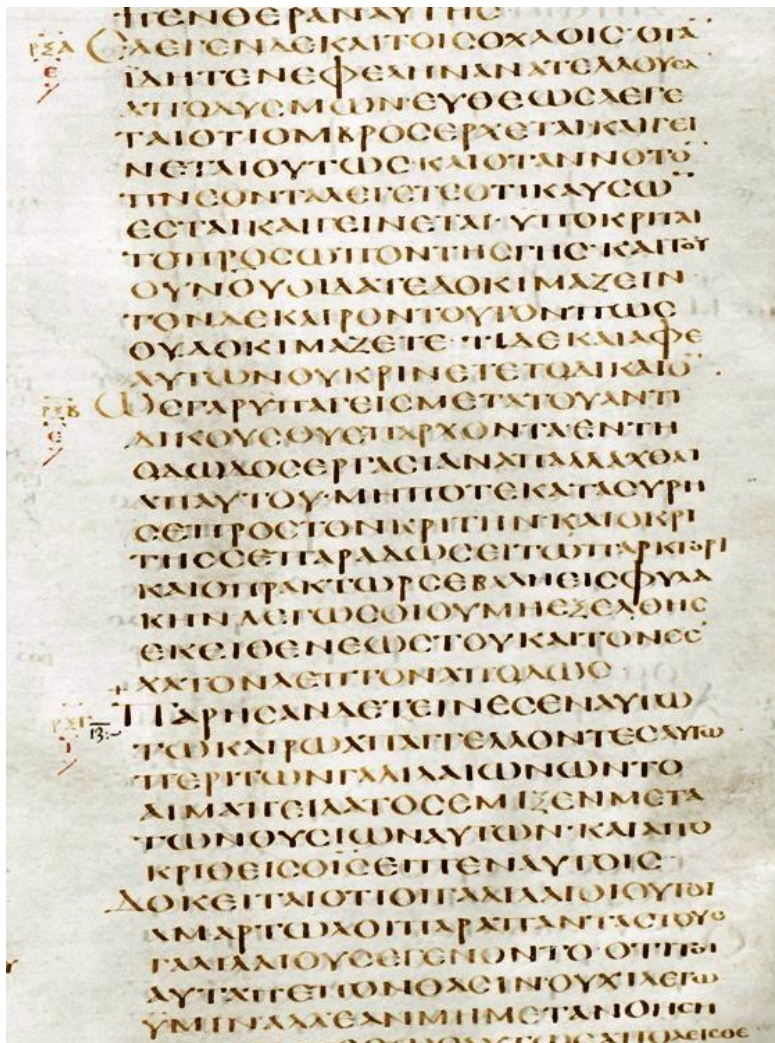


Playing ‘Follow the Leader’ in Bible Translation

by Phil Fields



Luke 12:54-13:4 from [Codex Alexandrinus](#). This is an important manuscript of the Byzantine Texttype in the Gospels. It is currently housed in the British Library and may be viewed at these two sites: [First site](#); [Second site](#)

It is the thesis of this short essay that it is time that Bible translators stop playing ‘follow the leader’. But before we can discuss the way translators have done this, let’s make sure we understand the basics and are using the same terminology.

