

500 TO 1

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In *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, pp. 106-125) Kurt Aland offers a summary of the results of a "systematic test collation" for the more important uncials from centuries IV-IX. He uses four headings: "Byzantine", "original", "agreements" between the first two, and "independent or distinctive" readings. Since "original" begs the question, and by it he seems to mean essentially "Egyptian" (or "Alexandrian"), I will use Egyptian, Majority (for "Byzantine") and "other" (for "independent or distinctive"). I proceed to chart each MS from the IV through IX centuries for which Aland offers a summary:

CODEX	DATE	CONT.	ONLY EGYPTIAN	BOTH E+M	ONLY MAJORITY	OTHER	TOTAL	CLASS.	CAT.
B-03	IV	<i>e</i>	196	54	9	72	331	E+	I
		<i>a</i>	72	22	2	11	107	E++	I
		<i>p</i>	144	31	8	27	201	E++	I
		<i>c</i>	80	8	2	9	99	E++	I
κ-01	IV	<i>e</i>	170	80	23	95	368	E	I
		<i>a</i>	67	24	9	17	117	E+	I
		<i>p</i>	174	38	76	52	340	E	I
		<i>c</i>	73	5	21	16	115	E	I
400									
W-032	V	<i>e</i>	54	70	118	88	330	M-	III
A-02	V	<i>e</i>	18	84	151	15	268	M++	III
		<i>a</i>	65	22	9	12	108	E+	I
		<i>p</i>	149	28	31	37	245	E+	I
		<i>c</i>	62	5	18	12	97	E+	I
C-04	V	<i>e</i>	66	66	87	50	269	M-	II
		<i>a</i>	37	12	12	11	72	E	II
		<i>p</i>	104	23	31	15	173	E+	II
		<i>c</i>	41	3	15	12	71	E	II
D-05	V	<i>e</i>	77	48	65	134	324	O-	IV
		<i>a</i>	16	7	21	33	77	O-	IV
I-016	V	<i>p</i>	15	1	2	6	24	E	II
Q-026	V	<i>e</i>	0	5	5	2	12	M+	V
048	V	<i>p</i> *	26	7	3	4	40	E+	II
0274	V	<i>e</i>	19	6	0	2	27	E+++	II
500									

(Continuing...)

CODEX	DATE	CONT.	ONLY EGYPTIAN	BOTH E+M	ONLY MAJORITY	OTHER	TOTAL	CLASS.	CAT.
D-06	VI	<i>p</i>	112	29	137	83	361	M-	II
E-08	VI	<i>a</i>	23	21	36	22	102	M-	II
H-015	VI	<i>p</i>	11	0	5	1	17	E	III
N-022	VI	<i>e</i>	8	48	89	15	160	M+	V
O-023	VI	<i>e</i>	0	4	9	3	16	M+	V
P-024	VI	<i>e</i>	3	16	24	0	43	M++	V
R-027	VI	<i>e</i>	0	4	11	5	20	M+	V
Z-035	VI	<i>e</i>	11	5	3	2	21	E+	III
Ξ-040	VI**	<i>e</i>	8	2	2	3	15	E	III
Σ-042	VI	<i>e</i>	15	83	140	25	263	M+	V
Φ-043	VI	<i>e</i>	11	83	131	18	243	M++	V
									600
0211	VII	<i>e</i>	10	101	189	23	323	M++	V
									700
E-07	VIII	<i>e</i>	1	107	209	9	326	M++++	V
L-019	VIII	<i>e</i>	125	75	52	64	316	E	II
047	VIII	<i>e</i>	6	96	175	21	298	M++	V
0233	VIII	<i>e</i>	3	23	47	5	78	M++	III
		<i>e</i>	52	21	40	19	132	E-	III
Ψ-044	VIII	<i>a</i>	22	25	43	15	105	M	III
		<i>p</i>	38	42	135	33	248	M	III
		<i>c</i>	54	8	21	14	97	E	II
									800
F-09	IX	<i>e</i>	0	78	156	11	245	M+++	V
F-010	IX	<i>p</i>	91	12	41	69	213	E-	III
G-011	IX	<i>e</i>	4	87	176	21	288	M++	V
G-012	IX	<i>p</i>	91	12	46	66	212	E-	III
H-013	IX	<i>e</i>	2	82	174	7	265	M++++	V
H-014	IX	<i>a</i>	2	22	48	1	73	M+++	V
K-017	IX	<i>e</i>	8	107	197	15	327	M++	V
K-018	IX	<i>p</i>	8	32	154	8	202	M+++	V
		<i>c</i>	4	9	77	6	96	M++	V
		<i>a</i>	1	23	51	3	78	M+++	V
L-020	IX	<i>p</i>	5	44	188	4	241	M++++	V
		<i>c</i>	5	9	78	3	95	M+++	V
M-021	IX	<i>e</i>	7	106	202	12	327	M+++	V
		<i>a</i>	1	29	70	0	100	M++++	V
P-025	IX	<i>p</i>	87	31	87	31	236	E/M	III
		<i>c</i>	26	6	46	9	87	M	III
U-030	IX	<i>e</i>	1	38	105	11	155	M++	V

(Continuing...)

