Some Second Thoughts on the Majority Text

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In his engaging volume, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1961*, Neill remarks, "In historical research there are few axioms; and it is good that periodically every alleged conclusion should be challenged and tested in the light of fresh evidence, or of a change in the premisses [*sic*] on the basis of which the evidence is weighed."[2] He was speaking of the Synoptic problem, but his words may justifiably be applied to the field of New Testament textual criticism today—at least in the United States.

In the last decade a handful of scholars has risen in protest of textual criticism as normally practiced. In 1977 Pickering advocated that the wording of the New Testament autographs was faithfully represented in the *majority* of extant Greek manuscripts.[3] This view had been argued in one form or another since John W. Burgon in 1883 sought to dismantle single-handedly the Westcott-Hort theory.[4]

What was new, however, with Pickering's approach was perhaps a combination of things: his theological invectives were subdued (especially compared with those of the Textus Receptus-advocating fundamentalist pamphleteers); his theological presuppositions regarding preservation were also played down; his treatment appeared sane, reasonable, and thorough; and he was a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary. This last point is of no small significance, for in the last several years some if not most of

[1] This essay is a revised and abridged version of a paper entitled "Some Reflections on the *Majority Text*," available for a small fee in the Dallas Theological Seminary Book Room. The longer version contains more extensive technical data.
[2] Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1961* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 115.
[3] Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1977).
[4] John W. Burgon, *The Revision Revised* (London: J. Murray, 1883).

the leading advocates of the majority text view have received their theological training at Dallas Seminary.[5]

In 1978 Gordon Fee mounted a frontal attack on the majority text view, especially as articulated by Zane Hodges.[6] The *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* then staged a battle between Fee and Hodges, in which Hodges wrote "Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: A Response,"[7] to which Fee responded with "Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: A Rejoinder,"[8] to which Hodges responded with "Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: A Surrejoinder."[9] Fee and Hodges have continued to interact with each other's views elsewhere. Most notably, Hodges wrote on the authenticity of John 5:4,[10] to which Fee responded by writing "On the Inauthenticity of John 5:3b–4."[11]

Then in 1982 theory was applied to practice. *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text*, edited by Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad—with the help of Wilbur Pickering and others—was published. Though Hodges and Farstad wanted to publish the text on the centennial anniversary of Westcott-Hort's Greek New Testament (i.e., 1981[12]), so as to emphasize the difference between the two approaches,[13] the missed

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[5] This can most clearly be illustrated by a consideration of the pedigrees of the editors of *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982) (hereafter referred to as *Majority Text*): Zane C. Hodges (ThM, Dallas Seminary) and Arthur L. Farstad (ThM, ThD, Dallas Seminary), the editors, are assisted by William C. Dunkin (ThM, Dallas Seminary). Among the consulting editors, Jakob van Bruggen did not receive his training at Dallas. Alfred Martin (ThM, ThD, Dallas Seminary), Wilbur N. Pickering (ThM, Dallas Seminary), and Harry A. Sturz (ThM, ThD, Grace Theological Seminary, though he began his seminary training at Dallas) were also consulting editors. It should be noted that Sturz is sympathetic toward but does not hold the same view as the other editors (see n. 15). Hodges served on the faculty of Dallas Seminary for 27 years (1959–86).

[6] Gordon D. Fee, "Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 (1978): 19–33.

[7] Ibid., pp. 143–55.

[8] Ibid., pp. 157–60.

[9] Ibid., pp. 161–64. Besides this front-line battle, there was a minor skirmish off center stage between Pickering and R. A. Taylor in the same issue (W. N. Pickering, " 'Queen Anne …' and All That: A Response," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 [1978]: 165–67; R. A. Taylor, " 'Queen Anne' Revisited: A Rejoinder," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 [1978]: 169–71).

[10] "The Angel at Bethesda—John 5:4," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136 (January-March 1979): 25–39.

[11] *Evangelical Quarterly* 54 (1982): 207–18.

[12] B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge: Macmillan & Co., 1881).

[13] Personal conversation with Zane Hodges in 1980.

conjuncture had no appreciable diminishing effect. A spate of book reviews followed—including a rather lengthy one by Gordon Fee.[14]

To be sure, other majority text advocates have published in the last five years,[15] but the focal point of the debate has justifiably been on Hodges and Farstad's book itself. The fact that the second edition of this text was published in 1985 perhaps shows the growing popularity of the textual theory that stands behind it.[16]

This historical survey raises the question, What issues could be raised that have not already been discussed in detail?[17] Two things, at least: first, the Dallas Seminary-majority

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[14] Among the book reviews are the following: J. K. Elliott, *Bible Translator* 34 (1983): 342–44; Gordon D. Fee, *Trinity Journal* 4 (1983): 107–13; L. W. Hurtado, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 162–63; G. D. Kilpatrick, *Novum Testamentum* 26 (1984): 85–86; D. Lau, *Journal of Theology* 22 (December 1982): 33–38; H. A. Moellering, *Concordia Journal* 10 (1984): 118–19; R. L. Omanson, *Review and Expositor* 80 (1983): 283; A. J. Panning, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 80 (1983): 239–40; Moisés Silva, *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 184–88; G. C. Studer, *Bible Collector* 74 (April-June 1983): 2, 5–6; Daniel B. Wallace, *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (1983): 119–26. The volume even made an impact in the more popular periodicals including H. Otten, *Christian News*, September 13, 1982, p. 14;R. H. Countess, *Military Chaplains' Review*, Fall 1983, p. 103; R. L. Sumner, *Biblical Evangelist*, April 15, 1983, p. 2; C. L. Winberry, *Theological Educator* 14 (1983): 100–104.

[15] Most notably, J. A. Borland, "Re-examining New Testament Textual-Critical Principles and Practices Used to Negate Inerrancy," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982): 499–506; Gordon H. Clark, *Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1986); T. P. Letis, ed., *The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate* (Fort Wayne, IN: Institute for Reformation Biblical Studies, 1987); and H. A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984). It should be noted, however, that Sturz is *not* advocating the same view the rest of the majority text proponents are advocating. Rather, Sturz is arguing merely that the Byzantine text-type is early and independent, but does not have exclusive claims on replicating the autographs. See the helpful and balanced review by M. W. Holmes, *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985): 225–28.

[16] The majority text view is gaining adherents in Third World countries—among pastors, missionaries, Bible translators—but the sale of *The New Testament according to the Majority Text* may be due to many causes. For example regardless of one's textual theory the book does give, for the first time in an easy-to-read format (unlike von Soden's), the text of the majority of manuscripts. Such a text has been longed for by text-critical scholars (cf. G. Zuntz, "The Byzantine Text in New Testament Criticism," *Journal of Theological Studies* 43 [1942]: 25–30; B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* [London: Macmillan & Co., 1924], p. 147). Note also the reviews of *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text* given by Kilpatrick and Silva. Even ardent opponents of the value of the Byzantine text are indebted to Hodges and Farstad for their *Majority Text*, for it can now supplant the Textus Receptus as a collating baseline for text-critical studies (see Daniel B. Wallace, "The *Majority Text*: A New Collating Base?" [forthcoming in *New Testament Studies*]).

