

## Scriptures and Doctrine :: Maurice Robinson and the Byzantine Textform

### Maurice Robinson and the Byzantine Textform - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/10 5:57

This is the first part of an interview with Maurice Robinson.

<http://kjvonlydebate.com/2010/08/09/kjvodb-interviews-dr-maurice-robinson-pt-1/>

If you really want to know what the KJV Only debate is really all about and are willing to give this a little careful consideration you will greatly profit from it.

Robinson distinguishes between the Byzantine Textform and the Received Text and shows my he believes the Byzantine Textform is more reliable than other Greek Texts of the New Testament.

Robinson is a well regarded academic and this reasoned approach has much to commend it.

Robinson has just published the Greek New Testament Reader for Beginners.

[http://www.amazon.com/Greek-New-Testament-Beginning-Readers/dp/3941750240/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1281434526&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Greek-New-Testament-Beginning-Readers/dp/3941750240/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1281434526&sr=1-1)

If you want a closer look here is the dust jacket and details of the layout.

[http://www.bingo-ev.de/~ps2866/GNT\\_REd\\_Presentation\\_D.pdf](http://www.bingo-ev.de/~ps2866/GNT_REd_Presentation_D.pdf)

### Re: Maurice Robinson and the Byzantine Textform - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/8/10 10:23

An interesting read. It's not too often I come across folks who prefer the majority text v. alexandrian, and not using an eclectic method of doing textual criticism... who also isn't at the same time KJV.

### Re: Maurice Robinson and the Byzantine Textform - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2010/8/10 12:05

GOD'S Word was, is, and always will be  
GOD'S Word!! It does not matter what  
textform is used; only that it remains  
truth!!

### Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2010/8/10 14:09

Interesting stuff. I sympathize with this MT view myself.

I would be interested to see a discussion on canon. If certain Biblical books are considered Christian canon, which I believe all of us agree the 66 books in our Bibles are canon, wouldn't that imply that the actual content of those books must be what is canonized?

For instance, we state that the book of John is canon, but isn't that really meaningless unless we are speaking of specific content and verses within John as being canon?

I guess my question is, is it desirable to canonize the content of the books themselves? For instance, the church recognizing the Byzantine (MT) text of John as canon.

I feel like that was as clear as mud. Do y'all know what I'm trying to ask?

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/10 14:23**

by KingJimmy on 2010/8/10 12:23:54 writes:

An interesting read. It's not too often I come across folks who prefer the majority text v. alexandrian, and not using an eclectic method of doing textual criticism... who also isn't at the same time KJV.

Well. I note that Robinson uses a NKJV in his lecturing career but feels free to correct 'on the fly' if any difference is significant to his point. My version of choice is still the KJV which I read in my Newberry Bible. For preaching I use the NKJV. The NKJV is unique in the way that it will not only follow the MT but will put NA variants into the footnotes. It will even show you where the NKJV deviates from the MT. This is an unusually generous attitude for a translation.

In one sense I am still "KJV" but I have never been "KJV Only" which I think is an unjustifiable position to hold. Sometimes I wink and say one of the great advantages of the NKJV is that it provides such a good introduction to the KJV. ;-)

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/10 14:30**

TaylorOtwell on 2010/8/10 16:09:54 writes:

"For instance, we state that the book of John is canon, but isn't that really meaningless unless we are speaking of specific content and verses within John as being canon?"

Taylor, I think you may be comparing apples with pears. ;-) The development of the canon and the development of an edited text are really quite different stories. We can have each discussion separately but if we insist on putting them together life will become very complicated.

If we take an arbitrary date of Nicea in C325 for acknowledgment, not creation of, the canon that is where the trail ends for the canon. (broadly speaking) But the 3rd and 4th centuries are pretty much where the trail began for the Westcott and Hort hypothesis.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/10 14:32**

by sojourner7 on 2010/8/10 14:05:46

writes:

"GOD'S Word was, is, and always will be GOD'S Word!! It does not matter what textform is used; only that it remains truth!!

the textforms are 94% in agreement but if it is possible, and we believe in the 'verbal inspiration of the original text', we have a duty to try to get as close to that original as we can.

**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/8/10 15:13**

Quote:

-----  
In one sense I am still "KJV" but I have never been "KJV Only" which I think is an unjustifiable position to hold. Sometimes I wink and say one of the great advantages of the NKJV is that it provides such a good introduction to the KJV. ;-)  
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Ooops. I meant to say KJV-O in my initial comment.

