace the Alexandrian Text. This was done in the 1800s, and it is still attempted today.

For example: Biblica, formerly known as the International Bible Society, produced a video called "Is the NIV Bible Missing Verses," asking the question, "How did the KJV and other earlier Bibles end up having more words than ours do today?". Biblica's presentation conveys that differences between English versions exist because the Biblical researchers in the 1500s only had a few MSS, which were not very early – but researchers today use many more MSS that are much more ancient.

Specifically, Biblica told viewers that the main MSS used by the producers of the *Textus Receptus* were just a few hundred years old, only going back to the twelfth century. In comparison, today's scholars have "almost 6,000" MSS. In addition, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus provide a "much earlier" text.

Viewers were **not** told that the text in the vast majority of those thousands of MSS is *Byzantine*, which means that in most textual contests where the Alexandrian and Byzantine forms disagree, they support the Byzantine reading, and disagree with the Alexandrian form. In other words, they tend to **oppose** the base-text upon which the New International Version is based.

In addition, viewers were not told how soon the Byzantine readings are supported. Instead, viewers got the impression that their choice is between readings from the 300s and readings from the 1100s, so *of course* they will tend to prefer what they are led to believe is the reading with much earlier support.

We now take a brief look at some readings in the Gospels that are included in the King James Version but not in the New International Version – not to delve into the intricacies of each textual contest, but to test how honest or *dishonest* it is to convey that when we look at these readings, we look at a text from the 300s as the basis for the NIV, versus a text from the 1100s as the basis for the KJV.

(1) Matthew 17:21 is not in the text of the NIV. It is supported by over 99% of the Greek MSS of Matthew, including Codex D and Codex W. It is also supported by most of the Old Latin copies of Matthew including Codex Vercellensis. It is supported by the Vulgate, and was cited by Origen, who died in the mid-200s – *before* Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Other patristic writers who used this verse

include Hilary, Basil, Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustine, representing five different locales.

(2) Matthew 18:11 is not in the text of the NIV. It is supported by the vast majority of MSS, including Codex D. It is also supported by the Vulgate, and by the Peshitta. It was in the text used by Chrysostom.

(3) The second part of Matthew 20:16, *“For many are called, but few are chosen,”* is not in the text of the NIV. It is supported by most Greek MSS of Matthew, including Codex D, and by the Vulgate, and the Peshitta, and it was used by Chrysostom. An additional consideration is that the final letters of the final word in this phrase are the same as the final letters in the word that comes before this phrase, which could make the whole phrase vulnerable to accidental loss via parablepsis.

(4) Matthew 23:14 is not in the text of the NIV. It is supported by the majority of Greek MSS of Matthew, including Codex W. It was quoted by Chrysostom, and was included in the Peshitta. Another point to consider is the potential of this reading to be accidentally lost via parablepsis; it begins with the same opening word as the verse before it, and the verse after it.

(5) The last part of Mark 6:11 is not in the text of the NIV or the ESV. It is supported by the vast majority of Greek MSS of Mark, including Codex Alexandrinus. It is also supported by the Gothic version and the Peshitta.

(6) Mark 7:16 is not in the text of the NIV. It is supported by the vast majority of Greek MSS of Mark, including Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Bezae, and Codex W. It has very strong Old Latin support. It is included in the Vulgate,

in the Gothic version, in the Peshitta, and in the Sinaitic Syriac.

(7) Mark 9:44 and 9:46 are not in the text of the NIV. Both verses are included in the vast majority of Greek MSS of Mark, including Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Bezae. Inclusion of both verses is supported by almost all Old Latin copies, and by the Vulgate, and by the Peshitta, and by the Gothic version.

(8) Mark 11:26 is not in the text of the NIV. It is supported by the vast majority of Greek MSS of Mark, including Codex Alexandrinus. It is supported by most Old Latin copies, and by the Vulgate, the Gothic version, and the Peshitta. In addition, this verse appears vulnerable to accidental loss; it ends with the same three words as the previous verse.

(9) Mark 15:28 is not in the text of the NIV. It is included in the majority of Greek MSS, and its inclusion is supported by the Vulgate, the Gothic version, the Peshitta, and the Armenian version.

(10) Luke 17:36 is not in the text of the NIV. It is not in the Byzantine Textform compiled by Robinson and Pierpont, either. In the 1611 King James Version there was a note in the margin beside this verse, stating, "This 36th verse is wanting in most of the Greek copies." But it is found in Codex Bezae, and its inclusion is supported by Old Latin copies, by the Vulgate, and the Peshitta. Another point to consider is that because this verse ends with the same ten-letter word as the previous verse, it may have been vulnerable to accidental loss.

(11) Luke 23:17 is not in the text of the NIV. It is included in most Greek MSS of Luke, including Codex Sinaiticus and Codex W. It is supported by the Old Latin text, the Vulgate, and the Peshitta.

(12) John 5:3-4 is not in the text of the NIV or the ESV. It is included in most Greek MSS of John, including Codex Alexandrinus. Tertullian, writing in about the year 200, seems to have used a text of John that had this reference to an angel at the pool of Bethesda. Its inclusion is also supported by the Peshitta, and by Chrysostom in his *Homily 36 on John*.

More than nine times out of ten in the Gospels, where a verse or phrase is included in the King James Version but is not in the NIV, its inclusion is supported by the **majority** of Greek MSS, *and* support for the KJV's reading can be seen in evidence from the 300s, the same century when Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus were made.

It is simply untrue that the verses and phrases that are supported by the Byzantine Text typically only appear in late medieval MSS. Claims that promote the idea that the KJV's readings typically originate in the 1100s or later should be regarded as **propaganda**.

In addition it should be pointed out that when marketers of the NIV or NET refer to the high number of Greek New Testament MSS as an "embarrassment of riches," they are strangely celebrating the abundance of evidence *against* the text they promote, since the vast majority of Greek MSS support the readings that are not in the text of English versions such as the NIV, the ESV, and the NLT.

The base-text of the NIV is often described as an “eclectic” text. By definition, an “eclectic” compilation takes all transmission-branches into consideration. Fine.

But in terms of its content, at points where the Alexandrian Text and the Byzantine Text disagree, the Nestle-Aland compilation adopts the Byzantine reading less than 2% of the time.

The Nestle-Aland text represents the local text of Egypt, especially as represented by Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, from the fourth century. Support for many Byzantine readings is just as old, or only slightly later. For some Byzantine readings, it is *earlier*.

What about papyrus MSS? Papyrus MSS from the 200s confirm the earlier use of the Alexandrian Text in Egypt. We do not have much papyrus evidence from other locations. But unless one wants to propose that Christians in the 300s spontaneously threw out the copies of Scripture that their predecessors had endured persecution to protect and preserve, the alternative is to reckon that there *were* papyrus MSS in Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, and Syria in the 200s, and that they were the ancestors of MSS used in the 300s and 400s which contained many Byzantine readings.

The humidity-level in Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, and Syria is not conducive to the preservation of papyrus – but it is not equitable or reasonable to ignore the text from this area *because of the weather*. The early stratum of the Byzantine Text deserves attention, especially the readings preserved in writings by individuals such as John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and others.

This does not mean that future investigation of the text that was used in the northeastern Roman Empire in the 300s and 400s will vindicate every reading found in the majority of Greek MSS. It won't. But the earliest

discernible stratum of the Byzantine Text deserves much more attention than it has received in the *so-called* “eclectic” compilation upon which the NIV is based.

There are alternatives to English translations that are based on the 99% Alexandrian Nestle-Aland compilation. Some Bible-readers, particularly in the United States, have reacted to the challenge posed by new versions by answering all text-critical questions with one response:

“The King James Version is always right.” That response is not scientifically sustainable. In many cases it is fueled by a tendency to stick to the New Testament translation one is used to – whether it is based on the divinely inspired Greek text or not.

Other Bible-readers, acknowledging non-original elements in the *Textus Receptus* but regarding them as fairly benign, have decided to stick with the King James Version, on the grounds that although its base-text is far from perfect, it has been shown to be *sufficiently* accurate as an English representation of the meaning of the original text.

For Bible-readers who desire their English translation to conform to the original text as closely as possible, rather than be inordinately limited to the local text of Egypt, the challenge posed by the rise of versions based on a pseudo-eclectic base-text should be met by the application of a more equitable eclectic method of textual criticism – an approach that is not biased against the idea that the original text may be found in the Byzantine Text. With that in mind, I refer to the following four English translations.

The base-text of the New Testament in the **Evangelical Heritage Version**, released in 2017, is far from consistently Byzantine, but its editors have taken the Byzantine Text seriously. Of the 12 readings reviewed in

this chapter, the EHV includes seven of them in the text. The text of the EHV also includes Mark 16:9-20, Luke 22:43-44, all of Luke 23:34, and John 7:53-8:11. More information about the Evangelical Heritage Version can be found at wartburgproject.org.

The **Eastern Orthodox New Testament** reflects an awareness of the critical text in its footnotes, but consistently favors the Byzantine Text. It can be purchased from New Rome Press, and it can be read online (at the website yorkorthodox.org/bible). The text of the EOB includes all of the readings reviewed in this lecture, and also includes Mark 16:9-20, Luke 22:43-44, all of Luke 23:34, and John 7:53-8:11.

The **World English Bible** is a copyright-free translation of the Old Testament and New Testament. Its New Testament was intended to be based on the Majority Text. It is available as a free PDF download at <https://worldenglish.bible/> and is also available in print.

Note: if you read the **New King James Version** and pay special attention to its textual footnotes, especially where readings in the Majority Text are mentioned, it will be similar to reading a version based on the Byzantine Text.

Finally: *The Solid Rock Greek New Testament* (edited by the brilliant Joey McCollum and Stephen L. Brown) published by Solid Rock publishers, and *The Greek New Testament* 4th edition (edited by Wayne A. Mitchell) published by Xulon Press are superb presentations of a Byzantine Greek base-text of the New Testament books.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Consulting the Evidence

Heavenly Father, we pray today for lost souls throughout the world. Send your word to shine into every land where it is kept in shadows. Guide Your church to share the gospel with travelers and students. Stir up a thirst for Your righteousness in their hearts, and fill it as they surrender to Jesus Christ. In His name, Amen.

Usually when considering the evidence for rival readings, we consult lists of witnesses in a textual apparatus: *this* group supports *this* reading, *that* group supports *that* reading, and so forth. With hundreds of MSS being considered, that is entirely understandable. But sometimes, especially when a manuscript supports a very unusual reading, it is helpful to resort to another approach: get to know the individual witnesses to the New Testament text.

Consulting the evidence directly can sometimes provide insights about specific readings that nothing else can, and account for the origin of some readings.

Consulting the evidence directly can sometimes suggest historical steps in the history of a particular reading.

Consulting the evidence directly can sometimes help researchers to appreciate the variety of ways in which the text has been transmitted.

Consulting the evidence directly can sometimes reveal how a manuscript has been used.

Consulting the evidence directly can sometimes even result in the correction of misreadings that earlier researchers made of its contents.

Meet fifteen of the most unusual witnesses to the text of the New Testament.

- Consider Matthew 24:35 in **Codex Sinaiticus**.

Most MSS of Matthew say, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall by no means pass away.” But in Codex Sinaiticus this verse is not in the main text. It is added in the lower margin. Does this mean that the main text of Codex Sinaiticus echoes an exemplar that did not have verse 35?

Consulting the evidence directly helps answer this question. When we look at the manuscript, we see that Matthew 24:34 is the last verse of the last column on a page. This implies that the scribe lost his place in his exemplar when he turned the page of the manuscript he was making, and skipped verse 35 when he resumed writing on the opposite side of the parchment.

- Second: **0212**. This uncial fragment is unusual. Technically it does not deserve to be listed as a manuscript of a continuous-text New Testament book or books. It may be better to think of it as an anonymous patristic text. This small fragment – a fragment from a scroll – was found in 1933, when the site known as Dura-Europos was being excavated, in eastern Syria.

