

PROTESTANT THEOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (PTHU) AMSTERDAM

The Origin of the Byzantine Text

New Perspectives in a Deadlocked
Debate

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“For in much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase sorrow.” (King Solomon: *Ecclesiastes*, 1:18)

“KNOWLEDGE OF DOCUMENTS SHOULD PRECEDE FINAL JUDGEMENT UPON READINGS.” (Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 31)

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Preface

In preparing this master thesis, I felt constantly attracted to the two different opinions here presented. Nevertheless, I have tried to handle the arguments in an honest way. I hope that everyone who reads this thesis, will see that arguments are never suppressed or reasoned away by (rhetorical) fallacies of which the field of the Byzantine text is terribly polluted. It has taken me a lot of struggle to clarify the debate and to separate the wheat from the chaff. I hope to have done justice to all opinions. Nevertheless I have passed over some of the more extreme views, and I suppose not everybody will be glad with that. My motivation is that many times the more extreme opinions show the least acquaintance with the subject. Moreover, they add no really new arguments in comparison to the more moderate views. This especially applies to the camp of Byzantine protagonists. Perhaps, some would consider me too loyal to the Byzantine position. They would do well to keep in mind that it was my motivation to do justice to both parties, both the eclectic and Byzantine priority party. I hope this labour will really satisfy both groups and intensify and deepen research on this subject, both historically and theologically.

The present problem is of utmost importance. Every new translation of the New Testament, will start with the question: which text will be used? Therefore, this thesis is written with deep reverence to the Scriptures and with much affection to the worldwide Church. I hope this will be my first step to serve the Church, with the deeply felt wish to add some more in my future life.

Originally, it was my intention to illustrate many aspects of the discussion by fresh case studies to illustrate the arguments in practice. Although I am still of the opinion that it would have improved my thesis considerably, there is—to put it with king Solomon—an appointed time to start a thesis and an appointed time to stop a thesis. Hence, I would like to stop with my deep gratitude to prof. dr. A. B. Merz, who has spent really a lot of time with a master student like me in reading and discussing the matter of this thesis. It has really improved its content and my competence to think and argue on an academic level. Furthermore, I would like to thank prof. dr. R. Roukema, who has served me at an early stage with his advice, and appeared again at the end of the run as assessor, with meticulous attention to detail. Also some words of thanks to dr. S. Janse, who has discussed with me my earliest ideas of the Byzantine text.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. den Dekker who has spent many hours in correcting my English, while in his eighties. Even after a terrible threefold somersault with a car in Canada. While I would make haste to add that for any grammatical mistakes I myself am wholly responsible. With these words, I consider my thesis completed. Soli Deo Gloria!

Driebruggen (The Netherlands), 23 January 2015

§1. Introduction

A textual critic is like a detective. A detective is expected to get to the bottom of all available evidence. As long as the interpretation of evidence remains inconsistent, or as long as crucial information is still lacking, it is impossible to reconstruct exactly what happened. Moreover, sometimes it appears necessary to reopen a trial, because new evidence came to light, which would clearly impact the judgement. I am deeply convinced that the same is true for textual criticism. In the case of the so-called “external evidence,”¹ it is of major importance to investigate all available evidence as thoroughly as possible to establish coherent theories about the origins of textual variation. With respect to the latter, the clarification of the *history* of the text and especially of the *origin* of the major textual clusters (formerly called “text-types”)² has placed textual critics before an important challenge, because it affects to a large degree the application of external evidence.

One of the impending problems of external evidence is that it becomes subject to the results of internal probabilities, whilst its force stands by its *addition* to internal evidence. To avoid the establishment of external evidence by circular reasoning, comprehensive answers need to be formulated to two questions: 1) *what is the actual situation of the text in all its variation*, and 2) *how can the different texts be explained best on historical grounds*? With respect to the first question, much work has already been done, but concerning the second question, much is still wrapped in mist. Especially the Byzantine text comes off badly. Kurt and Barbara Aland wrote:

(...) no adequate history has yet been written of the Byzantine text (...) But this is a task we may well leave to a future generation, or to specialists particularly interested in it

¹ Textual criticism, usually distinguishes between “internal” and “external” evidence. The first one is concerned with internal considerations of textual variants, for instance: transcriptional probabilities or considerations with respect to content and style of an author. External evidence is related to the material evidence of textual variants in all available sources. For instance: Greek majuscule and minuscule MSS, versions and patristic evidence. In addition, external evidence is concerned with questions about the importance of different sources. See for a quite comprehensive treatment of these methods: Léon Vaganay and Christian-Bernard Amphoux, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, trans. Jenny Heimerdinger, 2nd revised and updated ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). 52-88.

² Since this thesis contains a huge amount of historical research, it is not attempted to be wholly consistent in terminology. Designations like “Alexandrian text” or “Western text” are freely used, although I am well aware of the geographical problems of such designations. But to use neutral terms like “A-text” [=Byzantine] or “B-text” [=Alexandrian] will complicate the references to much research of the past unnecessarily, whereas these old designations are well understood and still commonly used. Moreover, the designation “Byzantine text” is as far as I know not criticised.

Further, the term “text-type” is avoided (except in quotations), because “type” suggests too narrow boundaries between the various texts. Instead I use “textual cluster” or simply “text.” Cf. for a critical treatment of terminology: Eldon Jay Epp, “Textual Clusters: Their Past and Future in New Testament Textual Criticism,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 2014), especially 520-523, 553-556.

today, and consider our own generation fortunate if we can succeed in tracing the history of manuscripts with non-Byzantine texts, and that in its general outlines.³

It is my deep conviction that a clear history of the Byzantine text and of the other texts will improve the application of external evidence and lead current methodology out of the impending impasse with regard to the relative results of internal evidence.⁴ The difficulty is—as Vaganay and Amphoux pointed out—that a “historian finds himself like someone trying to do a jigsaw puzzle which has most of the pieces missing and some of the rest damaged.”⁵ Nevertheless we can try to investigate the pieces which we have as well as we can, and in the case of the Byzantine text we can do nothing more than—as a member of the future generation—take the burden of Kurt and Barbara Aland on our shoulders and carry it forward with passion.

Before we proceed, some words on the title “Byzantine text” are due here. As far as I know, it dates back to Griesbach.⁶ After Griesbach, different titles have been employed to designate this roughly uniform text (as compared to the other textual clusters).⁷ Westcott and Hort—for instance—gave it the designation “Syrian” because of its proposed origins. Some decades later, the title of “Byzantine” was revived by a study of B. H. Streeter on the four Gospels, because—whatever its origin—it was indubitably the standard text of the Byzantine Empire.⁸ Consequently, it objectively points to the provenance of most of its MSS, and does not commit itself to one kind of theory about its origins. In literature—especially of the Byzantine priority camp—the designation “Majority text” is used often.⁹ But Klaus Wachtel rightly pointed out that “Majority text” is a purely quantitative category, whereas

³ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes, Second ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995). 142.

⁴ Cf. Kenyon, who wrote: “So long as opposing critics content themselves with asserting their preference for this reading or for that, on grounds of internal fitness, little progress can be made. The personal equation is too hard to allow for in such a controversy.” Frederic G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, Second ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1926). 321.

⁵ Vaganay and Amphoux, *Introduction*: 89.

⁶ Cf. Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament for the Use of Biblical Students*, Third ed. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co., 1883). 470f.

⁷ Like: Ecclesiastical (Lake’s and Lagrange), Antiochian (Robinson, Sanday and Burkitt) and Koine (von Soden).

⁸ Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins. Treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, & Dates* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1924). 29f.

⁹ It is remarkable that the title “Majority text” was used first by Kurt Aland as a *quantitative designation*. Kurt Aland, “The Significance of the Papyri for Progress in New Testament Research,” in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. P. Hyatt (New York: Abingdon, 1965), 342. Its use survived in the apparatus of the Nestle-Aland text in the symbol \mathfrak{M} ; although in the 28th edition it is substituted in the Catholic Epistles—in accordance with the *Editio Critica Maior*—by the symbol “Byz.”

“Byzantine text” is a historical and text critical category.¹⁰ Besides, a variant reading can be “Byzantine”—because it is evidenced by Byzantine MSS only—but not a “Majority reading”—because it is evidenced by a minority of Byzantine MSS. As a result, the designation “Byzantine text” is preferable, although it is probably more correct to speak of “Byzantine texts,”¹¹ because of its many internal differences.

§1.1. THE PROBLEM OF THE BYZANTINE TEXT

One of the main tasks of textual criticism is the reconstruction of the rise and development of textual clusters and of their mutual relationships. After the epoch-making theory of Westcott and Hort, the general consensus is that the Byzantine text is secondary in origin. The main arguments of Westcott and Hort to establish that secondary character were:¹²

- 1) The posteriority of the Syrian [=Byzantine] readings is shown by the use of earlier “Western,” Alexandrian and Neutral readings in *conflated* readings;¹³
- 2) The posteriority of Syrian readings is shown by *Ante-Nicene Patristic evidence*, that gives no trace of the Syrian text;¹⁴
- 3) The posteriority of Syrian readings is shown by *internal evidence of readings*.¹⁵

Today, these arguments are still in use in handbooks.¹⁶ Nevertheless, there have been scholars from Westcott and Hort onwards—of whom Dean John William Burgon was the most significant¹⁷—and other people, who opposed these conclusions. Among the proponents and opponents of the secondary character of the Byzantine text a ponderous discussion arose, which became polarised from its

¹⁰ Klaus Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text der Katholischen Briefe: Eine Untersuchung zur Entstehung der Koine des Neuen Testaments*, Arbeiten zur Neutestamentlichen Textforschung: 24 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995). 7.

¹¹ Cf. Kirsopp Lake and Silva Lake, "The Byzantine Text of the Gospels," in *Mémorial Lagrange*, ed. L. H. Vincent (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, J. Gabalda et Cie, Éditeurs, 1940), 252.

¹² These are the most prominent arguments of Westcott and Hort. Other arguments that are more spread through their book will be presented in §2.1.1. It is important to notice that Westcott and Hort were not the “inventors” of these arguments. Nevertheless they were the first to integrate these arguments into a coherent transmissional system. Cf. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament; with Remarks on its Revision upon Critical Principles* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1854). 182.

¹³ Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Volume 1, Introduction and Appendix* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan and Co., 1881). 93-107.

¹⁴ Ibid., 107-115.

¹⁵ Ibid., 115-119.

¹⁶ Cf. Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, Fourth ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). 180-181. “By way of retrospect and evaluation, it may be said that scholars today generally agree that one of the chief contributions made by Westcott and Hort was their clear demonstration that the Syrian (or Byzantine) text is later than the other types of text.”

¹⁷ Cf. §2.2.1.

earliest days, and which polarisation has determined almost all subsequent literature about the Byzantine text. In my opinion, this has done no good to the quality of research to the Byzantine text and has also taken away the motivation to research this bulk of manuscripts.¹⁸ It is this polarisation that calls for criticism, because history has shown that it is an obstacle to innovative investigation of the Byzantine text.

The purpose of this thesis is to describe and evaluate this impasse and to stimulate a new and open-minded investigation of the Byzantine text. It is argued that both historically and theologically opposite considerations are involved, while the polarisation in its entirety is aggravated by mainly unnoticed sociological and epistemological motives. Furthermore, it is explained why the present state of affairs cannot put forward a satisfactory conclusion to the present problem. Finally, I plead for a program which—with taking off of all polarising elements—would lead to more satisfying conclusions about the origin of the Byzantine text.

§1.2. SOURCES AND METHOD

In order to dismantle this polarised debate, extensive study of most important scholarly and semi-scholarly literature on the Byzantine text has been done.¹⁹ By means of the question: *For what historical or theological reasons is the Byzantine text thought to be secondary or not?* I have tried to extract the different arguments that led to opposite conclusions (§2.1-4., §3.1.).

Then I have considered the literature a second time along the question: *What epistemological and sociological considerations are at stake in this debate?* The purpose was to investigate which epistemological and sociological aspects can be distinguished in this debate (§4.1-2.).

Afterwards the different layers have been evaluated according to the question: *Which arguments or motivations do I consider as persuasive or not, and why?* (§2.5., §3.2., §4.3.).

Finally, a way out of the polarisation is presented by pointing to promising arguments, unanswered questions and by presenting a new method in which both parties can co-operate. The guiding question was: *What do I consider as the best method of escaping this impasse?* (§5.).

The whole was carried out by the coordinating question, which is answered in the final conclusions (§6.):

Why has the discussion about the origin of the Byzantine text got bogged down in a polarised debate, and what will be the best way to escape this impasse?

¹⁸ A notable exception is: Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*.

¹⁹ It is not easy to draw a clear line between scholarly, semi-scholarly and un-scholarly literature. In the main, un-scholarly pamphlets are disregarded, because they rest heavily on the more scholarly works. This applies especially for protagonists of the Byzantine text. Nevertheless, some semi-scholarly literature is selected, because of its influence in pro-Byzantine circles.

§1.3. LIMITATIONS

Although the literary sources are clearly defined, this thesis is subject to some unavoidable limitations. The first has already been given in the main question, which is clearly subjective, both in asking for the reason of polarisation and for its solution. Moreover, the evaluations of the different levels shall be restricted to my limited knowledge and view. Nevertheless, they will be a balancing among what we know, what we can know and what is acceptable speculation. Although I have tried to make my observations and decisions as transparent as possible, it has its obvious limitations. I hope my conclusions will be convincing to the reader.

§1.4. PRESUPPOSITIONS

My most fundamental presupposition is, that textual criticism is not only an issue of historical investigation, but also subject to theological reflection, even if one distances himself from any kind of theological considerations (which is a theological *a priori* as well).²⁰ Through the ages, textual criticism is more and more considered subject to historical investigation, with only loose lines to theology—for example with regard to textual variants that are of doctrinal importance like 1 Tim. 3:16, to mention a well-known one. As a result, most dogmatists have left the task to people interested in the history of the text and have themselves been satisfied with the results.

But for a Protestant theologian—who is attached to the *Sola Scriptura* of the Reformation—it is self-evident that the task and results of textual criticism are also part of theological reflection. Firstly, text critical methods and results immediately raise theological questions about our view of Scripture and revelation, because they comprise the very source of theology. Secondly, in history the Scriptures were (almost) always the authoritative source of Christian theology. This means that the very act of copying a manuscript was theologically motivated.²¹ In my opinion these considerations make it inadmissible to uncouple textual criticism from theological reflection, which however does not mean that theology *a priori* prevails over the source materials.²²

²⁰ This in contrast to many scholars, who insist that no doctrinal issues are touched by textual criticism. Kenneth W. Clark wrote: “It would appear that all of these scholars [Kenyon, Grant and Knox; EB] are insisting that textual criticism is at best a rational procedure belonging to a category apart from that of faith and doctrine.” Which Clark contradicts. See: Kenneth W. Clark, “Textual Criticism and Doctrine,” in *Studia Paulina in Honorem Johannis de Zwaan*, ed. J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn N.V., 1953), 52-53.

²¹ This appears to be not only valid for the act of copying itself, but also for the emergence of many variants. Cf. Ernest Cadman Colwell, *What is the Best New Testament?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952). 52-60.

²² That textual criticism has much to do with theological questions, is for instance shown by a bestselling publication of Bart Ehrman: Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperOne, 2005). And in a historical approach by his scholarly publication: *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Christological*

§1.5. WHY REOPEN A SETTLED ISSUE?

For a large part, Christian theology depends on the text of the New Testament. But what, if that text is not as certain as we would like it to be? This question is ultimately at stake in this thesis. In my opinion, both dogmatics and Christian ethics all depend on the text of the New Testament in particular. Textual criticism therefore, is the most fundamental and basic—although sometimes neglected—matter in theology. Hence all research adding something to clarify that text is highly relevant.

During the last few decades, there appeared some literature on the Byzantine text. All this literature has a direct link with the polemics around the secondary character (pro and contra) of the Byzantine text.²³ An overreaching study and evaluation of this *discussion* has not yet appeared.²⁴ Because of the polemical character of the discussion, the study of the origins and character of the Byzantine text has seriously been darkened. This thesis tries to evaluate the arguments from both sides. It is my aim to dig up those arguments, which are insufficiently refuted. Further research, especially of these arguments, has the potency to improve our knowledge of the Byzantine text. To systematise this discussion, further research becomes possible on a more objective level.

Controversies on the Text of the New Testament. Updated and with a New Afterword (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²³ The most important are: (*Pro*) Kurt Aland, "The Text of the Church?", *Trinity Journal* 8 (1987); Gordon D. Fee, "The Majority Text and the Original Text of the New Testament," in *Studies in the Theory and Methods of New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: 1993); Michael W. Holmes, "The 'Majority Text Debate': New Form of an Old Issue," *Themelios* 8, no. 2 (1983); T. R. Ralston, "The 'Majority Text' and Byzantine Origins," *New Testament Studies* 38, no. 1 (1992); Daniel B. Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods, and Critique," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 2014). The last article was published two times earlier, every time slightly revised: "The Majority-Text Theory: History, Methods and Critique," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 2 (1994); "The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods, and Critique," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995).

(*Contra*) Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984); Maurice A. Robinson, "The Case for Byzantine Priority," in *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2005*, ed. Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont (Southborough, Massachusetts: Hilton Book Publishing, 2005); Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of The New Testament Text III* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012).

The most thorough study is (although its secondary character is presumed from the beginning): Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*.

²⁴ While almost finishing my thesis, there came to my attention a recent article by T. David Andersen that covers the arguments for and against the Byzantine and Alexandrian texts. It is quite "halfway," ("The primary audience of this paper is myself. It is a working paper intended to document my growing understanding of this issue." [Page 154]), but I do well to mention it here, because it is the only study I know that presents the matter in this way. T. David Andersen, "Arguments For and Against the Byzantine and Alexandrian Text Types" in *Digging for the Truth: Collected Essays Regarding the Byzantine Text of the Greek New Testament. A Festschrift in Honor of Maurice A. Robinson*, ed. Mark Billington and Peter Streitberger (Norden: FocusYourMission, 2014), 154-188.

Nevertheless, the scholarly relevance of this theme is subject to serious criticism. “It would serve no good purpose to exhume the dead or to re-slay the slain,” Kenyon said about the *Textus Receptus* already in 1932.²⁵ For most textual critics today, the secondary character of the Byzantine text is a settled issue.²⁶ A return to that issue will mean a decline of textual criticism to resolved questions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁷ Daniel Wallace wrote: “As in the parallel case of Markan priority, proponents of a minority view are reopening an issue once thought to be settled.”²⁸ Or—more rhetorically stated—, will it be a good idea, to enter into discussion with Byzantine protagonists, whose argument “crumbles in a heap of sheer fiction”?²⁹ At the same time Michael W. Holmes wrote: “(...) it must be stated that the Majority text advocates have highlighted some of the real questions and issues facing contemporary New Testament textual criticism. Their criticisms serve as a salutary reminder of the provisional character of current critical texts.”³⁰ It is the very last observation which has led me to the legitimacy and necessity of this thesis. The issue appears to be not settled at all! What is happening here?

²⁵ Frederic G. Kenyon, *Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the Greek Bible*, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy: 1932 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933). 8.

²⁶ Cf. for this opinion: Daniel B. Wallace, “The Majority Text: A New Collating Base?,” *New Testament Studies* 35, no. 4 (1989): 616. See for an confirming statement: Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*: 188.

²⁷ Or as Aland said in emotionally loaded language, “The anachronistic return to debates of a century ago is disturbing, and it is possible only if one ignores, or refuses to acknowledge, the many serious efforts of international scholarship to ascertain the true text of the church, i.e., the original text of the New Testament.” Aland, “The Text of the Church?,” 144.

²⁸ Wallace, “The Majority Text Theory,” 712.

²⁹ Thus Aland, “The Text of the Church?,” 142.

³⁰ Holmes, “The ‘Majority Text Debate’,” 18.

§2. A controversy on history

The most obvious aspect of polarisation is the difference of opinion on the reconstruction of the *historical* origins of the Byzantine text. Most of the elaborated arguments are devoted to this discussion. In this chapter the arguments (pro and contra) from Westcott and Hort onward will be analysed and presented in a systematic way. It will be shown that, although the arguments of Westcott and Hort are still thought to be valid, development of ideas has taken place (§2.1.). Nevertheless, the common opinion has remained, that the Byzantine text should definitely be considered as a text of secondary origins.