Here are brief definitions of seven terms we need to keep straight:¹

- **manuscript:** I use this word for the actual physical media made of papyrus or parchment/vellum on which New Testament books or fragments thereof were written. Papyrus was predominately used when the New Testament was penned by the original authors, and a transition to longer-lasting parchment began sometime in the fourth century. Manuscripts are also differentiated by the style of handwriting used. Uncial handwriting — that is, all in capital letters — was used in the early manuscripts, and a transition to cursive writing happened from around the sixth century.
- **text:** The text is the actual words found on a manuscript that can be memorized or copied into a computer. The word ‘Text’ (capitalized) is also used for the published product of scholarly work comparing manuscripts in order to reconstruct the original form of each sentence that came from hands of the New Testament authors.
- **variant:** Textual variants or variant readings are places where the text of a manuscript varies from that of another. Quoting from Timothy Friberg, “from the thousands of manuscripts containing a particular passage, there are usually only two or three variant readings to be weighed, rarely upwards of ten; 94% of the text of the New Testament shows no variation whatsoever — that is, there is a unified text; on the other hand, the Alexandrian Text(type) and the Byzantine Text(type) differ from each other in some 6,000 places.”²
- **texttype:** a grouping of manuscripts that share the same textual characteristics. The four major texttypes are Alexandrian, Byzantine, Caesarean and Western. This essay will focus on the Alexandrian and Byzantine, since these are the most recognized choices for representing an authoritative New Testament text.
- **The Eclectic Text (ET)** is the result of scholarship starting from the mid-nineteenth century and extending up to the present, which aimed to discover the most authentic variants within the earliest New Testament manuscripts. The Eclectic Text is often referred to as the Nestle-Aland, the Critical Text, or the UBS Text. It strongly favors variants of the Alexandrian Texttype. This is because some of the most ancient manuscripts were preserved in the dry climate of Egypt.³
- **The Byzantine Texttype (BT)** is also called the Majority Text because it is represented by more than 95% of the 6,000 manuscripts that have come down to us containing New Testament books. The name ‘Byzantine’ can give the wrong impression, because manuscripts of this texttype were found in a very wide area encompassing all the regions that were the original recipients of the New Testament letters — places like Antioch, Colosse, Ephesus, Rome, and Corinth. Even Egypt is included in locations where BT manuscripts were found.⁴ But because the weather in Turkey, Italy, and Greece is more humid than in Egypt, the originals and almost all copies of this texttype made on papyrus are no longer extant. The early church preserved high quality manuscripts of this texttype on parchment or vellum, showing their high regard for God’s Word. This *Novum Testamentum Graece* is unchanged through the centuries and is still in contemporary usage by the Eastern Orthodox Church and other Orthodox denominations.

¹ Please see the Glossary to Friberg’s [Layman’s Guide](#) for more precise definitions of these terms.

² Friberg, [Layman’s Guide](#), p. 19.

³ A good historical summary of the history of the Eclectic Text is found at <http://www.nestle-aland.com/en/history/>

⁴ The Alexandrinus Codex contains the oldest manuscripts of the Gospels in the BT, but the rest of the New Testament books found therein are of the Alexandrian Texttype.

- **The Textus Receptus (TR)** is the name given to the Greek text published by Erasmus in 1516, which became the basis for the KJV. The TR differs from the BT in some 1800 places. So in just over two-thirds of the places where variants are found in the New Testament, the TR is the same as the BT.

It is no wonder that I have always played follow the leader as a Bible translator, because I came late to this calling in 1980 at thirty years of age and with degrees in music. Despite my own lack of training toward being able to discern anything about Greek manuscripts, it seems to me that the seminary grads I have known well have displayed very little aptitude for using the apparatus at the bottom of their Greek New Testaments. I have heard statements like, “If I ever knew anything about that, I have long since forgotten it.”⁵ I audited two Greek courses, and I remember one of the teachers saying something like this, “Well, I don’t know much about the different Greek texts, but the manuscripts referred to with capital letters were numbered first and are more important.” During my thirty-nine-year career as a Bible translator, I attended three consultant training workshops. I don’t remember any lecture or reading assignment having to do with different Greek texttypes.⁶ After all, our Bible translation software, Paratext, only had one Greek text in it, and since the software was created in partnership with the United Bible Societies, it is no wonder that the ET (or UBS) Text was used.⁷ In the two New Testament translation projects I have led, our consultants would allow us to deviate from the ET in places where other important translations deviated from it, such as the RSV, NIV, or NET.

