

THE TEXT OF THE CHURCH

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In "The Text of the Church?" (*Trinity Journal*, 1987, 8NS:131-144 [actually published Spring, 1989]), Kurt Aland offers some important evidence from the early fathers that I have not seen elsewhere. It is a fascinating article wherein Aland is concerned to argue that the "Majority text" could not represent the original, that honor being reserved for the "Egyptian text." Such a conclusion is not new, but the evidence that Aland himself has presented deserves a careful scrutiny—is that really the story that it tells?

By way of background I will start with some observations that Aland makes about the early Egyptian church. "The earliest form of the New Testament text in Egypt obviously had its origins outside Egypt" (p. 138). Of necessity, since Egypt did not possess any Autographs. This means that the textual tradition in Egypt was second-hand from the start. Then Aland informs us that "at the close of the 2nd century" the Egyptian church was "dominantly gnostic" and goes on to state: "The copies existing in the gnostic communities could not be used [by bishop Demetrius], because they were under suspicion of being corrupt" (p. 138). Now this is all very instructive—what Aland is telling us, in other words, is that up to A.D. 200 the textual tradition in Egypt **could not be trusted**. Aland's assessment here is most probably correct. Notice what Bruce Metzger says about the early church in Egypt:

Among Christian documents which during the second century either originated in Egypt or circulated there among both the orthodox and the Gnostics are numerous apocryphal gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses. . . . There are also fragments of exegetical and dogmatic works composed by Alexandrian Christians, chiefly Gnostics, during the second century. . . . In fact, to judge by the comments made by Clement of Alexandria, almost every deviant Christian sect was represented in Egypt during the second century; Clement mentions the Valentinians, the Basilidians, the Marcionites, the Peratae, the Encratites, the Docetists, the Haimetites, the Cainites, the Ophites, the Simonians, and the Eutychites. What proportion of Christians in Egypt during the second century were orthodox is not known.¹

So, the situation in Egypt at the end of the second century (A.D. 200) appears to have been this: Both the Christian church and her Scriptures were in a bad way. In the year 200 (the approximate date of P⁴⁶, P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵) Egypt would be one of the last places in the Mediterranean world where one would go to find "the Text of the Church."

Evidence from the Early Fathers

At page 139 we come to the tabulation of Patristic citations of the NT. The turn of phrase could be ambiguous. E.g., Origen is said to be: "55% against the Majority text (30% of which show agreement with the 'Egyptian text'), 28% common to both texts, and 17% with the Majority text." $55 + 28 + 17 = 100$. The problem lies with the "of which". In normal English the "of which" refers to the 55% (not 100%); so we must calculate 30% of 55%, which gives us 16.5% (of the total). 55 minus 16.5 leaves 38.5% which is neither Egyptian nor Majority, hence "other". I will chart the statistics unambiguously, following this interpretation.

<u>father</u>	<u>date</u>	<u>Egyptian alone</u>	<u>both E&M</u>	<u>Majority alone</u>	<u>other (-EM)</u>	<u># of pass.</u>
Marcion	(160?)	23%	10%	18%	49%	94
Irenaeus	(d.202)	16%	16.5%	16.5%	51%	181
Clement Alex.	(d.215)	13.5%	29%	15%	42.5%	161
Hippolytus	(d.235)	14.5%	31%	19%	46.5%	33**
		13.5%	18%	21%	43.5%	21
		14.5%	18%	21%	46.5%	33

¹ *The Early Versions of the New Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, p. 101.

Origen	(d.254)	16.5%	28%	17%	38.5%	459
Methodius	(280?)	12.5%	31%	19%	37.5%	32
Adamantius	(d.300)	11.5%	21%	31%	36.5%	29
Asterius	(d.341)	---	40%	50%	10%	30
Basil	(d.379)	2.5%	39%	40%	18.5%	249
Apost. Const.	(380?)	3%	33%	41%	23%	46
Epiphanius	(d.403)	11%	33%	41%	37%	114**
		11%	30%	22%	37%	114
Chrysostom	(d.407)	2%	38%	40.5%	19.5%	915
Severian	(d.408)	3%	37%	30%	30%	91
Theod. Mops.	(d.428)	4.5%	29%	39%	27.5%	28
Marcus Erem.	(d.430)	5.5%	35%	35%	24.5%	37
Theodotus	(d.445)	3%	37.5%	37.5%	22%	16
Hesychius	(d.450)	3.5%	37%	33%	26.5%	84
Theodoret	(d.466)	1%	41%	42%	16%	481
John Damas.	(d.749)	2%	40%	40%	18%	63

** (With reference to Hippolytus and Epiphanius, the first line reflects the statistics as given in Aland's article, but they do not add up to 100%. The second line reflects the statistics as given in a pre-publication draft of the same article distributed by the American Bible Society. For Epiphanius the second line is probably correct, since it adds up to 100%—the 33 and 41 were presumably copied from the line above. For Hippolytus the second line doesn't add up either. So we are obliged to engage in a little textual criticism to see if we can recover the original. The third line gives my guess—the 31 and 19 were probably borrowed from the line below.)