The KJV-O position, in my opinion, is outright heresy. Well meaning perhaps. But heresy just the same. I find it odd that at those in the KJV-O camp, as dogmatically as they assert their point of view, cannot defend the KJV-O on a Scriptural basis... not even from the KJV Bible... including the original one with the apocrypha :-)

It is a statement of faith, nothing more, and nothing less. It's one thing to assert that the MT is a better text, or even the TR. But it's another to assert what those in the KJV-O camp assert.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/10 17:06**

KingJimmy on 2010/8/10 17:13:58 writes:

"The KJV-O position, in my opinion, is out right heresy. Well meaning perhaps. But heresy just the same."

Jimmy

heresy?!? I think it shows a serious misunderstanding of verbal inspiration and inerrancy, but heresy? It transfers the miracle of inspiration from the apostles and puts it into the hands of a English committee of bishops and scholars chosen by a control freak known as King James but heresy?

I think the problem is that there is an enormous amount of plain superstition within the evangelical movement and by superstition I mean faith that is not based on a revelation from God. I think for many they have taken refuge and hidden behind a concept that has neither revelation nor logic.... but heresy?!?

;-)

**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/8/10 17:58**

LOL Ron, you almost make the case for me.

Well, it is heresy in the technical Biblical sense of the word. Those who are KJV-O often are divisive with those who are not. So much so those who are not KJV-O are often considered anathema in their book. And logically speaking, they must be. Any doctrine that creates such a division, especially in an area where no division is necessary, is the NT definition of heresy. When you are going to say "only," that puts you in a rather separatist and factitious group, meeting the standard of the word, "heresy."

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2010/8/10 18:59**

Quote:  
-----Ron's: I think the problem is that there is an enormous amount of plain superstition within the evangelical movement and by superstition I mean faith that is not based on a revelation from God.  
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I think a superstitious reverence has come about mainly because of the eloquent wording and sentence layout of the KJV. But I find I Cor. 2:1 a challenge,

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God (NKJV)

The koine Greek obviously does not have the polish of the KJV. David Bercot contends that the Romans used to scoff at the language employed in the scriptures. This is probably another thread, but it seems to me that God does not need eloquence to convey the message of His grace; in fact, to dress up the language may actually hinder what God is saying.

**Re: - posted by ccchhhrrriiisss (), on: 2010/8/10 19:52**

Good points, all!

**Re: - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2010/8/10 20:27**

Oh come on, ccchhhrrriiss, we now you have more to say about this topic! Where's your defense of the Alexandrian texts, or even, \*cough \*cough, the NIV?? ;-P

Just kidding, brother.

**Re: eclectic texts - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/11 4:29**

I know that this topic will not be 'everyone's cup of tea', as we say over here, but for those who see the significance of the discussion Robinson makes a telling point in his interview...

"An additional problem affecting modern critical editions is a form of eclecticism that even in short passages of text (single NT verses or less) introduces a sequence of words that can be demonstrated as having no actual existence in any ancient MS, version, or patristic quotation prior to their modern (19th or 20th century) creation..."

Bible translators start by deciding on a Greek Text that they are going to translate. An eclectic text is a version of the Greek text that has been 'gathered out' of various manuscript families. (that word eclectic is almost the same as elected) In the face of variations the scholars try to create a form of words which, in their minds, will account for all the variations found. The text behind the ASV, RSV, NIV, ESV etc is an eclectic text.

Robinson makes the point that in order for their theory of textual transmission to hold true they have to create a 'form of words' for which there is actually no historical evidence. To put that simply as an illustration...

If we have one manuscript family that says... the fruit was red  
and another that says... the fruit was yellow...

then the original, says the theory, must have said... the fruit is orange.

This is a ridiculous over-simplification but it should give some idea of what happens with an eclectic text, except that Robinson is talking about word order rather than single words. The issue here is that the order of words in a Koine Greek sentence is not as fixed as in English. However, when words are matched up in the sentence by their case endings the order of the words can become VERY significant. John 1:1 is a classic example of the vital importance of word order. However in an eclectic text, like the NU, the need to create a starting text which will explain all the variations that they think have arisen from it means that they must invent an 'original' form of words. As Robinson says this sometimes creates Greek sentences which have never been found in any Greek manuscripts.

If you start your translation work based on an invented text you will see why that puts down a somewhat shaky foundation for what is going to follow.

**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/8/11 6:41**

The eclectic method may not be perfect, but it is the only method that makes sense. Since we have over 5,000 manuscripts, with none of them being in perfect agreement, the eclectic method must be used. And the nature of it means we are trying to recreate as close as possible the original text based on the evidence at hand. Which means the final product of what is created won't have any perfect historical parallel. But it is hoped what is created is closer to the original autographs than anything we presently have, as nothing has such parallel. If there are a lot of variants within a short space, it only shows the assumptions of the eclectic method are correct, that somebody somewhere made a change or copyist error for some reason, which means we need to reinvent the wheel, and attempt to reconstruct something that accounts for these differences.