[17] The book reviews and pro-majority text essays listed in notes 14–16 are the tip of the iceberg. The more general assessments of the majority text view (i.e., those not specifically targeted at the *Majority Text*) include D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979); B. D. Ehrman, "New Testament Textual Criticism: Quest for Methodology" (MDiv thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981), pp. 38–92; Gordon D. Fee, "A Critique of W. N. Pickering's *The Identity of the*

text view connection has not been addressed; second, the majority text theory, as it has been displayed concretely in the *Majority Text* itself, has hardly been noticed.[18] This article addresses these issues as well as a few other points that have been (relatively) neglected.

Dallas Seminary and the Majority Text

As already mentioned, some if not most of the leading advocates of the majority text view are alumni of Dallas Seminary. An inference that has been drawn from this in the evangelical community at large is that Dallas Seminary is monolithic and provincial in its views of textual criticism. However, no faculty member in the New Testament Studies department at the present time embraces the majority text theory of textual criticism. This is because Hodges is no longer on the faculty (he taught from 1959 to 1986). In any case, his view has always been a minority view among the Dallas faculty.

Now this is not pointed out as an argument against the majority text theory. Neither the majority of professors nor the majority of manuscripts is in itself any kind of argument at all.[19] But this is mentioned because those in the evangelical community who are interested in what the faculty of Dallas Seminary are teaching need to be aware that what individual

New Testament Text: A Review Article," *Westminster Theological Journal* 41 (1978–79): 397–423; M. W. Holmes, "The 'Majority Text Debate': New Form of an Old Issue," *Themelios* 8 (1983): 13–19; J. P. Lewis, "The Text of the New Testament," *Restoration Quarterly* 27 (1984): 65–74; R. L. Omanson, "A Perspective on the Study of the New Testament Text," *Bible Translator* 34 (1983): 107–22; H. P. Scanlin, "The Majority Text Debate: Recent Developments," *Bible Translator* 36 (1985): 136–40; D. D. Shields, "Recent Attempts to Defend the Byzantine Text of the Greek New Testament" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985); R. A. Taylor, "Queen Anne Resurrected? A Review Article," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (1977): 377–81.

[18] Two illustrations will suffice. H. Otten, reviewing the *Majority Text* in *Christian News*, opines that the majority text does not go back to the original. He then mentions, as proof of the *Majority Text*'s inferiority, two studies done in previous issues of the magazine against the Textus Receptus' *Comma Johanneum*. If the reviewer had looked up 1 John 5:7–8, or even read the introduction, he would have recognized that the majority text is not the same as the Textus Receptus. On the other end of the spectrum, no less a scholar than Gordon Fee, after looking at Hodges' second principle of a majority text method (viz., stemmatics), asserts, "What this boils down to is an assertion that the majority is right *simply because it is the majority*" (*Trinity Journal* 4 [1983]: 109). Yet places where Hodges applies this second principle demonstrate that his resultant text is by no means always the text of the majority of Greek manuscripts.

[19] It is unfair to charge Hodges with holding that the majority of manuscripts are right *merely* because they are the majority. A consulting editor of the *Majority Text* points out the irrelevancy of pitting majority against majority: "Even though it is apparently sufficient for many exegetes to note that 'most scholars' or 'modern textual criticism' reject the church text, we must agree with the modern textual criticism that the majority *in itself* is not decisive. Not the majority of manuscripts, but the weight decides. That also applies in a different way: not the majority of scholars in a particular century, but the weight of their arguments decides" (Jakob van Bruggen, *The Ancient Text of the New Testament* [Winnipeg: Premier, 1976], p. 14).

faculty members advocate in print is not necessarily representative of what other faculty members—even the majority of them—embrace.

Some Reflections on the Majority Text: Text and Theory

There are three reasons for considering here the majority text theory as worked out in the Hodges-Farstad *Majority Text*.

First, before publishing the *Majority Text*, Hodges was inextricably linked with the advocates of the Textus Receptus.[20] As recently as 1978 Hodges's view was misunderstood by no less a scholar than Fee, who asked, "If they [i.e., Hodges et al.] really mean majority rule, are they ready to give up the TR at such non-superficial variants as

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[20] Unfortunately Hodges has contributed to such a misconception. First, in 1968 he wrote "The Greek Text of the King James Version" (*Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 [October-December 1968]: 334–45). Besides the implied Textus Receptus link in the title, Hodges made further positive connections in the article: "A large majority of this huge mass of manuscripts … contain a Greek text which in most respects closely resembles the kind of text which was the basis of our King James Version" (p. 335); "scholars have set aside this large majority of manuscripts which contain a Greek text very much like that used by the translators of the AV in 1611" (p. 335). He concluded by implicitly identifying the Byzantine text with the Textus Receptus when he spoke of "the Majority text, upon which the King James Version is based" (p. 334). One searches in vain for an explicit disavowel of the Textus Receptus being identical with the majority text. The closest Hodges comes to this is in his final paragraph: "It is hoped, therefore, that the general Christian reader will exercise the utmost reserve in accepting corrections to his Authorized Version which are not supported by a large majority of manuscripts" (p. 345). Yet in light of his majority equation in the previous paragraph, as well as the next sentence ("He should go on using his King James Version with confidence"), the "general Christian reader" would have no clue as to his meaning here.

This essay was reproduced in David O. Fuller, ed., *Which Bible?* 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1974), a volume where strict Textus Receptus advocates and majority text men stood side by side. David O. Fuller edited two more volumes which had the same mixture (*True or False?* in 1973 and *Counterfeit or Genuine?* in 1975, both by Grand Rapids International Publications). Because of Hodges's essay appearing in *Which Bible?* coupled with his paucity of published essays, Fee and others filled in the blanks with the statements of men with whom Hodges kept company (see Fee, "Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*," pp. 23, 25). Though it is logically fallacious to judge one man's results by another man's methods, the fact that there was no in-house critique of text critical method in *Which Bible?* contributed to this perception. One gets the impression that the Textus Receptus-majority text advocates will welcome anyone who ends up with the same text, no matter what his route in getting there might have been.

Finally, in "A Defense of the Majority-Text" (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Book Room, n.d.), Hodges made the Textus Receptus connection on the title page: "A Revised Edition of a Paper Originally Called 'Introduction to the Textus Receptus.' " Even in his section called "Objections" he makes the Textus Receptus-majority text connection: "But do not the readings of the Textus Receptus prove repeatedly to be inferior on transcriptional or internal grounds? No" (p. 16). He does not elaborate on the distinction between the Textus Receptus and the majority text here. From this, one might think that Hodges could find no internal reasons for omitting 1 John 5:7–8.

Acts 8:37 and 1 John 5:7–8 (where a weak minority of Greek MSS supports the TR)?"[21] In fact even since the *Majority Text* was printed, Hodges's view has occasionally been confused with a return to the Textus Receptus *in toto*.[22]

Second, previous judgments about the character of the Byzantine text-type can now easily be examined. The *Majority Text* has facilitated testing of the hypothesis that this text-type is a fuller, smoother, and more conflate text than the Alexandrian text-type or the text of the modern critical editions (i.e., UBS^3 [=NA^{26}]).

