

An Examination of the **NEW KING JAMES VERSION**

PART 1

*by A. Hembd, MACS
Reformation International Theological Seminary
A consultant to the Society*

THIS article is the first part of a review of the New King James Version of the Bible. In this review, we examine the original language texts of Scripture which the New King James uses for its translation, the alternate readings from the Nestle-Aland/UBS critical Greek text and the Hodges-Farstad majority Greek text which it supplies in its footnotes, and the actual translation work itself. Is the New King James a mere update of the Authorised (King James) Version, or is it a new translation?

In a statement of purpose for the New King James Version, the Thomas Nelson Publishing Company set forth this aim, among others:

to produce an updated English Version that follows the sentence structure of the 1611 Authorized Version as closely as possible. As much of the original King James Version as possible will be preserved.

The intention is to clarify the 1611 translation by the use of current words, grammar, idioms, and sentence structure so that this edition of the King James Version will speak to the individual reader in a clear and accurate manner. The intention is not to take from or alter the basic communication of the 1611 edition but to transfer the Elizabethan word forms into twentieth century English.¹

Thus we see that Thomas Nelson initially proposed a mere language update of the Authorised Version (though this certainly was not the result, as shall become obvious).

The preface to the New King James Version tells us that the NKJV translates the Old Testament from the Hebrew Masoretic Text, as did the Authorised Version. It also tells us that the NKJV uses the Textus Receptus in the Greek for its New Testament translation.²

Relatively speaking, the New King James Version is better than the other modern versions because its actual text is not based on the modern critical Greek text. Yet we must also state firmly that we do not deem it a faithful translation. Indeed, we cannot recommend it at all. We must to the contrary note its following grave defects:

■ In the New Testament, the NKJV presents a textual apparatus, alongside its translation, with readings from the Nestle-Aland critical Greek text, the text from which the New International Version, the New American Standard Bible, the Revised Standard Version and the vast majority of modern versions are translated. The textual apparatus also includes variant readings from the so-called Byzantine majority text which is an edition of the Greek text edited by Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad (Dr Farstad was also the editor of the New King James Version). **The presentation of these variant readings would make it appear that the Textus Receptus is not reliable, and that therefore, by implication, the Authorised Version, which used the Textus Receptus in Greek for its New Testament translation, is itself suspect.**

■ Instead of staying as close to the text of the Authorised Version as possible, as the guidelines originally stated, the New King James translators made many unnecessary translational changes and mostly for the worse, as we shall demonstrate. Contrary to what the original purpose was stated to be, the NKJV is a new translation, not a mere language update. Not only that, the translation changes impact key doctrines of the Scripture, such as the eternal punishment of the lost in hell. The doctrinal

impact of the changes made by the NKJV is heightened when one considers the inclusion of the readings of the Nestle-Aland/UBS text in the NKJV margin. These marginal readings make potential doctrinal impacts upon key doctrines such as the incarnation of Christ and His eternal Godhead, as we shall itemise.

We now consider the New King James Version translators' equivocal and duplicitous commitment to the Textus Receptus of the Greek. We quote the following from David Cloud's Web site article entitled *What about the New King James Version?* It should be noted that we do not personally endorse all that Mr Cloud has to say concerning the Providential preservation of the text. Nonetheless, we must take note of what he relates below concerning the executive editor of the Old Testament of the NKJV, and how that editor views the Received Text of the New Testament:

We have corresponded with the executive editor of the Old Testament portion of the NKJV, Dr James Price. In April of 1996 he admitted to me that he is not committed to the Received Text and that he supports the modern critical text in general:

'I am not a TR advocate. I happen to believe that God has preserved the autographic text in the whole body of evidence that He has preserved, not merely through the textual decisions of a committee of fallible men based on a handful of late manuscripts. The modern critical texts like NA26/27 [Nestle-Aland] and UBS [United

Bible Societies] provide a list of the variations that have entered the manuscript traditions, and they provide the evidence that supports the different variants. In the apparatus they have left nothing out, the evidence is there. The apparatus indicates where possible additions, omissions, and alterations have occurred... I am not at war with the conservative modern versions [such as the New International Version and the New American Standard Version]'. (James Price, e-mail to David Cloud, April 30, 1996).³

So there you have it. The executive editor of the Old Testament of the New King James Version does not advocate the Greek Textus Receptus at all; he is an advocate of the Nestle-Aland critical Greek text, by his own admission. Not only that, the principal editor overall of the New King James Version, Arthur L. Farstad, was also co-principal editor, along with Zane Hodges, of the Hodges-Farstad majority text, **a Greek text that makes nearly 1,900 changes to the Textus Receptus**.⁴ No wonder the editors of the New King James wish to present us with their textual apparatus of alternate Greek readings; they do not believe in the Textus Receptus, they advocate other Greek texts! Says Dr Farstad in his preface to the New King James:

Today, scholars agree that the science of New Testament textual criticism is in a state of flux. Very few scholars still favor the Textus Receptus as such, and then often for its historical prestige as the text of Luther, Calvin, Tyndale, and the King James Version.

For about a century most have followed a Critical Text (so called because it is edited according to specific principles of textual criticism) which depends heavily upon the Alexandrian type of text. More recently many have abandoned this Critical Text (which is quite similar to the one edited by Westcott and Hort) for one that is more eclectic. Finally, a small but growing number of scholars prefer the majority text, which is close to the traditional text except in the Revelation.⁵

Thus, we see that Dr Farstad deprecates the Textus Receptus. New Testament textual criticism is in a state of flux, he tells us; the old is no longer good, he implies. Very few scholars still favour that old-fashioned Textus Receptus, which was once universally recognised by the Church as the Providentially preserved and pure text of all ages, and which once held universal sway as the Byzantine text for 1,400 years, the last nearly five hundred years as the printed Textus Receptus.⁶ But no, we must now set aside that old-fashioned text; we must turn instead to the Greek texts favoured by the **real scholars**: either to the critical text, which is favoured by most, or to the new so-called Byzantine majority text which is favoured by an increasing minority of scholars. Thus, the editors of the NKJV will now do us a great favour by setting forth to us these better readings in the margin, these better readings which they have given in English in the margin, these better readings which overthrow and undermine the authority of the translation from the Textus Receptus we see in the main body of the text.

What we have just said is no overstatement, but is a necessary consequence of what Dr Farstad has said. Apparently the Textus Receptus is no longer to be regarded as the Providentially preserved Greek text because it was compiled by a ‘committee of fallible men’ using ‘a few late manuscripts’, as Dr Price has told us. If, as we are told by Dr Farstad (who was co-editor of the Hodges-Farstad majority Greek text which is at **major** variance with the Textus Receptus in over 1,000 places), that scholars today hold for the most part to either the critical text or the majority text and therefore those texts are better than the Textus Receptus, **then one of those texts and a translation made from one of those texts should be what we read.** Therefore, it follows that the Textus Receptus, and its faithful translation, the Authorised Version, should be set aside.

Statement of the overall purpose of this paper

We endeavour, the Lord helping us, to address the matters set forth above, along with the translational problems of the NKJV, in the following manner:

1. We shall show the critical text for what it is: a recovery of the Alexandrian text of the 4th century AD, which is an Egyptian revision and corruption of the Apostolic text. Therefore, we will affirm that it is **wrong** for the New King James Version to include text-critical notes in its margin from this very corrupt text. We shall demonstrate the very corrupt state of the Egyptian text, by utilising the meticulous textual examinations of it by Herman Hoskier,

especially from his work *Codex B and its Allies*,⁷ as well as from other sources. We shall demonstrate that the Egyptian or Alexandrian text was corrupted by the following things, among others: (1) it was corrupted by the superimposition of Coptic (i.e., Egyptian) spellings, grammatical structures, and word order upon the text; (2) it was corrupted in many places by the re-editing of the Apostolic Greek text to make it match the Coptic (Egyptian) text; (3) it was corrupted by the critical work of the early Church Father Origen and his followers, who often critically amended the text according to their mystical/allegorical interpretations of passages of Scripture; and finally, (4) it was corrupted by heretics in Egypt who emasculated the text in key places.