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2010/8/11 8:11**

Quote:

-----As Robinson says this sometimes creates Greek sentences which have never been found in any Greek manuscripts.  
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If this is true it would mean that the Word of God as given in the autographs did not survive beyond the apostolic era. That is impossible. It seems to me what needs to be done is a look not at individual words but at complete whole phrases. I

think one must look at the manuscripts as if one or the other is right and not seek to create a text in which many variations are somehow included. We end up with a mess if we're not careful I think.

**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/8/11 9:42**

But the problem Robert, is even if we had the autographs, how would we know it? If you've ever looked at a critical apparatus (like the NA27, or UBS4), you'll quickly see that while there is a lot of similarity between texts, none are close to being in perfect agreement. And a lot of the times, all we have is highly fragmented texts, and small pieces of paper. If I'm not mistaken, there is no ancient copy that is perfectly preserved, anywhere.

So what do we do?

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/11 10:01**

What we have here in the Byzantine Textform and the NU textform is essentially two different scenarios for history. The Robinson Pierpoint scenario can be found here.

<http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol06/Robinson2001.html>

Take some time to read through Robinson's thinking. I am convinced that this is a much more likely scenario than that of Westcott and Hort.

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2010/8/11 10:35**

Quote:

-----So what do we do?

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Begin with a copy text and make adjustments only as necessary. I think this is a better approach than starting off with the notion that everything is up for grabs. We risk too many speculations.

**Re: - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2010/8/11 10:50**

Jimmy, if I remember right, you have a fairly good background in Greek and have studied textual criticism before? If so, then I will clarify for the other readers.

The idea is not that "eclecticism" in the raw sense can be altogether avoided. At some level, we have to combine two or more different manuscripts to arrive at a whole. But how we choose to arrive there is very different, and in my mind critical.

Westcott-Hort says we have all these different texts (and in the Alexandrian family, there is no clear transmissional history...it's just a grab bag), and none match, so let's combine them all to arrive at something inclusive of all likely variations (how they arrive at what they call "likely" is a mystery, considering their starting assumptions). The result (by design) is a hodge-podge, mish-mash that really can have no resemblance to the autographs. By their reasoning, they have GUARANTEED that what we have in the NA, or UBS, or whichever, IS NOT "autograph-like."

Robinson, and those who follow a Byzantine priority, say what started with the autographs was copied exactly to the next generation, to the next, to the next, etc. Over time and geography, some variations crept in due to copying errors, etc., but we must trace back, as best we can, the transmissional history. We know there IS a history, so let's try and find it. That is the only way we can arrive at something "autograph-like". It may not be exact (of course, there is no way of knowing, even if it were), but at least there is a history involved, and the possibility is there. The text produced ACTUALLY has ancient counterparts (with an s, as opposed to W-H and the Alexandrian folks, where they have guaranteed the opposite.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/11 11:25**

“Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel. Deut 17:18–20 NKJV

This is an oft forgotten instruction to the kings of Israel. I am quoting here because of the phrase “he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests”. Now David is approx 300 years after this but presumably he copied from ‘the law in a book.. from the one before the priests’. If the kings ever kept this commandment it would mean that there would not be ‘successive’ generations of the text but each copy would be a ‘first generation’ copy.

The simplistic assumption of Westcott and Hort is that older is better and this myth is perpetuated in the footnotes of several versions with the phrase ‘better mss say...’. By ‘better’ they mean ‘older’. WH and those who have followed them do not even seem to consider the Deut 17 scenario.

**Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2010/8/11 13:40**

How does Robinson compare with John Burgon?

For Burgon also utterly rejected the conclusions of Westcott and Hort, and in Revision Revised puts them and their text to an open shame, in my opinion.

It's interesting, though, that Burgon, while being looked upon as the patron saint of the KJV-Only crew, did not hold that view himself. He saw flaws in the KJV and wished for a more accurate translation.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/11 13:45**

This is from the interview...

2. That leads us to the question, what exactly is the Majority Text (MT)? How would this compare to Dean Burgon’s idea of the “traditional text”?

The precise definition of terms depends on whom you ask. Our term “Byzantine Textform” is specifically distinct from the terms “majority text” or “traditional text,” since it restricts matters to only that Textform, even though the results closely overlap the other theoretical positions. From our perspective, the Byzantine Textform in most cases does represent a “majority text,” and equally should be considered the “traditional text” as transmitted through the centuries. Had there been no question of readings with less than near unanimity in every place of textual variation, no real distinction would exist regarding these terms. However, in many variant units the MSS comprising the Byzantine Textform are divided, so in such cases statements regarding “majority” or “traditional” status necessarily must be qualified. In the end, however, our Byzantine Textform edition agrees more than 99% with the Hodges-Farstad “majority text” edition or Pickering’s electronic “Family 35” edition; the same holds in about the same proportion with readings Burgon or Miller specifically favored as part of their “traditional text” approach.