This witness was made before the year 256. How do we know? Because the city of Dura-Europos, which had what has been identified as the earliest Christian church building, was destroyed in the year 256.

When 0212 was published, its Greek text was identified as a combination of phrases taken from the Gospels, presenting the narrative about the death and burial of Jesus found in parallel-passages in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19. This led researchers to identify it as an early fragment of Tatian’s *Diatessaron*. Some scholars have disagreed, interpreting the text as

something from an otherwise unknown Gospels-harmony. Either way, it is unique among the MSS listed as New Testament uncials.

- **Third: Lectionary 1276.** It is easy to overlook lectionaries. The textual apparatus of the Tyndale House edition of the Greek New Testament (first edition) does not mention a single one. But Lectionary 1276, a fragmentary palimpsest, is interesting and relatively early: its production-date has been assigned to the 500s. Even if that date is debatable, Lectionary 1276 is undoubtedly one of the oldest Greek lectionaries in existence. Lectionary 1276 is part of the massive collection of materials found in the genizah, or retirement-home for MSS, of the Ben-Ezra Synagogue in Cairo, Egypt. The indefatigable Solomon Schechter organized and studied these materials, beginning in 1896. He was joined by Charles Taylor.

It appears that some time around the 600s (give or take) a Gospels-lectionary was made, and it came into the possession of a Jewish community in Cairo, where its parchment was eventually recycled to hold the text of a Hebrew composition in the 800s. The background of Lectionary 1276 testifies to the geographic range of its readings in the text of Matthew 10 and John 20.

- **Fourth: the Garima Gospels.** This is a two-volume copy of the Gospels written in Ge'ez, or Ethiopic. When Europeans first encountered this MS in the mid-1900s, it was assigned to c. 1100. But as it received more attention, an earlier production-date was suspected. In the year 2000, researcher Jacques Mercier submitted two fragments from the manuscript to be radiometrically dated at Oxford University.

One fragment was dated to the period from 330 to 540. The other fragment was dated from 430 to 650. Both fragments could have been produced in the early

500s. The verification of the production-date of the Garima Gospels has facilitated a much greater appreciation for its readings.

- **Fifth: the Book of Kells.** This Book of Kells is so famous because of its artistry that its usefulness as a textual witness can be overlooked. Widely regarded as the most beautifully written of all Latin Gospels-MSS, the text in the Book of Kells might be considered just another copy of the Vulgate. For the most part, that is what it is – but it also has some readings that echo Old Latin ancestors that pre-dated the Vulgate.

One of the readings in the Book of Kells, and several other Latin copies, occurs in Matthew 27:49. After Matthew's report that some of the bystanders at Jesus' crucifixion said, "*Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him,*" the very next thing that happens, in most copies, is that Jesus cries out with a loud voice, and yields up His spirit. But in the Book of Kells, before verse 50, there is more. It says,

"And another person took a spear, and pierced His side, and there came out water and blood."

This is an approximate parallel to John 19:34. The significant difference is that in John, when Jesus is pierced, He is already dead; the soldiers pierce His side to remove any doubt that He has died. The reading in the Book of Kells is an interpolation, inserted by a scribe. But the originator of this reading cannot have been a *Latin* scribe, because the same reading is also found in Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, the two Greek MSS that form the backbone of the base-text of the New Testament in the NIV and ESV.

(I have noticed that although the NIV and ESV rely **very** heavily on these two MSS, the reading of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus in Matthew 27:49 has not been adopted in their text, and, as far as I can tell, is not mentioned in the

NIV and ESV in a footnote, even though it is supported by some other Alexandrian witnesses such as Codices C and 019.)

If we reckon that *witnesses that share the same readings tend to have the same origin*, then the thing to see is that the witnesses with this relatively rare reading in Matthew 27:49 must be connected in some way, even though some of them represent a stratum of the Latin Text in Ireland, and some of them represent a very early form of the Greek Gospels-text used in Egypt.

This connection is also suggested by similarities between some of the artwork in the borders of the Book of Kells, and in the artwork that appears in some Coptic MSS.

- Our sixth witness is the **Fadden More Psalter**.

The discovery, in 2006, of the Fadden More Psalter is another piece of evidence that increases the plausibility of a connection between a Biblical text in Ireland, and a Biblical text in Egypt. The Fadden More Psalter is a very heavily damaged Latin copy of the Book of Psalms that was made in about the year 800.

The parchment pages of the Fadden More Psalter were found along with a leather cover. It was found in a bog, near the city of Tipperary. The discoverer, Eddie Fogerty, exercised remarkable skill and competence in preserving the manuscript once it was discovered. One of the interesting things about the cover is that there is definitely *papyrus* in the cover's lining.

- **Codex Gissensis**. Sometimes, we cannot access the evidence directly because it does not exist anymore. That is probably the case with our seventh witness: Codex Gissensis. For a few decades after its discovery in Egypt in 1907, a small Gothic and Latin fragment, with text from Luke 23 and 34, was kept in Germany.

Unfortunately it was reportedly destroyed as a result of bombing during World War II. But black and white photographs of the manuscript survive.

Similarly, when Lake Nasser was enlarged on the southern border of Egypt around the year 1970, many artifacts from the ancient site of Faras were heroically rescued by a team of dedicated researchers from Poland. They can still be visited at the National Museum in Warsaw. Some inscriptions had to be left behind, and were subsequently submerged.

Photographs of them were taken, including a photograph of our ninth witness: an inscription that features the beginning and ending of each Gospel. Even this small witness can help track the geographic spread of variants in these portions of the text.

The direct consultation of MSS can reveal things that cannot be seen in a textual apparatus. Some New Testament MSS have colophons that state when and where the manuscript was made. In some MSS, there are illustrations which identify the donor or sponsor of the manuscript.

Our tenth witness, Greek manuscript 157 (produced in 1122), has an illustration featuring the Byzantine Emperor John II and his son Alexius, pinpointing where the manuscript was initially used. The size of a manuscript, the quality of its writing-materials, and the supplements to the text can sometimes provide clues about a manuscript's background.

One of the largest MSS of the Bible is the Latin Bible known as Codex Amiatinus, a 75-pound book. Its dedication page shows that it was made in Britain in the 700s – or, that is what is showed before it was altered to appear to have come from somewhere else.

Although Codex Amiatinus weighs 75 pounds, our twelfth witness is much larger: Codex Gigas (Latin for “the

very big book”) three feet tall and weighing 165 pounds. Made in the 1200s, it contains the Latin text of the Bible and several other compositions, including works of Josephus. One thing that makes Codex Gigas special is the ancient character of part of its New Testament text. For most of the New Testament, Codex Gigas has a fairly ordinary Vulgate text, but in the book of Acts, and in Revelation, it echoes an Old Latin ancestor.

Outside the interests of textual criticism, but still worth mentioning, is the full-page picture of the devil in this manuscript, and the tradition that the devil himself helped make it. By coincidence, the Old Latin text in Codex Gigas, which is sometimes called “*The Devil’s Bible*,” is related to the Latin text used by a fourth-century bishop named Lucifer.

Codex Gigas has something in common with our final witnesses, which are collected together in a manuscript known as Codex Guelferbytanus 64 Weissenburgensis. This manuscript and Codex Gigas both contain the text of *Etymologies*, a Latin composition written by Isidore of Seville around the year 600. It was a sort of “*Manual for Everything*” in the Middle Ages. In Codex Gigas, *Etymologies* is presented as a text that was in the same volume as the Bible. In Codex Guelferbytanus 64 Weissenburgensis, the Latin text of *Etymologies* is written on pages that had previously been part of several other MSS.

Those other MSS contained different parts of the New Testament. One set of pages is from a Greek manuscript that was made in the 500s, known as Codex Guelferbytanus A, also known as 024, or Codex P of the Gospels. Another set of pages is from 026 (also known as Codex Q), a Greek Gospels-manuscript made in the 400s. And a third set of pages was taken from a section of a

Latin-Gothic manuscript, containing Romans 11-15. This third set of pages is called Codex Carolinus, from the 500s.

Thus in addition to recycled pages taken from other books, we are looking at recycled pages from three New Testament MSS. The ink of these three MSS was washed off the parchment, and scribes then wrote *Etymologies* on the pages.

Fortunately some of the ink that was used by the scribes of 024 and 026 and Codex Carolinus adhered to the parchment, and survived being washed. But except for places in the manuscript that were not used when the pages were recycled to hold the text of *Etymologies*, even digital images of these palimpsests are very difficult to read. Electronic tools that help online viewers read layers of writing exist, such as the Mirador viewer, but sometimes there is nothing like careful in-person examination.

Constantine Tischendorf, the same researcher who obtained most of Codex Sinaiticus, examined them the pages of 026 and 024 directly, and published their contents in 1860 and 1869. An earlier researcher, F. A. Knittel, had already published the Latin and Gothic text of Codex Carolinus in 1762.

The 15 witnesses to the text of the New Testament that I have mentioned in this lecture all show in one way or another the advantages of direct consultation of the evidence. Today's researchers have an advantage that researchers two generations ago could only dream of: the ability to view high-quality digital images of hundreds of Greek New Testament MSS. This is the next-best thing to viewing the MSS themselves.

EXTRA CREDIT

The following resources provide access to photographs of MSS and manuscript-collections.

codexsinaiticus.org .

<https://digi.vatlib.it/> – Codex Vaticanus can be viewed at the website of the Vatican Library. Many more Greek MSS can be seen there, (Papyrus 75, Papyrus 72, Codex S, 157 *etc.*), plus MSS in Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, and other languages.

csntm.org – with pictures of 2,000 New Testament MSS, including 0212.

<https://www.bl.uk/greek-manuscripts> – The British Library has digitized over 100 continuous-text MSS and over 50 lectionaries, plus very many versional MSS.

<https://www.thetextofthegospels.com/2017/05/greek-new-testament-manuscripts-at.html> – Page-views from over 200 MSS at Saint Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai (taken with microfilm), are available to view at the website of the American Library of Congress. (The Library of Congress’ website also has microfilm page-views from over 70 MSS housed in or near Jerusalem.)

<https://www.thetextofthegospels.com/2015/10/manuscripts-at-bibliotheque-nationale.html> – Many manuscripts – some in microfilm images, and some from photographs – can be viewed at the National Library of France (and the Gallica website). (It is helpful to use a manuscript’s catalog-number, instead of its Gregory-Aland number, when using Gallica.) Both identification-numbers are provided in helpful lists at Wikipedia.

<https://www.thetextofthegospels.com/2017/07/greek-manuscripts-in-k-w-clark.html> – Duke University’s Kenneth W. Clark Collection of Greek MSS has over 100 Greek manuscripts.

<https://goodspeed.lib.uchicago.edu/> – The Goodspeed Manuscript Collection at the University of Chicago, one of the first institutions to put its MSS online, has digital page-views of more than 40 New Testament MSS, plus the forgery that was once known as “Archaic Mark” (which was included in the textual apparatus of the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland compilation as GA 2427).

<https://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/concern/works/hm50tr726?locale=en> – The Book of Kells.

<https://vimeo.com/164540291> – John Gills presents a detailed lecture about the Fadden More Psalter. John Gillis presented a detailed lecture about it in 2016. <https://vimeo.com/164540291>

<http://www.gotica.de/gissensis.html> – Pictures of Codex Gissensis can be found a website provided by Christian T. Petersen. (A 2003 analysis of its Gothic text by Magnus Snaedel is available at Academia.edu .)

The wall-inscription at Faras that contained the beginnings and endings of the four Gospels can be found in F. L. Griffith’s “Oxford Excavations in Nubia,” in the 1927 volume of *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, in Plate 64, sub-titled “Anchorite’s Grotto.”