2. In the second place, we shall demonstrate how the Church at large, after the persecutions of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and particularly after the Council of Nicea in the 4th century, began to revise their manuscript copies universally to the standard of the faithful apographs (copies descended directly from the originals) that were yet maintained in the apostolic churches of Asia Minor (which was the Byzantine Empire) and of Rome, and hence, set forth the rise of the Byzantine text to the ascendancy, and the universal rejection of the Egyptian text for the next 1,400 years.

3. In the third place, we shall show how the Textus Receptus was the result of faithful men who laboured to see that the best text from the copies of the traditional text found its way into the printed editions, that many eyes were on the text to correct it, and that the Reformation fathers were **right** in eight passages in the Textus Receptus to follow a

Greek minority reading⁸ when that reading was backed with nearly universal Latin support; and that thereby, through consulting an overwhelming Latin witness, the true readings were restored universally on the printed page.

4. We in the fourth place shall show that the so-called Byzantine majority texts of both Hodges and Farstad, and Pierpont and Robinson, are fatally flawed, in that, by their own confession,⁹ their editors relied primarily upon the work of Baron Hermann von Soden and his text of 1913. Herman Hoskier, an advocate of the traditional text, cites in his 1914 review of von Soden's text in the *Journal of Theological Studies* indisputable proof that von Soden's Greek text is, in his words, 'honeycombed with errors'.¹⁰ Similarly Frederick Wisse, who is himself very sympathetic of von Soden's aims though frank about his inaccuracies, says that '... von Soden's inaccuracies cannot be tolerated for any purpose. His apparatus is useless for a reconstruction of the text of the MSS he used'.¹¹ Accordingly, we shall cite specific instances from both Hoskier and Wisse that fully demonstrate the errors and inaccuracies of the von Soden text, and therefore also of the Hodges-Farstad majority text and the Pierpont-Robinson majority text. Therefore, we must censure the New King James Version for including the error-riddled readings of the so-called majority text in its margins.

5. We shall then, as enabled, address the translational flaws of the NKJV in both the Old and New Testaments. We shall demonstrate that these flaws are not minor in nature, but that, to the contrary, together

with the marginal notes, they impact key doctrines of the Word of God: doctrines such as the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ, the incarnation, the eternal generation of the Person of the Son, the divinity of Christ, and the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell.

6. In the last place, we shall exhort our readers to cling to the tried and proven Authorised Version, and, where difficulties are encountered with archaic language, simply to use a commentary like Matthew Henry's (which is now free online) to determine the meaning.

In this instalment, we hope to cover the first two points. We shall cover them in a panoramic history of the text, and then we shall enlarge on point one, namely, the corruption of the Egyptian text, and with it the Nestle-Aland/UBS text, by demonstrating its corruption from the Egyptian translations of the New Testament, by demonstrating the corrupting influence of Origen upon that text, and by demonstrating the emasculating influences of heretics upon certain of its texts. We now proceed, and may the Lord help us in this most important endeavour.

The corruption of the Egyptian text proven

First, we consider the corruption of the Egyptian text, which is commonly called the Alexandrian text, after Alexandria, Egypt, which was a centre of Greek learning and of textual criticism, it being founded by Alexander the Great on the coast of the Mediterranean.

The corruption of the Egyptian Greek texts can be seen in many ways—by the high numbers of contradicting variations among its own texts, by the high numbers of Coptic (Egyptian) spellings, by the imposition of Egyptian word order on the text, by the Greek text being made to follow the Coptic (especially the Sahidic or Southern Coptic); and by its being deliberately altered by Origen and his followers and by outright heretics. But before we consider these **material** evidences, we must consider the most sure witness—the Word of God itself. What does the Word of God say of its own preservation and how this preservation would come to be? Do we not have a ‘thus saith the LORD’?

We consider, then, Isaiah 59.20–21: ‘And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that *is* upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever’.

We may notice the following from the text:

1. The Redeemer Christ the Lord is promised to come to **Zion**, the Church, to them that turn from transgression in Jacob. We must understand by Zion both the Church Invisible and Visible—both as the Church which is composed of true, born-again believers, and also as that Zion which has an outward form, with ordinances, more or less pure: the faithful preaching of the Word, the keeping of the sacraments as

instituted in the Word of God, and church discipline rightly maintained.

2. The promise that the Lord makes to Zion is that His words, which He has put in their mouth, shall not depart out of their mouth, nor out of the mouth of their seed, nor their seed’s seed, from henceforth, even for ever. Likewise, His Spirit which is upon them shall abide with them for ever.

3. The significance of the Lord’s words being in their mouth is that His Word, His inspired Word, would be confessed publicly by them, and fed upon by them, with the mouth of faith, and that in all generations.

Now, we note that the above promise is **not** made to individual believers, considered as individual believers per se. The promise is rather made to **Zion**, to the **Church**. Thus, though there may have been individual true believers, particularly during the times of persecution, who did not have the purest text, yet the purest text remained in Zion **as a whole**. In time that text prevailed over the other texts, we might say, as Aaron’s rod prevailed over the rods of the magicians of Egypt. Thus it is that, though we see distinctive (and corrupted) textual readings in the papyri and uncial (similar to capital letters) texts—in what we now call the Alexandrian and Western text families—which were preserved in the sands of Egypt from the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries, yet by the end of the 4th century the text which we call the Byzantine text ascended and prevailed over all the others. The Church Fathers from Chrysostom of the 4th century AD onward we find universally quoting the Byzantine text, the text that prevailed in the area we now call Asia

Minor, then called the Byzantine Empire, over which Byzantium was the capital. It was this locale where most of the churches founded by the apostles themselves were—Colossae, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Philippi and Corinth. We may believe that this was the text that prevailed amongst those very churches. Indeed, this was so because, as Tertullian of Carthage tells us in the beginning of the 3rd century, faithful apographs, precise copies of the apostolic originals, were maintained in the apostolic churches as the standard for all copies.

In his famous *The Prescription against Heretics*, Tertullian says:

Chapter XXXVI. The Apostolic Churches the Voice of the Apostles. Let the Heretics Examine Their Apostolic Claims, in Each Case, Indisputable. The Church of Rome Doubly Apostolic; Its Early Eminence and Excellence. Heresy, as Perverting the Truth, is Connected Therewith.

Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your salvation, run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, **in which their own authentic writings are read**, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally. Achaia is very near you, (in which) you find Corinth. Since you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi; (and there too) you have the Thessalonians. Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus. Since, moreover, you are close upon

Italy, you have Rome, from which there comes even into our own hands the very authority (of apostles themselves).¹² [emphasis added.]

Notice that Tertullian speaks of the apostolic churches—Philippi, Corinth, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Rome—where the ‘thrones of the apostles are still eminent’, which is to say, where there were still faithful presbyters who were pastors over those congregations and who were yet teaching and preaching the apostolic doctrine. Not only that: notice also that Tertullian tells us that the **authentic writings of the apostles themselves** were still read in those churches.

What does Tertullian mean by ‘authentic writings’? He means that there were yet faithful **apographs**, that is, precise copies, or perhaps even the autographs or original copies themselves, in those churches, and which the presbyters read from every Lord’s Day.

Given that the Church Fathers even in Tertullian’s day found many variations in their texts through copyists’ errors, to whence do we think they would have looked to correct their copies? Why, of course: to the ‘authentic copies’ which were yet maintained in ‘the apostolic churches’.

And where were these apostolic churches? Outside of Rome, **they were all in the area of the Byzantine Empire**.

From the writings of Tertullian we have extant, we know that he was fluent in Greek, but that, he being from Africa—from Carthage—his New Testament copies

were primarily of a ‘Western’ text-type.¹³ What do we mean by the terms ‘Alexandrian’ or ‘Western’?

