

## Von Soden's treatment of his K<sup>r</sup>

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I am presently being criticized because I have never answered von Soden's 'arguments' whereby he called his K<sup>r</sup> a late revision—I never did for him what I did for Hort. Since there are people today who still think that his 'arguments' are valid, I recognize that I should have. I appealed to Dr. Jakob van Bruggen for help with von Soden. He began his answer by saying that von Soden "makes statements and gives descriptions, but doesn't give arguments or proofs". Well now, how is it possible to refute 'arguments' that do not exist? But since an answer of some sort is being called for, I will evaluate the 'statements'.

**1)** Von Soden noted that there were relatively few K<sup>r</sup> MSS in the libraries of Western Europe, probably true. But he went on to opine that it was a negative circumstance, a point against K<sup>r</sup>.<sup>1</sup> He seems to have forgotten that until the Protestant Reformation the Roman Church dominated Western Europe, and that church used Latin, not Greek. Worse still, only the Pope could interpret the Scriptures, and only the clergy were permitted to even read them. The common people, the laity, were forbidden to do so. So in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, who in all of Western Europe would have any use for Greek MSS? They were curiosities, museum pieces, to be found only in libraries or museums. All the NT MSS in those libraries came from the east. The British Museum (now Library) has a considerable collection; how did it get them? They were donated by travelers who had bought them in the east. All said and done, I submit to the reader that the number of K<sup>r</sup> MSS in the west is irrelevant to the age and nature of the text-type, and should not be adduced.

**2)** Von Soden repeatedly mentioned the well-known fact that the K<sup>r</sup> MSS are characterized by an elaborate liturgical apparatus in the margins, including 'begin' and 'end' written within the Text itself, but in ink of a different color, usually red, so the reader would know precisely where to start and stop. Although some non-K<sup>r</sup> MSS have some indication of lections in their margins, none are so elaborate as K<sup>r</sup>, with the exception of what Frederik Wisse<sup>2</sup> called Cluster 17 in Luke, composed of fewer than ten MSS (K<sup>r</sup> has over 250 in the Gospels). So far as I know, they are the only two groups that have the elaborate apparatus, so the presence of that apparatus is virtually diagnostic of his K<sup>r</sup> (my Family 35, f<sup>35</sup>). That much is fact, but what does it mean?

Von Soden gave it as his opinion that the circumstance indicated that his K<sup>r</sup> was a liturgical revision produced in Constantinople in the XII century, but did not offer

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<sup>1</sup> Soden, Hermann F. von. *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*. 2 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1911, pages 757-765. (His German is difficult to read.)

<sup>2</sup> *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

so much as a shred of evidence in support of his opinion. (He did try to defend the XII century by re-dating the three K<sup>r</sup> MSS that he knew of from the XI.) (I hold copies of at least ten such MSS, and there are others, but I will argue that the point is irrelevant.) Now then, it should be obvious to everyone that preparing a copy in two colors with an elaborate apparatus will take more time and effort than a copy in one color without that apparatus. So why would people do it? There had to be a demand for such copies. But what factor, or factors, could drive such a demand?

A MS with a liturgical apparatus was obviously prepared to be used for public reading, to be read aloud to an audience. For private reading and study you want a text without interruptions. Von Soden actually noted that the individual letters in his K<sup>r</sup> MSS tended to be somewhat larger than in non-K<sup>r</sup> MSS. So why would that be? Presumably to facilitate the public reading. So why is K<sup>r</sup>/f<sup>35</sup> by far the largest family within the broad Byzantine tradition? And why are its representatives scattered all around the Mediterranean world? And how many people could read Koine Greek, and how many of them could afford a private copy of the NT? After all, 'supply and demand' operates within the Church as well as in the world.

In 2014 I spent nine nights on the Mt. Athos peninsula, with its twenty independent monasteries. I visited five of them (including the top four in the hierarchy), slept in three of them and ate meals in two of them. To this day, the monks and visitors eat in silence, while one monk reads Scripture aloud. The monasteries pride themselves on being ruled by tradition, which they affirm goes back to the earliest centuries. Is it not reasonable to conclude that that tradition includes the reading of Scripture during meals? Would they not use MSS that were precisely prepared for public reading? And to what text-type do those MSS belong? And why did they use that text-type?