On the other hand, this conclusion was seriously challenged, especially by John William Burgon. After him, various authors have carried his inheritance forward, until today. Although they used many of Burgon's ideas, some slight changes and additional arguments have been formulated (§2.2.).

Finally, the various counter-arguments have been investigated, in order that a full picture of this controversy may be obtained. (§2.3.-§2.4.) The chapter is concluded with an evaluation and conclusion, in which the main points of disagreement have been summarised (§2.5).

§2.1. HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING THE SECONDARY ORIGINS OF THE BYZANTINE TEXT

It was Westcott and Hort who brought about the transition from the *Textus Receptus*—a mainly Byzantine text³¹—to a non-Byzantine text: their neutral text. The following debate is only understandable, if their theory is extensively explained.

§2.1.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: THE “UNCONQUERABLE” WESTCOTT AND HORT

In the introduction the backbone of their argumentation, which led to the overthrow of the Byzantine text, has already been presented.³² Their argumentation was felt to be highly persuasive, and a re-reading of their introduction will confirm that experience. Their whole argumentation was intended and constructed to set aside the Syrian [=Byzantine] text.³³ Through their introductory volume—accompanying their text edition—they fleshed out their main arguments with additional arguments, which can be summarised in the next points:

³¹ To get an impression: there are over 1800 differences between the *Textus Receptus* and the Byzantine text edition of Robinson-Pierpont. Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform* (Southborough: Hilton Book Publishing, 2005). i. Cf. note 216.

³² For a full treatment of that overthrow, see M. R. Vincent, *A History of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1899). 53-109.

³³ Ernest Cadman Colwell, *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, *New Testament Tools and Studies*: 9 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969). 158f.

- (a) *Conflate readings.* The theory about conflation has been called “the keystone of their theory.”³⁴ It means that in cases of *triple variation*, the neutral and “Western” texts have a different short reading, whereas the Syrian text has a conflated (longer) reading constructed of both. They give eight instances (from Mark and Luke) of this kind of conflation, and express the view that many more might be found.³⁵ In addition, they stated that—“to the best of our belief”³⁶—“the relations thus provisionally traced are never inverted.”³⁷
- (b) *Double readings.* The interpretation of double readings follows naturally from their conflation theory. In the case of double readings—they argue—the same three groups are found, but the Syrian reading goes along with the “Western” or neutral text. The point is, that in both cases—triple and double variation—the writers of the Syrian text used in essence both earlier texts. Hence, the Syrian text is interpreted as an eclectic text, which used, combined and sometimes changed both earlier texts.³⁸
- (c) *Internal evidence of readings.* This direction from neutral and “Western” to Syrian is both confirmed by transcriptional and intrinsic probabilities. The next step is that close examination of *distinct Syrian readings* (readings that are marked “by the want of attestation from groups of documents which have preserved the other ancient forms of text”) shows that they are inferior when compared to other ancient readings. Many distinctively Syrian readings are found to be actually “Western” or Alexandrian readings, somewhat trimmed and modified, and therefore corruptions of the Apostolic text. The results are readings that “run smoothly and easily in form, and yield at once to even a careless reader a passable sense, free from surprises and seemingly transparent.”³⁹ Contrary to the Syrian readings, the primary MSS—of which B and Ι are considered to be the most important—preserve a text with a prevailing internal excellence of readings.⁴⁰ Hence, this argument works both ways.
- (d) *Ante-Nicene Patristic evidence.* According to Westcott and Hort, the whole body of patristic evidence tells us that before the middle of the third century—at the very earliest—there are no historical signs of the existence of conflate or

³⁴ Kirsopp Lake, *The Text of the New Testament. Sixth Edition Revised by Silva New*, Oxford Church Text Books (London: Rivingtons, 1943; repr., 10th). 68.

³⁵ Mark 6:33; 8:26; 9:38; 9:49; Luke 9:10; 11:54; 12:18; 24:53. See for their elaboration of these passages: Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 95-104.

³⁶ This sentence appears more times in their introduction. Cf. *Ibid.*, 114, (146, 282).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99, 106f. “Now it is morally impossible that their use of documents of either or both classes should have been confined to those places in which conflation enables us to detect it in actual operation. [...] But the proved actual use of documents of the α [=neutral] and β [=“Western”] classes in the conflate readings renders their use elsewhere a *vera causa* in the Newtonian sense.” *Ibid.*, 107.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 115-116.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 193.

distinctive Syrian readings. They considered Chrysostom (†407) to be the first to use that sort of text. They thought it also persuasive that Origen—who had varied contacts with Christians in other countries and was hardly failing to acquaint himself with all leading Greek texts—gave evidence of all, except the Syrian one. This again “to the best of our belief.”⁴¹

- (e) *Versional evidence.* Another less marked argument was versional evidence. According to Westcott and Hort the *Revised Syriac* [=Peshitta]—dated by them to the latter part of the third or in the fourth century—was the first version that betrayed the existence of the Syrian text, because it exhibited a large proportion of characteristic Syrian readings. Other versions that give evidence of the Syrian text are definitely known to be of the fourth or later centuries.⁴²
- (f) *A priori genealogical argument.* Another fortunate attack against the *Textus Receptus* was their genealogical argument. It meant that when a number of MSS can be reduced to one common ancestor, it counts for one, or less, because that supposed ancestor is known only by approximation.⁴³ The result was twofold: 1) they reduced the numerical preponderance of the Syrian MSS to the *value* of more or less one, and 2) they were in fact freed of giving a plausible explanation of that majority of MSS, although they developed their recension theory.

Finally, it will serve our purposes well to quote the concluding remarks of Westcott and Hort at length, from which we get an idea how they practically imagined the origins of the Byzantine text.

“To state in few words the results of examination of the whole body of Syrian readings, distinctive and non-distinctive, the authors of the Syrian text had before them documents representing at least three earlier forms of text, Western, Alexandrian, and a third. Where they found variation, they followed different procedures in different places. Sometimes they transcribed unchanged the reading of one of the earlier texts, now of this, now of that. Sometimes they in like manner adopted exclusively one of the readings, but modified its form. Sometimes they combined the readings of more than one text in various ways, pruning or modifying them if necessary. Lastly, they introduced many changes of their own where, so far as appears, there was no previous variation. When the circumstances are fully considered, all these processes must be recognised as natural.”⁴⁴

They clearly saw the Byzantine text as an eclectic text and produced an impressive cumulative argument, which could not easily be invalidated. Later textual critics confirm Westcott and Hort’s conclusions of the consequences of external evidence on the Byzantine text. “The Greek MSS, the versions, and the Church Fathers provide

⁴¹ Ibid., 112-115. Quotation from page 114.

⁴² For example the Gothic, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Harklean Syriac versions. Ibid., 84, 159.

⁴³ Ibid., 43-44.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 116-117.

a threefold cord not easily broken.”⁴⁵ But they have also modified the argument of Westcott and Hort and added some points. This will be dealt with in the next sections.

§2.1.2. MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

Scholars generally agree with the *a priori* force of the genealogical method, in order that the numerical preponderance of the Byzantine text says nothing about the value of the text.⁴⁶ Nevertheless the possibility of making a genealogical stemma of the New Testament manuscripts came under serious criticism, especially because of the confusion caused by contamination⁴⁷—of which Westcott and Hort were well aware anyway.⁴⁸ Another infirmity is that the genealogical *a priori* is a theoretical assumption, and not a historical established result of accurate inquiry.⁴⁹ This became especially pressing when research showed that the Byzantine text is less homogeneous and more independent than stated by Westcott and Hort.⁵⁰

To elude these weaknesses, an argument has been developed, which strongly confirms the conclusions of the *a priori* (theoretical) possibility of the genealogical argument, but which was able to replace the genealogical argument. The argument is—with an appeal to the extant MSS—that the Byzantine text did not become a majority until the ninth century.⁵¹ This is confirmed by the conclusions of Klaus Wachtel, that—in the case of the Catholic Epistles—the Byzantine text was not

⁴⁵ Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory," 733.

⁴⁶ Cf. for instance: Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*: 208, 212.

⁴⁷ By contamination is meant that, already in the early centuries, scribes collated MSS and made MSS that were no exact transcriptions of originals, but eclectic texts that bore the characteristics of various texts. See for a recent and innovative introduction to this subject: Gert Mink, "Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission: The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM) as a Complement and Corrective to Existing Approaches," in *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research*, ed. Klaus Wachtel and Michael W. Holmes (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

⁴⁸ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 8. Cf. for a critical evaluation of the genealogical method the important article of Colwell: *Genealogical Method: Its Achievements and its Limitations* in: Colwell, *Studies in Methodology*: 63–83. “[...] sixty years of study since Westcott and Hort indicate that it is doubtful if it can be applied to New Testament manuscripts in such a way as to advance our knowledge of the original text of the New Testament” *ibid.*, 63. The difference between Westcott and Hort, and Colwell is, that mixture (as they called contamination) was for Westcott and Hort no reason to doubt the utility of the genealogical method, whereas Colwell thought it to be one of the biggest problems of the genealogical method.

⁴⁹ *Studies in Methodology*: 63–66. Westcott and Hort never applied their theoretical method to the actual MSS. The persuasiveness of this *logical* argument was enough to serve their purposes.

⁵⁰ These last conclusions came to light when Kirsopp Lake (in cooperation with Robert P. Blake and Silva New) collated almost all MSS in the monasteries on Mt. Sinai and Patmos, and in the Patriarchal Library and the collection of St. Saba at Jerusalem. Their (unexpected) conclusions were that they contain a large number of variants and that close relationships between the MSS are absent. Kirsopp Lake, "Excursus I. The 'Ecclesiastical' Text," in *The Casearean Text of the Gospel of Mark*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, Robert P. Blake, and Silva New (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928). [First published as part of *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1928) and afterwards in a separate volume.]

⁵¹ Aland, "The Text of the Church?," 140–141; Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory," 731.

standardised until the ninth century.⁵² The argument coheres extensively with the changed view from fixed recensional activity to a process of centuries, in which recensional activities are not excluded, but seen as more organic (Cf. §2.1.6.). Roughly the same conclusions were reached in the case of patristic and versional evidence.

§2.1.3. PATRISTIC EVIDENCE

For Kenyon the evidence of the Patres was decisive for the late origins of the Byzantine text. He saw this decisiveness increased, because “no subsequent discovery of new witnesses, and no further examination of the old, has invalidated it.”⁵³ Whereas Westcott and Hort were careful and said that before the middle of the *third* century—at the very earliest—we have no patristic evidence of the Byzantine text, Kenyon and other scholars vigorously stretched the period by hundred years, in stating that characteristic Byzantine readings are never found in quotations prior to AD 350.⁵⁴ Chrysostom was thought to be the first Father who used a Byzantine text (†AD 407).⁵⁵ However, this appeared to be a bit too enthusiastic.

On the one hand, the text of Chrysostom—the landmark of Westcott and Hort—was criticised, because it appeared to be not as Byzantine as once thought. Especially his text of Mark is mixed in character and cannot be classified with any group of manuscripts thus far discovered.⁵⁶ In Matthew, Chrysostom seems to have followed a type of text which is preserved in the K^a-group⁵⁷—as von Soden determined it—and in the Pauline Epistles he kept many “Western” variants.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, he gives evidence of the existence of the Byzantine text, even though in a mixed form.

On the other hand, at least one Church writer was indicated prior to Chrysostom who preserves (traces of) a Byzantine text. In 1978/79 Gordon Fee already pointed

⁵² Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*: 180-198.

⁵³ Kenyon, *Recent Developments*: 8.

⁵⁴ Kenyon, attributes this extension to Hort himself! Ibid. NB It was the date of the Peshitta [Revised Syriac version] that probably made Hort careful. Because later investigation pointed to a much later date of the Peshitta (fifth century), the way was free to extend the period.

⁵⁵ Chrysostom was born between AD 344 and 354 (probably in AD 348) and died in AD 407. His first writings were written between AD 378 and 385. For a short description of his life, person and works, see: Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History. Volume two: From the Council of Nicea to the Beginning of the Medieval Period*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connel (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005). 146-161.

⁵⁶ Jacob Geerlings and Silva New, "Chrysostom's Text of the Gospel of Mark," *Harvard Theological Review* 24 (1931).

⁵⁷ Claude D. Dicks, "The Matthean Text of Chrysostom in his Homilies on Matthew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 67 (1948). The K^a group represents according to von Soden an early stage of the Byzantine text.

⁵⁸ C. K. Gifford, *Pauli epistolas qua forma legerit Johannes Chrysostomus* (Halle Dissertation 1902). Cited in: Bruce M. Metzger, *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, *New Testament Tools and Studies* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963). 22.

cautiously to Asterius the Sophist (†AD 341),⁵⁹ who wrote a small treatise (*Syntagma*) after AD 325, in which he defended Arian views. Investigation of the *Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung* (Münster) confirmed that Fee's observation was true. In addition, the Cappadocian Fathers⁶⁰ have been suggested to have a Byzantine text.⁶¹ Although they produced literature prior to Chrysostom, it appeared after AD 350. Hence, the minimum date is not affected. In the light of the evidence of Asterius the minimum date for the *provable existence* of the Byzantine text in Patristic sources could be readjusted a little downwards to—say—AD 330.⁶²

§2.1.4. VERSIONAL EVIDENCE

The above-mentioned conclusion is confirmed by versional evidence. In 341 Wulfila—bishop of the Gothlands—received from Eusebius a manuscript to provide a Gothic translation of the New Testament. That translation—if it is handed over in a faithful manner—is definitely Byzantine in character,⁶³ although it is not free of numerous “Western” readings. These readings can point to extensive Latin influences, but if we take a gradual development of the Byzantine text for granted (cf. §2.1.6.), it is a sign that the Byzantine text was not yet standardised, especially with relation to the Epistles. Nevertheless the Gothic version clearly proves that something like the Byzantine text existed in earlier part of the fourth century, at least for the Gospels.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Gordon D. Fee, "A Critique of W. N. Pickering's *The Identity of the New Testament Text: A Review Article*," *Westminster Theological Journal* 41 (1978-1979): 422. Cf. "Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21, no. 1 (1978): 28f. It is interesting that Asterius himself was a native of Cappadocia and a student of Lucian of Antioch. See for short biographical notes: Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, V. 2: 24f. For additional information about his dogmatic views, see: Frances M. Young and Andrew Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background*, Second ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010). 57-60.

⁶⁰ The Cappadocian fathers worked and wrote their treatises from roughly AD 360. It was von Soden who pointed to the mixed text of the Cappadocians, while it gave clear evidence of the existence of a Byzantine text. Hermann Freiherr von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt. I. Teil, ii Abteilung, Die Textformen, A. Die Evangelien* (Berlin: 1907). 1460ff. For biographical information on the Cappadocians, see Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, V. 2: 81-135.

⁶¹ Aland, "The Text of the Church?," 141.

⁶² This date is remarkably close to the council of Nicea in AD 325, although there is no historical evidence to connect the Byzantine text with this council until now.

⁶³ It is generally agreed that its text is Byzantine and agrees with the majuscule group (A)EFGHSUV. Wilhelm Streitberg, *Die Gotische Bibel*, Fünfte durchgesehene Auflage ed. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1965). XXXV-XXXVI; Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). 384-388; Carla Falluomini, "The Gothic Version of the New Testament," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 332-333.

⁶⁴ "The Gothic Version of the New Testament," 331. An important feature of the Gothic version is the absence of the *Pericopa Adulterae*.

One of the centrepieces of the early debate was the date of the Syriac Peshitta, which Westcott and Hort thought to be the first version with a Byzantine character—dated by them in the latter part of the third or in the fourth centuries⁶⁵, and which was for Byzantine protagonists of utmost importance, because of its supposed early date (cf. §2.2.4.).⁶⁶ Today it is generally accepted that the Peshitta is a late recension of the old Syriac text, and commonly dated to the late fourth or early fifth century.⁶⁷ Besides, its text appears to be not as Byzantine as once thought, because it contains many “Western” readings and “Western”-Byzantine agreements.⁶⁸ In the light of these findings, the foundation of the argument of Westcott and Hort to suppose an early Syrian [=Byzantine] recension in the third century is lost.

§2.1.5. INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Present-day handbooks generally reiterate the views of Westcott and Hort, especially the view that the Byzantine editors glossed over many difficulties and presented a smoother text. It was von Soden, who made this general characterisation more concrete.⁶⁹ He subdivided the Byzantine interferences into three categories:⁷⁰

- 1) *Stylistical improvements* by change of word order, clarification and straightening of syntactical constructs, the consequent bringing into line of *tempora* within one sentence, avoidance of reiterations when they hinder the flow of the sentence, alteration of *genitivus absolutus* in *participium coniunctum*, change of *verbum finitum* in *participium* or the reverse, insertions of copula, and insertions of καὶ in co-ordinate phrases.
- 2) *Changes with respect to content* by adaptation to synoptic parallels or to the exact wording of LXX phrases.
- 3) *Clarification of meaning* by addition of possessives, avoidance of ellipsis, and addition or modification of particles.

⁶⁵ Although Westcott and Hort admitted that “[e]xternal evidence as to its date and history is entirely wanting (...) there is no reason to doubt that it is at least as old as the Latin version.” Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 84.

⁶⁶ Its date was of major importance during the *Oxford Debate on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*. See J. L. North, “The Oxford Debate on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, Held at New College on May 6, 1897: An End, not a Beginning, for the Textus Receptus,” in *Studies in the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts*, ed. D. G. K. Taylor (Birmingham: University Press, 1999).

⁶⁷ Peter J. Williams, “The Syriac Versions of the New Testament,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 150. Remarkably, the Peshitta did not contain 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation. *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*: 62f. Some thought it dated from the second or even the first century.

⁶⁹ Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments: I. Teil, ii Abteilung; A. Die Evangelien*: 1456-1458.

⁷⁰ Cf. Wachtel, who has analysed somewhat more comprehensively the characteristics of Byzantine readings of the Catholic Epistles: Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*: 73-75. His most important finding is the discovery and description of *untypical* Byzantine readings (cf. §2.1.6.).

Nevertheless subsequent scholars uttered cautious criticism on two of Hort's principles of internal evidence. The first point of criticism was focussed on the theory of conflation. According to Kirsopp Lake, conflation "can be tested only by an appeal to Patristic evidence and general probability."⁷¹ As general probabilities rest wholly on subjective argumentation, the ultimate and decisive ground is Patristic evidence. In later years, Patristic evidence received corroboration from papyrological evidence for the reconstruction of the early text, but a fundamental weakness remained. Moreover, Westcott and Hort—"to the best of their belief"—did not know of cases of conflation in the other texts, Colwell found them and concluded that "[n]o text or document is homogeneous enough to justify judgment on the basis of *part* [Hort's eight examples of conflation in the Byzantine text; *EB*] of its readings for the rest of its readings."⁷² When the conflation theory must be dropped, the most important pillar of Westcott and Hort's genealogical argumentation is lost. The result is that internal evidence has lost much of its objectivity and tends to become more and more subjective.⁷³

The second point is that many "distinctive Byzantine readings" are not as "distinctive" as Westcott and Hort thought. G. Zuntz pointed in his *Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum*, to instances where P^{46} agrees with the Byzantine text *against the ancient MSS*. Although in isolated cases one may be inclined to assume that they came in existence independently by chance, "[t]he examination of a number of these instances disproves this assumption. P^{46} actually shows that readings (faulty as well as genuine ones) which so far had appeared to be late do in fact go back to the earliest times."⁷⁴ His conclusion on the basis of these variants is that the "Byzantines" reproduced an older tradition, and never altered the text without manuscript evidence. Moreover, "[t]hey left so many hopelessly difficult places unassailed!"⁷⁵ These variants even show that the "old Uncials" of the fourth and fifth centuries do not furnish us with a complete picture of the text in the early centuries. Nevertheless Zuntz held the view that the Byzantine text is an eclectic text, which—despite of these old readings—"is the latest text (...) that (...) contains the largest proportion of corruptions."⁷⁶

⁷¹ Lake, *The Text of the New Testament*: 68.