I was surprised when I read Timothy Friberg’s⁸ *Layman’s Guide* because it claimed that the principles used to compile the ET are of debatable reliability in determining the most authoritative form of the text. The ET favors Alexandrian texts that are shorter, following the assumption that the shorter text is more likely to be the original — especially if that text was written on papyrus. However Alexandria was a library center where copyists frequently redacted texts to become shorter, as they did with Homer’s poems.⁹ I urge the reader to read all twenty pages of the [Layman’s Guide](#).

I was further convinced about the flawed nature of the ET when I read in that same article that there are **105 verses in the ET that contain combinations of variants not found in any extant manuscript**.¹⁰ Or if we widen that to two consecutive verses in the ET, we find a further **210 two-verse combinations that are not found in any extant manuscript**. An example in a single verse occurs in John 5:2 where no manuscript has been found anywhere

⁵ Nowadays, with the Internet, one no longer has to remain ignorant. See ‘[A Very Brief Introduction to the Critical Apparatus of the Nestle-Aland](#)’, by Brent Nogbri, 2006.

⁶ Katharine (Katy) Barnwell’s [A Handbook for Translation Consultants](#) has barely two pages about the Greek text. The policy stated on page 56 is that translators should follow the ET, and are advised to stick with variants that have an {A} or {B} evaluation in the critical apparatus. Barnwell deals with problems that may occur when people want to follow the Textus Receptus, but does not mention the BT. If this is all that **consultants** are taught about Greek texttypes, it is no wonder that ordinary translators like me were not taught about them!

⁷ I think it was only two or three years ago that the Byzantine Texttype was provided as an alternative resource for the Greek New Testament in Paratext.

⁸ If that name sounds familiar, it is probably because Dr. Friberg is the one who published the *Analytical Greek New Testament* (AGNT).

⁹ Friberg, [Layman’s Guide](#), p. 8. Friberg does not footnote support for that assertion, but he kindly gave me one location that can be referenced: Robinson & Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek--Byzantine Textform*, 2005, Appendix: ‘The case for Byzantine Priority’, pp. 542-544.

¹⁰ Friberg, [Layman’s Guide](#), p. 7-8.

that contains the name ‘Bethzatha’ and the exact form of the Greek translated as ‘at the sheep gate’. Two similar examples are found in 2 Peter 3:10 and Mark 11:3 and discussed in Friberg’s article. To me, **the presence of 315 unsupported combinations represents a fatal flaw in the principles used in compiling the ET**. Variants should not have been considered in total isolation. Of the 6,000 manuscripts out there, I would think at least one of them should have the original shape of the text within a reasonable span of five verses. I don’t think a two-verse span is wide enough.¹¹ With a span of five verses, the number of speculative combinations ruled out would expand exponentially to far more than 310.

Now that I have told you that I think the ET is fatally flawed, **let’s examine how nine major Bible translations that claim to be based on the ET have treated that text. What does it tell us when NONE of them actually followed the ET in a consistent manner?!**

In the following table, I have compared the nine translations according to how they treated the forty-three verses that Friberg compared in his [What is What](#) article, plus one more I added. I have ordered the translations according to the date of publishing the New Testament — where I could find that information, rather than the date of publishing for the whole Bible. The TB and BIS were both produced by the Indonesian Bible Society. The TB is an RSV-like translation, and the BIS is a Good News Translation adaptation. When a translation followed the ET in its text reasonably well, I gave it a score of 1. If a translation followed the BT in its text reasonably well, I gave it the score of 0 — regardless of the presence of footnotes or bracketing. I gave partial points for translations that did something creative in the translation that obscured the text they were following. In the case of the NIV, I gave a score of 0.5 when earlier and later editions differed in following the BT and ET. Where translations were split on two variants in the passage, I also gave them half a point.