One thing becomes apparent at a glance. With the sole exception of Marcion, each of the Fathers used the Majority Text **more than** the Egyptian. Even in Clement and Origen (in Egypt, therefore) the Majority text is preferred over the Egyptian, and by the end of the third century the preference is unambiguous. This is startling, because it goes against almost everything that we have been taught during this entire century. Perhaps we have misconstrued Aland's statement—actually, he wrote in German and it may be that his translator did not serve him well. Returning to Origen, we are told that he is "55% against the Majority text (30% of which show agreement with the 'Egyptian text'), . . ." On second thought, the "of which" is probably supposed to refer to the total. In that event a less ambiguous way of presenting the statistics would be to say: "30% with the Egyptian text, 17% with the Majority text, 28% common to both and 25% differing from both." I will chart his statistics in this way, using "other" for the last category.

father	date	Egyptian alone	both E&M	Majority alone	other (-EM)	# of pass.
Marcion	(160?)	32%	10%	18%	40%	94
Irenaeus	(d.202)	24%	16.5%	16.5%	43%	181
Clement Alex.	(d.215)	24%	29%	15%	32%	161
Hippolytus	(d.235)	24%	18%	21%	37%	33
Origen	(d.254)	30%	28%	17%	25%	459
Methodius	(280?)	25%	31%	19%	25%	32
Adamantius	(d.300)	24%	21%	31%	24%	29
Asterius	(d.341)	---	40%	50%	10%	30
Basil	(d.379)	11%	39%	40%	10%	249
Apost. Const.	(380?)	11%	33%	41%	15%	46
Epiphanius	(d.403)	23%	30%	22%	25%	114
Chrysostom	(d.407)	8.5%	38%	40.5%	13%	915
Severian	(d.408)	9%	37%	30%	24%	91
Theod. Mops.	(d.428)	14%	29%	39%	18%	28
Marcus Erem.	(d.430)	19%	35%	35%	11%	37
Theodotus	(d.445)	12.5%	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	16

most "Alexandrian" or "Egyptian" of the early Church Fathers, in terms of his textual preference. In this passage, at least, Clement is closer to the Byzantine than to the Egyptian text-type. 24 of the 26 UBS³ agreements with Clement are in common with the MT.

Codex D has long been notorious for its "eccentricity", and this passage provides an eloquent example. But compared to Clement Codex D almost looks tame. I would say that Clement has over 60 mistakes (involving over 120 words) in these 15 verses, or an average of four mistakes per verse! How should we account for such a showing?

Conventional wisdom would argue that with a passage so extensive as this one, 15 verses, the father must have been copying an exemplar that was open in front of him. But it is hard to imagine that an exemplar could have been this bad, or that Clement would have used it if one did exist. I feel driven to conclude that Clement transcribed the passage from memory, but was not well served. I wonder if this doesn't give us a possible explanation for the statistics offered by Aland.

Comparing "other", "Egyptian" and "Majority" the four earliest fathers have "other" leading with a plurality. Among them is Clement, who sides with "other" 32%. However, Aland's statistics are based on a selection of variation units (variant sets) considered to be "significant". If we plot all of Clement's readings within the variation units in Mark 10:17-31 (as given above) on the same chart we get:

E = 2(2%) E&M = 24(23.5%) M = 9(9%) O = 67(65.5%) # 102

The value of "other" rose dramatically. This is because O does not represent a recognizable text-type. In this exercise E and M are discrete entities (UBS³ and MT) while O is a wastebasket that includes singular readings and obvious errors. Perhaps we could agree that true singular readings should be excluded from such tabulations, but any limitation of variant sets beyond that will presumably be influenced by the bias of whoever conducts the exercise.