The Alexandrian text, with its distinctive readings, came primarily from Alexandria, Egypt, though its origin was actually from southern Egypt—near the Nag Hammadi libraries, where the Sahidic or Southern dialect of the Egyptian or Coptic language was spoken. We know this because of the affinity of the Alexandrian text for the early Sahidic Coptic translation of the Bible. In many instances, we may believe that verses were directly translated from the Sahidic Coptic back into the Greek, and we shall give instances of this shortly.

The Western text was so called, not because it was from the west but rather because it is a text that also came from Alexandria, Egypt, from a different school of textual criticism within that city. But that text-type ended up being translated into the Old Latin versions and into the Latin Vulgate, which were then used by most of the churches of the Latin west after the 5th century AD. We see the early Church Father Clement of Alexandria, in the 3rd century AD, primarily quoting a Western text; hence, we know the origin of that family of text to have been from Alexandria.¹⁴ (The Western text may also have been influenced by the Old Latin versions that were then current in northern Africa.) But we also know that the Latin versions were subsequently all related to this text, and because the Latin versions became the Bible used by the western churches of Europe for a time, that text family came to be known as the Western text. (The earliest Latin versions came from Africa, not Rome.

The Old Latin versions came from northern Africa, and worked their way up into Europe, as C. P. Hallihan well notes in the *Quarterly Record*.¹⁵)

Tertullian had copies that primarily reflected a Western text, as were most of the copies in northern Africa where he lived. But Tertullian was very limited in his choice of text. The age in which he lived—the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries AD—saw times of great persecution. Many were martyred. Christians were not free to travel. Believers, particularly in Egypt and Africa, did not have free access to the authentic copies that were yet maintained in the apostolic churches within the Byzantine Empire. Thus, corruptions entered the manuscripts for a time, particularly in Egypt and Africa, through copyist errors, through outright emendations of the text, and through heretics who wilfully corrupted the Sacred Text. But always, the saints like Tertullian pointed to what standard? To the ‘authentic copies’, as he called them, which were stored in the apostolic churches in the area around Byzantium. That he did so, we see from his own words in *Prescription against Heresies* which we already have quoted. Thus, a very strong case can be made for believing **that Tertullian himself would much have approved the Church’s return to the Byzantine text readings which began in the 4th century AD.**

A misunderstanding by Dr Harry Sturz cleared up

At this point, we must address a statement by Dr Harry Sturz concerning the Biblical doctrine of Providential preservation.

Dr Sturz is a refreshing voice in many ways amongst modern Biblical textual critics. He at least would give the Byzantine text a fair hearing. We **certainly** must warmly commend his work entitled *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, where he lists 150 specific instances of Byzantine readings in the Egyptian papyri which are extant from the first four centuries. That said, however, it is clear from his book that he does not completely understand the Scriptures (he certainly did not understand Isaiah 59.20–21) and what they say concerning their own preservation.

Dr Sturz says (in trying to respond to quoted statements of Dr Edward Hills):

One is tempted to ask: how can God's providence be limited to men of the Byzantine area? For example, there is no question about the belief of Irenaeus, Origen, and Augustine in the inspiration of the Scriptures. But Irenaeus used a 'corrupt' Western text, and Origen and Augustine are painfully aware of variants in their manuscripts. Athanasius was certainly orthodox, and he used a Greek text, yet it was Alexandrian and different from the text of Antioch of the 4th century. These men were believers and took a supernatural view of the text of Scripture, and yet, in God's providence, they used texts other than the Byzantine.¹⁶

In answer to this, we must say that, as we have shown from Isaiah 59.20–21, God made a covenant to preserve His word, **not with every individual true believer, but**

rather with believers considered corporately as Zion—the Church of God. It was with this Church (that is with Zion) that God made this covenant, for the Redeemer's sake, and it is with this Church that God fulfilled that covenant.

We have seen how Tertullian used a Western text primarily, and yet Tertullian also clearly pointed to the **Byzantine text** maintained in the apostolic churches in the authentic copies as being the true standard. Thus, we must be persuaded that Tertullian himself, and not only Tertullian but also Irenaeus (but not Origen, as the reader will shortly see for himself) would have **favoured** the movement of the Church in the 4th century to restandardise all the copies to conform to the faithful apographs maintained in the apostolic churches (which were, for the most part, within the Byzantine Empire).

There were several factors that had previously prevented the standardisation of the Greek text, several of them political and ecclesiastical in nature. There were certainly the ten persecutions against the Christians carried out by the Roman emperors in the first three centuries and in the beginning of the fourth—the last one, that of Diocletian, being the worst. There was also the Arian heresy, which had dominion in the universal Church for about forty years after the persecutions and which continued to be a dominant force in the Church until the Emperor Justinian crushed it by conquering the Lombards, the Vandals and the Ostrogoths—three Arian kingdoms—in AD 533.¹⁷ Prior to this, there had been an Arian influence upon the copies of the New Testament in Egypt, as we shall see.

There was also the influence of Origen and the Origenists, which had favoured a mystical/allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, and which also had modified the texts to favour their interpretations. The Byzantine emperor Justinian also brought an end to the influence of Origenism when he called the council of Constantinople in AD 543, which condemned Origen and Origenism, particularly Origen's heresy of universal redemption (that all souls, after a thousand years of purgatory, would be saved). Certainly, the facts that: (1) the Egyptian text differed from the apographs which had been maintained in the Byzantine apostolic churches; (2) Egypt, notwithstanding that there were champions of orthodoxy within her midst, nonetheless also had many heretics within her who were known to have tampered with the text; (3) it was well known that Origen had altered the Egyptian text, and that he with his followers had just been condemned by a Council in Byzantium in AD 543; and (4) the entire Coptic (that is, **Egyptian**) Church was excommunicated from the communion of the orthodox churches in the 5th century because of their monophysitism¹⁸ (which they have named miaphysitism¹⁹)—these facts, we affirm, would have caused the orthodox churches to look askance, and rightly so, at the Egyptian text. So, during the 5th century, all hands agree that the Byzantine text gained dominance²⁰—the Church began to shelve the Egyptian text, and to promote copies after the apostolic, Byzantine standard—and that by the 9th century all remnants of the Alexandrian text in essence died out. It was no longer in the mouth of any segment of the Church at all, save the Coptic Church and her allies, who had universally been excommunicated in

the 5th century for refusing to comply with the Council of Chalcedon.

We are thus persuaded that the early Church universally embraced the standard of Tertullian—namely, that the true readings of New Testament Scripture were to be found in the faithful apographs or copies of the apostolic congregations, where the apostolic pastorates were still in place. We believe that, after the persecutions ceased, and Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism and Origenism were routed, the Byzantine text rightly gained the ascendancy and that permanently, thus manifesting itself to be the text that would be the Scriptures in the true Church's mouth, from generation to generation, even for ever, in accordance with the promise of Isaiah 59.20–21.

The Egyptian text cannot be the Providentially preserved text, because it was not preserved in all generations nor in the Church's mouth in all ages

We have shown that the true text, the words of God promised in Isaiah 59.20–21, would be that which would be in the mouth of the true Church, in the mouth of her seed and her seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever. Thus, any text that was obliterated and forgotten for 1,400 years cannot by Scriptural standards be the Providentially preserved words of God, because it was not the text that was in the Church's mouth, that is, in her profession and in her feeding upon

it as it was being expounded from her pulpits from generation to generation. Of course, where the Alexandrian and Western texts **agree** with the Byzantine text, those readings were preserved, those words were preserved—but not the **distinctive** Alexandrian or Western readings. They were not preserved from generation to generation in the Church's mouth, in her confession and preaching, because they simply were not the Providentially preserved words of God.

Thus, the Egyptian text cannot be the Providentially preserved words of God, save where it agrees with the Byzantine text.

Accordingly, **the New King James Version of the Bible is wrong for incorporating these corrupt readings into the margin of its translation of the Holy Scriptures**, thus making it appear that these readings might be valid when they were rightly rejected by the historic apostolic church. The NKJV is **especially** wrong in including the **heretical** readings as footnotes, such as the 'only begotten God' reading of John 1.18,²¹ which we shall examine more closely when we discuss heretical readings in the Egyptian text. (We shall also discuss there more thoroughly, as enabled, the meaning of the Greek word *monogenes*.)