The last few lines... beginning “However, in many variants...

**Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2010/8/11 13:59**

Thanks, Ron. I had made a mental note a few days ago to read that interview... but then forgot where I put the note. :)

I'll read it now.

**Re: - posted by ccchhrrriiisss (), on: 2010/8/11 17:15**

Hi BeYeDoers...

---> You wrote: "Oh come on, ccchhrrriiisss, we now you have more to say about this topic! Where's your defense of the Alexandrian texts, or even, \*cough \*cough, the NIV?? ;-P"

Awww...I don't enter into the discussion until I hear some new KJV-only person enter the forums and publicly proclaim that all other versions of God's Word are from the devil. ;-)

I do appreciate the comments here. I actually shared some of the statements from this thread with my mom today over the phone. Like many of us, my mom was stuck by Brother Ron's comment about KJV-only people levying a similar level of "inspiration" to mere translators that was reserved for the prophets and apostles who initially transcribed the Word of God in the first place.

**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/8/11 22:55**

I have printed Robinson's essay off, and hope to read it soon. But unfortunately, I'm going to have to back out of this conversation. As much as I'd like to dialogue on this subject, I'm pulling 60 hours a week between two jobs right now, and with some other things I have going on in the Church, this subject matter is simply too academic for me to deal with at this time. I must press on to more edifying things. But, Lord willing, I can revisit this topic again in the future.

And yes, to answer somebody's question, I do have some background in this area of study. Not a lot, and I'm by no means an expert. But I did receive a good dose of this stuff in seminary at one point. I've literally read thousands of pages of stuff on textual criticism, and have spent hours using the eclectic method while flipping through a critical Greek edition of the NT, and deciding which variants of a certain text were best. As dull as it can be to do, sometimes it is very exciting. It's definitely not for the faint of heart though.

Many blessings! :-)

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/15 3:25**

here is the second part of the Robinson Interview...

This is the second installment of our three part interview with Dr. Maurice Robinson, co-editor of the The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform (Southborough, MA: Chilton Book Publishing, 1991, 2005). Continuing from part 1...

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6. Getting back to the Majority Text, opponents of the Majority Text point out the relative lateness of Byzantine readings compared to older readings in the Alexandrian or other text types. How would you respond to the idea that older readings, all things considered, are necessarily better?

Were this really a true principle, then we should be preferring Western readings over Alexandrian (as even Westcott and Hort acknowledged), since the Western readings clearly have a documented earlier pedigree than the Alexandrian, whether from Old Latin MSS or patristic quotations. Obviously neither Westcott and Hort nor even most eclectically based modern critical texts follow that particular route (a few textual critics mostly in France in fact do advocate Western authenticity). In addition, it is generally recognized among all schools of thought that at least some later MSS in fact do preserve earlier texts. This principle usually is limited by critical text partisans to include only those later MSS that tend to agree with their favored earlier MSS, but the principle should apply equally; and if so, there is no reason why the later Byzantine MSS (or those of even the late 4th and early 5th centuries) should not similarly be considered to have preserved a much earlier form of text with (at least) second-century roots. This becomes a greater issue, given that many non-Byzantine partisans have allowed that virtually all significant readings were in existence during the second century — this in effect reflecting what Sturz and Colwell have claimed. Also — as Sturz has shown — numerous Byzantine readings that were dismissed by Westcott and Hort as “distinctively” Byzantine (maintaining W-H’s definition of such in light of material then available to them) do appear in early papyri that were unknown to W-H. Further, as Burgon and Miller had claimed (confirmed by more precise recent research), a large number of Byzantine readings exist among early fathers in a proportion that does approach 2:1 (cf. Hannah’s tabulation of quotations by Origen in 1 Corinthians). So a case can be made regarding the likely early character of the Byzantine Textform; the desired missing piece yet to be discovered (should



such ever occur) is merely an early papyrus with a clearly Byzantine text.

7. On a somewhat related note, would you say a respect for the history of church usage, plays heavily into your decision to opt for a Byzantine priority?

Not that I would give great credence to the particular doctrinal views of the Greek Orthodox Church any more than I would those of the Roman Catholic Church — but I do recognize that it was primarily through each of these channels that the Greek and Latin Vulgate texts of the NT were preserved. Accepting that historical factor, I would suggest that a healthy respect for church-based preservation and transmission of the sacred texts should weigh heavily in relation to text-critical theories and praxis.

8a. Some of us have read a bit of the writings of men like Dean John Burgon, Frederick Scrivener and even Edward Frier Hills. Would you claim such men as forebears of the Majority Text position?