Quite apart from the Talmud, we know from the NT that it was the custom in the Jewish synagogues to read from the OT writings in their Sabbath meetings. The Lord Jesus Himself did this, as recorded in Luke 4:16-19. At the 'Jerusalem Council' James concluded his decision with: "For from ancient generations Moses has in every city those who preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (Acts 15:21). The apostle Paul always began his ministry in a new city with the Jewish synagogue, when there was one. Notice what Acts 13:15 says: "After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent to them . . ." In a synagogue Paul usually began his speech with: "Men of Israel and you who fear God", the 'you who fear God' referring to Gentiles who were present.

Now in the very beginning the Christian community was mainly made up of Jews and such Gentiles, and they would naturally continue the practice of reading Scripture in their weekly meetings. Recall what gave rise to the office of deacon in

Acts 6. “It is not advantageous that we should forsake the Word of God to serve at tables” (verse 2). “We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word” (verse 4). Of course, at that time their Bible was the OT; the first Gospel, Matthew, not being published until 38/39. However, since the NT writings were recognized as Scripture from the very first, it was natural that they would be added to the OT, and in time probably took the lead. Notice what Justin Martyr wrote in his First Apology (around 150 AD):

On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president [presiding minister] verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.<sup>1</sup>

The “memoirs of the Apostles” were the Gospels as we know them (First Apology 66). If one considers Justin’s use of the phrase “memoirs of the Apostles” in all of his writings, one may safely conclude that he accurately refers to two apostles (Matthew and John) and two followers of the apostles (Mark and Luke), which he delineated. Justin used the phrase “memoirs of the Apostles” to reference the four Gospels, but he never used this phrase to reference gnostic or apocryphal gospels.<sup>2</sup>

Notice that the Gospels are mentioned first, before the ‘writings of the prophets’, that would refer to the OT. Justin makes clear that the practice of reading Scripture in the weekly meetings was continued by the Christians, and, as was to be expected, the NT writings came to be preferred. We have no evidence that the practice of reading Scripture in public meetings was ever dropped, at least in the east. Indeed, the very existence of Lectionary manuscripts would be evidence that the practice continued. If the ‘Eusebian Canons’ were actually produced by Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), we have evidence from the early fourth century, and he certainly was merely standardizing what was already being practiced in the churches. So then, when the Mt. Athos monks claim that their practice goes back to the earliest times, they are correct. However, **none of the above tells us what text-type was used**, and it is incumbent upon me to address that question.

But first, the lectionary evidence flatly contradicts von Soden’s claim that the system was created in Constantinople in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. According to the *Kurzgefasste Liste*<sup>3</sup> (Feb., 2018), we have one extant lectionary from the IV century, two from the V, two from the VI, two from the VII, fifteen from the VIII,

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, eds. *The Ante-Nicean Fathers*. American Edition. New York: Christian Literature Co., 1906. I. p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Personal communication from Dr. Michael C. Loehrer.

<sup>3</sup> Kurt Aland, ed., *Kurzgefasste Liste der Griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994).

113 from the IX, 162 from the X and 303 from the XI. Even if we reduce all those numbers by half (to preclude quibble), they demonstrate that von Soden was completely mistaken. It happens that among the extant Lectionaries, the second largest family contains the **K<sup>r</sup>/f<sup>35</sup>** text, but it is small, compared to the dominant family; but please note: the difference is in the wording, not the selection of lections. Von Soden also claimed that the **K<sup>r</sup>/f<sup>35</sup>** text was imposed by ecclesiastical authority. In that event, how is it that the vast majority of Lectionaries have a different text? And how could something created in the 12<sup>th</sup> century supplant an ancient practice? Again, von Soden was completely mistaken.

It should be obvious to everyone that books that are used wear out; the more they are used, the faster they wear. The earliest manuscripts survived because no one wanted to use them; nor were they copied (why waste good parchment?). If the communities used **K<sup>r</sup>/f<sup>35</sup>** for public reading, those copies would be worn out and could not survive physically. So the lack of early **K<sup>r</sup>/f<sup>35</sup>** MSS is not necessarily an argument against the text-type.

**3)** Von Soden noted, correctly, that **K<sup>r</sup>/f<sup>35</sup>** MSS are characterized by far fewer variants than MSS of other types. His explanation was that his **K<sup>r</sup>** was a revision imposed by ecclesiastical authority; it was a controlled text. Within the discipline, the notion of a controlled text was extended to the whole Byzantine text. For example, on page 11\* of the English ‘Introduction’, the editors of the *Editio Critica Maior* of James<sup>1</sup> refer to the Byzantine text (which includes **K<sup>r</sup>/f<sup>35</sup>**) as being “carefully controlled”. **K<sup>r</sup>/f<sup>35</sup>** is by far the largest, and most cohesive (internally consistent), line of transmission within the broad Byzantine river, so if the Byzantine bulk was controlled, **K<sup>r</sup>/f<sup>35</sup>** would be more so.