So what conclusions should we draw from this study of Clement? I submit that all statements about the testimony of the early Fathers need to be re-evaluated. Most NT citations were presumably from memory—in that case allowance must be made for capricious variation. If they would be likely to make stylistic alterations of the sort that are typical of the Egyptian text (such as moving toward classical Greek) they could happen to make the same "improvement" independently. Such fortuitous agreements would not signal genealogical relationship. Also, anti-Byzantine bias needs to be set aside. For instance, faced with Clement's preference for Majority readings in Mark 10:17-31 it is predictable that some will try to argue that medieval copyists "corrected" Clement toward the Byzantine norm. But in that event, why didn't they also correct all the singular readings? Question begging tactics, such as assuming that the Byzantine text was a secondary development, need to be dropped.

Evidence from the Uncials

On page 140 Aland turns his attention to the papyri and early uncials. I will begin with the uncials and come back to the papyri. "The earliest witnesses to the Majority text appear in the 5th century, with Codex Alexandrinus showing its influence . . ." With reference to the 6th century he says: "by far the greater number of manuscripts still did not have a predominantly Byzantine text but were independent (and largely "Egyptian") in character. The same is true of the next two centuries, . . ." In *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, pp. 106-125) 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 by "original" he seems to mean essentially "Egyptian" (or "Alexandrian") we may use the same headings as with the Fathers. I proceed to chart each MS from the IV through IX centuries for which Aland offers a summary:

Codex	Date	cont.	Egyptian	both	Majority	other	total	class.	Cat.
B-03	IV	e	196	54	9	72	331	E+	I
		a	72	22	2	11	107	E++	I
		p	144	31	8	27	210	E++	I
		c	80	8	2	9	99	E++	I
#-01	IV	e	170	80	23	95	368	E	I
		a	67	24	9	17	117	E+	I
		p	174	38	76	52	340	E	I
		c	73	5	21	16	115	E	I
-----400									
W-032	V	e	54	70	118	88	330	M-	III
A-02	V	e	18	84	151	15	268	M++	III
		a	65	22	9	12	108	E+	I
		p	149	28	31	37	245	E+	I
		c	62	5	18	12	97	E+	I
C-04	V	e	66	66	87	50	269	M-	II
		a	37	12	12	11	72	E	II
		p	104	23	31	15	173	E+	II
		c	41	3	15	12	71	E	II
D-05	V	e	77	48	65	134	324	O-	IV
		a	16	7	21	33	77	O-	IV
I-016	V	p	15	1	2	6	24	E	II
Q-026	V	e	0	5	5	2	12	M+	V
048	V	p*	26	7	3	4	40	E+	II
0274	V	e	19	6	0	2	27	E+++	II
-----500									
D-06	VI	p	112	29	137	83	361	M-	II
E-08	VI	a	23	21	36	22	102	M-	II
H-015	VI	p	11	0	5	1	17	E	III
N-022	VI	e	8	48	89	15	160	M+	V
O-023	VI	e	0	4	9	3	16	M+	V
P-024	VI	e	3	16	24	0	43	M++	V
R-027	VI	e	0	4	11	5	20	M+	V
Z-035	VI	e	11	5	3	2	21	E+	III
#-040	VI**	e	8	2	2	3	15	E	III
#-042	VI	e	15	83	140	25	263	M+	V
#-043	VI	e	11	83	131	18	243	M++	V

0211	VII	e	10	101	189	23	323	M++	V	600
E-07	VIII	e	1	107	209	9	326	M++++	V	700
L-019	VIII	e	125	75	52	64	316	E	II	
047	VIII	e	6	96	175	21	298	M++	V	
0233	VIII	e	3	23	47	5	78	M++	III	
#-044	VIII	e	52	21	40	19	132	E-	III	
		a	22	25	43	15	105	M	III	
		p	38	42	135	33	248	M	III	
		c	54	8	21	14	97	E	II	
F-09	IX	e	0	78	156	11	245	M+++	V	800
F-010	IX	p	91	12	41	69	213	E-	III	
G-011	IX	e	4	87	176	21	288	M++	V	
G-012	IX	p	91	12	43	66	212	E-	III	
H-013	IX	e	2	82	174	7	265	M++++	V	
H-014	IX	a	2	22	48	1	73	M+++	V	
K-017	IX	e	8	107	197	15	327	M++	V	
K-018	IX	p	8	32	154	8	202	M+++	V	
		c	4	9	77	6	96	M++	V	
L-020	IX	a	1	23	51	3	78	M+++	V	
		p	5	44	188	4	241	M++++	V	
		c	5	9	78	3	95	M+++	V	
M-021	IX	e	7	106	202	12	327	M+++	V	
P-025	IX	a	1	29	70	0	100	M++++	V	
		p	87	31	87	31	236	E/M	III	
		c	26	6	46	9	87	M	III	
U-030	IX	e	1	38	105	11	155	M++	V	
V-031	IX	e	8	101	192	17	318	M++	V	
Y-034	IX	e	4	95	192	6	297	M++++	V	
#-037	IX	e	69	88	120	47	324	M	III	
#-038	IX	e	75	59	89	95	318	O-	II	
#-039	IX	e	0	10	41	2	53	M++++	V	
#-041	IX	e	11	104	190	18	323	M++	V	