I would not consider anyone whose primary agenda was the defense of KJV exclusivity or primacy to be in any manner a forerunner of the Byzantine-priority or majority text position, but rather to reflect a more recent and less-than-scholarly development. This is the situation with Hills, who — regardless of all his former training and apparently favorable comments regarding the Byzantine or majority text — is never willing absolutely to reject any KJV reading derived from a minority of Greek manuscripts (or even no Greek manuscripts whatever!). Through scholastic sophistry similar to that applied by most other KJVOs, Hills ultimately defends every aspect of the KJV and its underlying text, regardless of where the factual data might point. Like most other KJVOs, Hills also ignores the methodological dichotomy whereby he on the one hand claims Byzantine superiority while on the other hand he denies such in favor of minority or unsupported readings — this demonstrates a KJVO mentality quite clearly. Burgon and Miller, on the other hand, freely critiqued certain translational and textual aspects of the KJV, even while urging its retention for Anglican Church use until such time as various textual and translational matters were more firmly decided (conservative textual criticism in the 19th century was very much undetermined and in flux). Scrivener was even more bold, openly departing much more from the KJV and its underlying text, but not always in the Byzantine direction. Scrivener basically allowed for the originality of various non-Byzantine minority readings taken from other texttypes; such was not the case with Burgon or Miller. Similarly, S. W. Whitney in the 19th century also defended the Byzantine reading in most cases (more so than Scrivener), but here and there even Whitney chose to abandon the Byzantine reading for one found in minority texttypes. In this light, the real forerunners of the current majority text or Byzantine-priority position remain Burgon and Miller and (in his earliest work) J. A. Scholz.

8b. If the Greek text you helped edit were available to these men, would you think they would support your efforts?

I think that for the most part Burgon and Miller would agree heartily, given the evidence from their own writings, especially Burgon's comments as to places where the TR/KJV text was deficient or erroneous. Such appears not only in his major works, but also as shown in his Textual Commentary on Mt 1-14, where he anticipated both the H-F and R-P texts regarding places of variation away from the TR in more than 95% of the actual cases. Scholz similarly would likely fall into the same category. Scrivener and Whitney, on the other hand, would today continue to hold a differing opinion in some cases.

9. Could you speak to how modern scholarship in general, and evangelical scholarship particularly, has received the Majority Text? Is it helping to further productive debate?

For the most part modern text-critical scholarship remains content with the predominantly Alexandrian-based reasoned eclectic method and its resultant UBS or Nestle text (even though those texts are determined more on external than internal principles). Here and there, of course, eclectic-based journal articles and commentaries occasionally defend some Byzantine as well as other non-Alexandrian readings, but not to a degree that would significantly alter the Alexandrian character of the critical text favored overall. The scholars who have accepted the Byzantine-priority or majority text position remain few, and many of these do not primarily teach or practice in the text-critical arena. In contrast, far more laypeople seem to favor the Byzantine or majority text position than those in academia, although their support continually is clouded by the overly vocal KJVO partisans, who tend to drown out the various voices of reason on this issue.

The very fact that the Byzantine Textform has been published (electronically and in hard copy) helps to spur further inquiry and debate (see, for example, Dan Wallace regarding the likely originality of the Byzantine "shorter readings" as well as the acceptance of some previously rejected Byzantine readings by the INTF in Münster). Overall, however, the Byzantine-priority position remains unconvincing to most scholarly readers (through no fault of my own, I trust). Yet, had the H-F or R-P editions never been published, I wonder whether the greater credence now assigned to some Byzantine



readings by eclectic critics really would have occurred.

see

<http://kjvonlydebate.com/2010/08/10/kjvodb-interviews-dr-maurice-robinson-pt-2/>

for the text of the interview.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/15 3:31**

here is the third and final part of the Robinson Interview

This is the third and final installment of our interview with Dr. Maurice Robinson, co-editor of the The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform (Southborough, MA: Chilton Book Publishing, 1991, 2005). Continuing from part 2Â....

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10. What would you see as the future for the Majority Text position? What needs to happen for it to have a greater impact on the wider church?

I expect the Byzantine-priority position to maintain itself, at least at the current level of acceptance. I would hope that, over time, more people might become convinced that a thoroughly integrated theory of transmission needs to underlie any text-critical endeavor Â— and such a theory is severely lacking in current modern eclectic praxis. As for the wider church, the matter depends on God's people who comprise that body. Should the laypeople become convinced that the modern critical texts, the currently applied praxis of textual eclecticism, and translations based upon such are deficient, then perhaps the popular appeal of the Byzantine or majority text position will grow; if not, matters will continue much as they currently are.

