“Out of Egypt Have I Called My Son:” Why Evangelicals Should Get Over Their Preoccupation with Egyptian Manuscripts

by Glenn J. Kerr

Introduction

When most people hear about texts, manuscripts, textual criticism, they usually think the subject is too boring, too complicated, too sectarian, too unimportant to require their attention. These reactions are even true for seminary graduates with PhDs. Most people are very happily settled in their ignorance (and ignoring) of this subject, and wish it would go away. Many think it already has gone away.

The whole field of textual criticism is shrouded in mystery: textual apparatuses at the bottom of pages seem to be written in a secret code that only those initiated into the cult can know. It requires knowing that 𝔎 and *Byz* actually mean the same thing, that 𝔐 and M are different, that *Byz Lect* is not one term but two, that א and A are different, and that every manuscript (MS) has at least two different numbers, maybe more, and sometimes a letter as well if it’s really special. Text critics have perhaps unwittingly perpetuated this mystery by claiming that textual criticism is a science and not a theology, and that you probably wouldn’t understand anyway.

I can surely appreciate this. When I was a beginning student of New Testament Greek forty some-odd years ago, I knew nothing about differences between Greek texts. I was handed my little red UBS Greek text and taught to read it. It took a long time for me to find out why the King James Version, the only English text used in the school where I was, did not match up from time to time with the Greek text I was learning to read. My Greek professors were virtually no help at all on the questions that came up in my mind. I later found out that there was a different Greek text that I could not buy in the campus store, or almost any place else, either. It wasn’t called the Greek New Testament. It was called the *Textus Receptus*.

My first copy of the *Textus Receptus* was a loose-leaf notebook version I got from a Rev. Thomas Baker of the Bible Truth Institute in Pennsylvania. Since then I have amassed a prodigious collection of New Testament Greek texts, including a Tischendorf NT, an 1885 edition of the Westcott and Hort NT, Souter, Nestle-Aland, Scrivener, Hodges-Farstad, Robinson-Pierpont, Pickering, and several others, printed and electronic, even several versions of audio, in addition to my original red

UBS Greek NT. I have also become intimately acquainted with the entire critical text-traditional text issue, and far from being "as dead as Queen Anne,"[1] the traditional text, and along with it the *Textus Receptus*, is alive and well. I have also found out that the question of which Greek text we should use for the New Testament is not really a very complicated question after all. It does not require intimate knowledge of minuscule cursive writing or knowing the difference between *recto* and *verso*. It really only requires understanding some historical and geographic issues and being able to look at maps.

I hope I can surprise you with this paper. For those who think they know what I will say already, I know I will surprise you. For those who think they will not understand, I believe you will find it simpler than you thought. For those who think it really doesn't matter, I plan to awaken you. The whole key to understanding New Testament textual criticism is not primarily comparing manuscripts, but simple history, geography, and weather.

Three Possible Models for New Testament Manuscript History

One of the great lacks in text critical theory is a logical and coherent history of the transmission of the NT text. Only a few have been attempted, with Westcott and Hort's well-known reconstruction being the first. This reconstruction has been abandoned by nearly everyone as untenable, yet the text it presupposes has not been questioned, and a plausible history to replace it has not been proposed. We have in the field of textual criticism essentially only three models of textual transmission: the non-evangelical eclectic model, the evangelical eclectic model, and the evangelical transmissional model. Here is a simple delineation of each:

Non-evangelical eclectic model:

> The NT text was in a fluid condition for about 2-3 centuries, during which various texts circulated with wide differences between them. The Byzantine text was an attempt to solidify the text and make it stable, as were the fourth-century uncials. There really may not ever have been an autographic text, so the only real way to find the "original" text, if it really existed at all, is to find the earliest copies and reconstruct the earliest form by comparisons of readings as the text with the fewest variations wrought over time. This text is called the *Ausgangstext*, the "starting text," as opposed to the *Urtext*, or "original text."[2]

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[1] Robertson AT 1926. *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 225. Robertson is actually quoting CH Turner of Oxford, who made the statement during an Inaugural Lecture on the *Study of the New Testament 1883 and 1920.*

[2] "The distinction made in the ECM between the "initial text" (*Ausgangstext*), on the one hand, and the original text as composed by the author, on the other, may be seen by some as a recourse to Karl Lachmann, who, according to his 1830 "Rechenschaft," was not yet aiming for the true reading but for the oldest among widespread variants in his *Editio Maior* of the New Testament." *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research.* Klaus Wachtel and Michael W. Holmes (SBL: Atlanta, 2011, Intro, pp. 2-3)

Evangelical eclectic model (this actually comes in two forms):

Standard eclectic - The NT text was given in the autographs, but because of poor copying and attacks against the text, many different forms circulated for the first 2-3 centuries. However, the purest and earliest form of the text was found in Alexandria, so the manuscripts (MSS) from there should be carefully compared to determine the best form of the text. The Byzantine text represents a late but honest attempt to reconstruct the autographs, but because they did not have the resources or texts we do, they only did a fair job, and now we can do a much better job.

Broad eclectic – The NT text was given in the autographs, but because of poor copying and attacks against the text, many different forms circulated for the first 2-3 centuries. While the MSS from Egypt are the oldest we have, they do not necessarily represent the best form of the text. Greater weight or even equal weight should be given to other textual traditions and families, and we must carefully compare all the available texts to arrive at the readings that most likely represent the original text.

Evangelical transmissional model:

The transmission of the NT text from the autographs was basically normal and highly stable among the churches of the Adriatic-Aegean area, and texts from other areas outside the Adriatic-Aegean (Egypt, North Africa, Syria, Armenia, southern Egypt) represent less ideal and even poor examples of the NT text. To some extent, the farther away geographically from the Adriatic-Aegean, the less reliable the copies. The Byzantine text, particularly the core MSS of the Byzantine tradition, represent the only stable and reliable form of the autographs. The Egyptian MSS, like other texts and families, broke off from the main stream of the Byzantine text and developed independently.

These three models are in fact generalizations, and are certainly subject to variants and permutations under each broad category, but they will serve our purposes for now. (Note that the major differences between the evangelical and non-evangelical models is that the evangelical models claim there were autographs; also, the broad eclectic view does not give priority to any family.)

Here is a table summarizing the different models:

model	autographs	priority
Non-evangelical eclectic	no	Alexandrian
Evangelical standard eclectic	yes	Alexandrian
Evangelical broad eclectic	yes	none
Evangelical transmissional	yes	Byzantine

Scripture and Manuscript transmission

In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul said the following:

> And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit (παράθου) these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (NKJV)[3]

This is obviously a very familiar verse, but it has rarely if ever been applied to the transmission of manuscripts. However, it contains an important word related to that subject, the word παράθου (commit). This word, coming from the lemma form παρατίθημι, along with related and similar words παραδίδωμι (deliver, transmit) and παραλαμβάνω (receive) and two noun derivatives παραθήκη (deposit) and παράδοσις (tradition), represents an idea we usually relate to oral teaching and discipleship. It is clear from 2 Thessalonians 2:15 that it should not be limited to oral teaching alone: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." The word here for "traditions" is παραδόσεις, "things handed over," or we might say "things passed on" or "things transmitted."

This concept of and realization of the need to transmit truth to others, both orally and in written form, is very much supported in numerous passages in the NT:

> (Luke 1:2) just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered (παρέδοσαν) them to us.
> (Acts 16:4) And as they went through the cities, they delivered (παρεδίδουν) to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.
> (1 Corinthians 11:2) Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions (παραδόσεις) just as I delivered (παρέδωκα) *them* to you.
> (1 Corinthians 11:23) For I received (παρέλαβον) from the Lord that which I also delivered (παρέδωκα) to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread.
> (1 Corinthians 15:1-3) Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received (παρελάβετε) and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered (παρέδωκα) to you first of all that which I also received (παρέλαβον): that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
> (Galatians 1:9) As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received (παρελάβετε), let him be accursed.

[3] All quotations from English in this paper will be from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

(Philippians 4:9) The things which you learned and received (παρελάβετε) and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.
(1 Thessalonians 2:13) For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received (παραλαβόντες) the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.
(1 Thessalonians 4:1) Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received (παρελάβετε) from us how you ought to walk and to please God.
(2 Thessalonians 3:6) But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition (παράδοσιν) which he received (παρέλαβον) from us.
(Jude 1:3) Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered (παραδοθείσῃ) to the saints.

In these passages and in the New Testament in general, two concepts stand out clearly. The early Christians were not just the repository of truth taught to them, but they also had the responsibility to contend for and transmit that truth. That this applies clearly to the transmission of manuscripts is not as evident at first glance, but is based on two corollaries.

The first corollary is that of practical necessity. If we are ever to get what Paul, John, Luke, Matthew, Mark, the writer of Hebrews, Peter, James, and Jude actually wrote, then there are only two ways it can arrive. Either a chain of people who are faithful takes what has been delivered to them and passes it on with as much precision as is humanly possible, enlisting divine aid at the same time, or we go back and search through the scraps of history and try to reconstruct what the above list of writers wrote. It may require some of both, but what we are looking for first is a clearly defined and recognizable **stream of faithfulness** within the broad and turbulent sea of the manuscript tradition.

The second corollary is that of past example. The concept of transmitting carefully and accurately documents that are the foundation for belief and practice had already been worked out and accepted by the vast bulk of people who considered the written tradition of the Old Testament essential to their faith. That concept was of course what developed into the Hebrew Masora (transmission, tradition), and it even used the same terminology to identify itself as we have already seen the New Testament writers using (Matt. 15:2-3, Mark 7:3-13). With their Jewish background, the apostles would have well understood the entire manuscript transmission process, and would likely have modeled their practices after that tradition. So we are also looking for a **tradition to be maintained**.

As we look again at 2 Timothy 2:2, we should realize that Paul is not so much setting forth a prophecy as he is a methodology, a transmissional methodology, a means of preserving God's Word that he believed would work. It is a simple process, and in fact is the only real possibility how that preservation might be achieved. The only alternative is the recovery process, where someone searches through the scraps of history and tries to reconstruct what was aimlessly scattered there.