#-045	IX	e	3	104	208	10	325	M+++	V
049	IX	a	3	29	69	3	104	M+++	V
		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
33	IX	e	57	73	54	44	228	E-	II
		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 (*The Text*, 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+++++	=	100%	
M++++	=	over 95%	= 19:1 = very strong
M+++	=	over 90%	= 9:1 = strong
M++	=	over 80%	= 4:1 = good
M+	=	over 66%	= 2:1 = fair
M	=	over 50%	= 1:1 = weak
M-	=	plurality	= = marginal
M/E	=	a tie	

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. So, what can we learn from this chart?

Perhaps a good place to begin is with a correlation between "Cat." and "class." in terms of the values we have each given to specific MSS:

I	II	III	IV	V
E++	E+++M-,O-	E+,M++	O-	M+++++
E+	E+	E,M		M++++
E	E	E-,M-		M+++
	E-	E/M		M++
				M+

Categories I, IV and V are reasonably consistent, but how are we to interpret II and III? This is bothersome because in Aland's book (pp. 156-59) a very great many MSS are listed under III and not a few under II.

It would be helpful to see how many MSS, or content segments, fall at the intersections of the two parameters:

	I	II	III	IV	V	total
E+++		1				1
E++	3					3
E+	5	2	1			8
E	6	5	2			13
E-		1	3			4
O-		1		2		3
E/M			1			1
M-		3	1			4
M			5			5
M+					5	5
M++			2		10	12
M+++					10	10
M++++					8	8
M+++++					1	1

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%. (In *The Text*, 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."⁴

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?

Codex A^e is 82% Byzantine and must have been based on a Byzantine exemplar, which presumably would belong to the IV century. Codex W in Matthew is also clearly Byzantine and must have had a Byzantine exemplar. The sprinkling of Byzantine readings in B is sufficiently slight that it could be ascribed to chance, I suppose, but that explanation will hardly serve for Aleph. At least in p, if not throughout, Aleph's copyist must have had access to a Byzantine exemplar, which could have belonged to the III century. But Asterius offers much stronger evidence: he died in 341, so presumably did his writing somewhat earlier; it seems likely that his MSS would be from the III century—since he shows a 90% preference for Byzantine readings those MSS must have been **Byzantine**. (Using my classification, Asterius would be M++, the Byzantine preference being 83%. On a percentage basis Asterius is as strongly Byzantine as B is Egyptian.) Adamantius died in 300, so he did his writing earlier. Might his MSS have been from the first half of the III century? Since he shows a 52% preference for Byzantine readings (or 39%, using my classification) at least some of his MSS were presumably Byzantine. For that matter, P⁶⁶ has so many Byzantine readings that **its** copyist must have had access to a Byzantine exemplar, which would necessarily belong to the **II** century! (The circumstance that

⁴ "The Significance of Grouping of New Testament Manuscripts," *New Testament Studies*, IV [1957-1958], 86-87.

some Byzantine readings in P⁶⁶ were corrected to Egyptian readings, while some Egyptian readings in P⁶⁶ were corrected to Byzantine readings, really seems to require that we posit exemplars of the two types.)

Returning to the chart of the uncials above, 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. (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. By "used" I mean for ordinary purposes—I am well aware that Aleph exercised the ingenuity of a number of correcters over the centuries, but it left no descendants.) In the V century M takes over the lead in **e** while E retains **apc** (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 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.

Evidence from the Cursives

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 textual criticism" (*The Text*, 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++
e		10	23	12	6	16	1		2	1		
a		12	15	23	21	14	12	1	4	2		1
p	1	25	17	17	28	19	4		2	3	1	
c	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! 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 sixteen 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 one. (I assume that almost all of these 900 will score at least M++, and most will doubtless score M+++ or higher. If we were to compute only segments that score at least 80%, the Byzantine:Egyptian ratio would be more like **1,000** to one—the MSS that have been classified by Aland's "test collation", as reported in his book, represent perhaps 40% of the total (excluding lectionaries), but we may reasonably assume that most of the "independent" ones have already been identified and presented. It follows that the remaining MSS, at least 1,600, can only increase the Byzantine side of the ratio.) If the Byzantine text is the "worst", then down through the centuries of manuscript copying the Church was massively mistaken!