⁷² Colwell, *Studies in Methodology*: 70. In note 3 Colwell gave three examples, of which the most convincing are: Mark 1:28 in which the readings εὐθυς and πανταχοῦ are conflated to εὐθυς πανταχοῦ in B; and Mark 1:40 in which the readings ὅτι and κυρίε are conflated to ὅτι κυρίε in B.

⁷³ Cf. Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*: 43. Nevertheless, Wachtel considers his book as an attempt to produce convincing internal evidence for the Catholic Epistles. *Ibid.*, 43f.

⁷⁴ Gunther Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum*, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy: 1946 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953). 49-50. This statement is accompanied by a number of examples. *Ibid.*, 50-55, 56 (note 2).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

In conclusion, it can be said that the arguments of conflation and of distinctive readings are in need of revision. This leads us to another point in which a major shift took place: the reconstruction of the textual history. Whereas in previous times the Byzantine text was considered the result of a recension, present-day scholars are more and more inclined to think of a process of centuries.

§2.1.6. THEORIES OF ORIGINS: RECENSION THEORY AND PROCESS THEORY

From Westcott and Hort onward, it was generally accepted that the Byzantine text was the result of a fixed recension or recensions. Nowadays, most scholars have dropped that key part of Westcott and Hort's theory,⁷⁷ although they were much more cautious than generally thought.

According to Westcott and Hort, the origins of the “Syrian” [=Byzantine] text must be sought in two separate stages. They deduced these stages in three steps. Firstly, they observed that the Syriac Peshitta version closely resembles the Syrian text, but is not identical, because it frequently sides with “Pre-Syrian” [=Pre-Byzantine] texts. Secondly, they established that the Peshitta version was an officially sanctioned version, made in Edessa or Nisibis—which had close relations with Antioch—or in Antioch itself. In conclusion, they stated that the Syrian text as we know it, cannot be equated with the Greek text, which was the source text of the Peshitta version. Hence, they supposed an earlier Syrian revision of the Greek text—which was authoritative for the Peshitta version—, which in its turn was revised too.⁷⁸

Another historical and contemporary circumstance to which Westcott and Hort paid attention, was the period of peace between the persecutions under Decius and Valerian (ca. AD 250-260) and Diocletian (AD 303-313). After the mass destruction of churches and MSS, multiplication of MSS was desired, because of the increasing number of converts. Such a state of things would also increase the need of a textual revision. It was in this very period, that Lucian—who was educated in Edessa—was active in Antioch.⁷⁹ According to Westcott and Hort, his name is best to be associated

⁷⁷ Holmes, "The 'Majority Text Debate,'" 15. "While most scholars continue to view the Majority text as late and secondary, Hort's explanation of its origin is widely rejected. There is no direct evidence that Lucian ever worked on the New Testament text, nor can the Majority text any longer be traced back to a single event. In fact, 'neither the origin of the Byzantine text viewed as entirely nor the origin of its various sub-forms in the course of history is known'. Thus most textual critics are in the position of rejecting a key part of Hort's argument while continuing to accept his results."

⁷⁸ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 135-137. As stated in §2.1.4., this argument does not hold anymore, because of changed views regarding the date of the Peshitta version.

⁷⁹ Lucian suffered martyrdom in AD 312.

with the early Syrian revision, although the presence or absence of his name is not considered as decisive for the argument.⁸⁰

It is important to notice that they seriously considered the possibility of a process completed in the midst of the fourth century, but eventually rejected it.⁸¹ They saw two considerations as decisive: 1) the contraction of the sphere of influence of the Greek Church, because of the separation of the Latin and Greek Churches and the conquests of whole regions by the barbarians and Muslims, by which many local MSS were lost; 2) the Greek Church became centred in Constantinople, of which Antioch—which promoted the Antiochian recension [=Byzantine text]—was the true ecclesiastical parent. Because of these circumstances, it is probable that the Antiochian recension became more and more the standard text in the East. However, Westcott and Hort were well aware of the differences between the Byzantine minuscules.⁸² In other words, they did not consider the *development* of the Byzantine text as a process, but its *increasing influence*.

Initially, subsequent scholars fully honoured this sketch of history,⁸³ although critical views were expressed early. One of the major problems of a fixed recension is that it is highly remarkable that no early historian or Church Father mentions such an influential recension.⁸⁴ On the contrary, if the origin of the Byzantine text is considered as a process, it also accounts for the differences between the Byzantine text and the Syriac Peshitta, which led Westcott and Hort to divide the recension into two stages. Thus according to Kenyon, “[i]t seems probable (...) that the Syrian revision was rather the result of a tendency spread over a considerable period of time

⁸⁰ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 137-139. The Lakes saw the connection of Lucian with the supposed Byzantine recension as very problematic. See for their comments: Lake and Lake, "The Byzantine Text of the Gospels," 252.

⁸¹ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 142. "It follows that, however great and long continued may have been the blending of texts, the text which finally emerged triumphant in the East was not a result of any such process, in which the Antiochian text would have been but one factor, however considerable." [Emphasis added]. And some paragraphs before: "The Syrian text must in fact be the result of a 'recension' in the proper sense of the word, a work of attempted criticism, performed deliberately by editors and not merely by scribes." Ibid., 133. [Emphasis added] Nevertheless it should be admitted that their use terminology is somewhat ambiguous, because on page 137 they speak about the "final process." [Emphasis added]

⁸² Ibid., 142-146.

⁸³ For instance Lake, *The Text of the New Testament*: 72. "How can you explain an eclectic text, except by a revision? No one has answered this question as yet. But if there be any answer, it might be adopted without upsetting W.H.'s views in the least."

⁸⁴ The much cited letter of Jerome to Pope Damasus (No. 13: *Epistula ad Damasum*) in which is spoken of "codices quos a Luciano et Hesychio nuncupatos," cannot be taken as evidence for a Lucianic recension, because Jerome does not accuse Lucian and Hesychius of tampering with the Greek text, but people who appeal to Lucian's and Hesychius' MSS. On the basis of other quotations of Jerome, it is highly questionable if he saw Lucian's text as corrupt, neither gives he reasons to link Lucian with the Byzantine text. See: Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*: 166-169. For the *Epistula ad Damasum*, see: Robertus Weber and Roger Gryson, *Biblia Sacra, Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, Vierte verbesserte ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994). 1515f.

than of a definite and authoritative revision or revisions.”⁸⁵ The process view, which was quickly taken over as an acceptable modification of the theory of Westcott and Hort, has dominated subsequent research, although the concept of a recension remained still alive.⁸⁶

Later on, both theories were combined, to clarify the complexities of the Byzantine texts. According to Kurt Aland, there was a tendency among scribes to gloss over the text during the second and third centuries. At the end of the third century, Lucian *created* by comparison and further recensional activity the “Antiochene [=Byzantine] text.” After the Diocletian persecutions (AD 303-313), many students of the Antiochian theological school were called to serve as bishops in Asia Minor, who carried their Byzantine MSS with them. Nevertheless, it took centuries before the Byzantine text supplanted the other earlier texts, which is seen by the increase of Byzantine elements from century to century.⁸⁷ Such a combination of theories has two advantages: 1) it accounts for the unnoticed rise of a quite different text, and 2) it accounts for the existence of the many internal differences and mixed forms of text.

However, more detailed investigation of the data brought an important turn. In 1995, Klaus Wachtel published his investigation of the Byzantine text of the Catholic Epistles. His important study of these letters brought him to three observations:⁸⁸

- 1) Characteristic readings of the Koine text are evidenced in early MSS too, that represent older traditions;
- 2) The characteristics of Koine readings show the normal way of variant formation;
- 3) The *untypical* Koine readings,⁸⁹ are incompatible with the hypothesis that the Koine text was edited according to fixed principles.

⁸⁵ Thus Kenyon, *Handbook*: 324-327. (The quotation is taken from page 325). According to Kenyon, this was roughly what Hort actually meant, but in my opinion he neglected the explicit rejection of that view by Westcott and Hort, as the quotations show in note 81. It is also remarkable that Kenyon wholly passed over the two arguments of Westcott and Hort that led them to the rejection of a process view.

⁸⁶ See for example Vaganay and Amphoux, *Introduction*: 109, (126). However, they comment that the recension was deteriorated in quality by continual alterations.

It should be reminded that Tregelles abandoned already the whole idea of recensions well before Westcott and Hort developed their theory: “There is no proof of any *recension* of the text ever having taken place, or any revision on an extensive scale: it is evident that any corrections must have been partial and local, springing from copyists, and not from authority, ecclesiastical or critical.” It is thrilling that it took more than a century before this idea became fully revived by Wachtel! Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, ed. *Introduction to the Textual Criticism and Study of the New Testament*, 11th ed., vol. 4, An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), 104. Cited from: Epp, “Textual Clusters: Their Past and Future in New Testament Textual Criticism,” 537.

⁸⁷ Aland, “The Text of the Church?,” 142-144.

⁸⁸ Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*: 89.

⁸⁹ Wachtel describes the “Untypischen Mehrheitslesarten” as “Stolpersteine”: variants “die den Text eben nicht glätten und verdeutlichen, sondern eher schwieriger oder sogar eindeutig fehlerhaft

It was these observations that brought him to challenge the whole idea of a (Lucianic) recension—at least for the Catholic Epistles. Furthermore, he observed that the actual MSS evidence can be explained best as the result of a long process of development, which brought the text of the Catholic Epistles to its final form in the ninth century only.⁹⁰ The next considerations are significant:⁹¹

- 1) There is no MS that has the Majority reading in all its variants;
- 2) All Majority readings are also evidenced in representatives of older text traditions;
- 3) Many readings of older text forms are evidenced in some Koine MSS as well; many times in the larger minorities.

In the light of these remarks, the theory of Westcott and Hort becomes untenable. According to Wachtel, “ist es wahrscheinlich, daß der Text, der sich später als Koine durchsetzte, nicht einer nach gleichbleibenden Prinzipien durchgeführten Rezension unterzogen, sondern nur stellenweise “editorisch” bearbeitet wurde.”⁹² Or in other words:

Aufgrund dieser Voraussetzungen stellt sich die Entstehung und Ausbreitung der Koine als ein im Princip kontinuierlicher Prozeß dar. Wahrscheinlich gab es im Zuge dieses Prozesses Entwicklungssprünge, indem Handschriften, die mehrfach kopiert werden sollten, zuvor redigiert und mit verbreiteten Lesarten angereichert wurden.⁹³

It was the untypical variants that ultimately knocked down the recension theory, which was wholly based on the typical readings.⁹⁴ In this way, Wachtel returned to Kenyon’s assertions but added necessary argumentation.

Further investigation of the other parts of the New Testament is necessary to show which of these principles are applicable to for instance the Gospels. According to Barbara Aland, Patristic citations show that the Byzantine text is not considered “sakrosankt” in the fourth and fifth centuries. It was not until the sixth century, that the Byzantine text of the Gospels was fully developed.⁹⁵ And Ralston observed that “[t]he Byzantine text appears to grow increasingly toward the *Majority Text* with the

gestalten (...) und sind zugleich sicher vom ursprünglichen Text zu unterscheiden.” Ibid., 10, 73-75. Quotation from page 10.

⁹⁰ Wachtel subdivided this process for the Catholic Epistles in three phases: an early stage ca. 3rd/4th century, a middle stage ca. 5th/6th century, and a final stage until the 9th century. Ibid., 190-198. In the same manner, von Soden subdivided the K-text in three stages: K¹, K^x and K^r, which the Lake’s interpreted as three stages *in evolution*. Lake and Lake, "The Byzantine Text of the Gospels," 254.

⁹¹ Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*: 159.

⁹² Ibid., 89.

⁹³ Ibid., 183.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 74. “Diese untypischen Mehrheitslesarten sind es vor allem, die zu einer Revision seiner [=Hort’s] bis heute weit verbreiteten Rezensionshypothese zwingen.” But it is also remarkable that the majority of untypical readings (24 of 37) are not evidenced by old MSS and the Syriac Harklensis (AD 616)—which according to Wachtel represents an intermediate stage of the process—but by MSS of the ninth century first. Ibid., 197.

⁹⁵ Barbara Aland, "Neutestamentliche Textforschung und Textgeschichte," *New Testament Studies* 36, no. 3 (1990): 348f.

passing of time [which is] due to addition from other traditions, not subtraction.”⁹⁶ Remarkably, Kirsopp and Silva Lake presented as early as 1940 a summary of their previous studies in which they suggested a similar development.⁹⁷

It is important to notice that this development to a process view allows for a more positive view of the Byzantine text, which Wallace has called “the potential value of the Byzantine witnesses.”⁹⁸ The main reason is that we have to reckon with the possibility that “the Byzantine archetype(s) could have been based in part on better Alexandrian and Western MSS than are now extant.” Moreover the time-consuming publication of the *Text und Textwert*⁹⁹ has revealed that among the late Byzantine MSS—in the broadest sense of the word—there are many jewels that evidence a very old (Alexandrian) text, which sometimes corresponds in a higher degree with the Nestle-Aland text or “initial text” (= the main text of the *Editio Critica Maior* [ECM]) than Κ or B.¹⁰⁰ This has kindled an increasing interest for the late minuscules.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the conviction that the Byzantine tradition can preserve traces of earlier phases gains more and more ground. Several of the distinctively Byzantine readings are now considered as authentic and adopted in the text of Nestle-Aland.¹⁰² Besides, by using the CBGM (*Coherence Based Genealogical Method*) the late and closely related minuscules are expected to provide useful genealogical information about the development of the text of the New Testament even well into the majuscule times,

⁹⁶ Ralston, “The ‘Majority Text’ and Byzantine Origins,” 132.

⁹⁷ Lake and Lake, “The Byzantine Text of the Gospels,” 251–258. “It is not rash, therefore, to say that the π family is one of the ancestors of the Byzantine text, not a corrupt descendant of it. Ought it to be called the earliest form of the Byzantine text? Possibly it ought, but this depends on our definition of ‘Byzantine’.” Ibid., 256. Cf. Silva Lake, *Family II and the Codex Alexandrinus*, Studies and Documents, 5 (London: Christophers, 1936).

[Π is considered the main member of an early Byzantine group (Π, K and some minuscules), called by von Soden the K^a-group.]

⁹⁸ Wallace, “The Majority Text Theory,” 734.

⁹⁹ Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, and Klaus Wachtel, eds., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments*, 16 vols., ANTF (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987–2005).

¹⁰⁰ With thanks to Bart Kamphuis, who draw my attention to this aspect.

¹⁰¹ Especially the Alands have repeatedly pointed to the potential value of the minuscules. Cf. for a recent plea: Barbara Aland and Klaus Wachtel, “The Greek minuscules of the New Testament,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

¹⁰² An example is the Byzantine *lectio brevior* in Phil. 1:14; which variant is surprisingly evidenced by Ψ⁴⁶ too. This more inclusive stance is also visible in the method of the new ECM. Speaking about the ECM, Mink said: “We have to search for traces of earlier phases of the textual history in the manuscripts of later centuries. Such evidence is likely to be found in documents deviating from the main stream of transmission. On the other hand, it must not be excluded that the Byzantine tradition itself preserves such elements. Therefore, the textual epoch from the ninth century on is well represented in the selection of manuscripts for the ECM.” Mink, “Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission,” 146. Cf. for more examples: Klaus Wachtel, “Early Variants in the Byzantine Text of the Gospels,” in *Transmission and Reception: New Testament Text-Critical and Exegetical Studies*, ed. J. W. Childers and D. C. Parker (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2006), 28–47.

which is unavailable from the quite solitary majuscules and papyri.¹⁰³ If successful in reconstructing convincing stemmata, this method will uncover much of the supposed development of the Byzantine text through the ages.

§2.1.7. CONCLUSION

Although many of the assertions of Westcott and Hort have undergone modification, the conclusion remained the same: the Byzantine text is *definitely* secondary in origin. Moreover, we can conclude that through these modifications, the claims of the secondary character of the Byzantine text became rather stronger. The most influential change that led to this conclusion, was the change from a recensional view, to a process view in which the text received editorial interventions during ages. It can be a misconception to conceive of a fixed recension, but a process is much more difficult to refute, because this view appears to be more and more supported by Patristic and versional evidence. Nevertheless, various opinions fixed once, like the genealogical argument and the theory of conflation, have been dropped, although they still dominate the handbooks. In the next section it is investigated how Byzantine protagonists took up the task.

§2.2. HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING THE PRIMARY ORIGINS OF THE BYZANTINE TEXT

§2.2.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: THE “HEADSTRONG” DEAN JOHN WILLIAM BURGON

The most compelling and elaborate defender of the “Traditional Text” [=Byzantine text]—not of the *Textus Receptus*¹⁰⁴—was the Dean of Chichester: John William

¹⁰³ Aland and Wachtel, "The Greek minuscules of the New Testament," 73-75. "By means of such genealogies, it is possible to determine the ways that New Testament manuscripts vary from one another, to understand why these variations came into being, and to study the persistence of certain readings and forms of the text in the tradition. On the basis of our conclusions, we will then be able to improve significantly the external criteria used to establish the initial text." Ibid., 74.

For a comprehensive introduction to the CBGM, see: Mink, "Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission."

¹⁰⁴ Burgon is usually wrongly associated with the *Textus Receptus*, which should not be considered as a full Byzantine text, because many Caesarean readings from Codex 1—which Erasmus used—found their way in this text. There is however no difference between Burgon's use of “Traditional Text,” and the Byzantine- or Majority text, which are now more usual. See for his own explanation of the Traditional Text in contrast to the *Textus Receptus*: John William Burgon and Edward Miller, *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established. Arranged, Completed, and Edited by Edward Miller.* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896). 5. “First, be it understood, that we do not advocate perfection in the *Textus Receptus*. We allow that here and there it requires revision. (...) What we maintain is the TRADITIONAL TEXT.” Cf. Ibid., 15; John William Burgon, *The Revision Revised: Three Articles Reprinted from the 'Quarterly Review'* (London: John Murray, 1883). 21 (note 2), 107-108 (inclusive an example from Matthew 10:8, in which the TR calls for correction), 269.

Burton.¹⁰⁵ In studying his works, the best thing will be to start with his two later works that appeared posthumously in print, because they are more mature and less hot-tempered than his earlier works.¹⁰⁶

In his method, Burton distinguished two branches of inquiry: 1) the collection, investigation and arrangement of evidence as supplied by MSS, versions and Fathers, and 2) the drawing of critical inferences concerning the “truth of the text.” According to Burton, “[n]othing can be successfully accomplished here without large and exact knowledge, freedom from bias and prejudice.”¹⁰⁷ Both should be carried out with the underlying rule in mind, that “[t]he real text of the sacred writers does not now, since the originals have been so long lost, lie in any MS. or edition, *but is dispersed in them all.*”¹⁰⁸

Concerning the first, there is in Burton’s view a disproportionate amount of attention to the five oldest codices (NABCD), whereas of these codices, N, B, and D, are “three of the most corrupt copies in existence.”¹⁰⁹ If I interpret Burton well, this conclusion is the most fundamental argument of his method, and is at the root of all his further reasoning. Moreover, this conviction was more fundamental than his theological convictions, of which he is commonly accused.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ It should be noted that Burton was not the first, to stand up for the Byzantine text. One notable predecessor—on whose principles Burton relied—was the Roman Catholic scholar J. M. A. Scholz of Bonn (†1852). His arguments were: 1) The uniformity of the Byzantine text; 2) discrepancies between the Alexandrian MSS and versions; 3) the oldest Byzantine MSS have been worn out; 4) the evidence from other versions, especially of the Syriac versions; (and possibly 5) the numerical preponderance). See Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text*: 92-97. Later on in his life (1845), Scholz retracted his preference for the Byzantine text, and stated that in a new edition, many of the Alexandrian readings should be incorporated into the text. Cf. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction*: 476-477.

¹⁰⁶ Burton’s earlier works are both—as their titles show—part of his direct polemics with the opinions of contemporary scholars. The first appeared in 1871 in reaction to the more and more accepted view that the last verses of Mark should not be considered authentic. The second appeared originally as a series of separate articles in the *Quarterly Review* (October 1881, January 1882 and April 1882) together with a reply to a pamphlet of bishop Ellicott that appeared in 1882 in reply to Burton’s first two articles. John William Burton, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark* (Oxford & London: J. Parker & Co., 1871); *The Revision Revised*.