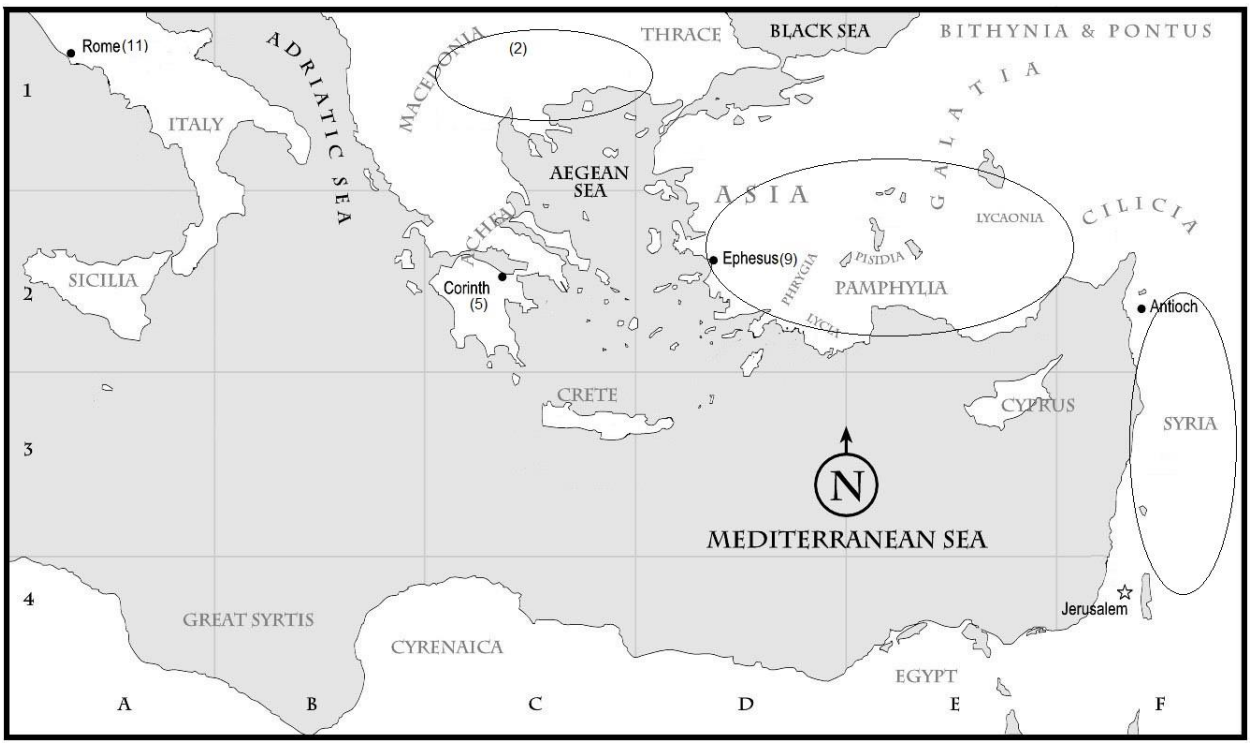
To summarize, we are looking for **a stream of faithfulness** and a **tradition to be maintained**.

A History of New Testament Manuscript Transmission

We want to construct a history of the text that best accounts for all the facts we know. We will start with the writing of the New Testament.

1. The New Testament originated primarily in the Adriatic-Aegean area

Below is a map that shows as simply as possible the points of origin for the New Testament books as understood by the broad group of evangelicals:



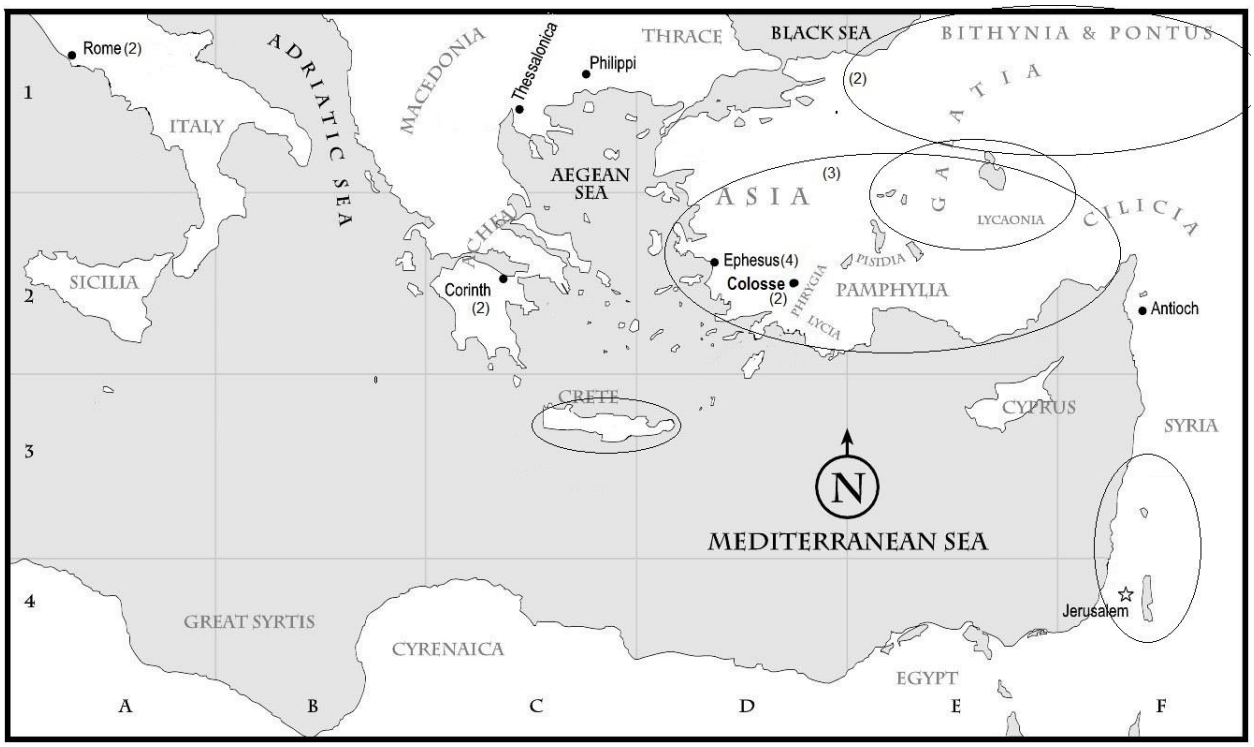
Point of origin for the NT books[4]

[4] Map adapted by author from BibleWorks Map Module: NET Bible Maps-Journeys of Paul 4. See Appendix for table of probable points of origin that served as the basis for this map.

A circle represents an area in which certain books were presumed to have been written, such as the circle for Palestine, which represents one of the presumed points of origin for the gospel of Matthew, and the circle of southern Asia Minor for books such as Jude, Galatians, Luke, and Acts. Numbers in parentheses represent the number of books that could be ascribed to the same city or region. It is evident that the writing of the New Testament soon shifted from Palestine to Asia Minor, the Greek states, and Rome.

2. The New Testament was written primarily to the Adriatic-Aegean area

Below is a map that shows as simply as possible the points of destination for the New Testament books as understood by the broad group of evangelicals:



Point of destination for the NT books[5]

Once again we see that things soon shifted from Palestine northward, and the points of destinations of the books are even more localized than the points of origin. Furthermore, though we have stated the focus as the Adriatic-Aegean area, it is the Aegean which is the primary locus. The letters written from Rome were mostly written to the churches and people of the Aegean area. Paul's letter to the Romans was probably written in Corinth, and the gospel of Mark may be the only book actually written from Rome to Rome.

[5] Map adapted by author from BibleWorks Map Module: NET Bible Maps-Journeys of Paul 4. See Appendix for table of probable points of destination that served as the basis for this map.

3. The churches of the first century were clustered in the Adriatic-Aegean area

Below is a map of the New Testament churches at the end of the first century:

New Testament churches at the end of the first century[6]

It is to the credit of the churches that by the end of the first century Christians had established a beachhead for the church in north Africa, in Cyrene and Alexandria. In fact, the John Rylands papyrus fragment, found in Egypt and dated to the early second century, bears witness to this fact. Other historical sources also confirm the presence of a Christian community in Egypt in the first century. However, it is also clear that north Africa was not the geographical center of the first-century churches.

[6] Map adapted by the author from "The Spread of Christianity in the Roman World" (BibleWorks – Moody Bible Atlas Map #116, superimposed on the NET Bible Map-Journeys of Paul 4.)

4. The churches of the second century advanced in north Africa, but maintained their strong presence in the Adriatic-Aegean area

Below is a map of the churches at the end of the second century:

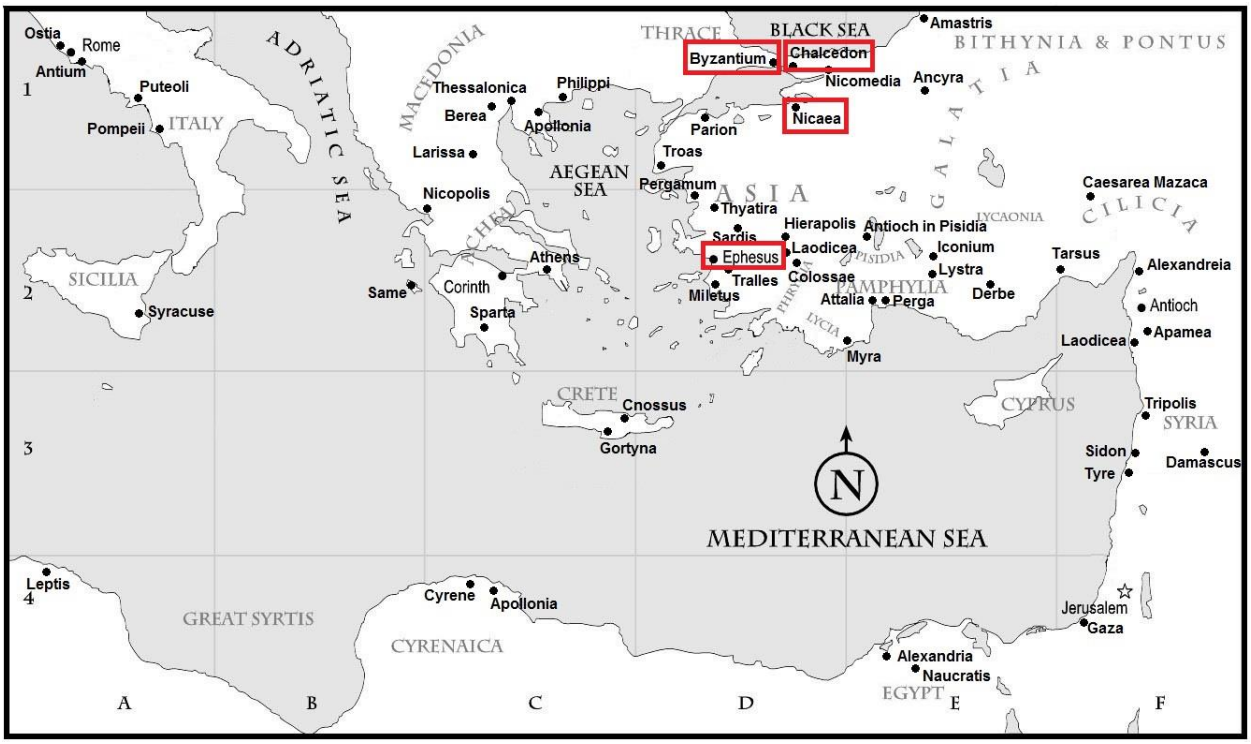
Churches at the end of the second century[7]

The second century shows growth and expansion, but not relocation. The first century churches continued to grow and establish more churches close by to them.

[7] Map adapted by the author from "The Spread of Christianity in the Roman World" (BibleWorks – Moody Bible Atlas Map #116, superimposed on the NET Bible Map-Journeys of Paul 4.)

5. The church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries were all in the Adriatic-Aegean area

Below is the map above with the addition of the locations of the ecumenical church councils from AD 325-451:



Ecumenical church councils 325-451[8]

Of course church councils would be held where the most people could come from the shortest distance, so the councils continue to point to the focus and concentration of churches to be the Adriatic-Aegean area.

