This book is dedicated to the memory of

Angelo F. Celano
The Majority Text of the Greek New Testament

An apology of the text of the New Testament found in the vast majority of surviving Greek manuscripts

Giuseppe Guarino
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The Old Testament was entrusted to the Jewish nation. Abundant evidence shows that they did an excellent job. Paul himself witnessed to that: “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of the circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.” (Romans 3:1-2).

The witness of the Jewish historian Josephus is also worth notice. He writes: “... and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly die

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has proved the case for the faithfulness of the Jewish nation preserving the Old Testament text.

Among the Qumran manuscripts was the so-called Great Isaiah Scroll, which dates 100 BC (in the picture). When compared to the Masoretic text, it showed that: “Despite of the fact that the Isaiah scroll was about a thousand years older than the Masoretic version of Isaiah, the two were nearly identical … The results obtained from comparative studies of this kind have been repeated for many other scriptural books represented at Qumran. The large majority of the new scrolls do belong to the same textual tradition as the Masoretic text. They are, however, centuries older and thus demonstrate in a forceful way how carefully Jewish scribes transmitted that text across the years.” James C. Vanderkam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, page 126.

But what happened with the New Testament?

By the time the temple and the city of Jerusalem was destroyed (70 AD) the Jews who believed in Christ were a minority in the Church
compared to the large number of Gentiles who became Christians. All the apostles died in the first century and the dawn of the second century saw Christianity as a definite, separate entity from the Jewish nation, which, through its leaders, reiterated the rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah.

“knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will also be diligent to cause you to always have memory of these things after my departure. For not having followed fables having been cunningly devised, but becoming eyewitnesses of the majesty of Jesus Christ, we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord.” (2 Peter 1:14-16)

The apostles themselves must have instructed as to how the Gentile Church should preserve the New Testament Scriptures. This must have given rise to what Pickering calls “the beginnings of a ‘majority text’.” Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV*, p. 93.

Multiple, faithful copies, of Paul’s epistles, of the Gospels, and other New Testament books must have been made by the recipients of the writings themselves. Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica: “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren” (1
Thessalonians 5:5). He also wrote: “Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.” (Colossians 4:16). These statements and other similar found in the New Testament imply that an active work of multiplying and spreading of trustworthy copies took place at an early age in the Gentile Church too.

But, as mentioned even in the New Testament, heretics were many from the beginning. The Church of the first centuries was even more attacked by heretics than the Church of the centuries to follow.

Since faithful copies could not be used to this purpose, some heretics began to try to corrupt the text of the Greek Scriptures in order to be able to show copies that proved the case for their beliefs. Others would even dare create gospel accounts or other writings falsely attributing them to the apostles Peter, Thomas, James and even Judas.

Notwithstanding these vile attempts, the witness of the surviving Greek New Testament manuscripts shows evidence of the faithful hands of honest servants of God who produced faithful copies of the apostolic Scriptures down to the times of the invention of print. If evidence of the preservation of the Holy Scriptures is not seen in
the wonderful agreement found in 95 percent of the existing manuscript evidence, where else can we hope to find it?

On the other hand, we can’t fail to see the traces of the heretics attempts to corrupt the Scripture in the small number of manuscripts, which disagree even among themselves, the confusing text produced in Egypt, survived in some early manuscripts and acclaimed today as the most reliable witness to the Greek New Testament.

The Majority text of the Greek New Testament is there for all to see how God preserved the apostolic Scriptures through the Gentile believers as well as He preserved the Old Testament through the Jews.

The goal of this book is not controversy. But I believe the Bible believing Christian needs to know that not only God inspired His Word, He also preserved it and such thing is quite evident especially in the Majority Text.

I hope the reader, whatever his opinions about this subject may be, will understand my work as an effort in the direction of communicating confidence in the supernatural way God gave His Word to the man of the twenty-first century.

Please bear with me. Not being a native speaker I know my English is far from perfect.
So, please judge intentions and ideas more than language accuracy.

“*That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*” (2 Timothy 3:17)
TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

The Bible is a collection of books. Some of them date as early as the fifteenth century BC. The latest written are very probably the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation, both dating around the end of first century AD. Too far from the invention of print to be able to take advantage of it. The first book printed from movable types was a Bible in the middle of the fifteenth century: 1400 years after the Bible was completed. Along with other books published before that epoch making event, the preservation and diffusion of the Bible was exclusively entrusted to faithful hand copying process.

Even in very old times the production of manuscripts was a very developed art. Yet is was inevitably subject to let mistakes enter the text.
This applies to all kinds of books and since the Bible is also a book, it applies, to a certain extent, to the Bible too.

Textual Criticism is the study of the available, surviving manuscript evidence in order to recover either the original text of a book or the best retraceable text. A lot easier said than done.

As far as textual criticism of extra biblical books is concerned, critics usually need to confront themselves with two main problems: (1) the late date of manuscripts available and (2) the scarcity of them.

Bruce M. Metzger gives some interesting statistics. Homer’s Iliad survives in less than 600 manuscripts. Euripides works are preserved in less then 400 manuscripts. The complete Annals of Tacitus survive in only one complete manuscript, dating from the ninth century.

In contrast, biblical textual criticism deals with too large an amount of manuscripts, the date of some being relatively close to the originals. Just to give an idea, in round numbers, this is the situation of the New Testament surviving manuscripts:

- More than 5000 manuscripts survive, which contain all or part of the Greek New Testament. One need only consider that “The Book of Revelation is the least well-attested part of the New Testament, being preserved in about 300 Greek manuscripts”. Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 1968, Oxford University
Press, page 34.

- 8000 mss witness to the Latin Vulgate, the famous translation by Jerome. Also many other mss contain other versions of the Bible.
- More than 2000 lectionaries.
- Bible quotations in early Christian writers - Church Fathers - are also very important. They witness both to readings of the text and the use and existence of New Testament books.

I think what said will suffice to show the incredible amount of evidence surviving of the New Testament. What about the age of such evidence?

P52 is a papyri fragment of the gospel of John (in the picture). It has been dated around 125 BC or even earlier! One need but quickly consider what an incredible witness this is in order to realize the priceless source of information such a small document may be. It gives evidence of the existence of John’s Gospel at such an early period, giving a definite confirmation of the traditional dating of this gospel.

Recently a growing number of scholars has been supporting the theory that sees a fragment of the Gospel of Mark in the manuscript fragment 7Q5. It was found in cave 7 at Qumran and since this community
disappeared in 68 AD, this manuscript may be evidence of the gospel of Mark having been written before that time. Also, if such identification is correct, 7Q5 is the first Christian scroll manuscript ever found. So far, only Codex manuscripts were available.

\( P^{75} \) belongs to the Bodmer Papyri collection. It has been dated 175-225 AD. It is very important for the portions of the gospel of John and his evident relation to Codex Vaticanus.

The picture of this papyri (left) is easily found in Google or Yahoo images, searching for \( P^{75} \). It is quite an experience – it was for me – to be able to read the beginning of John’s Gospel straight from a 1800 year-old manuscript.

\( P^{66} \) is another very old papyri manuscript. (picture to the right). It is as old as the second Century. It has arrived at us in a very good state. It is part of the Bodmer Papyri collection.

More other papyri evidence has recently been collected and, apart from any textual value attached to them, they witness the existence and spread of the Gospels as we know them as early as the traditional view has
always maintained.

B and ☩ (read Aleph) are still the two oldest and most complete manuscripts, both containing almost the whole Bible and dating as early as the middle of the forth century.

☐ (Aleph) or Codex Sinaiticus, was found on Mt. Sinai by Constantin Von Tischendorf, the famous textual critic. To honor its antiquity and importance it was named after the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet: ☩, Aleph. It originally contained the whole Bible but it has not survived in its integrity though all the New Testament is still intact.

B or Codex Vaticanus is in the Vatican library. Though it dates early in the fourth century, it was not available to critics until the second half of the nineteenth century.

The two last mentioned manuscripts usually enjoy credit among scholars and are responsible for the changes in the critical editions of the original Greek New Testament from 1881 until today.

Another category of manuscripts is the minuscule.

Up to the ninth century, New Testament Greek manuscripts were written in capital letters. That is why they are also called Uncials. But, from this time on, the text was transmitted in minuscule handwriting. Minuscule manuscripts were produced from that time down to the invention of print.
MS61 is a minuscule dated fifteenth-sixteenth century. It is at Trinity College at Dublin. It is very famous because it has the *Johannine Comma* (1 John 5:7-8). Erasmus used this manuscript to motivate the inclusion of the Comma into the third edition of his Greek text, latter to be called *Textus Receptus*. 
Some manuscripts of the Greek NT are included in the following synoptic outline.

The earliest witnesses are often fragmentary.

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The copying process inevitably lets mistakes in the text of a book. To see how easy this is, do a very simple experiment: copy a long text. Then copy from the copy. Again produce another copy from the copy. The more copies of copies you produce, the more mistakes you will inevitably collect. Imagine this process delayed in hundreds of years.

Of course Bible manuscripts were cherished as they were God’s Word - the reader would argue. This was the case for Jewish scribes, who were diligent in this task beyond imagination. When an error was made, they destroyed the manuscripts they were copying, so as not to leave a mutilated copy of Scripture. They also reviewed their work and if more than a certain number of mistakes were found, they would destroy the copy produced as unfaithful to the original.

But when the Gospel began to be spread
among the Gentiles, it had to confront itself with a totally different frame of mind than the Hebrew's. What was most sacred to the Jew, could be subject to investigation by the Greek mind of the Gentile believers. This is why, besides unintentional mistakes, a number of variant readings found in manuscripts can be retraced down to the self overestimation of some early scribes.

In “The Identity of the New Testament Text”, Wilbur Pickering writes: “the MSS contain several hundred thousand variant readings. The vast majority of these are misspellings or other obvious errors due to carelessness or ignorance on the part of the copyists. As a sheer guess I would say there are between ten thousand and fifteen thousand that cannot be so easily dismissed-i.e., a maximum of five percent of the variants are “significant.”

Scholars Westcott and Hort argued something similar when they wrote: “...the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text.” Westcott and Hort, The New Testament in the Original Greek, p. 2.

We’ll have to keep this in mind. In fact, we are not looking for a lost text of the New Testament, but for the best text of the New Testament among the critical editions available
Identifying the peculiarities of ancient manuscripts, their variant readings, scholars have grouped them into three main text types. They are: the Western, the Alexandrian (or Egyptian) and the Majority (Syrian, Byzantine, Traditional) text.

Let me dismiss the term Byzantine text at once. It renders no justice to this type of text and implies a late deliberate production of it. This latter assumption is false, destitute of any historical support, and the result of mere suppositions that time proved wrong. Calling it the Traditional text would go too far in the opposite direction. Referring to it as the Majority text expresses a doubtless fact, i.e. it is the text found in the majority of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.

The Western is a "longer" type of text, characterized by interpolations. It is found in the Uncial Codex Bezae, also known as D and in manuscripts of the Old Latin Version. The W text is also a witness to some peculiar omissions in the Gospel of Luke. Some of them became famous thanks to Westcott and Hort, who isolated and adopted some of these omissions, calling them the Western Non-Interpolations. The term Western could not be more conventional, since it is very probable that this type of text originated in the East.

The Alexandrian text is a "shorter" Greek
New Testament text.

Since the work of the scholars Westcott and Hort, the Alexandrian shorter text has been favoured by critics. The simple assumption is that the Western text has been clearly tempered with interpolations and that the Majority text has been produced *conflating* the Western and the Alexandrian text to produce a smooth readable text.

Some other scholars (a minority, to be honest) believe the Majority to be the closest to the original, the Alexandrian-Egyptian to be a shorter version of it and the Western a longer one. The writer of this booklet believes the latter case to be a correct representation of the truth of the textual transmission of the Greek New Testament and, to this day, as far as manuscript evidence is concerned, the Majority text is still the best witness to the autographs.