	1900 ¹²	1946	1963	1966	1973	1974	1985	1996	2001
	ASV	RSV	NASB	GNT	NIV	TB	BIS	NET	ESV
Matthew 1:7-8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Matthew 5:22	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Matthew 10:10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Matthew 18:15	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Matthew 19:17	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mat. 27:16-17	0	0	0	1	0.5	1	1	1	0
Mark 1:2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	1
Mark 6:22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Mark 9:29	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mark 11:3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mark 15:8	1	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1	1

¹¹ I have intentionally left my suggestion on the low side in the text above for the sake of skeptics in my audience. Dr. Robinson responded that I was being “far too generous toward the critical text. I would easily expect a large number of MSS to reflect the original shape of the text within a reasonable span of 10 or even more verses (which would occur regularly among the bulk of the Byzantine witnesses).” I actually agree with Robinson.

¹² According to the Wikipedia article, the ASV New Testament was published in 1900, the full Bible was published in 1901.

Mark 16:9-20	0	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luke 3:33	0.5	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1
Luke 4:44	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	1
Luke 8:26	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Luke 9:10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Luke 10:1, 17	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Luke 11:2-4	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1
Luke 22:43, 44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luke 23:45	1	0.2	1	1	1	1	1	0.2	0.2
Luke 24:17	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Luke 24:42	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
John 1:18	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0.5	1
John 3:13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
John 6:47	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
John 7:8	1	1	1	1	0.5	0	1	1	1
John 7:53-8:11	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
John 8:59	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Acts 7:46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Acts 16:13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Acts 19:16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Acts 28:13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Romans 11:6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1 Cor. 5:1	1	0.5	1	0.2	0.5	1	0.2	0.5	0.5
Ephesians 5:30	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Colossians 4:8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1 Timothy 3:16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
James 1:19	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2 Peter 3:10	0	0	0	1	0.5	1	1	0.5	0.5
Jude 15	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	1	0
Jude 24	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Rev. 12:18-13:1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Rev. 22:14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Rev. 22:21	0.2	0	0.5	1	0	0.5	0.5	1	0.5
PERCENT AVERAGES	69.77	65.23	71.59	70.91	70.45	70.45	67.50	80.00	72.05

It is reasonably clear that translation teams coming after the ASV played ‘follow the leader’. If each individual translation team of the other eight versions had been carefully and honestly evaluating each textual choice as they worked, one would expect a sprinkling of

zeros in the table where there are solid bands of the number one.¹³ The bands of zeros or fractions of a point likewise point to translation teams playing ‘follow the leader’, rather than conscientious textual choices. The average degree at which these translations followed the ET is just 70.88%.¹⁴ Note that the ASV was based on Westcott and Hort (1881) and Tregelles (1857). But the teams coming after the ASV using the latest editions of the ET — each with a better apparatus detailing newer manuscript discoveries — did not significantly change what had been decided prior to 1900. **If we Bible translators are going to depart from the printed Greek text, then it should behoove us to examine the apparatus and prayerfully evaluate textual variants rather than just playing ‘follow the leader’.**

It shocks me how insensitive all of the *ASV-followers* have been to what end-users have clearly told us they want. I count it amazing that none of the other eight translation teams decided to curry the favor of their audience by including three variant phrases of the Lord’s Prayer in Luke 11:2-4. Did all the translation teams carefully weigh whether only 1% manuscript support was enough for them to leave those phrases out? I seriously doubt it!

My addition to Friberg’s selections was Revelation 22:21. I just thought this verse would be an interesting choice, since it comes so soon after the warning against adding to or subtracting from ‘the words of this book’.

BT: Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων. Ἀμήν.

ET: Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων.

ASV	The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.	0.2
RSV	The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.	0
TB	Kasih karunia Tuhan Yesus menyertai kamu sekalian! Amin.	0.5
NASB	The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.	0.5
GNT	May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with everyone.	1
BIS	Semoga Tuhan Yesus memberi berkat-Nya kepada semua umat Allah!	0.5
NIV	The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.	0
NET	The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.	1
ESV	The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.	0.5

¹³ Each one of the forty-three verses/passages chosen by Friberg has enough support to warrant taking the place of the ET in any translation. Had the eight teams following the ASV been independently evaluating the textual evidence in each case, I count it impossible that twenty-one lines in the table would be populated unanimously by the number one.

