

About 'Pattern' and 'Dependency'

Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD

When 100% of the known MSS are in agreement, the pattern and dependency among the MSS is total, or complete. Since ALL MSS received common influence from the Original, it is the divergences that require special attention.

When 100% of the known MSS are in agreement, there can be no reasonable question as to the original wording. This is probably true for at least 50% of the words in the NT. For many more of the words, only one MS disagrees—we call this a 'singular' reading. I agree with E.C. Colwell when he declared that all singular readings should be rigorously excluded from consideration¹—even when a given reading is not an obvious mistake. It is simply unreasonable to imagine that a single MS could be correct against 1,700 in the Gospels, or against 700 in Paul. When all lines of transmission are in agreement, they must reflect the Original. If the MS containing a singular variant belongs to a line of transmission, that variant cannot be correct (it is internal to that line).

MSS that are so individually disparate that they cannot be grouped do not belong to any line of transmission. Any singular that they contain cannot be correct. The number of MSS containing the NT is so vast that any disparate MS was simply someone's private property; it is irrelevant to the history of the transmission of the Text.

When two or more MSS agree in a divergence, at least three questions need to be asked: 1) Were they produced in the same place? 2) Is it an easy copying mistake that different copyists could make independently? 3) Do they belong to the same line of transmission? When two or more MSS share a number of variants in common, there is probably some dependency: they share a common influence of some sort. The extent of such influence requires scrutiny.

Colwell opined that two MSS should agree at least 70% of the time, where there is variation, in order to be classed as representatives of the same family² [I would require 80%]. Since Codices Aleph and B agree less than 70% of the time, they fall below Colwell's threshold. That said, however, it cannot be denied that those two MSS suffered a common contamination, to be joined in varying degrees by A, C, D and W. That common contamination must have had a source; where? Within the discipline of NT textual criticism, that common contamination is called the

¹ "External Evidence and New Testament Criticism", *Studies in the History of the Text of the New Testament*, ed. B.L. Daniels and M.J. Suggs (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1967), p. 8.

² "The Significance of Grouping of New Testament Manuscripts," *New Testament Studies*, IV (1957-1958).

'Alexandrian' text-type. Since Alexandria is in Egypt, that text-type is also called 'Egyptian'. Each of the six codices mentioned above has a distinct conglomerate of variants; they are each rather different from all the others. Since they each have neither parents nor children (that we know of), they are individual productions, fabricated copies. We have no way of knowing what motivated each of the copyists who produced those fabricated copies. However, our ignorance on that point does not change the nature of those fabricated copies.

Years ago, Colwell demonstrated that it is impossible to define an archetypal form for the so-called 'Alexandrian' text-type based on a vote of the participating MSS.¹ **A text-type without an archetype is a fiction.** That said, however, the common contamination attributed to Alexandria is not a fiction. Before he died, Kurt Aland, that great champion of the 'Egyptian' text, wrote that in 200 A.D. the gnostic presence and influence in Egypt was so pervasive that the manuscripts in Egypt could not be trusted!² He also wrote that at that time the use of Greek in Egypt was dying out.³ (So on what basis did he claim that the 'Egyptian' text was the best?)

Based on the objective evidence available to us, it seems to me that the production of MSS in Alexandria and environs was never more than a stagnant eddy on the fringe of the great river of NT transmission. The surviving MSS supposed to have been produced there are so disparate that they do not qualify as a line of transmission. Since we have the names of at least eleven gnostic 'denominations' in Egypt in 200 A.D., there was doubtless no lack of fabricated copies among them. The great age of a fabricated copy does not alter the fact that it is a fabricated copy! A fabricated copy is irrelevant to the history of the transmission of the Text.

Frederik Wisse collated and compared 1,386 MSS in Luke 1, 10 and 20 (three complete chapters); he reduced those MSS to 37 groups (families) (plus 89 "mavericks" [MSS that are so individually disparate that they cannot be grouped]).⁴ It happens that 36 of the 37 fall within the broad Byzantine river of transmission. He found 70 subgroups within the 36, so felt able to define those relationships, based on the profiles. The 37th group is the 'Alexandrian', to which he assigned precisely ten MSS for the three chapters—10 out of 1,386, just what one might expect for a stagnant eddy. Wisse used pattern and dependency.

¹ Colwell, "The Significance of Grouping of New Testament Manuscripts", *New Testament Studies*, IV (1957-1958), 86-87.

² "The Text of the Church?", *Trinity Journal*, 1987, 8NS:138.

³ K. and B. Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), pp. 52-53.