History of the editions of the New Testament appeared on the scene since the invention of print, has seen various seasons of fortunes for the Alexandrian and the Majority text.

Let us briefly consider the critical editions appeared since the invention of print.
The Textus Receptus

The first phase of the history of the printed editions of the Greek New Testament saw the rise of the so called “Received Text”, the *Textus Receptus*. It was the first published, by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516. Stephanus' fourth edition of 1551 was the first to contain our modern verse division.

In the Preface to the 1633 edition of the Elzevir brothers, it was written: “*textum* ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus *receptum*, in quo nihil immulatum aut corruptum damus”

From this statement originated the name “Textus Receptus”, which means in English
“Received Text.”

It was used by the translators of the King James Version of the Bible completed in 1611. It was translated by Diodati in Italian and French, by Luther in German.

The text of the TR is mainly the text of the majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts, though some readings are peculiar to the few manuscripts used to edit it. Acts 8:37, is an example: it is found in the TR but not in the Majority text. Another famous reading peculiar to the TR is 1 John 5:7. It was first introduced in a later edition (Erasmus’ third edition of 1522) and ever since printed with it.

The critical value of the Textus Receptus can be judged from various points of view.

The usual objection is that only a few and late manuscripts were used when editing it. This is true. But it is a false representation if we do not add that, by incident or by the grace of God, the few manuscripts consulted contained the Majority Text.

Personally - if this may be of any interest to the reader - I read and study on the KJV and read the New King James Version. If I read the Bible in Italian I still consider the Diodati Bible my favourite translation. But, since I have learned Greek, I have not read translations much. I consider the TR a good text since it includes the Majority text.

We can conclude that the value of the Textus
Receptus, though, beyond any possible doubt, revision of it was necessary to improve its critical value, rests on the importance given to the Majority New Testament text.

The Westcott and Hort critical text

In 1881 two English scholars, Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901) and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828-1829), published their edition of the Greek New Testament, along with their theories in support of it. They claimed to have retraced and presented to the public what they called the Neutral Text, the closest text to the original possible.

Their text was mainly based on the Vatican (B) and Sinaitic (鞍) manuscripts, which had become available then. Bruce M. Metzger quotes them saying: “it is our belief that the readings of 鞍 and B should be accepted as the true readings until strong internal evidence is found to the contrary.” Bruce M. Metzger, The Text of The New Testament, Second Edition, 1968, Oxford University Press, page 133.

The reason for the success of their theory was due to a simple concept, very captivating to the mind of both the average Bible reader and the student: "the oldest, the best."

Any sufficiently honest scholar of textual criticism will tell you that the oldest manuscript is
not necessarily the best. But that won the public's confidence on the reliability of the work of Westcott and Hort.

Alexander Souter writes: “A manuscript’s importance does not of course depend solely on its age. An old manuscript is likely to be a more faithful representative of its ultimate original only because in its case there has been less time for corruption to accumulate... But a late manuscript may be the last of a series of faithful copies, and may thus preserve a better tradition than another manuscript actually much earlier in date of it.” Alexander Souter, *The Text and Canon of the New Testament*, page 18.

The Neutral Text that Westcott and Hort thought to have retraced simply never existed. Kurt and Barbara Aland clearly agreed on the fact that there is no Neutral Text.

The backbone of Westcott and Hort’s theory was a mere supposition.

Also their *conflation* and Byzantine Text *recension* theories were not supported by historical evidence.

I must confess that I consider their fame unmerited, since little or nothing remains of the validity of the reasons that led them to support the text they edited. Even their disrespectful attitude toward what they called the Byzantine text has been abandoned and today it is with right called the Majority text in the best editions of the Greek New Testament.
Another peculiarity of their theory were the so called Western Non-Interpolations. Westcott and Hort collected nine Bible passages that were in all or in part omitted by the Western text representative Uncial Manuscript D, the so called Codex Bezae, preferring this isolated witness and ignoring the rest of the Greek New Testament evidence. The eight Western non-interpolations are Mt 27.49, Lk 22.19b-20, 24.3, 6, 12, 36, 40, 51 and 52. The discovery of Papyri unknown during the days when they developed their theory, if necessary, proved how unmotivated were such considerations on a part of the New Testament text so well supported by external evidence, and how personal judgement guided their ideas more than evidence.

Their absolute, blind preference for shorter readings led the two English scholars to support a text that contradicted even their favourite manuscripts, B and ℞, as well as the rest of the available evidence.

Bruce Metzger writes: “... scholars have been critical of the apparently arbitrary way in which Westcott and Hort isolated nine passages for special treatment (enclosing them within double square brackets), whereas they did not give similar treatment to other readings that are also absent from the Western witnesses.” A textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition, United Bible Societies, p. 165

We must agree with those who supposed that
the only true success of these two scholars was to bring back to life a text – that found in the so-called Alexandrian – Egyptian manuscripts - that the church had gotten rid of almost two thousand years earlier. This conviction stood at the base of the work of their opponents.

**Burgon - Miller - Scrivener**


The latter two were edited by Edward Miller.

Burgon supported the Majority text. He called it the Traditional Text, giving to it the dignity of being the best representative of the autographs, the evidence that the New Testament had been faithfully handed down, copied and spread by the Church.

Burgon had to find out for himself how hard it was to try to recover those seduced by the so captivating “the oldest, the best” motto.

Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener (1813-1891) believed also in the superiority of the Majority text. I am a fan of his work and text. This great scholar was very reliable and moderate,
sound in his research principles. The 1887 edition of his critical Greek New Testament can be downloaded at www.archive.com. The text is that of Stephanus published in 1550 and translated in the King James Version, along with the changes made in the Revised Version of 1881. The apparatus that shows the readings of other critical editions, including Westcott and Hort, makes it very valuable. The fact that he was so moderate a supporter of the Traditional Text and that he served only the cause of a better knowledge of the text of the New Testament, mixed with his unforgivable fault not to have produced any sensational theory, are the reasons why Scrivener is unknown to the public. True and honest servants of truth rarely produce sensational theories and their precious work is done in silent and very rarely will bring fame and fortune. I must add that his great contribution to textual criticism included the editing of Codex Bezae, the collation of Codex Sinaiticus with the Textus Receptus. He also wrote “A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament” 1861.

The Nestle-Aland text edited by Barbara and Kurt Aland, Karavidopoulos, Martini and Metzger

Today, the most credited critical editions of
the Greek New Testament are the Nestle-Aland and the UBS (United Bible Societies). They are virtually identical. I personally consult the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland quite often. It is a very important reference work because of the critical apparatuses which offers a list of the variants of the manuscripts. Though I do not agree with some conclusions, the evidence is listed in a very detailed and reliable manner and this makes it most useful.

The text adopted is still mainly that of Westcott and Hort since most credibility is still given to the Alexandrian witnesses, B and ө. The more recent discovery of the papyri has somehow strengthened the witness to the Alexandrian-Egyptian manuscripts. Though, as I already said, Hort’s basic principles have been reviewed.

Kurt and Barbara Aland with confidence call their text the Standard Text. They believe it represents the closest to the original ever presented to the public.

**Pickering – Hodges and Farstad – Robinson and Pierpont**

Recently, a growing number of scholars have advocated the value of the Majority Text. This position stands in the Anglo-Saxon world right between the two extremes of the KJV-TR only supporters and those who totally dismiss the
Byzantine-Traditional-Majority text as of little or no critical value.

This school can be retraced in the positions of scholars already mentioned, like Burgon or Miller.

Wilbur N. Pickering has made a Majority Text available. It is found on line at www.walkinhiscommandments.com and www.prunch.org

It is also available in printed form at www.amazon.com

It is impossible to deny the value of this scholar’s work as he argues for both the Majority text and the reliability of the New Testament.

The Majority text edited by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad was published by Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville. This editor also made available a new translation of the Textus Receptus, the New King James Version.


The critical editions of the Majority text clearly emendate the Textus Receptus of its mistakes and restore a very important witness to the Greek New Testament to its rightful place.

I am convinced that the Majority Text is the closes text to the original, its archetype being, in
my opinion, the autographs themselves.

**The King James Version – TR-only position.**

There are still some areas of Christianity that boldly defend the Textus Receptus and its most famous English translation, the King James Version. It is mainly a phenomenon of English-speaking Christianity and is to be understood and explained as a reaction to the bewildering confusion raised by so many new English translations being published.

In his books Edward F. Hills recalled the work of Dean Burgon, but went further, supporting the peculiar readings of the *Textus Receptus*. Hills’ work represents the honest efforts of a Bible-believing Christian. His work “the King James Defended” contains a lot of good information.

Though the value of the *Textus Receptus* cannot be denied - since it is a good representative of the Majority text - some of its reading need be corrected. We cannot blame critics who support readings found in only one or two manuscripts and believe the Textus Receptus to be a new autograph only because it is “the received text”. In any respect, I believe that the revision of the TR made in the nineteenth century - if it was really meant to improve it - failed miserably.
It is true what Pickering wrote about it: “most lines of transmission within the Byzantine bulk would be reasonably close, good enough for most practical purposes. This is also true of the much maligned Textus Receptus; it is certainly good enough for most practical purposes. Down through the centuries of Church history, most people could have had reasonable access to God’s written revelation.”
Today, the main stream of textual critics still support the witness of B, 5 and the mss that associate with them. Scholar’s preference is clearly for the Alexandrian-Egyptian text. The road trodden today is still that inaugurated by Westcott and Hort, though the means used to travel in it are quite different.

The first and most significant practice behind the Neologian text is **Eclecticism**. Using this method, the critic chooses among the available variant readings, according to Intrinsic and Transcriptional Probability. In lay terms, the personal judgment of the editor will lead him to choose among the available readings found in the extant manuscripts, according to what he believes the author of the inspired book might have
written and how the scribes might have handled the text, the mistakes they might have done or their intentional changes introduced in it.

Colwell clearly pointed out that adopting such a method, manuscripts become only suppliers of readings. The text of the critical editions based on this principle, though it may seem an incredible paradox, “taken as a whole, is not one found in any extant manuscript… Modern eclectics have created an artificial entity with no ancestral lineage from any single historical MS or group of MSS”. We are speaking here of critical texts that produce “a sequence of favored readings that at times – even over short segments of text – has no demonstrated existence in any known manuscript, version or father.” Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in The Original Greek, Byzantine Textform*, 2005.

In other words, Eclecticism in the hands of textual critics produces a text that has no archetype. It does not reflect the witness of any manuscript too, not even of the Alexandrian Type. It differs from \( \text{A} \). It is different than \( \text{B} \). It’s not the text of \( \text{P}^{66} \). Nor that of \( \text{P}^{75} \). It is simply a further editing of the Alexandrian text, following, very probably, the principles of the scribes behind this text. The result, like the previous, is only a new isolated witness.

The weak link in the chain of today’s textual criticism is that critics still follow the text of
Westcott and Hort. Most of the pillars of the theory of those two scholars have been completely demolished, but incredibly the building is still up, the preference is still for the Alexandrian witnesses. Something is wrong with this approach to the text of the New Testament. Hort had dreamed of a Neutral Text – something that never existed. Now it is abundantly clear that, if there ever was an archetype of the Alexandrian text, it is impossible to try to find it in the contradicting surviving manuscripts that are thought to derive from it. The only option left is internal evidence and personal judgment of the editors.

Official textual criticism has become an art, but it was meant to be a science. It has become the art of supplying first the translators and then the Bible readers with the available readings to choose from.

Some principles of this art will be further discussed here.

A very controversial rule, so famous with modern critics, is that "a shorter reading is more likely to be right than a longer.” – Alexander Souter, The Text and Canon of the New Testament, page 110.