Third, the second principle of Hodges's theory—that a reconstructed family tree will vindicate the authenticity of the majority text's readings—can also be tested, at least in the *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53–8:11) and in the Apocalypse (the two places where the *Majority Text* reflects readings based on stemmatics).

Because of these considerations, this discussion will be restricted for the most part to an interaction with Hodges's text-critical method and results.[23]

MAJORITY TEXT VERSUS THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

In 1977 Pickering predicted that "the *Textus Receptus* will be found to differ from the Original [=*Majority Text*] in something over a thousand places, most of them being very

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[21] Fee, "Modern Textual Criticism and the Revival of the *Textus Receptus*," p. 23.

[22] See note 18. What seems even more astonishing are the occasional references to the *Majority Text* in Kurt and Barbara Aland's *Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987). For example in their preface the Alands write, "Since the appearance of the German edition of this book, Arthur L. Farstad and Zane C. Hodges have published *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text*.… This return to the Textus Receptus of Erasmus … can be put to a practical test by means of the present book. In Chapter VII … the essential differences between the Textus Receptus and the modern scholarly text are examined carefully, providing the basis for readers to judge for themselves which of the two texts corresponds more nearly to the original wording of the New Testament" (p. vii).

The Alands make other imprecise statements in referring to the *Majority Text:* "A movement has recently made its appearance in the United States promoting a return to the Textus Receptus" (p. 19), and "*The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text* [is] the newly proclaimed return to the Textus Receptus" (p. 292). To be sure, the Alands do not think that the *Majority Text* is merely a reprinting of the Textus Receptus, but their very description of it betrays, it seems, either a lack of knowledge of the differences between the two editions or an intentional guilt by association.

[23] Where Hodges has been silent, this writer will try to refrain from imputing a viewpoint to him. And even where Hodges has spoken, most of the issues he has raised have been responded to—adequately and otherwise (see references in previous notes). It is not this writer's intention to ignore Arthur Farstad, the coeditor of the *Majority Text*, in this discussion. But as he has not published separately, one has no way of knowing his particular contribution. Could it be that he, as Westcott was to Hort, is the "silent partner" in the articulation of the theory advanced?

minor differences, whereas the critical texts will be found to differ from the Original in some five thousand places, many of them being serious differences."[24]

There is much to criticize in the way this prediction is stated;[25] nevertheless the *quantitative* aspect of Pickering's guess is on the mark. In this writer's examination of Hodges and Farstad's *Majority Text*[26] he has counted 1,838 differences between it and the Textus Receptus.[27] This is indeed "something over a thousand" differences! Most notably the *Majority Text* excluded Acts 8:37 and the *Comma Johanneum* (the Textus Receptus's rendering of 1 John 5:7–8 with its Trinitarian formula). As well, in the last six verses of Revelation, which Erasmus had to translate into Greek from Latin, there are 17 differences between the *Majority Text* and the Textus Receptus.

The fact of almost 2,000 differences between these two texts, many of them quite significant, is a two-edged sword. On the one hand it should be rather disconcerting to Textus Receptus advocates who have been depending on Hodges's scholarship for some time. On the other hand it cries out for a fresh look, by New Testament students, at the Byzantine text-type, which has been seen only through a glass darkly in the printed editions of the Textus Receptus.

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[24] Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, p. 177.

[25] First, Pickering's comparison of "*most* of them being very minor differences" (italics added) and "*many* of them being serious differences" (italics added) is throwing the apples into the orange bin. He could just as accurately have stated, "Most of the differences between the critical texts and the *Majority Text* are very minor indeed, though *many* of the differences with the Textus Receptus are quite serious." A glance at the dual apparatuses on virtually any page of the *Majority Text* will verify this. Second, in perhaps hundreds of places the Textus Receptus agrees with the "critical texts" against the *Majority Text*. In Matthew alone this writer counted 48 such agreements. Thus, contrary to what one might have expected, with every step the *Majority Text* is taking away from the Textus Receptus, it is not necessarily getting closer to the critical text. Ironically then in some measure the *Majority Text* in the eyes of most textual critics today might be doing something of a disservice to its advocates, for what it gives with one hand (viz., authentic readings) it takes away with the other. (Cf. the comments to the same effect by Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins*, p. 94, and especially Zuntz: "The Textus Receptus exhibits, in a generally Byzantine setting, a certain, or rather an uncertain, number of individual, and also some 'good, old' readings" ("The Byzantine Text in New Testament Criticism," p. 26).

[26] All collations are from the first edition. According to the preface to the second edition (p. v) and personal conversation with Arthur Farstad (March 3, 1987), the second makes only a few alterations in citing the relevant evidence.

[27] The Textus Receptus here refers to the edition used by Hodges and Farstad, namely, the Oxford edition of 1825.

MAJORITY TEXT VERSUS CRITICAL TEXT (i.e., UBS³ [=NA²⁶])[28]

To be sure, the *Majority Text* stands much closer to the Textus Receptus than it does to the critical text. According to this writer's count there are 6,577 differences between the *Majority Text* and the critical text. But that does not tell the whole story.

Textual variants are customarily placed in one of four categories: omission, addition, substitution, and transposition. The general character of the Byzantine text-type is normally described as smooth, conflated, harmonistic, complete.[29] Therefore one would expect it especially to imbibe in the error of addition. That is, since it is an allegedly later form of text, it must have adapted and adopted earlier traditions. But of the 6,577 differences between the *Majority Text* and the critical texts, in only 1,589 places is the *Majority Text longer* than the critical. This is less than one-fourth of the total differences.[30]

Further, the *Majority Text* is sometimes shorter than the critical text. Though this is generally acknowledged, it is severely downplayed—by both friend and foe. Hort, for example, suggests that while "interpolations … are abundant," "omissions … are rare."[31] Metzger, in a suggestive study on the parallels between the textual criticism of the New Testament on the one hand, and *The Iliad* and The Mahābhārata on the other, quotes with approbation Franklin Edgerton, one of the editors of *The Mahābhārata*:

> I have come to believe that any passage, long or short, which is missing in *any* recension or important group of manuscripts *as a whole*, must be very seriously suspected of being a secondary insertion … probably not one of the some fifty MSS. [that] I have studied for Book 2, nor any of their genealogical ancestors, ever *deliberately or intentionally* omitted a single line of the text.… It appears that no scribe, no redactor, ever knowingly sacrificed a single line which he found in his original.[32] Metzger draws the parallel for New Testament textual criticism that the rule that the shorter reading is to be preferred (*brevior lectio praeferenda est*) is

[28] For the remainder of the paper, "critical text(s)" will refer, in accord with the Hodges-Farstad nomenclature, to UBS³ (=NA²⁶).

[29] See any standard text on textual criticism (e.g., Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2d ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968], p. 131; B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *Introduction [and] Appendix*, vol. 2 of *The New Testament in the Original Greek* [Cambridge: Macmillan & Co., 1882], pp. 115, 134–35).