Photographic page-views of Codex Amiatinus are at the Digital Repository of the Laurentian Library in Florence, Italy. The New Testament portion begins on page 796. A video about Codex Amiatinus is on YouTube. <http://mss.bmlonline.it/s.aspx?Id=AWOS3h2-l1A4r7GxMdaR&c=Biblia%20Sacra#/book>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0P1m1afVfFI>

Some digital page-views of Codex Gigas are at the website of the National Library of Sweden, and it can be viewed page by page at the World Digital Library. More New Testament MSS in Greek, Latin, Armenian, and other languages can also be seen at the World Digital Library.

<https://www.kb.se/in-english/the-codex-gigas.html>

<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/3042/view/1/1/>

The palimpsest that includes 024, 026, and Codex Carolinus can be seen at the website of the Herzog August Library.

<http://diglib.hab.de/mss/64-weiss/start.htm>

Tischendorf's transcription of 024 in Volume 6 of *Monumenta Sacra Inedita* is at Google Books.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=a4DIAAAAMAAJ>

Also available: Tischendorf's transcript of 026, in Volume 3.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=GPFBAAAAYAAJ>

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Textual Analysis and Doctrine (and Conjectural Emendation)

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving Your people the fruit of Your Spirit. Influence us to long to be more loving, modeling your love. Make us more joyful as we remember Your promises to us. Make us peaceful, in light of the peace you have provided. Make us patient, kind, and good, seeking to conform to the image of your Son. Make us gentle, seeking to represent Your kingdom in every circumstance. Give us composure, that all our actions may be guided by our awareness of Your presence. Through Your Son Christ our Lord, Amen.

In this chapter I investigate the most controversial area in the field of New Testament textual criticism: the creation and adoption of conjectural emendations. A conjectural emendation is a reading that is not directly supported by any witnesses. Conjectural emendations are driven by the premise that on some rare occasions, the reading that accounts for all other readings is a reading that is not extant.

Even in the earliest days of the printed text of the Greek New Testament, some conjectural emendations were proposed: in James 4:2, Erasmus did not think that it was plausible that the readers of James' letter would *kill*, so he introduced the idea that James originally wrote that his letters' recipients were *envious*. Erasmus' conjecture influenced some future translations including Martin Luther's German translation and the 1557 Geneva Translation.

By the late 1700s, so many conjectural emendations had been proposed that a printer named William Bowyer collected them in a book in 1772 that was

over 600 pages long, titled *Critical Conjectures and Observations on the New Testament*. Many of the conjectures were apologetically driven and resolved historical questions rather than textual ones, and many others implied a magical stupidity on the part of copyists.

In 1881, when Westcott and Hort released their Greek New Testament, they were willing to grant the possibility that 60 passages in the New Testament contain a primitive corruption, where only by conjecture could the original reading be recovered. Other scholars have seriously argued for the adoption of non-extant readings in a few other places.

We are not going to look into each and every one of those 60 passages here, but we will look into some of them, especially ones that have affected some English translations.

(1) Mark 15:25 – One of the earliest conjectural emendations is from Ammonius of Alexandria, from the 200s, whose proposal was passed along by Eusebius of Caesarea and others. Ammonius suggested a conjectural emendation that could harmonize Mark's statement (in Mark 15:25) that Jesus was crucified at the third hour, and John's statement (in John 19:14) that Jesus was being sentenced by Pilate at the sixth hour. Rather than imagine that different methods of hour-reckoning are involved, Ammonius proposed that the text of John 19:14 contains an ancient error, and that the Greek numeral Γ, which stands for "3," was misread as if it was the obsolete letter *digamma*, which stands for "6"). Some copyists apparently thought that this idea must be correct, and wrote the Greek equivalent of "sixth" in Mark 15:25; a few others (including the copyists of Codex L and Codex Δ) wrote the equivalent of "third" in John 19:14.

(2) John 1:13 – Tertullian, proposed that the extant reading of John 1:13 is not the original reading. In chapter 19 of his composition *On the Flesh of Christ*, he insisted that the reading that is found in our New Testaments is the result of heretical tampering, and that the verse initially referred specifically to Christ. Not only Tertullian but also Irenaeus and the author of the little-known *Epistula Apostolorum* appear to cite John 1:13 with a singular subject rather than a plural one.

(3) John 7:52 – No reading that is supported exclusively by papyri has been adopted in place of readings that were already extant. But a reading of Papyrus 66 comes very close to doing so. William Bowyer's 1772 book included a theory that had been expressed by Dr. Henry Owen about John 7:52: Owen had written, "The Greek text, I apprehend, is not perfectly right: and our English Version has carried it still farther from the true meaning. Is it possible the Jews could say, *that out of Galilee hath arisen no prophet;*" when several (no less perhaps than six) of their own prophets were natives of *that* country? . . . I conclude, that what they really said, and what the reading ought to be, was ... *That the prophet is not to arise out of Galilee:* from whence they supposed Jesus to have sprung."

The key component of Owen's proposal was vindicated by the discovery of Papyrus 66, which has the Greek equivalent of "the" before the word "prophet" – exactly what Owen thought was the original reading.

(4) John 19:29 – Some commentators have considered it implausible that John would report that the soldiers at the crucifixion would offer to Jesus a sponge filled with sour wine upon a stick of **hyssop**. In 1572 Joachim Camerarius the Elder proposed that originally John wrote about a

javelin, or spear, and that after this had been expressed by the words ὑσσῶ προπεριθέντες scribes mangled the text so as to produce the reference to hyssop. This conjecture was adopted by the scholars who made the New English Bible New Testament in 1961.

● **Acts 7:46** – Most textual critics choose between the reading of most MSS, which is the statement that David asked to be allowed to find a dwelling-place for the **God** of Jacob, and the statement that David asked to be allowed to find a dwelling-place for the **house** of Jacob (the reading in the Nestle-Aland compilation).

The second reading is more difficult, because it seems to say that David asked to build a house for a house. Even when the second “house” is understood to refer to the nation descended from Jacob, the problem does not go away, since the temple was for God, not for the people, who were not looking for a new place to reside in the days of David.

In 1881 Hort proposed that “οἶκω can hardly be genuine.” Instead of accepting the Byzantine reading, he conjectured that *neither* reading is original, and that the original text was τῷ Κυρίῳ (“the Lord”), which was contracted, and then inattentive copyists misread it as ΤΩ ΟΙΚΩ.

● **Acts 16:12** – Bruce Metzger was overruled by the other editors of the United Bible Societies’ Committee and an imaginary reading was adopted into the UBS compilation: πρώτης was adopted, instead of πρώτης της μερίδος, so as to mean that Philippi was a “first city” of the district of Macedonia. Metzger insisted that the extant text was capable of being translated as “a leading city of the district of Macedonia.”

● **Acts 20:28** – Bruce Metzger dedicated two full pages of his *Textual Commentary* to consider the variants in Acts 20:28. Did the original text refer to “the church of God,” or to “the church of the Lord,” or to “the church of the Lord and God”? The contest between “God” and “Lord” amounts to the difference of a single letter: if we set aside the Byzantine reading, once the sacred names are contracted, it’s a contest between ΘΥ, and ΚΥ.

If the contest is decided in favor of ΘΥ, then a second question arises: did Luke report that Paul stated that God purchased the church with His own blood?

Many apologists have used this verse to demonstrate Paul’s advocacy of the divinity of Christ. Hort, however, expressed echoed the suspicion of an earlier scholar, Georg Christian Knapp, that at the end of the verse, after the words “through His own blood”, there was originally the word υιοῦ (“Son”).

The Contemporary English Version, advertised as “an accurate and faithful translation of the original MSS,” seems to adopt this conjecture. It has the word “Son” in its text of Acts 20:28b: “Be like shepherds to God’s church. It is the flock that he bought with the blood of his own Son.”

● **First Corinthians 6:5** – The Greek evidence is in agreement about how this verse ends. But the Peshitta disagrees. The reading in the Peshitta implies that its Greek base-text included the phrase καὶ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ (“and a brother”).

The first part of Paul’s statement in this verse is something to the effect of, “Is there not even one person among you – just one! – who shall be able to judge between” – and that’s where the difficulty appears. The Greek text just mentions one brother, whereas the idea of

judgment between two parties seems to demand that more than one brother should be mentioned.

Although the *Textus Receptus* has the equivalent of “between his brother” – which is clearly singular – the KJV’s translators concluded the verse with “between his brethren” (which is clearly plural). The CSB, the NIV, and the NASB likewise render the text as if the verse ends with a plural word rather than a singular one. All such treatments of the text make the problem all the obvious: the first part of the sentence, in Greek, anticipates **two** brothers, while the second part of the sentence mentions only **one**.

In light of such strong internal evidence, Dr. Michael Holmes (the compiler of the SBLGNT), recommended the adoption of a conjectural emendation at this point, so that the Greek equivalent of “and the brother” appears at the very end of the verse.

First Corinthians 14:34-35 – A fairly recent development in textual analysis is the tendency to regard these verses as non-original even though the words are in every manuscript of First Corinthians. In a few copies they appear after verse 40. The usual form of this conjecture is that the words began as a marginal note and were gradually adopted into the text.

The late Dr. Gordon Fee advocated this view in his commentary on First Corinthians and it had grown in popularity since then, especially among interpreters who favor an egalitarian view on the question of gender roles in the church. The case for his proposal has weakened considerably however in light of the discovery that the *distigmai* (or “umlauts”) in the margins of Codex Vaticanus were added in the 1500s.

Galatians 4:25 – A much older scholarly debate has orbited the phrase “Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia.” This sentence is included in the Nestle-Aland compilation. It has been proposed that the entire phrase originated as a marginal note. This conjecture goes back at least to the early 1700s, with Richard Bentley. More recently, the star of Australia, Dr. Stephen Carlson, has argued in favor of the same idea.

Hebrews 11:37 – As the sufferings endured by spiritual heroes are listed, one of those things is not like the others: they are all somewhat unusual experiences, except for “they were tempted.” Some textual critics have suspected that the word ἐπειράσθησαν originated when a copyist committed dittography. In this case, the preceding word the means “they were sawn in two” – and that subsequent copyists changed it into something meaningful. Others have thought that this relatively common term replaced one that was less common – perhaps another word that meant “they were pierced,” or “they were sold”.

Presently the Nestle-Aland compilation, deviating from the 25th edition, simply does not include ἐπειράσθησαν in the text, following Papyrus 46. But Papyrus 13 appears to support the inclusion of ἐπειράσθησαν and it has a very impressive array of allies. Readers of the Nestle-Aland compilation should not get used to the current form of this verse, for it is a placeholder likely to be blown away by the appearance of new evidence or slightly different analysis.

● **First Peter 3:19** – The most popular conjectural emendation of all time was favored by the expert J. Rendel Harris, who read a very brief form of it in William Bowyer’s book. The extant text of First Peter 3:19 says “in

which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison.” Verse 18 refers to Christ, and nobody else is introduced into the text, so verse 19 has been understood to mean that during the time between Jesus’ death and resurrection, He visited the realm of the dead, and visited the spirits of those who had been disobedient in the days of Noah, prior to the great flood – and delivered a message to them.

Harris proposed that the original text was different, and that Peter had in mind a scene that is related in the pseudepigraphical Book of Enoch. In this text, Enoch is depicted delivering a message of condemnation to the fallen spirits who corrupted human beings so thoroughly that the great flood was introduced as the means of amputating the moral infection they had induced.

Harris proposed that the opening words in 3:19 were originally ἐν ᾧ καὶ Ἐνώχ (“in which also Enoch”), assigning the subsequent action not to Christ, but to Enoch.

There are two ways in which the name “Enoch” could have fallen out of the sentence.

1. If the original text were Ἐνώχ (without ἐν ᾧ καὶ), then, in majuscule script, the *chi* was susceptible to being misread as an abbreviation for the word καὶ (“and”). A copyist could decide to write the whole word instead of the abbreviation, and thus Enoch’s name would become ἐν ᾧ καὶ.