“As an editor the scribe of $P^{45}$ wielded a sharp axe. The most striking aspect of this style is conciseness. The dispensable word is dispensed with. He omits adverbs, adjectives, nouns, participles, verbs, personal pronouns -

According to the same authority the omission practice is peculiar of the scribe of P\textsuperscript{66}. One need but compare the Alexandrian witnesses among themselves to understand how unsafe confidence in the short readings can be, especially considering the fact that their omissions are peculiar to some of them and not to all. Their disagreement is often evidence of the liberties taken by the scribes behind this type of text and the tendency is clearly for omissions.

Origen was a representative of the Christian school at Alexandria, in Egypt. Just to give an idea of the critical spirit at work in this branch of the church, I will quote a passage of his commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew: “But you will compare together His saying to Peter, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan’, with that said to the devil (who said to Him, ‘All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me’), ‘get thee hence’, without the addition, ‘behind Me;’ for to be behind Jesus is a good thing”, The Ante-Nicene fathers, edited by A. Allan Menzies, fourth edition, Hendrickson Publishers, volume 9, p. 462. Origen gives us an example of what is technically called *conjectural emendation*, which is the most dangerous practice
of textual criticism: the critic emendates the text not because of any external evidence but because of personal considerations. Since Origen thought it was impossible that Jesus had actually said to the devil: "get thee behind me, Satan", he supposed that "behind me" was not part of the original. Is it a wonder that the mss coming from the Alexandrian-Egyptian tradition support a shorter text?

The assumption “the shorter, the better” is false. The shorter reading has no more right to be considered the closest to the original a priori than the longer. Such presumption must be abandoned. Or better, it proves that the preference given to a certain type of text is very probably due to the fact that the scribes that produced that mutilated text and modern critics share a very similar frame of mind.

Westcott and Hort were deeply convinced that the Majority text was deliberately created in Antioch and that it was imposed on the Church. This Byzantine Recension of the text would be visible in the examples of the so called conflate readings they proposed to their public. This was a backbone of their theory, but it has not shaken the securities of the supporters of their text the simple fact that no trace in history remains of such an event. A theory based on assumptions, based on silence or considerations on the state of the available text is at least weak and closer to speculation than to facts. The deathblow to this
Recension theory is that the Majority text is quoted by Church Fathers and some traces are found also in newly discovered papyri, taking its existence long before it is supposed to have appeared on the scene. P 66 is said to agree in the first eight chapters of John more with the M readings (50.9%) than those of \( \text{M} \) (43.7%) – “Studies in the Text and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism”, by Epp and Fee, p.228, 233.

Bruce M. Metzger writes about Colossians 1:12: “The reading of B is an early conflation of both variants” the Majority and the Western. How can an earlier text be influenced by a later fabricated text?

It is very instructive to consult Miller’s work in this field. Through a careful study he was able to retrace what Hort called Syrian or Byzantine readings in the writings of Christian writers in a time (before the fourth century) where Hort believed they could not exist. In this same direction the results of Pickering’s studies are very interesting. Today the birth of the Majority text has been taken back in time significantly. But not back enough in time, as I will briefly state lately.

Kurt Aland is convinced that official recensions occurred also in other branches of the Church. He thinks, anyway, that some old mss preserve a text antedating those recensions. He boldly states that the so called Standard Text brings back to light a text that antedates such
recensions. I believe that no historical evidence survives of such recensions and that it is more than doubtful that churches wanted or were able to impose a uniform text of the New Testament.

I believe the Standard Text is the best text that can be edited today, if the presumptions of the textual critics are taken as correct. The truth is slightly different.

On top of any other rule and, being so simple and apparently obvious, is the first confident statement made by every supporter of the Standard Text: the oldest the best.

If this be the case, the oldest papyri must be the recipient of the New Testament textual pureness.

Upon inspection, our expectations may very quickly turn into disappointment.

Unless there are other good arguments, the age of a manuscript does not necessarily prove that the text it contains is the authoritative one since later manuscripts can easily stem from a more reliable tradition, a possibility of which there are sufficient examples in non-biblical Greek and Latin literature.” Carsten Peter Thiede, The earliest Gospel manuscript, p. 16, The Paternoster Press. Thiede was a papyrology expert.

P45, P66 and P75 do not have in common antiquity only.

P66 is one the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament. It contains most of the Gospel of
John. It is the earliest witness to omit the so-called *Pericope de Adultera*, which is John 7:53 – 8:11. But in order to understand how reliable this manuscript is and the weight of the readings it supports, other facts must be taken into serious consideration.

Pickering records that it shows an average of two mistakes per verse. He argues that the scribe who copied this manuscript did not even know Greek, since the kind of mistakes he made clearly show that he copied the text syllable by syllable. This would have not been the case had he known the language. It has 482 singular readings.

But if “the oldest witness is the best”, why can’t we rely on this manuscript and review our text of John according to it? Pretty simple. Because, notwithstanding its age, it is a bad copy, worth something just because it survived to our days to witness the incompetent work of a scribe. A reason why it got to us maybe the fact that, because of the poor text it had, it must have been put aside and not even read.

P75 is another very old papyri manuscript. It is only a little less older than P66 but its text is of no better quality. It shows 257 singular readings, 25 percent of which are nonsensical. Pickering believes that also this scribe must not have known Greek, since, by the kind of mistakes he made it seems that he copied letter by letter.

“In general, P75 copies letters one by one; P66 copies syllables, usually two letters in length. P45
copies phrases and clauses. The accuracy of these assertions can be demonstrated. That P\textsuperscript{75} copied letters one by one is shown in the pattern of the errors. He has more than sixty readings that involve a single letter, and not more than ten careless readings that involve a syllable. But P\textsuperscript{66} drops sixty-one syllables (twenty-three of them in “leaps”) and omits as well as a dozen articles and thirty short words. In P\textsuperscript{45} there is not one omission of a syllable in a “leap” nor is there any list of “careless” omissions of syllables. P\textsuperscript{45} omits words and phrases...He shortens the text in at least fifty places in singular readings alone. But he does not drop syllables or letters. His shortened text is readable.” Colwell, *Scribal Habits*, p. 380, 383.

Manuscripts produced even one thousand years later than the above are more reliable and accurate than them. Age in itself does not mean much. A manuscript that has been copied without due care, though it may be closer to the original time wise, cannot be valued more than a later manuscript, come down through a number of faithful and accurate, honestly produced copies.

Yes, honestly.

Because another reason for variant readings, besides mistakes due to the quality of the work of the scribe, are deliberate changes. The scribe of P\textsuperscript{45} literally created\textsuperscript{ii} a text of his own.

Westcott and Hort thought "the oldest was
the best” because they supposed that no deliberate changes were made to the text of the New Testament. All who believe that, must also be convinced with those two scholars that the extant manuscript show no trace of deliberate falsification of the text. Evidence shows that the opposite is true. Both as far as history and manuscript evidence are concerned.

With this (false) presumption in mind Hort believed and wrote that through what is called a *genealogical* method, knowing the practice of scribal work and retracing the accidental mistakes it introduces in the text, it would be possible to emend those mistakes and restore the original text of the New Testament.

We read of how some scribes handed the manuscripts with freedom. It deserves notice that the above mentioned papyri mss belong to the Egyptian/Alexandrian tradition! We read of Origen, belonging to this school. It must be added that many heretic views came from this area of Christianity. Arius was from Alexandria.

It is a known fact that heretics of the first centuries adulterated the text of manuscripts creating new copies that would fit to their ideas. The heretic Marcion mutilated his copies of Scripture in order to justify his heretical views. I think some of the omissions found in the mss tradition of Luke can be retraced to this heretic. The Western Non-Interpolations supported by Westcott and Hort and found in the Uncial ms D
may be a trace of such deliberate tempering of the text.

Here is a direct witness to the deliberate adulterations of the New Testament. Caius (180-217 AD) was a Christian who wrote of the heretics: “...they have boldly laid their hands upon the divine Scriptures, alleging that they have corrected them...if any one should choose to collect and compare all their copies together, he would find many discrepancies among them.” – The Ante-Nicene fathers, edited by A. Roberts & J. Donaldson, volume 5, p. 602.

To see the extent of how much some wanted credit for their heretic views one must only consider the many apocryphal gospels and other writings circulating in the first centuries of our era. The recent discovery of the “gospel” of Judah has only added one to the number of them we already know. The historical and religious value of those writings is well known to the informed and the antiquity of such forgeries will impress only the unaware of the multitude of heretical movements that rose in the first century of Christianity.

Going back to our subject, Westcott and Hort presumption of no deliberate changes affecting the transmission of the New Testament text was not based of facts. Their method and work were affected by that as well as other wrong assumptions. Otherwise, they would not have failed to see how suspicion it is that the witnesses
of the Alexandrian text, to which the more recently papyri must be added, contradict one other all the time.

If a complete copy of Marcion mutilated text of the Bible was found today, would it be considered reliable and trustworthy only because of its age?

The problem Westcott and Hort had to solve before going on with their theories and produce their text was the Majority Traditional Text. Before being able to discard it, he had to find an explanation for something that has no other explanation than the supernatural work of God through the Church in preserving the New Testament.

So many independent witnesses, agreeing with one another, supporting the same text of the New Testament – too good to be true. In order to discard it altogether a satisfactory, rational explanation for its existence had to be found. Westcott and Hort called the Traditional text by the name Byzantine or Syrian text, explaining its existence supposing deliberate ecclesiastic recensions fabricated it, in the fourth century. The Church, they imagined, went on to impose the edited text to Christianity. Conflate readings would prove such event.

All works perfectly, doesn’t it? Except for the fact that such an event never took place. No trace can be found in history. No branch of the Church was able in the fourth century to impose
a text of the Bible to the whole Christian world.

The so called Lucian, Antiochian Recension Theory now faded out of the scene and in the apparatus of critical editions (Nestle-Aland 27th edition) you will read of M as an abbreviation for the Majority text.

But we must explain what that capital M found in today’s New Testament critical editions stands for. Since, visibly, it gives the idea as of one isolated witness, but includes hundreds of manuscripts.

Pickering writes: “Not only do the extant MSS present us with one text form enjoying a 95 percent majority, but the remaining 5 percent do not represent a single competing text form.” He adds: “The chief Alexandrian witnesses, B, A … are in constant and significant disagreement among themselves, so much that there is no objective way of reconstructing an archetype. 150 years earlier the picture is the same; P45, P66 and P75 are quite dissimilar and do not reflect a single tradition.”

When I spoke of text types, I did for the sake of simplicity, following what is the reference of textual criticism’s manuals. Following some scholars, I do not believe there are text types when we speak of the Greek New Testament manuscripts. The above statements prove it abundantly. In fact, instead of looking for Hort’s neutral text, resting on their personal judgment and internal considerations, today’s textual critics
evaluate each controversial reading adopting from time to time what is supported by this or that manuscript. But please notice that behind that letter M supporting this or that reading against B or P75, there is a 95 percent consent of manuscript evidence.

Pickering makes it very clear and simple, the Majority text is “the result of an essentially normal process of transmission.”

The apostolic writings were faithfully copied from the first century on till the invention of print. Those few disagreeing witnesses are only deviations from this pure stream of manuscripts. Their disagreement among themselves proves it.

To recover the original text of the New Testament all that today’s scholars should really do is find the archetype of the Majority text.

Praise God for those scholars who are working in this direction.
Most of what I know about the Majority Text I owe to John William Burgon. So I think it is more appropriate to present his authoritative voice instead of mine. He called the Majority Text the Traditional Text.

He writes: “their witness (Alexandrian MSS) does not agree together. The Traditional Text, on the contrary, is unmistakably one.” – The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established by John William Burgon, p. 34.