6. The secondary nature of the Egyptian text

At this point a logical and important question arises: where was the center of Christianity for the first four centuries after Christ? Looking at these maps, it is easy to see that the Adriatic-Aegean area, the home of the Byzantine textform, was the center for Christianity in every way and at every time after the initial migration from Jerusalem to Antioch. This calls in question a strange statement made by Kurt and Barbara Aland in a footnote in *The Text of the New Testament*:

> There is undoubtedly an early (although admittedly different) tradition underlying the *K* text (it may even claim one or more papyri of the early period among its ancestors), yet nevertheless it must have received its final

[8] Map adapted by the author from "The Spread of Christianity in the Roman World" (BibleWorks – Moody Bible Atlas Map #116, superimposed on the NET Bible Map-Journeys of Paul 4.)

> form in a revision made about 300 or shortly before, and this gave it a distinctly secondary character.[9]

The phrase "one or more papyri of the early period" refers in this context to Egyptian papyri, since they are the only papyri we have. The Alands seem to be suggesting that the Byzantine text (the *K* text) somehow originated in Egypt in the second or third century (or at least was related to the Egyptian text at that time) and was revised at the end of the third or start of the fourth century to become the dominant text form in the Adriatic-Aegean area. This would make the Byzantine text dependent on the Egyptian text for its origin. Looking back at our maps, does that seem even possible? What were the Adriatic-Aegean churches doing in the first, second, or third centuries, waiting for the Egyptian churches to get around to giving them the New Testament? Let's try reversing the statement:

> There is undoubtedly an early (although admittedly different) tradition underlying the Alexandrian text (it may even claim one or more papyri of the early period of the Byzantine text among its progenitors), yet nevertheless it must have received its final form in a revision made by Hesychius (?) about 300 or after, and this gave it a distinctly secondary character.[10]

Which statement better fits the maps we have just looked at? Which area is "primary" and which area is "secondary"? By definition of its location and its place in the history of the early church, the Egyptian text is secondary in character.

There is another dimension to the fact of the secondary nature of the Egyptian text, which has to do with the autographs and the autographic text. By this latter term I mean the text that was first copied from the autographs and still had reasonable chances to be compared to the autographs or at least was at a very pure level compared to later copies. Was the autographic text ever in Asia Minor, in the Adriatic-Aegean area? The answer is of course: "Yes." It originated there, and even the autographs were there at one time. Now, was the autographic text ever in Egypt? The answer is: "We don't know." If it ever was, it came to there from the Adriatic-Aegean area. If it wasn't, then the Egyptian MSS have limited value in establishing the original text of the New Testament. In either case the Egyptian MSS are secondary in nature. The critical text theory bears the burden of proof, which is to demonstrate that the autographic text was ever in Egypt. Further, the theory needs to demonstrate that the Adriatic-Aegean area actually lost its text and had to recover it from another source. Without a demonstration of these two things, there is no case for the Alexandrian text being closest to the original text.

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[9] Aland K and Aland B 1995. *The Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, p. 23, ftn. 50.

[10] Paraphrase and adaptation by the author.

Let me add that the non-evangelical eclectic model has no need to demonstrate this issue, since their model does not require a belief in the existence of the autographs. This should be a matter of concern for evangelicals, however, on two counts. First, by accepting the standard evangelical form of the eclectic model, they have inadvertently undermined their own belief in the existence of the autographs. Second, the standard evangelical model simply does not work if the autographic text was never in Egypt. At the very least this should move evangelicals away from the standard eclectic.

Answering Objections to the Priority of the Byzantine Text

Having set forth the plausible, logical, and historically demonstrable history of the New Testament text, we believe the historical data alone is enough to show that the Byzantine text should have priority. But we are prepared to answer the following objections. (I am sure there are other objections, but these will keep us quite busy for now.)

1. Someone will immediately say, I am sure: "But the Byzantine text is clearly derived from the Alexandrian text! What about all those conflated (combined) readings that prove the Byzantine text is later? What about all those places where the Alexandrian text readings best explain the origin of the Byzantine text readings?"
2. Another objection would be to conjecture that the Byzantine text was itself not stable during the early period (just as unstable as the Egyptian text), and in fact wasn't the "majority" text until the ninth century, so it could not be the best example of the original text.
3. A third objection might be: "Since the Egyptian MSS are the oldest MSS we have, doesn't it make logical sense that they would be closest to the autographs? Do we want to rely on a text that can't be verified until seven or eight centuries later?"
4. A fourth objection has to do with the Lucianic recension, and how that recension (revision) supposedly made the text secondary in character.
5. A fifth objection is that the Byzantine text is a polished, expanded text, whereas the Alexandrian text is lean and clean.
6. And finally: "Shouldn't MSS be weighed rather than counted?"

1. Isn't the Byzantine text derived from the Alexandrian text?

This argument was the most forceful one that Fenton John Anthony Hort used to unseat the *Textus Receptus* in the first place. He proposed that eight examples of readings in the Byzantine text demonstrated these readings were originally from places where the Western and Alexandrian texts each had something different from each other, and that the Byzantine text combined or "conflated" the Western and Alexandrian texts. It would be fair to say that hardly anyone believes this argument anymore, and the sheer paucity of examples that Hort set forth should have been a

red flag to his contemporaries (there should have been 800 or at least 80 instead of eight; statistical chance would explain eight).[11] The present form of this argument is not based on "conflated" readings, but rather on the type of reasoning that is best reflected in the *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (*TC*) compiled by Bruce Metzger on behalf of the UBS editorial committee.[12] The arguments can be summarized by a single maxim in general: "pick the reading that best explains the origin of the other readings."

It is important to recognize that the *Textual Commentary* (*TC*) is not a collection of pro vs. con arguments, but rather the notes Metzger took about the proceedings of the committee and how they came to their decisions. I have been reading the *TC* for many years, regularly consulting it when questions arise, and also regularly collecting contrary arguments which the *TC* does not supply. Three observations: 1) it is relatively easy to come up with a plausible explanation for the Byzantine reading over against the Alexandrian reading in virtually every case (I have a whole file full of them); 2) the classic canons of textual criticism often contradict each other, thus supplying contrary arguments themselves, and quite frankly the *TC* does not make widespread use of the canons; 3) such arguments are highly subjective on both sides, and do not actually determine what really happened, since probability or even possibility does not mean certainty.

What the *TC* does point out, as does the apparatus of the UBS Greek text, is that the Byzantine and Alexandrian texts are usually opposed to each other, and only rarely do they agree together against some other form of the NT text. This points to an early separation and independent development, which is not what either the non-evangelical or evangelical eclectic models predict. The separation goes back deep into the second century, too early for the combined readings theory mentioned above and the Lucianic recension theory. The simple history of the NT churches shows that the Egyptian text separated off from the Adriatic-Aegean text, what we might call the proto-Byzantine text. We call it proto-Byzantine not to say we believe its character was any different from the later Byzantine text, but to be historically correct, since the text cannot be called Byzantine before the Byzantine period.

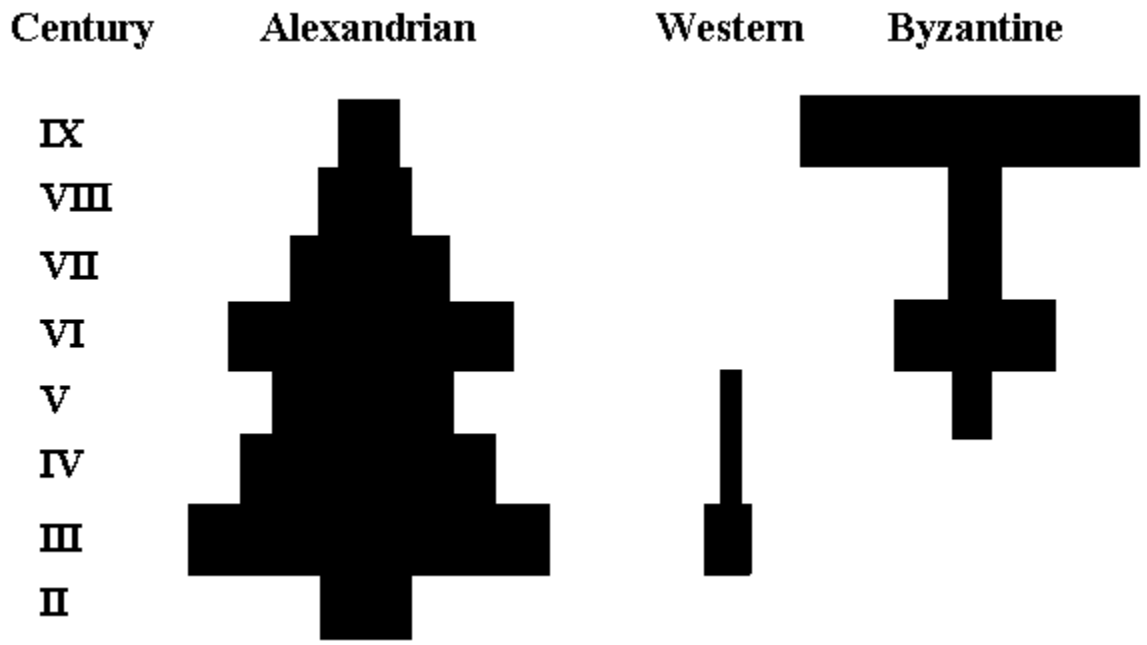
2. The Byzantine text did not become the "majority" text until the ninth century

Whether Daniel Wallace originated this argument or not, he certainly has popularized it. "Among extant Greek manuscripts, what is today the Byzantine

[11] For a thorough explanation and treatment of the conflate reading issue, see Pickering W 2014. *The Identity of the New Testament Text*. Fourth edition, Appendix D, pp. 177-195. The appendix combines the work of William Pierpont, Maurice Robinson, Harry Sturz, and Peter Johnstone with Pickering's editorial comments.

[12] Metzger BM 1994. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. United Bible Societies.