2. Or, if the original text were ἐν ᾧ καὶ Ἐνώχ, a copyist could read the *chi* as a abbreviation for καὶ, and assume that the scribe who made his exemplar had inadvertently repeated three words. Attempting a correction, he removed “Ἐνώχ.”

Answering the charge that the introduction of Enoch’s name “disturbs the otherwise smooth context:” a reference to Enoch is **not** out of place, inasmuch as

Enoch's story sets the stage for the story of Noah and his family, whose deliverance through water Peter frames as a pattern of salvation.

If this conjectural emendation were adopted, it would have at least a little doctrinal impact, by lessening the Biblical basis for the phrase "He descended into hell" found in the Apostles' Creed.

● **First Peter 3:10** – We encounter an imaginary Greek reading that has been adopted into the text of the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament. Rejecting the assortment of contending variant offered by the Greek MSS, the editors have preferred the reading that is implied by a reading for which the external support is only extant in Coptic and Syriac. However, the judgment of the scholars who gave up on the extant Greek readings was premature.

The text is sufficiently clear with the reading, "will be found," while it is also puzzling enough to provoke attempts at simplification.

In Conclusion:

Only two of these conjectural emendations is mentioned in the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament. The 27th edition listed over 200.

Some readers may be taken aback by the idea that some of the inspired words in the Word of God can only be reconstructed in the imaginations of scholars. A realistic pushback against the idea of adopting **any** conjectural emendation is the question, "*Does it really seem feasible that every scribe in every transmission-stream got it wrong?*" If scholars reject *singular* readings simply because they are singular, then non-existent readings should be even more disqualified, as a point of consistency. It is also very inconsistent to criticize

advocates of poorly attested readings only to turn around and advocate readings with *zero* external support.

It has been said that New Testament textual criticism is both an art and a science. But it should be all science, and not art. It is an enterprise of reconstruction, not construction. Its *methods* may validly be creative and inventive (and even intuitive) but not its *product*. Conjectural emendation is the only aspect of textual criticism that potentially involves the researcher's artistic or creative skill.

No conjectural emendation should ever be placed in a compilation of the text of the Greek New Testament. At the same time, the task of proposing conjectural emendations as *possible* readings which account for their rivals serves a valuable purpose: to demonstrate the heavy weight of the internal evidence in favor of such readings in the event that they are discovered in a Greek manuscript.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Mark 1:41

If you read Mark 1:41 in an NIV printed before 2011, and an NIV made after 2011, you will find two different statements. In Mark 1:41, the 1984 edition of the NIV said that when a leper approached Jesus seeking to be healed, Jesus was “filled with compassion.” In 2011, the NIV was revised in order to adopt many of the changes that had been introduced in the discontinued TNIV. Among those changes was the introduction of a different form of Mark 1:41 which states that Jesus, rather than feeling compassion, was “indignant,” that is, angry.

Those two different forms of Mark 1:41 – “filled with compassion” versus “indignant” – echo two textual variants. It’s not as if the translators have emphasized different nuances of the same Greek text. The Greek base-text of the 2011 NIV is different from the Greek text of the 1984 NIV at this particular point. The 1984 NIV (and the ESV, HCSB, and other versions) reflects the Greek word *σπλαγχνισθεις* which is found in the overwhelming majority of Greek MSS (including Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Alexandrinus, and about 1,600 others (plus the non-Greek equivalent in thousands of non-Greek copies).

But Codex Bezae has a different reading: *οργισθεις*. When we turn to the Latin MSS, a mountain of evidence favors *misertus*, which supports *σπλαγχνισθεις*. However four Old Latin MSS favor *οργισθεις*. One of those four is the Latin text which accompanies the Greek text in Codex Bezae. Codex Bezae is not only a Greek manuscript; it is Greek-Latin; it is arranged in alternating pages – a page of Greek text is followed by the same passage in Latin, followed by a page of Greek text, followed by the same passage in Latin, and so forth.

The reason why the compilers of the NIV's base-text have rejected the text that is supported by over 99.999% of the external evidence runs as follows: copyists were more likely to adjust the text to relieve difficulties, rather than to introduce difficulties. Codex Bezae's textual variant in Mark 1:41 is more difficult than its rival, and therefore (it is claimed), it should be preferred. A typical defense of *οργισθεις* is built on and around this question: *Which is more likely: that scribes would be puzzled by "filled with compassion" and would replace it with "angry," or that scribes would be puzzled by "angry" and would replace it with "filled with compassion"?* And there the question is left, as if this calculation tips the scales.

There is more to the story.

Another question should be asked: if early copyists encountered *οργισθεις* in their exemplars and thought it was so problematic that it must be changed, why did they replace it with *σπλαγχνισθεις* instead of simply omitting the word? In the parallel-passages in Matthew 8:2-3 and Luke 5:12-13, there is no mention of Jesus becoming filled with compassion. If a reckless copyist was profoundly puzzled by an exemplar of Mark which read *οργισθεις* in Mark 1:41, his natural reaction would be to harmonize the verse to the parallel-passages by making a simple excision. Yet instead of a finding a harmonistic omission, we see *σπλαγχνισθεις* dominating every Greek transmission-stream, with the exception of Codex Bezae and a few MSS which, as a result of harmonization, do not have *σπλαγχνισθεις* or *οργισθεις*. (Minuscule 1358, which has been erroneously cited as support for *οργισθεις*, is one such manuscript. Dr. Jeff Cate affirmed that a few Greek MSS display neither *σπλαγχνισθεις* nor *οργισθεις* in Mark 1:41 (GA 169, 505, 508, 1358, and lectionary 866). (In minuscule 783, an entire line was skipped at the beginning of Mark 1:41, but the error was corrected; *σπλαγχνισθεις*

εκτεινας την χειρα αυτου appears in the margin.)

Secondly, we do not encounter a consistent aversion on the part of copyists to the notion of Jesus being angry. In the same manuscript in which we find οργισθεις in Mark 1:41, we find a harmonization in which Jesus' anger is emphasized: in Codex Bezae, the text of Luke 6:10 is supplemented with the words εν οργη, that is, *in anger*, transplanted from Mark 3:5. Whether we consider passages such as Mark 9:19 (where Jesus expresses exasperation), and Mark 10:14 (where Jesus is greatly displeased with His disciples' actions), and Mark 14:6 (where Jesus curtly corrects His disciples), there is not much evidence to justify the theory that early copyists of the Gospel of Mark were averse to depictions of Jesus' anger.

Third, a demonstrable scribal mechanism – one for which there is abundant evidence – accounts for οργισθεις as a creation of a copyist. As we stand in the vestibule of that subject, let's ask a question: how could anyone, in the course of translating the Gospel of Mark into Latin, start with σπλαγγνισθεις and end up with *iratus (in anger)* rather than *misertus (in pity)*? Two theories have been proposed, arguing that this happened due to a careless mistake.

In the first theory, the Latin text read, *I̅s* [i.e., *Iesus*, contracted as a sacred name] *autem miseratus eius*, and a copyist accidentally wrote "M" only once instead of twice, producing *I̅s autem is eratus eius*. A subsequent copyist, interpreting the second occurrence of *I̅s* as a superfluous repetition of Jesus' contracted name, removed it, thus producing the sentence, *I̅s autem eratus eius*, and the shift from *eratus* to *iratus* was then merely a matter of orthography.

In the second theory (proposed in 1891 by J. Rendel Harris), the Latin text in Codex Bezae descended

from a Latin translation which rendered σπλαγχνισθεις by the ambiguous Latin term *motus*, as if to say that Jesus was “stirred” or “moved.” This ambiguous term was subsequently replaced, sometimes by *misertus* and sometimes – erroneously – by *iratus*. Harris proceeded to propose that the Greek text in Codex Bezae was conformed to the Latin text alongside it, and that this phenomenon of retro-translation from Latin into Greek is the mechanism that produced the reading οργισθεις.

Harris was partly right. As we proceed to a third (and better) explanation of the origin of οργισθεις, it will be worthwhile to notice some examples of the influence of the Latin text of Codex D upon its Greek text. In his 1891 article, *A Study of Codex Bezae*, published in *Texts & Studies*, Harris gave many examples of Latinization in this manuscript’s Greek text; I will point out a few of the many Latinizations that occur in Codex Bezae in the Gospel of Mark.

- Mark 1:10 – The usual reading σχιζομενους (*torn*) is replaced by ηνυγμενους (*opened*), based on the Latin *apertos* (*opened*).
- Mark 1:33 – The word αυτον is added, based on the Latin *eius*.
- Mark 1:38 – The usual reading εχομενας κωμπολεις (*neighboring towns*) is replaced by ενγυς κωμας και εις τας πολεις, a loose harmonization to Matthew 9:35, based on the Latin *proximos vicos et civitates* (*nearby towns and cities*).
- Mark 2:25 – Codex D adds οντες (*were*) at the end of the verse, to correspond to the Latin *erant* (*were*).
- Mark 3:5 – Instead of the usual reading πωρωσει (*hardness*), Codex Bezae reads νεκρωσει (*deadness*), based on the Latin *emortua*.

- Mark 3:5 – Codex Bezae ends the verse with ευθεως (*immediately*), based on the Latin *statim* (*immediately*).
- Mark 3:6 – Codex Bezae, instead of stating that the Pharisees *took* counsel (εποιουν, the Byzantine reading), or that the Pharisees *gave* counsel (εδιδουν, the reading of B L 565 and a smattering of other MSS), says that they *undertook* counsel (ποιουντες), corresponding to the Latin *faciebant*.
- Mark 6:20 – Codex Bezae adds the word ειναι (*to be*) at the end of the verse, corresponding to the Latin *esse* (*to be*).
- Mark 6:39 – where the usual text is συμποσια συμποσια (*group by group*), the Latin text here is *secundum contubernia* (*according to groups*), and accordingly the Greek text in Codex Bezae is κατα την συμποσιαν. This is manifestly a Greek translation of the Latin translation.
- Mark 7:25 – The usual Greek text has no conjunction, stating that the woman, having arrived, fell at Jesus' feet. But in Codex Bezae, the word και (*and*) has been added, expressing the word *et* that is found in the Latin text.
- Mark 8:2 – Codex Bezae adjusts the Greek text and adds the word τουτου, echoing the Latin text which includes *istam*.
- Mark 10:16 – Mark uses the words Και εναγκαλισαμεος αυτα to describe how Jesus took the children in His arms. The Latin text of Codex Bezae, however, has something very different, as if the Latin translator misconstrued the meaning of εναγκαλισαμεος: *Et convocans eos* ("And He summoned them," or, "And He called them together"). Accordingly, the Greek text in Codex Bezae has been altered to mean what the Latin mistranslation means: instead of εναγκαλισαμεος Codex Bezae reads προσκαλεσαμενος.

Here in Mark 10:16 we have a situation that is very similar to the one we encounter in Mark 1:41:

- Codex Bezae has a reading that no other Greek manuscript has.
- Codex Bezae's unique Greek reading agrees with its Latin text.
- A relatively rare word is involved.
- The second half of the Greek word in Codex Bezae resembles the second half of the word that is usually found.

The phenomenon observed in 10:16 was also at work in 1:41. An early translator, in the course of translating the Greek text of Mark into Latin, was puzzled by the term *σπλαγχνισθεις* – at least, at its first occurrence in Mark. This is understandable, inasmuch as if one were to dissect the word in search of its meaning, one might conclude that it meant that Jesus was “gut-wrenched,” or that he “reacted viscerally.” As the translator sifted through the surrounding verses for further insight, he found in verse 43 that Jesus gave the healed man a strict order. So the translator concluded that in this context, *σπλαγχνισθεις* meant “deeply moved” and that this could validly be rendered into Latin by *iratus* – dismayed, perturbed, angry.

With *iratus* thus entering the Old Latin transmission-stream, it was almost inevitable that when Greek-Latin codices were made, someone who was more familiar with the Latin text than with the Greek text would adjust the Greek text of Mark 1:41 in order to make it agree with the Latin text. The result is what we observe in Codex Bezae.