It is a simple and undeniable truth that witnesses that contradict one another, are not reliable. On the contrary, agreeing witnesses, if no connection or conspiracy can be proved, must be
supposed to be reliable and honestly representing the truth.

About the Majority text Burgon adds: “Those many MSS were executed demonstrably at different times in different countries”, p.46.

Independent agreeing witnesses are very reliable. These are the kind of witnesses which support the Majority Text.

On the contrary, concerning the Alexandrian text not only is it impossible to state that its representatives agree with one another, but we also can’t call them independent witnesses, since they mostly derive from the same location.

“The consentient testimony of two, four, six, or more witnesses, coming to us from widely sundered regions is weightier by far than the same number of witnesses proceeding from one and the same locality, between whom there probably exists some sort of sympathy, and possibly one degree of collusion”, p. 52.

For example, the witness by the Alexandrian text against John 5:4 as it is found in the M text, is considered final by modern critics. But it should be said of those witnesses against the authenticity of the traditional reading that they “are unable to agree among themselves whether there was a Jerusalem a sheep-pool (نسخ) or ‘a pool at the sheep-gate’: whether it was surnamed (BC), or named (D), or neither (نسخ): - which appellation, out of thirty which have been proposed for this pool, they will adopt, - seeing that C is for
‘Bethesda’; B for ‘Bethsaida’; a for ‘Bethzatha’; D for ‘Belzetha’...in respect of the thirty-two contested words...only three of them omit all the words in question...D retains the first five, and surrenders the last twenty-seven.”, p. 82-83.

Adding the information provided by the newly discovered papyri, this is the witness of the mss against the traditional reading:

- Bethsaida – P75, B, T,W
- Bedsaida – P66
- Bethzatha –  and 33.

The choice among those, when discarding the Majority text, can be only based upon the editors personal judgment or preference.

External evidence is for the traditional reading.

Burgon gives even more details about the contradictions of the Alexandrian text witnesses. “The five Old Uncials ( A B C D) falsify the Lord’s Prayer as given by St. Luke in no less than forty-five words. But so little do they agree among themselves, that they throw themselves into six different combinations in their departures from the Traditional Text; and yet they are never able to agree among themselves as to one single various reading.”, p.84.

The weakness of the Majority text is the relatively late age of its representatives. Again we say that age alone cannot determine whether a ms is reliable or not. A sixth century ms that is the last in a chain of faithfully copied mss is more
reliable than a single ms produced in the second century by a scribe so convinced of his doctrinal positions to change the text of a ms accordingly.

We read about church official revisions and supposed ecclesiastical authority imposing those revisions, the Byzantine, the Alexandrian. But those are simply theories. The habit of some to change the New Testament text for doctrinal purposes is a documented fact. We quoted Caius and Origen. It will be useful to relate about an instance of this kind found in P66. It stands alone in adding an article before the word "prophet" in John 7:52. The scribe did not hesitate to solve an evident difficulty of the text by changing it as he pleased.

If the manuscripts of the Majority text are late, it means only that its ancestors have not survived to our days. In my library, the best preserved text is the New World Translation, the Jehovah's Witnesses Bible. I simply do not read it. On the contrary, the books which I most value are those in the worst conditions. Is it not possible that the ancestors of the Majority text were in use in the church and are no more in existence because they were torn apart by the use in the church, whose only care was to produce new faithful copies of the original? Codex Sinaiticus was literally rescued from fire by Tischendorf. The Vaticanus manuscript was undisturbed in the Vatican library for centuries. Another reason why we have so many old mss of
the Alexandrian-Egyptian tradition is because of the dry and hot climate of those areas.

Number is no more relevant in itself than age. In general, number would be less important than the age. But because of what we noticed, this may not be applicable to the manuscripts of the New Testament.

Some facts must be taken into consideration along with the age of the Alexandrian witnesses. The value they can boast because of their antiquity is weakened by: 1. The contradictions of his representatives. 2. The fact that these mss come from one specific area and consequently from one textual school and tradition. 3. The area from which they come is where heresies were rampant, so much that they even influenced the orthodox.

Though number in itself would not mean much, the other facts in favor of the reliability of the Majority text are: - 1. That its representatives mss come from different areas of Christendom, - 2. They all agree in one text, but they show some peculiarities that are evidence of their value as independent witnesses (“Robinson has collated the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53-8:11) in all available Greek manuscripts and lectionaries that include the narrative of this incident … The Pericope Adulterae data suggests an increased presumption of relative independence within the various lines of Byzantine manuscript descent.” Robinson and Pierpoint, Preface to their Greek
3. This type of text is well supported by the quotations of the fathers of the church, which take its existence back in time, before the supposed Recension, which was said to have given birth to it.

The truth is that the Recension theory was conceived to give a rational explanation to the existence of the M text which is in itself a quite peculiar phenomenon. In fact, without believing that the Traditional text is the product of an authoritative Recension, how can we explain its existence?

The Western text has Majority Text readings. The Alexandrian Text – we saw in the papyri – has them too. The Western and the Alexandrian differ from one another. The late date assigned to the Byzantine text is but a myth, so no other reason can be found to deny its antiquity. Is it then so strange, is it not the natural consequence to believe that the (Traditional, Byzantine) Majority text simply represented the “normal” faithful process of copying of the New Testament writings and those isolated, contradicting witnesses, only corruptions of it.

Now it is time to ask: What would you expect from the faithful copying of the books of the New Testament, down from the time of the apostles to the age of print, if not a text like the Majority text? Moreover: what would you expect of mss departing from this faithful
transmission of the text, if not a small number of unreliable witnesses, contradicting each other?

Robinson and Pierpont say it more technically in their Preface to their Greek Text: “This ‘normal’ state of transmission presumes that the aggregate consentient testimony of the extant manuscript base is more likely to reflect its archetypal source (in this case the canonical autographs) than any single manuscript, small group of manuscripts, or isolated versional or patristic readings that failed to achieve widespread diversity or transmisssional continuity.” “The Byzantine-priority hypothesis thus appears to offer the most plausible scenario for canonical autograph transmission.” p.5.

I close this section by reproducing a question posed by Burgon, which resembles mine above.

“Does the truth of the Text of Scripture dwell with the vast multitude of copies, uncial and cursive, concerning which nothing is more remarkable than the marvelous agreement which subsists between them? Or is it rather to be supposed that the truth abides exclusively with a very handful of manuscripts, which at once differ from the great bulk of the witnesses, and - strange to say - also amongst themselves?”, The Traditional Text, p. 16-17.
EXAMPLES OF VARIANT READINGS

Now the time has come to consider some of the most famous variant readings detectable in Bible translations, leaving behind the theoretical speculations for the most important practical implications.

I will compare the New King James Version as a representative of the Textus Receptus to the Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament, eighth edition, 1994 and its companion textual commentary by Bruce M. Metzger. I will briefly consider some controversial Bible passages.

Matthew 1:25. “And did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called his name Jesus.”

The NA text, following B and א, omits the
word “her firstborn”. The Majority text, as well as other manuscripts, retain it and so does the Textus Receptus.

**Matthew 6:13b.** “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

These words are omitted by \( \text{A} \), B and D. But they are in the Majority text and in other manuscripts that usually side with the Alexandrian witnesses like L, W, 33.

Do we need more overwhelming evidence to consider authentic a portion of Scripture?

**Mark 1:1.** “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

The words “Son of God” are omitted by some, enclosed in brackets by others. I like the way Metzger justifies this decision, I like the way he explains it in a moderate and scientific way. But external evidence in support of the long reading is overwhelming. The short reading is only supported by suppositions and a few manuscripts, belonging to the Alexandrian text. My opinion is that this is one of the many instances that shows the attitude of some scribes to shorten the text, like we see it in the mss so much valued by some critics.
Mark 16:9-20

The so called “long ending”, the traditional ending of the gospel of Mark, with which most of us are familiar, is supported by the Majority text. Its omission is based both on the external support of the Alexandrian witnesses and on internal considerations concerning the text: most scholars agree about the fact that the author of this ending of the gospel was not the author of the rest of Mark.

John W. Burgon wrote an entire book on this subject.

As a simple Christian, not a critic, I ask myself a simple question: Why is it that the long ending is still retained in the Bibles which translate the modern text? Why don't they simply end the gospel at v.8?

If critics, and the manuscripts supporting the omission of this portion of Scripture, are right, this means that:
1. Are we to believe that Mark ended is gospel at v.8? “And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.”
2. Or, even worse, are we to believe that the original ending of this gospel is lost?

Besides the overwhelming support of manuscripts to the traditional ending of Mark, it was quoted by old Christians like Papias, Justin
Martyr, Irenaeus, Tatian (in his Diatessaron), Tertullian, Hippolytus, Epiphanius, taking the existence of the Majority text back to the first steps of Christianity.

Concerning the testimony in favor of the omission, there are some facts which must be taken into very serious consideration concerning Codex Vaticanus, B, in the place where these verses should have been has a “blank space, amply sufficient to contain the verses, the column in question being the only vacant one in the whole manuscript.” Dean Burgon, *The Traditional Text*, p. 298. See the picture.

To be added to this strange case, is the fact that the very same scribe who is author of B "appears to have cancelled the sheet originally written by the scribe of #, and to have substituted for it the sheet as we now have it, written by himself... Thus we are led not only to infer that the testimony of # is here not independent of that of B, but to suspect that this sheet may have been thus cancelled and rewritten in order to conform its contents to those of the corresponding part of B.” The Traditional Text,
The blank space in B is due to the fact that the ending we know was found in the manuscript it was copied from? What other explanation can there be?

At the same time, if the scribe of B had to fix the testimony of \( \text{\&} \) in order to agree with his omission, are we not entitled to understand that the ending of the gospel as we know it was known to him and that he, willingly, for some reasons, though found in the copies he had before him, decided to omit this portion of Scripture? Is this evidence against the traditional ending of Mark's gospel, or rather against the reliability and even honesty of the work of the scribe behind \( \text{\&} \) and B?

Bruce Metzger writes: "the longer ending, though current in a variety of witnesses, some of them ancient, must also be judged by internal evidence to be secondary." A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, p.104.

On the ground of the same considerations - so called: internal evidence! - the authenticity of John 21, of some epistles of Paul, of 2 Peter, is questioned. Is it safe to rely on the personal judgment of critics?

Resting on objective external evidence alone, which is the only safe thing to do, there is no reason for the omission of this portion of Scripture.
Luke 10:41-42. “And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

The reading of the NKJV-TR is the Majority Text reading. P⁴⁵ and P⁷⁵ agree with it. They leave B, ℳ L and 33, to support the reading: “Few things are needful, or one.”

The M text is the original. There can’t be any doubt, not if we rely on textual evidence instead of suppositions and/or personal judgment. Where is the theory of a late, fabricated text here? The M text has the earliest witnesses on its side.

Please, notice the Gnostic taste of the text of B and ℳ! Are we to believe that that deviation from the text might have occurred by mistake?

Of course the spurious reading is rejected by newer critical editions but it was adopted in the Westcott and Hort text.

Luke 12:31. “But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.”

*Seek the kingdom of God* is supported by M and P⁴⁵. Also by A, W, 33 and other witnesses.

*Seek the kingdom* is found in P⁷⁵.

*Seek His kingdom* is the reading of B and ℳ!

It is quite peculiar that P⁴⁵ reads like the
Majority text. The other manuscript where the Alexandrian text should have found support is P\textsuperscript{75}. But it finds none.

Considering the preceding passage observed, Luke 10:41-42, it is very probably to believe that the scribe of P\textsuperscript{75} changed from a M reading using his sharp axe.

The fact still remains, the traditional reading is supported by an ancient manuscript. Again, we must ask where is the theory of a late, fabricated text here? Again the Majority reading is found in the oldest authorities! Again we notice the confusion and contradiction among the Alexandrian witnesses themselves. In the best case, at least two of them are lying!