[30] And hence the category of "additions" is actually *smaller* than the average category of variation.

[31] Westcott and Hort, *Introduction [and] Appendix*, p. 135.

[32] Bruce M. Metzger, "Trends in the Textual Criticism of the Iliad and the Mahābhārata," in *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism*, vol. 4 of *New Testament Tools and Studies* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p. 151. The citation is taken from F. Edgerton, ed., *The Sabhāpārvan*, vol. 2 of The Mahābhārata, V. S. Sukthankar and S. K. Belvalkar et al., eds. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1944), p. xxxiv.

> generally sound and that by this canon the Byzantine text-type, in being long, comes up short.[33]

On the other side Pickering argues against the canon of the shorter reading.[34] He concludes that "the 'fullness' of the Traditional Text, rather than a proof of inferiority, emerges as a point in its favor."[35] Not once does he suggest that the shorter reading is at times to be preferred or that the Byzantine text-type contains shorter readings. Hodges takes a more cautious approach, saying that one must be agnostic about the principles of internal criticism at the present time.[36] Yet he cites but two studies, both of which are used to demonstrate the invalidity of *brevior lectio*.[37] The impression one gets, though never explicitly stated, is that the critical text will rarely if ever have a longer reading than the majority text, and the majority text will rarely if ever have a shorter one.[38]

Indeed, the battle line almost seems to be drawn at this issue. But what is the evidence? In this writer's count, there are 657 places where the *Majority Text* is shorter than the critical. Obviously one cannot both invoke (or reject) this canon mechanically and maintain an equally mechanical preference for a given text-type.

Yet raw statistics can be tantalizingly deceptive. If the Byzantine text's "additions" are frequently due to harmonization or conflation,[39] while the Alexandrian text (which

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[33] Metzger, "Trends in the Textual Criticism of The Iliad and The Mahābhārata," p. 153. He quickly adds, however, that "responsible textual critics have never applied this canon in a mechanical way." Of course he means responsible *New Testament* textual critics, for those who worked on *The Iliad* (p. 152) and *The Mahābhārata* seem close to applying this canon in a mechanical way. One might, with some justification, wonder why the textual critics responsible for UBS[3] seem to suspend this canon almost exactly as many times as the Byzantine text had shorter readings (i.e., if the Western readings are not in the purview of the discussion).
[34] Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, pp. 79–83.
[35] Ibid., p. 83.
[36] Hodges, "A Defense of the Majority-Text," p. 16; idem, "The Greek Text of the King James Version," pp. 342–44.
[37] Hodges, "A Defense of the Majority-Text," pp. 16–17.
[38] Alfred Martin goes so far as to say, "A Bible-believing Christian had better be careful what he says about the Textus Receptus, for the question is not at all the precise wording of that text, but rather a choice between two different kinds of texts, a fuller one and a shorter one" ("A Critical Examination of the Westcott-Hort Textual Theory," in *Which Bible?* pp. 149–50).
[39] See the extended treatment of this point in the author's "Some Reflections on the *Majority Text*," pp. 15–21. That section can be summarized as follows: (1) The fact of harmonization (e.g., assimilation of the wording in one Gospel to another) in general makes a most damaging case against the purity and antiquity of the Byzantine text, for the undeniable fact is that harmonization occurs much more often in the majority text than in the Alexandrian text (majority text advocates have either tacitly ignored this point or have inadvertently agreed that harmonization is a secondary feature). (2) In spite of the fact that there are logical guidelines to determine whether or not a reading is a harmonization (which renders this

usually, though not always, stands behind the critical text) "adds" an article here or a pronoun there (which could easily drop out via homoioteleuton or for stylistic reasons in the Byzantine tradition), then the significance of these statistics is greatly altered.[40]

HODGES VERSUS HODGES: INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS

One inconsistency has already been mentioned which applies to majority text advocates in general—as well as, to some degree, to reasoned eclecticists. That inconsistency is that too dogmatic an appeal to the superiority of shorter or longer readings *in toto* actually softens the dogmatic appeal to a preferred text-type.

In addition there seem to be four areas of inherent contradiction to Hodges's general theory. Before looking at them it may be helpful to examine the first principle of his method, namely, that mathematical statistics are in some way relevant to the supposition of "majority rule."

Hodges and Farstad say, "(1) Any reading overwhelmingly attested by the manuscript tradition is more likely to be original than its rival(s).… (2) Final decisions about readings ought to be made on the basis of a reconstruction of their history in the manuscript tradition."[41] Elsewhere Hodges adds, "Under normal circumstances the older a text is than its rivals the greater are its chances to survive in a plurality or a majority of the texts extant at any subsequent period."[42] He then shows, through the mathematical calculations of his brother, David Hodges,[43] that in any generation of normal transmission, the reading of the autograph will survive in the majority of manuscripts. In a hypothetical genealogy, three copies are made directly from the original. Two of them

aspect of internal criticism far less subjective than some others), the tendency of majority text advocates when faced with an obvious harmonization in the Byzantine manuscripts is to label all internal considerations *equally* subjective. (3) At the same time, a perusal of the *Majority Text* will bring to light several *potential* harmonizations found in the Alexandrian text-type which the Byzantine has somehow avoided.

[40] The verdict is not yet out as to why the Byzantine text has shorter readings. These call for careful examination. Only one study specifically on the shorter readings of the Byzantine text is known to this writer: D. Karavidopoulos, "Μερικες Συντομες Γραφες του Εκκλησιαστικου Κειμενου της Καινης Διαθηκης" ["Some Short Readings of the Ecclesiastical Text of the New Testament"], *Deltion Biblikōn Melētōn* 13 (1984): 36–40. Karavidopoulos argues, on the basis of *some* selected readings of the Byzantine text, that occasionally this text-type by itself contains the original. He calls such readings "Eastern Non-Interpolations." The present writer is working on an exhaustive study of Byzantine shorter readings.

[41] Hodges and Farstad, eds., *Majority Text*, pp. xi–xii.

[42] Hodges, "A Defense of the Majority-Text," p. 4.

[43] Ibid., p. 8.

are good, one bad. Unfortunately the last generation listed on his diagram seems to contradict his thesis, for there are 13 good copies and 14 bad ones![44]

Perhaps this is why David Hodges adds, "A one-third probability of error is rather high, if careful workmanship is involved."[45] After making such adjustments, he argues, "Consequently, the conclusion is that, given the conditions described, it is highly unlikely that the erroneous reading would predominate to the extent that the majority text predominates."[46] An integral part of David Hodges's calculations is the supposition that the correct reading can arise from a faulty reading just as easily as a faulty reading can arise from the correct one.[47]

This statistical demonstration has four basic problems[48] (either irrelevancies or inconsistencies): (1) "Reading" and "text" are confused,[49] giving a distorted picture of how the statistics are applied to the New Testament.[50] (2) The statistics are relevant only

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[44] The fifth generation really should be called the fifth, sixth, and seventh generations, for there is direct lineage involved ("A Defense of the Majority-Text," p. 5). The present writer is referring to the seventh in the tabulation (or, 5c).