His two later works have been compiled after his death from extensive, but incomplete manuscripts, by Edward Miller. Although they are not free from polemics, they are much reduced in tone and cover the issues of textual criticism in a more comprehensive and coherent way. Burton and Miller, *The Traditional Text; The Causes of the Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels. Arranged, completed, and edited by Edward Miller* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896). Cf. what Miller noted in the preface of *The Traditional Text*: xiii: “I ask from Critics who may not assent to all our conclusions a candid consideration of our case, which is rested solely upon argument and reason throughout. This explanation made by the Dean of his system in calmer times and in a more didactic form cannot, as I think, fail to remove much prejudice.”

¹⁰⁷ *The Traditional Text*: 19.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 26. [Emphasis added] Burton borrowed this “golden precept” from Bentley.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 25. Cf. Burton, *The Revision Revised*: 11-18.

¹¹⁰ For his theological convictions, see: §3.1.

It is important to understand that Burgon's opinion about the "old Uncials" was not a simple, naïve understanding. In the third article of *Revision Revised* he gave an account of how his ideas had been developed. In eight years, he "laboriously collated" ΚΑΒCD, but "[l]ong before coming to the end of our task (...) we had become convinced that the supposed 'best documents' and 'first-rate authorities' are in reality among *the worst*."¹¹¹ In addition, he gave numerous examples of cases in which he considered ΚΒD inferior to later copies.¹¹² Especially pressing was their *inconsistent testimony*.¹¹³

Concerning the second, Burgon developed a sevenfold approach, summarised in his "seven Tests (or Notes) of Truth":¹¹⁴

1. Antiquity, or Primitiveness;
2. Consent of Witnesses, or Number;
3. Variety of Evidence, or Catholicity;
4. Respectability of Witnesses, or Weight;
5. Continuity, or Unbroken Tradition;
6. Evidence of the Entire Passage, or Context;
7. Internal Considerations, or Reasonableness.

Burgon considers the importance of these tests in *their co-operation*, because approximation is all that can be expected. It is important to see that theological convictions are absent in this list, which shows that in his later work, Burgon was convinced of a coherence between his "personal" theological convictions and the "general" historical evidence. He even argued that the latter could stand for itself.¹¹⁵

As the first five Notes show, his method was mainly focussed on external evidence.¹¹⁶ In *The Revision Revised* he gave an account of this approach which remained unchanged in his later work.

¹¹¹ Burgon, *The Revision Revised*: 337-338.

¹¹² See: ibid., 30-36, 308-318. 30-32 general examples; 32-33 conspicuous assimilations; 33-36 deprivation of the text. Cf. Ibid., 36-106. Which contains many elaborated examples from the English *Revised Version*, and in which the five old Uncials are mostly involved. See for more very interesting examples: Burgon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 287-291.

¹¹³ Burgon found for example in Mark 2:1-12, 60 variations of reading (not reckoning 4 blunders and peculiarities of spelling) in ΚΑΒCD. "Now, in the present instance, the 'five old uncials' *cannot be* the depositaries of a tradition,—whether Western or Eastern,—because they render inconsistent testimony *in every verse*." Burgon, *The Revision Revised*: 30-31.

¹¹⁴ Burgon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 28-29. Burgon elaborated these principles in chapter III (40-67).

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 12. "I have addressed what goes before [about God's providential care; *EB*] to persons who sympathize with me in my belief. To others the argument would require to be put in a different way." That different way rests mainly on the authority of the Catholic Church, which felt the need of "zealous care of the Holy Scriptures." Ibid., 12-14. We see that in his later works, Burgon was able to put his theological convictions in the background.

¹¹⁶ Burgon, *The Revision Revised*: 19. "For we resolutely maintain, that *external Evidence* must after all be our best, our only safe guide; (...)."

A safer, the *only* trustworthy method, in fact, of ascertaining the Truth of Scripture, we hold to be the method which,—without prejudice of partiality,—simply ascertains WHICH FORM OF THE TEXT ENJOYS THE EARLIEST, THE FULLEST, THE WIDEST, THE MOST RESPECTABLE, AND—above all things—THE MOST VARIED ATTESTATION. That a Reading should be freely recognized alike by the earliest and by the latest available evidence,—we hold to be a prime circumstance in its favour. That Copies, Versions, and Fathers, should all three concur in sanctioning it,—we hold to be even more conclusive. If several Fathers, living in different parts of ancient Christendom, are all observed to recognize the words, or to quote them in the same way,—we have met with all the additional confirmation we ordinarily require.¹¹⁷

And one page further:

It will be perceived therefore that the method we plead for consists merely in *a loyal recognition of the whole of the Evidence.*¹¹⁸

Another remarkable aspect of Burgons approach is, that he fully conceived the idea of recensions, but in no way connected it with the Byzantine text. “Unfortunately, they [Origen, Lucian and Hesychius; *EB*] did their work in an age when such fatal misapprehension prevailed on the subject, that each in turn will have inevitably imported a fresh assortment of *monstra* into the sacred writings.”¹¹⁹ He immediately afterwards referred to early heretics like Tatian, Valentinus and Marcion, and fabricated Gospels like the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. But in another place, he imagined—contrary to the before presented—, that a comprehensive recension (or recensions), as is conjectured by Westcott and Hort, would more likely lead to a purer text than to a fabricated text. His main argument is that these revisers could have much older manuscripts on their disposal than are now known.¹²⁰ It is impossible to suppress the thought that Burgon is prejudiced here in favour of his Traditional Text.

Finally, Burgon was especially disgusted of the many assumptions and conjectures in the theory of Westcott and Hort. “They assume everything. They prove nothing.”¹²¹ Because subsequent authors rely heavily on Burgon’s opinions, we will discuss them more in depth in the subsequent sections.

§2.2.2. MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

One of the purposes of *The Revision Revised* was to show the bad quality of the “old Uncials” and the good quality of the Byzantine MSS—and in that order. This is roughly the whole approach of Byzantine protagonists concerning MSS evidence and therefore the structure of this section.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 339-340.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 341. [*Emphasis added*]

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

¹²⁰ See for his interesting fictive story what would have happened in the case of an official recension: *ibid.*, 279-281.

¹²¹ Ibid., 264. Cf. 276-77.

In *Revision Revised*, Burgon formulated in short what he considered the background of especially NBD:

By some of these ancient Critics it seems to have been thought allowable to abbreviate, by simply leaving out whatever did not appear to themselves strictly necessary: by other words, to transpose the words—even the members—of a sentence, almost to any extent: by others, to substitute easy expressions for difficult ones. In this way it comes to pass that we are often presented, and in the oldest documents of all, with Readings which stand self-condemned; are clearly fabrications. That it was held allowable to assimilate one Gospel to another, is quite certain.¹²²

Although many differences are mere accidents, a vast number was unmistakably the result of “very clumsy executed” design. It becomes all the more interesting, when Burgon asserts, that it was precisely Hort’s remarks on “Transmission by Writing”—errors as the result of *Accident*, or *Design*—, together with their internal discordance, which ultimately led to his rejection of NBD.¹²³

Usually, Byzantine protagonists associate these aberrant MSS with an appeal to various Fathers, with the work of heretics changing the text.¹²⁴ According to Pickering it was the heretics that created “a welter of variant readings.”¹²⁵ That these MSS were considered unreliable later on, is evidenced by the absence of a numerous progeny.¹²⁶

Connected to this conviction is the explanation of the preservation of the depraved MSS. It is argued that, because of its divergent text, these MSS have not been worn out like the much used old Byzantine MSS of the same age. The last were copied and subsequently discarded. This is confirmed by the fact that almost all MSS—also the Byzantine—are “orphans,”¹²⁷ as Kirsopp Lake discovered to his surprise.¹²⁸

¹²² Ibid., 50.

¹²³ Ibid., 56, 248-250.

¹²⁴ We find for instance in Eusebius a lengthy quotation from an anonymous work—written about AD 230—in which heretics are accused for tampering with the divine Scriptures on a large scale. See: Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History: Books 1-5*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 153, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926). 520-524 (V.528.513-519).

¹²⁵ This opinion, expressed in his first edition (Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Nashville, New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1977). 107-108.) was nuanced in the last: abnormal transmission counts only for the “significant” readings (5%) the other 95% is due to transcriptional errors. *Identity*: 67 (note 2). Pickering added this note, because he was charged by Fee with an “unhistorical view of the causes of textual corruption”: Gordon D. Fee, “A Critique of W. N. Pickering’s *The Identity of the New Testament Text*: A Review Article,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* XLI(1979): 408.

¹²⁶ Gordon H. Clark, *Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1986). 15.

¹²⁷ Pickering, *Identity*: 85-88. By “orphans” is meant that direct parents of MSS or brother or sister MSS are lacking. There is some evidence of MSS that appear to be copies, but the phenomenon is very sporadic. See David C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). 135-141.

¹²⁸ Lake, “The ‘Ecclesiastical’ Text.”

But according to Robinson—who defends a Byzantine priority view—this argument is specious at best and fails to take account of the entirety of the data.¹²⁹ There is no evidence of selection of MSS according to its text for copying. According to him, the loss of (old) Byzantine MSS is much better explained by two “copying revolutions”.¹³⁰

- 1) The change from papyrus MSS to vellum MSS when Christianity was legitimised under Constantine;
- 2) The change from majuscule script to minuscule script in the ninth century.

In the last remarks, we naturally entered the second point of the Byzantine text defenders: showing the good quality of the Byzantine MSS and defending that conviction against counter-arguments. Most fundamental is what they call “normal transmission.” Normal transmission means that the text of the autographs was multiplied throughout the ages and remained substantially the same. It means that it is more likely that the original text appears in the mass of MSS than in aberrant MSS, which are even discordant among themselves.¹³¹

In order to undergird normal transmission, a “geographical” argument has been proposed. According to Robinson, it is not likely that the local text of Egypt reflected that which permeated the primary Greek-speaking region of the Roman Empire (Southern Italy, Greece and Asia Minor). It is this region that was the ablest to preserve the original text, because they had received many of the original autographs.¹³² “Who could ‘sell’ a fabricated text in Asia Minor in the early fourth century?” Pickering asked rhetorically to invigorate this opinion.¹³³ Moreover, there is *no* assured manuscript-, patristic- or versional evidence from this region prior to the fourth century. The fact that there is no historical confirmation or authorization of a “new” text, makes it probable that the Byzantine text was already dominant in earlier times. In addition, regional alteration would increase proportionally to distance, which is evidenced by the “uncontrolled popular text” phenomenon, which we meet in the early papyri and the “Western” text.¹³⁴ The same idea was elaborated by Pickering, who considers—with an appeal to figures of von Harnack¹³⁵—the

¹²⁹ The same point is made by Taylor: Richard A. Taylor, "Queen Anne Resurrected? A Review Article," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20, no. 4 (1977): 380. “At any rate, such a systematic destruction of used manuscripts by early Christians as this view [of Pickering; EB] demands does not seem to have objective historical corroboration, (...).”

¹³⁰ Robinson, “Byzantine Priority,” 559-560.

¹³¹ Pickering, *Identity*: 65-79. The idea of normal transmission was proposed by Hodges: Zane C. Hodges, “The Greek Text of the King James Version,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125, no. 4 (1968): 334-345.

¹³² Robinson, “Byzantine Priority,” 569-571. According to Pickering between 18 and 24 of the 27 Canonical autographs were sent to this region. Pickering, *Identity*: 61-62.

¹³³ *Identity*: 79.

¹³⁴ Robinson, “Byzantine Priority,” 570-571.

¹³⁵ As shown in: Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den Ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, Vierte verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage ed., vol. I: Die Mission in Wort und

region of the Aegean Area as the most important region that was able to preserve the autographic text.¹³⁶ That Egypt was influenced by Gnosticism at an early stage,¹³⁷ is felt as an argument to suspect the quality of MSS that emanate from that period and place.¹³⁸ An additional argument is that Alexandria was characterised by an allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures with less attention to the literal wording of the text, whereas Antioch was characterised by a literalistic interpretation, with much attention to literal wording. Pickering considers this confirmed in the 1,000 MSS of the Syriac Peshitta that are unparalleled in their consistency.¹³⁹

After Burgeson's death, many papyri came to light. Although there is no early papyrus with a convincing Byzantine text, Sturz—who cannot be reckoned among the pure Byzantine protagonists¹⁴⁰—focussed attention to 150 distinctively Byzantine readings that appear in early papyri. He used these readings to make a strong case for considering the Byzantine text as an early and independent witness to the New Testament text. His arguments are these:¹⁴¹

- 1) These 150 readings are old (2nd or 3rd century);
- 2) These readings cannot have been edited in the fourth century, because they existed already;
- 3) These readings show that the “old Uncials” preserved no complete picture of the text of the second century;
- 4) These readings show that the Byzantine text has preserved readings not preserved in other textual clusters.

There are but several possibilities that could explain the agreement between these readings in the papyri and the Byzantine text.¹⁴²

- 1) *The agreement in these readings is accidental*; but he denies that this would account for the majority of them;
- 2) *The Byzantine text originated in Egypt*, which hardly fits the circumstances;

Tat (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1924). 732-785. Cf. Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*: 53-54, 68.

¹³⁶ Pickering, *Identity*: 61-65.

¹³⁷ See on the question of the origin of Christianity and Gnosticism in Egypt: Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt: The Schweich Lectures on the British Academy 1977* (London: The Oxford University Press, 1979). 49ff.

¹³⁸ Pickering, *Identity*: 63-64.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 65. This seems more due to ignorance than to scientific investigation. Much work to the Peshitta MSS is still to be done. Cf. Williams, "The Syriac Versions of the New Testament," 151f.

¹⁴⁰ Sturz's main purpose was “to see if there were valid reasons for making use of the Byzantine text as an early and independent witness to the text of the New Testament.” Which is answered in the affirmative. And “to present a case for including the Byzantine text-type in the weighing of external evidence for various readings to the Greek text of the New Testament. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 10.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 55-69.

¹⁴² Ibid., 65-69.

- 3) *These Byzantine readings originated in Egypt at an early period and were adopted by the Byzantine editors.* But when these readings originated in Egypt, how did they get into the Byzantine text, whereas at the same time they were excluded from the Alexandrian text?¹⁴³
- 4) *These readings originate in Antioch and found their way to Egypt.* This direction seems more logical for the early period than the reverse, because these readings were rejected by the Alexandrian editors;
- 5) *These readings indicate the independent preservation of wide-spread second-century readings,* but it is impossible to trace their origin;
- 6) *These readings represent an independent preservation of original readings.*

According to Sturz, 4, 5 and 6, along with 1, each account for some of the agreements, whereas 2 and 3 are the least logical of the possibilities. He concluded that these agreements sufficiently demonstrate that distinctively Byzantine readings were in existence prior to the end of the second century and therefore deserve serious consideration.

After proposing the geographical probability and some evidence from the early papyri, the next concern of Byzantine protagonists is to show why the majority of *late* MSS are a reliable source for the original text. An important argument is seen in the numerical preponderance¹⁴⁴ of Byzantine MSS *in connection* with the argument that these predominantly late texts are copies of older MSS. To establish this connection, they often refer to the μεταχαρακτηρισμός [=the transliteration from majuscule to minuscule writing],¹⁴⁵ which started at the beginning of the ninth century, or somewhat earlier.¹⁴⁶ This led to the view that many late minuscule MSS are in fact transliterations of majuscule MSS older by centuries, which is felt valid especially for the minuscules from the ninth until the eleventh century.¹⁴⁷ According

¹⁴³ That the Alexandrian textual cluster was quite fixed in the late second or early third century is shown by Ψ⁷⁵, which text resembles Codex B.

¹⁴⁴ Frequently, Byzantine protagonists pointed to a passage in the *Introduction* of Westcott and Hort, which seemed to accept “that a majority of extant documents is more likely to represent a majority of ancestral documents, than *vice versa*.” Many scholars pointed out that these words are followed by the assertion that it “is too minute to weigh against the smallest tangible evidence of other kinds.” Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 45. Burgon was well aware of these assertions and discussed them both. Burgon, *The Revision Revised*: 254-255.

¹⁴⁵ See for general comments on this transliteration process: L.D. Reynolds and N.G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, Third ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009). 58-61; Herbert Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz: Die byzantinische Buchkultur*, ed. Hans von Steuben and Marcel Restle, Beck's Archäologische Bibliothek (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1989). 62-68.

¹⁴⁶ The earliest dated New Testament MS minuscule (461) is dated AD 835. It shows a quite developed minuscule script, from which it is reasonable to place the starting point at the beginning of the ninth century or somewhat earlier. Cf. Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*: 128-129.

¹⁴⁷ Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*: xiv. “The documents of the twelfth and later centuries generally are irrelevant to the establishment of primary Byzantine readings, and at best serve only a confirmatory purpose.”

to A. Dain, the transliterated copy became the new reference point for the subsequent tradition. The old MSS were of no further interest and were usually discarded or destroyed.¹⁴⁸ That such old MSS were disregarded is seen from the fact that of the 310 majuscule manuscripts, 68 are palimpsests,¹⁴⁹ and many fragmentary because of other kinds of reuse. From this point of view, the late minuscules contain much earlier texts and hence, there is no reason to disqualify them.¹⁵⁰ This brings us to the value that is granted to *number*.

Various later authors attach more weight to number than Burgon did. Pickering for instance, considers a numerical preponderance of 90% or more as unassailable and of 80% as virtually so.¹⁵¹ This means that he acknowledges that a numerical preponderance from 90% can serve absolutely. According to Burgon, number is not “the sole Test, but *caeteris paribus*, and in its own place and proportion.”¹⁵² He mainly intended it as a protection against the proposition that the majority of manuscripts can safely be rejected. He defended his position by stating that this majority of MSS came from different times and different countries, representing the entire area of the Church. Although he was well aware of the many differences between Byzantine MSS, he considered them as demonstrating that they were not assimilated to an arbitrary standard and therefore should be taken as independent witnesses. In contrast, the remaining (say) 5% represent MSS that are even in discordance among themselves. It is of great importance to understand that Burgon never intended that number functions on its own. He practiced it as a close ally of

¹⁴⁸ A. Dain, *Les Manuscrits* (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1949). 115.

¹⁴⁹ According to the numbers given in: Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*: 53. Cf. Robinson, "Byzantine Priority," 561-562.

¹⁵⁰ A reference can be made to a considerable portion of classical literature which depends on transliterations from the ninth and tenth centuries. Cf. Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*: 51.

¹⁵¹ Pickering, *Identity*: 100. Unfortunately Pickering states that if Burgon were alive today, “he would agree that the discoveries and research of the last hundred and some years make possible, even necessary, some refinements on his theory.” Although this can formally be true—we do not know—he would certainly not agree with *this* refinement. For Pickering the “Notes of Truth” come only in play where the attestation falls below 80%. Hence, number functions in many cases as an absolute standard.

¹⁵² In another place, he says that number is “a *presumptive* proof of their trustworthiness.” Burgon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 17. Sometimes it seems to function more absolutely: “When therefore the great bulk of the witnesses,—in the proportion suppose of a hundred or even fifty to one,—yield unfaltering testimony to a certain reading; and the remaining little handful of authorities, while advocating a different reading, are yet observed to be unable to agree among themselves as to what that different reading shall precisely be,—then that other reading concerning which all that discrepancy of detail is observed to exist, *may be regarded as certainly false*.” [Emphasis added] ibid., 47. But it still stands that Burgon’s general opinion is that number only functions *in relation* to the other “Tests.” Cf. Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, Second ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985). xi-xii. According to them, “[a]ny reading overwhelmingly attested by the manuscript tradition is more likely to be original than its rival(s).”

antiquity, variety and the other “Tests of Truth.” Nevertheless, he considered it as the most ordinary ingredient of weight,¹⁵³ which cannot be played off against the others.