External evidence is overwhelming in favor of the TR-Majority Text reading. The only reason why the reading of the B and  (against older Alexandrian witnesses) can be preferred is mere internal considerations, not objective evidence. From the omission of “of God” (P\textsuperscript{75}) to the addition of “His” (B and ) we see how the original text was corrupted into the reading still supported by Aland’s text.

In a very similar instance, Matthew 6:33, B and , show a corrupt text, though Westcott and Hort blindly adopted it. Today even the N-A must retain the traditional reading in the text, though “of God” is between square brackets.

The Majority reading is by far the best attested reading.
Incredible as it may seem, the three oldest Papyri, P45, P66 and P75 show a number of Majority text readings that is too relevant. It is something unexpected from mss that have been usually assimilated to the Alexandrian text. Such a thing would be impossible if Hort’s theories were true.

On the contrary, such an event perfectly fits the idea that the Majority text is simply the result of a normal and faithful work of copying the autographs down to the invention of print and that the so called Alexandrian witnesses, B and  are old deviations from the pure and honest stream of manuscripts. P45, P66 and P75, being older show a larger number of traditional readings.

I checked my N-A apparatus in John.

In John 5:17, “Jesus” is omitted by P75, B,  and of course Westcott and Hort text, but it is found in P66.

In John 5:19 the original Greek word ἄν is the reading of  and B, adopted by W-H. But the Majority reading ἐὰν, among other witnesses, is found in P66, P75.

In John 5:29 the choice is among the following readings:

- οἱ - P66, B. It is in W-H.
- οἰ δὲ - P75, . Like in the preceding readings, in light of the new evidence, the
traditional-Majority reading has become the N-A also.

- καὶ οἱ - P⁶⁶, W.

Pickering writes: “I have used Klijn’s study with reference to the existence of text types, but his material also furnishes evidence for the antiquity of the “Byzantine” text. Summing up the evidence for the 51 cases Klijn discusses, P⁴⁵ agrees with 8 21 times, with B 25 times, with TR 33 times. P⁶⁶ agrees with 8 16 times, with B 32 times, with TR 38 times. P⁷⁵ agrees with 8 11 times, with B 36 times, with TR 33 times, or to put it another way, all three papyri agree with 8 4 times, with B 18 times, with TR 20 times, any two of them agree with 8 8 times, with B 13 times, with TR 15 times, just one of them agrees with 8 36 times, with B 62 times, with TR 69 times, for a total of 48 times, 93 times, 104 times.

In other words, in the area covered by Klijn’s study the TR has more early attestation than B and twice as much as 8 – evidently the TR reflects an earlier text than either B or 8.” Wilbur Pickering, The Identity of the New Testament Text.

The instances of agreement of the above mentioned papyri with 8 and B is not a surprise, since they are even said to belong to the same type of text, they all are Alexandrian-Egyptian manuscripts.

But it is quite a surprise that they have so
many Traditional-Majority readings. The latter cannot be called Byzantine text anymore, since its existence before the Byzantine period is now a fact – existence definitely proved by a rival type of text witnesses! The truth is that, if P\textsuperscript{45}, P\textsuperscript{66} and P\textsuperscript{75} had been available then, there would have never been Westcott and Hort speculations about a Byzantine text, a Lucian Recension, a Neutral Text. The only result of their work and theories was to create the strongest prejudice against the Traditional Text of the New Testament.

**Luke 22:43-44.** "Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony He prayed more earnestly. Then his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground"

One can only wonder how can the witness for the omission of this passage can mean anything when it represents the voice of the champions of deliberate omissions: P\textsuperscript{75}, B, Marcion, Origen.

Some early Christian sects (among them that of Marcion) denied the reality of the incarnation of Jesus, not believing he was a true man! Is it any wonder that this passage of Scripture was removed from their Bibles?

With some other (confused) exceptions, the rest of the New Testament mss support the authenticity of this passage along with quotations
from the writings of early orthodox Christian writers like Justin, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Eusebius.

Luke 23:34. "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they do."

This portion of Scripture is omitted by P75, B, D and some few more mss. P75 and B are so close to each other that they could be with right considered just one witness. D, besides the famous Western Non-Interpolations, omits other passages considered unanimously original, Mt. 9.34, Mk 2.22, 10.2, 14.39, Lk 5.39, 10:41-42, 12.21, 22.62, 24.9, Jn 4.9.

What is the weight of the testimony of such an unreliable witness, which shows a text that has been so clearly willingly mutilated?

External evidence cannot motivate the denial of the authenticity of the words of Jesus. Metzger motivates the doubts cast on this passage by the fact that no reason could explain its deliberate omission. But I would rather say that: no reason that we know of, could explain the omission! How incredible were the suppositions of Origen to lead him to dismiss the word "behind me" as spurious. The fact is that we do not know why some might have removed this portion of Scripture, since such scarce evidence is in favor of the omission and the rest are for its presence. Therefore, if we want to abide in the realm of
objective evidence and not speculations, we must admit there are no true or sufficient reasons to cast any doubt on the authenticity of this passage.

**John 1:18.** “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.”

The Alexandrian text reads “God” instead of “Son”.

The change is very simple in the original Greek: it takes a single consonant change, since “Son” was among the so called *Nomina Sacra* and abbreviated YS (νς) and God was abbreviated ThS (θς).

Here we are looking at another corruption of the Alexandrian tradition and maybe clear evidence of Gnostic infiltration in the Egyptian text of this gospel.

Some modern translators understand the total absence of meaning of the expression “the only begotten God” and retain the Majority text.

Again the witnesses against the Majority text are not in agreement with each other.

- 1. ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς – “the only begotten Son” - is the Majority - TR reading.
- 2. ὁ μονογενὴς θεὸς – “the only begotten God” - is supported by P75, 33 and a corrector of Χ.
- 3. μονογενὴς θεὸς – “only begotten God” - is supported by P\textsuperscript{66}, \textit{K}, B, C, L.

The latter reading enjoys the consent of modern critics. But the contradiction in which the supporters of the reading “Only Begotten God” fall, invalidates the value of their witness. The article could only have been dropped intentionally. Omission is a characteristic of the Alexandrian text scribes. The freedom with which the text was handed, let the change to God enter the text. The imprint of Gnostic influence is clearly seen in the Alexandrian reading: "the only begotten God" simply means nothing.

**John 3:13.** “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”

The representatives of the Alexandrian text omit: “who is in heaven”. They are P\textsuperscript{66}, P\textsuperscript{75}, \textit{K}, B and 33.

Honestly it is a lot more explainable the omission of this gloss than the insertion of it. If we consider also that the longer reading is attested by manuscripts of different traditions against the Egyptian tradition only, it remains little or no room for doubt that the longer reading is the original. The reasons for its omission are explained by Bruce M. Metzger: “the
quality of the external attestation supporting the shorter reading, regarded the words ὁ ὡν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (who is in Heaven) as an interpretative gloss, reflecting later Christological development”. A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, United Bible Societies, second edition, page 175

The quality of a text limited to use in a single region is obviously poor. The “Christological development” explanation is even a weaker point, since this reading clearly creates a difficulty even to it. Such difficulty was the reason for its omission. It is both clear and simple. The loss in the rhythm of the wording is quite evident if the last sentence is missing.

**John 6.69.** “Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Instead of “the Son of the living God”, the modern text has “the Holy One of God”. I do not see the need to deeply discuss the importance of choosing one text instead of another. Such a slight change in the text is irrelevant, if you consider it as part of a text copied for nearly 1700 years. I urge the reader to keep this fact in mind, since it will be duly considered when I will draw my conclusions on this subject.
John 7:53-8:11

This portion of Scripture, the so called Pericope of the Adulteress, is one of the most famous portions of the Bible. It is supported by the Majority text.

Just like in the case of Mark 16.9-20, I ask the reader: why is it retained in the text of most Bibles?

If it really wasn’t part of the original gospel of John, why is it not completely deleted and the original text restored?

If it is considered original, how can we reject such an important variant reading of the Alexandrian text but adopt its other readings?

Most Bible readers don’t know that John 21 is also thought not to have belonged to the original gospel. This is usually supposed because of internal considerations on the text. But since (so far) not one ms supports its omission, no textual critic can successfully remove it from the received text. All it would take is even one single manuscript!

I personally advocate the inclusion of the Pericope right where it is. The manuscripts that have it in other places of the New Testament are unreliable witnesses.

It is supported by the Majority text and few other passages of Scripture have enjoyed so much
sanction from the body of Christ.

It is also found in D. It is in the Old Latin manuscripts b and e. Jerome included it in his forth century translation, the Latin Vulgate.

Augustine of Hippo, who lived between 354 and 430 AD, wrote concerning this passage of Scripture: “Certain persons of little faith, or rather enemies of the true faith, fearing, I suppose, lest their wives should be given impunity in sinning, removed from their manuscripts, the Lord’s act of forgiveness toward the adulteress, as if he who had said “sin no more” had granted permission to sin.” Quoted by Hills in the King James Version Defended.

John 8:39. “They answered and said to Him, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.’”

The confusion among the witnesses against the Majority reading has not stopped critics from choosing eclectically from the Alexandrian supporters.

- If you are Abraham’s children, do the works of Abraham” is found in P66 and B. It was the text of Westcott and Hort.
- If you are Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.” – is found in P75 and ʔ.
The latter is the reading adopted in the Nestle-Aland text.

It is so evident that the Alexandrian text must have fallen victim both of the attempts of scribes to correct the text and of early copying mistakes.

The Majority text has the strongest external support and is still to be preferred.

**John 10:29.** “My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.”

The *New World Translation* of the Jehovah’s Witnesses which adopts the Greek text of Westcott and Hort. “*The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*” translates: “What my Father has given me is something greater than all other things, and no one can snatch them out of the hand of the Father”

Again the simplicity of the truth of Scripture is turned into philosophy. The confusion of the mss against the traditional reading makes them support no definite reading. The traditional text is found also in P66. Again, another instance where the Majority text is supported by the earliest authority.

**Ephesians 1.1.** “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus.”
The words “at Ephesus” are omitted by some witnesses. The evidence for its presence in the text are too strong to give any credit to a few witnesses who have fallen victim of scribes seduced by the speculations of some early heretics and Christian commentators on the real addressee of this epistle.

1 Timothy 3.16. “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh …”

The reading “God was manifested” is the Majority text reading. The change, just like in John 1:18, was possible by changing one single consonant in the Nomina Sacra, since Θεὸς (Theos) was abbreviated Θς (Ths).

The modern text (Revised Standard Version) has “He was manifested in the flesh”. But this is not the translation of the Greek text they support. In fact the RSV adds in a note: “Greek Who.” If the Greek text says “who” why don’t they translate it “who”? Because in every language a sentence needs a subject and this is missing in the Neologist text!

Even more confusing the text of D and of the Latin Versions that read: “which was manifest in the flesh.”

Though a misleading note in the same RSV
says: “other ancient authorities read God”, evidence is abundantly in favour of the Majority text.

Pickering maintains that the manuscript evidence is the following: 300 Greek manuscripts read “God” and 7 have other readings.
CONCLUSION

The time has come to end our discussion and explain the peculiarities of New Testament Greek Textual Criticism and its impact on the Bible reader.

When I consider the various texts available today, I marvel at the great work of God, how he preserved his Word in such a miraculous way.

My first Bible was an Italian translation of the Textus Receptus, made by Giovanni Diodati in 1649. Then I began to read the Riveduta Luzzi Bible, which is similar to the English Revised Version and released a bit later than that.