[45] Ibid., p. 9.

[46] Ibid., p. 8.

[47] "The probability of introducing a bad reading into a copy made from a good manuscript is equal to the probability of reinserting a good reading into a copy made from a bad manuscript" (ibid., p. 6). Earlier Hodges argued that "erroneous readings are introduced into good manuscripts, as well as the reverse process in which good readings are introduced into bad ones" (ibid., p. 5).

[48] These are problems mainly within Hodges's own system. That is, no mention is made here of the primary argument used against Hodges's statistical method, namely, evidence from history.

[49] Notice again the statement by David Hodges: "It is highly unlikely that the erroneous *reading* would predominate to the extent that the majority *text* predominates" ("A Defense of the Majority-Text," p. 8, italics added). His diagram is not instructive, for it is an example of a text with only one original reading. Further, Zane Hodges in the *Majority Text* speaks of a "reading" which is "overwhelmingly attested by the manuscript tradition," while in his "Defense of the Majority-Text" he switches to "text": "Under normal circumstances the older a *text* is than its rivals the greater are its chances to survive in a plurality or a majority of the *texts* extant at any subsequent period" (ibid., italics added). Meanwhile his brother argues that "if the probability of introducing an error is less than one-third, the probability that the erroneous *reading* occurs 75% of the time is even less" (ibid., italics added).

[50] Only if a text has *one* possible variant reading is it licit to equate text with reading. But such is obviously not the case with the New Testament. So what do the statistics mean? What does David Hodges signify when he says an erroneous reading is unlikely to occur 75 percent of the time? Does he suppose that the Alexandrian witnesses disagree with the Byzantines 75 percent of the time? If so, he errs by a wide margin, for these two text-forms have more than a 90 percent *agreement*. (See "Some Reflections on the *Majority Text*," pp. 24–27, for a demonstration of this point.) Or does he mean that 75 percent of the manuscripts will have the original wording 100 percent of the time? This again is demonstrably untrue, since no two manuscripts are identical (the closest two have 6 to 10 variants per chapter). Could it be then that 100 percent of the manuscripts have the original wording 75 percent of the time? That seems to be a *lower* figure than the data, on any textual theory, display.

for potential variation of a singular nature (e.g., transposition of one number for another), and hence they cannot accurately be applied to the problem of New Testament textual criticism.[51] (3) The supposition that a good reading can arise from a bad reading just as easily as the reverse does not take into account the theological-literary nature of the New Testament.[52] (4) If it were true that a good reading could easily arise from a bad one, the result would be a hopeless labyrinth from which a stemmatic reconstruction (Hodges's second principle of textual criticism) could not possibly be accomplished.[53]

Majority versus genealogy. Though the statistical demonstration is certainly Hodges's best-known argument for the supremacy of the majority text, it is not his last word. His coup de grâce, as it were, is not a theoretical genealogy, but applied stemmatics, for he says,

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[51] The statistics of David Hodges, as far as this writer can decipher them, operate on the basis of hypothetical variation of a manageable sort (as opposed to the actual variants found in the manuscripts). As such, his statistics *might* work if the only kind of variant were substitution, say, of one number for another—and the substitution could only be of single digit numbers for single digit numbers. Otherwise, two errant readings could be generated from one true reading (e.g., 17 arising from 7); David Hodges did not discuss this kind of variation, even though something quite similar to this happens frequently in New Testament manuscripts. Thus if the original reading were "7" one could easily see the logic of the scheme: in any generation "7" would be found in a majority of manuscripts. But when dealing with four broad categories of variation, and with words, not numbers, in a text with over 138,000 of them—whose potential corruptibility is *infinite* (and in extant manuscripts is over 300,000)—it is difficult to see how this model can handle the data. It is just too simplistic and hence not useful.

[52] Unlike a list of numbers, the New Testament is capable of being corrupted (in the process of transcription) in countless *predictable* ways that are unlikely to be reversed by a later scribe. Otherwise the fundamental principle of internal criticism—and the one on which Hodges bases the second leg of his theory—is worthless (i.e., "choose the reading which best explains the rise of the others"). In Matthew 1:7–8, for example, the critical text reads ̓Ασάφ. Since the man is in Jesus' genealogy, one would rightly expect the king (Asa) rather than the psalmist (Asaph) to be mentioned. What scribe would intentionally change ̓Ασά to ̓Ασάφ? (Further it is difficult to posit an unintentional reason for such a change.) On the other hand Matthew's less common spelling of the king's name (̓Ασάφ) would naturally tend to be "corrected" to ̓Ασά. (It is not insignificant that the Byzantines have ̓Ασά, while the Alexandrian witnesses read ̓Ασαφ.)

Another example is the many scribally generated harmonizations between the Synoptic Gospels. Once the wording of one Gospel had been assimilated to that of another, what scribe would be able to determine what each Gospel writer originally penned? (Cf., e.g., the two versions of the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:1–4.) No wonder F. Wisse, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on classifying the Byzantine minuscules, remarks, "A MS much more often adds group readings other than its own than it misses a majority reading of the group to which it belongs" (*The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982], p. 38).

[53] See discussion under "Genealogical method ultimately dependent on internal criteria" (pp. 287–89) for an elaboration of this point, as well as "Majority versus genealogy" (pp. 282–85) for other contradictions between Hodges' first two principles. What is stressed here is that statistics and stemmatics tend to cancel each other out.

"Final decisions about readings ought to be made on the basis of a reconstruction of their history in the manuscript tradition."[54]

Though not explicitly stated, since Hodges has been vigorous to defend both the majority text and the genealogical method,[55] the distinct impression arises that he is convinced that a reconstructed family tree will vindicate majority rule. In other words his second principle should validate his first.

As he has applied stemmatics only to the *pericope adulterae* and the Apocalypse, we can test this "validation" in only these places. For John 7:53–8:11 Hodges has constructed a family tree of the extant Greek manuscripts, using von Soden's data. He sees the manuscripts as belonging to seven subgroups, according to their distinctive readings.[56] A group of approximately 250 manuscripts, given the label M^6, "is viewed as the original form of the pericope from which all other groups are descended."[57]

A look at the textual apparatus here reveals a startling fact: Of the 30 textual problems listed, the editors, on the basis of their stemmatic reconstruction, have adopted at least 15 readings supported by a *minority* of manuscripts.[58] In other words for the *pericope adulterae*, the *Majority Text*, in half its readings, is a minority text.

One might object, however, that every reading adopted by the editors appears within the majority text, even if it is not the predominant reading of that text-type. But this would

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54 Hodges and Farstad, eds., *Majority Text*, p. xii.

55 See, for example, "The Greek Text of the King James Version," pp. 334–45 (1968), especially page 344 for the "majority" principle, and "The Critical Text and the Alexandrian Family of Revelation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 119 (April–June 1962): 129–38 for his tightly argued case for stemmatics in Revelation. It is significant that in the 1962 article Hodges spends no time defending the majority text view per se. It is unnecessary of course to assume that Hodges's approach to textual criticism changed between the writing of these two articles (though he has been misunderstood in that way by, e.g., J. D. Price, "A Computer Aid for Textual Criticism," *Grace Theological Journal* 8 [1987]: 118), for Hodges later defends *both* approaches.