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].)

Now I wish to return to the chart of the Fathers (the second one) and apply my classification to those statistics. The result looks like this:

II & III		IV		V	
Marcion	O- (45%)	Asterius	M++(83%)	Theod. Mops.	M (55%)
Irenaeus	O (51.5)	Basil	M (66)	Marcus Erem.	M (54)
Clement Al.	O- (45)	Apost. Const.	M (61.5)	Theodotus	M (60)
Hippolytus	O- (44.5)	Epiphanius	O- (36)	Hesychius	M (53)
Origen	E- (41.5)	Chrysostom	M (65)	Theodoret	M+(71%)
Methodius	E/O(36.5)	Severian	M- (47.5)		
Adamantius	M- (39%)				

(Epiphanius, Chrysostom and Severian presumably did most of their writing in the IV century, and their MSS would date well back into it.)

I imagine that almost everyone who has studied NT textual criticism, as generally taught in our day, will be surprised by this picture. Where is the Egyptian text? The II and III centuries are dominated by O—only in Origen does E manage a plurality (a weak one, at that) while tying with O in Methodius. By the end of the III century (Adamantius), M has taken the lead, and is in clear control of the IV and V. The detractors of the Byzantine text have habitually argued that while Byzantine "readings" may be attested in the early centuries the earliest extant attestation for the Byzantine "text", as such, comes from the V. In contrast, say they, the Egyptian "text" is attested in the III and IV. Well, the tabulations of actual readings from the Fathers and uncials that Aland has furnished seem to tell a different story. In the first place, just what is the "Egyptian text"? How did Aland arrive at the "norm"? Could it be that there is no Egyptian "text" at all, just "readings"? Many of the readings that have fallen under "O" have frequently been called "Western". There are Western "readings", but is there a Western "text"? Many scholars would say no. If there is no Western "text", how can there be Western "readings"? On what basis is a reading to be identified as "Western"? How about the Byzantine "text", can it be objectively defined? Yes. That is why we can tell when we are looking at a Byzantine "reading"—it is characteristic of that objectively defined "text". If the Byzantine "readings" that occur in the II and III century Fathers and papyri do not constitute evidence for the existence of the "text", then neither do the Egyptian and Western "readings" constitute evidence for those "texts".

Evidence from the Early Papyri

On page 140 Aland also appeals to the papyri: "There is not a trace to be found of the Majority text (as defined by Hodges and his colleagues) in any of the forty-plus papyri of the early period (prior to the period of Constantine), or of the fifty more to the end of the 8th century." He is referring to "text", not "readings", but what does he mean by "not a trace"? In normal usage a "trace" is not very much. After his tabulation of the citations in the earliest Fathers, Aland states: "At least one thing is clearly demonstrated: it is impossible to say that the existence outside Egypt in the early period of what Hodges calls the 'Egyptian text' is unproved" (p. 139). He then refers to the first five Fathers by name. Notice that he is claiming that the 24% preference for Egyptian "readings" in Irenaeus, for example, "proves" the **existence** of the Egyptian **text** outside Egypt in the II century. If 24% is enough to prove the existence of a "text", surely 18% would qualify as a "trace"? If Aland's argument here is valid then Marcion's 18% preference for Majority "readings" proves the existence of the Majority **text** in the middle of the II century! If Aland is unwilling to grant that the percentage of Byzantine "readings" to be found in these early Fathers constitutes a "trace", then presumably they contain no trace of the Egyptian text either. But what about the papyri?

Unfortunately Aland's book does not contain a summary of the "systematic test collation" for the papyri, as it does for the uncials, so brief mention will be made of Eldon Epp's study of P⁴⁵ and Gordon Fee's study of P⁶⁶. With reference to 103 variation units in Mark 6-9 (where P⁴⁵ is extant) Epp records that P⁴⁵

shows a 38% agreement with D, 40% with the TR, 42% with B, 59% with f¹³, and 68% with W.⁵ Fee records that in John 1-14 P⁶⁶ shows a 38.9% agreement with D, 44.6% with Aleph, 45.0% with W, 45.6% with A, 47.5% with the TR, 48.5% with C, 50.4% with B, and 51.2% with P⁷⁵.⁶ Does 40% not constitute a "trace"? The picture is similar to that offered by the early Fathers. If we plotted these papyri on a chart with the same headings there would be a significant number of variants in each column—"Egyptian", "Majority" and "other" were all important players on the scene in Egypt at the end of the second century.