One thing I would like to see (and I mentioned this in a paper presented at the end of May 2010 in Montreal, at a Canadian Bible Society sponsored conference on Text and Translation) is a greater number of footnotes added to modern translations regarding translatable textual variants, and to present these with some real specificity as to the nature of the manuscripts or texttype that support a given variant. Beyond this, I really would like to see existing NT translations (e.g., NASV, ESV, NKJV) appear in two editions: one reflecting the eclectic Alexandrian-based text (as current), and the other reflecting a Byzantine-based text (with text-critical footnotes adjusted to match each situation).

11. Speaking closer to home, would you say the Majority Text should influence students and pastors today? If so, how?

As GÃ¼nter Zuntz stated in 1942, regardless of acceptance of the Byzantine-priority position, one really should Â“profitably pause to glance at the only universal Greek text of the New Testament that ever existedÂ” (JTS 43 25-30). For more than a millennium, this form of text indeed was the Â“universal textÂ” of the Greek-speaking world, a circumstance that did not come about without good reason. I suggest the major reason to be transmissional considerations leading to a generally consistent and regular perpetuation of the canonical autographs, with little or no major alteration beyond limited and minor scribal variation occurring sporadically among only a limited number of manuscripts.

12. Along these lines, what Bible translation would you recommend for general church use? Are any good quality English translations available that use the Majority Text?

At the present time no printed English translations of the Byzantine Textform exist, although the KJV and NKJV (both based on the TR) would come close. The NKJV comes closer, assuming that one follows its Â“M-textÂ” footnotes scattered throughout, although these are by no means totally comprehensive regarding all translatable differences between the TR and the Byzantine Textform. As for unpublished electronic English translations of the majority text, there exist Zeolla's ALT (Analytical-Literal Translation), Johnson's WEB (World English Bible), and Esposito's EMTV (English Majority Text Version), of which the latter remains the most readable without being overly literal.

I personally would welcome a good quality (readable formal-equivalence) printed English translation of the Byzantine Textform. I also would like to see a good interlinear based on the Byzantine Textform (either project of which I would be pleased to work on and/or supervise). The primary obstacle to both projects (at least for me) remains the need for funding and support of such.

13. Thanks again for your interacting with us on these points, Dr. Robinson. Could you help our readers know where we can find a copy of the Majority Text that you edited? And would you speak briefly on how it differs with the Hodges/Farstad edition that preceded it?

The Robinson-Pierpont edition is *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform* 2005, available in hard back from various online sources or in case lots of 12 from the publisher ([www.chiltonpublishing.com](http://www.chiltonpublishing.com)). Individual copies can be obtained from me within the USA at a low cost that covers only publishing plus postage and handling.

As for the differences from Hodges-Farstad: these are relatively minor in nature and in quantity small (somewhere around 220 differences total). Apart from the Revelation and the Pericope Adulterae passage in John, our differences reflect a varying choice where the Byzantine manuscripts are significantly divided. Due to their methodology, H-F in certain instances invoked manuscripts from non-Byzantine texttypes in order to determine their numerical "majority" reading. In Revelation, H-F chose to utilize a genealogical method similar to that of Westcott and Hort, accepting as primary a small subgroup that does not always reflect the more dominant Byzantine Textform (represented by the union of the Byzantine Q and A<sup>957</sup> groups). In the Pericope Adulterae, H-F follow the group termed "B" by von Soden, primarily on the basis of internal criteria; our text in that pericope follows the "B<sup>5279</sup>;B<sup>5279</sup>;B<sup>56</sup>" group, primarily due to the relative antiquity of the B<sup>5</sup> tradition, but also with regard to transmissional probabilities regarding the variants in question.

14. Do you have plans for any future editions?

Glad you asked: the newest edition (a Reader's Edition) has just appeared: *The Greek New Testament for Beginning Readers: Byzantine Textform*. This volume contains our 2005 text, but with lexical definitions and parsing information on each page for all NT root forms occurring 50 times or less in the NT. It also has an appendix that covers definitions and parsing information for all forms occurring more than 50 times (the Zondervan and UBS Reader's editions only cover words occurring 30 times or less, and lack the appendices covering all other definitions and verbal forms). This hardback volume was prepared by Jeffrey Dodson (in consultation with me) over the past five years; it is published in hardcover by VTR (Verlag für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft), Nürnberg, Germany, but is speedily available in the USA and Canada from Amazon and other online marketers with the price (both retail and discounted) being parallel with that of the softcover NIV-based Reader's Edition from Zondervan.

15. We can find you contributing from time to time over at Evangelical Textual Criticism blog, is there any additional online home where we can read more of your work? And are there any additional resources or websites you'd like to refer interested readers to for more information on the Majority Text?