Now then, if a text is ‘controlled’, someone has to do the controlling—if there is no controller, there can be no controlling. So who are the possible candidates? I see three possibilities: human beings, Satan, God. So far as I know, all those who refer to the Byzantine text as ‘controlled’ exclude the supernatural from their model; so for them, the controlling is done by human beings, independent of supernatural influence. Since the alleged control had to operate for more than a millennium, it could not be done by a single individual. But who could control the whole Mediterranean world? For over a thousand years the Roman Church used Latin, not Greek. Was there ever a functioning central authority among the Orthodox Churches? Certainly not for a thousand years, and not for the whole Mediterranean world. So who did the controlling?

Not only that, but the supposed controlling was evidently rather lax, since the MSS are full of random mistakes, quite apart from shared dependencies. Consider

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<sup>1</sup> Aland, Barbara, Mink, Gerd, and Wachtel, Klaus (eds.). *Novum Testamentum Graecum, Editio Critica Maior*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997.

the conclusion reached by F. Wisse after he collated and analyzed 1,386 Greek MSS containing chapters 1, 10 and 20 of Luke (three complete chapters). He described 37 lines of transmission, plus 89 “mavericks”, MSS so individually disparate that they could not be grouped. Of the 37 groups, 36 fall within the broad Byzantine river, and within them Wisse described 70 subgroups. So what kind of ‘control’ could permit such a situation? I trust that my readers will not think me unreasonable when I say that in the face of such concrete evidence I find the thesis of a ‘controlled’ Byzantine text (excluding the supernatural) to be less than convincing. But then, how shall we account for the comparative uniformity found within it?

I hope that my readers are aware that I personally insist that the supernatural should be included in any model of NT textual criticism. Both God and Satan certainly exist, and both have an ongoing interest in the fortunes of the NT Text. For some time I have been defending the divine preservation of the NT Text in concrete terms. Curiously, those who allege a controlled Byzantine text usually reject any notion of divine preservation. But of course, if they do not believe in divine inspiration, they will not believe in preservation. Someone who denies the existence of a Sovereign Creator will logically insist that a nonexistent being cannot do anything. But how then can such a person explain the Byzantine text? I submit that no naturalistic hypothesis can account for Family 35 (**K'**).

Satan would certainly do nothing to help preserve the NT Text; any involvement of his would be with a view to pervert the text, thereby undermining its authority. (I would say that he concentrated his efforts in Egypt.) I have argued elsewhere that the transmission of the NT Text was predominately ‘normal’, and that normality was defined by the Christian Church. Why were copies made? Because the congregations needed them. Why did the congregations ‘need’ them? Because they understood that the NT writings were divinely inspired, and they were read and discussed in their weekly meetings. To argue that the early Christians were mistaken in that understanding would be beside the point. That understanding (mistaken or not) determined their attitude toward the NT writings, which controlled their production of copies. If the majority of persons producing copies was made up of sincere (more or less) Christians, they would do their work with reasonable care (some more, some less). Those who held a strong view of inspiration would be especially careful.

I submit that the surviving MSS reflect my description above. **K'**/**f**<sup>35</sup>, by far the largest and most cohesive group (perhaps the only group that exists in all 27 books), represents the core of the transmission, its representatives having been produced by copyists with a high view of inspiration (as evidenced by the extreme care in their work). Outside that core are a large number of tangents, or rivulets, that diverge from the core in varying degrees, and that began at different times

and places. A monk who was merely carrying out a religious obligation would produce a 'run of the mill' Byzantine copy; good enough for virtually all practical purposes, but not up to the **f<sup>35</sup>** standard.

So was the Byzantine text 'controlled'? Obviously not in any strict sense. The control was exercised by a common belief (within the Christian community) that the NT was divinely inspired. It was that belief that dictated the proliferation of copies made with reasonable care. That reasonable care is reflected in the basic uniformity within the Byzantine bulk. But to explain the incredibly careful transmission reflected in the **f<sup>35</sup>** representatives, requires something more.

Of **f<sup>35</sup>** MSS that I myself have collated, I hold perfect copies of the family archetype (empirically determined) as follows: 29 for Philemon, 15 for 2 Thessalonians, 9 for Titus, 6 for Galatians, 4 for Ephesians, and at least one for 22 of the 27 NT books (and many more are off by a single letter!). These are MSS from all over the Mediterranean world, and representing five centuries. So what kind of control could produce such an incredible level of perfection—a control exercised in isolated monasteries scattered around the Mediterranean world and during five centuries? We know of no human agency that could do it. If the agency was not human, then it had to be divine. Since von Soden certainly was not thinking of supernatural control, once more he was completely mistaken.