*The Nestle-Aland text
based on the Egyptian text,
especially upon Vaticanus
(Codex B)*

To remind our readers, we are demonstrating the unreasonableness of

the editors of the New King James Version in putting variant readings from the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies Greek text in their margin. We stated at the outset of our article that 'We shall show the critical text (i.e., the Nestle-Aland/UBS Greek text, among others) for what it is: a recovery of the Alexandrian text, which is an Egyptian revision and corruption of the apostolic text. Therefore, we will affirm that it is **wrong** for the New King James Version to include text-critical notes in its margin from this very corrupt text'.

The critical text—the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies text—is essentially, with few changes, the Greek text that was prepared by Brooke Westcott and Fenton Anthony John Hort in 1881. Michael Marlowe, himself an advocate of the modern critical text, says that the Nestle-Aland text of 1979 is 85% in agreement with the Westcott-Hort text.²² It is likely more than that, if one excludes the insignificant spelling and grammatical differences that do not impact the meaning; he would find that the N-A/UBS text is over 90% in agreement with Westcott-Hort. Eldon Jay Epp, a noted textual critic of the modern rationalist bent, makes this comment on the similarity of the N-A/UBS text to the Westcott-Hort text:

An earlier comparison of significant variants in the Marcan text of Westcott-Hort with those of the Nestle-Aland/Merk/Bover cluster yielded the following results: Bover showed 160 differences from Westcott-

Hort; Merk 128; but Nestle-Aland only 65 differences from Westcott-Hort [Vogels showed 239 variations and may serve as a control] . The conclusion is clear: these three most widely used Greek New Testaments of the mid-twentieth century (Nestle-Aland, Merk, and Bover) ‘show little change from Westcott-Hort and **only rarely present a significant variant.**²³

The influence of the Westcott Hort text upon the Nestle-Aland/UBS text is most strongly seen in the N-A/UBS text’s text-critical apparatus, in which **it almost always cites Codex B (Vaticanus) as a primary authority.** (Vaticanus is an uncial manuscript from the 4th century AD which is stored in the Vatican Library. **The Nestle-Aland/UBS text cites Vaticanus so much, one could well deem it a corrected edition of Vaticanus.**)

As noted by several authors, many of them modern textual critics themselves, Vaticanus clearly has an Egyptian text and shows a strong influence from the Coptic versions. By means of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus (a manuscript discovered in a monastery on Mount Sinai which is also an Egyptian manuscript), many Egyptian readings have found their way into the Nestle-Aland critical text. So much is this so that it may be safely said that the Westcott-Hort and the Nestle-Aland text are in substance a recreation of the 4th century Alexandrian text, as Herman Hoskier noted of the Westcott-Hort text and the Oxford text in 1914.²⁴

Herman Hoskier’s work showing the Coptic/Alexandrian corruption of Codex B or Vaticanus, the Egyptian main exemplar for the Nestle-Aland/UBS Greek text

Several scholars in addition to Herman Hoskier, the famed collator of all the manuscripts of Revelation, have noted Vaticanus’ Egyptian characteristics and that accordingly it is an Egyptian or Alexandrian manuscript. These include scholars Kurt Aland,²⁵ Frederick Kenyon²⁶ and Bruce Metzger.²⁷

Frederick Kenyon in his book *The Text of the Greek Bible—a Handbook for Students* gives the following proofs for Vaticanus’s being of Egyptian origin:

With regards to its place, Hort was inclined to assign it to Rome, and others to southern Italy or Caesarea; but the association of its text with the Coptic text, and with Origen, and the style of writing (notably the Coptic forms used in some of the titles), point rather to Egypt and to Alexandria.²⁸

So Kenyon shows us that Vaticanus is necessarily of Egyptian origin because of its affinity for the Coptic translation of the Bible. He also says that the evidences of Origen’s influence over it manifest it to be of

Egyptian origin, because Origen himself was from Alexandria, Egypt. Note also that Kenyon points out that Vaticanus uses ‘Coptic forms in some of the titles’, and that overall ‘the style of writing’ points to its being an Egyptian or Alexandrian manuscript.

We proceed now to discuss Herman Hoskier, and his observations concerning the Egyptian characteristics of Vaticanus.

Herman Hoskier was universally recognised amongst Biblical textual scholars as ‘unsurpassed’ in the quality and quantity of his textual collation work.²⁹ (Kirsopp Lake said Hoskier was ‘almost supernaturally accurate’.³⁰) His work in single-handedly collating **all** the known manuscripts of the book of Revelation is unequalled amongst textual scholars. What does Hoskier say of Vaticanus?

‘It is high time that the bubble of Codex B should be pricked’.³¹

Why does he say this? Because he had just completed an entire collation of the four Gospels that specifically compared Vaticanus and its sister manuscript, Sinaiticus, Tischendorf’s famous find (which, according to Tischendorf’s own words, he rescued from being consigned to the furnace³²). Hoskier not only collated Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, he also compared the readings of those two manuscripts with the other major uncial texts and with the ancient Syriac, Latin and Coptic versions.

And what did he find? He found that Vaticanus and Sinaiticus contradicted each other in 3,036 places in the four Gospels alone! He cites every single variant between

the two of them in volume two of his famous work, *Codex B and its Allies*. On page 1 of volume 2, he gives us the following summary of the variants between Ⲛ (Sinaiticus) and B (Vaticanus).

I have tabulated the major part of these differences between Ⲛ and B in the Gospels and given the supporting authorities on each side. They amount to—

Matt.	656+
Mark	567+
Luke	791+
John	1,022+
Total	3,036 ³³

The high degree of these variants totally manifests the unreliability of Ⲛ and B, and yet these two texts are primarily what the modern critical text is built upon. Hoskier also shows us something very interesting about Ⲛ and B when they **agree**. When they agree, they often also agree with the Coptic version. It appears that B follows the Sahidic Coptic and Ⲛ the Old Bohairic (northern Egypt) Coptic, and, though the Sahidic and the Old Bohairic are often different, yet often they agree.

That Vaticanus often agrees with the Sahidic is openly acknowledged by many authorities.³⁴ We have already also cited Kenyon’s observation that many of the titles in B follow the Coptic forms.

But now we look at Hoskier’s proofs of the Sahidic corruption of B.

One very telling verse which Hoskier lists under ‘As to B and Coptic Sympathy’³⁵ is

Matthew 7.26. Our Authorised Version well translates it as ‘And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand’. We will now focus on the words ‘which built his house’.

The Textus Receptus correctly reads: οστις ωκοδομησε την οικιαν αυτου. In English, this could be transliterated *hostis okodomese ten oikian autou*. Literally, this reads ‘which built the house of him’. This is the normal and regular way of using the Greek genitive to show possession, that is, ‘of him’ following the noun.

However, Vaticanus reads as follows (along with the Nestle-Aland critical text): οστις ωκοδομησεν αυτου την οικιαν. There is a change in word order here. *Ten oikian autou*—the house of him—has just become *autou ten oikian*—in English, ‘his house’. The ‘of him’ has been placed before ‘the house’. In this word order, a few Egyptian uncials and the Sahidic and Bohairic agree with Vaticanus, against the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts. There is a similar inversion of word order for the possessive in Matthew 18.31 in Vaticanus. For the words ‘his fellowservants’, Vaticanus has ιδοντες ουν αυτου οι συνδουλοι, thus saying ‘so seeing his fellowservants’—again using the Coptic word order. In Greek only Vaticanus has this word order, with the Sahidic and Bohairic Coptic, against all other authorities including Sinaiticus. (Not even the UBS Greek text follows Vaticanus here.)

Why has this inversion occurred? Why has this rendering of the possessive taken place over the normal order with the

genitive of possession following the noun it modifies, as in ‘the house of him’?