56 His stemmatic method is as follows: "A valid stemma must have the power to explain the descent of the readings in a natural way. Each hypothesized intermediate archetype must show itself to be the starting point of more than one reading which appears below it on the stemma, but not above. Where there is mixture, as there always is, the stemma should be able to disclose the probable source of most of it. Moreover, the readings found high on the stemma should quite often easily be seen as the natural progenitors of readings lower down which developed from them. In particular there ought to be some readings treated as original which are noticeably superior to their rivals. When a stemmatic tree can pass all these tests at once, it has a high probability of being correct" (*Majority Text*, p. xxv).

57 Ibid.

58 Και ο Ιησους (John 8:1); βαθεως (v. 2); ηλθεν ο Ιησους (v. 2); ειπον (v. 4); λιθαζειν (v. 5); περι αυτης (v. 5); γην (v. 6); επερωτωντες (v. 7); αναβλεψις (v. 7); αυτοις (v. 7); λιθον βαλετω επ αυτην (v. 7); οι δε ακουσαντες (v. 9); ειδεν αυτην και (v. 10); γυναι (v. 10); οι κατηγοροι σου (v. 10).

be something of a bait-and-switch response: Does the majority text mean to Hodges a text-type per se, or does it mean the majority of manuscripts? This writer's distinct impression is that Hodges would not regard what others call the Byzantine text a text-*type* at all.[59] If so, then in no sense do these 15 minority text readings represent the majority text as Hodges uses the term. Of course they are representative of the *Byzantine* text—and Hodges has done an invaluable service by providing a provocative stemma that apparently traces the pericope back to its roots in the Byzantine tradition.[60]

Admittedly 15 minority text readings in a volume called *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text* may seem hardly significant (even if these 15 variants do comprise half the readings in the test passage). Yet it must be remembered that the *pericope adulterae* is one of only two places where Hodges has applied his stemmatic principle—the principle he believed would vindicate majority rule. Nevertheless the stemmatic method should be given a full hearing. In the Apocalypse, where stemmatics have been applied for 22 chapters, one can see more clearly how well stemmatics have vindicated the majority text.

Hodges' stemma for Revelation is based on two magisterial pillars: the complete manuscript evidence collated by Hoskier[61] and the stemmatics of Schmid.[62] Hoskier supplied the raw data (the readings of the manuscripts), and Schmid interpreted the data by grouping the manuscripts into genealogically related families.

In the Hodges-Farstad *Majority Text*, Schmid's groups (slightly modified) are cited, but not the individual manuscripts that compose them. One can get a rather artificial impression then as to the number of manuscripts supporting each variant. Consequently Hoskier must be consulted to see where individual manuscripts line up.

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[59] Pickering certainly argues this way (*The Identity of the New Testament Text*, pp. 50–54). Although Hodges himself has not made the same explicit statements in print, he did argue against the validity of text-types in 1978 when the present writer took Hodges' course on New Testament textual criticism at Dallas Seminary. Further, by implication, if the majority text is identified with a text-type, then all Hodges's arguments about normal transmission and normal rate of copying are invalidated.

[60] Of course it is quite possible that Hodges has still misconstrued the original wording of this pericope. This is especially so because his stemmatic approach is still governed, it seems, by considerations of majority rule. In other words there is every likelihood that Hodges began his stemmatic work with the a priori assumption that M^6, being one of the largest groups of manuscripts for this pericope, would stand closer to the original than a smaller group.

[61] H. C. Hoskier, *Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse*, 2 vols. (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1929). Hoskier's work stands out as the only complete collation of the Greek witnesses for any New Testament book.

[62] Josef Schmid, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Textes*, 3 vols. (Munich: Karl Zink, 1955–56). Though indebted to Schmid, Hodges has made some rather significant adjustments to Schmid's family tree (see Hodges, "Critical Text and the Alexandrian Family of Revelation," pp. 129–38).

This writer's comparison of Hoskier with the *Majority Text* has revealed 152 minority text readings that have been adopted by the editors of the *Majority Text*.[63] This is 15 percent of all textual problems.[64] Thus over 150 times in the Apocalypse, Hodges and Farstad have invalidated their own first principle of textual theory, that original readings will survive in the majority of manuscripts.[65]

[63] The complete list of minority readings is found in note 84 on pages 33–34 of "Some Reflections on the *Majority Text*."

[64] There are 986 textual problems listed in the *Majority Text*'s Revelation.

[65] Though this is not a shocking percentage, majority text advocates need to keep two things in mind: (1) It is the consensus of textual critics today that the majority text makes by far its best case for authenticity in the Apocalypse. Fee, for example, argues as follows: "Given the fact that the historical data point to conclusions different from H-F's, one wonders how they could convince themselves to the contrary … perhaps the clue is to be found in this Introduction. It has to do with where Hodges has spent the vast majority of time in the NT text, viz., the text of the Revelation. Could it be that his starting here, and spending most of his time here, led him to extrapolate some things he found in the Revelation to the rest of the NT? If so, one could well understand how he might have gone down so many wrong paths. The problem with this, as is well known, is that the textual history of the Revelation differs so radically from all others (see K. Aland in the Introduction to NA^{26}, p. 53*). The reasons for this are probably related to its unique struggle for canonicity. In any case, stemmatic arguments from the unique data of the Revelation are hardly fitting for the Gospels or Acts" (*Trinity Journal* 4 [1983]: 112). If here Hodges and Farstad go against the majority text 15 percent of the time, how far afield might they go if they were to perform stemmatics on other New Testament books? (As already seen, in the *pericope adulterae*, stemmatics invalidated the majority text 50 percent of the time.) (2) The fact that the resultant text even has 85 percent of the majority readings is due in large measure to Hodges' alterations of Schmid's stemma. In brief Schmid saw four main families of manuscripts: "(*a*) The most important family is that represented by manuscripts A and C and the text of Oecumenius (particularly MS. 2053). (*b*) Next in importance is the text represented by $\mathfrak{p}^{47}$, א, and several minuscules. According to Schmid these two families stand closer to each other than to the following two groups, and closer than the following stand to each other. (*c*) The minuscule manuscripts preserving the Commentary of Andreas of Caesarea. (*d*) The so-called K (οινή)-text" (Bruce M. Metzger, "Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament," in *Historical and Literary Studies*, vol. 8 of *New Testament Tools and Studies* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968], p. 156).

Hodges demurs on this arrangement, on two significant points: (1) "It is the contention of this study that, *per contra* Schmid, A and C on the one hand and א and $\mathfrak{p}^{47}$ on the other do not actually comprise two major stems of the textual tradition of the Apocalypse but rather simply two branches of a single *haupstämm* [*sic*]" ("The Critical Text and the Alexandrian Family of Revelation," p. 130). Hodges adds that "it is hard to suppress a doubt that most, if not all, of the readings in the list could be easily explained as the idiosyncracies of a single archetypal manuscript lying behind all four of these ancient witnesses" (ibid., p. 132). (2) He considers Av (=Andreas) and K to be two independent strands which join only in the autographs (ibid., p. 136).