¹⁴ I suspect that the percentage of compliance with the ET might go up a few percentage points, perhaps as high as even 80%, if one compared a larger number of not-so-interesting variants, and not such a restricted sampling.

Of the two variants in this verse, it is a bit strange that ‘[Amen](#)’ was more popular for being retained in the translation than ‘[the saints](#)’. From what I understand from the ET Apparatus in Paratext and from [Pickering’s New Testament footnote](#), ‘[the saints](#)’ has overwhelming support, compared to only strong majority support for ‘[Amen](#)’. ***Do you see what I mean about ‘follow the leader’?!***

The implications of how translators have treated the ET bothered me, so I wrote to Dr. Maurice A. Robinson (who published *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*, third edition 2018). Here is my first question, followed by his responses in [blue](#):

I am involved with two New Testament translations into Indonesian. We have chosen to use the Byzantine text for those. In order to support that decision, I published an article in Indonesian based on Friberg's *What is What* article (which is soon to appear, if he hasn't shared it with you). The thing I added to Tim's article in English is that I tracked how five translations using the Eclectic text followed that text in all of the forty-four examples cited. The translations I chose were RSV, NASB, and NIV, plus two translations by the Indonesian Bible Society. As I'm sure you could predict, none of those translations followed the Eclectic text in a consistent manner. In 25% of Tim's examples, they translated like more traditional texts. The same is true for newer translations like ESV and NLT. The translators for the ESV have made it very clear that they believe in the inerrancy of the Bible.¹⁵ So my question is this: *How can they say that the New Testament is inerrant if they don't consistently follow the Greek text that they have chosen?* Surely they couldn't be saying that they are smarter than the experts that compiled the Eclectic text! And it doesn't seem like they have consistently chosen to follow a more traditional text for reasons of gaining acceptability or to be like the KJV. That would make a pretty poor excuse. Or maybe they might say that the original texts were inerrant, but we don't have the original texts and must make guesses as to which text was original. This would mean that they admit that the Eclectic text is faulty. Anyway, the three answers are so silly sounding to me that I think that the translators of the aforementioned Bibles must have better answers than what I have given. What are they?

Dr. Robinson responded in between my lines:

>I tracked how five translations using the Eclectic text ... As I'm sure you could predict, none of those translations followed the Eclectic text in a consistent manner.

[No surprise there.](#)

¹⁵ The book *Translating the Truth* is a series of articles whose sole purpose is to promote the ESV as the world's best Bible translation, Wayne Grudem — a member of the Translation Oversight Committee for the ESV, wrote the first article in the book, entitled, “Are Only Some Words of Scripture Breathed Out by God? Why Plenary Inspiration Favors “Essentially Literal” Bible Translations.” If the ESV translators believe in the *Every Word* method of translating Grudem idealizes, then a seventy-two-percent level of following the Greek text is not a very good score!

>The translators for the ESV have made it very clear that they believe in the inerrancy of the Bible. So my question is this: How can they say that the New Testament is inerrant if they don't consistently follow the Greek text that they have chosen?

It's more than that — how can they hold to inerrancy when they admit errant critical text readings such as 'Amos' and 'Asaph' in Mt 1.7,10 or 'Judea' in Lk 4.44 when the parallel is clearly 'Galilee'? etc. etc.

>Surely they couldn't be saying that they are smarter than the experts that compiled the Eclectic text!

Actually, I think they are saying just that. Just as the Zondervan Greek text for their reader's edition differs from NA/UBS; just as the Tyndale House GNT differs from NA/UBS etc.

>Or maybe they might say that the original texts were inerrant, but we don't have the original texts and must make guesses as to which text was original.