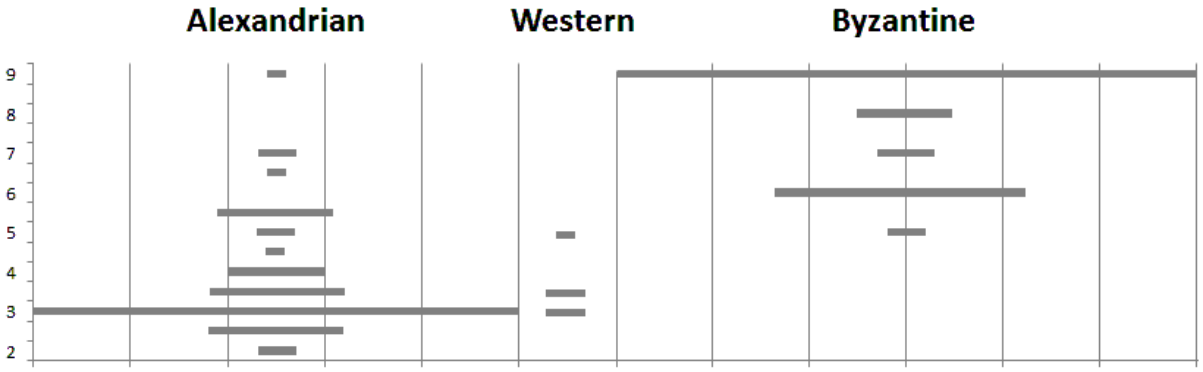
textform did not become a majority until the ninth century."[13] Wallace also includes a chart to demonstrate his findings:



Wallace chart showing extant (presently existing) manuscripts by century[14]

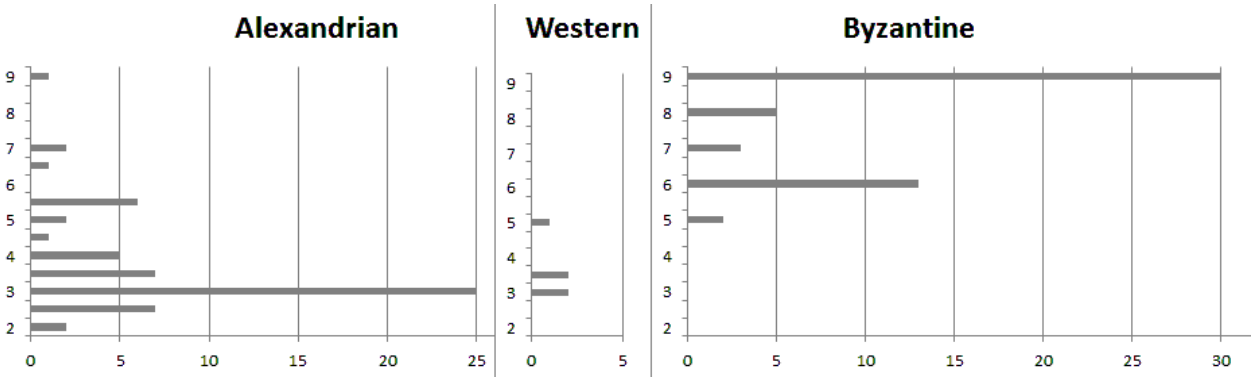
There are several interesting things about this chart. First, there is not a citation as to its source. Second, there are no numbers to indicate how many MSS are involved. However, personal communication with Wallace[15] clarified the sources for the chart as the Metzger-Ehrman *Text of the New Testament,* Metzger's *Textual* Commentary, and Aland and Aland's *Text of the New Testament.*[16] In previous research, I had constructed a similar chart based on the *selective* list of MSS given by one of Wallace's sources, Aland and Aland in their *Text of the New Testament*.[17] If you compare this with Wallace's chart, the similarities are evident:

[13] Wallace DB 2004. "The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?" *Biblia Sacra*, Vol. 148, No. 590, p. 159.
[14] Ibid., p. 160.
[15] Wallace DB 2017. (dwallace@dts.edu) (March 29, 2017) *RE: Articles on the Majority Text.* Personal e-mail to Glenn J. Kerr (gkerr@biblesint.org).
[16] Metzger BM and B Ehrman 2005. *The text of the New Testament: its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Metzger BM 1994. A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. United Bible Societies.
Aland K and Aland B 1995. *The Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.
[17] Aland K and Aland B 1995. *The Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, pp. 159-162



Kerr chart of *selective* manuscripts from Aland and Aland

The same chart with the number of MSS indicated is as follows:



Same chart with actual numbers indicated[18]

But this list of MSS is a *selective* list, the MSS "with a significance for textual criticism,"[19] but not necessarily the totals of the actual ones known to exist. Therefore, the Wallace chart may not tell the whole story. Furthermore, most of the Alexandrian MSS are fragmentary, and the Byzantine MSS are usually unbroken and entire MSS of the whole NT or one of the defined parts such as the gospels or the Pauline epistles. What is needed is a more thorough comparison that actually shows the number of MSS in each group that are known to exist, in other words, as Wallace has said, "in historical investigation one must start with the evidence and then make the hypothesis."[20] If we look at more complete evidence, we may come to a different conclusion than the one Wallace has reached.

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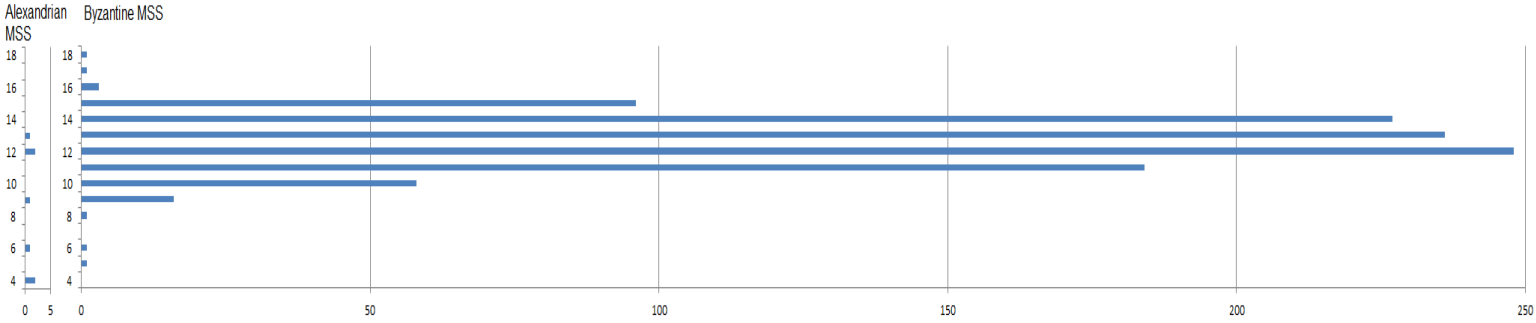
[18] Charts by author, based on Aland K and Aland B 1995. *The Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, pp. 159-162

[19] Aland K and Aland B 1995. *The Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, p.163.

[20] Wallace DB 2004. "The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?" *Biblia Sacra*, Vol. 148, No. 590, p. 160.

Such evidence exists in the Claremont project conducted by Frederik Wisse, a classification of 1385 MSS on the basis of comparisons of three chapters from Luke to form a profile for each manuscript.[21] The advantage of this method is that it was a true "apples to apples" comparison, since all the MSS compared had these three chapters. Here is the resulting chart:



1385 MSS of the Claremont project[22]

Wallace's chart gives the impression that the numbers of Byzantine MSS in the ninth century are about the same as the Alexandrian MSS in the third, and that they just gradually pulled ahead as the Alexandrian MSS faded from view. To the contrary, the numbers of Byzantine MSS in the ninth century and onwards are overwhelmingly large, with the Alexandrian MSS appearing as an insignificant minority.

This chart, however, does seem on further reflection to support the idea that the Byzantine text is a latecomer on the scene. However, it should be noted that extant Byzantine MSS go back to the fifth century, almost as early as the extant Alexandrian MSS. In other words, the Byzantine text is almost as well represented in the early centuries as what is considered the "pure" Alexandrian text. There is another factor to be considered from this chart that I will call "manuscript death."

The manuscript death factor

If we look at other ancient documents besides the New Testament, an observable factor emerges:

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy
Pliny	61-113 A.D.	850 A.D.
Plato	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.
Demosthenes	fourth Cent. B.C.	1100 A.D.
Suetonius	75-160 A.D.	950 A.D.
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	1100 A.D.

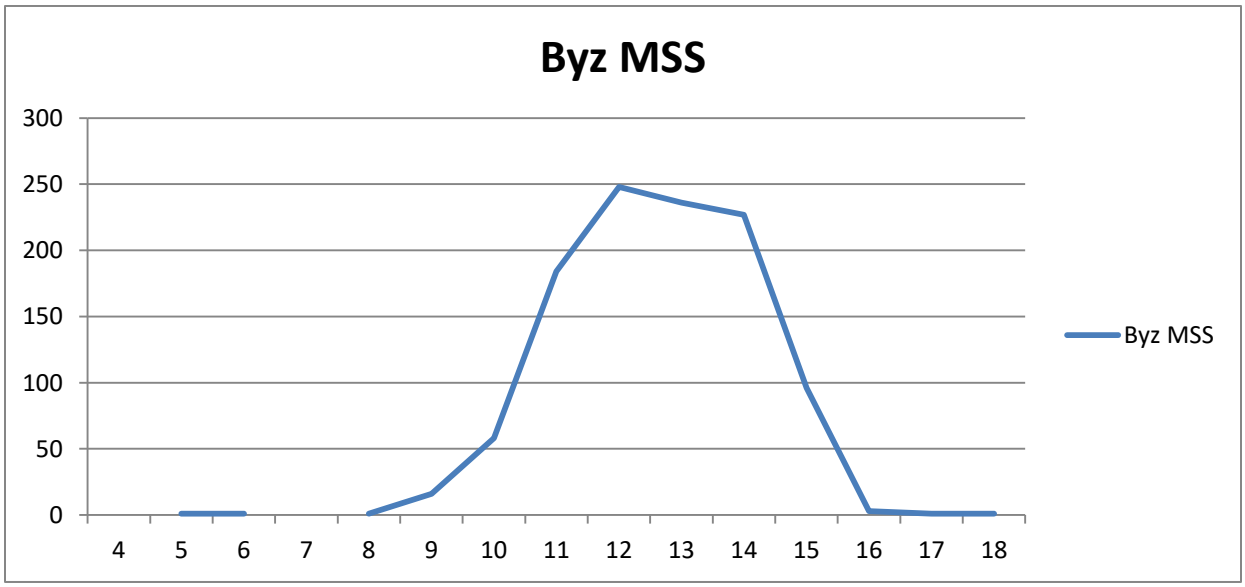
[21] Wisse F 1982. *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence, as Applied to the Continuous Greek Text of the Gospel of Luke.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
[22] Graph by the author, based on Wisse F 1982. *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence, as Applied to the Continuous Greek Text of the Gospel of Luke.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, pp. 52-90.

Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	900 A.D.
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.
Tacitus	circa 100 A.D.	1100 A.D.
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	1100 A.D.
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	1000 A.D.

[23]

None of these ancient writers have extant MSS that are earlier than 850 AD, and most extant copies are younger than that. In the case of the Hebrew Bible, until the discoveries at Qumran, the oldest copies were the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex, both about tenth century. Würthwein says the following: "We may note that Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible from the tenth and eleventh centuries are very rare. The overwhelming majority of manuscripts are from a later period."[24] A few of these ancient writers also have extant copies from Egypt, such as Herodotus, who has nothing before 900 AD except for three fragmentary Oxyrhynchus papyri. Thucydides is tenth century except for some Oxyrhynchus papyri as well. So the existence of MSS older than the ninth century for ancient writers is the exception rather than the rule unless the MSS are found in Egypt. It is obvious that the Byzantine region is not in Egypt.