As regards MSS evidence, Pickering has recently uttered a more extreme position, which is not supported by other Byzantine protagonists. In his opinion, the text was more and more purified through the ages, with its culmination in the fourteenth century. He knits wholly to the K^r text—as von Soden called it—which is also seen as a later text form by many Byzantine protagonists. The reader sees himself referred to the cited literature if interested.¹⁵⁴

§2.2.3. PATRISTIC EVIDENCE

The most thorough investigator of Patristic evidence I know is Burgon. He collected well over 86.000 quotations of NT passages. On the basis of this collection, Miller—Burgon’s literary executor—concluded that the “text” of the *Textus Receptus* (ed. Scrivener 1887) is not only to be found in the writings of the early Fathers (died prior to AD 400), but also that it predominates (by comparison with the text of Westcott and Hort) in a factor 3:2. For Burgon, this evidence unto Chrysostom (†407), shows that at the time when codices Ι and B were written, MSS existed with a Byzantine text. Moreover, the only Fathers who left considerable remains of the Greek text in the third century are Clement of Alexandria and Origen. But in Burgon’s opinion, there are considerations which “greatly detract from their value.” The quotations of Clemens are very imprecise, and depart from the Alexandrian text of Ι and B even in numerous respects. And “[t]he mischief done by Origen in this department [of textual criticism; EB],—through his fondness for a branch of Learning in which his remarks show that he was all unskilled,—is not to be told.” Hence, Burgon considers patristic evidence prior to Chrysostom to be unreliable.¹⁵⁵

In line with Burgon, Sturz asserted that “quotations from early Fathers *have* been found in support of Byzantine readings.”¹⁵⁶ Although such readings are generally considered as assimilations to the later Byzantine standard, he suggested by a

¹⁵³ “Weight” is a troublesome term. It presumes that witnesses can be weighed, and that textual critics are competent to weigh them as well. Burgon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 43.

¹⁵⁴ See for his view of the purification process: Pickering, *Identity*: 78-79. See for his exposition of the K^r text—called by him family 35: *ibid.*, 100-135. His thoughts about family 35—which he believes goes back to the Original—is absent in the former editions of his book. Robinson for instance has expressed his disagreement with this development, see: *ibid.*, 102 (note 1). Remarkably, it is contradictory to his majority-argument—as presented in the main text—, because K^r is a minor stream in the Byzantine tradition.

By way of evaluation: Pickering should at least construct with the CBGM a reliable stemma of the Byzantine tradition, from which it is clear that *the text of* minuscule 35 stood at the beginning of the whole Byzantine tradition.

¹⁵⁵ Burgon, *The Revision Revised*: 271, 292, 298, 326-331. The quotations are from pages 298 and 292.

¹⁵⁶ Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 78.

quotation from an article of M. Jacob Suggs, that the problem has been exaggerated and that assimilation should be expected less than generally assumed.¹⁵⁷

In addition, Sturz has put forward some considerations that explain the *absence* of Patristic support for the Byzantine text prior to the fourth century.¹⁵⁸ Apart from the consideration that the argument proposed by Westcott and Hort is an *argument from silence*, Sturz explained it in the following points:

- 1) It is an argument from the silence of Fathers *in non-Syrian locales*;
- 2) In the same way, we cannot prove from Irenaeus' "Western" text (2nd century), that there was no Alexandrian text in Alexandria during the same period.
- 3) The argument of silence is an argument as far as Antioch is concerned. Chrysostom, was the *first* Antiochian Father whose literary remains are extensive enough to analyse the type of text he used;
- 4) How can Fathers of other locales be used to witness to the local text of Antioch?
- 5) Therefore, the "silence-of-the-Fathers argument" has been asked to bear more weight than it is able to sustain.

In short, the problem is that evidence of early Fathers is simply lacking for Antioch and the rest of the Aegean area. Hence, Byzantine text defenders consider it an inadmissible conjecture to presume that a different text predominated the Aegean area prior to the fourth century.

§2.2.4. VERSIONAL EVIDENCE

According to Burgon, there are two versions that are prior to the fourth century: the Peshitta, and the old Latin. The second he calls with reference to Hort "grossly corrupt" and in his own words: "licentious and corrupt to an incredible extent."¹⁵⁹ The first is clearly Byzantine in character and was believed by Burgon and Miller to originate in the early part of the second century, and therefore represents a clear piece of evidence for the early existence of the Byzantine text. Alongside of the Peshitta, there existed two other Syriac versions: the Curetonian and Sinaitic versions (both

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 79 (note 4). Quotes: M. Jacob Suggs, "The Use of Patristic Evidence in the Search for a Primitive New Testament Text," *New Testament Studies* 4, no. 2 (1958): 140. Suggs wrote: "It is possible to make too much of this aspect of the problem [=scribal revision of Bible quotations; EB]. While modern standards of reproduction were not in effect in the manuscript period, it would be untrue to say that verbal accuracy was not an aim of the ancient scribe—particularly of the trained copyist. There is little evidence of systematic revision of New Testament citations except in translated works, (...)." I have not the impression that these considerations lead Suggs to a different view of the use of uncritical and critical editions of the Greek Fathers. In the next section, he asserts that scribal revision remains a significant consideration in studying the text of the Patres, especially the improvements conform the Byzantine norm after the fifth century. Subsequently, he stated that good critical editions will lessen this problem considerably, which is wholly in line with the common opinion.

¹⁵⁸ Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 77-81.

¹⁵⁹ Burgon, *The Revision Revised*: 297-298.

preserved in one MS).¹⁶⁰ Whereas contemporary scholars stated that these old Syriac versions were predecessors of the Peshitta, Burgon and Miller held the view that the Curetonian must have been an adulteration of the Peshitta, or a partly independent translation. Moreover, they considered the old Syriac versions—and especially the Sinaitic MS—to have a heretical text.¹⁶¹ Burgon believed that the old Syriac MSS were used by Theodoret (Bishop of Cyrrhus in the fifth century) to replace two hundred copies of Tatian's Diatessaron.¹⁶² Although Burgon's treatment of the Syriac text is quite limited, his conclusions are clear: the Curetonian and Sinaitic text are secondary with regard to the Peshitta.¹⁶³

In more contemporary authors, the Peshitta plays no important role anymore, and it seems that they have tacitly accepted its later date. It strikes anyway that Byzantine protagonists are little interested in the text of the versions. Pickering for instance used only half a page to illustrate that the Latin, Syriac and Coptic versions are more times in accordance with the Byzantine text than not.¹⁶⁴ That is all he had to say about the versions.

§2.2.5. INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Whereas Burgon worked mainly on the side of external evidence, it was Sturz, who added an important argument to the side of internal evidence. He noted that the description of Westcott and Hort of the Byzantine text—which is essentially the same as that of von Soden and Wachtel—“could (...) be taken as an acceptable description of the Hellenistic Greek of the first century!” To the contrary, he considered the text of **N** and **B**—with an appeal to Kilpatrick’s observations about Atticism’s¹⁶⁵—as MSS that “tend to favour the more brief, precise, and Attic-like forms of expression,” which should be considered as secondary.¹⁶⁶

This leads to the more general conviction that the Byzantine-priority theory accounts more easily for the rise and dominance of the Byzantine text than the

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Williams, "The Syriac Versions of the New Testament," 145-150.

¹⁶¹ In the Curetonian MS for instance, all references to Joseph as Mary’s *husband* or *wife* have been omitted. To the contrary, the Sinaitic MS makes Joseph Jesus’ actual father. Both tendencies were characteristic of the *fifth century* discussion on the natures of Christ (the Nestorian and Eutychian direction), which is a very interesting observation. Burgon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 297.

¹⁶² Theodoret wrote in AD 453 that he replaced these Diatessaron MSS by *Mēpharrēshe* Gospels. Both in the Curetonian and Synaitic MSS, the designation *Mēpharrēshe* is used. *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 125-134, 292-297. Cf. North, "The Oxford Debate on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament," 13-14.

¹⁶⁴ Pickering, *Identity*: 96.

¹⁶⁵ G. D. Kilpatrick, "Atticism and the Text of the Greek New Testament," in *The Principles and Practice of New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays of G.D. Kilpatrick*, ed. J. K. Elliott, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, Uitgeverij Peeters, 1990). Atticism’s are variants designed to mitigate or remove un-Greek, of bad-Greek expressions.

¹⁶⁶ Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 108. [Emphasis added]

competing views of modern eclecticism.¹⁶⁷ According to Robinson, the fact that the “Western” text and the Alexandrian text differ more from each other than from the Byzantine, “strongly suggests the separate derivation of each of these regional texts from a common source that would closely resemble the more dominant tradition [=Byzantine text; *EB*].”¹⁶⁸ Burgon held the same view in stating that the Byzantine text cannot have been derived from the archetype of ~~N~~B, whereas the converse operation is obvious and easy. At the one hand, because a shorter text is more easily produced from a fuller text than vice versa, and on the other hand, because glosses would not account for the fuller parts of the Byzantine text.¹⁶⁹

Finally, Byzantine protagonists are convinced that the individual Byzantine readings “are clearly defensible on reasonable internal, transcriptional, and transmissional grounds”¹⁷⁰ This last conviction was already postulated by Zane C. Hodges.¹⁷¹ Unfortunately, a demonstration on the basis of a score of variants is still wanting.¹⁷²

§2.2.6. THEORY OF ORIGINS

The origin of the ‘Traditional Text’ [=Byzantine text] is in Burgon’s own words as follows:

How is this resemblance [among the Byzantine MSS; *EB*] to be accounted for? *Not*, we answer,—*not*, certainly, by putting forward so violent and improbable—so *irrational* a conjecture as that, first, about A.D. 250,—and then again about A.D. 350,—an authoritative

¹⁶⁷ Robinson, "Byzantine Priority," 534.

¹⁶⁸ Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*: vi.

¹⁶⁹ Burgoon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 34. For Burgoon's opinion on glosses, cf. *The Causes of the Corruption*: 172-190. "Glosses," properly so called (...) are probably by no means so numerous as is commonly supposed." Ibid., 172.

¹⁷⁰ Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*: vi.

¹⁷¹ Zane C. Hodges, "Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: a Response," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21, no. 2 (1978); "Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: a Surrejoinder," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21, no. 2 (1978). These articles are responses to two articles of Gordon D. Fee: Fee, "Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*"; "Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: a Rejoinder," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21, no. 2 (1978).

¹⁷² It should be noted that—while I was writing this thesis—Robinson is appointed to research professor of New Testament studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, with as main task the production of a critical text of the Byzantine text and *a textual commentary*. See <http://www.sebts.edu/headlines/articles/Spring2014MariceRobinson.aspx> (visited at 29 October 2014). If executed, these productions would reveal much about these statements, unless they are wholly confined to the Byzantine tradition, which would be a serious shortcoming.

Fortunately, while I was revising the latest version of this thesis, the first fruits of an online textual commentary came to my attention. It is executed by Jonathan C. Borland and Mike Arcieri, while Robinson serves as advisor. According to its editors, the “website [is] designed to foster discussion and to employ the canons of New Testament textual criticism to determine the earliest form of the transmitted text of the New Testament through a systematic study of every difference between the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum graece* (28th ed., 2012) and the Robinson-Pierpont *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform* (2005). See: <http://tcgnt.blogspot.se/> (visited at 23 January 2015).

standard Text was fabricated at Antioch; of which all other known MSS. (except a very little handful) are nothing else but transcripts:—but rather, by loyally recognizing, in the practical identity of the Text exhibited by 99 out of 100 of our extant MSS., the probable general fidelity of those many transcripts *to the inspired exemplars themselves from which remotely they are confessedly descended*. And surely, if it be allowable to assume (with Dr. Hort) that for 1532 years, (viz. from A.D. 350 to A.D. 1882) the *Antiochian* standard has been faithfully retained and transmitted,—it will be impossible to assign any valid reason why the inspired Original itself, the *Apostolic* standard, should not have been as faithfully transmitted and retained from the Apostolic age to the Antiochian,—i.e. throughout an interval of less than 250 years, or *one-sixth* of the period.¹⁷³

Further on he described the origins of the Traditional Text in relation to the establishment of the Canon.

In fact, the Nature of the Divine Word, and the character of the Written Word, were confirmed about the same time:—mainly, in the period when the Nicene Creed was reasserted at that Council of Constantinople in 381 A. D.; for the Canon of Holy Scripture was fixed and the Orthodox Text gained a supremacy over the Origenistic Text [=Alexandrian text; *EB*] about the same time:—and finally, after the Third Council of Constantinople in 680 A. D., at which the acknowledgement of the Natures of the Son of Man was placed in a position superior to all heresy; for it was then that the Traditional Text began in nearly perfect form to be handed down with scarce any opposition to future ages of the Church.¹⁷⁴

Contrary to the conviction that the Byzantine text goes back to the originals,¹⁷⁵ Pickering asserts that “[i]t is true that early MSS, Fathers and Versions certainly contain many readings that are neither “Alexandrian” nor “Byzantine”, but they appear to be largely random, with a common influence discernible here and there.”¹⁷⁶ Interestingly, all investigations of early Patres or versions confirm this observation.¹⁷⁷ They all show a highly contaminated text.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, when Colwell tried to reconstruct the Alexandrian text of Mark 1 on a quantitative basis, he found so many differences among the six primary witnesses (B L 33 892 2427) that he concluded that such a reconstruction is doomed to failure.¹⁷⁹ The argument of

¹⁷³ Burgon, *The Revision Revised*: 295-296.

¹⁷⁴ Burgon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 173. It is questionable if unambiguous historical evidence exists for these assertions.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Pickering, *Identity*: 134, 140-141.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. for instance the figures with percentages in two recent studies of the text of Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, that show a high degree of contamination: D. Jeffery Bingham and Billy R. Todd Jr., "Irenaeus's Text of the Gospels," in *The Early Text of the New Testament*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Kruger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 380-382, 386-387, 389-391; Carl P. Cosaert, "Clement of Alexandria's Gospel Citations," in *The Early Text of the New Testament*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Kruger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 401, 403, 405, 407, 411.

¹⁷⁸ It should be noted that contamination appears to be greater in the early centuries than it really was, because many links (MSS) are missing. Mink, "Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission," 155.

¹⁷⁹ Colwell, *Studies in Methodology*: 18-19.

Pickering is clear: The Byzantine text can be reconstructed, the “Western” or Alexandrian not. Hence, they cannot represent the original text.¹⁸⁰

Beside these considerations stands a *different approach in handling the data*. Instead of integrating the MSS evidence verse by verse in an eclectic text, Byzantine protagonists are first seeking for the establishment of the *history* of textual transmission on the basis of which they argue for the preferred text.¹⁸¹ Although they cannot reproach eclectacists for lacking a textual history, the difference is that Byzantine protagonists use such historical considerations to establish an *existing* text and not a *fabricated* text. By the “predominantly transmissional approach,” it is argued that the Byzantine text has the best credentials, and hence represents the original text. This method—called by Robinson “reasoned transmissionalism” comprises an evaluation of readings “in regard to their antiquity, diversity, and continuity within transmissional history.”¹⁸² And this was Burdon’s very opinion.

§2.2.7. CONCLUSION

Byzantine protagonists see good historical reasons to criticise modern eclectic theories and to make plausible that the Byzantine text points to the original text. Their argumentation was found to be twofold: the faultiness of the “old Uncials” and the good credentials of the Byzantine text. The “old Uncials” are seen as depraved, because of their extensive mutual discordance. Critical editions therefore get bogged down in a circular argument which rests entirely on subjective internal evidence. Concerning the second one, the good quality of the Byzantine text is made plausible by the following arguments:

- 1) The wearing out of the old Byzantine MSS;
- 2) The transliteration of MSS from majuscule to minuscule in the ninth and tenth centuries;
- 3) The consideration that Byzantine minuscules—especially from the ninth until the eleventh century—should therefore be considered as independent witnesses.
- 4) The preservation of distinctive Byzantine readings in papyri;
- 5) The suggestion that the papyri show the *local text* of Egypt and that in Asia Minor the Byzantine text always prevailed;
- 6) The fact that Asia Minor should be considered as the best place to preserve the autographic text;
- 7) The absence of patristic evidence from Aegean area for the first four centuries;

¹⁸⁰ Pickering, *Identity*: 96-97.

¹⁸¹ Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*: vi-ix.

¹⁸² Ibid., viii, xv. Cf. Robinson, "Byzantine Priority," 544-545.

- 8) The unreliability of the text of early Patres from the other parts of the Roman Empire;
- 9) The consideration that number is an ingredient of weight;
- 10) The conviction that individual Byzantine readings are clearly defensible on internal, transcriptional and transmissional grounds.

§2.3. COUNTER-ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE SUPPOSED PRIMARY ORIGINS OF THE BYZANTINE TEXT

In this section some counter-arguments have been selected that were in particular uttered *in reaction* to some of the arguments of Byzantine text advocates.

§2.3.1. “NORMAL TRANSMISSION” AND NUMERICAL PREPONDERANCE?

The idea of “normal transmission” is seriously criticised, because there are different historical considerations that question even the possibility of a normal transmission. Holmes put forth the following considerations:¹⁸³

- 1) Clear historical evidence about the destruction of MSS in pre-Constantinian persecutions;¹⁸⁴
- 2) The Islamic conquests in Syria (Antioch), Palestine (Jerusalem) and Egypt (Alexandria) in the seventh century, all ancient patriarchates; as well as of Mesopotamia and North Africa;
- 3) The reduction of the geographic range of Greek.

Roughly the same arguments were used by Sturz to explain the great numerical preponderance of the Byzantine text, and the scarcity of MSS of the other textual clusters:¹⁸⁵

- 1) In the West—with its “Western” text, Greek faded out in favour of Latin;
- 2) The multiplication of MSS in Egypt—with its Alexandrian text—was cut off with the Islamic conquest and capture of Alexandria in AD 642;
- 3) In the Byzantine area, Greek remained the primary language, and it was not overwhelmed by the Moslems till the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Therefore, Byzantine MSS could naturally multiply.

Holmes’s conclusion is that although the Byzantine MSS preponderate numerically over the others (about 90%), it is also true that they were written after the geographical restriction of Greek.¹⁸⁶ But, can we really speak of an *overwhelming* majority? Wallace has stated that there is no suchlike thing, because the Majority text

¹⁸³ Holmes, "The 'Majority Text Debate'," 16-17.

¹⁸⁴ The first Edict of Diocletian—for instance—contains explicit orders commanding the burning of MSS. See for the text of the edict: G. E. M. de Sainte-Croix, "Aspects of the "Great" Persecution," *Harvard Theological Review* 47, no. 2 (1954): 75.

¹⁸⁵ Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 47-48.

¹⁸⁶ Holmes, "The 'Majority Text Debate'," 17.

is hundreds of times internally divided in which cases Majority text champions must resort to internal evidence.¹⁸⁷

A more important question is if a normal transmission would automatically lead to a well preserved text. Fee's answer is in the negative, because in the earliest period one would expect that (a) the first copies were not made by trained scribes, (b) they were made for pragmatic reasons, and (c) the earliest copies were probably carried away at an early moment.¹⁸⁸ In conclusion, when we reason from normal transmission, we cannot expect a uniform text like the Byzantine text-form.

§2.3.2. THE WRONG USE OF PATRISTIC AND PAPYROLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Byzantine protagonists constantly cling to Burgon's database of Patristic quotations—which was mainly based on the old and uncritical editions of Migne—¹⁸⁹ and the general picture drawn from it. But Kenyon stated that, if critical editions existed, they would reveal that in many cases the quotations have been assimilated to the later Byzantine standard.¹⁹⁰ The same point is made by Fee, who stated that recent studies—of cause on the basis of new critical editions—show a completely different picture, which is ignored by the Byzantine protagonists.¹⁹¹ New critical editions “always move the father’s text of the NT *away from* the TR and *closer to* the text of our modern critical editions.”¹⁹² Moreover, although it is admitted by later critics like Carson and Fee, that Byzantine readings existed prior to Chrysostom, they haste to say that the whole of readings comprising the Byzantine text did not exist.¹⁹³

Secondly, Kenyon states that the Byzantine readings to which Miller points, are in fact old readings that were *incorporated* within the Byzantine text. The same point is recognised by Holmes, who nevertheless fairly confessed that these old Byzantine readings have been inadequately recognised, especially since the discovery of \mathfrak{P}^{45} and \mathfrak{P}^{46} , in which Zuntz found many Byzantine readings.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁷ Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory," 729 (note 76).

¹⁸⁸ Fee, "Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*," 26-27.

¹⁸⁹ Gordon D. Fee and Roderic L. Mullen, "The Use of the Greek Fathers for New Testament Textual Criticism," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 357 (note 17).

¹⁹⁰ Kenyon, *Handbook*: 322-323.

¹⁹¹ Fee, "Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*," 26-27.