It has happened because this is the **normal** word order in Coptic. The Sahidic Coptic in Matthew 7.26 reads ΠΑΙ ΝΤΑΦΥΟΤ ΜΠΕΦΥΙ,³⁶ transliterated in English *pai ntafyot m'pefyi*, literally, ‘this one who built his house’. Now the word ΜΠΕΦΥΙ is comprised of the following components: the Μ̄ is a direct object marker that indicates the word is a direct object. The Π or ρ is a definitive article. The ΕΦ is a masculine third person pronoun for ‘he’. The component ΗΙ is *yi*, which means ‘house’. The construction of the definite article Π + the pronoun ΕΦ means ‘his’.³⁷ Thus, the entire word means ‘his house’, instead of ‘the house of him’, as the Biblical Greek normally says it. The same grammatical structure is found in the Sahidic Coptic in Matthew 18.31 (as in other places). In these places, Vaticanus follows the Coptic word order over and against the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts.

We realise that this discussion has been quite technical. However, let it be said that, with the use of Coptic headings in titles as Kenyon notes, plus the use of Coptic transliterations of Hebrew names which occur in Vaticanus—Daveid for David, Yobed for Obed, Ameinadab for Aminadab, etc.³⁸—and combined with the imposition of Coptic word order upon the Greek, these things **show that it was the Coptic that influenced Vaticanus, and not Vaticanus the Coptic versions**. Either Vaticanus copied directly from the Coptic, or **Vaticanus used Greek manuscripts that had themselves copied from the Coptic**.

Thus, we must affirm that Vaticanus and its allies are Coptic corruptions of the Apostolic originals, not faithful apographs or copies. Accordingly, we must agree with Hoskier: 'It is high time that the bubble of Codex B should be pricked'—even so. Also we must say that it is time that we see the modern Nestle-Aland/UBS text for what it is: a faithful reproduction of the corrupt Coptic editions of the Greek text of the 4th century. It is a reproduction of an Egyptian corruption of the New Testament Greek text that rightly had been put to rest by the historic Church.

In all, with respect to the Coptic corruption of Vaticanus, Hoskier reveals the following numbers of verses (by this reviewer's count) where there is evidence of Coptic influence on Vaticanus's readings:

In Matt.	71 instances.
In Mark	83 instances (98 if you count where the Coptic and Latin both influence the text)
In Luke	89 instances, but 99 if you include the Coptic/Latin influences
In John	72 instances, but 125, if you include the Coptic/Latin
Total:	315, not counting where the Coptic and Latin conspire to influence Vaticanus, but 393 if you count the Coptic/Latin.

Thus, Hoskier finds several hundred Coptic influences upon Vaticanus, and that just in the four Gospels. So we must ask: how can this be the Apostolic text, preserved in all generations? It cannot. A text full of Coptic readings must needs be an Egyptian revision of the Apostolic text.

Again we must ask: why have the New King James Version translators opted to include these corrupt, Coptic-influenced readings in their textual apparatus? Why not stay by the proven and true, the Textus Receptus?

We answer an objection of Dr Harry Sturz

In a footnote in his book *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, Dr Harry Sturz makes the following statements **against** Herman Hoskier's charges that Vaticanus was influenced in its text form by the Coptic and Old Latin versions. The prospect of finding the origin of Byzantine readings in the old Sinaitic Syriac

now appears to be as unlikely as Hoskier's attempt to derive distinctive readings of B from the Coptic and Old Latin versions. Hoskier may have borrowed this idea from Burkitt in the first place. **There appears to be no question as to the Egyptian character and locale of the Vatican MS;** but Hoskier's 'proofs that B was influenced in its text form by the Coptic and Old Latin versions' fall short of demonstration. **In Hoskier's work *Codex B...* there are numerous instances where he cites B supported by one of the Coptic versions alone, and holds this as evidence that it was the Coptic version which influenced the text of B.** In many of these places one of the papyri, either p^{66} or p^{75} can be added to the same reading. This

indicates that the Alexandrian recension goes back into the 2nd century. It is more reasonable to assume that it was the Coptic recensions which followed the Greek in these readings, and not vice versa; so also with the Syriac and Greek agreements at Antioch.³⁹ [emphases added.]

First of all, we very much agree with Dr Sturz that there was indeed a recension of the Egyptian Greek text to the Coptic, back in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries. We also note with approval his acknowledgment of the Egyptian character and locale of Vaticanus. However, we must politely take issue with him as to his assertion that it was the Egyptian version of the Greek text that influenced the Coptic, and not the other way around. (p⁷⁵ is a partial copy of the Gospels that was found in the sands of southern Egypt and dates back to about AD 200, during the days of Origen. It predates Vaticanus by about 150 years. This is also the case with p⁶⁶. p⁶⁶ is quite different from Vaticanus in many respects, but p⁷⁵ is famous for its similarity to B.)

We have already noted that Coptic readings found their way into Vaticanus in that there are proper names spelled as they are in the Sahidic Coptic version (which is not necessarily significant of itself, but is significant when taken together with all the other affinities in Vaticanus to the Sahidic Coptic). Moreover, we have shown where the Greek text in Vaticanus has been made to follow the natural order of the Coptic, citing in particular two instances in which the order of the Greek was inverted to put the

genitive of possession before the noun instead of after, **as is the case in the vast majority of Greek manuscripts**. We have also shown Hoskier's listing of many verses in which Vaticanus and maybe one or two other Egyptian uncials agree with the Coptic version against the vast majority of other Greek manuscripts.

But Dr Sturz also fails to realise that Coptic readings clearly found their way **into p⁷⁵, and we only need to cite the liberal rationalist textual critic Bruce Metzger to demonstrate this**. Through p⁷⁵, or texts like it, Coptic readings found their way into Vaticanus (though Vaticanus clearly has distinctive Sahidic readings of its own, apart from p⁷⁵, as instanced by the Coptic order in titles noted by Frederick Kenyon). But Metzger has found distinctively Sahidic Coptic readings in p⁷⁵. By the way, Metzger, a member of the committee which approved the readings for the Nestle-Aland text, versions 26 and 27, **did not believe in the divine inspiration of the original autographs of Scripture**.⁴⁰ That notwithstanding, we have no reason to doubt Metzger's proofs of Sahidic readings in p⁷⁵; to the contrary, we confirm them below with the original sources, as the reader may shortly see.

Returning to Metzger and how he finds readings from the Sahidic Coptic in p⁷⁵, he tells us the following in his book *The Text of the New Testament*:

The textual significance of this newly acquired witness [p⁷⁵] is hard to overestimate, presenting, as it does a form of text very similar to that of codex Vaticanus. **Occasionally, the**

codex is the only known Greek witness which agrees with the Sahidic version in supporting several interesting readings. Thus, at John x.7, instead of the traditional text, 'I am the door of the sheep', p^{75} replaces 'door' ($\eta \theta\upsilon\rho\alpha$) by 'shepherd' ($\omicron \pi\omicron\mu\eta\nu$). What is still more remarkable is the addition at Luke xvi.19, where in Jesus' account of the Rich Man and Lazarus this new witness inserts after $\pi\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ the words $\omicron\omicron\mu\omicron\alpha\tau\iota \text{N}\epsilon\upsilon\eta\varsigma$... The Sahidic version agrees with a rather widespread tradition among ancient catechists of the Coptic Church that the name of the Rich Man was Ninevah, a name which had become the symbol of dissolute riches. Obviously the scribe of p^{75} was familiar with this tradition, and by accidental haplography wrote 'Neve' for 'Ninevah' ($\text{N}\epsilon\upsilon\eta\varsigma$ for $\text{N}\iota\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon\eta\varsigma$).⁴¹ [emphasis added]

This author has confirmed, using Horner's edition of the Sahidic Coptic version of the New Testament, that indeed the Ninevah reading is there.⁴² He has also confirmed the $\text{N}\epsilon\upsilon\eta\varsigma$ reading in p^{75} .⁴³ The rich man in the Coptic in Luke 16.19 is called Ninevah, and **p^{75} is the only manuscript to agree with the Sahidic Coptic** in this. It has also been confirmed that the 'I am the shepherd of the sheep' reading for John 10.7 is an instance where both the Sahidic Coptic and p^{75} agree against all other manuscripts.