If we look at the chart of Byzantine MSS alone, and convert it to a line chart, we have the following:

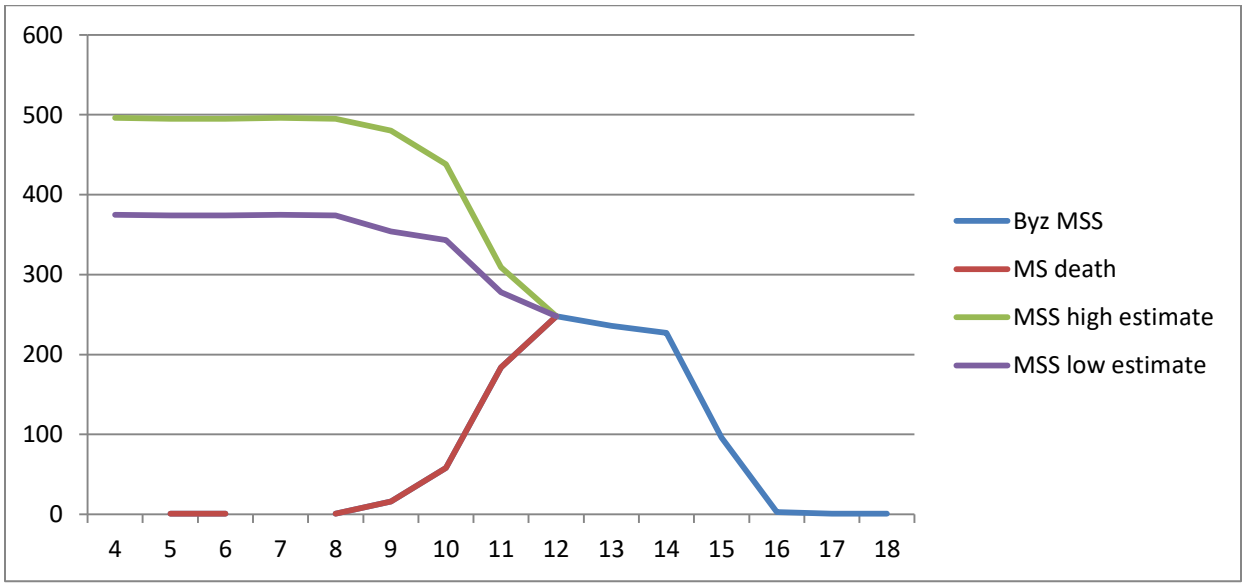


Byzantine MSS from the Claremont Project[25]

[23] http://carm.org/manuscript-evidence (accessed 6/24/2013)
[24] Würthwein E 1995. *The Text of the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, p. 30.
[25] Chart by the author, based on Wisse F 1982. *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence, as Applied to the Continuous Greek Text of the Gospel of Luke.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

From the twelfth century on we have a decline in numbers, which is what we would expect, as the Eastern Church declined and eventually was absorbed by the Muslim advance. Also, the advent of printing in the end of the fifteenth and start of the sixteenth centuries caused a sharp decline in MS production. So we can easily explain historically the line from the twelfth century on. But the line on the other side, before the twelfth century, is problematic based on the history of the Eastern Church, since we know from our maps that there was an abundance of churches in Asia Minor for all these centuries. Did they only copy a few MSS in the fifth and sixth centuries, and then start copying more in the eighth? That is not logical or probable.

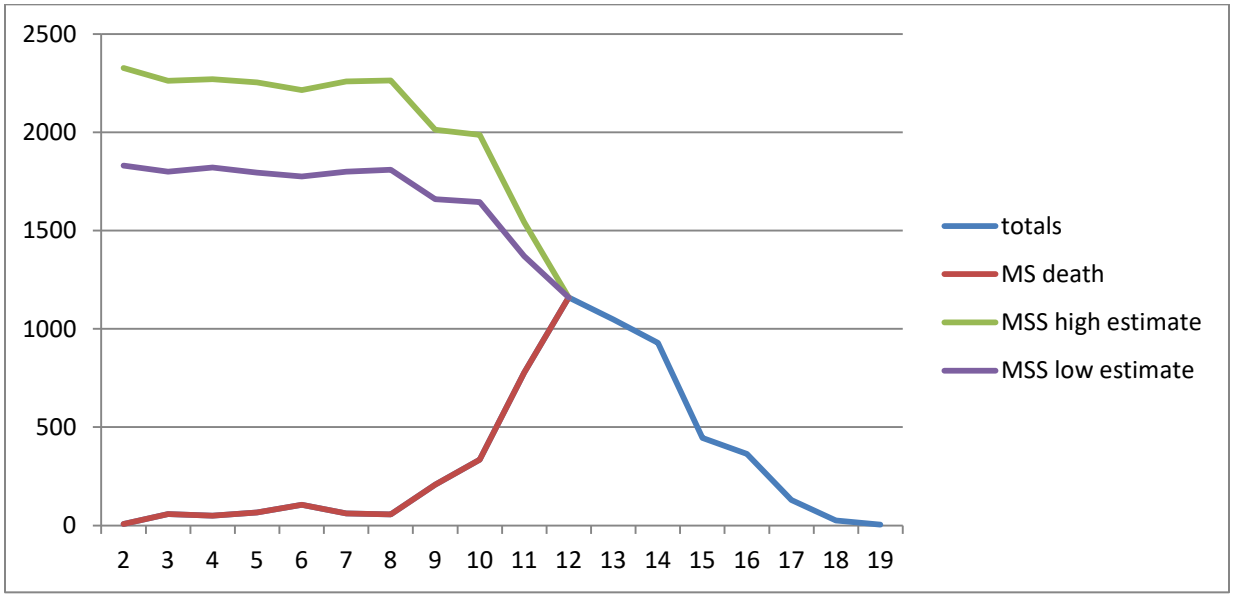
If we look at the line earlier than the twelfth century back to the first century, we see the phenomenon of manuscript death already observed in other ancient documents. Outside of Egypt, manuscripts older than the eighth or ninth century generally don't survive. So the existence of Byzantine MSS in the fifth and sixth centuries must mean that for any to survive, there must have been a much greater number that existed. The basic problem with MS death is finding a way to realistically assess how many may have existed that have now perished. We could reverse the line of manuscript death to predict the probable number of MSS now dead that were produced each century, and since we don't have any specific data to determine the rate of MS death, we will give two estimates, a high one and a low one:



Kerr chart showing theorized rate of MS death[26]

[26] Chart by the author, based on Wisse F 1982. *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence, as Applied to the Continuous Greek Text of the Gospel of Luke.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

To show this is not an isolated phenomenon, I did the same calculations based on the MSS listed in the CNTTS database as supplied in BibleWorks,[27] regardless of classification or family, with the following results:



Kerr chart showing overall MS death for all CNTTS MSS[28]

The decline in numbers before the twelfth century is a logical expectation based on demonstrable death of MSS. Wallace's statement that the Byzantine text was not the majority until the ninth century fails to take into account the obvious factor of manuscript death and the abundance of churches needing Scripture copies, or at the very least lectionaries, therefore his conclusions and his chart apparently do not reflect the entire picture and give a false impression. Thousands of MSS don't just appear out of thin air; they represent thousands of copies of previous MSS that have died, and bequeathed their text to replacements, which would be at least as numerous as their successors.

3. Aren't the oldest MSS closest to the autographs?

This is a logical and expected question, and ideally speaking under normal circumstances the answer should be: "Yes." However, this answer fails to take into account the weather in the Mediterranean area. There are only two areas in this region that have climate suitable to the preservation of ancient leather and papyrus: the Judean desert and Egypt. What this means is that Egyptian MSS start with a statistical advantage over every other type of MS that has nothing to do with

[27] BibleWorks module, The Center for New Testament Textual Studies NT Critical Apparatus, © 2004 by the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. This database is a project of the H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies (CNTTS), a research center under the auspices of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS). Dr. Bill Warren, Director of the CNTTS.
[28] Chart by the author, based on data extracted from BibleWorks CNTTS Module.

the quality or lineage of their text. If the Egyptian churches had used a text that was as farfetched as a conflation of the Syriac and Old Latin retranslated back into Greek, that would be the oldest text and would be found in the Egyptian MSS. The critical text people are allowing weather to choose their NT text for them. A more logical and honest approach would be to seek a way to give a measure of greater weight to the data from other texts not from Egypt to attempt to rectify the unfair advantage that the Egyptian MSS have of being made in the best place for their longevity.

Another factor worthy of note here is that due to further discoveries over the last century and a half, we now can demonstrate that many of the readings that used to be labeled as distinctively Byzantine (and therefore labeled late!) can now be found in some form in some other early ancient source. So the Byzantine MSS may not be the oldest copies, but their readings are equally old in general to the distinctive readings of the Alexandrian family, which is claimed to be the closest to the autographs. The early papyri support the Byzantine text as well as the Alexandrian text in many places, and in most of my personal researches and comparisons of readings I have found that the oldest extant Byzantine text reading is often contemporary with the oldest extant Alexandrian reading, sometimes even older, or in other cases only a century or two later.[29]

Here are a few examples out of the Metzger *Textual Commentary*. Matt. 5:22 has a small but significant variant, as can be seen by the comparison of two Greek text editions, the Robinson-Pierpont (BYZ) with the NKJV, and the UBS (GNT) with the RSV:

BYZ Matthew 5:22 ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ εἰκῇ ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ, Ῥακά, ἔνοχος ἔσται τῷ συνεδρίῳ· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ, Μωρέ, ἔνοχος ἔσται εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός.

NKJ Matthew 5:22 "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother,`Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, `You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

GNT Matthew 5:22 ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ· ῥακά, ἔνοχος ἔσται τῷ συνεδρίῳ· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ· μωρέ, ἔνοχος ἔσται εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός.

RSV Matthew 5:22 But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, `You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire.

[29] Pickering quotes Zuntz and Colwell to confirm this on p. 41 of Pickering W 2014, The Identity of the New Testament Text, Fourth edition, http://www.cspmt.org/pdf/resources/Pickering%20Identity%20IV.pdf, and treats this question extensively in pp. 103-107.

Of this variant, Metzger says the following:

> Although the reading with εἰκῇ is widespread from the second century onwards, it is much more likely that the word was added by copyists in order to soften the rigor of the precept, than omitted as unnecessary.[30]

In fact the evidence is overwhelming in both the Western and Byzantine MSS in favor of the longer text, yet the committee decided their internal argument trumped the mass of evidence. The contrary internal argument is just as strong: the removal of the word would make the prohibition against anger stronger, as the word included seems to imply a loophole that angry people would exploit to justify their anger. So what happened, did the copyist wish to weaken the text or strengthen it, or is this just a recurring error of a scribe due to three words in a row starting with epsilon? We don't know for sure, so why don't we just trust the mass of evidence in favor of including this word? The only modern English translation that follows the Byzantine reading here is the NKJV.

Another passage, Matt. 6:4, has the following textual differences:

BYZ Matthew 6:4 ὅπως ᾖ σου ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ· καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ αὐτὸς ἀποδώσει σοι ἐν τῷ φανερῷ.

NKJ Matthew 6:4 "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

GNT Matthew 6:4 ὅπως ᾖ σου ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ· καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι.

RSV Matthew 6:4 so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The Metzger Commentary says:

> The phrase ἐν τῷ φανερῷ, which is absent from the earliest witnesses of the Alexandrian, Western, and Egyptian types of texts, appears to have been added by copyists in order to make more explicit an antithetical parallelism with the preceding phrase ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ. The point in the whole section, however, is not so much the openness of the Father's reward as its superiority to mere human approval (compare verses 6 and 18).[31]

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[30] Metzger BM 1994. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. United Bible Societies, p. 11.

[31] Metzger BM 1994. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. United Bible Societies, p. 12.