¹⁹² Ibid., 26f. It will be interesting to see *why* critical editions are closer to the critical text. I think this is because non-Byzantine readings are generally preferred, and this is indeed coined by Taylor in the rule: “In judging between two alternative readings the principle to be adopted is that the one which *diverges* from the latter ecclesiastical text is more likely to be original.” Vincent Taylor, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: St. Martin’s Press Inc., 1961). 39. Hence, critical editions are made as non-Byzantine as possible.

¹⁹³ D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979). 110f; Fee, "A Critique of W. N. Pickering's *The Identity of the New Testament Text: A Review Article*," 416.

¹⁹⁴ Holmes, "The 'Majority Text Debate'," 16. Cf. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*: 49-57.

The question presents itself what to do with Byzantine readings in early Patristic and papyrological evidence. According to Wachtel, the *typical* Byzantine readings had an *Überlieferungsvorteil*, by which they were preferred contrary to the more difficult “Western” and Alexandrian readings. Moreover, it is probable that they came in existence by accident (*vorlagenunabhängig*)—like the *untypical* readings.¹⁹⁵ According to Wallace, only eight of Sturz’s 150 examples, seemed to be genetically significant and probably originate not in accident. From these Byzantine readings with early papyrological evidence, one cannot conclude that the Byzantine *text* already existed, and hence it is an insufficient basis to conclude that the Byzantine text already existed in the second century.¹⁹⁶ A much repeated challenge is that Byzantine protagonists should convincingly demonstrate that not just Byzantine *readings* existed prior to Chrysostom, but that the Byzantine *text* as a pattern of variants existed.

Finally, it is argued by the Byzantine protagonists that the early papyri show the local text of Egypt and not that of the other countries, especially in the Aegean Area.¹⁹⁷ But contrary to this hypothesis, it is evidenced that the early Egyptian papyri reflected virtually all textual clusters except the Byzantine, which has only been evidenced from the sixth and seventh centuries.¹⁹⁸ This perfectly fits the picture of the late origination of the Byzantine text.

§2.4. COUNTER-ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE SUPPOSED SECONDARY ORIGINS OF THE BYZANTINE TEXT

In this section some counter-arguments have been selected that were in particular uttered *in reaction* to some of the arguments of modern textual critics.

§2.4.1. CONFLATION THEORY INDECISIVE

Almost all defenders of the Byzantine text have made many efforts to show that “conflation”¹⁹⁹ is not restricted to the Byzantine text only, and that a longer reading—seemingly conflated—can be original.²⁰⁰ In doing this, a cornerstone of the theory of Westcott and Hort is thrown down. Their argument is fourfold: 1) show that the examples of Westcott and Hort are unpersuasive and that the Byzantine readings can well be original in these cases, 2) show that “conflation” appears in all

¹⁹⁵ Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*: 184.

¹⁹⁶ Wallace, “The Majority Text Theory,” 718–719 (note 35).

¹⁹⁷ Cf. §2.2.2 Robinson, “Byzantine Priority,” 569–571.

¹⁹⁸ Epp, “Textual Clusters: Their Past and Future in New Testament Textual Criticism,” 541, 543.

¹⁹⁹ Conflation is in this section mainly used with double quotation marks, because it is usually uncertain if it is a real conflation.

²⁰⁰ The same is true for “harmonization,” but because it is less disputed in modern criticism, it is passed over.

kinds of texts and in particular in the Alexandrian text tradition,²⁰¹ 3) show that Byzantine “conflations” also appear in early papyri, and 4) show that conflation did not take place in certain cases in which one would expect it.

Firstly, Burgon seriously criticised the eight examples of Westcott and Hort. He defends a reverse process, and will for “conflation” substitute “omission” through various reasons.²⁰² Secondly, Pickering listed 106 (possible)²⁰³ conflations through all kinds of MSS. Indeed not all examples are convincing, but many are.²⁰⁴ It is interesting that *none* of the “Western” or Alexandrian “conflations”—listed by Pickering—have early papyrological support.²⁰⁵ Thirdly, Sturz showed that at least two *Byzantine* “conflations” have been attested in \mathfrak{P}^{66} (John 10:19, 31).²⁰⁶ Finally, Sturz gives one example of a case in which a conflation could easily take place (Mark 5:42), but was resisted.²⁰⁷ Pickering also referred to Hutton’s *Atlas of Textual*

²⁰¹ Westcott and Hort saw conflation as a characteristic of the Byzantine text. Nevertheless they were aware of conflations in other texts, for instance: E (Acts 6:8), D (John 5:37). Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 94-95. Also Metzger and Ehrman are aware of conflation in for instance B: Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*: 265.

²⁰² Burgon, *The Revision Revised*: 258-266; Burgon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 81. Cf. Pickering, *Identity*: 165. It is interesting that research on scribal habits in Greek papyri shows that “omission” was more common than expected, especially in \mathfrak{P}^{45} . See the conclusions in: Colwell, *Studies in Methodology*: 118-121. James Ronald Royse, “Scribal Tendencies in the transmission of the Text of the New Testament,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 470. “All the scribes [of $\mathfrak{P}^{45}, 46, 47, 66, 72, 75$, EB] do make additions, and it is possible that at any particular variant we have such an addition. But these figures suggest strongly that the general tendency during the early period of textual transmission was *to omit*.” [Emphasis added] This remark goes back to the figures of Royse’s dissertation (“Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri” (Dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1981)). Nevertheless this result was challenged, at least for Galatians by: Moisés Silva, “The Text of the Galatians: Evidence from the Earliest Greek Manuscripts,” in *Scribes and Scripture: New Testament Essays in Honor of J. Harold Greenlee*, ed. David Alan Black (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 23-24. It was Royse himself who declared that “this entire topic deserves fuller treatment.” Royse, “Scribal Tendencies,” 470 (note 47). Interestingly, the researches of Peter M. Head confirmed the conclusions of Royse: Peter M. Head, “Observations on Early Papyri of the Synoptic Gospels, Especially on the ‘Scribal Habits’,” *Biblica* 71 (1990): 240-247; “The Habits of New Testament Copyists: Singular Readings in the Early Fragmentary Papyri of John,” *Biblica* 85 (2004): 399-408. Royse also pointed to resent treatments of great majuscules that likewise show a scribal tendency to omit. Royse, “Scribal Tendencies,” 471-473.

²⁰³ By “possible,” he meant cases in which conflation should be expected, but did not take place. See for instance number 14.

²⁰⁴ Pickering, *Identity*: 165-183. Cf. also some examples in: Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 84-88.

²⁰⁵ Pickering, *Identity*: 173.

²⁰⁶ Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 84, (151). Wachtel has criticised this evidence, because these readings are not “distinctively Syrian” [=Byzantine] in Hort’s sense, but that is a weak argument, because it loses that Hortian epithet because of its attestation in \mathfrak{P}^{66} only. Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text*: 33 (note 58). The evidence is clear in these cases: there is an Alexandrian, Western, Byzantine (and Caesarean) reading, the Byzantine seems “conflated,” but is surprisingly attested in \mathfrak{P}^{66} .

²⁰⁷ Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 88. Cf. note 203.

Criticism,²⁰⁸ who gave over 800 examples (some 250 detailed) of “triple readings,”²⁰⁹ in which conflation could easily take place—and according to a recension theory should be expected—but did not.²¹⁰

§2.4.2. NO “COUNTING NOSES”

Byzantine protagonists are often accused for making their textual decisions by “merely counting noses.” It was to be expected that they should take offence at this short-sighted judgement. They argued that—aside from the fact that such method would offer no solution in the places where the Byzantine text is divided—it passes over that external and internal criteria have been employed, which closely resemble or are identical with the principles of modern textual criticism, although their application is sometimes different.²¹¹ Moreover,—as already stated in §2.2.2.—number is not the sole or primary factor in the evaluation of variants. It should always function in connection with the other principles.²¹²

According to many modern critics, even the role of number is nullified because of the *a priori* force of the genealogical argument. But it is replied that the Byzantine MSS are far more independent than thought, and that such an argument would require a far more extensive knowledge of manuscript genealogies, which is still lacking. Even for the Byzantine text, a true genealogy has never been completed.²¹³

§2.4.3. SHORTCOMINGS OF THE MODERN ECLECTIC TEXT AND THEORY

One of the fiercest attacks against the eclectic method is that its resultant text appears to be wholly subject to internal considerations, which “results in a textual patchwork that within numerous verses finds no support among any extant document, even over relatively short segments of scripture.”²¹⁴ On the contrary, the Byzantine text is preserved in a reasonable body of extant witnesses with an acceptable level of reconstructability.

Modern critics point repeatedly to the fact that no pre-fourth century MS shows a Byzantine *pattern of readings*. But Robinson grabbed his chance, because the eclectic text suffers from the same problem, for its pattern of readings is not attested among any of the extant witnesses, and thus its text has no proven existence in

²⁰⁸ Edward Ardron Hutton, *An Atlas of Textual Criticism. Being an Attempt to show the Mutual Relationship of the Authorities for the Text of the New Testament up to about 1000 A.D.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).

²⁰⁹ “Triple readings” are cases in which variation among MSS evidence can be separated in an Alexandrian, Western and Byzantine group.

²¹⁰ Cf. Pickering, *Identity*: 183.

²¹¹ Robinson, “Byzantine Priority,” 544. Cf. Burdon’s extensive treatment of the causes of corruption: Burdon and Miller, *The Causes of the Corruption*.

²¹² Burdon was aware that he did not count the evidence, but made persistently his appeal to antiquity. Burdon, *The Revision Revised*: 332.

²¹³ Clark, *Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism*: 15.

²¹⁴ Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*: iv.

transmissional history.²¹⁵ Moreover, why differ eclectic text so much among themselves? For instance, between the second and third edition of the UBS text, five hundred changes were introduced. And that within three years, in which no significant accretion of new evidence appeared, while the committee remained the same. Probably, every new piece of evidence can challenge the unanimous witness of the rest.²¹⁶

Finally, the eclectic method precludes *a priori* the possibility of an ascertained text. Even when testimony is unanimous, there is no basis for objecting to conjectural emendation—which because of the preservation theory is a delicate matter (cf. §3.1.).²¹⁷ In short, it remains unacceptable for all Byzantine text advocates that the great majority of evidence is passed over, in favour of a small and internal discordant minority.

§2.5. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, the discussion is about the reconstruction of the history of the text. Opponents of Byzantine priority see good historical reasons that the Byzantine text existed not until the fourth century and that it developed only in the ninth century to a standardised text. Proponents of Byzantine priority have two kinds of argument to place these views under suspicion. On the one hand, they challenge the historical arguments that the Byzantine text is a late text by pointing at the scarcity and internal discordance of early evidence. On the other hand, they give arguments that give reason to think that early evidence is no good basis to build a textual history upon.

²¹⁵ Robinson, "Byzantine Priority," 534-538. Interestingly, Robinson gives this way of reconstructing the text the epithet "conjecture." "Rule 9: Isolated Variants, and the 'Test-tube' Nature of the NA²⁷/UBS⁴ Text: A Byzantine Priority Perspective," in *Translating the New Testament: Text, Translation, Theology*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Mark J. Boda (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 39-40. "On a *de facto* basis, the NA²⁷ main text *as printed* for this verse [Mark 11:3; EB] becomes a matter of *conjecture* (...)."

²¹⁶ Pickering, *Identity*: 3 (note 1, 2). It is interesting that Metzger and Ehrman flung the same criticism back, by stating that Byzantine text advocates themselves use eclectic criteria in establishing their Byzantine text editions. Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*: 220 (note 30). It is indeed true that there are (according to the unpublished collation of Jonathan C. Borland: see http://www.biblical-data.org/MT_collation.html [visited at 22 December 2014]) some 200 differences between the editions of Hodges-Farstad (1985) and Robinson-Pierpoint (1991 [the 2005 version is not collated, but it is said to be closer to Hodges-Farstad: Gary F. Zeolla, *Differences Between Bible Versions: Translation, Principles, Greek Text-types, and KJV-onlyism*, Third ed. (Private, 2012). 132.]).

²¹⁷ Pickering, *Identity*: 3 (note 2). This appears to be not a quite fair presentation of the eclectic method. Although there are eclectics that allow for conjectural emendation, many hesitate or refuse it. Even Kenyon and Kilpatrick—to mention two well-known eclectics—wholly abandon conjectural emendation. Cf. for an overview of different opinions among eclectics: Jan Krans, "Conjectural Emendation and the Text of the New Testament," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 625-628.

In my opinion there is much to clarify in this historical controversy, which has led to *irreconcilable results*. Apart from the fact that this thesis is intended to give some clarity in this debate, it will serve our purposes well, to give an evaluation of these historical arguments. In this evaluation, I would like to investigate: 1) which arguments have been disproved, 2) which arguments still stand, and 3) which arguments need more investigation to become firm arguments.

Firstly, at least two arguments can—with consent of both parties—be renounced: the argument of conflation and that of a fixed recension. Conflation, because it is attested in all textual clusters and MSS and appears not to be a particular characteristic of the Byzantine text.²¹⁸ The recension theory, because there is no sufficient historical evidence that it was the case.

Secondly, notwithstanding much efforts from the side of the Byzantine protagonists, it remains true that the Byzantine text is not attested as *text* prior to the fourth century. At the same time, it still stands that the same is true for the eclectic text. Moreover, it appears to be very difficult to reconstruct the Alexandrian or “Western” texts. In addition, none of the versions, and none of the Patristic writers prior to the fourth century have an Alexandrian or “Western” *text*; they just show a highly contaminated text.²¹⁹ Although it is true that in the early tradition many MSS links are missing, the problem still stands.²²⁰

Thirdly, there is in my opinion a score of arguments that need more investigation, before they can be dropped or embraced. On the one hand, more evidence is needed to determine if the Byzantine text developed as a process, and how it developed as a process. What is available now, is only a rough sketch on the basis of some of the Byzantine majuscules. But knitting too much to MSS dates—as Wachtel in my opinion does—will be very dangerous. The influence of the transliteration process and of the keeping of MSS with a strange text should not be underestimated. Moreover, are these majuscules really pointing to a process, or are it MSS corrected in many places to an existing Byzantine standard?

Furthermore, internal evidence is said to show that Byzantine readings are *almost always* secondary. What is forgotten, is that in practice the system of local genealogies *presumes* the secondary character of the Byzantine text, and that its

²¹⁸ The same is true for harmonization, which appears in all textual clusters.

²¹⁹ Cf. for instance a recent article of the text of Clement of Alexandria. Cosaert, "Clement of Alexandria's Gospel Citations," esp. 409-413.

It should be noted that an fundamental problem of the use of Patristic evidence is, that many pieces of Patristic literature have come down to us in relatively late MSS. In the case of Clement of Alexandria for instance, we are wholly dependent upon one MS of the fourteenth century. [With thanks to prof. R. Roukema for this valuable suggestion.]

²²⁰ Codex B and Ρ⁷⁵ is an isolated case. The closest MS to B is Κ, which differs according to Hoskier in 3036 cases from B in the Gospels only. Cf. H. C. Hoskier, *Codex B and Its Allies: A Study and Indictment*, vol. II (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1914). 1.

secondary character was ultimately founded on intrinsic probabilities. In an evaluation of a textual variant, the secondary character of the Byzantine reading is fixed from the beginning—except if internal evidence shows clearly that it is not true—, while it should be the result of a discussion. The result is a circular argument. What we need is a more objective evaluation of individual variants without the “secondary” premise. Probably the *Coherence Based Genealogical Method* (CBGM) will be helpful (cf. §5.2.).

On the other hand, many arguments of Byzantine protagonists are at the most an initial impetus to a real argument, because sufficient historical evidence is missing. Nevertheless many of these impetuses are really of interest. The first is the transliteration process of the ninth and tenth centuries. As stated before, critics exceedingly underestimate the importance of this revolution. It also means that we cannot rely anymore on (approximate) dates of MSS.²²¹ We need tools to “date” transliterated MSS. It is improbable that the standardisation of the Byzantine text coincides with this transliteration process, because the independence of late MSS seems to indicate that old MSS were copied and not new ones were made from a new standard text.²²² Although verification of Kirsopp Lake’s conclusion that almost all MSS are “orphans” is necessary (cf. §2.2.2.), as far as I know, nobody has ever questioned this conclusion. Since there are comprehensive digital collations and transcriptions available in Münster, it will be of interest to investigate whether his conclusion is true.²²³

Next, what do we do with the Aegean area and especially with Asia Minor as the heart of early Christianity? Unfortunately there is only *late* MSS- and patristic evidence from this region, but nobody can deny that it played an important role, if not the most important role in the MSS distribution of the earliest centuries. This will be a commonly recognised problem, even by eclectics. But the point at issue is, that Byzantine protagonists fail to *prove* that this region was dominated by the Byzantine

²²¹ An important piece of evidence (“one of the most significant recent discoveries in New Testament textual criticism.” Williams, “The Syriac Versions of the New Testament,” 155.) is that the eleventh century minuscule 2138 represented an almost exact *Vorlage* of the Syriac Harclean version which was completed in AD 615/616. Cf. Ibid., 154f. and there cited literature.

²²² It is very interesting that the CBGM (Coherence Based Genealogical Method) focusses on the “state of texts” or “witnesses”, instead of on the MSS as physical artefacts, which means that—for now—MSS are threatened not according to palaeographical or codicological characteristics (like date), but according to the text they contain. Mink, “Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission,” 143–146; Klaus Wachtel, “The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method: A New Way to Reconstruct the Greek New Testament,” in *Editing the Bible: Assessing the Task Past and Present*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Judith H. Newman (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 129.

²²³ A short check of the *Ergänzungsliste* of *Text und Textwert* of the Catholic Epistles, shows that very few MSS are (nearly) 100% identical in a sufficient number of *Teststellen*. Kurt Aland, Annette Benduhn-Mertz, and Gert Mink, *Text und Textwert der Griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments. I. Die Katholischen Briefe, Band 2: Ergänzungsliste* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987).

text. They only *assume* that it was the case. Unless more evidence will be put forward, this argument has little chance to survive.

Moreover, the influence of orthodox or “heretical” corruption should not be denied. It is inconceivable to argue that they would change the text always to easier readings; rather the reverse. More investigation is necessary to see if MSS were changed along *fixed principles*, with a doctrinal background.²²⁴ We have to be reminded that the most basic principle in textual criticism is that “KNOWLEDGE OF DOCUMENTS SHOULD PRECEDE FINAL JUDGEMENT UPON READINGS.”²²⁵ The main problem of doctrinal corruption is that it inserted new variants within textual transmission that should be eliminated in modern editions of the New Testament text.

Furthermore, does the Byzantine text really account for the other texts? This is never convincingly demonstrated by a score of textual variants that confirm this theoretical possibility. Byzantine protagonists should seriously make work of this. Or is the absence of such a demonstration a sign of the impossibility of this hypothesis?²²⁶ A comprehensive textual commentary should be produced as quickly as possible.

Likewise, more investigation is necessary of Byzantine readings in early Patristic, versional and papyrological evidence. These readings say more about the Byzantine text, and its origins than now recognised. They are indeed insufficient to conclude immediately that these readings are original, but it is clearly shown that they are old.

According to Sturz, Antioch was more inclined to the literal text than Alexandria, which was more focussed on the allegorical meaning of the text. This seems to me quite odd, because Alexandria was a major centre of textual criticism of the classical authors, with a high degree of attention to the literal wording of texts. Because—as far as I know—nobody has objected to this argument, I have categorised it under the head of arguments to be investigated, but I foresee little chance of survival for this argument.

Last but not least, it will be important to give more attention to the kind of *language* which is evidenced in the different textual clusters. Sturz claimed that the simplicity of the Byzantine text is simply the language in which the New Testament originates. This very interesting hypothesis should get more attention of textual

²²⁴ Probably the doctrinal tendencies in Codex D are an indication of it. Cf. Eldon Jay Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts*, ed. Matthew Black, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

²²⁵ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 31.

²²⁶ Van Bruggen has stated that many Byzantine readings have clearly the stamp of originality on their foreheads. He himself gives two examples (Luke 2:33 and 24:42). Jakob van Bruggen, “The Majority Text: Why Not Reconsider Its Exile?,” in *The Bible as Book: The Transmission of the Greek Text*, ed. Scot McKendrick and Orlaith O’Sullivan (London & New Castle: The British Library & Oak Knoll Press, 2003), 149–150.

critics. Not only to analyse the character of the Byzantine text, but rather as an important instrument to determine the priority or posteriority of readings in general.

