Morrill's Thesis on John 18

In 2012 Michael Bruce Morrill submitted his doctoral thesis to the University of Birmingham. It revolved around a complete collation of 1629 available MSS for the eighteenth chapter of John. In his acknowledgements Morrill states that "dozens of volunteers" participated in the collating. Since he could not check the work of all those people, we have no guarantee of absolute accuracy; but assuming that none of the collators deliberately falsified his findings, we may accept the findings as being very close to reality; certainly more than enough for my present purpose. I imagine that few of my readers will have seen this thesis, so I am sending along a few observations based upon it. I venture to think that they will be of interest.

Chapter 18 has 40 verses. For those 40 verses Morrill lists 395 variant sets, and many of them involve more than one word. There are so many because he listed virtually all variation in the MSS collated. One is reminded of E.C. Colwell's dictum: all singular readings should be rigorously excluded from consideration, and therefore from the critical apparatus. However, singular readings are important for determining the care quotient of the copyists, so they should be registered in a separate file. Had Morrill neglected singular readings, his apparatus would be somewhat shorter. That said, however, Morrill's procedure is important because it highlights the difference between a partial collation, as in TuT or ECM, and a complete one. The percentage of variation for an individual MS varies considerably. Morrill himself furnishes this evidence by comparing his collations for chapter 18 with those of TuT for John 1-10. Here are some results based on the majority reading that resulted from the collations.

MS	Jn. 18		Jn. 1-10
05	(110/131)	84.0%	41.3%
P^{66}	(169/198)	85.4%	44.8%
01	(344/395)	87.1%	36.7%
2786	(344/394)	87.3%	71.2%
03	(353/395)	89.4%	34.6%
032	(355/395)	89.9%	36.3%
04	(299/329)	90.9%	41.7%

It requires only a glance to see that the difference is dramatic. I will now limit my comments to John 18. Codex D (05) is the worst of the MSS that were collated (for John 18), which does not surprise us, followed by P^{66}, that also does not surprise us. Of the complete MSS, Codex Aleph (01) is the worst, and so on. NA^{27} differs from the majority 41 times, and compared to it the percentages go up for all the above except MS 2786.

Now then, doing a complete collation highlights the true level of manuscript support for majority readings; consider: Out of 1629 collated MSS, only ten fall below 90% support for the majority, and only one, Codex D, falls below 85%. I will now plot the percentages for 90% and above.

%	# of MSS
90	8
91	14
92	16
93	33
94	41
95	100
96	204
97	398
98	510
99	299
100	6 [five of these are fragments; only MS 226 is complete]

Only 122 MSS fall below 95%; a full half score 98% or above; Family 35 differs from the majority three times, and thus makes up the bulk of the 99%. Why then does 98% have so many (510)? Those 510 must represent a number of lines of transmission within the Byzantine bulk. If singular readings were removed, well over half of the MSS would score 98% or above. Really now, how can we explain a text-type that dominates 98% of the transmission? Must it not derive directly from the Source?

Of particular interest to me is a comparison of my apparatus with Morrill's findings. I repeat the statement from the last footnote for John (in my Greek Text).

> In the statements of evidence I have included the percentage of manuscript attestation for each variant within either ( ) or [ ]. I have used ( ) for the evidence taken from *Text und Textwert*, which I take to be reasonably precise. For the variant sets that are not covered there, I referred to Swanson, Scrivener and von Soden—the percentages offered, I have used [ ] for these, are extrapolations based on a comparison of these sources.
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> I venture to predict, if complete collations ever become available, that for any non-Byzantine variants listed with 5 to 1% support (in my apparatus) the margin of error should not exceed ± 2%; for non-Byzantine variants listed with 10 to 6% support the margin of error should hardly exceed ± 4%; where there is some division among the Byzantine witnesses the margin of error should rarely exceed ± 15%—since my sources had collated a lower percentage of the extant MSS than ECM for the General Epistles, for example, my guesses as to percentages are more tentative than they were there, except that I guarantee the witness of **f^{35}**.

So then, how did I do? Of my 59 footnotes (John 18), 40 are vindicated; only five or six were off to a surprising extent (to me). Also, I will have to add two new footnotes, where variants not printed in any of the six editions in my apparatus scored over 10% attestation. Nothing

from Morrill's evidence even remotely challenges my choice of text. I will here give the 'surprising' notes, including the new ones, as they would appear in a revised apparatus; the 'address' is based on the second edition.

v. 7, fn 13: αυτους επηρωτησεν **f**^{35} ℵD,N,W [75%] CP,HF,RP,OC,TR || αυτοις 2 [18%] || ~ 21 A,B,C [6%] NU || 2 [1%] [The surprise here is that my sources evidently did not catch the 18% variant; but it makes no difference.]

v. 25, fn 11: ουν **f**^{35} [71%] CP,HF,RP,OC || --- ℵA,B,C,N,W [29%] TR,NU [The jump from 10% to 29% was more than expected; but it makes no difference.]

v. 28, fn 14: πρωι **f**^{35} ℵA,B,C,W [60%] CP,HF,RP,OC,NU || πρωια N [38%] TR || --- [2%] [The jump from 30% to 60% is surprising; but it makes no difference.]

v. 31, fn 7: ουν **f**^{35} ℵW [87%] CP,HF,RP,OC,TR || δε A,N [12%] || --- B,C [1%] NU [The increase from 2.5% to 12% is more than expected; but it makes no difference.]

v. 39, fn 5: υμιν απολυσω **f**^{35} [79%] CP,HF,RP,OC,TR || ~ 21 P^{66}ℵA,B,N,W [10%] NU || ~ ινα 21 [6%] || 2 [4%] || ινα 12 [1%] [The unexpected here is the added three variants, totaling 11%; but it makes no difference.]

v.40, fn 7: παντες **f**^{35} A,N [88%] CP,HF,RP,OC,TR || --- ℵB,W [12%] NU [The jump from 1% to 12% is unusual, to say the least; but it makes no difference.]

I will now give the two new footnotes:

v. 4: ερχομενα *rell* || επερχομενα [11%]

v. 16: τη θυρα *rell* || την 2 [13%] || την θυραν [12%]

It remains to comment on a serious error in Morrill's apparatus. I will reproduce the variant set in question from my apparatus, as a basis for discussion.

v. 39, fn 3: ημιν **f**^{35} [20%] || υμιν ℵA,B,W [80%] CP,HF,RP,OC,TR,NU || υμων N [Really now, would Rome release a prisoner based on a Jewish demand? This was evidently a bit of 'pub rel' that Rome had decided to do.]

When I came to this spot in Morrill's apparatus, I looked in vain for the Family 35 reading: there is simply no mention of it. Now then, I have collated 57 **f**^{35} representatives for the whole book, and only five of them abandon the family reading here. This means that over 200 MSS read ημιν! Whether the error was due to carelessness or dishonesty, to fail to mention a reading contained in over 200 MSS is simply unacceptable.