Mention should be made of *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) by Harry A. Sturz. He himself collated P^{45,46,47,66,72,75}, but took citations of P¹³ and P³⁷ from apparatuses in Nestle texts (p. 140). He compared these papyri with the Byzantine, Alexandrian and Western texts throughout the NT. He charts the results as follows:

<u>Readings Compared</u>	<u>Number of Occurrences</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>
PB/A/W	31	6.3
PB/AW	121	24.7
PBW/A	169	34.4
PBA/W	<u>170</u>	<u>34.6</u>
Total:	491	100.0%

"PB = papyrus readings supporting the Byzantine text; A = the Alexandrian text; and W = the Western text. Thus PB/A/W means the Papyrus-Byzantine readings are being compared against the Alexandrian where it differs from the Western readings" (p. 228). It thus appears that Sturz identified 152 places where early papyri side with the Byzantine text against both the Alexandrian and Western texts. He gives evidence for 175 further papyrus-supported Byzantine readings but which have scattered Western or Alexandrian support as well, and thus are not "distinctively Byzantine" (pp. 189-212). He refers to still another 195 cases where the Byzantine reading has papyrus support, but he doesn't list them (p. 187). The 169 PBW/A instances remind us of the statement made by Gunther Zuntz. "Byzantine readings which recur in Western witnesses **must** [emphasis his] be ancient. They go back to the time before the Chester Beatty papyrus [P⁴⁶] was written; the time before the emergence of separate Eastern and Western traditions; in short, they reach back deep into the second century." (*The Text of the Epistles*. London: Oxford University Press, 1953, pp. 150-51.) One could wish that Sturz had also given us the PA/BW and PW/AB alignments, but he didn't. In any case, doesn't all that early papyrus attestation of Byzantine readings deserve to be called at least a "trace"?

Concluding Remarks

In both his article and his book Aland's discussion of the transmission of the NT text is permeated with the assumption that the Byzantine text was a secondary development that progressively contaminated the pure Egyptian ("Alexandrian") text. But the chief "Alexandrian" witnesses, B, A (except e) and Aleph (*The Text*, p. 107), are in constant and significant disagreement among themselves; so much so 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. In A.D. 200 "there was no king in [Egypt]; everyone did what was right in his own eyes," or so it would seem. But what if we were to entertain the hypothesis that the Byzantine tradition is the oldest and that the "Western" and "Alexandrian" MSS represent varying perturbations on the fringes of the main transmissional stream? Would this not make better sense of the surviving evidence? Then there would have been no "Western" or "Egyptian" archetypes, just various sources of contamination that acted in such a random fashion that each extant "Western" or "Egyptian" MS has a different 'mosaic'. In contrast, there would indeed be a "Byzantine" archetype, which would reflect the original. [As those who receive my mailings are aware,

⁵ "The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, XCIII (1974), pp. 394-96.

⁶ *Papyrus Bodmer II (P⁶⁶): Its Textual Relationships and Scribal Characteristics*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1968, p. 14.

I now affirm that Family 35 is the only text-type with an unambiguous profile/archetype, and so it is the only viable candidate for the Original Text.]

Aland seems to grant that down through the centuries of church history the Byzantine text was regarded as "the text of the church" (p. 142-3), and he traces the beginning of this state of affairs to Lucian. He makes repeated mention of a "school of/at Antioch" and of Asia Minor. All of this is very interesting, because in his book he agrees with Adolf Harnack that "about 180 the greatest concentration of churches was in Asia Minor and along the Aegean coast of Greece" (p. 53). This is the area where Greek was the mother tongue and where Greek continued to be used (until the fall of Constantinople). It is also the area that started out with most of the Autographs. But Aland continues: "Even around A.D. 325 the scene was still largely unchanged. Asia Minor continued to be the heartland of the Church." "The heartland of the Church"—so who else would be in a better position to identify the correct text of the New Testament? Who could 'sell' a fabricated text in Asia Minor in the early fourth century? I submit that the Byzantine text dominated the transmissional history because the churches in Asia Minor vouched for it. And they did so, from the very beginning, because they knew it was the true text, having received it from the Apostles. The Majority Text is what it is just because it has always been **the Text of the Church.**