This is not an isolated incident. Retro-translation occurs all over the text of Codex Bezae. In Matthew 10:42, where the usual text is *ποτηριον ψυχρου* (literally, a cup of

cold; the presence of a beverage in the cup being implied), Codex Bezae reads ποτηριον υδατος (a cup *of water*). That is not an arbitrary paraphrase; it is a retro-translation based on the Latin text.

When the impact of retro-translation upon the Greek text of Codex Bezae is appreciated, the likelihood that the reading οργισθεις in Mark 1:41 is original effectively falls to zero. It echoes a mistranslation in the Latin text that accompanied the Greek text in the codex.

When one sifts through commentaries and articles about Mark 1:41, it is not easy to find any that mention Codex Bezae's Latin-based variants.

The authors are, it seems, either ignorant of this highly relevant feature of the Greek text in Codex Bezae, or afraid to mention it. Numerous prominent writers and commentators, such as Daniel Wallace, Bill Mounce, Mark Strauss, Ben Witherington III, Douglas Moo, and Philip Comfort have kept this feature of the manuscript (which explains many of its anomalies including its unique reading in Mark 1:41), a tightly guarded secret. Not one of them, as far as I can tell, has ever mentioned it in any discussion of Mark 1:41.

If it seems as if there has been some momentum among commentators to prefer the Latinized variant in Mark 1:41, using the excuse that they are preferring the variant that explains its rivals, or that they are preferring the more difficult reading, perhaps it is because there is momentum among commentators to lose touch with (or to never become acquainted with) the special characteristics of the relevant evidence.

When the impact of retro-translation upon the Greek text of Codex Bezae is appreciated, the likelihood that the reading οργισθεις in Mark 1:41 is original effectively falls to zero. An incorrect text-critical decision currently mars the English text in the New International

Version. The Common English Bible (CEB) perpetuates the same mistake, stating in Mark 1:41 that Jesus was “incensed.” The New International Reader’s Version (NIRV) begins Mark 1:41 with the sentence, “Jesus became angry.” The Easy-to-Read Version (ERV) distributed by The Bible League begins Mark 1:41 with the sentence, “These last words made Jesus angry” – a paraphrase which is not only based on an erroneous compilation, but also conveys a cause-and-effect that has no basis in any Greek text.

The producers and distributors of the NIV, the NIRV, the CEB, and the ERV must reverse the unfortunate and unwise decision that the compilers of their Greek New Testament base-text made in Mark 1:41. Until then, Bible-readers should not touch those versions as long as they contain such a prominent error that conveys a meaning contrary to the meaning of the original text.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

New Testament Translations to Avoid

Often when people are asked, “What English version of the New Testament should I read?”, the answer is given “*The one that you can understand the best.*” But there are some exceptions. Some English versions of the New Testament are NOT trustworthy and should NOT be regarded as valid representatives of the meaning of the original text of the New Testament. In this chapter, I shall focus on a few such monstrosities.

The New World Translation is published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. It is a paragon of deception and poorly disguised doctrinal adulteration and dilution. Do not use it for any purpose other than origami-practice.

The Clear Word, by Jack J. Blanco, is Copyright © 2003 by Review and Herald® Publishing Association, features myriad inaccuracies and its additions of non-Biblical material into the text render it unusable for any purpose other than recycling into pulp. (The Old Testament portion is also, in a word, terrible.) One example of the textual corruption in *The Clear Word* may suffice: at John 3:14 it says, “The miracle of the new birth was taught by Moses when he put a brass serpent on a makeshift cross and held it up for people to look at. All those bitten by snakes who looked at it in faith were healed. That power didn’t come from the cross Moses made, but from the Son of God who would come and die on a cross. He will soon be lifted up between heaven and earth for all to see.”

For comparison, here is John 3:14 in the KJV: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”

The Passion Translation – a recent translation of the New Testament, Psalms, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs by Brian Simmons – is also so adulterated that one marvels at the chutzpah of Briam Simmons to dare to call this travesty a translation.

The fingerprints of the New Apostolic Reformation and the influence of Brian Simmons' delusions about the forgery known as Shem-Tob, the influence of sloppy scholarship (which is not scholarship; it is just a side-effect of ignorance), and Simmons' dependence upon the writings of Victor N. Alexander, are all over *The Passion Translation*. My recommendation: on a cold day in January, **burn it**.

The NRSVue (Updated Edition) should also be avoided. It is an example of the products made by those who St. Paul mentioned in Second Corinthians 2:17 who were peddling the word of God. The NRSVue's translators, in First Corinthians 6:9 (and elsewhere, are guilty of committing precisely that sort of adulteration – subtly gagging the apostle Paul so as to allow the sin of sodomy. Dr. Jennifer Knust shall have much to answer for on the day of judgment, unless she repents.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Who's Making Your New Testament?

When the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* was published in 2012, it was followed by *A User's Guide to the Nestle-Aland 28 Greek New Testament* in September of 2013. The author of this introduction to NA28 is David Trobisch, who in 2011 became a member of the editorial committee entrusted with the preparation of future editions of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

Trobisch's *User's Guide to NA28* has been met with some concerns among evangelicals. Dr. Daniel B. Wallace, for example, noted that Trobisch "got some facts wrong," and recommended the removal of an entire chapter. I too have some concerns. One might expect all of the compilers of *Novum Testamentum Graece* to be Christians, since future compilations of this text will likely be the basis for future translations of the New Testament used in Christian congregations. However, Trobisch was a fellow of *The Jesus Project*, an undertaking of a group called the Center for Inquiry. His fellow-members include Frank Zindler (an atheist and a Jesus Mythicist, who denies that Jesus ever existed), Paul Kurtz (President of the International Academy of Humanism), James Crossley (an atheist), Robert M. Price (Jesus Seminar member, and also a Jesus Mythicist), and Richard Carrier (another Jesus Mythicist).

The Center for Inquiry's website defines the organization: "A world-wide movement of humanists, skeptics, freethinkers, and atheists." Its members' mission is plainly stated: **"To foster a secular society based on science, reason, freedom of inquiry, and humanist values."** The website used to state that it is a priority of the Center for Inquiry "to oppose and supplant the

mythological narratives of the past, and the dogmas of the present.”

I suspect that the phrase “dogmatic influence of religion” encompasses the historical doctrines of the Christian church. One of the research-programs of the Center for Inquiry mentioned at the website is the *Council for Secular Humanism*. It is rather surprising to learn that a member of that organization, which is clearly dedicated to erode and marginalize the cultural influence of Christianity, is the same individual who wrote *A User’s Guide to the Nestle-Aland 28 Greek New Testament*.

In a speech delivered in 2015, David Trobisch referred to the text about Jesus promoted by the second-century heretic Marcion as “the oldest Gospel,” and he began that speech with the claim that “Scholars now know of a Gospel-book that is probably older than the Gospels that are part of the New Testament.”

Trobisch also claimed that the author of the Gospel of Luke used Josephus as a source. Trobisch has also written that the opening sentences of Acts refer, not to the closing verses of Luke, but instead to the closing verses of John – implying that the composition of Acts post-dates the collection of the four canonical Gospels. He has also written, “Historically speaking Paul probably did not heal.” Trobisch’s doubts about Paul’s healing-miracles might not affect Trobisch’s text-critical work. But does anyone think that if a textual critic believes, as Trobisch seems to, that Acts was written in the middle of the second century, this will have no impact on his text-critical decisions pertaining to the text of Acts?

And does anyone think that it does not matter that Trobisch believes (as he has written that he does) that “scribes and editors felt free to revise the Greek text during the fourteen centuries of its manuscript

transmission,” rather than the normal view that a scribes’ primary ambition was to make an accurate copy of the text of his exemplar? Do any specialists besides Trobisch believe that a typical copyist “felt free” to revise the text of the Gospels? There were *some* reckless copyists, but to present them as if they were typical is like saying that human beings have six digits on each hand.

There is a pastoral concern here. The statement of faith of the National Association of Evangelicals (which affirms Christ’s virgin birth, His bodily resurrection, His deity, His future return, the final judgment, *etc.*) affirms the infallibility of the Bible. So why are American evangelicals – D. A. Carson, James R. White, Craig Evans, Bill Mounce, Steve Green, *et al* – pleased to observe that the task of compiling the text of the Greek New Testament has been entrusted to someone who, as far as I can tell, denies every one of those tenets of Christianity? Why are they perfectly content to have a hyper-liberal edit the book on their pulpit, and on the pulpits of evangelical churches throughout the world?

It may be that our wise evangelical leaders have reckoned that just because a fox is a fox, that is no reason why a fox cannot be a skillful guardian of the chicken coop. Nothing but *bias*, they might insist, would elicit a suspicion that an unbeliever might – whether purposefully or unconsciously – render the base-text of the New Testament unstable, or introduce readings into the text which have very little manuscript-support (or even none). “It would be a gross employment of the genetic fallacy,” someone might insist, “if Christian translators deliberately avoided using a base-text compiled by someone ideologically opposed to Bible-believing Christianity.”

Against such politically correct wisdom I protest in the name of common sense. The gold of the king of Sodom was as solid as the next man’s. Nevertheless

Abraham (in Genesis 14:21-24) refused to receive any of it. There is a principle at work there that should not be ignored.

Second Corinthians 6:14 says, *“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what partnership does righteousness have with lawlessness? And what fellowship does light have with darkness?”*

Saint Paul stressed this theme for several verses: *“What agreement has the temple of God with idols?”* He utilizes two stirring passages from the Old Testament in his call to the church: *“Come out from among them.”*

I ask my fellow American evangelicals: what co-operation can there be between Christ-centered churches, and members of the Center for Inquiry? No one can serve two masters. Americans need to pay closer attention to the ethical and philosophical and religious testimony of the individuals preparing their Greek New Testament.

One American evangelical who is guilty of misleading his own congregation is John MacArthur of Grace Community Church in California (USA).

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

John MacArthur: Clueless

Our heavenly Father, your son warned us to beware of false shepherds, and to beware of shepherds who do not know how to handle your word. Make their hearts malleable and humble, and make them welcome to receive a loving rebuke. May all of our hearts be shaped according to the pattern of love exhibited by Jesus Christ and his disciples. Amen.

Grace To You, a California-based ministry, is still spreading false statements about Mark 16:9-20 that are found in Dr. John MacArthur's infamous sermon *The Fitting End to Mark's Gospel*. Here are some of them.

- MacArthur conveyed that copyists of New Testament books wrote one letter, and then took a bath, and then wrote another letter, and took a bath, and so forth. This falsehood insults the intelligence of the congregation.

- MacArthur said that all MSS of the New Testament survived after the Council of Nicea in 325 because no one was banning them or destroying them. Ridiculous. The natural effects of humidity destroyed many papyrus MSS. There were still areas where Christianity was opposed. And there are many cases in which Christians themselves destroyed ancient MSS by recycling their parchment to use as material with which to make new books.

- MacArthur falsely stated that the earliest copies of Biblical texts are Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. The Dead Sea Scrolls are older than those two MSS, and so are some New Testament papyrus MSS (P52, P104, P45, *et al*).

- MacArthur said that Codex Vaticanus contains both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It should be clarified that Codex Vaticanus does not contain the books of First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Revelation.

I dare any member of Grace Community Church to pick up a book missing those books and say "I have in my hands a complete Bible."

- MacArthur, referring to Latin MSS, conveyed that there are "eight thousand copies going back to the fourth century." What he should have said is that the Vulgate was translated in the fourth century, and our extant copies of the Vulgate were produced later. It is not as if all existing copies of the Vulgate read the same as the Vulgate as it existed at the end of the fourth century.

- MacArthur stated, referring to Syriac MSS, "There are 350 copies that go back to the 200s, very ancient MSS." Ridiculous. In real life, the number of Syriac MSS with text from the New Testament that were made in the 200s is **zero**. The 350 Syriac MSS to which MacArthur refers are, I suspect, copies of the Peshitta, which was produced in the late 300s.