CODEX	DATE	CONT.	ONLY EGYPTIAN	BOTH E+M	ONLY MAJORITY	OTHER	TOTAL	CLASS.	CAT.
V-031	IX	e	8	101	192	17	318	M++	V
Y-034	IX	e	4	95	192	6	267	M++++	V
Δ-037	IX	e	69	88	120	47	324	M	III
ϑ-038	IX	e	75	59	89	95	318	O-	II
Λ-039	IX	e	0	10	41	2	53	M++++	V
Π-041	IX	e	11	104	190	18	323	M++	V
Ω-045	IX	e	3	104	208	10	325	M+++	V
		a	3	29	69	3	104	M+++	V
049	IX	p	0	34	113	3	150	M++++	V
		c	1	9	82	4	96	M+++	V
063	IX	p	0	3	15	0	18	M+++++	V
0150	IX	p	65	34	101	23	223	M	III
0151	IX	p	9	44	174	7	234	M+++	V
		e	57	73	54	44	228	E-	II
33	IX	a	34	19	21	11	85	E	I
		p	129	35	47	36	247	E	I
		c	45	3	21	14	83	E	I
461	835	e	3	102	219	5	329	M++++	V

900

* Aland shows ap, but gives no figures for a.

** UBS³ has VIII.

By way of explanation: "cont." stands for content, **e** = Gospels (but Aland's figures cover only the Synoptics), **a** = Acts, **p** = Pauline epistles (including Hebrews) and **c** = Catholic epistles; "Cat." refers to Aland's five categories (pp. 105-6) and "class." stands for a classification devised by me wherein E = Egyptian, M = Majority and O = other. It has the following values, which are illustrated with M:

M VALUE	"PURITY"	PROPORTION	CONFIDENCE
M+++++	100%		
M++++	> 95%	19:1	very strong
M+++	> 90%	9:1	strong
M++	> 80%	4:1	good
M+	> 66%	2:1	fair
M	> 50%	1:1	weak
M-	plurality		marginal

I assume that Aland will agree with me that E+M is certainly original, so the "both" column needs to be disregarded as we try to evaluate the tendencies of the several MSS. Accordingly I considered only the "Egyptian", "Majority" and "other" columns in calculating percentages.

0274 and 063 are fragmentary, which presumably accounts for their exceptional scores, E+++ and M+++++ respectively; if they were more complete they would probably each come down a level. Out of 45 M segments 31 score above 80%, while 9 are over 95% 'pure'. It should be possible to reconstruct a "Byzantine" archetype with tolerable confidence. But one has to wonder how Aland arrived at the "Egyptian" norm in the Gospels since the best Egyptian witness (except for the fragmentary 0274, which has less than 10% of the text but scores 90%), Codex B, barely passes 70%. (On p. 95 Aland gives a summary for P⁷⁵ in Luke—it scores 77%). Further, besides B and 0274, P⁷⁵ and Z (both also fragmentary) are the only Greek MSS that score so much as an E+ in the Gospels. One is reminded of E.C. Colwell's conclusion after attempting to reconstruct an 'average' or mean Alexandrian text for the first chapter of Mark.

These results show convincingly that any attempt to reconstruct an archetype of the Beta [Alexandrian] Text-type on a quantitative basis is doomed to failure. The text thus reconstructed is not reconstructed but constructed; it is an artificial entity that never existed. ("The Significance of Grouping of New Testament Manuscripts," *New Testament Studies*, IV, [1957-1958], 86-87.)

For the other content areas the situation is not much better. Only P⁷⁴ (86%), B (85%) and 81 (80%) rate an E++ in **a**; apart from them only A and Aleph manage even an E+. Codex B is the only E++ (80%) in **p**, and only P⁴⁶, A, C, 048 and 1739 manage an E+. Aside from B's 88% in **c**, only P⁷⁴, A and 1739 manage even an E+. How did Aland arrive at his "Egyptian" norm in these areas? Might that "norm" be a fiction, as Colwell affirmed?