Edward Hills, in his citation of what Metzger says above, correctly notes the following:

At a very early date the Greek New Testament was translated into Sahidic, and some of the distinctive readings of this Sahidic version are found in p^{75} , **thus supporting the contention of Hoskier (1914) that the Alexandrian text was 'tremendously influenced' by the Sahidic version.**⁴⁴ [emphasis added.]

So then, the discovery of p^{75} , far from disproving Hoskier's contention that the Alexandrian text was heavily influenced by the Coptic, quite to the contrary **proves** it, as Hills rightly notes. To the contrary, p^{75} was **itself** influenced and corrupted by the Sahidic Coptic. We are persuaded that the copyist of Vaticanus used either p^{75} or a manuscript much like it, along with the Coptic version (or perhaps he had a Greek/Coptic diglot), so as to reinforce in itself the recension of p^{75} to the Sahidic Coptic. Indeed, the other papyri do not follow the Sahidic Coptic in the way that p^{75} and Vaticanus do; they tend toward an Alexandrian/Western mixed text, with interspersed Byzantine readings (like p^{66}).⁴⁵

The evidence clearly proves that the Coptic influenced Vaticanus—both directly and by other Greek manuscripts that had also been influenced and revised by it.

So we must ask ourselves again: why does the New King James Version include readings from the Nestle-Aland edition of the Egyptian text in its margin? That such a text cannot possibly be the Apostolic text is fully evinced by the obvious Egyptian influences that permeate it. The Apostles

themselves were not Egyptians! But we go on to demonstrate Origen's influence on the Egyptian text.

Origen's influence corrupted the Alexandrian text

Unquestionably, there were many baneful influences upon the Egyptian text. We shall now consider that of Origen.

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* online,⁴⁶ Origen was born in AD 185 and died in AD 232. Origen was a brilliant thinker and a prolific writer. His writings number over six thousand. He wrote commentaries on many books of the Bible, homilies and exegeses of passages of Scripture, and he drafted the famous *Hexapla*—an attempt to correct the Septuagint, which had already grown quite corrupt. The *Hexapla* had six columns, with the Old Testament rendered in six different readings. The first two columns were in Hebrew and the remaining four columns presented four different Greek translations. The first Hebrew column presented the Hebrew in unpointed letters, the next column was the Hebrew transliterated into Greek letters. Next came a Greek translation by Aquila, which was rather literal; after that came a version by Symmachus, which was quite free in paraphrasing. After that came the Septuagint. We only have fragments of the work today, but it is obvious that Origen was much given to textual criticism and that accordingly he exercised a very strong influence over the New Testament Greek text in Egypt.

Although Origen believed that the Scriptures were inspired in all their 'words',

his concept of what constitutes a 'word' was different from ours. To Origen, a 'word' was a logical unit of thought. A word to Origen could have been a **passage** in the Scriptures, as we shall see from Dr Hills in just a moment. Thus, Origen, if he thought he understood what a passage really meant, felt at liberty to change the individual words of the text before him to make them say what he understood the passage to be saying. In other words, he took many liberties to make critical amendments to the text. It is quite likely that some of Origen's emendations found their way into the Alexandrian text.⁴⁷ We may think this because (although there is not a perfect agreement) overall the distinctive Alexandrian readings compared with Origen's citations of Scripture passages are in accord against the traditional or Byzantine text.⁴⁸ Origen lived during the time that p^{66} and p^{75} were written.

Hoskier, in his book *Codex B and its Allies*, cites Canon Cook's assessment of the character and person of Origen:

In his criticism of the New Testament Origen had great advantages, and he used them with greater success. Every available source of information he studied carefully. Manuscripts and versions were before him; both manuscripts and versions he examined, and brought out the results of his researches with unrivalled power. But no one who considers the peculiar character of his genius, his subtlety, his restless curiosity, his **audacity in speculation, his love of innovation**, will be disposed to deny the extreme

risk of adopting any conclusion, any reading, which rests on his authority, unless it is supported by the independent testimony of earlier or contemporary Fathers and Versions. The points in which we are specially entitled to look for innovations are: 1) **curious and ingenious readings**, such, for instance, as those which we have noticed in St Mark and St Luke; 2) the **removal of words, clauses, or entire sentences** which a man of fastidious taste might regard as superfluities or repetitions; 3) a fearless and speculative mode of dealing with portions of the New Testament which might contain statements opposed to his prepossessions or present difficulties even his ingenuity might be unable to resolve...⁴⁹ [emphases added.]

So we see that Origen was highly skilled in amassing various readings and comparing them, but also that his 'audacity in speculation' and his 'love of innovation' made him extremely unreliable for determining the real reading of a passage. We see that Origen was indeed given to novel readings and to removing words, clauses, and even entire sentences when he deemed them to be superfluous.⁵⁰

Edward Hills in his book *The King James Version Defended* gives us the following specific example of Origen's propensities toward 'the boldest sort of conjectural emendation'.

In his comment on this passage [Matthew 19.19] Origen gives us a

specimen of the New Testament textual criticism which was carried on in Alexandria about 225 A.D. Origen reasons that Jesus could not have concluded his list of God's commandments with the comprehensive requirement, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. For the reply of the young man was, *All these things have I kept from my youth up*, and Jesus evidently accepted this statement as true. But if the young man had loved his neighbor as himself, he would have been perfect, for Paul says that the whole law is summed up in this saying, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. But Jesus answered, *If thou wilt be perfect, etc.*, implying that the young man was not yet perfect. Therefore, Origen argued, the commandment *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, **could not have been spoken by Jesus on this occasion, and was not part of the text of Matthew**. This clause, he believed, was added by some tasteless scribe.⁵¹ [emphasis added.]

Thus it is clear that this renowned Father was not content to abide by the text which he had received but freely engaged in the boldest sort of conjectural emendation. And there were **other critics less restrained than he who deleted many readings of the original New Testament and thus produced the abbreviated text found in the papyri and in the manuscripts Aleph and B**.⁵² [emphases added.]

Thus we see that Origen felt that the phrase ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ should be deleted from the passage, and Hills tells us that, at that time Origen was one of the more restrained in his views regarding altering the text. Hills points out rightly that many of the deletions and omissions we find in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, which accordingly have found their way into the Nestle-Aland/UBS text, can likely be traced to the hands of Origen and his followers. Yet the New King James lists these omissions as possibly valid readings!

David Cloud cites forty-four omissions of complete verses and ninety-five partial omissions **from the Nestle-Aland/UBS text that are footnoted as possibly valid readings by the New King James**, many of which can be traced directly to the hand of Origen and his contemporaries. For a listing of these omissions, see Cloud’s Web site.⁵³ Some of the more significant omissions by the critical text (though these were not necessarily Origen’s work) include: Matthew 17.21 (‘Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting’), John 7.53–8.11 on the woman caught in adultery, Acts 8.37 (‘And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?’), and 1 John 5.7. For a list of hundreds of such omissions by the Nestle-Aland/UBS critical text throughout the New Testament, see the Society’s article *A Textual Key to the New Testament: A List of Omissions and Changes*.⁵⁴

Add to this that Origen in many ways was quite unsound in doctrine. Origen was excommunicated from Alexandria for

holding to the doctrine of universal redemption, that is, the final salvation of all souls, including the devil’s. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* cites Origen as saying in his *De Principia* that ‘We think that the goodness of God, through the mediation of Christ, will bring all creatures to one and the same end’ (*De princip.*, I, vi, 1–3).⁵⁵ The phrase ‘will bring all creatures to one and the same end’ shows us that, apparently, Origen thought even the devil would ultimately be saved at the very last. The same article tells us about Origen’s being excommunicated from Alexandria for holding to this doctrine. Certainly, we cannot trust the hand of a man upon the Sacred Text who held to such heterodox views as these.