- MacArthur, after describing Greek, Latin, and Syriac MSS, said, "When you compare all of these MSS, they're all saying exactly the same thing." That is outrageously false – so false that I deduce (assuming that John MacArthur had no desire to deceive) that John MacArthur does not know very much at all about the contents of ancient MSS of the New Testament. It boggles the mind that MacArthur was capable of saying such a thing in the course of a sermon in which he rejected Mark 16:9-20, because **in those thousands of copies of the Vulgate, and in those dozens of copies of the Peshitta, Mark 16:9-20 is in the text**. MacArthur makes it seem as if the opposite is the case. *Grace To You spreads*

this severe misrepresentation of the evidence every day they keep MacArthur's sermon online.

- MacArthur claimed that using 32,000 Scripture-quotations made by patristic writers, it is not only possible to reconstruct the entire New Testament, but that "it matches perfectly all other manuscript sources." This too is absurd.

A brief investigation of practically any major patristic writers – Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Basil of Jerusalem, Chrysostom – will show that their quotations do not match perfectly with each other, let alone with "all other manuscript sources." MacArthur's claim is preposterous. The staff of Grace To You should be ashamed to participate in the circulation of such nonsense.

- MacArthur claimed that over 19,000 quotations from the Gospels in patristic writings "read the Gospel text the very same way you read them in your Bible today." This is not just one absurdity. It is a tower of absurdities. It is a statement which can only be made by an honest man if he has vigilantly avoided studying the materials about which he speaks. Anyone who picks up an ordinary UBS Greek New Testament and reads its textual apparatus with a modicum of understanding will see that there are hundreds of textual contests in which some patristic writers favor one reading, and other patristic writers favor a rival reading. Grace to You cannot be trusted while it spreads claims that are refuted by a basic familiarity with the evidence.

- MacArthur conveyed that the original text of the New Testament was "preserved and protected as it was passed down." Without testing this claim, I merely ask, "Considering that out of 1,670 Greek MSS of the Gospel of Mark, only three end the text at 16:8, how can MacArthur say in one breath that the original text has been preserved

and protected as the text was passed down, and then say in the next breath that 99.8% of the Greek MSS of Mark contain a “bad ending”?

- MacArthur explicitly appealed to the number of MSS as evidence of the preservation of the original text: “we have **so many** accurate, consistent MSS that we know without hesitation that what we hold in our hands is an English translation of the original with no loss.” By “many,” he cannot mean *three*. But if he were to consult 99.8% of the Greek MSS of Mark (plus lectionaries, in which Mark 16:9-20 is routinely found), he would find the passage that he rejects.

- MacArthur claimed that the oldest manuscript we have of Homer’s *Iliad* is from the thirteenth century A.D.: “We don’t have anything between the thirteenth century and the eighth century B.C. of Homer’s *Iliad*.” That is false. Over two dozen fragments of the *Iliad* exist which were produced before the thirteenth century A.D. Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 560, from the 200s, is just one example.

- MacArthur claimed that Irenaeus, a prominent Christian writer in the 100s, was aware of “other endings starting to float around.” This too is false. In real life, Irenaeus – writing well over a century before Codex Vaticanus was made – clearly quoted Mark 16:19, stating that he was quoting from near the end of Mark’s Gospel-account. This shows that as far as Irenaeus’ MSS of Mark were concerned (and Irenaeus had been in Asia Minor, and southern Gaul, and Rome), the Gospel of Mark ended with verses 9-20. Contrary to MacArthur’s claim, the only way in which the Gospel of Mark ended, as far as we can tell from Irenaeus’ testimony, is with verses 9-20 included. Irenaeus does not express an awareness of the existence of MSS of Mark that end at the end of verse 8. Irenaeus does not indicate in any way that he is aware

of MSS of Mark that end with the “Shorter Ending.” MacArthur’s statement about Irenaeus is 100% fictitious and 100% misleading.

- MacArthur claims that two other second-century writers – Justin Martyr and Tatian – also “show knowledge of other endings.” That is false. The only ending of Mark attested to in any way by Justin Martyr and Tatian is the ending that consists of verses 9-20.

- MacArthur claims that several endings were composed by people who tried “to help Mark a little bit with his abrupt ending.” However this too is false; exactly one alternative ending, the Shorter Ending, was created in Egypt, where the text had formerly circulated with no words after the end of verse 8. Except for the Shorter Ending – which stands alone after (most of) Mark 16:8 in exactly one Latin manuscript, and which appears along with verses 9-20 (or at least verse 9; incidental damage having affected the rest) in six Greek MSS (sometimes in the margin, sometimes with notes – see my book for details) – there are no endings of Mark after 16:8 that do not involve the presence of verses 9-20. When Grace To You spreads the claim that “several endings” were floating around, as if referring to several independent compositions, Grace To You misleads people.

And where are the faculty members of The Masters Seminary on this subject? Where are the staff-members of Grace To You? Or the officers of Grace Community Church? These trusted men are entirely silent as far as I can tell – either too scared, too apathetic, too distracted, or too misinformed to adequately address the wild inaccuracies that are being spread daily by their school’s founder.

Grace To You has one proper course of action: take down the video in which John MacArthur made these false claims. This is not about debatable points of theology.

This is not even about whether or not Mark 16:9-20 belongs in the text. It is about whether Grace To You's leadership and staff want to spread false statements or not.

If Dr. MacArthur and Grace To You continue spreading these claims, after being informed that the claims are false, the only conclusion that can reasonably be drawn is that the persons at Grace To You who continue to spread false claims *have decided to do so*.

I have condensed my message to John MacArthur in a song (sung to the tune of "The Star-Spangled Banner")

—

John D. MacArthur, hear,
Grave to You also fear.
Judgment has come.
You say, "correct me" if
ever I go astray,
so hear me when I say,
you have strayed far.

John, you have told your flock
those who wrote Gospel books
took a thousand baths.
John that is a big lie
And such absurdi- ties
make you both look and be
ugly to God.

Grave to You, you have spread
this crazy claim, which said
"after Nicea, all
New Testament manuscripts
were not destroyed," but that,
you know very well,
is simply not true.

Masters of ignorance, who are not innocent,
Please grow a spine.
Eight thousand Latin books,
and hundreds in Syriac
all have, and do not lack,
Mark 16 nine. [and the next eleven verses too!]

Johnny Mac, if you say,
“The Bible, down to this day,
it is all pure,”
How could you ever say
verses nine to twenty of
Mark 16 constitute
a bad ending?

Johnny Mac, brother dear,
Wake up and shake with fear:
Guilty of lies.
If what you say is true –
[“we have **so many** accurate, consistent manuscripts that
we know that what we hold in our hands is an English
translation of the original with no loss.”] –
means that Mark 16:9-20
is the Word of God.

Grave To You, learn to think,
because you really stink
at math. Observe:
“Other endings” you have said,
“Other endings” you have said,
“in the second century,”
floated around.

Let Grave To You beware.
Let them stand, if they dare,
and face the facts.
They have been spreading lies
wearing their own disguise.

Confess and realize
God sees all things.

Dear John retract your lies,
and with your weeping eyes
perceive the truth.

Mark did not end so bad,
but to him who does bad,
I warn you, John, God says,
he will end you.

CHAPTER THIRTY

A Call to Equitable Eclecticism

Our heavenly Father, equip you people to honor you with diligent and patient work. We cannot undo mistakes committed in the past. We can in many cases return to the intersection where a poor choice was made, and make a better decision. Give your people wisdom in the choices ahead. Amen.

The textual criticism of the Gospels is a scientific task which has two goals. The primary goal is the reconstruction of the text of each Gospel in its original form, that is, the form in which it was initially received by the church. The secondary goal is the reconstruction of the transmission-history of the text. This involves both the evaluation of rival readings in specific variant-units, and the evaluation of the documents in which the readings are found. Hort, in his 1881 *Introduction*, argued that if superior readings are consistently found in a particular document or set of documents, in cases that seem easy to decide, then the character of the documents should be a factor when considering harder cases.

Hort expressed this principle as an axiom: *“Knowledge of documents should precede final judgment upon readings.”* The consideration of individual variant-units should never be completely detached from the question of the relative quality of the witnesses, or from the question of how groups of variants became characteristic readings of text-types. Accurate text-critical judgments will assist in the estimation of the relative values of witnesses, and in the reconstruction of the text’s transmission-history; simultaneously, accurate assignments of relative value to the witnesses, combined

with accurate reconstructions of the text's transmission-history, will assist specific text-critical decisions.

The textual critic who engages this method should vigilantly avoid circularity; the adoption of a reading because "the best manuscripts" support it ought to be a last resort. After observing, on analytical grounds, that certain witnesses seem to consistently contain the best readings, a textual critic might then be tempted to abandon the initial approach which led to that premise, and proceed to use the premise itself to justify a tendency to adopt the readings of those witnesses. Similarly, a textual critic who notices that a group of witnesses tends to contain the worst readings might be tempted to reject the remainder of the testimony of that group of witnesses. If a textual critic proceeds to build on both such premises, the premises will virtually determine the results of the rest of the analysis. The "best manuscripts" will seemingly get better and better.

Competing Models of Transmission-History

The model of transmission-history adopted by a textual critic has a strong effect upon the values which a textual critic assigns to the testimony of groups of witnesses, and therefore also upon the final evaluation of variants. In this respect, the approach which I advocate – Equitable Eclecticism – resembles the approach used by Hort. However, Equitable Eclecticism yields an archetype which is significantly different from the Revised Text produced by Westcott & Hort, and from the modern descendants of the Revised Text (such as the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*). This is because research and discoveries subsequent to Westcott & Hort have required the adoption of a transmission-model significantly different from the one used by Hort.

Hort, building on premises developed by previous investigators, reasoned that the Byzantine Text was essentially the result of a recension that consisted of readings drawn from manuscripts with Alexandrian or Western readings; Byzantine variants were derived from the Alexandrian Text, or the Western Text, or both, or, in some cases, came into being during the recension. Hort therefore rejected all distinctive Byzantine variants. After dismissing the Western Text as the result of scribal creativity, embellishment, and a general lack of discipline (with the exception of a smattering of readings), Hort declared the Alexandrian Text (which he called the “Neutral” text, tinting the terminology in favor of his theory) the only text-type which could possibly be regarded as the depository of the original text of the Gospels.

Hort’s endorsement of the Alexandrian Text was not absolute, but it was so strong that he openly stated that variants shared by the Alexandrian Text’s two flagship codices (B and Ⲛ) “should be accepted as the true readings until strong internal evidence is found to the contrary,” and “No readings of ⲚB can safely be rejected absolutely,” while “All distinctively Syrian” – that is, Byzantine – “readings must be at once rejected.”

Thus, in the approach used by Hort, the degree of favor that was given to the Alexandrian Text was matched only by the degree of disregard that was given to the Byzantine Text. The categorical rejection of Byzantine readings was a natural implications of Hort’s model of transmission-history in which the Western Text was derived from the Alexandrian Text, and the Byzantine Text was derived from both the Alexandrian Text and the Western Text.

However, Hort acknowledged that such a clear-cut genealogical model would be out of place if a

transmission-model persistently involved readings which all had some clearly ancient attestation.

(Hort's *Introduction*, page 286, § 373.)

This very thing, or something very close to it, was subsequently proposed by textual critics in the 1900s. Eminent scholars such as E. C. Colwell, G. D. Kilpatrick, and Kurt and Barbara Aland maintained, respectively, that "The overwhelming majority of readings," "almost all variants," and "practically all the substantive variants in the text of the New Testament" existed before the year 200. Nevertheless the Hortian text has not been overthrown. Only slightly changed, it has become entrenched in NA-28 and UBS-5 as the primary, and nearly exclusive, Greek New Testament used in seminaries.