A contrary assumption would be that the phrase ἐν τῷ φανερῳ ("openly") may have been removed because it seemed to imply that God would reward openly those who serve him in secret, something that seems not true in Christian experience many times and certainly seemed not so during times of persecution. Removing the phrase would keep the theme of ἐν τῷ κρυπτω ("in secret") clear without mixing in a seeming contradiction. A further option, suggested by Maurice Robinson, is that if the copyist was trying to maintain the parallel, an option possibly more logical would have been to repeat ἐν τῷ κρυπτω instead of adding a new thought involving "openly."[32] Here's a case where either text can be justified against the other, so the best choice is to eliminate the one that seems the most isolated geographically and accept the one that represents the majority of the churches and their traditions. The CNTTS apparatus in BibleWorks lists specific MSS by century and by category (family of MSS) to show where a particular reading is found and when. Category I is the Alexandrian family, category II is the Egyptian MSS not considered part of the Alexandrian tradition, category III is independent MSS grouped together into a category, category IV is the Western family, and category V is the Byzantine family. The CNTTS apparatus gives the following breakdown for these variants:

αυτος αποδωσει σοι εν τω φανερω (he himself will reward you openly)

	I	II	III	IV	V	No Category
4 c.						a
5 c.						b h
6 c.						f q
7 c.			Wsupp			
8 c.					E07	g1
9 c.			Δ 565		M021 Π Ω	
10 c.			1582cc		S	
11 c.		28	124		2	35
12 c.			1071 346			c
13 c.			579		2372	
14 c.						1005

[32] Personal communication by e-mail, August 15, 2016.

αποδωσει σοι (he will reward you)

	I	II	III	IV	V	No Category
4 c.	ℵ B					k
5 c.				D05		
9 c.		33				
10 c.			1582 f^1			
12 c.			1			

CNTTS charts for Matthew 6:4 variants[33]

One can see that the Byzantine text reading goes back into the fourth century, equal to the critical text reading, and is found in every century through to the fourteenth, whereas the critical text reading is found in just a few MSS in the fourth, fifth, ninth, tenth, and twelfth.

Another example is 1 Corinthians 14:38:

BYZ 1 Corinthians 14:38 Εἰ δέ τις ἀγνοεῖ, ἀγνοείτω.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 14:38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

GNT 1 Corinthians 14:38 εἰ δέ τις ἀγνοεῖ, ἀγνοεῖται.

CSB 1 Corinthians 14:38 But if anyone ignores this, he will be ignored.

Here is the *TC* explanation for this choice:

> Although the external evidence may at first sight seem to favor ἀγνοείτω (𝔓46 B K Ψ 81 614 syrp, h arm eth *al*), several important representatives of the Alexandrian, the Western, and the Palestinian texts unite to support the indicative (ℵ* A*vid Dgr* 33 1739 itd syrpal copsa, bo, fay Origengr). The alteration between active and passive forms of the same verb accords with Paul's usage in 8.2-3, whereas the use of the imperative form may have been suggested by Re 22.11. In any case, the imperative gives a less forceful meaning than

[33] Charts taken from BibleWorks module, The Center for New Testament Textual Studies NT Critical Apparatus, © 2004 by the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. This database is a project of the H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies (CNTTS), a research center under the auspices of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS). Dr. Bill Warren, Director of the CNTTS.

ἀγνοεῖται. The reading of D^{gr*} (ἀγνοεῖτε) is by itacism for ἀγνοεῖται (ε and αι were pronounced alike).[34]

This is a case where the textual evidence should have been enough, but somehow the committee wanted to justify a very minority reading that doesn't even have Alexandrian authority for the most part. Metzger's statement, "In any case, the imperative gives a less forceful meaning than ἀγνοεῖται," is hard to follow. It appears he is saying that we should choose the Alexandrian reading because the imperative form in the Byzantine text is less forceful, and the scribes would have chosen the more forceful reading. The fact that the "imperative gives a less forceful meaning," if it is indeed a fact (typically an imperative is *stronger* than an indicative), has nothing to do with choosing a reading, since none of the canons of textual criticism say to choose a reading on the basis of its perceived force or lack of it. Besides, the ironic nature of the Byzantine text is lost with the Alexandrian variant, which is possibly why some scribe who did not catch the irony changed to another form. A further detail is that the Byzantine text reading matches the imperative in the grammatical structure of the preceding verse.[35] Here are the CNTTS charts for the different variants:

αγνοειτω (let him be ignorant)

	I	II	III	IV	V	No Category
3 c.	𝔓$_{46}$					
4 c.	ℵ$_{c}$ B					
5 c.	A					
7 c.		D06$_{c}$				
9 c.			Ψ		049	1900
10 c.			1874			1720
11 c.			1243 1735 1962		945	1244 131 35 424
12 c.			1573 1505		1 1448 927	1245 1315 1646
13 c.			1563 218 2400			
14 c.			1877		209	1249 489 76
15 c.			2495 69			1628 1876
16 c.						1768

[34] Metzger BM 1994. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. United Bible Societies, p. 500.

[35] Personal communication from Maurice Robinson by e-mail, August 15, 2016.

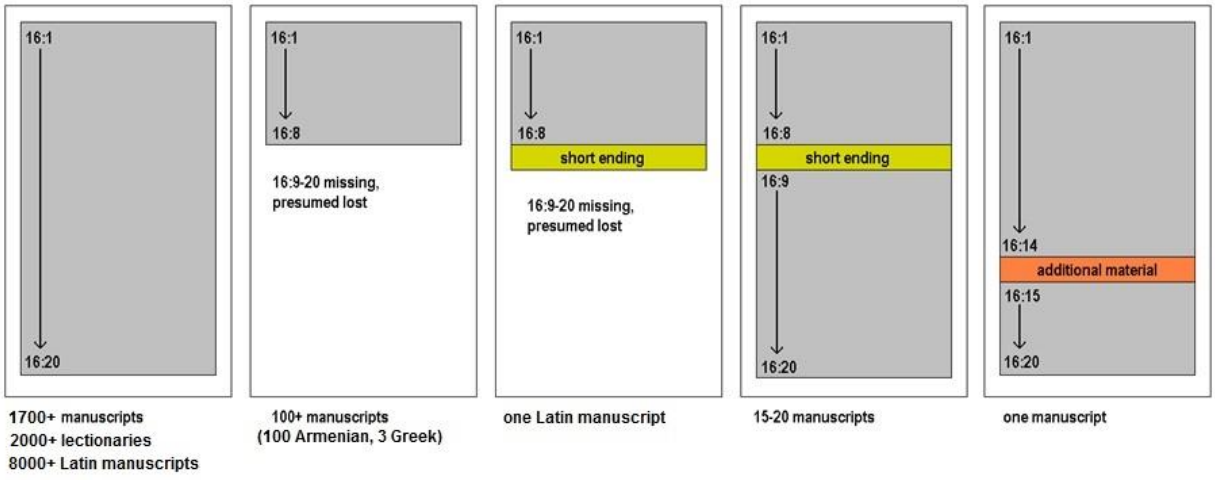
αγνοειται (he will be ignored)

	I	II	III	IV	V	No Category
4 c.	ℵ					
9 c.	33					
10 c.	1739					
11 c.						424cc

CNTTS charts for 1 Corinthians 14:38

Here is a case where the textual evidence far outweighs the alternative and the Byzantine reading goes back even earlier than the Alexandrian, yet the committee chose the decidedly minority reading.

Numerous other examples exist of the subjective nature of the critical text judgments, undermining the reliability of the critical text, and showing apparent prejudice against the Byzantine textform. One final example is the last twelve verses of Mark's gospel. Below is a graph that represents the various endings for Mark's gospel:



[36]

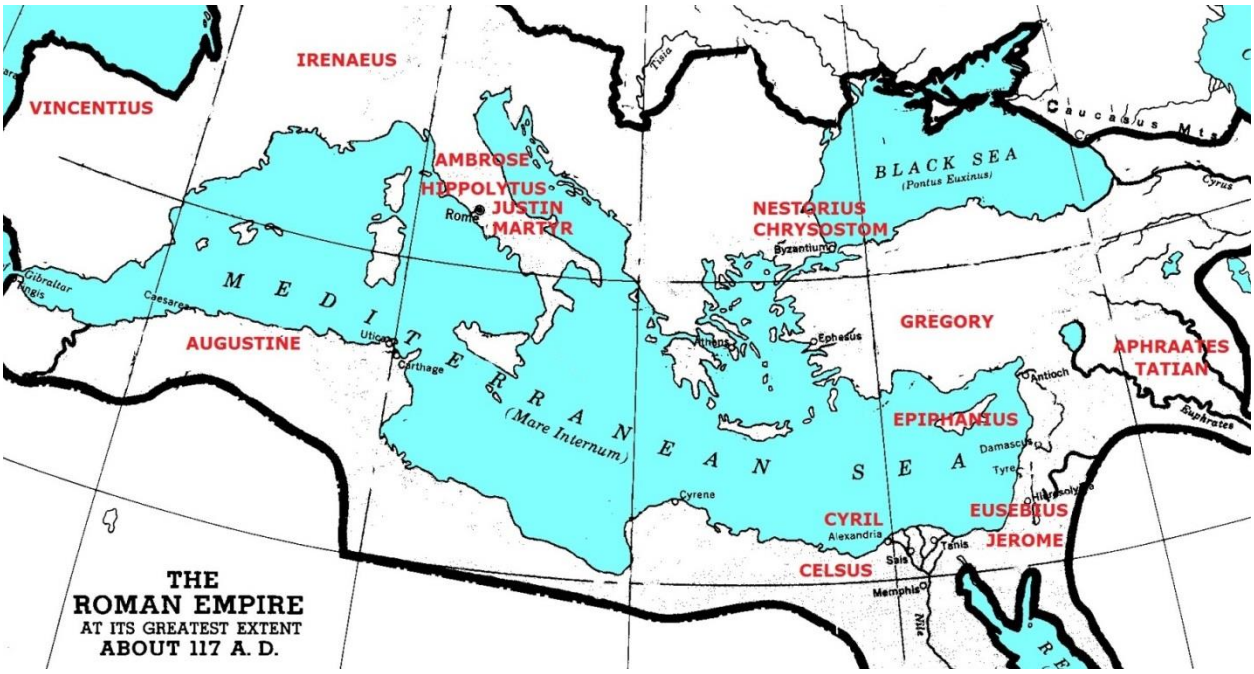
William R. Farmer in his book *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark*[37] on pp. 31-35 lists numerous sources that give evidence for the existence of these verses in many different places early in the Christian era. Below is a summary of those pages:

- Tatian's *Diatessaron* (2nd century) includes the verses
- The earliest versions, Old Latin, Syriac, Coptic, contain the verses

[36] Chart by the author.
[37] Farmer WF 1974. *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark.* Cambridge University Press.

- Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) uses wording from Mark 16:20
- Celsus (c. 177-80 AD) apparently knew the ending
- Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* (c. 180 AD) quotes Mark 16:19
- Third-century passage attributed to Hippolytus interprets Mark 16:18
- Vincentius in 256 AD at a church council declared Mark 16:15-18 authoritative
- Porphyry (c. 270 AD) based an argument on Mark 16:18
- *Acta Pilati* contains Mark 16:15-18 (380 AD or later)
- Eusebius (c. 263 – 339 AD) knew of copies of Mark with 16:9-20
- Apraates, Syrian church father, quotes Mark 16:16-18 in 337 AD
- Ambrose of Milan (c. 338-397 AD) quotes the ending frequently
- Epiphanius refers to Mark 16:19 in *Panarion* (c. 375 AD)
- Chrysostom (c. 347-407) refers to Mark 16:9
- *Apostolic Constitutions* in Syria c. 380 AD refer to Mark 16:15, 17-18
- Jerome included the verses in the Vulgate (382 AD or later)
- Augustine (354-430 AD) discusses the verses as the work of Mark
- Nestorius and Cyril in 429 and 430 AD debate, both citing Mark 16:20 as genuine
- Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-394 AD) cites Mark 16:19 in an Easter sermon
- All the Byzantine MSS except one that is a commentary, not a continuous-text MS, include it
- The Greek, Syrian Melchite, Jacobite Copt, Monophysite, and Roman church lectionaries include Mark 16:9-20 as a lectionary reading, for Easter and Ascension Day, two great festivals of the early churches
- In all, about 12,000 manuscripts of various degrees of importance include the verses

Below is a map of the ancient NT world with "sightings" of these verses noted, the places where the fathers who quoted these verses were located:



Map of church fathers who quoted parts of or commented on Mark 16:9-20[38]

We have heard it said that the textual variants in all the MSS do not affect any doctrine, but the exclusion of twelve verses that have such widespread support cannot be regarded as doctrinally neutral. Furthermore, the doctrine of preservation is significantly easier to explain from the Byzantine text viewpoint than from the critical text viewpoint. Daniel Wallace goes so far to say: "I don't hold to the doctrine of preservation."[39] So the textual variants in fact do affect doctrine, dramatically. It is also of interest to note that one of the three Greek MSS that omit these verses, Sinaiticus, has been tampered with, and the pages that omit the ending of Mark are not an original part of the MS. A further detail is that the Armenian scholars, whose MSS form the bulk of the evidence against these verses, were trained in Alexandria: ". . . there was a close relationship between Alexandrian scholarship and the Armenian church, not only indirectly through Origen's continuing influence, but directly through Armenian scholars who in the early fifth century were specifically sent to Alexandria to study in order that they might bring back with them Alexandrian methods that could guide the Armenian authorities and further the vital task of producing a trustworthy version of the scriptures in the language of the Armenian people."[40]

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[38] Map adapted by the author from Hammond Historical Atlas. Maplewood, NJ: Hammond Incorporated, p.H-5.
[39] Wallace DB 2008. "Mark 16:8 as the Conclusion to the Second Gospel." In *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: Four Views*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, p. 7.
[40] Farmer WF 1974. *The Last Twelve Verse of Mark.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 38-39.

The other argument that is often brought up is that this section uses words and phrases that are not Marcan, that is, that don't appear elsewhere in his writings. The fact is, *every* chapter in Mark uses words and phrases that do not appear elsewhere in his gospel, as has been pointed out by Robinson, Burgon and Broadus in other passages that are unquestionably Marcan. Furthermore, James Snapp, Jr., in his book on the authenticity of the section points out that the last twelve verses also contain distinctively Marcan elements of writing.[41]

4. What about the Lucianic recension; doesn't it make the Byzantine text late?

According to Westcott and Hort, who first advanced this argument, Lucian, a church father who lived in Antioch (AD 240-312), did a revision (recension) of the New Testament to produce what then became the Byzantine text. This is a doubtful argument, since there is virtually no historical proof that Lucian ever made such a recension. But let us assume for the sake of argument that Lucian did make such a recension. The real question, however, is not whether he did, but what texts would he have used if he had made a recension? Would he have gone down to Egypt to get texts to use for his editing, and if he had, how would they have compared to the proto-Byzantine texts he had all around him? If he was swimming in a sea of homogeneous MSS in the many churches of Asia Minor, why would he have gone to the puddle of Alexandria for anything?

When Jacob ben Chayyim made a recension to produce the Second Bomberg edition of the rabbinic Bible in 1525, he used medieval MSS from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. When the Aleppo and Leningrad codices were discovered and compared to the ben Chayyim text, the differences were minuscule. Paul Kahle in his Biblia Hebraica edition of 1937 noted 268 differences between them in the footnotes. Of those 268, only twenty-nine are a material textual difference.[42] Most of them are spelling or pointing differences. My point is the quality of the recension depends on the quality of the MSS used for it. Jacob ben Chayyim used MSS of high and uniform quality and produced a recension that rivals the finest OT MSS we have.

If Lucian were working from proto-Byzantine texts of similar quality to the later ones, and if he did a good job, he would only have produced a high-quality recension. So a recension by Lucian could have been an exemplary work of epic proportions that helped weed out textual problems and bring the recension closer to the autographs than before. So if there were a recension, it doesn't prove a thing for good or for bad, since we don't know what the text was like before and after, besides the fact that we don't know whether the recension even happened. A Lucianic

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[41] Snapp J 2015. *Authentic: The Case for Mark 16:9-20,* pp. 171ff.

[42] Kerr GJ 2005. "A Comparison of the Modern Hebrew text of Biblia Hebraica with the Second Bomberg edition of 1524-25." Unpublished paper by the author.

recension is simply a worthless argument for either side, to argue for it or against it.

5. What about the fact that the Byzantine text is longer and more polished than the Alexandrian text?

So what about it? It is a generally accepted fact by both sides of the debate that the above statement is essentially true. But what does it prove? Do we know that unpolished and shorter means "original" and that polished and longer means "not original?" Suppose unpolished and shorter means "sloppy copying"? My own experience with copying and copyists in my present work in Bible translation is that people generally tend to leave out things in copying rather than add things. Furthermore, Farmer has several pages of comments concerning the scribal practices of Alexandria, from which we will excerpt a few comments:

> The text-critical methods developed in Alexandria in the second century before Christ were later adopted by Alexandrian Christians.[43]
>
> But Alexandrian scholars were also guided by other principles in making their omissions. . . . This principle called for the omission of any passage which was regarded as offensive to or unworthy of the gods. In this case it mattered not whether the passage concerned was or was not in the most ancient copies. This is an important point, as we shall soon see. In other words, in addition to the respect for the authority of the oldest manuscripts there was a contemporary theological norm which operated.[44]
>
> This is an important consideration since it establishes the point that the "philological editorial know-how of Alexandrians", to use the phrase of Colwell (see p. 53), led to the rejection of passages comparable to Mk. 16: 9-20, even when there seems to have been no manuscript evidence to support such rejection.[45]

The quotation from Colwell noted in the last quotation is as follows:

> The Beta texttype [which we have referred to as B ℵ] is a "made" text probably Alexandrian in origin, produced in part by the selection of relatively "good old MSS" but more importantly by the philological editorial know-how of Alexandrians.[46]

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[43] Farmer WF 1974. *The Last Twelve Verse of Mark.* Cambridge University Press, p. 14.
[44] Farmer WF 1974. *The Last Twelve Verse of Mark.* Cambridge University Press, p. 15.
[45] Ibid., p. 16.
[46] 'The origin of texttypes of New Testament manuscripts', Early Christian Origins: Studies in Honor of Harold R. Willoughby, ed. Allen Paul Wikgren (Chicago, 1961), p. 137, as cited in Farmer.

So if the Alexandrian Christian scribes learned their scribal practices from the common approaches of the scribal traditions of Alexandria, and those common approaches included omission as a common practice, their copies would be shorter than the Byzantine texts, not the other way around. Also, we should not automatically assume that a longer, polished text is not original.

6. Shouldn't MSS be weighed rather than counted?

The simple answer to the above question is that we should do both. What we should not do is assume what is best and what is not without investigation. But let us begin by weighing the relative merits of the MS groups, as has been done by Pickering:

> A typical "Alexandrian" MS will have over a dozen variants per page of printed Greek text. A typical "Byzantine" MS will have 3-5 variants per page. MSS 1761 and 1876 have about one per page, and one of the better f^{35} MSS will go for pages without a variant.[47]

I would further point out that in my experience there is a qualitative difference between the types of variants found in the Alexandrian MSS and in the Byzantine MSS. The Alexandrian MSS have additions of phrases, omissions, changes of wording, portions skipped, whereas the Byzantine MSS have many of the same kinds of errors, these are less numerous and they are qualitatively much better.

Let us list some characteristics of the Egyptian MSS:

- They are from the part of the NT world that was geographically remote from the center of the Christian churches
- Alexandrian secular scribal practices of unjustified omissions probably had an effect on the Christian copyists
- Across the board there are more disagreements among the Egyptian MSS than there are agreements; there is hardly a unified Alexandrian text except in the UBS Greek NT and in the Nestle-Aland Greek NT
- The Alexandrian center of Christianity did not really become strong until the third or fourth century
- Many of the early papyri are from the second century, the period regarded by most as the time of greatest attack on the text of the NT
- Egyptian MSS in general exhibit some of the worst examples we have of ancient copyist skills

I recognize the following statement is somewhat of an oversimplification, but we could say the Byzantine MSS have almost everything going for them except their age, and the Alexandrian MSS have very little going for them except their age. I might point out that when we get down to examining the Byzantine family as a

[47] Pickering W 2014. *The Identity of the New Testament Text.* Fourth edition, www.cspmt.org, p.128.

whole, while there is great overall consistency, the entire process is still weighing rather than counting all the way through to the end.

When I was younger I repaired stringed instruments, and worked in a music store (I put myself and my family through grad school that way). I would from time to time have customers come in the door carrying a very old violin case, open it before me, and inform me that they had found a "genuine Stradivarius violin" in their attic. Sure enough, there would be a label inside the instrument that said *Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis Faciebat Anno* _____ on it in faded print. But even with my limited experience I could tell at a glance that the instrument before me was not a genuine Strad. I would have to inform the customer that many instruments have been produced with false labels in them (one customer suggested maybe it was a "genuine" copy!) I say this to point out that there is old junk as well as old treasures. The violin restorers I trained under sought out the finest woods they could find when doing their restoration work on old genuine instruments, ones that had passed the tests of authenticity. I see many textual critics failing to follow their example. The critics have great skills, but they are working with inferior materials, while the vast number of newly discovered Byzantine MSS lie languishing for lack of interest, shelved by an inadequate theory that has consigned them to second-class status, when in fact they are the finest examples of the NT copyist work that we have.

Addressing the Evangelical Broad Eclectic View

As we look back at the common objections that have just been addressed, one thing may stand out, which is that many of the arguments seem to be pitting the Alexandrian text against the Byzantine text. The evangelical broad eclectic view seeks to avoid that polarity, and would put all families on a more or less equal basis, therefore considering all the evidence of all the MSS rather than just two options. If no family is given priority, the results ought to be more even-handed, in the thinking of those who hold this position.

This argumentation makes good sense, and in fact at one time in my studies of textual criticism I would have identified myself as holding to such a position. I should also tell you that this position helped reinforce my switch to the transmissional model. I don't know about others, but I think the adoption of that approach will ultimately end up with almost the same result as the transmissional model. This is true for several reasons:

1. The more you compare readings and study them, the more you find it is hard to justify the minority readings, though I have found some places where it does seem to work, and where the Byzantine standard text does seem to be off. But they are few and far between, and the more MSS you compare, the more attractive the Byzantine reading becomes.
2. The eclectic approach is so subjective, and has been used so widely and differently by people to make choices between readings, that it is hard if

possible at all to establish any fixed approach. Internal evidence[48] is such a slippery matter if not properly applied.