Now I read the New Testament in Greek - praise be to God for that, it's not my merit but His grace! I learned Greek on the Textus Receptus. Later, when I was able to get one, I started using the Majority text, in an interlinear Greek-English edition. I also read the Nestle-Aland text which I consider very important for
study purposes.

The percentage of differences among different editions is so small and the quality of those changes affect so little the meaning of the sentences and passages and even less the doctrine and teaching of the Church that I can boldly say that the preservation of the New Testament is a fact.

No other book can boast such a wonderful reliable text after a 2000 years journey! 3000 years if we include the writings of Moses.

I believe in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible. I am convinced that God inspired the very words of Scripture. This is the supernatural, divine aspect of the Bible.

Jesus was God made man. He was true God, but was also a true man. A special man but human in the full sense of the term. The Bible is God’s Word, but it is also a book. As a book it was subject to all the quality and limitations of a book.

Today the Bible is being translated in many languages and published almost everywhere in the world. It is also available on audio, video, e-book, pdf, epub. The picture here to the left is the icon of a Biblical app(lication). It’s the New King James Version available for Smartphones and Tablets.

As a book it is enjoying all the potentials offered by the technology of our time.
Everyone has a Bible in their home. I have dozens, both printed and electronic editions. We welcome all the privileges, but we must also accept all the possible limitations of a book.

We cannot judge the facts that we cannot correctly interpret by using only today’s perspective. What was given to other generations has not been given to ours. And, at the same time, what has been given to our generation has not been given to other past generations. We need to live our time.

Some want a uniform text of the Bible, a printed perfect edition of the Scriptures to satisfy their need for certainties. Obviously, God did not want it this way. Looking for perfection in a printed Bible translation is frustrating like looking for doctrinal perfection in different denominations, when it is quite evident that no Church is perfect on this earth.

If we do simply look at the facts and consider them for what they are, we can but marvel at the greatness of God’s perfect plan to save man. How God created the ground for the birth of Jesus, so perfectly prophesied of in the Old Testament. How God arranged the times and the conditions so that the Gospel might easily be preached to all the nations, when the Roman Empire virtually united politically all the then known world and the Greek culture and language was familiar to people everywhere.

As there are some areas of Christianity and
churches that go astray and far from the truth, so far as that their faithfulness to the Gospel may be easily questioned - Jehovah's witnesses, Latter Day Saints or some liberal Protestant churches - at the same time, there are some Bible texts which can be considered inferior to others.

Critics today definitely prefer the Alexandrian, shorter, text. The rest follows as a consequence. It was the same text that circulated in an area where thinkers like Origen and Gnostics dominated the scene. This means one thing: the frame of mind of some scholars of today is simply more fitting to the frame of mind of those who lived in that environment and created the deviations of the text survived in the Alexandrian witnesses.

The same applies to Christianity today. Today’s moderate, compromising, educated but not convinced Christianity, animated more by ecumenical desires than by the will to spread the Truth of the Gospel, finds itself at ease with this fluctuating type of text, produced by likeminded people.

The modern text has not improved the TR, the Majority text in use in the Church, it has simply revived a text that the Church had long since gotten rid of.

But the Holy Spirit did not let some portions of Scripture to be taken away. I can't find any other good reason why Mark’s traditional ending or the Pericope de Adultera, though openly
considered spurious by eminent critics, are still there, available to reader in all the various Bible editions.

Also, most of the omissions of the Neologian text are not entirely followed and the text is still there: enclosed in double square brackets, included in the text with a note casting doubt on its authenticity. If the critics are so sure of these omissions and their text, why don't they just edit a text, their text, getting rid of the supposed spurious additions? Is it because the body of Christ won't accept such a text? Is it because the Spirit of God has already sanctioned some of the omissions of the modern text into the hearts of believers?

For the reasons that I have given so far, all evidence points to the fact that critics from Westcott and Hort till today have not improved the text of the Textus Receptus. Today's Greek New Testament is fluctuating, changing according to the personal judgment of editors and their choices among the contradicting evidence of mss departing from the Majority text. Westcott and Hort's Neutral Text proved to be a fable. The same will happen in time to the Standard Text of today.

My suggestion is that we follow the path of the early Church and confine again to oblivion the Alexandrian text and the confused isolated witnesses departing from the Traditional-Majority text of the New Testament.
Appendix I

Why was the Greek Language chosen for the New Testament?
According to the dating criteria we have adopted, I can share my conviction with the reader that the books which are part of the New Testament were all written before the end of the first century in the most widely spread language of the time: Greek.

During those days the Roman Empire was the leading world power, ruling all over the lands around the Mediterranean Sea, but its military conquest had not been able to affect the extension of the supremacy of the Greek language and culture. Just like the fall of the British Empire did not mean the end of the diffusion of the English language, also in the ancient world neither the death of Alexander the Great, the first agent of worldwide hellenization, nor the division of his empire, nor the Roman conquest were able to remove the Greek influence. On the contrary, the Romans themselves were fascinated and seduced by the Greek world.
In the third century BC, in Egypt, under the Dynasty of the Tholomeos, the Bible began to be translated into Greek. This version of the Hebrew Scriptures began very early to be called the Septuagint, which means Seventy (abbr. LXX) because of the number of the original translators and the providential circumstances under which the Pentateuch’s Greek version was completed. Whether history or myth, the name remains to this day.

What was the type of Greek used for the Septuagint?

Just like today’s English can be distinguished in its derivations: British, American, Australian, etc… The Greek of the third century BC, being a language spoken worldwide, also by non native speakers, offered a variety of choices.

Classical Greek was the elegant, sophisticated literary language. It was used by the intellectuals, philosophers, writers.

The LXX’s translators preferred the Koiné Greek, a less rhetorical, more practical, accessible, elastic, fluid form of language. More open to innovation and to the introduction of new words, it was definitely more fit to express the Hebrew religious language. The latter was characterized by a very rigid, well fixed technical terminology, fundamentally impossible to be fully translated into classical Greek and that, by consequence, needed a form of language that could be better adapted to foreign language and culture.
The Septuagint is an object of very deep study up to this day. The internet has become a valuable source for information on this subject. The Sinaitic manuscript (which contains it) and the Septuagint itself are now available online for anyone to study.

It is indeed hard to underestimate the importance of the LXX version of the Old Testament, its contribution for a better understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, facts and terminology. It also influenced the New Testament as we examine the original language in which it was written, that is a later development of the same Koiné Greek.

Jesus’ mandate was to spread the good news throughout the whole world.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19 – NKJV)

“you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 – NKJV)

The most obvious thing was that the apostles and the disciples would choose a language for the Scriptures of the Christian faith that would ensure the growth of the Church outside of the boundaries of the Jewish nation. Koiné Greek
was perfect for this purpose.

Literally speaking the New Testament – as well as the Old – is not the work of one single writer. Usually when we read the various versions, the change of the language and the presence of a translator, will naturally uniform the style of the books of the Bible. But if we read the original we will suddenly notice the different linguistic approach of each writer.

If we compare Mark to John, both words and style could hardly be more different. Paul writes even in a very peculiar way. He has a perfect knowledge both of Greek and Hebrew, and it is quite evident in the accurate terminology that he displays to lay the foundations of the Christian doctrine.

Luke writes the introduction to his gospel in classical Greek, elegant and rhetorical in style, which made his work more popular among the Gnostics sects hostile to the Jewish heritage.

All of the authors of the books of the New Testament – and I feel authorized to say, also the Holy Spirit – have given up artificial structures of literature, in order to embrace the vivid and accessible vernacular of the people.

The repercussions of this choice are amazing and we experience them on a daily basis when we read the Word of God, understand and live it.

The Greek of the New Testament is simple and clear, but by no means elementary or simplistic. It is not sophisticated for the simple
reason that it is intended to communicate – not
to boast knowledge and technique, but it never
gives up its own identity and the characteristics.
These traits, which make it a literary
phenomenon, are those that almost every culture
has each to confront ever since.

It is worthwhile notice that the Hebrew
influence on the biblical Greek gave rise to a new
religious terminology which would enrich the
Greek vocabulary so that it could properly
describe the truths of the Christian religion.

As far as the Greek influence on the Hebrew
religion is concerned, there might be different
opinions on the subject, since it is objectively a
far more complicated matter. Personally, I believe
that though the Jews might recognize the value of
the Greek language, their religious identity was
too strong to be contaminated with Hellenistic
practice and beliefs. The strong influence of
Antiocus Epiphanes or other rulers who tried to
impose paganism, rituals and thought, simply led
some to deny their Jewish heritage by accepting
the Hellenic philosophy. In a few words,
orthodox Judaism, after the Babylonian captivity
of the sixth century BC, was not inclined to
compromise with any foreign culture as time and
circumstances have abundantly left evidence in
history.

Going back to our main topic, the language
of the LXX and of the New Testament, was
simple, innovative; clear, live and stimulating.
Let’s see some examples in detail.

The Greek word "agape" (in the original Greek alphabet: αγαπη), which is famous also to many who have nothing to do with biblical Greek, is a peculiar word from the LXX and the New Testament. It is not found in classical Greek. The King James Version translates it Charity, which corresponds to modern “love” used by more up to date versions.

Another famous Greek word is "zoe" (ζωη) which means “life”. We find it used in particular in the gospel of John, where such a colloquial word has been enriched to the extent of reinventing it altogether, keeping only the original form of it, in order to express and communicate wonderful new meanings. In its original meaning, zoe has nothing of the deep spiritual meanings that the apostle attaches to it.

There is one word which is really worth not only mentioning but also considering. We find it in the book of Revelation: "pantokrator" (παντοκράτωρ), which means "Almighty".

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "He who is and He who was and He who is to come, The Almighty." (Revelation 1:8)

Outside of the Revelation we find this term in 2 Corinthians 6:18.
John took the word *Pantokrator* from the LXX translation where it thus rendered the Hebrew expression which in our Bibles is usually translated as “Jehovah of hosts” (ASV) or “Lord of Hosts” (KJV). In Nahum 2:13 the LXX reads *Kyrios Pantokrator* (κύριος παντοκράτωρ), literally: "Lord Almighty".

Why did the LXX translators choose to do so?

The Greek *Pantokrator* was used to translate the Hebrew term *Sebaoth* ( عبدالله) also in ancient books of the Bible. It literally reviews the original Hebrew word (Jehovah of Hosts) giving it a more universal meaning, becoming its Greek evolution, expressing the absolute sovereignty of God over all creation and every creature.

The Greek term itself might even have been created to translate the Hebrew here. This would explain why some other Old Testament books of the LXX do not translate the word but simply transliterate it into the Greek alphabet: Hebrew יְהוָּה צְבָאֹת, Greek κύριος σαβαôθ, (Isaiah 1:9), English: Jehovah of Hosts (ASV).

There is another expression used by John in the same context which is indeed worth mentioning. Addressing God as “*the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come*” I believe he gave the equivalent in the Greek language of the Hebrew הוהי as much as *pantokrator* translates the Hebrew צבאות (Sabaoth).
John knew the Tetragram, the Name of God revealed to Moses, YHVH (in Hebrew alphabet יהוה), but instead of transliterating it from the Hebrew, applying a similar process that brought to the birth of the word “Almighty”, he thinks it better to try to simply communicate the immediate meaning of that Name in Hebrew.

The four Hebrew consonants are vocalized in the Masoretic text as follows

יְהֹוָה

If we simply add the vowels’ symbols to the consonants, we’ll read in our alphabet the familiar YeHoVaH.

Asher Intrater is a Messianic Jew. He writes in his book “Who ate with Abraham?” that the sequence of the three vowels “e” (sh’va), “o” (holom), “a” (patach), indicate the root of the future, present and past tense.

We might even conclude that the phrase found in Revelation 1:8 was an attempt to render the Jewish name of God יהוה צבאות (Adonai Sebaoth) following the principles of the LXX translators, expanding the narrow Hebrew expression Sebaoth, giving it a meaning, a religious meaning, for the Greek speaking world when interpreted it as “Pantokrator”, which is in English “Almighty”.