With the discovery and publication of Egyptian New Testament papyri in the 1900s – beginning with Grenfell and Hunt's work at Oxyrhynchus – Hort's claim that the Alexandrian readings have a demonstrably greater antiquity than their rivals has eroded. Harry A. Sturz collected and categorized dozens of distinctive Byzantine variants which were supported by at least one early papyrus. Sturz's data does not vindicate the entire Byzantine Text (and we should not expect it to do so). What it **does** do is demonstrate that Hort's main reason for rejecting distinctive Byzantine readings was unsound. According to Hort's transmission-model, none of the early distinctive Byzantine readings listed by Sturz should exist. The fact that they obviously did exist, even in papyri found in Egypt, demonstrates that the Byzantine Text may, at any given point, attest to an ancient distinctive reading. Hort's theory of the origin of distinct Byzantine readings was wrong.

In addition, discoveries about the texts in the papyri, in early versions, and in early parchment codices

have contributed to the erosion of one of the building-blocks of Hort's approach: the proposal that conflations in the Byzantine Text demonstrate that it is later than the Alexandrian Text and the Western Text. As Edward Miller objected in 1897, eight conflations cannot justify the rejection of the entire Byzantine Text. They may be comparable to recently minted coins dropped in an ancient well.

Dr. Wilbur Pickering, in Appendix D of his book *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, showed that an apparent conflation exists in Codex Sinaiticus at John 13:24 (where the Alexandrian Text has και λεγει αυτω ειπε τις εστιν, the Byzantine Text has πυθεσθαι τις αν ειη, and Sinaiticus reads πυθεσθαι τις αν ειη περι ου ελεγεν, και λεγει αυτω ειπε τις εστιν). A conflation appears to occur in B at Ephesians 2:5 and at Colossians 1:12 (where the Western Text has καλεσαντι, the Byzantine Text has ικανωσαντι, and B has καλεσαντι και ικανωσαντι). In D, a conflation appears to occur at Acts 10:48 and John 5:37 (where the Alexandrian Text – supported by P75 – has εκεινος μεμαρτυρηκεν, the Byzantine Text – supported by P66 - has αυτος μεμαρτυρηκεν, and D has εκεινος αυτος μεμαρτυρηκεν).

In the world according to Hort, this should not happen.

The papyri have supplied direct evidence against Hort's belief that apparent conflations imply that the text in which they are found must be late. In P53, the text of Matthew 26:36 seems to read ου αν, where the Byzantine text has ου and the Alexandrian Text and Western Text have αν. Papyrus 66 reads σχισμα ουν παλιν at John 10:19 (agreeing with the Byzantine Text), where the Alexandrian Text has σχισμα παλιν and the Western Text has σχισμα ουν. Similarly, P66 reads εβαστασαν ουν παλιν at John 10:31 (again agreeing with the Byzantine Text), where the

Alexandrian Text has εβαστασαν παλιν and the Western Text has εβαστασαν ουν.

The appearance of such readings in very early manuscripts forces the concession that they do not imply that the text in which they appear is late. Instead, they prove that an early text can appear to include confections. Nevertheless some modern-day textual critics such as Dr. Daniel B. Wallace still appeal to Hort's list of eight Byzantine confections as if it demonstrated that the entire Byzantine Text was secondary.]

Ironically, as the papyri-discoveries took away the pedestal upon which Hort's transmission-model had stood, they also tended to exonerate Hort's favored text of the Gospels, the Alexandrian Text, by demonstrating the high antiquity of the Alexandrian text of Luke and John. Papyrus 75, in particular, possesses a remarkably high rate of agreement with B. This shows that the Alexandrian Text of Luke and John was carefully preserved in the 200s, and this has tended to alleviate the suspicions of some earlier scholars that the Alexandrian Text was the result of editorial activity in the 200s.

The correspondence between Papyrus 75 and Codex B was interpreted by some textual critics as a demonstration of the antiquity and superiority of the entire Alexandrian Text. Kurt Aland compared the situation to sampling a jar of jelly or jam: a mere spoonful is enough to show what is in the rest of the jar. However, although the agreement between P75 and B proves that the Alexandrian Text of Luke and John is not the result of scribal editing conducted in the 200s, it did not prove that Alexandrian readings are not results of *earlier* scribal editing.

Theoretically, if the Western Text could develop in the period prior to the production of P75, so could the Alexandrian Text. Papyrus 75 proved that the Alexandrian

Text of Luke and John is very early; it did not prove that Alexandrian readings are not the result of very early editorial activity. (As late as 1992, Bruce Metzger maintained that most scholars “are still inclined to regard the Alexandrian text as on the whole the best ancient **recension**,” on page 216 of *The Text of the New Testament*, third edition (1992), emphasis added.)

Nor did Papyrus 75 prove that the Byzantine Text is less ancient than the Alexandrian Text. It shows what kind of Gospels-text (or at least, major parts of the Gospels-text) was in use in Upper Egypt in the early 200s. It does not constitute evidence about what form of text was used, or was not used, in other places.

The most significant evidence for the absence of the Byzantine Text prior to the 300s is the lack of patristic testimony for its use, but this is largely an argument from silence. The natural destructive effects of humidity upon papyrus-material, allied with Roman persecutors who sought to destroy Christian literature, silenced a large proportion of the Christian communities of the first three centuries of Christendom. According to Hort’s theories, when these communities adopted the Byzantine Text in the 300s and 400s, they embraced a new, imported text of the Gospels, setting aside whatever they had used previously. A more plausible alternative is that they simply continued to use their own local texts which consisted primarily of Byzantine readings.

The discovery of the papyri led some textual critics to advocate an undue emphasis upon the ages of witnesses, resulting in a lack of equity toward variants with no support in Egypt. Because the Egyptian climate allowed the preservation of papyrus, the oldest copies will almost always be copies from Egypt. To favor the variant with the oldest attestation is to tilt the playing-field, so to speak, in favor of whatever readings are found in whatever

manuscripts were stored in the gentlest climate. But this is no more reasonable than favoring the variants of a manuscript because it was found closer to the equator than other manuscripts. Certainly when two rival variants are evaluated, and the first is uniformly attested in early witnesses, while the second is found exclusively in very late witnesses, the case for the first one is enhanced. But to assign values to witnesses according to their ages without considering factors such as climate is to introduce a lack of equity into one's analysis.

The papyri-discoveries elicited another interesting development. Before Hort, pioneering scholars such as Griesbach had organized witnesses into three main groups – Western, Byzantine, and Alexandrian. Each group, characterized by consistent patterns of readings, was considered a text-type, and manuscripts sharing those special patterns of readings were viewed as relatives of one another. Hort then divided the Alexandrian group into two text-types, calling its earlier stratum the “Neutral” text, supported by Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. Then, following analysis by Kirsopp Lake, the Caesarean text of the Gospels was added. But the evidence from the papyri indicates that even in a single locale (Egypt), the text existed in forms other than those four.

Consider Papyrus 45, a fragmentary copy of the Gospels and Acts from the early 200s (or slightly earlier). In Mark 7:25-37, when P45 disagrees with either B or the Byzantine Text or both, P45 agrees with B 22% of the time, it agrees with the Byzantine Text 30% of the time, and 48% of the time it disagrees with them both. Such departures from the usual profiles of text-types has led some textual critics to reconsider the existence of early text-types, arguing instead that the text in the 100s and 200s was in a state of fluctuation. A plausible alternative is that some of the papyri attest to the existence of localized text-forms

which became extinct, without implying that the Western, Byzantine, and Caesarean forms did not exist prior to the 300s.

Competing Greek New Testaments

In the late 1800s, Westcott & Hort's Greek text of the New Testament faced several obstacles. First was the popularity of the *Textus Receptus*, which, as the base-text of the King James Version, had the status of an ancient landmark in English-speaking countries, regardless of how carefully attempts were made to demonstrate that its Reformation-era compilers, or some stealthy editors in ancient times, were the real landmark-movers.

In 1898, the Württemberg Bible Society published the first edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, an inexpensive Greek New Testament which closely resembled the Westcott-Hort compilation, and which was designed to compete with the edition of the *Textus Receptus* which was being widely disseminated by the British and Foreign Bible Society. (The leaders of BFBS apparently had not found Hort's 1881 case for his compilation irresistible.)

Eberhard Nestle wrote an enthusiastic recommendation of this handy Greek New Testament; his brief review appeared in the *Expository Times* in June of 1898. He pointed out how "disgraceful" it would be to continue to circulate Erasmus' errors in Rev. 17:8 and Rev. 22:19-21. He invited the British and Foreign Bible Society to begin to circulate *Novum Testamentum Graece* instead of the *Textus Receptus*. In 1904 the British and Foreign Bible Society began circulating the fourth edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Its editor: Eberhard Nestle.

While that was happening, a scholar named Hermann von Soden was in the process of compiling an edition of the Greek New Testament which textual scholars expected to become definitive, superseding all previous editions. But when von Soden's Greek New Testament was released in 1902-1911, it was found to be extremely cumbersome, and it was flawed in various ways. Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece* was on hand to meet the need of seminarians and other textual researchers, and it has done so ever since – and it eventually was adopted, in later editions, as the primary base-text for new translations.

But should that be the case? According to Kurt and Barbara Aland, the 27th edition of *NTG* differs from the text compiled by Eberhard Nestle “in merely 700 passages.” Considering the high number of variant-units involved, this implies that the text of the Gospels in NA-27 and UBS-4 is essentially the same text that was published by Eberhard Nestle in the early 1900s. (See page 20 of *The Text of the New Testament*: “In its 657 printed pages the early Nestle differs from the new text in merely seven hundred passages.” Consider that in the Gospels alone, the 25th and 27th editions of *NTG* disagree at over 400 places.)

It is as if the papyri (and the research into early versions, and the revisions of patristic writings, and other significant discoveries and research undertaken in the 1900s) have scarcely had an impact, whereas in reality they cracked the transmission-model that was a large part of the foundation of the Westcott-Hort compilation.

The marketplace for Greek New Testaments in the early 1900s rapidly became crowded: Bernard Weiss, Alexander Souter, and J. M. S. Baljon made compilations which rivaled Nestle's. F. H. A. Scrivener's editions of the *Textus Receptus* remained in circulation. Thomas

Newberry's 1870 *Englishman's Greek New Testament* – an interlinear edition of the *Textus Receptus* which featured a presentation of variants adopted by textual critics prior to Westcott & Hort (Griesbach, Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf, Alford, and Wordsworth) – also remained in print. The public generally had to choose between either a Greek text similar to the 1881 revision of Westcott & Hort, or the *Textus Receptus*.

That changed in 1982, when Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad published a compilation called *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*. As its name implies, this text was intended to consist of the readings shared by the majority of Greek manuscripts. Hodges and Farstad proposed that the Alexandrian Text is a heavily edited, pruned form of the text, and that the Majority Text is much better, inasmuch as “In any tradition where there are not major disruptions in the transmissional history, the individual reading which has the earliest beginning is the one most likely to survive in a majority of documents.” The work of Hodges and Farstad was the basis for many text-critical footnotes in the New Testament in the New King James Version, which was published around the same time under Dr. Farstad's supervision.

A similar work was released in 1991 by Maurice Robinson and William Pierpont, called *The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Byzantine/Majority Textform*. A second edition was published in 2005. Rejecting any notion of defending the *Textus Receptus* (which differs from the Byzantine Text at over 1,800 points, about 1,000 of which are translatable), Robinson and Pierpont regarded the Byzantine Text as virtually congruent to the original text. The Byzantine Textform consists of a series of majority readings, wherever majority readings clearly exist. Outside

the *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53-8:11) and the book of Revelation, almost no analytical attempts to reconstruct the relationships of variants within the Byzantine tradition seems evident, since the question is usually settled by a numerical count (or, by a consultation of representative manuscripts, using data from von Soden's work).