⁴ *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

Herman C. Hoskier collated about 220 MSS for the Apocalypse, and assigned them to nine families or groups, based on their affinities. For the purposes of the following discussion, I will assign them letters: **a** through **i**. The critical apparatus of my Greek Text (Family 35) for the Apocalypse, based on Hoskier's collations, treats about 954 variant sets. I did a rough and ready count of all the internal divisions within the nine families, as given in my apparatus (for my present purpose, precision is not necessary). I now list the families in descending order of the number of divisions:

e—495
i—424
h—412
a—268
g—191
d—163
b—135
f—104
c—20

The total is 2,121, which gives an average of 2.3 per variant set! Strange to relate, in spite of all the fuzz, each of the groups has enough private property to permit identification. The top three have division around half of the time; evidently there was a great deal of comparison and mixture going on. Group **a** is by far the largest, and Hoskier identified five subgroups within it, so the high number should not surprise us. The number for the last one, **c**, is remarkably small, compared to the others. It happens that **c** equals my Family 35, and is perhaps the second largest group. I wish to explore the question: what do pattern and dependency tell us about the evidence presented above?

But first, I wish to analyze the Family 35 divisions. There are eleven numbers that are either spelled out or represented by the appropriate letters; since these are two ways of saying the same thing, they are not variants, and I did not count them. Nine are alternate spellings of the same word; I did count these, but they are not proper variants (for eight of them the difference is of a single letter, and the other is a diphthong). That leaves eleven proper variants, five of which involve a single letter, and three a diphthong; only one involves more than two letters. In short, Family 35 is very solid (internally coherent), much more so than any of the other groups. The proper variants involve only nineteen letters for the whole book of Revelation—astonishing!

What do pattern and dependency tell us about the evidence presented above? I begin with the following postulates:

- 1) When 100% of the known MSS are in agreement, the pattern and dependency among the MSS is total.
- 2) All MSS received common influence from the Original.
- 3) All singular readings should be rigorously excluded from consideration.
- 4) Any idiosyncratic MS was simply someone's private property, a fabricated copy; it is irrelevant to the history of the transmission of the Text.
- 5) Fragments do not contain enough text to permit classification, and like the idiosyncratic MSS are therefore irrelevant to the history of the transmission of the Text.¹

Since all the extant MSS from the first five centuries (in Revelation) are either fragments or idiosyncratic, I will confine my analysis to the lines of transmission.

To begin, Hoskier used pattern and dependency to identify his nine groups. But obviously they cannot all represent the original, except when all are in agreement. Do we have nine independent groups, or can some of the groups be grouped? I went through my apparatus and listed all the different combinations among the nine groups, with the number of times each combination occurred (a combination of two or more groups). I found **238** different combinations!! I counted only full groups (no divisions) except that I considered 2/3 or more to represent the full group. Because of the inordinate amount of fuzz, the statistics that I offer can only be a rough approximation, but they are good enough to allow defensible conclusions. However, 96 of the combinations occur only once, and 42 only twice, so I excluded them from the following tabulation. That still leaves one hundred!

I am pleased to note that the recent *Text und Textwert* for the Apocalypse (2017) recognizes their Complutensian text as an independent line of transmission, along with the so-called Koine and Andreas texts. Their Complutensian is my Family 35; it corresponds to group **c** below. Their Koine corresponds to groups **a, b, f, g, i** below. Their Andreas corresponds to groups **d, e, h** below—well, that is to say, according to my evaluation. As you can see below, there is a good deal of 'promiscuity', the individual groups move around, some more than others. The most difficult case is **h**, that goes with the Koine almost as often as with Andreas.

Based on my analysis of Hoskier, the groups have the following 'size': **a** is represented by 65 MSS; **b** by 10; **c** by 33;² **d** by 15; **e** by 31; **f** by 11; **g** by 9; **h** by 13; **i** by 11. (**a** alone is larger than **b, f, g, i** combined.) (**d** is smaller than **e**, but **e** is

¹ However, both fragments and idiosyncratic MSS demonstrate that any variants they contain existed at the time they were produced. They demonstrate existence, not value.

² I have added 10 MSS to the 33, based on research I did at the INTF. Of the 43, one is a mere fragment, but it contains the first diagnostic family reading.

by far the most fragmented group.)¹ Since I consider c to be the common denominator, I place it first; a leads the Koine and d the Andreas. Only combinations are listed; each group occurs by itself as well.

ca—10	cbdeg—5	ab—3	bd—9
cabdfgi—15	cbdegh—11	abdefghi—11	bde—12
cabdfi—3	cbdeh—6	abdfghi—10	bdeh—12
cabefgi—4	cbdfhi—3	abdfgi—4	bdf—4
cabf—5	cbefghi—3	abdfh—3	bdh—3
cabfg—8	cbegh—4	abefghi—4	be—7
cabfghi—28	cd—22	abefhi—3	beh—4
cabfgi—47	cde—49	abf—23	bf—4
cabfhi—7	cdef—13	abfg—15	bg—3
cabfi—13	cdefghi—3	abfgh—3	bh—5
cabghi—3	cdefhi—3	abfghi—20	
cadfghi—4	cdeg—11	abfgi—33	de—52
cadfgi—5	cdegh—14	abfh—4	def—8
caf—9	cdeghi—4	abfhi—8	deg—5
caf—6	cdeh—32	abfi—17	degh—8
cafgh—5	cdehi—7	abgh—3	deh—25
cafgi—24	cdg—3	af—19	dei—3
cafhi—3	cdh—7	afg—15	df—6
cafi—5	ce—10	afghi—9	dg—3
cag—4	cef—4	afgi—7	dh—19
caghi—6	ceg—3	afh—5	
cb—5	ceh—5	afhi—3	eg—5
cbd—4	cf—4	afi—14	egh—3
cbde—15	cg—5	ag—19	eh—11
cbdefghi—3	ch—3	agh—5	
cbdefhi—6		agi—3	gh—4