From the chart of the uncials it can be seen that Aland's remarks about the tenacity of the Egyptian text are overstated. In the IV century E leads in all four areas, although in Aleph E is weak and M is gaining. If W is IV century M has gained even more.¹ (I remind the reader that I am referring only to the information in the chart given above. In reality, I assume that the IV century, like all others, was dominated by Byzantine MSS. Being good copies they were used and worn out, thereby perishing. Copies like B and Aleph survived because they were 'different', and therefore not used.) In the V century M takes over the lead in **e** while E retains **a p c** (it may come as a surprise to some that C^e is more M than anything else). In the VI century M strengthens its hold on **e** and moves in on **a** (it may come as a surprise to some that D^p is more M than anything else). After the V century, with the sole exception of the fragmentary Z, all the "Egyptian" witnesses are weak—even the "queen of the cursives", 33, does not get up to an E+. Of the X century uncials for which Aland offers a summary, all are clearly Byzantine (028, 033, 036, 056, 075 and 0124) except for 0243, which scores an E.

When we turn to the cursives, Aland offers summaries for 150, chosen on the basis of their "independence" from the Byzantine norm. He lists 900 MSS only by number because "these minuscules exhibit a purely or predominantly Byzantine text", and therefore he considers that "they are all irrelevant for

¹ From the historical evidence surrounding the place where Codex W was found, it could scarcely have been produced later than 200 AD.

textual criticism” (p. 155). To do for the 150 “independent” cursives what I did for the uncials would take too much space, so I will summarize Aland’s statistics in chart form, using my classification.

CONT.	M+++++	M++++	M+++	M++	M+	M	M-	M/E	E-	E	E+	E++
<i>e</i>		10	23	12	6	16	1		2	1		
<i>a</i>		12	15	23	21	14	12	1	4	2		1
<i>p</i>	1	25	17	17	28	19	4		2	3	1	
<i>c</i>	1	9	18	6	30	21	10	1	5	10	1	
TOTAL	2	56	73	58	85	70	27	2	13	16	2	1

Even among these “independent” cursives there are two content segments that actually score 100% Byzantine! (424 in **c** and 1841 in **p**). The best Egyptian representative is 81 in Acts, with an even 80%. 1739 scores 70% (E+) in **c** and 68% (E+) in **p**. These are the only three segments that I would call “clearly Egyptian”. There are 16 segments that score between 50 and 66% (E). Pitting M - M+++++ against E - E++ we get 344 to 19, and this from the “independent” minuscules. If we add the 900 “predominantly Byzantine” MSS, which will average over two content segments each, the actual ratio is well over 100 to 1. I assume that almost all of these 900 will score at least M++, and most will doubtless score M+++ or higher. And to those 900 must be added another 600-700 that Aland did not mention. If we were to compute only segments that score at least 80%, the Byzantine to Egyptian ratio would be more like **500** to one! (If we considered only the minuscules it would be well over 1,000 to 1.) The MSS that have been classified by Aland’s “test collation”, as analyzed above (+ 210), represent less than an eighth of the total. But we may reasonably assume that most of the “independent” MSS have already been identified and presented—it follows that the remaining 1,500 MSS can only increase the Byzantine ratio. If the Byzantine text is the “worst”, then down through the centuries of manuscript copying the Church was massively mistaken! But in any case, in the face of such evidence, to prefer the ‘Alexandrian’ congeries of readings against the ‘Byzantine’ macro-tradition is surely an advanced exercise in perversity.

The MSS discussed in Aland's book reflect the collating done at his Institute as of 1981. Many more have doubtless been collated since, but the general proportions will probably not change significantly. Consider the study done by Frederik Wisse. He collated and compared **1,386** MSS in Luke 1, 10 and 20, and found only four uncials (out of 34) and four cursives (out of 1,352) that displayed the Egyptian text-type, plus another two of each that were partially so (*The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

That two content segments among the “independent” minuscules actually score 100% Byzantine suggests that there should be many more virtually perfect Byzantine exemplars among the 900 “purely or predominantly” Byzantine cursives—an eloquent testimony to the reverence and care employed by

successive generations of copyists. We have generally been accustomed to claim that between 80 and 90% of the extant MSS are Byzantine. If we define "Byzantine" as M++ (80%) or above, I believe we may safely say that over 95% of the content segments (**e**, **a**, **p** and **c**) are Byzantine. If we include M+ the figure goes up. Are we not justified in seeing all of this as a clear vindication of the Divine preservation of the NT Text?