**4)** Von Soden was obsessed with the adulterous woman passage (John 7:53-8:11) (apparently he thought that it would provide a key for the whole NT). He and his team collated over 900 MSS for those twelve verses (far more than for any other NT passage). He reduced those 900 MSS to seven families, or lines of transmission, that he called **M<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</sup>** (the M being the first letter in 'adultery', in Greek). On page 524 he offered a stemma, wherein his **M<sup>1</sup>** was closest to the Source and **M<sup>7</sup>** the farthest from that Source. The last three families were by far the largest, any one of them being larger than the first four combined; so much so that any two of the three represented a majority of the total. Von Soden argued that his **M<sup>7</sup>** was a composite based on his **M<sup>6</sup>** and **M<sup>5</sup>**, and therefore was subsequent and inferior to them.

This is reminiscent of Hort's treatment of his 'Syrian' text. However, Hort produced eight alleged 'conflations' within his Syrian text and condemned it for the whole NT on that basis. Now then, a genuine conflation is by definition secondary (if you can prove that the two shorter readings are not independent simplifications of the original longer reading). But in the 'Pericope', **M<sup>7</sup>** does not contain any 'conflations', so on what objective basis did von Soden claim that it was based on **M<sup>6</sup>** and **M<sup>5</sup>**? Within the Pericope there are 32 variant sets that are relevant to the three large groups, that I will now reproduce. I ask the reader to try to analyze the evidence without preconceived notions.

The information offered below is based on Maurice A. Robinson's complete collation of 1,389 MSS that contain the Pericope, John 7:53 - 8:11.<sup>1</sup> I attempted to establish a profile of readings for each of the three main groups of MSS, **M**<sup>5,6,7</sup>.

|      | <b>M</b> <sup>7</sup>                  | <b>M</b> <sup>6</sup>   | <b>M</b> <sup>5</sup>                            |
|------|--|---|--|
| 7:53 | 01 απηλθεν                             | απηλθεν / απηλθον   | **επορευθη / επορευθησαν                         |
| 8:1  | 02 Ιησους δε                           | **και ο Ιησους δε / και ο Ιησους  | Ιησους δε  |
| 8:2  | 03 (βαθεως) = <u>omit</u>              | **βαθεως / βαθεος   | (βαθεως)   |
| 8:2  | 04 παρεγενετο                          | **ηλθεν ο Ιησους  | παρεγενετο                                       |
| 8:2  | 05 προς αυτον                          | προς αυτον  | ** (προς αυτον)                                  |
| 8:3  | 06 προς αυτον                          | (προς αυτον) / προς αυτον   | προς αυτον                                       |
| 8:3  | 07 επι                                 | επι   | **εν   |
| 8:3  | 08 κατειλημμενην                       | κατειλημμενην   | **καταληφθεισαν                                  |
| 8:3  | 09 εν μεσω                             | εν τω μεσω / εν μεσω  | εν μεσω  |
| 8:4  | 10 λεγουσιν                            | **ειπον   | λεγουσιν   |
| 8:4  | 11 (πειραζοντες)                       | (πειραζοντες)   | **πειραζοντες                                    |
| 8:4  | 12 ταυτην ευρομεν                      | ταυτην ευρομεν  | **αυτη η γυνη κατεληφθη / ειληπται / κατειληπται |
| 8:4  | 13 επαυτοφωρω                          | επαυτοφωρω / -φορω / -φορος   | επαυτοφωρω / -φορω                               |
| 8:4  | 14 μοιχευομενην                        | μοιχευομενην / -νη  | **μοιχευομενη                                    |
| 8:5  | 15 ημων Μωσης                          | ημων Μωσης / υμων Μωσης / Μ. ενετ. ημιν / Μωση                              | **Μωσης ημιν                                     |
| 8:5  | 16 λιθοβολεισθαι                       | **λιθαζειν  | λιθοβολεισθαι                                    |
| 8:5  | 17 (περι αυτης)                        | (περι αυτης) / περι αυτης   | (περι αυτης)                                     |
| 8:6  | 18 κατηγοριαν κατ                      | κατηγοριαν κατ  | **κατηγορειν                                     |
| 8:6  | 19 μη προσποιουμενος                   | (μη προσποιουμενος) / μη προσποιουμενος                                     | μη προσποιουμενος                                |
| 8:7  | 20 ερωτωντες                           | ερωτωντες / επερωτωντες   | ερωτωντες  |
| 8:7  | 21 ανακυψας                            | αναβλεψας / ανακυψας  | ανακυψας   |
| 8:7  | 22 προς αυτους                         | **αυτοις  | προς αυτους                                      |
| 8:7  | 23 **τον λιθον επ αυτη βαλετω          | **λιθον βαλετω επ αυτην   | **επ αυτην τον λιθον βαλετω                      |
| 8:9  | 24 και υπο της συνειδησεως ελεγχομενοι | (και υπο της συνειδησεως ελεγχομενοι) / και υπο της συνειδησεως ελεγχομενοι | και υπο της συνειδησεως ελεγχομενοι              |