In other words it is Hodges' contention that when M^{de} (=Andreas) and M^{a} (=K) converge on a reading it is because both groups go back independently to the original. But does this convergence ever produce an errant reading? Though Hodges denies this (ibid.), Schmid produces numerous probable examples (Rev. 2:10–21), among them the aorist subjunctive after ἵνα in 3:9, which is most likely a corruption of the

Such minority text readings demonstrate Hodges's deep integrity; he has not altered the stemmatic evidence to save the majority's neck. In fact in many respects Hodges is moving toward a critical text and away from a purely majority text as he practices his genealogical method. On this score it seems ironic that the leading majority text advocate has produced a text that is undermining the majority text school.

Though it would be too much to label his genealogical principle the "Hodgian fallacy,"[66] it must be recognized that the more the stemmatics principle is applied to the Hodges-Farstad text, the less it will deserve the name *Majority Text*. Ultimately it would, in the interest of truth, need to be called something like "The Intra-Byzantine Stemmatics Greek New Testament."

Normal rate of copying versus stemmatics. What stands behind the "majority rule" principle (as well as the statistical demonstration) is the idea of a normal rate of copying: "The manuscript tradition of an ancient book will, under any but the most exceptional conditions, multiply in a reasonably regular fashion with the result that the copies nearest the autograph will normally have the largest number of descendants."[67] Hodges's stemmatic reconstruction not only contradicts "majority rule," as well as coming into conflict with the statistical demonstration,[68] but also seems to mitigate the "normal rate of copying" hypothesis. This last point is so because in order to reconstruct a family tree by placing hundreds of extant manuscripts into less than a dozen groups,[69] one would have to posit, it seems, that concentrated copying was done in particular places (such as scriptoria) and particular times. Hodges's argument that a single hypothetical examplar

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Alexandrian reading of a future indicative after ἵνα. Here in fact is an instance of the Byzantine text displaying *atticizing* tendencies (in preferring the more formally correct form)!

In passing it may also be noted that if Hodges seriously took into account the high probability of some mixture—not just from group to group, but between individual manuscripts—even early in the tradition, it would soften substantially many of his stemmatic conclusions. Colwell points out that "when there *is* mixture, and Westcott and Hort state that it is common, in fact *almost* universal in some degree, then the genealogical method *as applied to manuscripts* is useless" (E. C. Colwell, "Genealogical Method: Its Achievements and Its Limitations," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 66 [1947]: 114). In point of fact, as already noted, Hodges does recognize mixture in textual transmission, but of a most curious kind, namely, that in which "good readings are introduced into bad [manuscripts]" ("A Defense of the Majority-Text," p. 5)—and this as much as the reverse phenomenon. If this were true, how would any stemmatic reconstruction ever be possible? Thus on the one hand Hodges's stemmatics invalidate his statistics, while on the other hand his statistics invalidate his stemmatics.

[66] Darrell L. Bock of Dallas Seminary suggested this title (no doubt with tongue in cheek a là the "Hortian fallacy").

[67] Hodges, "The Greek Text of the King James Version," p. 344.

[68] See note 65.

[69] Including, for the *pericope adulterae*, four hypothesized exemplars (i.e., those that have no extant manuscripts).

stands behind one or more groups of manuscripts[70] is no different from Hort's argument that a single archetype stood behind the Byzantine text-type. As such, it destroys any notion of a normal rate of copying.

Majority versus us majority.[71] Kilpatrick remarks, "Hodges' and Farstad's view must explain two features, first that there is no evidence for Hort's Syrian text before the fourth century, and second that the dominant text of the second and third centuries is so different."[72] The fact of no early Byzantine manuscripts is a well-worn issue.[73] Nevertheless three important questions are rarely brought into the discussion. First, why is it that not only are there no early Byzantine manuscripts (i.e., before the late fourth century), but also the Byzantine text-type, as far as the extant manuscripts demonstrate, did not become the *majority* until the *ninth* century?[74] Does this not indicate that the principle of "majority rule" changes from century to century?[75] Second, why do majority text advocates count only *Greek* manuscripts? Is it because inclusion of the Latin Vulgate, for example, with more than 8,000 extant copies (compared to less than 5,400 Greek manuscripts)—and a text-form closer to the critical text than to the majority text—would demolish their theory?[76] Third, what would happen to the majority text theory if a cache of thousands of New Testament manuscripts—whose textual affinities were different from the Byzantine text-type—were to be discovered? Could the majority text view survive the blow of a "Greek Ebla"?[77] Far from achieving certainty about the wording of the autographs, the so-called "majority text" seems to be built on shifting sands.

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[70] For example in the introduction to *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text*, Hodges speaks of several groups of manuscripts in the *pericope adulterae* that "show signs of derivation from a common [non-extant] archetype" (p. xxvi).
[71] Harold W. Hoehner of Dallas Seminary is to be credited with the seminal form of this section.
[72] G. D. Kilpatrick, review of *Majority Text*, in *Novum Testamentum* 26 (1984): 85–86.
[73] Pickering's response to this problem is representative of the majority text school: "We should not necessarily expect to find any early 'Byzantine' manuscripts. They would have been used and worn out" (*The Identity of the New Testament Text*, p. 124). Hodges gives a similar response in "A Defense of the Majority-Text," pp. 14–15.
[74] Kurt and Barbara Aland illustrate this in their *Text of the New Testament* with a table entitled "Distribution of Greek manuscripts by century and category" (pp. 156–59; also cf. the table, "Distribution of Byzantine type minuscules by century," pp. 153–55).
[75] One might also ask Pickering why Byzantine manuscripts of the ninth and following centuries no longer seem to wear out, while Alexandrian and Western manuscripts do.
[76] Apart from questions of majority rule, the Vulgate also illustrates the invalidity of the canons of "normal rate of copying" and "normal transmissional history," since Vulgate manuscripts outnumber the Greek and yet are based on only a few Greek manuscripts.
[77] Such a cache is not out of the realm of possibility. In 1975, for example, between 3,000 and 4,000 manuscripts were discovered in a "secret compartment" in Saint Catherine's Monastery—the very place where Constantin von Tischendorf in 1844 discovered Codex Sinaiticus. Though the manuscripts are by no means all in Greek, and their contents have still to be examined by the scholarly community, a great

Genealogical method ultimately dependent on internal criteria. Hodges inveighs against the canons of internal criticism, speaking of them as "very broad generalizations about scribal habits," and arguing that "all such generalizations tend to cancel each other out."[78] Hodges attacks Hort on the grounds that "Hort's study of manuscript history and his investigation of documents is predicated above all on the internal evidence of readings!"[79] Hodges concludes by stating:

> Modern textual criticism is psychologically "addicted" to Westcott and Hort. Westcott and Hort, in turn, were rationalists in their approach to the textual problem[s] in the New Testament and employed techniques within which rationalism and every other kind of bias are free to operate. The result of it all is a methodological quagmire where objective controls on the conclusions of critics are nearly nonexistent. It goes without saying that no Bible-believing Christian who is willing to extend the implications of his faith to textual matters can have the slightest grounds for confidence in contemporary critical texts.[80]

It is well known that Hort's "approach to the textual problems in the New Testament" was the genealogical approach. That is, he reconstructed the relationship of the text-types according to readings contained in them. His view of the superiority of א and B squarely rested on his own judgments as to the superiority of their readings.[81] This approach, Hodges maintains, is the result of rationalism.