To the first question, the answer is no, I generally do not post at other sites by deliberate choice. First, I am too busy to blog (and I don't Tweet, Twitter, or Text either); second, I am generally disappointed by the nature and tone of most online text-critical or translational comment blogs, particularly since the KJVO writers tend to monopolize or hijack virtually all discussions, and I have no interest in dealing with what I consider illogical sophistry, conspiracy theories, and agenda-driven propagandistic blather. I have posted (rarely) on the Yahoo Byzantine Text discussion list, but almost exclusively on the ETC blogsite. I do have a couple of articles and reviews available online through the electronic TC Journal, but that's about all.

As for other resources, I would recommend that anyone interested in the Byzantine or majority text issue begin historically with the various 19th century authors who defended a greater proportion of Byzantine readings than any others, without having the KJV as some sort of touchstone. These in various degrees include John W. Burgon, Edward Miller, F. H. A. Scrivener, and S. W. Whitney, as well as the French writer J. P. P. Martin. After digesting that material, I would move to reading the more modern authors on the subject such as the various material from Zane Hodges, Wilbur Pickering, Andrew Wilson, and myself. Not to be neglected, however, are the writings of those representing the opposite position, many of whom are addressed within the pages of the writers mentioned above; this particularly includes the Westcott-Hort Introduction volume.

16. Would you have a particular book or two that you would recommend as a good one-book introduction to the Byzantine-Priority position?

There really is no "book" out there on that specific topic (though a collection of my various articles, ETS presentations, and essays is currently in the works, but this won't be ready for a couple of years). At this point, the best I can recommend

mend is for people to read the Introduction to the 1991 R-P Gk NT edition and also the "Case for Byzantine Priority" a appendix to the R-P 2005 edition (available here).

I should also add bibliographically that for a good overview of the "majority text" position, one really needs to read the various articles by Zane Hodges in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society that appeared in the late 1970s (Hodges' other articles in Bibliotheca Sacra in the 60s, 70s, and 80s are also helpful in this regard, although not as precisely to the point as the JETS articles).

And of course, for Pickering's position, one needs to read his Identity of the New Testament Text (preferably his 3rd edition, available on the internet) as well as his JETS articles from the late 1970s.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/15 3:34**

How would you feel if you posted a brief explanation of the financial crisis on SermonIndex and then got a reply from the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

The equivalent happened to me. I received an email from Maurice Robinson pointing out that my over simplifications had somewhat muddled the waters! I will let you digest the details of the interview and then I have his permission to post our emails here...

You just never know who is going to be reading Sermon Index!!

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2010/8/15 8:56**

Quote:  
-----The equivalent happened to me. I received an email from Maurice Robinson pointing out that my over simplifications had somewhat muddled the waters!  
-----

Interesting. It took me a long time to get used to your pedantic approach, maybe that was just a foretaste of Maurice Robinson! BTW, I did get his latest book in. It seems to be almost a handbook on how to read the GNT they published previously. Definitions are at the bottom for words used less than 50x.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/15 13:39**

I don't want to be pedantic in rejecting your accusation of pedantry but...

just joking.

Yes, that's what a 'reader' is designed to do. It should try to give you uncluttered access to the Greek text but just have helps available as you need them.

**email exchange Maurice A Robinson and Ron Bailey - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/15 14:01**

an email conversation between Maurice Robinson and Ron Bailey:

Where MAR quotes from MY post to the SermonIndex thread and MY email I have placed those quotations in quotation marks.

email from Maurice Robinson dated 14 Aug 2010  
Dear Mr Bailey,

Regarding your SermonIndex.net post of 8/11 regarding my position...

While I thank you for your comments, the explanation of my point regarding sequential variants as they appear in the NA/UBS edition is somewhat distorted and could use some clarification. You write: " "

Robinson makes the point that in order for their theory of textual transmission to hold true they have to create a 'form of words' for which there is actually no historical evidence. To put that simply as an illustration...

"If we have one manuscript family that says... the fruit was red and another that says... the fruit was yellow...

then the original, says the theory, must have said... the fruit is orange.

This is a ridiculous over-simplification but it should give some idea of what happens with an eclectic text"

Actually that point would reflect conjectural emendation (which I also reject, but which is engaged in by the NA/UBS Committee at Ac 16:12). My point about sequential variants would better be illustrated by the following example:

Text 1 = the fruit is green Â (MSS a, b, c read this way)

Text 2 = the cucumber is ripe (MSS d, e, f read this way)

NA/UBS = the cucumber is green (\*no\* MSS whatever read this way)

"except that Robinson is talking about word order rather than single words. The issue here is that the order of words in a Koine Greek sentence is not as fixed as in English."

Actually word order is not the issue (although some cases involve such); rather, it is eclectic choice of words supported by one group of witnesses in one variant unit that are coupled later in the same verse with another eclectic choice of words supported by a different group of witnesses that cancel out the ones supporting the first variant unit (if that is not clear, see the example once more).