So the national יהוה צבאות (Adonai Sebaoth) – Jehovah of Hosts becomes the universal “Κύριος ὁ Θεός, ὁ ὃν καὶ ὁ θὰ καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ”
Which the ASV renders in English: “Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Another very important Greek word is **Logos** (Λόγος) used by John in his gospel, in order to fully explain the relationship of Jesus with the Father and the Creation, before becoming a man. **Logos** is usually translated as “Word”.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

(John 1:1)

**Logos** is found in Greek philosophy long before it was used by John. This must not entitle us to believe that the apostle was looking outside of the Hebrew world in order to find ideas and terminology that could express the eternal state of the Savior: again a Greek terminology is simply borrowed in order to express a deeply Semitic concept.

The Greek fathers of the Church, such as Justin Martyr (II century), took the chance of this familiarity of the Greek speaking world with the idea and term of **Logos** to preach Jesus in a way that might be familiar to the non Jewish culture.

Nothing happens by chance – every believer must be deeply convinced of this.

The Hebrew language was born and raised along with the Faith in the Personal God of the people who spoke it: that is why it perfectly
conveys the facts and ideas of the Jewish religion.

The Greek language had reached quite a large diffusion and the necessary maturity when it came in contact with the Old Testament: in the right hands it could express any concept, abstract or practical. It became the language of the Septuagint and later that of the New Testament, the perfect means through which the faith in Jesus might be shared with people virtually everywhere.
Appendix II

7Q5
The Gospel of Mark at Qumran?
The picture to the left is the famous 7Q5 papyrus fragment, found in one of the Qumran caves. It is part of a scroll dated 50 AD. Some scholars believe it is part of the Gospel of Mark.

Is it really possible that the Gospel of Mark had already been written at such an early date and had reached the Qumran community? It is difficult, if not impossible, to underestimate the magnitude of such a discovery, if time and research will prove it to be correct.

The identification of the fragment 7Q5 with Mark 6:52-53 is not unanimously accepted. Though sufficient and reasonable evidence has already been provided to this end by some scholars of the past 30 years.

It was Joseph O’ Callaghan who first noticed how the Greek letters of this papyrus fragment
would not possibly combine with any other known Greek text except that of the Gospel of Mark 6:52-53.

O’Callaghan was led to recognize Mark in this passage by the unique detail of the ΝΝΗ, found in the fourth line of the fragment, with which, he believed, no other passage of Greek literature would so perfectly fit like Mark.

Another very important fact in favor of the identification of the fragment with the Gospel of Mark, is the space between what today corresponds to the end of Mark 6:52 and the beginning of Mark 6:53.

(πεπωρωµένη – space – Καὶ διαπεράσαντες).

In today’s books, when a paragraph or a sentence ends and another begins, we find a simple period. It is conventional of today’s languages. The same was represented in the writings of the time by a space, left between the end of a section and the beginning of another. This perfectly fits the context of Mark.

The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament entitles the narrative beginning with verse 53 as follows: “Many Touch Jesus and Are
Made Whole.”

The RSV also heads the passage beginning at v. 53: “The Healing of the Sick in Gennesaret.”

The scribe of the 7Q5 manuscript left a space exactly to the same end. This is a very strong point in favor of the attribution of Mark.

The text of 7Q5 agrees with Mark only if we understand the fragment to read: των in the second line. This way we can assume the line to be a part of the whole sentence of verse 52: “ου γαρ συνηκαν επι τοις αρτοις ην γαρ αυτων η καρδια πεπωρωμενη”

τ and ω are perfectly visible. Concerning the third letter, Thiede is convinced that what we see today is what remains of a ν and the identification with Mark is sure. He brought the dilemma to the attention of the Israel Scientific Police Department to analyze the manuscript with a special microscope. The identification with the letter as a ν seems to have been confirmed.

Another detail we need to explain is the τ of the third line, which would be replacing in the fragment the δ at the beginning of the word διαπεράσαντες.

Studying modern Greek one of the things that I had to notice was the fact that, for
example, the word used also in the Koinè Greek of the New Testament πάντα, “panta” – all – is today pronounced “panda.” Something similar happens in English, where words like “better”, for example, are pronounced by Americans as if the “tt” would be a “d” in the mouth of an English person. In my land, Sicily, people have a natural tendency to pronounce the Italian “t” as a soft “d”. In this perspective, being so natural a change in common languages between the t and d sound, it should not be surprising if such a change occurred during the first half of the first century too, especially in a language used by non native speakers as was the case for Greek in Israel.

Thiede gives evidence of such a δ to τ change occurring in a Greek inscription in the town of Jerusalem. This is enough to accept the change in the spelling as due to the current pronunciation of the Greek word in the Jerusalem area. Often scribes were writing under dictation. Of course, this would make misspelling the words easier and changes enter the text according to the accent of who was dictating.

Reading the works of Thiede has been a personal, incredible journey, into the potentials of a branch of studies that most of New Testament students, including myself, know so little of: Papyrology. Thiede’s, as O’Callaghan’s approach, to old papyrus and manuscript evidence in
general, is entirely different than the scholars’ we are used to find mentioned in Textual Criticism books or Commentaries on the Bible.

Usually, the results of critical studies in the text has resulted in affecting even the dating of the manuscripts of the New Testament, causing, if Thiede’s position will prove correct, great damage to all the fields of Biblical studies.

Critics believe the Gospels to be a late product of the first century. This is an assumption. There is no objective evidence to prove it historically. We speak of theories and not facts, though often contrary tends to be insinuated in the mind of the readers of their books. Scholars come to their conclusions analyzing the text as we know it today. It is not much to rely on. Most of what is left depends on personal judgment of scholars only.

Is it any wonder if Ferdinand Christian Baur thought that the Gospel of John was a product of the second century? P\textsuperscript{125} – discovered too late to stop Baur’s wrong speculations – stands today as conclusive, objective evidence against his very intriguing but false assumptions.

Are we at the dawn of a new day, when 7Q5 will concur in providing conclusive, objective evidence that late date assigned to the Gospel’s autographs is to be revisited and reconsidered? Perhaps.

I remind the reader that historical evidence points to the unanimous belief of the early
Church concerning the Gospels. They were believed to be the product of honest eyewitnesses of the events told.

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, in the early fourth century wrote his famous Ecclesiastical history, where he clearly states what the so-called traditional view has been and is. Let us enquire into his text and consider his own words. “So greatly, however, did the splendor of piety enlighten the mind of Peter’s hearers, that it was not sufficient to hear but once, nor to receive the unwritten doctrine of the gospel of God, but they persevered in every variety of entreaties, to solicit Mark as the companion of Peter, and whose gospel we have, that he should leave them a monument of the doctrine thus orally communicated, in writing. Nor did they cease their solicitations until they had prevailed with the man, and thus become the means of that history which is called the gospel of Mark. They say also, that the apostle (Peter,) having ascertained what was done by the revelation of the Spirit, was delighted with the zealous ardor expressed by these men, and that the history obtained his authority for the purpose of being read in the churches. This account is given by Clement, in the sixth book of his Institutions, whose testimony is corroborated by that of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis. But Peter makes mention of Mark in the first epistle, which he is also said to have composed at the same city of Rome, and
that he shows this fact, by calling the city by an unusual trope, Babylon; thus: “The church at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, as also my son Marcus.” 1 Pet. v.13.” The Ecclesiastical history of Eusebius Pamphilus, translated by Isaac Boyle, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1991, pages 64-65.

Of course, Eusebius’ words deserve more respect than blind acceptance, but they reflect what must have been the Church feelings and beliefs at such an early time of its history, at the beginning of the fourth century. At the same time, his words also speak of the Church’s deep respect for the Scriptures and their apostolic origin and consequent authority. The critical schools of the last two centuries have long traveled in an entirely opposite direction, which I must add, seemed to be led only by the blind desire to disprove the traditional faith of the Church. Such an approach would be worth of little or no mention if such was the attitude of people outside of the Church. On the contrary, it is a strange and noteworthy phenomena that this tendency has risen inside the Church and the Christian schools.

Further research is needed but, so far, I am inclined to believe that 7Q5 is really a surviving fragment of a Greek scroll which contained the Marcian account. If the second Gospel was in the caves at Qumran, the traditional date attributed to that Gospel is confirmed.
Here we see the cave 7 Greek Papyri as officially identified with progressive numbers. See them on the official website http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/
Appendix III

The DIVINE NAME in the New Testament?
There are some people that knock on your door and show you their Bible translation, claiming it is the best in the world also because of its unique attempt to restore the Name of God, Jehovah, both in the Old and the New Testament.

Is such supposed superiority claim based on evidence? The answer is: "No". I will show why in this article. I warn my readers: my arguments will be technical, focusing on the possible inclusion of the Divine Name in New Testament translations. Speculations on what the Hebrew text means to say when it speaks of names of God won't be found in this article. Also the possible pronunciations of the Name won't be evaluated or even cited.

The Bible says that the Divine Name was revealed to Moses by God Himself.

In Exodus 3:13-15 we read: "And Moses said to God, Behold, when I come to the sons of Israel, and shall
say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they shall say to me, What is His name? What shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM. And He said, So you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you. And God said to Moses again, You shall say this to the sons of Israel, Jehovah (יהוה) the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My title from generation to generation." (This and the quotations that follow are from the Modern King James Version free on the e-sword Bible software)

יהוה is the way the name revealed to Moses is written in Hebrew. Please notice that Hebrew reads from right to left. The Tetragram (from the Greek Tetragrammaton, which means four letters) corresponds in our alphabet - more or less - to the following letters: "YHWH".

The Tetragram is translated Jehovah in four passages of the King James Version (Exodus 6:3, Psalms 83:18, Isaiah 12:2, 26:4). The American Standard Version renders Jehovah all its Old Testament occurrences. The same happens in the Modern King James Version from which I am quoting Scripture in this article. Other less authoritative attempts are the New World Translation, the official Bible of the Jehovah's Witnesses, which has Jehovah both in the Old and in the New Testament. The Book of Yahweh is another "translation" trying to restore God's Name. It renders the Tetragram in our alphabet
Discussing the opportunity to render יהוה as Jehovah or Yahweh, or in any of the other suggested ways, is not the goal of this article. Neither it is to investigate the meaning of the Name or Names of God. It is my purpose to ascertain whether the Divine Name was part of the autographs of the New Testament or not and, by logical consequence, if a translator is entitled to restore it in the New Testament or not.

In general, the need of identifying God's Name has been felt by many translators when dealing with the Old Testament. but lately some have taken the liberty to extend such practice to the New Testament. In doing so, they must deliberately neglect the manuscript and also the internal evidence of the precious second division of our Bibles, so wonderfully teaching us the precepts of our Christian faith. They claim - with no true evidence on their side - that they are restoring the Name of God, which some kind of conspiracy must have removed from all existing evidence we can consult today - this is what they say or imply and we can't remain silent when confronted with such untenable and dangerous assumptions.

There is nothing wrong in studying the Hebrew roots of our Christian faith. I agree that the New Testament itself motivates the inclusion of Hebrew terms in our Christian terminology. Words like Hallelujah, Amen, Messiah, etc., are clear
evidence of such tendency. But the New Testament was originally written in Greek, not Hebrew and many Hebrew concepts have been adapted and expressed in the Greek language in which the inspired authors were writing - showing us that there is nothing wrong with translating God's Word. So if someone is trying to force the presence of God's Name (whether they transliterate it Jehovah, or Yahweh, or in any other way), along with those who try to "restore" as much as possible of Hebrew terminology and names in general, we can't help but be skeptical about it.