3. My work in reading and evaluating the Metzger Textual Commentary leaves me over and over with the feeling that the decisions were already made in ideology, and that the arguments there are almost "after the fact" rather than decisive.
4. Most of what I have read about why ancient writers said they chose the readings they did is so different from modern approaches, so theologically and even capriciously based, that I doubt we even have a clue for most of the reasons behind the ancient choices and creations of differences of readings.
5. External evidence[49] is so easy to ignore or even forget about in the eclectic approach, whereas it is an actual physical factor that must be taken into account. There has to be a way for the non-scribal-error readings to actually move around and be passed on, and not be, as one eclectic-text person put it (whose citation I have not been able to remember or find), "like flies buzzing around the Mediterranean and landing on manuscripts haphazardly here and there."

All these reasons result in the stability and the consistency of the Byzantine text becoming more and more like a strong magnet, a welcome mat laid out to invite one in and feel the warmth of a satisfying conclusion. That's the way it worked for me in a large part. Once you get away from the "lure of Egypt," the "candlesticks of the churches" in Asia seem to shine the more brightly!

Conclusion: "Out of Egypt have I called my son."[50]

I was born a year after the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, and grew up with them, not knowing much about them until my college and grad school years. These MSS were ten centuries older than the oldest copies we knew of before them. The find was great and valuable, but it was evident from careful study that these MSS did not have the same quality as the later Masoretic texts. I have personally seen such examples in such documents as the Psalms scroll, where letters are inserted, and even the name of Jehovah was inserted in one place by mistake, something unheard of in Masoretic MSS. While we have learned much about the text from these scrolls, and some changes have been made in our critical editions, the Dead Sea Scrolls did not supplant the Masoretic text. That was a wise decision. We have trusted a stream of faithfulness, a tradition to be maintained, rather than newly-discovered fragments.

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[48] Internal evidence is the evidence that can be derived from the text itself, without looking at other MSS or tracing geography or family groupings.

[49] External evidence is the evidence that can be derived from locations of MSS, their time frame in history, and their similarity or difference from other MSS.

[50] I fully recognize this quote is not used contextually. The wording struck me, however, as surprisingly apt for this occasion and writing.

In view of the present state of the critical text, the *Textus Receptus* and other more recent excellent and well-researched editions of the Byzantine textform such as Hodges-Farstad, Robinson-Pierpont, and Pickering, all offer better alternatives to the modern critical text (yes, even the *Textus Receptus*, which differs less than 1% from the Byzantine text as found in other modern editions).[51] But we have to be willing to leave Egypt, as it were.

The critical text as found in Nestle-Aland and Metzger/UBS is a theoretical text; it doesn't actually exist in history.[52] In a sense you can say it is the latest of texts, since it did not appear in that form until the late 1800s. By contrast, the Byzantine text as a whole represents a clearly identifiable textform that is recognized by virtually all authorities. Robinson has pointed out with numerous examples whole verses where the critical text, due to its particular selection of variants, has a sequence of readings that taken as a whole never appears in any extant MS.[53] How could those verses be original? Further, how could we consign twelve apparently genuine verses of the Bible to oblivion on the basis of two Greek MSS, one of which has pages at that point that come from another hand, and the other with an unexplained gap at the same point? How could we reconstruct the NT text on the basis of a history that isn't even logical or plausible, and ignore the plain history before us?

Wallace in his article treats the theological issues related to the Byzantine text-Alexandrian text debate at some length, and concludes that section with the following:

> In reality, to argue for the purity of the Byzantine stream, as opposed to the pollution introduced by the Alexandrian manuscripts, is to blow out of proportion what the differences between these two texts really are—both in quantity and quality. For over 250 years, New Testament scholars have argued that no textual variant affects any doctrine. Carson has gone so far as to state that "nothing we believe to be doctrinally true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants. This is true for any textual tradition."[54]

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[51] Bancroft GD 2017. (sban@sbcglobal.net) (March 18, 2017) *Fwd: RP VS f35 RP VS TR.* Personal e-mail to Glenn J. Kerr via Paul Anderson (gkerr@biblesint.org).

[52] Colwell basically admits that an archetype of the Alexandrian text, which he calls the Beta Text-type, cannot be defined: "These results show convincingly that any attempt to reconstruct an archetype of the Beta Text-type on a quantitative basis is doomed to failure. The text thus reconstructed is not reconstructed but constructed; it is an artificial entity that never existed" (Colwell 1969. *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, p. 19).

[53] Robinson MA 2001, "New Testament Textual Criticism: The Case for Byzantine Priority," *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism,* p. 3.

[54] Wallace DB 2004. "The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?" Biblia Sacra, Vol. 148, No. 590, p 157.

We have already pointed out that the choice of which text to defend as preserved and in what manner is in fact a serious doctrinal issue, critically affected by the evidence chosen to support it. But giving the benefit of the doubt, if this statement that no doctrine were affected is true, and there is not a doctrinal issue, then why choose a text that introduces "pollution" and neglect the text that exhibits "purity," whether that was the intended meaning of Wallace or not? Why defend a text with such lousy credentials and such lack of historical basis and decry a text that has stood the test of time for centuries, was used to evangelize the world, and is valued by a significant segment of the Christian church worldwide? If the differences are not that great, then why not allow the rest of us the text that we want and respect, and don't thrust upon us a text that cannot even be found in history? I would rather have a stream of faithfulness and a tradition to be maintained, than the pieced-together text of forgotten scraps from a small, remote area. Furthermore, I believe a strong case can be made that we are called to accept a transmissional model rather than an eclectic one. The transmissional model is described in 2 Tim. 2:2 and in the numerous passages we cited at the start of this paper, which then makes it a doctrinal and theological issue. The eclectic model is not improved by "stamping our dove or our fish on it"[55] and saying it is evangelical.

I would like to point out that this argument that variants do not affect doctrine simply results in maintaining the status quo. But more than that, which came first, the doctrine or the text? If we defend the doctrine but not the text, we are subtly undermining the very thing that brought about the doctrine in the first place, and weakening the concept of inspiration as well as that of preservation. If we are committed to the doctrine, doesn't that make us committed to the text? And furthermore, isn't the concept of a "stream of faithfulness" a doctrine in its own right that can only be maintained by the transmissional model?

I was talking with a translation consultant from another Bible society not long ago about a Bible translation they had done in the past for a large people group in another part of the world. They were preparing to do a revision of that translation, and I knew that there was a significant number of nationals and missionaries in the people group that not only preferred the received text, but were seeking to have a translation made that was based on the *TR*. I suggested to him that it might be a good idea to put out an edition of the revision based on the *TR*. I pointed out that their society had done different editions for Catholics of the same translation with deuterocanonicals and another edition for Protestants without, and that they had done translations for Orthodox churches based on the received text. Why wouldn't they consider doing this for the revision they were undertaking? His answer was "no" because as he put it, the people wanting the *TR* translation were at the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum from the Orthodox churches. So if you are a historic, ancient Orthodox church, you can have a translation based on the received

[55] This is a semi-quote from a message I heard years ago by Keith Green.

text, but if you are a conservative, evangelical Protestant church, you can't! I fail to see the logic in that, and suggest that both the Orthodox and the conservative, evangelical Protestant are defending the same important thing, the treasury of texts that represents the best example of the legacy of the apostles and prophets of New Testament times.

In order to maintain the critical text theory, those holding it, if they are evangelicals, have a burden of proof. The soundness of their position depends on their ability to show the following:

- The autographic text was at some point in time actually in Egypt
- Based on the Alexandrian text being original, the Adriatic-Aegean area lost all record of such after the fourth century, and a pure form of the text had to be recovered from Egypt
- The modern critical Greek text is not based on error-laden, corrupted MSS that disagree as much as they agree

In contrast, the Byzantine textform advocates can easily prove the following:

- The autographic text was not only in the Adriatic-Aegean area, but it originated there, both in its writing and destination
- Based on the history of the churches of the Adriatic-Aegean area, it would have been virtually impossible to "lose" the text or perpetuate a different form of the text, and no evidence exists for anything but minor variant streams within the Byzantine family
- The modern, critical editions of the Byzantine textform are based on a general consensus of a large amount of significantly consistent MSS that are characterized by extreme care in copying and minimal variants and errors

We can confidently say that the Byzantine text represents a **stream of faithfulness** and a **tradition to be maintained**.

One final word. When I finally saw the true state of the textual tradition that produced the Byzantine text, I realized that I no longer had to apologize for the state of the NT text. I found that the Byzantine Christian scribes did just as good a job as their Karaite Jewish counterparts. There is undoubtedly value in the Egyptian MSS that we have found, and it is in God's providence they were preserved. But their value is not in becoming the new form of the text. That honor remains for the Byzantine text, the text that best reflects the contemporary and eye-witness records of God's word to men, found in the mouths of many manuscript witnesses, carefully and precisely copied, preserving through a divine-human cooperative the faith "once and for all delivered to the saints."

Appendix: Origins and Destinations of New Testament Books

The probable geographical origin of all the NT books

26	Jude	Asia Minor
6	Romans	Corinth
13	1 Thessalonians	Corinth
14	2 Thessalonians	Corinth
17	Titus	Corinth
4	John	Ephesus
7	1 Corinthians	Ephesus
8	2 Corinthians	Ephesus
23	1 John	Ephesus
24	2 John	Ephesus
25	3 John	Ephesus
27	Revelation	Ephesus
9	Galatians	Ephesus, Syrian Antioch, Corinth, Macedonia
20	James	Jerusalem
15	1 Timothy	Macedonia
1	Matthew	Palestine, Syrian Antioch
2	Mark	Rome
10	Ephesians	Rome
11	Philippians	Rome
12	Colossians	Rome
16	2 Timothy	Rome
18	Philemon	Rome
21	1 Peter	Rome
22	2 Peter	Rome
3	Luke	Rome, Syrian Antioch, Achaia in Greece
5	Acts	Rome, Syrian Antioch, Ephesus
19	Hebrews	Rome?

The probable geographical target of all the NT books

24	2 John	elect lady
1	Matthew	Jews
23	1 John	Asia Minor
27	Revelation	Asia Minor
26	Jude	Asia Minor?
12	Colossians	Colosse
19	Hebrews	converted Jews
7	1 Corinthians	Corinth
8	2 Corinthians	Corinth
17	Titus	Titus on Crete
4	John	Ephesus
10	Ephesians	Ephesus
25	3 John	Gaius
9	Galatians	North or south Galatia
21	1 Peter	northern Asia Minor
22	2 Peter	northern Asia Minor
18	Philemon	Philemon at Colosse
11	Philippians	Philippi
2	Mark	Rome
6	Romans	Rome
20	James	scattered Jews after Jerusalem persecution
3	Luke	Theophilus, Gentiles
5	Acts	Theophilus, Gentiles
13	1 Thessalonians	Thessalonika
14	2 Thessalonians	Thessalonika
15	1 Timothy	Timothy at Ephesus
16	2 Timothy	Timothy at Ephesus

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