Please remember that I have not listed 138 further combinations that occur only once or twice. The amount of ‘mixture’ is bewildering. In spite of all that, for at least 80 years the following canard has been standard fare within the discipline: the Complutensian group is a composite based on the Koine and Andreas groups. But how does that idea square with the evidence given above? c occurs in no fewer than 129 combinations with other groups, quite apart from the times when

¹ I should mention that Hoskier collated 14 MSS that I have not included in the nine groups (for various reasons). If they do not belong to a line of transmission, nor themselves form a separate group, they are irrelevant.

it is alone. However, it is almost never entirely alone; a sprinkling of unrelated MSS will agree with it; but the roster of such MSS is always different (if the roster were the same, such MSS would be part of the family). The incredible range of unrelated associations permits two conclusions: 1) the MSS that represent the group can be identified and factored out, giving us an empirically defined family; 2) that empirically defined family **must be independent** of all other lines of transmission.

So what do pattern and dependency tell us about the evidence? They operate at two levels: within a group and between groups. Within a group they define the level of consistency or internal coherence exhibited by that group. Thus, among the nine groups in the Apocalypse, e, i and h exhibit the most internal confusion, which reduces their credibility as lines of transmission. a is large, but it has five subgroups; without the subgroups, it drops from 65 to 18—the five subgroups, plus further internal confusion, detract from its credibility as a line of transmission. In contrast to the rest, c is remarkably solid, internally consistent or coherent—the internal pattern and dependency are heavy, which enhances the group’s credibility as a line of transmission.

And how about between groups? It is the comparatively high level of pattern and dependency that allows us to group a,b,f,g,i and to say that together they form a text-type (call it ‘Koine’). The same obtains for d,e,h (call it ‘Andreas’). In contrast to those eight, c is independent of them all, as shown by the lack of pattern and dependency. c and ‘Koine’ agree against ‘Andreas’ over 100 times, while c and ‘Andreas’ agree against ‘Koine’ over 100 times. The complete roster of ‘Koine’ and ‘Andreas’ agrees against c eleven times. I submit that the most reasonable explanation for the evidence before us is that c is the common denominator; it is the core of the transmission from which all the others departed, at different times and different ways.

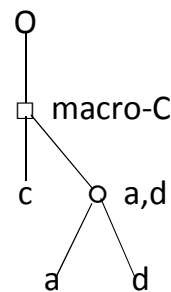
So what do pattern and dependency tell us? They permit us to identify groups, or families, of MSS. They also define the level of internal consistency of each group. The lack of pattern and dependency permits us to identify independent lines of transmission. All MSS received common influence from the Original, but evidently independent lines of transmission cannot represent the Original equally. So what do we do when confronted with several such lines? Or, to take a concrete case, how can we choose between ‘Koine’, ‘Andreas’ and ‘Complutensian’ in Revelation? If we follow two against one, we will have a ‘majority’ text—as a guess, it will be at least 90% Complutensian (it is seldom alone).¹ (From my point

¹ Just for the record, the *TuT* edition uses a “relative majority”. To arrive at that “*rM*” they added NA²⁸ as a fourth line, but also used ‘internal’ considerations. They followed ‘Koine’ 98 times,

of view, that would be a very good Text!)

There is not a single clear three-way split in the whole book, and only one that might be said to come fairly close (at 15:4). What does the lack of three-way splits tell us? It tells us that the three groups are not equally independent. It tells us that the Complutensian is the most independent of the three—independent with reference to the other two! Since all three are dependent on the Original, can we determine which one is most dependent, and therefore closest to the Original? If the evidence points to Complutensian as the common denominator, then the other two groups are at least partly dependent upon it; this would mean that Complutensian lies between them and the Original, and is therefore closest to the Original.

But what about the few places where Koine and Andreas agree against Complutensian; did they do an ‘end-run’ and go back directly to the Original? [How could that be possible?] Did they ‘pick and choose’, consulting an exemplar different from the Complutensian? Such an exemplar would be a node above Koine and Andreas, since they both subsequently went their separate ways. [I suppose that would at least be possible.] But what if Complutensian correctly represents the Original? Then a stemma would perhaps look like this:



I suppose that one’s final choice will be guided by considerations beyond pattern and dependency. But we need pattern and dependency to get us close to a final choice.

‘Complutensian’ 95 times, ‘Andreas’ 79 times and NA²⁸ 41 times (extracted from twelve combinations). They followed ‘Koine’ by itself eleven times, the only line so treated.