<sup>1</sup> 240 MSS omit the *PA*, 64 of which are based on Theophylact's commentary. Fourteen others have lacunae, but are not witnesses for total omission. A few others certainly contain the passage but the microfilm is illegible. So, 1389 + 240 + 14 + 7(?) = about 1650 continuous text MSS checked by Robinson. He also checked a number of Lectionaries.

|      |    |  |  |  |
|------|----|--|--|--|
| 8:9  | 25 | εως των εσχατων                            | εως των εσχατων                                | ** (εως των εσχατων)                       |
| 8:9  | 26 | μονος ο Ιησους                             | ο Ιησους μονος / μονος                         | μονος ο Ιησους                             |
| 8:10 | 27 | και μηδενα θεασαμενος<br>πλην της γυναικος | ** ειδεν αυτην και                             | και μηδενα θεασαμενος<br>πλην της γυναικος |
| 8:10 | 28 | αυτη                                       | ** (αυτη) γυναι                                | αυτη / αυτη γυναι                          |
| 8:10 | 29 | εκεινοι οι κατηγοροι σου                   | εκεινοι οι κατηγοροι σου<br>/ οι κατηγοροι σου | εκεινοι οι κατηγοροι σου                   |
| 8:11 | 30 | ειπεν δε αυτη ο Ιησους                     | ειπεν δε αυτη ο Ιησους                         | ** ειπεν δε ο Ιησους                       |
| 8:11 | 31 | κατακρινω                                  | κατακρινω                                      | ** κρινω / κατακρινω                       |
| 8:11 | 32 | και απο του νυν                            | και απο του νυν / απο του νυν και              | ** και                                     |

**M<sup>7</sup>** has a single, clear-cut, unambiguous profile/mosaic, as defined by 127 MSS—there is no internal variation among them (the 127 are precisely the same for all twelve verses). This contrasts dramatically with **M<sup>6</sup>** and **M<sup>5</sup>**. It is possible to come up with a partial profile for both **5** and **6**, for purposes of distinguishing them from each other and from **7**, but they have so much internal variation that I see no way to come up with a family archetype that is objectively defined. I used \*\* to distinguish variants that might be called the ‘backbone’ of the family, for the purpose of distinguishing it from the others. As the reader can verify, **6** has internal division no less than 15 times out of 32, which does not improve its credibility quotient. **5** has ‘only’ four, so it is far less ‘squishy’ than **6**, but the nature of those four does not allow a single archetypal form. (I did not include set 13 in the above because there is generalized confusion among the MSS.)

Now then, **7** and **6** join against **5** fourteen times; **7** and **5** join against **6** nine times; **6** and **5** join against **7** not one single time. Does this mean that **7** is dependent on **5** and **6** (von Soden), or does it mean that **5** and **6** are independent departures from **7** (WNP)? Only for set 23 are all three groups entirely distinct, but at least for this set **7** does not depend on the other two. (Curiously, the MSS present us with at least seven different arrangements of the five words in set 23, and the main lectionary group goes with a fourth reading, not one of the big three.) To my mind, **7** is the lowest common denominator, and therefore older and better than the other two. So what is the point? The point is that **M<sup>7</sup>** equals von Soden’s **K<sup>r</sup>** (my **f<sup>35</sup>**), and he used his analysis of **M<sup>7</sup>** to characterize his **K<sup>r</sup>** for the whole NT! He repeatedly offered **M<sup>7</sup>** as ‘proof’ that **K<sup>r</sup>** was late. As anyone who is even remotely acquainted with the MSS knows, to characterize even one book, not to mention the whole NT, on the basis of twelve verses is just plain wrong.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since it is impossible to demonstrate objectively that **M<sup>7</sup>** is dependent on **M<sup>6</sup>** and **M<sup>5</sup>**, that imagined dependency should not be alleged as being relevant to the age and nature of the text-type.