They would say “educated guesses” (= “reasoned eclecticism”), but then that is how the NA/UBS texts were also created.

>This would mean that they admit that the Eclectic text is faulty.

Understatement, at least from the Byzantine-priority perspective.

>Anyway, the three answers are so silly sounding to me that I think that the translators of the aforementioned Bibles must have better answers than what I have given. What are they?

Their only answer is that they chose to depart from the NA/UBS text when their view of the internal considerations were considered more likely correct. Nothing more.

Before Robinson's answer, I didn't realize that both Zondervan and Tyndale House have published Greek New Testaments that differ from the ET. That makes sense. Hopefully then their translators might claim that they followed a published text. It seems pretty difficult to claim that God's Word is inerrant if when translating it you don't follow the text printed above the apparatus.

From the evidence I have presented, prominent Bible translators of the ET evidently feel it necessary to take part in 'reasoned eclecticism' and join in the search for the original and authoritative shape of the Greek text. Twenty-eight editions of the ET have brought us no closer to having an authoritative text. Amid the uncertainty, one thing is certain: **Through their textual choices, the translation teams of the eight major versions have all claimed to be smarter than the textual scholars who produced the ET!**

I am currently involved with two New Testament translations in Indonesia, a country with at least 200 million followers of Muhammed. So fully eighty percent of that country's population have been taught that the text of the Christian Bible has been corrupted. How can

we refute them when *fiddling with the text* — as they see it — has happened in our time and is easily visible in the footnotes of our translations?!¹⁶

My other question to Dr. Robinson was, “By the 1970s, during the days of the King James Only Movement and when the weaknesses of both the ET and the Textus Receptus were well known, why weren't there more conservative churches and seminaries recommending the Byzantine Textform?” His answer:

Most of them simply accepted the “assured results” of modern textual criticism that had held sway since the late 19th century (whether from Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles or particularly Westcott and Hort). The view was primarily that “the older MSS are best” and therefore more authoritative; and since those older MSS were predominantly Alexandrian in character, this set the standard for the base text of the next 120+ years to the present day.

In other words, the Bible translation world as a whole naively played ‘follow the leader’ right up until the present. **But we really should wake up and stop this game!** Bible translators and publishers have only three choices:

- We could trust in the textual criticism experts of the last 150 years and translate only the text above the apparatus in the Eclectic Text. Well, but as demonstrated in this essay, none of the eminent scholars that produced major versions did that. Not even the organizationally related American Bible Society or Indonesian Bible Society have rigorously followed the United Bible Societies’ Text (ET). If THEY didn’t agree with the ET, why should anyone else?!
- We could continue the *follow-the-leader tradition*. But then what do we say is our Greek Text? There isn’t one. We might compile one by working backwards from the nine major Bible versions. (I’m talking like a mad man!) Please allow me to propose names for it. We could call it the Flexible Follow the Leader Text (FFLT). *What? You don’t like that choice?! All right, so maybe we could name it the Newly Received Text (NRT).* Continuing in the *status quo* is untenable.
- My choice is to trust the nameless scribes of the Byzantine era. They were the ones who really had access to the earliest treasured copies, and their work shows dedicated effort in producing and disseminating accurate manuscripts. But because of high demand in that era for copies of New Testament books, manuscripts were also made by not-so-careful scribes. The Alexandrian Texttype discoveries have allowed us to see into that side of history.¹⁷

¹⁶ I am embarrassed to say how late I am in coming to the conclusions in this paper. Our *Plain Indonesian New Testament* (TSI) follows the ET in a way similar to the NET and was published in 2014. When we print our next edition with the OT, the New Testament will be revised to follow the BT.