To conclude, it is very troublesome that scholarly clarity is at issue in this controversy. On the one hand, proponents of the Byzantine text, make serious—but frequently selective—use of scholarly literature and achievements. Consequently, it is not fair to say that all their work is overarched by a theological *a priori* and thus of no use. Arguments have been given, which are still waiting for a scholarly response. On the other hand, opponents have asked for unambiguous scholarly evidence that justifies the Byzantine priority view, and they are still waiting.

I think we can safely speak of an impasse which is not easily brought to a solution. Nevertheless we can make some progress to study this impasse from an overarching point of view. In the following sections we shall dig up the theological motivations and analyse the debate from the perspective of philosophy of science and sociology.

§3. A Search for Theological Certainty?

After we have explored the historical dimension of the debate, we proceed to the second dimension, which is theologically motivated. Opponents of Byzantine priority generally keep apart all theological considerations, which determinate *a priori* the methodology. Or as Daniel Wallace said: "In sum, a theological *a priori* has no place in textual criticism. Since this is the case, it is necessary to lay aside fideism in dealing with the evidence."²²⁷ In their opinion, textual criticism needs to be independent of theology, to obtain scholarly—and historically—verifiable results; theology has to make do with its results. Generally speaking: liberal theologians—who handle a more unbound view of Scripture—are attached to this view, although also conservative (evangelical) scholars—like D. A. Carson and Daniel Wallace²²⁸—give their fiat. The last generally feel free to do so, because the other texts are not considered theologically fallacious.²²⁹

For proponents of the Byzantine text, textual criticism is a very emotionally charged matter, because they connect it with their high view of Scripture (inspiration, inerrancy and authority). Through textual criticism, these "dogmas" come under pressure and therefore they have looked for ways to reconcile these with each other. In their opinion, the Byzantine text best fits the doctrine of preservation. By connecting their theological views with the Byzantine text, proponents reach that kind of certainty which is thought necessary for their theology. In the most extreme position, it is linked with one kind of the Byzantine text; for instance the *Textus Receptus* or family 35 of Pickering.²³⁰ In the following section, we will discuss both positions more in depth.

§3.1. TEXTUAL CRITICISM A (NON-)THEOLOGICAL SCIENCE?

The most common argument against Byzantine protagonists, is that their theory is wholly affected by the theological *a priori*, that the Holy Spirit should have preserved the original text through the ages and that the divine preservation should be connected with the majority of Greek MSS. In an article against the revival of the *Textus Receptus*, Fee extensively discussed this theological *a priori* in the method of Fuller and Hodges. His main objection is that—at the outset—"theological

²²⁷ Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods, and Critique," (1995) 309. Interestingly, Wallace changed the wording slightly in the latest version of his article: "In sum, a theological *a priori* has *little* [instead of *no*; EB] place in textual criticism." "The Majority Text Theory," 728.

²²⁸ See: Carson, *The King James Version Debate*; Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory."

²²⁹ Carson, *The King James Version Debate*: 62-66.

²³⁰ See for a plea for the *Textus Receptus*: Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended!*, 3rd ed. (Des Moines: The Christian Research Press, 1979). And for family 35: Pickering, *Identity*: 100-135.

conclusions have preceded any judgments of the data.”²³¹ His arguments are the following:²³²

- 1) If the NT should be approached in a different way from other ancient books, it must be shown that its textual history is more providential.
- 2) There functions a “hidden agenda,” “namely, that Westcott and Hort’s Greek text is suspect because their orthodoxy with regard to Scripture is suspect”. But the orthodoxy of their predecessor S. G. Tregelles²³³ and of the revered B. B. Warfield (Princeton)—who fully ratified their theory²³⁴—is unassailable.²³⁵
- 3) Why does the theological presumption of the providential preservation of the Scriptures demand that the *Textus Receptus* represent best that divinely-inspired original?²³⁶ Providential care does not necessitate that preservation should be extended to *all* MSS or to the *majority* of MSS, which is both a historical and a logical fallacy.
- 4) The theological *a priori* demands errorlessness. If God’s providential care is to be found in the majority of MSS, they—or at least one—should be free from error as the autographs,²³⁷ but it is obvious that no MS has escaped corruption.

Sturz has pointed out that “*providential preservation is not a necessary consequence of inspiration.*” He makes an analogy between “perfect revelation” and the perfect creation of man and of the world. Both have been corrupted in time. Just in the same manner, God was not under a “special or logical obligation to see that man did not corrupt it.”²³⁸ Such a connection of preservation to inspiration has also the danger in itself, that the faith of some is weakened when they become aware of the mass of variant readings.²³⁹ Hence, it is Sturz’s personal opinion, that

²³¹ Fee, “Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*,” 21.

²³² Ibid., 21-24.

²³³ See his Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text; The Greek New Testament: Edited from Ancient Authorities, with Their Various Readings in Full, and the Latin Version of Jerome. Seven Volumes.* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, C. J. Stewart, 1857-1879). See especially the different introductions for his high reverence to the inspired Scriptures.

²³⁴ See his introduction: Benjamin B. Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, 6th ed., The Theological Educator (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899).

²³⁵ Moreover, Church Fathers like Irenaeus and Augustine, whose orthodoxy is without dispute, used clearly a different text from the Byzantine one. Cf. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 40-43.

²³⁶ Fee confesses on this point expressly his own belief in “Biblical infallibility.” That Fee speaks about the TR instead of the Majority text is incorrect as Hodges pointed out in a response; but nothing changes in the argument. Hodges, “Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: a Response,” 143.

²³⁷ It is interesting that Wilbur Pickering has taken this consequence in his search for perfect MSS, which he finds in family 35 (K^r).

²³⁸ Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 38.

²³⁹ A clear example is the biography of Ehrman of which he gave an account in: Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*: 1-15.

“[p]rovidence includes the preserving of the other types of text as well as the Byzantine.”²⁴⁰ Furthermore, why are Tischendorf’s finding of Χ in a basket—ready to be burned—, and the findings of valuable papyri in Egypt, not in God’s providence? They should explain why these findings are in spite of God’s providence. Hence, Sturz himself carefully distinguishes between inspiration and preservation, because otherwise, one should expect that there is no deviation within the MSS:²⁴¹

Inspiration has to do with the very words which were originally God-breathed in the vocabulary and style of the original writers. Providence has to do with all that God has allowed to come to pass in the preservation of that which was originally given by inspiration. Providence includes the preserving of the other types of text as well as the Byzantine.²⁴²

In addition, Wallace saw four observations that should keep one from giving theology the function in textual criticism as Byzantine protagonists do:²⁴³

- 1) The driving force is *an undifferentiated need for certainty*. Since historical inquiry is not black or white, absolute certainty is only achievable through doctrinal certitude.
- 2) Their entire doctrinal basis is founded on *what they think God must have done*.
- 3) This fideistic formula *violates all known historical data*. Such a stance is urged in the face of empirical and exegetical evidence to the contrary.
- 4) This doctrinal stance *lacks a sound exegetical basis*. Those, who reason from a theological *a priori*, fail to give any convincing exegesis of the relevant biblical texts—like Matth. 5:18; Luke 16:17 (no tittle and iota of the law shall fail); 1 Pet. 1:25 (but the word of the Lord abides for ever)—and also neglect any discussion of how the doctrine of preservation squares with the OT in its current complex state.

His conclusion is, that when their theory is stripped of this “fideistic stance,” it is barely within the realm of historical possibility.²⁴⁴ According to Fee, the question is not whether we believe in Biblical infallibility or not, but “*where and how* that original text has been preserved.”²⁴⁵ At that point we are thrown back on historical questions, unless we receive a divine revelation as to which reading is original. And according to Warfield, textual criticism is part “of God’s singular care and

²⁴⁰ Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type*: 40.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 44-45.

²⁴² Ibid., 39-40.

²⁴³ Wallace, “The Majority Text Theory,” 726-728. [Emphases added]

²⁴⁴ “The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods, and Critique,” 315.

²⁴⁵ Fee, “Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*,” 22.

providence in preserving His inspired Word pure.”²⁴⁶ Indeed, from the 16th till the 18th centuries, the orthodoxy’s doctrine of verbal inspiration was immediately connected with the *Textus Receptus*, but we should keep in mind that the *Textus Receptus* was the only Greek text they knew.²⁴⁷ Hence, textual criticism remains in itself substantially a non-spiritual science, on which the spiritual study of the Bible stands.²⁴⁸

Many Byzantine protagonists become uncomfortable when it is stated that the inspired text of the autographs cannot be recovered, as many eclectics suggest. Pickering gave a clear account of this experience, which has much similarity with the struggle that led Bart Ehrman to agnosticism.²⁴⁹ To handle this discomfort, most Byzantine protagonists turn to one or another kind of preservation theory, because it is promised: “the word of our God shall stand for ever.”²⁵⁰ In this way, the doctrine of preservation is usually immediately linked with that of inspiration. “[B]ecause the Bible was infallibly inspired, it has been preserved by God’s special providence.”²⁵¹ From such a high view of Scripture, Burgon argued, that:

There exists no reason for supposing that the Divine Agent, who in the first instance thus [=by inspiration; *EB*] gave to mankind the Scriptures of Truth, straightway abdicated His office; took no further care of His work; abandoned those precious writings to their fate.²⁵²

Furthermore, it was the church from which we have learnt which books belong to the Canon, and it was the same church that brought the art of transcribing to a high pitch of perfection. Both rest on the authority of the Catholic Church.²⁵³ In addition, it is clear that the church did not propagate the text found in the earliest MSS. How can modern critics be in a better position to identify the true text?²⁵⁴ And how could God’s providence be applied to the five great Codices if they are never found in accord?²⁵⁵ “If the Byzantine text is the “worst”, then down through the centuries of manuscript copying *the Church was massively mistaken.*”²⁵⁶ But if that is true, why has God permitted the emergence of textual variants? Pickering answered: “God permitted textual variants to test our faith and determination, to test our attitude, to

²⁴⁶ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931). 39. Cited in: Fee, "Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*," 24.

²⁴⁷ Aland, "The Text of the Church?," 131.

²⁴⁸ Cf. F. G. Kenyon and Adams A. W., *The Text of the Greek Bible, Revised and Augmented by A. W. Adams*, 3th. ed. (Old Woking: The Gresham Press, 1975). 2.

²⁴⁹ Pickering, *Identity*: 1-3; Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*: 1-15.

²⁵⁰ Is. 40:8; quoted in: 1 Pet. 1:25.

²⁵¹ Hills, *The King James Version Defended!*: 113. Cf. Ibid., 2.

²⁵² Burgon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 11.

²⁵³ Ibid., 13-14.

²⁵⁴ Pickering, *Identity*: 84, 88 (note 2).

²⁵⁵ Burgon and Miller, *The Traditional Text*: 17.

²⁵⁶ Pickering, *Identity*: 77. [Emphasis added] In stating this, Pickering states implicitly that the whole Western Church was wrong in using for over thousand years the Vulgate text, which differs from the Byzantine text in many respects.

test our willingness to humbly and patiently look for answers (Proverbs 25:2 and Revelation 5:10).²⁵⁷

Alongside this argumentation, Pickering stated that, “both God and Satan have an ongoing active interest in the fate of the N.T. Text (...) to approach N.T. textual criticism without taking due account of that interest is to act irresponsibly.”²⁵⁸ He considers the activity of Satan confirmed in the evidence of Church Fathers, who wrote about heretics changing the text.²⁵⁹ In addition, Burgon was also aware of the orthodox tampering with the text.²⁶⁰ Hence, it is impossible to handle the Bible as a normal book, as Westcott and Hort did.²⁶¹ It can be asked if this means that historical research is superfluous. According to Robinson, “Byzantine-priority provides no domain or shelter for those unwilling to labor diligently, or for unscholarly individuals whose goal is merely a biased theological perspective or the advocacy of a particular translation.”²⁶²

§3.2. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The ultimate question of this section is how systematic theology relates to textual criticism. In fact this is the ever ongoing discussion about theology (faith) and reason. If we admit this antithesis, polarisation is unavoidable. My opinion is that both are inevitable. Nobody concerned with the New Testament can work without any kind of theology, and nobody can work without reason. Hence, nobody can work without *a priori* theological considerations. (Even the admission that we cannot know if God ever intervened in textual history is a theological *a priori*.) “Rather than denying that influence [of theology; EB] we would do better to face it openly.”²⁶³

The second question concerns our thinking about reason. From the fact that nobody would deny that we need reason to express theology, nobody can negate its function and necessity. To discuss what should be first is the discussion about the chicken and the egg. While theology and reason do not exclude each other, and while a Biblical faith in God cannot be without the doctrine of providence, it will be fruitful to question the *internal* consistency of providence in relation to textual criticism.²⁶⁴ To deny this will rightly provoke the epithet of being naturalistic.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 186.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 100.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 16. See pages 59-61 for examples.

²⁶⁰ Burgon and Miller, *The Causes of the Corruption*: 211-231. Including many examples. Cf. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*.

²⁶¹ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 19.

²⁶² Robinson, “Byzantine Priority,” 584.

²⁶³ Ryan Donald Wetlaufer, *No Longer Written: The Use of Conjectural Emendation in the Restoration of the Text of the New Testament, the Epistle of James as a Case Study*, New Testament Tools and Instruments (Leiden: Brill, 2013). 43.

²⁶⁴ In this way Wetlaufer approaches the doctrine of preservation. I think this approach is a very helpful one, because it does not exclude theology, but questions it from its own principles.

Concluding that it is unnecessary to deny the doctrine of providence, I question what we should mean by it and if preservation is a necessary part of it, which is generally said by Byzantine protagonists. Firstly, who truly believes in providence, cannot stop with what is written in the inspired Scriptures, but should look at what happened in history as well. Applied to textual criticism, it appears that everything that happened with the text of the New Testament, happened within the realm of God's providence—even the MS from the basket (**N**) and the papyri from the Egyptian sands. Otherwise providence is no providence at all.

The next question is if preservation is a component of providence, as Burgon and others asserted. In my opinion, both should be connected, because otherwise providence and inspiration become empty titles. Nevertheless it remains highly questionable if these theological notions immediately point to the Byzantine text only. This would mean an unaccountable narrowing of God's providence, because providence was clearly not opposed to the other texts. Moreover, what do we do with the differences *within* the Byzantine textual cluster? Even both recent Byzantine text-editions²⁶⁵—who try to recover the *original* text—differ among themselves. From a narrow preservation perspective, at least one cannot have preserved the original inspired text. This brings about some problematic notions that adhere to a narrow conception of the doctrine of preservation by many Byzantine protagonists:

- 1) It implies that the original text should be preserved in at least one MS;²⁶⁶
- 2) It implies that the original text cannot be translated—because that would mean an unaccountable tampering with the text—; hence, the only permissible use of the text would be recitation in the original Greek;
- 3) The imperfect quotations of the Old Testament in the New become problematic;
- 4) We are forced to conclude that the Church, at least for the major part of its history, was devoid of the original text.

Because of these considerations, we are forced to conclude that we should not connect preservation with the *letter*, but with *content*.²⁶⁷ This also appears to be practiced in the New Testament when it quotes the Old Testament imperfectly.²⁶⁸ Moreover, by concluding that we should connect preservation with content, we can conscientiously conclude that the New Testament text *has been* preserved in all its

²⁶⁵ Hodges and Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*; Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*.

²⁶⁶ As already noted (cf. notes 154 and 237), Pickering has taken this consequence by looking for perfect MSS of the Byzantine family 35 (K').

²⁶⁷ An important aspect is if Scripture itself points to this conclusion. Wallace for instance noted that the exegesis of the major scriptural texts do not lead to the traditional idea of preservation. Careful exegesis is at least preferred. (Cf. §3.1.)

²⁶⁸ Possibly the apostle Paul would have accused textual critics in this polarised debate for occupying themselves with endless discussions about variants, “that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith.” (1 Tim. 1:4 RSV)

doctrines, *despite textual variation*. Indeed, there are doctrinal important variants, but they do not change one of the important doctrines. That textual variation exists is *inter alia* due to general “broken” situation on earth.

One word should be said about Pickering’s view that both God and Satan are interested in the New Testament text. It is not immediately clear what it actually means for textual criticism. If we apply it to the emergence of textual variation, it would mean that almost all MSS are “devilish,” which is inconceivable. I would like to apply it only when MSS are in such way mutilated that it is clear that evil forces were at work.

My final conclusion is that the doctrine of preservation cannot solve completely the issue of the original text. But this is no problem, because the Church has always worked with and lived from different MSS and editions. When the Church and the Holy Spirit can work with these MSS, so can we. Furthermore, systematic theologians are obliged to develop more fully the quest of textual criticism in their doctrine of revelation and Scripture.

§4. Observations from Philosophy of Science and Sociology

As every scientific field, this debate can be studied from the perspective of philosophy of science. As far as I know, this has never been applied to debates in textual criticism in general and the discussion about the Byzantine text in particular. In this section, I use the widely appreciated theory of Thomas S. Kuhn on “paradigm shifts” to analyse this debate.²⁶⁹

§4.1. KUHN’S THEORY OF PARADIGM SHIFTS

Kuhn defined “paradigms” as “universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners.”²⁷⁰ This paradigm shapes the basis of “normal science,” which means that subsequent research is (and ought to be) based upon that commonly received paradigm. A paradigm is usually sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems to be solved. When more and more results come to light that are contradictory to the paradigm, a scientific revolution can get started. In this period, the old paradigm is rejected, and a new paradigm (or paradigms) is (are) proposed [=paradigm shift], until there is enough consensus to accept a new paradigm as a basis for further research. It speaks for itself that such a revolution is always accompanied by controversies.²⁷¹ It is important to note that the new “paradigm” is *incompatible* with the older one. Although Kuhn’s use of “paradigms” is somewhat cloudy, it will provide a useful instrument for our analysis.²⁷²

§4.2. ANALYSIS OF THE DEBATE

To apply this model from philosophy of science, two complementary questions are of importance:

- 1) Are both camps working from a different *and* incompatible “paradigm”?
- 2) Can the debate be characterised as part of the “normal science stage,” or is a scientific revolution at work?

The most fundamental conviction of modern textual criticism, is that all evidence to the text should be evaluated with the assistance of external and internal probabilities. In my opinion, this is the commonly accepted paradigm, in this respect

²⁶⁹ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions; with an Introductory Essay by Ian Hacking*, 4th ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

²⁷⁰ Ibid., xlvi.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 1-11.

²⁷² Margaret Masterman pointed out that there are twenty-one uses of the word “paradigm” in Kuhn’s book. Margaret Masterman, “The Nature of a Paradigm,” in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

Kuhn himself recognised the validity of his theory for the other sciences, outside his own: physics. “More clearly than most other episodes in the history of at least the physical sciences, *these display what all scientific revolutions are about*. Each of them necessitated the community’s rejection of one time-honored scientific theory in favor of another incompatible with it.” Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: 6.

nothing has changed since the past centuries. All textual phenomena have been researched and interpreted with the help of external and internal criteria. It is highly questionable if Byzantine protagonists are working from a different and *incompatible paradigm*. Modern critics tend to be rash in concluding that they wholly rely on a theological *a priori*, but the foregoing investigations in the preceding sections prove that it is at least partly untrue. Nevertheless, it remains a good question what the relationship comprises between their theological convictions and the common paradigm. Is the theological notion of preservation (along with inspiration) a complementary part of the paradigm, the whole paradigm, or no part of the paradigm at all? In my opinion, the reproach that Byzantine protagonists rely wholly on a theological *a priori*—which is the same as to say that they work from a different and incompatible paradigm (a theological one and a historical one)—only applies to the most extreme, but not to for instance Burgon and Robinson. Both are deeply engaged in working with external and internal criteria. Burgon for instance wrote the most extensive treatise on textual corruption ever published.²⁷³ Likewise, Robinson explained in an accompanying article the internal criteria he used in establishing his Byzantine text edition.²⁷⁴ They appear not to be different from those in use by eclectics.