5) For some mysterious reason von Soden seemed determined that his **K<sup>r</sup>** should have been created in the XII century, so he exerted himself to re-date the three **K<sup>r</sup>** MSS from the XI that he knew of. But since the three are copies, not original creations, their exemplars were older, of necessity (as were the exemplars of the exemplars), so what did von Soden think he was 'proving'? To his mind, apparently, a text-type could not have existed before its earliest extant representative [!]. For many years, I have heard people repeating the evident stupidity that because there are no early Byzantine MSS the Byzantine text cannot be early, and they are still doing it. This is based on the obviously false assumption that the surviving MSS from the earliest centuries are representative of the total manuscript situation at that time.

The only surviving 'edifices' in Egypt that are 4,000 years old are the pyramids. Will anyone be so ridiculous as to argue that a pyramid was the only type of structure used in Egypt at that time? How many Egyptians at that time lived in pyramids? Absolutely none, because pyramids were only for the dead. But did ordinary people get a pyramid for a tomb? Only a pharaoh could afford one. We can say with total certainty that pyramids are not representative of the totality of structures in Egypt 4,000 years ago, even though they are the only ones that have survived. I would say that it is equally certain that the earliest MSS are not representative of the manuscript situation at the time. (They are the resting place of 'dead' forms of the NT Text, much like the pyramids.)

I do not know even the name of any of my great, great grandfathers, and I have no artifacts that they used. Yet I can state with total certainty that they existed. How can I do that? I can do that because I am here, because I exist. I could not exist without great, great grandfathers. My body contains some of their genes, their DNA. Just because I did not exist 400 years ago, does not mean that none of my ancestors did. Is that not perfectly obvious?

In 1976 Dr. Jakob van Bruggen published *The Ancient Text of the New Testament* (Winnipeg: Premier Printing Ltd.). It contains a chapter on 'The Age of the Byzantine Type' that occupies pages 22 – 29. He marshals a variety of arguments to show that the Byzantine text-type must be older than its surviving representatives. I will limit myself to quoting just one paragraph (page 25).

What conditions must be satisfied if we wish to award the prize to the older majuscules? While asking this question we assumed wittingly or unwittingly that we were capable of making a fair comparison between manuscripts in an earlier period and those in a later period. After all, we can only arrive at positive statements if that is the case. Imagine that

someone said: in the Middle Ages mainly cathedrals were built, but in modern times many small and plainer churches are being built. This statement seems completely true when we today look around in the cities and villages. Yet we are mistaken. An understandable mistake: many small churches of the Middle Ages have disappeared, and usually only the cathedrals were restored. Thus a great historical falsification of perspective with regard to the history of church-building arises. We are not able to make a general assertion about church-building in the Middle Ages on the basis of the surviving materials. If we would still dare to make such an assertion, then we wrongly assumed that the surviving materials enabled us to make a fair comparison. But how is the situation in the field of New Testament manuscripts? Do we have a *representative* number of manuscripts from the first centuries? Only if that is the case do we have the right to make conclusions and positive statements. Yet it is just at this point that difficulties arise. The situation is even such that we know with certainty that we *do not* possess a representative number of manuscripts from the first centuries. This is due to three reasons, which now deserve our attention successively [emphasis in the original].

He then goes on to discuss those three reasons. (I know Dr. van Bruggen personally, and may say that he is an authority on the subject of cathedrals.) Pages 137 – 154 of my *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV* give a detailed discussion of the evidence for an early Byzantine text-type.

I continue to insist that most of the early MSS survived because they were intolerably bad; it was psychologically impossible to use them, besides being a criminal waste of good parchment to copy them (is not uncial 06 the only one with an extant 'child'?). A while ago I collated cursive GA 789 (Athens: National Library) for John, having already done so for Luke. Although the copyist made an occasional mistake, I judge that his exemplar was a very nearly perfect representative of Family 35. However, 789 is presently lacking John 19:12 to the end. A later hand, 789<sup>s</sup>, has 19:26 to the end, but that copyist was a terrible speller, averaging nearly one mistake per verse—reminiscent of P<sup>66</sup> (although P<sup>66</sup> is worse, averaging around two mistakes per verse). I found myself becoming angry with the copyist—I was prepared to call down curses on his head! Assuming that the cause of the mistakes was ignorance, rather than perversity, the copyist should not have undertaken a task for which he was so pitifully unqualified. It would be psychologically impossible for me to use 789<sup>s</sup> for devotion or study. I would become too angry to continue. I assume that sincere Christians in the early centuries would have reacted in the same way.