¹⁷ I recommend Glenn Kerr’s excellent article that was given the short title of, “[A deeper look at the traditional Byzantine text](#).” In this article Kerr rightly states, “One of the great lacks in text critical theory is a logical and coherent history of the transmission of the NT text.” Kerr’s assertion is supported by three quotes from experts. Then he continues, “Only a few such histories have been attempted, with Westcott and Hort’s well-known reconstruction being the first. This reconstruction has been abandoned by nearly everyone as untenable, yet the text it presupposes has not been questioned, and a plausible history to replace it has not been proposed.” In other words, on what grounds should we suppose that the best manuscripts would be found in Egypt?

Imagine this! Using the Byzantine text, we can make translations of the Bible with NO footnotes dealing with textual issues.¹⁸ I did not realize until joining the Byzantine camp that the footnotes in our contemporary Bible translations have done immense harm to the position that God's Word does not contain errors. I also did not realize that many textual footnotes are deceptively worded. Textual footnotes in the form of, "Some ancient manuscripts say ..." so often hide the truth that 'some' is equal to 98-99%!¹⁹

For those wishing to see deeper into the world of textual criticism, I recommend taking a look at Friberg's side-by-side [comparison of Metzger and Robinson's textual commentaries](#). Which side has the more carefully reasoned arguments? For anyone whom I haven't convinced in this essay, I urge you not to dismiss what I have said without looking at Friberg's "[What is What](#)" article.

Dr. Robinson told me about [the Gideons special publication of the ESV](#), which adds words and phrases back into the ESV from the Textus Receptus/KJV. I cite this as evidence that a large portion of the most evangelical Bible users have never appreciated the follow-the-leader shift to the ET. This can be seen in YouTube posts about that Bible [like this one](#), [and this one](#). One other piece of evidence is the 2014 publishing of the Modern English Version, a translation of the Textus Receptus. Many people who keep promoting the Textus Receptus would be thrilled to find out about the BT, if this superior textual option were only made known to them. I am confident that when we produce high quality translations of the BT, not only would they sell well, but they have the chance of uniting many Christians around one Greek text.

In this global age, it is not just in Indonesia where people think the Bible has been corrupted and can't be trusted. On one hand, we have the atheists and, on the other, there are devout Muslims who go to the extent of learning to read Greek so that they can refute the arguments of Christians. Let's not make it so easy for skeptics of all stripes to claim that our Bible has been fiddled with!

¹⁸ I have left my original statement in the text because Friberg has actually done this in the Konjo New Testament, which has 13,000 footnotes with not one of them dealing with textual issues. (That's right, twice the number of footnotes than the NET whole Bible! Friberg's translation is modified-literal. He put a more meaning-based translation in the footnotes where needed.) However, Dr. Robinson responded to my 'NO footnotes' statement, "not exactly, given that there are hundreds of readings in which the Byzantine text itself is heavily divided. Rather, with far fewer footnotes regarding substantial textual issues than appear in the critical text." I am sure Robinson is right about there being places with a heavily divided text in the BT. However, when translating in a majority-Muslim context like Friberg's, following his example is a good idea.

¹⁹ Support for this claim is found in Friberg's [What is What](#) article. Actual percentages of support for the Byzantine text compared to the ET are often shown in the footnotes of [Pickering's The Greek New Testament According to Family 35](#). (Note that Pickering uses the abbreviation NU for the ET, as he brought together Nestle-Aland and UBS. Explanations of his abbreviations are found in the last footnote of each New Testament book.)

The best thing in the world that could happen to the Bible translation movement would be to adopt the highly traditional Byzantine Texttype as the basis for every translation. **If YOU agree, we have work to do!** I call on the Bible publishers, seminaries, and each Bible translator: Due to the influence of English-language Bible translations over the rest of the world, we must start by ensuring that we have a complete range of high quality English translations of the BT, including

- a high-quality literal translation,²⁰
- an NIV-like modified literal translation,
- plus a good NLT-like.

Doing this would also ensure that publicity would be disseminated that would further promote the BT. This also would pave the way for translations of the BT for all other major languages and for all viable ethnic languages.