Origen’s followers went to even wilder excesses. Finally, at the Second Council of Constantinople in AD 543 (the Council called by the Emperor Justinian), the errors of Origenism were condemned.⁵⁶ The three errors for which the Origenists were condemned—and all three of these errors had their seminal beginnings in Origen himself—were:⁵⁷

- Allegorism in the interpretation of Scripture
- Subordination of the Divine Persons
- The theory of successive trials and a final restoration

We have already seen Origen’s propensity toward allegorising the Scripture. With respect to ‘subordination of the Divine Persons’, although Origen was a Trinitarian, yet he strongly taught that

there was a hierarchy of the Divine Persons, with the Son under the Father, and the Spirit under the Father and the Son. He taught this to the weakening of the equality of the three Persons. His teaching this back in the 2nd and 3rd centuries paved the way for Arius's later errors, wherein Arius denied outright the Godhead of Christ, saying that Christ was a spirit-being created by God, the firstborn of the creation, and therefore totally subordinate to the Father in every way.

Origen's theory of successive trials and final restoration basically came to this: Origen believed that, during the Millennium, all souls that had sinned, including those of devils themselves, would be punished in purgatory. At the end of the Millennium, all would be redeemed. This is certainly an execrable heresy, and for holding to it himself Origen was rightly excommunicated from the Church.

It is clear that Origen had a contaminating effect upon Egyptian Christianity and no doubt upon the text of the Holy Scriptures—his influence was so strong over the text of Egypt that the Alexandrian text is often known as the Origenistic text.⁵⁸

Again, we must ask ourselves: why has the New King James Version, then, chosen to revive the long-rejected, Origenistic text of Alexandria in its marginal notes? How can a text which has been subject to the extravagant critical emendations of Origen and his followers be the genuine Apostolic text, preserved of God in all generations, as promised in Isaiah 59.20–21?

Egyptian heretics corrupted the Egyptian text

We come now to consider the profound influence that heretical sects in Egypt exercised upon the copies of the Sacred Writ which were there. That the Egypt of the 2nd and 3rd centuries—the age of most of the papyri or parchment readings that modern textual critics delight in—was full of heretics is openly acknowledged by the noted textual critic Dr Bruce Metzger:

Among Christian documents which during the 2nd century either originated in Egypt or circulated there among both the orthodox and Gnostics are numerous apocryphal gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses... There are also fragments of exegetical and dogmatic works composed by Alexandrian Christians, chiefly Gnostics, during the 2nd century. We know, for example, of such teachers as Basilides and his son Isidore, and of Valentinus, Ptolemaeus, Heracleon, and Pantaenus. All but the last-mentioned were unorthodox in one respect or another. In fact, to judge by the comments made by Clement of Alexandria, almost every deviant Christian sect was represented in Egypt during the 2nd century; Clement mentions the Valentinians, the Basilidians, the Marcionites, the Peratae, the Encratites, the Docetists, the Maimetites, the Cainites, the Ophites, the Simonians, and the Eutyctites. What proportion of Christians in Egypt during the 2nd century were orthodox is not known.⁵⁹

The early Church Father Tertullian, who himself was from Carthage, Africa, tells us that these early heretics willingly corrupted the copies of the Scriptures with ‘both pen and knife’. Tertullian speaks of this in his work *Prescription against Heresies*. (By his use of the term ‘Catholics’, of course, Tertullian means the communion of the orthodox churches of the 2nd and 3rd centuries; he is not referring to popery.)

Chapter XXXVIII.-Harmony of the Church and the Scriptures. Heretics Have Tampered with the Scriptures, and Mutilated, and Altered Them. Catholics Never Change the Scriptures, Which Always Testify for Them.

[1] Where diversity of doctrine is found, there, then, must the corruption both of the Scriptures and the expositions thereof be regarded as existing. [2] On those whose purpose it was to teach differently, lay the necessity of differently arranging the instruments of doctrine. [3] They could not possibly have effected their diversity of teaching in any other way than by **having a difference in the means whereby they taught**. As in their case, corruption in doctrine could not possibly have succeeded without **a corruption also of its instruments**, so to ourselves also integrity of doctrine could not have accrued, without integrity in those means by which doctrine is managed. [4] Now, what is there in our Scriptures which is contrary to us? What of our own have we introduced, that we should have to take it away again, or else add to it, or alter it, in

order to restore to its natural soundness anything which is contrary to it, and contained in the Scriptures? [5] What we are ourselves, that also the Scriptures are (and have been) from the beginning. Of them we have our being, before there was any other way, before they were interpolated by you. [6] Now, inasmuch as all interpolation must be believed to be a later process, for the express reason that it proceeds from rivalry which is never in any case previous to nor home-born with that which it emulates, it is as incredible to every man of sense that we should seem to have introduced any corrupt text into the Scriptures, existing, as we have been, from the very first, and being the first, as it is that they have not in fact introduced it who are both later in date and opposed (to the Scriptures). [7] **One man perverts the Scriptures with his hand, another their meaning by his exposition**. [8] For although Valentinus seems to use the entire volume, he has none the less laid violent hands on the truth only with a more cunning mind and skill than Marcion. [9] **Marcion expressly and openly used the knife, not the pen, since he made such an excision of the Scriptures as suited his own subject-matter**. [10] Valentinus, however, abstained from such excision, because he did not invent Scriptures to square with his own subject-matter, but adapted his matter to the Scriptures; and yet he took away more, and added more, by removing the proper meaning of

every particular word, and adding fantastic arrangements of things which have no real existence.⁶⁰ [emphases added.]

We note from the above that Tertullian openly testifies (as also did Irenaeus) that Marcion cut away texts from the Scriptures that did not agree with him.⁶¹ He tells us also that Valentinus did not appear to have excised texts, but that he overloaded words of Scripture with new and novel meanings, as well as adding many new doctrines of his own. He also implies that other heretics whom he does not name here did indeed alter the text. However, John Burgon, the famous champion of the traditional text, shows us that Valentinus and his followers, who were from Egypt, plainly did alter key texts of Scripture, particularly John 1.18.

But before we deal with Burgon's testimony on how a very early Christian writer, the author of *Excerpta Theodoti* in the 2nd century, explicitly testified how the Valentinians used a corrupted form of John 1.18 to defend their heretical doctrines, we must consider a controversy from John 1.18. Does the reading *μονογενης θεος* (*monogenes theos*) which occurs in Vaticanus mean 'the only begotten God', as the New King James Version renders it in its marginal note and the New American Standard Version translates it in its text? Or does it mean 'God the one and only', as the New International Version translates it?

To come nearer to the point: is it really so bad that Vaticanus reads (as did the Valentinians) *μονογενης θεος* (*monogenes theos*), instead of 'the only begotten Son'? Does the NKJV mistranslate *μονογενης*

θεος in its marginal note on John 1.18, rendering it, as they do, 'only begotten God'? And is saying that Christ is the only begotten God really such a bad thing? We affirm that it is a bad thing, as will be shown below. We also affirm that the words *μονογενης θεος* can **only** be translated as 'only begotten God'; it cannot be translated 'the only and unique God', and we offer our reasonings for this below also. We will show how this reading was introduced into the Egyptian text by early Gnostic heretics. We shall then censure the New King James Version for including this reading, introduced as it was by heretics in the Egyptian text, in its marginal notes, as though it were a possibly valid reading. Finally we shall reprove the NKJV for including other readings influenced by heretics from the Egyptian text in its notes.

The 'one and only God' or the 'only begotten Son'?

First of all, let us openly state that we find the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament using *μονογενης υιος* (*monogenes huios*, meaning either 'the only begotten Son' or 'the only and unique Son'), and not *μονογενης θεος* in John 1.18.⁶² We will affirm, with the Nicene Fathers, that *monogenes huios* properly means 'the only begotten Son'. For indeed, *monogenes* properly means 'an only offspring', and *monogenes huios* means 'an only offspring son'. That concept could be communicated as either 'the only begotten Son' or 'the only Son'. However, we will demonstrate that *monogenes theos* is an altogether **unacceptable** rendering, and that that would mean either 'the only begotten

God’ (as both the New King James Version margin and the New American Standard Version text have rendered it), ‘the only and unique offspring God’ or ‘the God who has the quality of being an only offspring’.