In some respects, Hodges & Farstad and Robinson & Pierpont have paved a trail that was blazed in the 1800s by John Burgon, who opposed the theories of Westcott & Hort. Burgon's aggressive writing-style sometimes overshadowed his argumentation; nevertheless some of his views have been vindicated by subsequent research.

For example, Hort asserted that "even among the numerous unquestionably spurious readings of the New Testament there are no signs of deliberate falsification of the text for dogmatic purposes," but Burgon insisted that the opposite was true. Burgon's posthumously published *Causes of Corruption* (1896) even included a sub-chapter titled "*Corruption by the Orthodox.*" Almost a century later in 1993, a variation on Burgon's theme was upheld by Bart D. Ehrman in the similarly titled book *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. As a result, although Ehrman exaggerated his case in many respects, no textual critics now consider Hort's assertion to be correct.

Many scholars and interested bystanders, noticing that the weaknesses of several of Hort's key premises and assertions have been exposed, have been willing to consider the model of transmission-history proposed by the supporters of the Byzantine Textform. Others have irresponsibly attempted to associate it with the fundamentalist doctrine of King James Onlyism.

Others have rejected it because, despite detailed lists of principles of internal and external evidence in Dr. Robinson's essay *The Case for Byzantine Priority*, the factor that usually determines the adoption of a variant in the

approach advocated by Robinson is its attestation in over 80% of the Greek manuscripts. Patristic evidence and the testimony of early versions are not included in the equation of what constitutes the majority reading. Distinctive Alexandrian variants, Western variants, Caesarean variants, and even minority readings attested by the oldest Byzantine witnesses (such as parts of Codices A and W) have no chance of being adopted; generally, if a variant is supported by over 80% of the Greek manuscripts, it is adopted.

The validity of such an approach depends upon the validity of the premise that the transmission of the text of the Gospels was free from “major disruptions.” However, major disruptions have had enormous impacts upon the transmission of the text. Roman persecutions – followed by Roman sponsorship – wartime and peacetime, dark ages and golden ages – all these things, plus innovations and inventions related to the copying of manuscripts, drastically changed the circumstances in which the text was transmitted, and while all text-types were affected by them, they were not all affected to the same extent. It is no more scientifically valid to adopt a reading because it was favored in Byzantine scriptoria than it is to adopt a reading because the manuscripts that support it were kept in an area with low humidity (namely Egypt) and thus lasted longer than the manuscripts in other places.

Competing Analytical Approaches

In the Byzantine Priority view, Greek manuscripts which display the Byzantine Text are considered superior witnesses on the grounds that their text has a plausible transmission-history. Pick any series of readings in the Byzantine Text, and it can be shown to have considerable manuscript support. The Nestle-Aland compilation,

meanwhile, is considered a “test-tube text,” because it often combines readings in a series that is unattested in any Greek manuscript. And although it has been argued that this is unavoidably what one gets when selecting variants from among different text-types, the point remains that a heavy burden of proof should be upon the compiler whose work implies a transmission-history in which no copyists have preserved the original combination of readings in hundreds of passages.

On the other end of the spectrum, the approach used by Hort may seem like something very different from Byzantine Priority, but in terms of methodology the two approaches are similar: Hort regarded a specific set of manuscripts as superior to all others (in this case, Codex Vaticanus and whatever allies Hort could find for it), and he built a transmission-model that vindicated its readings. Thinking that he had established Vaticanus as the best overall witness in a relatively small series of contests, Hort gave it enormous weight, with the result that its text just kept getting better and better, as more and more contests were decided by “the weight of the witnesses” – to the point that long segments of Hort’s compilation resemble transcripts of Codex Vaticanus.

Two other approaches were developed by textual critics in the 1900’s by scholars aspiring to produce an eclectic text (that is, a text obtained via the utilization of a variety of sources).

Thoroughgoing Eclecticism (also known as **Rigorous Eclecticism**) values the relative intrinsic qualities of rival variants as the best means to determine their relationships, effectively rejecting Hort’s axiom. In this approach, even if a reading appears exclusively in late witnesses, if its intrinsic qualities are judged to be better than its rivals, it is adopted, on the premise that its young supporters echo an older text – the autograph – at that

point.

Building on the theory that text-types did not stabilize until the 200's or later, thoroughgoing eclectics resort to the only sort of reconstruction which can be undertaken without appealing to the relationships of text-types: the relationships of rival variants. Advocates of this approach tend to be more willing to introduce conjectural emendations, if an emendation possesses superior intrinsic qualities to its rival extant variants.

Reasoned Eclecticism (also known as **Rational Eclecticism**), in theory, considers the relative intrinsic qualities of rival variants, but also considers the quality of each variant's sources, their date, and their scope. The text of the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* was compiled using a form of reasoned eclecticism. However, in its companion-volume, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Bruce Metzger's comments show that the quality of sources tended to be measured according to Hort's model of transmission-history. In *The Text of the New Testament*, Metzger wrote, "Theoretically it is possible that the Koine text" – that is, the Byzantine Text – "may preserve an early reading which was lost from the other types of text, but such instances are extremely rare." This anti-Byzantine bias is pervasive. It is no surprise, therefore, that the UBS text varies only slightly from Hort's text, even though more evidence in favor of Byzantine readings is available to researchers than ever before.

Superior to these options is **Equitable Eclecticism**, in which the relative intrinsic qualities of rival variants are considered, and each variant's sources, their date, and their scope are also considered. Equitable Eclecticism begins by developing a generalized model of transmission-

history, and estimates of the relative values of the readings of groups, through a five-step process:

- First, the witnesses are organized into groups which share distinctive variants.
- Second, variant-units involving variants distinct to each group are analyzed according to text-critical principles, or canons.
- Third, a tentative model of transmission-history is developed, cumulatively explaining the relationships of the competing groups to one another by explaining the relationships of their component-parts where distinctive variants are involved. This model of transmission-history utilizes the premise that the earliest stratum of the Byzantine Text of the Gospels (echoed by Family Π, the Peshitta, Codex A, part of Codex W, the Gothic version, and the Purple Codices N-O-Σ-Φ) arose without the involvement of witnesses that contained the Alexandrian, Western, or Caesarean texts. Even readings supported by a higher stratum of the Byzantine Text and not by the lowest one are not rejected automatically.
- Fourth, values are assigned to groups rather than to individual witnesses. Less dependence by one group upon another group, as implied cumulatively by the relationship of its variants to the rival variants in other groups, yields a higher assigned value.
- Fifth, all reasonably significant variant-units (those which make a translatable difference) are analyzed according to text-critical canons, using all potentially helpful materials, including readings that are not characteristic of groups. When internal considerations are finely balanced and a decision is difficult, special consideration is given to readings attested by whatever group appears to be the least dependent upon the others in the proximity of the difficult variant-unit.

This will yield the archetype of all groups, albeit with some points of instability (at especially difficult variant-units) and with a degree of instability in regard to orthography.

Additional Principles

Equitable Eclecticism, besides rejecting the theory that the Byzantine Text was formed entirely via a consultation of manuscripts containing Alexandrian and Western readings, utilizes some additional principles which set it apart from the kinds of textual criticism which produced the revised text and its modern-day representatives:

- 1.** Textual criticism is a science, not an art. It is an enterprise of reconstruction, not creation.
- 2.** The text of the New Testament should be reconstructed in its component-parts: the Gospels, and Acts, and the General Epistles, and the Pauline Epistles, and Revelation.
- 3.** Relationships shown by patterns of readings in one part of the New Testament should not be assumed to exist in the others.
- 4.** The genealogical descent of a group of manuscripts from an ancestor-manuscript other than the autograph is not assumed without actual evidence that establishes links among specific manuscripts (such as shared formats, shared marginalia, shared miniatures, or readings which conclusively show a historical connection).
- 5.** Variants involving *nomina sacra* are placed in a special class, and receive special attention.
- 6.** The assumption of preference for the shorter reading is rejected.
- 7.** If a variant has very sporadic support from witnesses greatly separated by age and textual character, this may

indicate that the variant was liable to be spontaneously created by copyists, rather than that it was transmitted by distant transmission-streams.

8. Exceptional intrinsic merit is required for the adoption of variants attested exclusively or nearly exclusively by bilingual manuscripts in which a Greek variant may have originated via retro-translation.

9. Conjectural emendations are not to be placed in the text.

Equitable Eclecticism also utilizes principles shared by other approaches. These principles are all superseded by Principle Zero: no principle should be applied mechanically.

1. A variant which explains its rivals with greater elegance and force than it is explained by any of them is more likely to be original.

2. A variant supported by witnesses representing two or more locales of early Christendom is more likely to be original than a variant supported by witnesses that represent only one locale.

3. A variant which can be shown to have had, in the course of the transmission of the text, the appearance of difficulty (either real or imagined), and which is rivaled by variants without such difficulty, is more likely than its rivals to be original.

4. A variant supported by early attestation is more likely to be original than a rival variant supported exclusively by late attestation.

5. A variant which conforms a statement to the form of a similar statement in a similar document, or in the same document, is less likely to be original than a rival variant that does not exhibit conformity.

6. A variant which involves a rare, obscure, or ambiguous

term or expression is more likely to be original than a rival variant which involves an ordinary or specific term or expression.

7. A variant which is consistent with the author's discernible style and vocabulary is more likely to be original than a rival variant which deviates from the author's usual style and vocabulary and the vocabulary which he may naturally be expected to have been capable of using.

8. A variant which is fully explained as a liturgical adjustment is less likely to be original than a rival variant which cannot be thus explained.

9. A variant which is capable of expressing anti-Judaic sentiment is less likely to be original than a rival variant which is less capable of such expression.

10. A variant which can be explained as an easy transcriptional error is less likely to be original than a rival variant which cannot be explained as an easy transcriptional error or as one which would be less easily made.

11. A variant which can be explained as a deliberate alteration is less likely to be original than a rival variant which is less capable of originating in the same way.

12. *Ceteris paribus*, in the Synoptic Gospels, a variant which does not result in a Minor Agreement is more likely to be original than a rival variant which results in a Minor Agreement.

Closing Thoughts

Christian readers may feel intimidated or exasperated at the realization that the original text of the New Testament can only be fully reconstructed down to the last detail by a careful analysis of the witnesses – a massive and intricate task which currently involves no less

than 140 papyri, about 320 uncials, about 2,900 minuscules, and about 2,500 lectionaries, plus versional and patristic materials. The feeling may be increased when one also realizes that even the most erudite textual critics have reached divergent conclusions, and that their conclusions must be subject to the implications of future discoveries.

This may lead some readers to decline to investigate the text, deciding instead to hopefully adhere to whatever text (or texts) they already use. Such an expedient response is understandable, especially in light of the often-repeated (but false) claim that textual variants have no significant doctrinal impact. Nevertheless, for those few who are not content to place their confidence in textual critics, or to posit providential favor upon a particular set of variants on account of its popularity or for other reasons, the best option is to become textual critics.

Becoming acquainted with the contents of the manuscripts and other witnesses gives additional responsibility, but also additional confidence, somewhat like the confidence of a traveler who knows his maps, as opposed to one who does not and must trust his guides.

Knowing the message of the map that we have – and being aware of which parts are still questioned, and why, concerning how closely their form corresponds to the form of the original – makes one a confident traveler where one should be confident, and cautious where one should be cautious. But after we have done our best to conduct research with scientific detachment, it will do us little good if we only possess the map. Let us walk with boldness in the path that the Holy Spirit reveals to us through the Word. With that thought I leave the reader to consider the words of J. A. Bengel, one of the pioneers of New Testament textual criticism:

Te totum applica ad textum:
rem totam applica ad te.

Apply all of yourself to the text,
Apply it all to yourself.

EXTRA CREDIT

Read my essay *Byzantine Manuscripts: Where Were They Before the 300s?*, at
<https://www.thetextofthegospels.com/2017/05/byzantine-manuscripts-where-were-they.html> .

Thanks be to God
This is the end of the book.
Thanks be to God.