These is good evidence that the Divine Name, יהוה, in any of its forms, was not in the original Greek New Testament.

All the old manuscripts of the Greek New Testament show no trace of it.

We have almost six thousand manuscripts of the Greek original of the New Testament, attesting its text, its antiquity, its reliability. On this evidence we base the text of the Bibles that we read as God's inspired Word, on which we rely for our salvation and knowledge of pure apostolic doctrine. There is no trace in them of יהוה, or of any kind of transliteration of the Name in any way. In all the manuscripts, in all the occurrences of the Old Testament passages
quoted, where יְהֹוָה stands in the original Hebrew, the New Testament writers wrote invariably \textit{Kyrios}, which is the Greek for "Lord". Such was the practice of the Septuagint (abbreviated LXX) which is a translation of the Old Testament in Greek as old as the third century BC. Since the NT writers wrote in that language directly, they must have simply and logically followed the LXX practice. Again, unanimous manuscript evidence points in that direction. I believe this objective fact alone would suffice to end the matter here, but in order to give an answer to the theories the reader might had to confront himself with, I will add something to what I have already said.

Those who believe that the יְהֹוָה was in the autographs of the New Testament and that some kind of conspiracy removed it all together from all the existing copies, have absolutely no evidence to support their views. In doing so, in their blind need to advance their theories at any cost, they fail to see that, by accusing ALL manuscripts evidence to have been altered so well as to leave no trace at all of such a deliberate falsification, they are undermining the reliability of the text of the very Bible they say they cherish and honor as God's Word. If we believe that someone was able to remove or change anything from the Bible and leave no trace at all of such a corruption of the text, then we must also be ready to give up believing the New Testament as we know it as being reliable. We thank God that such
a possibility is not remote, but unquestionably and scientifically impossible and we can reliably trust the text of the New Testament, which has been handed down to us through the centuries, being virtually that of the autographs.

**No external evidence supports the existence of the Tetragram in the New Testament**

Not only Greek manuscript show no trace of God's Name in the New Testament, but also all other external evidence are against such a possibility. All the Christian writers of the first century quote the New Testament and there is no trace of the יהוה. This happens both in the orthodox and in the heretic writers - who agree on this, and it must be admitted that joined witness of enemies is very reliable.

**Internal evidence is against the inclusion of the יהוה**

The New Testament text clearly shows that even if its writers had written their books in Hebrew, they would have avoided the use of the Tetragram.

Though Jehovah's Witnesses keep on believing that our goal should be to bear witness to the
mosaic Name of God, in whatever way we write it or pronounce it, biblical facts point to an entirely different direction.

Jesus himself said: "But you shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you. And you shall be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Christian are Jesus' witnesses! The Bible clearly says so.

Let us consider some statistics concerning the occurrences of the יהוה and of the word God in the Old Testament.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>יהוה</th>
<th>God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The five books of Moses</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can easily see, Old Testament authors gave great importance to the Name God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. It was the Name that God revealed just before the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt. In that occasion God gave Moses the Law and He made a covenant with the nation of Israel.

In the New Testament things change. That a change occurred in the relationship of God with man and also with his people, who had rejected the Messiah, is clearly and openly stated by John
in his Gospel: "For the Law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

The New Testament is not Jehovah-centered - like the Old - but Christ-centered.

Even using Jehovah's witnesses' data, which is clearly an overestimation of the possible presence of the name Jehovah in the New Testament, evidence is clear: Jehovah is found 237 times, God 1363 times.

The tendency of the Old Testament writers is reversed and the use of the word "God" is overwhelming compared to the places where the JW inserted Jehovah. Also, it is worth notice that of the 237 occurrences over 133 are quotations or references to Old Testament passages. This reduces the potential use of Jehovah to around 100 occurrences. Less than one tenth of the times the New Testament authors used the word God. If the New Testament intended to be "Jehovah witnessing" it is indeed a very weak witness.

But if the words of Jesus are to be relied and we have to be his witnesses in the preaching of the Gospel, this must be reflected in the New Testament. Let's see some more statistics again.

In the New Testament: The word God is found 1363 times in the New Testament. Jesus, 1112 times. Christ, 536 times. Messiah, 3 times. Lord, 680 times (but they both refer to Jesus and the Father. It includes the 237 New World Translation's "Jehovah"). Father, 368 times. Son of God, 236 times. Savior, 24 times.
Even believing the ideas of the JW are correct, looking at the New World Translation, *Jehovah* is inserted other than the Old Testament quotations in a bit more than 100 hundred times, but the reference to the person of Jesus (1112+536+3+236+24) is found about 1911 times, to which the many times he is called "Lord" should be added. "God" alone is used more than ten times more than Jehovah.

Can there be any more devastating evidence to the Christ-centered New Testament doctrine?

Also, internal evidence shows that, being their focus on Christ, the New Testament writers had no reason to use the Tetragram when the consolidated practice of the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint, in some instances even directly quoted) was to use the word *Kyrios*, which is "Lord", for every occurrence of the Divine Name.

Why use "Lord"? Because even as far as the third century BC, it was a consolidated orthodox Jewish practice, as a sign of respect, not to pronounce God's name even when reading the Hebrew Bible. The Jews encountering the word יהוה in their Bible, even today, read *Adonai*, which means "Lord". Hence the Greek translation. Hence the New Testament practice. Hence every reliable translation renders it "Lord", not emendating the text, not following opinions and ideas, but simply translating the critical text.
adopted.

Even through the Greek language reverence for the Name is visible. In fact, New Testament writers show the same attitude of orthodox Jews of the first century in dealing with God's name, as statistics data confirms.

Though the whole New Testament was written in Greek, there is a Hebrew version of Matthew that circulated in the Jewish circles and was used in the fourteenth century to dispute Christian doctrine. I believe the way the Divine Name is dealt with in the Hebrew Matthew is very instructive. In every place where Matthew quotes from the Old Testament as well as where the Name is part of significant expressions (like "Angel of the Lord", which in Hebrew includes the Tetragram), the Hebrew text has ֶה, as a short form of hashem, which means the Name. As far as the rest of the book of Matthew, the Name is avoided, simply not used. This might not seem so important, but it is. It tells us that the writers showed very deep respect for the Divine Name, and that is more evident when we look at a Hebrew version of a New Testament book. It is also very visible in the Greek, as I hope sufficient evidence in the statistics shown above has been given. Also, which is really most important, the New Testament practice is perfectly in harmony with the orthodox Hebrew practice of the first century, as the finds of the Qumran manuscripts inform us, of avoiding the use of the Divine
Name except in Old Testament written quotations. This is good evidence in favor of an early dating of the New Testament books, that must have been written within the apostolic, Jewish circles. This gives more credit to the traditional views concerning the early composition and circulation of New Testament writings as Scripture.

The Tetragram in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX)

Some believe that the ancient manuscripts of the Septuagint can be a key to solving the problem concerning the presence or absence of the Name in the Greek New Testament. The Papyrus named P. Fouad 266 or also known as Rahlfs 848 is as old as the second century BC. It has the Tetragram in the Hebrew square alphabet, the one we know and which I also used in this article, which is still in use in Israel today. Other ancient Greek manuscripts of the LXX were found with the Name in paleo-Hebrew script, the alphabet in use before the square script alphabet came into use. The singularity of the scribal behavior has led someone to conjecture that the Septuagint, though a Greek translation, originally retained the Divine Name in Hebrew letters. Professor George Howard, whose merits are undisputed, but whose conclusions I strongly
oppose, set forth a theory: "that the divine name, יהוה (and possibly abbreviations of it), was originally written in the NT quotations of and allusions to the OT and that in the course of time it was replaced mainly with the surrogate" Greek word we translate in English as "Lord". (see Journal of Biblical Literature, The Tetragram and the New Testament, 96/1 (1977), 63-83).

I fail to see the reasons for the Jehovah's Witnesses' excitement concerning Howard's theories. They quote him as if he was giving any sanction to their practice of using Jehovah in the New Testament. On the contrary, he clearly states that: the New Testament originals might have had the original Hebrew words for the Tetragram (יהוה) or its common Hebrew abbreviation (יהו) - not Jehovah! Also, the fact that some ancient LXX manuscripts had the Name in Hebrew, is openly contrary to the use of Jehovah, that for a Jew might be as good as any other surrogate - since Jehovah is neither the transliteration of the Hebrew into our alphabet nor the way it is read. Jehovah's witnesses are used to quote authorities that, when fairly considered, are against their views. Professor Howard has been writing to the Watch Tower for a long time to lament this misuse of his work, but without any result.

Albert Pietersma has written a very deep and valuable article on this subject: "Kyrios or Tetragram: a renewed quest for the original LXX." He gives convincing evidence that the
presence of the Tetragram in some LXX manuscripts is due to the need of harmonization with the Hebrew text felt by some scribes or religious group. Specifically, in dealing with the witness of the above mentioned P.Fouad 266 or Rahlfs 848, he writes: "it contains at least half a dozen instances of correction to the Hebrew text. Some revising of this text has obviously been done in order to bring it in better accord with the Hebrew." Pietersma concludes: "In the Pentateuch kyrios (which means "Lord") as a surrogate for the tetragram is original."

In this perspective the testimony of the LXX to the Name assumed by Howard in order to develop his theory must be reconsidered altogether. His idea of the presence of the Tetragram or of the abbreviation of it, is not substantiated and cannot be considered anything more than a theory at best. In fact, evidence points to another direction than that suggested by Howard: the presence in some manuscripts of the original Hebrew name of God in a Greek translation, the LXX, must be seen as a trace of deliberate attempts of Jewish scribes to improve the text of the Septuagint, bringing it to a more evident dependence from the Hebrew original. It can be no matter of discussion the fact that the scribe inserting יהוה at the place of kyrios would not expect the fruiters of his work to read יהוה in any other way than Adonai, which is equivalent to kyrios in Greek and "Lord" in English.
The Septuagint testimony is in favor of the use of *Kyrios*, "Lord", by New Testament authors also where they quote from Old Testament passages. In fact they must have followed the Septuagint practice, using *kyrios*.

I hope I have given sufficient evidence that the apostolic writers showed the same kind of reverence for the Divine Name that was common among the Jews.

**Conclusion**

As I said earlier, no other evidence is so strong against the inclusion of יהוה in the New Testament like the witness of all the existing Greek manuscripts.

In the primitive Church days there were only local, independent groups (churches) connected one to another by bonds of love, but no central authority existed which could impose whatever idea, practice or text to all Christianity. Also, the New Testament books must have circulated for some time independently. They must have also been used and copied by heretics and, in general, by different emerging factions in Christianity.

It is practically impossible that something that occurred in all or almost all the books of the New Testament could be obliterated from manuscript evidence without leaving any trace at all. Not with the incredible amount of evidence we have to the
original Greek.

Not even entering into the details of the possible choice among the possible renderings of the Tetragram, I conclude that the serious, honest translator of the New Testament - in order to remain such and not become an editor of the text - must abide with the witness of the New Testament and translate "Lord" every occurrence of "Kyrios".

Of course the Hebrew translations of the New Testament must be an exception, since they should diligently render the Old Testament quotations including the Name. Of course the tetragram will be read by Jews "Adonai", which means "Lord" and corresponds to the Greek "Kyrios" - which is the reading adopted by the New Testament.

For all the above facts, the only possible conclusion of this discussion is that, as far as evidence is concerned, no translator has the right to discard the apostolic choice to include "Lord" (Kyrios in the original Greek) in the New Testament text, even in the quotation of Old Testament passages that, in the original Hebrew, included the Divine Name. All attempts to “restore” the Name, in any of its suggested readings, are not to be encouraged or supported, since they do not improve the text, nor even simply translate it, but represent a corruption of the text of the New Testament as supported and preserved by all the ancient manuscript evidence.
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