Strange to relate, the very INTF that Kurt Aland founded—he who declared that the Byzantine MSS were irrelevant to the search for the original text—that INTF has now published the following:

Since the Textus Receptus was overcome by the scholarly textual criticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there is tenacious negative bias against the Byzantine majority text. Wherever well-known, older textual witnesses like Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, and even more so in combination with a papyrus, stand against the majority of minuscules, the decision against the majority text was often made easily, without seriously considering the quality of the variants in question. Therefore, the editors of the present edition have taken two factors as paramount.

First, it is often overlooked that in the vast majority of variant passages only a few witnesses differ from all the others. As a rule, the popular witnesses from the 4<sup>th</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> centuries and, if extant, from even earlier papyri, agree with the majority of all witnesses. This implies that at all these passages the old age of the majority text is not in doubt.

Second, it is necessary to distinguish consistently between a manuscript and the text transmitted in it. “*Recentiores non deteriores*” is a principle widely accepted in editing philology, but in New Testament scholarship it was applied only to a few younger manuscripts featuring similar textual peculiarities as Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. For the reason given above, it is undoubtedly true that the textual tradition as a whole goes back to a very early period and that the coherent transmission of the majority of all textual witnesses provides a strong argument *for*, not *against*, the variant in question [emphasis in the original]. (Page 30\* of the recent [2017] *Editio Critica Maior* for Acts.)

Well, well, well, better late than never! “The textual tradition as a whole” includes  $\text{f}^{35}/\text{K}^r$ , of necessity. The *Text und Textwert* series<sup>1</sup> is now complete for the whole NT, except for John 11-21. The objective evidence it provides shows clearly, empirically, that Family 35 ( $\text{K}^r$ ) is independent of the Byzantine bulk (Soden’s  $\text{k}^x$ ) throughout the NT. It follows that it **cannot** be a revision of that bulk. Anyone who continues to affirm that von Soden’s  $\text{K}^r$  was a revision of his  $\text{K}^x$  is either uninformed or perverse.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Text und Textwert der Griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* (Ed. Kurt Aland, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter).

<sup>2</sup> To ignore clear evidence that has been called to your attention and to continue to promote a claim that you know is false, is to be perverse.

6) It remains to take up the question of the liturgical apparatus characteristic of  $\text{f}^{35}/\text{K}^r$ . A lectionary copy would be far easier and faster to produce than a full continuous text copy, quite apart from an apparatus in a different color. Since we have extant lectionaries from the IV and all subsequent centuries, why would anyone go to the extra work of adding a liturgical apparatus to a continuous text copy? And why was that apparatus added to only one text-type?

But first, why were lectionaries prepared, instead of continuous text MSS? As the practice of reading and expounding established passages on specific Sundays became generalized, having to use a full text MS became cumbersome; why not prepare MSS containing only the established lections? Recall that most people could not read and were limited to hearing Scripture during the weekly meetings. Very few people were able to read and study the Scriptures at home. Fewer still would be in a position to make written copies of anything. Scribe was a profession. However, I submit for the consideration of the reader that the very mentality that would consider a lectionary to be a good thing, in itself represented a relaxing of a devout commitment to the precise form of the Sacred Text.

From the fourth century on, if not before, the Roman Church used Latin, not Greek. So who preserved the Greek NT during the middle ages? Increasingly it would have been the Greek speaking monastic communities. By definition a monastery is a religious community; its daily life and very existence derives from and depends upon its religion. For Christian communities, the NT writings would be central to their faith. However, as time went on, tradition took over, and there would be a relaxing of a devout commitment to the precise form of the Sacred Text. This would be reflected in the level of quality control that prevailed in each monastery with reference to the copying of NT MSS. It would also be reflected by the increased production of lectionaries in the monasteries.

The relaxing of quality control in the copying of NT MSS is reflected in the variety of readings to be found among the MSS that make up the Byzantine tradition. For three chapters of Luke, F. Wisse identified 36 lines of transmission within that tradition. An average Byzantine MS will have 3 to 5 variants per page of a printed Greek Text (as compared to 15 to 20 for an Alexandrian MS). The monk was performing a religious duty, but without a personal commitment to the Text. A merely 'ho-hum'  $\text{f}^{35}/\text{K}^r$  MS will have one variant per two pages of a printed Greek Text, while the better ones will only

have one variant per four or more pages of a printed Greek Text (the really good ones will be perfect for the shorter books). I have collated a MS with just one variant for the 21 chapters of John; the same MS (GA 586) has just one variant for the 16 chapters of Mark. What does that picture tell us about the mentality of the copyists? How can we account for the extreme care demonstrated by the **f<sup>35</sup>/K<sup>r</sup>** copyists?