In this present age of vehement opposition to the Bible and all it teaches, let us make the strategic decision that we will not be accused of adding to or subtracting from God's Word.

Resources:

Barnwell, Katharine (Katy): [A Handbook for Translation Consultants](#), revised in 2003.

This book is available in Translator's Workplace. Section 11.3 starts on page 56: *Policy on textual issues: Which original language text should translators follow?*

Esposito, Paul W.: [English Majority Text Version](#), 2012.

This is an English translation of the BT by Dr. Paul W. Esposito.

Friberg, Timothy: Articles:

[On the text of the Greek New Testament that also happens to be the right one for cousin audiences](#)

Although the title of this four-page paper refers to translating for Muslims, the principles and summary is widely applicable. **I suggest reading this paper before reading Friberg's other articles listed below.**

[Layman's Guide](#) — *A modest explanation for the layman of ideas related to determining the text of the Greek New Testament*, 2019.

²⁰ The [World English Bible](#) may currently be our best choice for a literal translation of the BT. I have not had time to thoroughly evaluate it. Reviews of it give the same criticisms that could be said of any literal translation, such as unnatural language or difficulty in understanding the meaning. Two other translations are listed below in the Resources. To my knowledge, there are no NIV-like or NLT-like translations of the BT.

[What is what?](#) — *Differences between the Traditional Text and the Bible Society Text of the Greek New Testament. Some data for the reader to weigh*, 2019.

[Robinson's Commentary of the GNT vs. Metzger's Textual Commentary](#)
A comparison of the textual commentaries of Metzger and Robinson's over twenty selected passages in the four Gospels and Acts, 2019.

Kenaga, Dennis: [*Skeptical Trends in New Testament Textual Criticism: Inside the Alexandrian Priority School and Why Bible Change Is Coming*](#)

Kenaga's fifty-page article has many details not found in the other articles listed here. I highlight just one thing: Kenaga points out that even with the discovery of manuscripts that are earlier than Vaticanus and Sinaiticus (the second and third-century papyri), the critical text editions still continue to follow Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. This shows that they are not even following their own "earlier is better" proposition, but continuing to play 'follow the leader' with older ET editions of Greek NT. This article is very useful also in explaining the underlying editing steps that are common to both Alexandrian and Byzantine texttypes. Many excellent examples are given, and many secrets revealed in this article!

Other [articles by Kenaga](#) are found [here](#).

Kerr, Glenn J.: [*A deeper look at the traditional Byzantine text.*](#)

An earlier version of this article was entitled *Out of Egypt I have called my son: Why Evangelicals Should Get Over Their Preoccupation With Egyptian Manuscripts*.

Nogbri, Brent: [*A Very Brief Introduction to the Critical Apparatus of the Nestle-Aland*](#), 2006.

Pickering, Wilber: [*The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken*](#) — New Testament Translation with Commentary Second Edition, by Wilber Pickering.

The current price for the Amazon Kindle Reader is just \$0.99.

Pickering, Wilber: [*The Identity of the New Testament*](#).

The Amazon Kindle Reader version costs just \$.99.

[*The Greek New Testament According to Family 35*](#) (Second edition, 2015)

[*What difference does it make?*](#)

This article was helpful to Timothy Friberg in making his [What is What](#) article.

Pickering's website: <http://prunch.org/> has many good articles.

Robinson, Maurice: The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform, 1991, 2005, 2018.

This is available in free digital form in the MyBible Bible app, and in other ways.

Articles: *Zero-support Verses by number of variant units per verse*

[Full Text of the 105 verses lacking overall Greek Manuscript Support in the NA edition 27](#)

Database: *The Approximately 105 NA27 Verses lacking overall Greek manuscript support*

[Wikipedia on Alexandrinus text](#)

[Wikipedia on American Standard Version](#)

[Wikipedia on Byzantine text-type](#)

[Wikipedia Novum Testamentum Graece](#)

[Wikipedia World English Bible](#)