Thus the majority text advocates—Hodges included—prefer a more objective approach, one based on external rather than internal evidence. This is the motive behind Hodges's first principle of "majority rule." Yet Hodges's second principle of stemmatics—on which "final decisions about readings ought to be made"[82]—is none other than the genealogical method. Kilpatrick points out that in this regard "the two editors are more rigorous than Hort."[83] Even Hodges and Farstad admit that the genealogical method "remains the only

number of them are biblical manuscripts and among them is "the largest collection of [Greek] uncials in the world" (J. H. Charlesworth, "The Manuscripts of St. Catherine's Monastery," *Biblical Archaeology* 43 [Winter 1980]: 28).

[78] "A Defense of the Majority-Text," p. 16.

[79] "Rationalism and Contemporary New Testament Textual Criticism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128 (January-March 1971): 33.

[80] Ibid., p. 35.

[81] Westcott and Hort, *Introduction [and] Appendix*, pp. 19–72, 90–145.

[82] Hodges and Farstad, eds., *Majority Text*, p. xii.

[83] Kilpatrick, review of *Majority Text*, p. 86.

logical one. If Westcott and Hort employed it poorly, it is not for that reason to be abandoned."[84]

But perhaps Hodges's genealogical method is more objective than Hort's. Let us again hear what he says about it:

> A valid stemma must have the power to explain the descent of the readings in a natural way. Each hypothesized intermediate archetype must show itself to be the starting point of more than one reading which appears below it on the stemma, but not above.… Moreover, the readings found high on the stemma should quite easily be seen as the natural progenitors of readings lower down which developed from them. In particular there ought to be some readings treated as original which are noticeably superior to their rivals.[85]

One might ask, On what basis are the readings judged to be superior? And how does this differ from Hort's dictum, "Where then one of the documents is found habitually to contain these *morally certain or at least strongly preferred readings*, and the other habitually to contain their rejected rivals, we can have no doubt … that the text of the first has been transmitted in comparative purity, and that the text of the second has suffered comparatively large corruption"?[86]

If Hodges responds that Hort never really applied the genealogical method to individual manuscripts (a point which is quite true),[87] this does not thereby obviate the problem that Hodges's genealogical method is still founded on the subjectivity of internal criteria. In his insightful study on the genealogical method, Colwell lists several problems with this approach: "It is doubtful if it can be applied to New Testament manuscripts in such a way as to advance our knowledge of the original text of the New Testament";[88] "genealogical method can trace the tree down to the last two branches, but it can never unite these last two in the main trunk—it can never take the last step";[89] "when there *is* mixture, and Westcott and Hort state that it is common, in fact almost universal to some degree, then the genealogical method *as applied to manuscripts* is useless";[90] "there is no

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[84] Hodges and Farstad, eds., *Majority Text*, p. xii.
[85] Ibid., p. xxv.
[86] Westcott and Hort, *Introduction [and] Appendix*, p. 32 (italics added). It should be noted that this very quotation is found in Hodges, "Rationalism and Contemporary New Testament Textual Criticism," p. 33, n. 18 and incidentally with the same words underlined. He concludes the note in an apparent mimicking of Caiaphas (Mark 14:63): "It is needless to multiply references!"
[87] Cf. Colwell, "Genealogical Method: Its Achievements and Its Limitations," pp. 109–10, 112.
[88] Ibid., pp. 109–10.
[89] Ibid., p. 113.
[90] Ibid., p. 114.

unmixed text in existence, nor any manuscript with an unmixed text";[91] "in a field where no manuscripts have parents, where centuries and continents separate witnesses, the genealogical method is not of primary importance."[92] These statements show that the genealogical method is hardly objective, especially when it is applied to specific manuscripts (as in Hodges's approach).[93] At bottom, then, Hodges's stemmatic reconstruction is inextricably tied to the subjectivity of internal criteria which he so adamantly condemns.

Summary

Three major points were made in this article: (1) The *Majority Text* differs from the Textus Receptus in almost 2,000 places, suggesting that the Byzantine text-type has been seen only through a glass darkly in the printed editions of the Textus Receptus. (2) The *Majority Text*, differing from the critical text in over 6,500 places, has over 650 readings shorter than the critical text; such readings call out for an exhaustive evaluation. (3) In "Hodges versus Hodges" five points were noted: (a) The statistical demonstration of majority rule for the New Testament transmissional history, though ingenious, seemed to be irrelevant for it did not deal with the phenomenon of a literary document. (b) Hodges's second principle of stemmatics, as applied in the *pericope adulterae* and in Revelation, overturned, in large measure, his principle of "majority rule" (thus rendering *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text* something of a misnomer). (c) Hodges's reconstructed family tree also contradicts the "normal rate of copying" canon for it seems to imply abnormal (i.e., heavy) copying in particular places and at particular times. (d) The "majority rule" principle does not take into account the majority of Greek manuscripts in the first eight centuries, nor the versions, nor any future cache of manuscripts. (e) The genealogical method (Hodges's final vindication of "majority rule")

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[91] Ibid., p. 117.

[92] Ibid., p. 132.

[93] This can be illustrated in another way. Recently a stemmatic reconstruction of Philippians, 1 Timothy, and Jude was done with the aid of a computer (J. D. Price, "A Computer Aid for Textual Criticism," *Grace Theological Journal* 8 [1987]: 115–29). In the study the author repeatedly avowed objectivity and concluded, "The Byzantine text is located in one of the later branches. Nothing in the logic of the program could have predetermined this late secondary descent of the Byzantine text" (p. 126). The point is not that Price's genealogical reconstruction is more valid than Hodges's (there are serious problems with Price's approach, too), but that if two recent applications of the genealogical method can produce such contradictory results, the objectivity of the method is a myth.

ultimately depends on internal criteria and as such vitiates any statements about an objective method.[94] [95]

[94] The writer would be remiss not to conclude with a personal comment. The work that went into this article as well as its intended irenic tenor has been motivated by the character and scholarship of Zane Hodges himself. Never has this writer known a more humble or godly man. As a former student of Hodges and for a brief tenure his "colleague" (in a very broad sense), the present writer has been profoundly influenced by Hodges's perfect blend of scholarship and spirituality.

Specifically, this paper is intended to fulfill Hodges's stated desire: "I sincerely hope that no informed person will pretend that there is nothing to discuss and I also hope that the dialogue that is sure to follow will be carried on at a high level of accuracy and fairness and with a maximum of Christian grace" ("Modern Textual Criticism and the Majority Text: A Response," p. 155).

[95] Wallace, D. B. (1989). "Some Second Thoughts on the Majority Text." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, *146*, 270–290.