MAR

my reply to Maurice Robinson

Dear Mr Robinson

I am so grateful for your taking time to write and putting me straight on these points. I was very aware that my illustrations were far too simplistic. Â I was trying to make a complex subject accessible for folks who are quickly swamped by academic detail. Â My apologies for any distortions I have created. Â Can I have your permission to post your post and these corrections on Sermonindex? Â I would obviously omit your email address.

Thank you again for all your work in these matters. Â My own fairly basic studies in these things were done over 40 years ago but from time to time I get drawn into such matters.

I am fully intending to buy a copy of the Readers New Testament; it will help refresh my dusty recollections of my Greek studies!

Maurice Robinson email of 15 Aug 2010

Dear Mr Bailey,

"I am so grateful for your taking time to write and putting me straight on these points. I was very aware that my illustrations were far too simplistic."

Nothing wrong with a simplistic explanation, so long as it makes the correct point in question. As I noted, your example was a fine illustration of conjectural emendation, but merely did not illustrate the point I was making in my article on NA zero-support verses.

"Can I have your permission to post your post and these corrections on Sermonindex? Â I would obviously omit your email address."

Certainly. No problem for me, so long as I don't end up with an endless series of emails from all and sundry (for which I simply would not have time to reply).

"My own fairly basic studies in these things were done over 40 years ago but from time to time I get drawn into such matters."

Somewhere around 45 years ago I began studying Greek and textual variants. It hasn't let up since.

"I am fully intending to buy a copy of the Readers New Testament; it will help refresh my dusty recollections of my Greek studies!"

Very good. If you like it, please recommend it to others as opportunity permits. Even those using the NA/UBS text will find it remains 94% identical in text, with that amount of the helps therefore pertinent.

MAR

**Re: email exchange Maurice A Robinson and Ron Bailey - posted by RobertW (), on: 2010/8/15 14:34**

Quote:

-----Text 1 = the fruit is green (MSS a, b, c read this way)

Text 2 = the cucumber is ripe (MSS d, e, f read this way)

NA/UBS = the cucumber is green (\*no\* MSS whatever read this way)

-----

Looks like what MAR is saying is that in his view it has to be one or the other (text 1 or text 2); it cannot be both. I think he is right.

The difference in Ron's illustration (which also shows an attempt to combine both texts) is that Ron's introduced a new word (orange) into the text in place of either red or yellow. This, according to MAR, is more accurately defined as conjectural emendation. In other words, in Acts 16:12 Nestle Aland/United Bible Societies GK NT take this approach to the passage in an attempt to improve on the texts available by the speculative use of a word not found in any manuscripts. Hmm. Seems like that approach may almost qualify as 'adding to' what has been written.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/16 5:34**

Robert W writes

"Looks like what MAR is saying is that in his view it has to be one or the other (text 1 or text 2); it cannot be both. I think he is right. "

I think you are right.

When he says "While I thank you for your comments, the explanation of my point regarding sequential variants as they appear in the NA/UBS edition is somewhat distorted and could use some clarification." I hadn't realised from the brief interview that he was talking about what he calls 'sequential variants'. I thought he was referring to 'conjectural emendations' which is what I tried to illustrate.

The key to 'conjectural emendations' is that they are emendations/amendments to the actual text based on 'conjecture'. Such a conjecture might be allowable in a marginal comment but to build it into the text that you are then going to translate into English means there is no way back to the original and the original words will be obscured forever.

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2010/8/16 10:41**

Quote:

----- Such a conjecture might be allowable in a marginal comment but to build it into the text that you are then going to translate into English means there is no way back to the original and the original words will be obscured forever.

-----

It seems that to do such things is little different than what Erasmus did. It's still fabrication. What disturbs me is how easily scholars become their own authority and feed things in in their NT Greek texts (and commentaries that shape ideas about God's word) and have at best a shaky foundation. I think men that take hold of God's word ought to reverence God more than that. I think it is evidence of their lack of faith that God has protected His Word. I have some old text books on textual criticism (Marvin Vincent's for example) that predate 1900 or shortly after and the term 'conjectural emendations' is not in the index. Is this a newer practice?

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/8/16 13:42**

"the term 'conjectural emendations' is not in the index. Is this a newer practice?"

I suspect it is. Have you tried 'googling' it?

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conjecture\\_\(textual\\_criticism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conjecture_(textual_criticism))

That definition seems to remove any possibility of understanding what the experts are up to unless you yourself are an expert!

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2010/8/16 14:33**

It seems that eclecticism came into vogue in the middle 1800's and 'conjectural emendations' has since followed. It is not surprising given the higher criticism that arose in that time. What is striking to me is that modern exegetes actually believe the Bible can be rightly understood independent of the Holy Spirit. This is a slightly different issue, but I think the trend is away from men of God doing the influencing and more the critical academics. I see this as a serious problem.