The extant **f<sup>35</sup>/K<sup>r</sup>** MSS come from isolated monasteries around the Mediterranean world and were produced during five centuries (XI-XV). (I ignore, for the moment, the generations of exemplars that they represent.) There simply was no human agency that could exercise such control. Evidently some monasteries would be more conservative in doctrine and attitude than others, and within a conservative monastery an individual copyist could be committed to the divine authority of the exemplar he was copying. Apart from supernatural participation in the process, the prevailing attitude in certain monasteries plus the personal conviction of individual copyists is the only explanation that I can see for the incredible internal consistency that the **f<sup>35</sup>/K<sup>r</sup>** MSS demonstrate.

But why would anyone go to the extra work of adding a liturgical apparatus to a continuous text copy, since lectionaries were in plentiful supply? And why was that apparatus added to only one text-type, precisely the one with the greatest internal consistency? Well, what would a conservative monastery do if it wanted to use the established lections for the reading aloud at the community meals, but doing so with a continuous text MS (because of respect for the Text)? The beginning and the ending of the lections would have to be marked somehow. But respect for the Text dictates that such lection markers must not be confused with the Text itself—therefore ink of a different color (which would also help the reader to start and stop at the correct spots).

Well and good, but why choose **f<sup>35</sup>/K<sup>r</sup>**? Well, if it is respect for the Text that motivates you to use continuous text MSS, rather than lectionaries, what kind of text are you going to use? If you are aware that the different MSS offer some differences in wording, how will you choose? That very awareness will derive from a conviction within the monastery as to which line of transmission within the MSS has the best pedigree, and it will be that line that deserves your greatest respect. So that is the type of text that you will use. But how is it that isolated monasteries made the same choice? Aye, there's the rub, how is it that isolated monasteries made the same choice? Von Soden opined that a central authority ordered a revision and imposed it on the monasteries. Since it is demonstrable that **f<sup>35</sup>/K<sup>r</sup>** is not a revision, on what basis would that imaginary authority make a choice of what text to impose? If that authority was a sincere Christian, would he

not choose what he considered to be the best text? Since there was no such authority, we are still left with the question: how is it that isolated monasteries made the same choice?

The only answer that I can see is that there was a generalized conviction throughout the global Christian community as to the identity of the line of transmission with the best pedigree. Since the transmission of the NT Text down through the centuries was essentially normal, from the very start, the conviction about pedigree would be based upon historical evidence. When the Autographs were penned, there were no NT lections. The idea of adding lection markers had to come later; just how much later we have no way of knowing. Somewhere along the line, the first such MS was produced. Was the idea so brilliant that it spread like wild fire? Or did the idea spread slowly? We have no way of knowing.

It should be obvious to everyone that preparing a copy in two colors with an elaborate apparatus will take more time and effort than a copy in one color without that apparatus. So why would people do it? There had to be a demand for such copies. A MS with a liturgical apparatus was obviously prepared to be used for public reading, to be read aloud to an audience. For private reading and study you want a text without interruptions. Von Soden actually noted that the individual letters in his **K<sup>r</sup>** MSS tended to be somewhat larger than in non-**K<sup>r</sup>** MSS. So why would that be? Presumably to facilitate the public reading. In any case, books that are used wear out. So much so, that monasteries that used a specific text-type for their public reading would be sure to make and keep a number of back-up copies on hand. There would not be the same motivation for text-types that were not used. That may be why **f<sup>35</sup>/K<sup>r</sup>** is by far the largest family within the Byzantine tradition, and is the only family that has so far been demonstrated to exist in all 27 books.<sup>1</sup>

CONCLUSION: I found this exercise to be tiresome and boring, feeling obliged to keep repeating the obvious. Von Soden's characterization of his **K<sup>r</sup>** as a late revision is simply false. For my detailed defense of Family 35, I direct the reader to the third edition of *God Has Preserved His Text! The Divine Preservation of the New Testament*. It is available from Amazon, or may be downloaded from my website: [www.prunch.org](http://www.prunch.org) (it may appear as [prunch.com.br](http://prunch.com.br), but the site is the same); click on the British flag to get the English page; click on 'Studies' and then on 'Objective Authority of the Biblical Text', then on 'God has Preserved His text'.

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<sup>1</sup> Just by the way, it is common knowledge that the Lectionaries contain no lections from the Apocalypse. What few people know is that some **f<sup>35</sup>** MSS do contain a liturgical apparatus in the Apocalypse. Might this be something that deserves further study?