More differences appear in the case of external evidence. §2. Gives a clear account of the differences with respect to the Byzantine text. Nevertheless even among eclectics there is much difference in the use and application of external evidence in general—for instance concerning the use of the “Western” text. Eclectics would not follow Burgon in considering the “old Uncials” as depraved and heretical texts, but nobody would argue that “heretical,” or doctrinally corrupted MSS never existed. Hence, the paradigm is not different, but the application of its principles. To state that they work from a different paradigm, is to complicate things unnecessarily.

Nevertheless, the question remains whether the secondary character of the Byzantine text is not part of the paradigm in modern criticism. From Westcott and Hort onwards, distinctive Byzantine readings seem to be used as an instrument to trace secondary readings.²⁷⁵ Moreover, the Byzantine text is used to determine which MSS and versions are of less importance. Nevertheless it is acknowledged that in some exceptional instances the Byzantine text has preserved the original text. The change from a recension theory to a process theory has even widened that possibility. In my opinion, the secondary character of the Byzantine text should therefore not be threatened as a necessary part of the eclectic paradigm.

²⁷³ Burgon and Miller, *The Causes of the Corruption*.

²⁷⁴ Robinson, “Byzantine Priority,” 545-554.

²⁷⁵ Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*: 306. “readings that are supported by only Koine or Byzantine witnesses (...) may be set aside as almost certainly secondary.” Cf. Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*: 119, 194, 255.

Interestingly, these considerations lead to the conclusion that the discussion is about the *interpretation* and *application* of the common paradigm, and especially about the question whether the principles of the paradigm point to the dependency or independency of the Byzantine text. Such considerations like the recension- or process theory are but debatable scholarly achievements, *not differences in paradigm*, because a different estimation of these achievements does not lead to an incompatible paradigm.

It would be illustrative to pay some attention to *real paradigm shifts* in the history of textual criticism. For the Western Church, the first real shift was the change from the Vulgate text to the texts of Erasmus and Ximénes. Both constructed critically a Greek text from various MSS, whereas before the officially sanctioned Latin translation of the Church was used. The old paradigm was a fixed ecclesiastical text, the new paradigm was a critically constructed text in the original language.

The second real paradigm shift was the change from the Erasmian/Bezan text to a fixed *Textus Receptus* in 1633, when this text became the “text which is now universally recognized [and offered] free of alterations and corruptions.”²⁷⁶ This text remained the base text of almost all subsequent editions, with or without marginalia. When this text is considered the same as the original text, a new paradigm is imposed, that is really different from and incompatible with the paradigm of Erasmus and Beza. Interestingly, this paradigm was quite similar to the old paradigm of the Vulgate. In my opinion, even Bentley, Mill, Bengel, Wettstein, Griesbach and others have not committed themselves to this “new” paradigm. Although they printed the *Textus Receptus* in the main text, their attitude was similar to that of Erasmus and Beza. Hence, when Karl Lachmann introduced his edition of the New Testament (1831), which contained the first substantially different text from the *Textus Receptus*, he proposed no new paradigm. He just took the consequences of his predecessors. Afterwards no real and incompatible paradigms have been proposed.

§4.3. SOCIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Another factor which should not be underestimated is sociological in nature. The force of the *Textus Receptus* as a mainly Byzantine text, and its merits for theology from Erasmus onwards is considerable. The question: How could the Church be off the right track for such a long time? would count heavily. As always, when religion comes into play, things become twice as serious. But before we draw conclusions from this, the same is true for eclectics: how could scholarly achievements misdirect us so much? Are we really off the track for more than a century? Especially the 1898

²⁷⁶ Cited in: Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*: 6. Latin: “Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus.”

edition of Eberhard Nestle²⁷⁷ inaugurated a factor which should not be underestimated, because it combined three of the recommended editions. An important catalyst of the more and more growing reputation of its later editions was the invitation of Kurt Aland (then main editor of the Nestle-Aland²⁵ text to participate in the editorial committee, which was ordered to produce the GNT/UBS text. The prestige of the Nestle-Aland text rose sharply when the GNT/UBS³ text was equated with it.²⁷⁸ Nowadays, there is no exegesis course thinkable without this text. Whole generations of students have grown up with it. Hence there is a huge psychological reservation against abandoning this text, now in the 28th edition, which has tactically been equated in the Catholic Epistles with the *Editio Critica Maior*. Interestingly, this “psychological reservation” is quite comparable with the reservations against abandoning the *Textus Receptus* or Byzantine text.

Moreover, scholars would always experience resistance at the idea that they have once constructed their systems—to say it in Foucault’s words—: “pour, peut-être, se dénouer et s’évanouir bientôt.”²⁷⁹ Interestingly, this works both ways.

In conclusion, both the historical and theological value of the *Textus Receptus*, and the scientific value of the critical text of Nestle-Aland have provided a huge amount of “social capital,” which was probably one of the most important catalysts of the present polarisation.

§4.4. CONCLUSION

The most important feature of Kuhn’s instrument of paradigm shift is to look for *incompatibility*. The analysis has shown that—despite the differences in application of the basic principles (paradigm)—there is no reason in this debate to think of an *incompatible* paradigm. It is found that incompatibility only applies to the more radical group that wholly argues from theological principles and a fixed text. Hence the more distinguished Byzantine protagonists like Burgon and Robinson wrongly suffer from the accusations that are only applicable to the extreme *Textus Receptus* fanatics. Concerning the more moderate group, theological convictions should not be taken as real differences in paradigm. Finally, it was observed that both paradigms provided a “social capital,” which has been a very important factor in the emergence of the present polarisation.

²⁷⁷ This edition combined the text of Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and Weymouth (in 1901 replaced by Bernhard Weiß) by majority choice. Eberhard Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th revised ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012). 46.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 47.

²⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Bibliothèque des Sciences humaines (Gallimard, 1966). 13. Trans. “possibly, to dissolve and vanish soon.”

§5. In Search of a Fruitful Methodology

In the preceding sections, many materials and arguments have been presented and discussed. The most fundamental conclusion was that the basic method (paradigm) of both parties is not necessarily incompatible. That conclusion provides a firm basis to look for new perspectives in this deadlocked debate.

§5.1. NEW AND FURTHER HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

As we have seen (§2.5.) many questions are unanswered yet that need to be answered before the quest of Byzantine origins can be brought to a definite end. By using these questions, this debate can be transformed into a very fruitful debate, providing that all participants are willing to learn from each other. In §2.5. two promising areas of investigation stand out:

- 1) The coupling of textual criticism with the analysis of the development of Greek until the emergence of Byzantine-Mediaeval Greek about AD 600.²⁸⁰
- 2) Investigation of the internal evidence of Byzantine readings; i.e. the production of a comprehensive textual commentary, without a pre-judgement about the character of the Byzantine text, and with special attention to the relationship between the Alexandrian, “Western” and Byzantine texts.

A third one should be added, which has no (prominent) place in literature on the Byzantine text, but which provides nevertheless an important instrument to analyse the textual character of the Byzantine text:

- 3) The possible influence of the textual forms of *lectionaries* on the text of the New Testament.²⁸¹

In my opinion, these three areas of investigation can provide cumulative conclusions that bring this discussion definitely to an end, because:

²⁸⁰ An interesting starting point will be: Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006). There is a fine reference, says something of this matter: J. Neville Birdsall, "The Codex Vaticanus: Its History and Significance," in *The Bible as Book: The Transmission of the Greek Text*, ed. Scot McKendrick and Orlaith O'Sullivan (London, New Castle: The British Library, Oak Knoll Press, 2003), 36. "Both in Sanders' lectures [*He lectured in Cambridge, but unfortunately left no literature on this subject; EB*] and in the last form of Lake's introduction [Lake, *The Text of the New Testament*. 6th ed.; EB], it was suggested that in the second and early third centuries, not only was there no Antiochian or Byzantine text, but no 'Neutral' or Alexandrian text either. The Lakes say nothing of the criteria of that creation, *but Sanders, a fine Classicist before he turned to theology, believed that the 'Neutral' text of Hort was characterized by an adaptation of a rough-hewn original to classical norms*. He gave no working examples, but in one's simplicity one believed him." [Emphasis added]

²⁸¹ Cf. for the necessity of involving the lectionaries in the study of Byzantine MSS: Gunther Zuntz, "The Byzantine Text in New Testament Criticism," *Journal of Theological Studies* 43 (1942): 26-27. Zuntz would not use the lectionaries to discover the secondary character of the Byzantine text, but because they were the ecclesiastical text in the proper sense of the word.

- a) By these areas of investigation we can really prove or disprove the hypothesis of the secondary character of the Byzantine text.
 - i. A careful analysis of the used language, especially of morphology and syntax, will reveal if the Byzantine text (or even the other textual clusters) has been adjusted to later usage.
 - ii. A comprehensive textual commentary of the Byzantine text will reveal general and countable tendencies in the Byzantine text—secondary or not.
 - iii. If it can be proved that the *lectionaries* influenced the textual form of the Byzantine text, its secondary character is clearly evidenced.
 - b) Especially the first (about language) can prove the hypotheses if the Byzantine did or did not exist prior to the fourth century.
 - c) The second one can bring more clarity about the internal evidence of the Byzantine text.
- a) If it can be proved that the Byzantine text carries clearly the marks of later Greek usage, b) if it can be proved that the textual forms of *lectionaries* clearly affected the textual form of the Byzantine text, and c) if it can be proved that convincing textual commentaries are sparingly in favour of the Byzantine text, it is demonstrated that at least the *form* of the Byzantine text cannot be the original, especially when the first and third provide convincing evidence. If not, it should be concluded that the Byzantine text is an independent witness. If the first and third do not provide convincing evidence, the issue remains unsolved, because we should not rely on the subjectivity of internal evidence.

But to steer the debate in the right direction some basic attitudes are necessary that safeguard the objectivity of the debate and that deescalate the debate in its present polarisation.

§5.2. A NEW METHOD FOR ANALYSING THE ORIGINS OF THE BYZANTINE TEXT

The first preparation to a new method is seeing that the present theory about the origins of the Byzantine texts—and also the other textual clusters—is not as factual as stated. To present it as facts—and thus impose a paradigm—is more obstructive than is usually imagined. Hence, much is gained, if we observe this intolerance, drop it and develop a better paradigm, which has better credentials.²⁸² Eclectics have rushed to conclusions, before the evidence was entirely clear. This section is therefore a plea to take one step down and reinvestigate our conclusions concerning the Byzantine text. This does not mean to ignore one century of research, but a

²⁸² Cf. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: 19.

thorough evaluation of the conclusions of that century and new or different starting points for further research.

The first attitude that is necessary is “mutual openness.” Both Byzantine protagonists and eclectics need to take time for careful analyses of each other’s arguments. This thesis provides a wealth of arguments that need consideration and reinvestigation.

The second is “cautiousness.” The origin of the Byzantine text is a very complicated historical question. To take its secondary character for granted and to use that “achievement” as a paradigm and instrument for further research is to act irresponsibly. On the other hand, to take the priority of the Byzantine text for granted is to act irresponsibly as well. What we need is investigation, not rash conclusions.

The third attitude is “willingness to co-operate.” Our predecessors of the nineteenth century used to speak about Sacred Criticism; nobody is allowed to trifle with it. It is about God’s Word for the world. Bad decisions affect a whole generation of translations. This is an important incentive to co-operate, to work hard, to share and discuss results, to reinvestigate and discuss again. Be not afraid of confessional differences, because truth survives. Truth may and should be questioned, because by testing it, it is strengthened. And on the other hand, not all that glitters is gold. Practically, it will be fruitful to couple or integrate textual decisions in a comprehensive (digital) textual commentary in a compact recording system with full bibliographical notes.²⁸³ In this way it will be immediately clear to scholars which textual decisions are possible. Byzantine protagonists should substantially contribute to such a project.²⁸⁴

The fourth attitude is “awareness of theological premises.” As is shown, nobody works without theological premises, nevertheless they should be discussed on their roots into the scriptures. Exclusion of theological principles will only contribute to a hardened debate.

Beyond these necessary attitudes, the *Coherence Based Genealogical Method* (CBGM) will provide an invaluable instrument to analyse the Byzantine textual cluster.²⁸⁵ Byzantine protagonists should make intensive use of this method with all its available online tools.²⁸⁶ They can now—with the help of Münster!—test their own

²⁸³ Something like this is in preparation at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam to provide a database of all proposed conjectural emendations. Bart L. F. Kamphuis et al., "Sleepy Scribes and Clever Critics. A Classification of Conjectures on the Text of the New Testament," *Novum Testamentum* 57, no. 1 (2015).

²⁸⁴ Fortunately, a textual commentary of the Byzantine text is in preparation. Cf. note 172.

²⁸⁵ Unfortunately, I was unable to do some analyses of short portions of the Byzantine text of the Catholic Epistles.

²⁸⁶ <http://intf.uni-muenster.de/cbqm2/GenQ.html> (visited at 23 December 2014) Gert Mink invited all textual critics working with different basic methodologies, to use CBGM! Mink, "Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission," 142.

hypotheses. CBGM is especially promising for the Byzantine text, because it provides tools to analyse different stages within the Byzantine textual cluster by the construction of a “global stemma.”²⁸⁷ This will be important to prove whether Wachtel is correct in supposing that the standardisation of the Byzantine text of the Catholic Epistles was a process of centuries.

Interestingly, Mink has—because of his renewed attention on external evidence—openly denounced the circular argument of internal evidence, which was done in that way only by Byzantine protagonists.²⁸⁸ He even acknowledged that in many cases local genealogies can be inverted. Byzantine protagonists will be very fortunate with these acknowledgements. This renewed attention on external evidence, even on the Byzantine MSS, should be grasped as a well-timed chance to come closer together in searching for the best Greek New Testament.

§5.3. CONCLUSION

In this section, I have stated that there are three aspects of historical inquiry that have the potential to bring the debate about the origins of the Byzantine text to an end: 1) language analysis, 2) the production of a comprehensive textual commentary, and 3) analysis of the influence of lectionaries on the textual form of the Byzantine text. Furthermore, it is argued that co-operation is necessary and possible when both parties accept some fundamental attitudes: mutual openness, cautiousness, willingness to co-operate, and awareness of theological premises. Finally, I have argued that the CBGM offers a helpful instrument to analyse the Byzantine textual cluster, without being prepossessed to one of the groups. Recent revaluation of external evidence and the more openly treatment of the fundamental weaknesses of internal criteria show that the door is open to refreshed and motivated investigation of the Byzantine text.

²⁸⁷ A “global stemma” is a stemma of witnesses, which provides insight into the development of the text. *Ibid.*, 144.

²⁸⁸ Although it is true that eclectics are always careful with regard to internal evidence (cf. Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*: 302-304.). No eclectic has said it so boldly as Mink: “The circularity of arguments is obvious: witnesses are assessed as “good” if they contain “good” readings, while readings are assessed as good, if they are attested by “good” manuscripts. *This circularity cannot adequately be controlled by internal criteria.*” Mink, “Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission,” 149-150 (note 17). [Emphasis added]

§6. Conclusions

Almost all literature about the Byzantine text provides evidence of the polarised nature of the discussion about the origins of the Byzantine text. This thesis will be no exception. Nevertheless it is exceptional, because it threatens the quest for the origins of the Byzantine text from an overreaching and evaluative point of view. In order to do that, I have read and analysed almost all the important literature on the Byzantine text from Westcott and Hort onward.

It is found that the discussion consists of three layers: a historical one, a theological one, and an epistemological and sociological one. All the layers have carefully been analysed and evaluated to gain insight in this deadlocked debate and to look for promising arguments that can provide new ways and motivations to escape the current impasse. After evaluating the debate, I have pleaded for a new method for analysing the origins of the Byzantine text.

Concerning the historical controversy, it is found that most modern textual critics consider the Byzantine text as secondary, because internal evidence shows that its readings are for the biggest part secondary. The truth of this observation is confirmed by the fact that there is no clear historical evidence for the Byzantine text prior to AD 330. Manuscript-, Patristic, and versional evidence is completely in agreement with regard to this conclusion. Moreover, it is made probable that the Byzantine text developed for centuries, before it gained its final form. This is evidenced by the contaminated nature of the early Byzantine manuscripts and versions. On the basis of these arguments, most textual critics consider the Byzantine text definitely as secondary.

On the other hand, Byzantine protagonists have seen many reasons to challenge this conclusion. In the first place, they see good reasons to suspect the quality of the old majuscules (especially ΧΒΔ). In the second place, they have found many arguments that argue for another estimation of the Byzantine manuscripts. Firstly, the early minuscules (9th – 11th century) are probably transliterations of (very) old lost Byzantine majuscules. Secondly, the Byzantine manuscripts are independent witnesses to the text of the New Testament. Thirdly, Byzantine readings in early papyri show early attestation of Byzantine readings. Fourthly, there is no evidence that the Alexandrian or “Western” text prevailed in the Aegean area prior to the fourth century, while it is historically more probable that the Byzantine text was always the text of this region, which originally received most of the autographs. Fifthly, there are other reasons that account for the absence of Patristic evidence in favour of the Byzantine text in ante-Nicene times, whereas existent early Patristic evidence is unreliable. Sixthly, (almost) all Byzantine readings are defensible on internal, transcriptional and transmissional grounds.

It is clear that both positions that argue with historical arguments lead to incompatible results. Hence it is concluded that more investigation is necessary to prove or disprove many of these arguments.

With regard to theological considerations, it is found that on the one hand textual critics reject any interference of theology in the method of textual criticism, because *a priori* theological considerations tend to determine the results beforehand. Moreover, they see serious problems in the conception and application of theological notions like divine providence and preservations in the method of Byzantine protagonists.

On the other hand, Byzantine protagonists cannot believe that God has given his revelation, without concerning Himself with the preservation of His revelation. To ascertain the preservation of the text, they closely connect providence with preservation together with the faith that the original text is preserved in the majority of manuscripts.

I have pointed out that the Byzantine protagonists are unable to show convincingly why preservation should be connected with the majority of manuscripts. Moreover, I see serious problems with such a narrow conception of providence, because every textual discovery is within the realm of God's providence and should not be excluded. Furthermore, I argued that it is unnecessary to disconnect theology from textual criticism, because there is no textual criticism without any kind of a theological *a priori*. This does not mean that theology *a priori* prevails over text critical methodology, but that textual criticism obliges to theological reflection. Further, I have argued that theological notions like providence and preservation need to be connected with the *content* of the New Testament and not with the *letter*. In that sense, the New Testament is historically and theologically fully preserved.

With regard to epistemological and sociological considerations, it is concluded that both parties do not work from an incompatible paradigm, although some extreme positions do. Besides, there are different sociological aspects that led to a "social capital" of both the Byzantine text, that served the Church for such a long time, and the Nestle-Aland text, that serves the scholarly world and even the Church for many decades. Both led to "psychological reservations" in abstaining from these text.

Finally, I have pleaded for a new method and program that has the potential to motivate new and further historical investigation of the origins of the Byzantine text. To prove or disprove the secondary character of the Byzantine text, it is necessary 1) to investigate linguistic changes that evidence later Greek, 2) to produce a convincing textual commentary by Byzantine protagonists, which interacts with the common opinion, 3) to investigate if the lectionaries had influence on the textual form of the text. Further, I see many possibilities for Byzantine protagonists to prove their presumptions with the help of the *Coherence Based Genealogical Method*.

Moreover, I have argued for a fruitful co-operation between Byzantine protagonists and eclectics. This will be possible if there is a mutual openness, cautiousness, willingness to co-operate and awareness of mutual theological premises.

In conclusion, it is a matter of seeing the complexities of the Byzantine text. In this process of researching the Byzantine textual cluster, both parties can and should co-operate. With above mentioned attitudes and method, it will be possible to launch fresh and motivated contributions to the Byzantine text. One thing remains clear: there is much work to do. Hence, our final conclusion appears to be that the secondary character of the Byzantine text is not settled at all! And until we have thoroughly investigated the origins and characteristics of the various textual clusters in their mutual relationships, we need investigation and not hard conclusions. Moreover, we should ask the question, if we are not on the right track in ignoring the Byzantine text in textual theories and decisions. The answer is: we do not know yet. We need the detective of our introduction that can supply us the right evidence. His first task will be *to lift up our “Joseph” out of the pit, and consider his qualities another time, before selling him to Egypt once and for all.*

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