A modern scholar, Richard Longenecker, has stated that *monogenes* in the Greek means ‘one and only of a kind’. He states this in the chapter entitled ‘The One and Only Son’ in the book *The NIV: the Making of a Contemporary Translation*.⁶³

Longenecker argues that *monogenes* is formed of two Greek words (which it is), with *monos* meaning ‘one’ or ‘only’ and *genos* ‘kind’. Thus, says he, *μονογενης* properly means ‘one of a kind’ or a ‘unique kind’. Where we see *monogenes huios*, it properly means to Longenecker ‘the only and unique Son’, whereas, *monogenes theos* means to him, ‘the only and unique God’. Thus, according to Longenecker and men of like sentiments with him, John 1.18 should follow the Greek of Vaticanus, but translating it in this way: ‘No man hath seen God at any time; the only and unique God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him’.

While we must commend Longenecker for seeing the impropriety of the ‘only begotten God’ rendering, we cannot agree with his defence of Vaticanus’s reading of *monogenes theos*, and that, for the following three reasons:

1. *Genos* (γενος) properly refers to an **offspring**, whether literal or figurative. Thus *monogenes* would mean ‘a unique offspring’, which also would then mean (as it always means in the New Testament) ‘only begotten’. The Greek word *genos*, from

which we get the word ‘genus’, in its literal sense refers to the offspring of an ancestor; thus we see in the Greek of the New Testament, Christ is referred to as the *genos* of David, that is, the offspring of David. We also see Israel referred to as the ‘stock’ or offspring of Abraham in Acts 13.26: ‘Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham’, begins Paul in his address to the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. The word used for ‘stock’ is our word *genos*. He is calling them the offspring of David. We shall list the various readings of *genos* from the New Testament in a moment.

Genos may also refer to an offspring of a prototype, figuratively speaking, and thus to a ‘kind’. However, whenever *genos* is used to mean ‘kind’, it always means that it is a **figurative offspring**, figuratively descended from a prototype of some sort. Our English word for ‘kind’ also follows this principle. Our word ‘kind’ comes from the Germanic word *kind* (pronounced *kint*), which means ‘a child’. Thus, our word ‘kind’ properly means a figurative child, that is, ‘a child of a prototype’.

2. But now in coming to the term *monogenes*, that term always means ‘only offspring’. That term **always** is used in the New Testament to denote an only child, as we shall shortly prove by citing all nine occurrences of the word in the New Testament. Michael Marlowe, though himself an advocate generally of the critical text, has also written a paper in which he shows that *monogenes* means ‘only begotten’.⁶⁴

3. Athanasius and the Nicene Fathers, who knew the Greek of the New Testament far

better than modern scholars do, being much nearer the period when that language was spoken, regularly referred to John 1.14, John 1.18 and John 3.16 as speaking of Christ as the only begotten Son. In speaking of Christ as the *monogenes huios*, the Nicene Fathers referred to Christ as the only and unique offspring of the Father, and sometimes simply as the offspring of the Father.⁶⁵

4. This being the case, along with the fact that *genos* **always** refers to an offspring of some sort, *monogenes* could **never** refer to God, for in no sense is God the offspring of another. God is not a kind descended from some other prototype, for He is indeed the First Cause and Primary Mover of all things, as Aquinas rightly noted. Nor is the Godhead of Christ begotten. It is properly **only His Person** which is begotten. Thus, *monogenes theos*, as the Nicene Fathers rightly understood, cannot mean 'the only and unique God'. Rather, it would mean 'the only offspring God', or 'the only begotten God'—and this phrase is at best a very harsh catachresis, and cannot but be offensive to orthodox ears.⁶⁶

The early saints in Egypt and Africa who were orthodox, but who had an inferior text and who would have encountered the 'only begotten God' or 'the only and unique offspring God' reading, would have interpreted it as a catachresis: they would have stated it to mean 'the divine Person who is an offspring but Who also is God'. But the heretics referenced this reading as it literally stands; they said that it means that the very Godhead of Christ is an offspring of the Father, and that therefore Christ was not really God, but only 'a god' as the modern Arians, the Jehovah's Witnesses,

claim. We shall shortly see that the very first reference to this 'only begotten God' reading occurs in the writings of a follower of Valentinus, who was a very wicked heretic. The Valentinians believed that Monogenes, the only begotten, was a god, and that he proceeded from Bythos. But they believed that the Son was another god, yet who was formed by Monogenes. Their wicked heresies were well exposed to all eternity by the godly Irenaeus.⁶⁷

But we proceed first to establish our point, namely that *genos* properly means 'offspring', by listing all the occurrences of it in the Greek New Testament. We see this literal rendering of the word in the following verses:

Acts 17.28: 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring'. The word here for 'offspring' is *genos*. We, as God's image-bearers by nature, are His children in a sense, though fallen and estranged from Him and under His wrath and curse until actually redeemed by a true faith in Christ. But even as estranged, we are in some sense His offspring.

So also, then, in Acts 17.29: 'Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device'. The word again here for 'offspring' is *genos*.

Now we look at Philippians 3.5: 'Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a

Pharisee'. The Greek word, the word in the original language, for 'stock' is *genos*, again. The phrase could well be translated 'of the offspring of Israel'.

We also consider 1 Peter 2.9: 'But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light'. The word here for 'generation' is again *genos*—'offspring'. 'Ye *are* a chosen offspring', Peter is saying.

Next, we look at Revelation 22.16: 'I am the root and the offspring of David'. Again, the Greek word is *genos*.

Thus, the normal, literal meaning of *genos* is 'offspring'.

In a clear majority of instances, *genos* means a literal offspring in some sense, whether we in English should translate it 'offspring', 'countrymen', 'nation', 'kindred' or 'stock'. Such are the instances we find in the following verses: Mark 7.26 ('nation'), Acts 4.6 ('kindred'), Acts 4.36 ('country'), Acts 7.13, 19 ('kindred'), 2 Corinthians 11.26 ('countrymen'), Galatians 1.14 ('nation'). All of these instances could be fairly rendered either 'offspring' or 'kindred'.

But now we look at two instances in which *genos* means 'a kind', a metaphorical child of a prototype.

Matthew 13.47: 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every **kind**'. [emphasis added.]

Matthew 17.21: Howbeit this **kind** goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. [emphasis added.]

There are only three other instances of the word *genos* which are used in this way, that is, to mean 'kind', and they are 1 Corinthians 12.10 and 28, and 1 Corinthians 14.10.

In all, **there are twelve instances of the Greek word *genos* in the New Testament which mean 'offspring' or 'kindred' in a literal sense.** There are five instances in which it can be rendered 'kind' although, as we pointed out, **even here it properly means 'the offspring of a prototype'.**

Thus, *genos* properly means an offspring, usually a literal offspring but sometimes a metaphorical offspring. Therefore, *monogenes* properly means 'an only offspring', and this indeed is what it **always** means in the Greek New Testament. We now list all nine occurrences of *monogenes* in the Greek New Testament.

Luke 7.12: 'Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother'. The words for 'only son' in the Greek are υιος μονογενης (*huios monogenes*), an 'only begotten son', or, more literally, 'a son [who is] an only offspring', which means the same thing.

Luke 8.42: 'For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age'. The words for 'one only daughter' in the Greek are θυγατηρ μονογενης (*thugater monogenes*), which is literally, 'a daughter, an

only offspring'. This certainly may be translated 'an only begotten daughter'.

Luke 9.38: 'And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child'. The words in Greek for 'he is mine only child' are μονογενης εστι μοι (*monogenes esti moi*), which literally means 'he is my only offspring'.

John 1.14: 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth'. The Greek words for 'only begotten of the Father' are μονογενοϋς παρα πατρος (*monogenous para patros*), which means literally 'the only offspring of the Father'. This, by the way, is continually how Athanasius refers to Christ, and how the Nicene Council referred to Him⁶⁸—as the 'only offspring from the Father'. 'Only begotten' means exactly the same thing.

John 1.18: 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*'. The Greek words for 'the only begotten Son' are ο μονογενης υιος 'the only offspring [which is a] son', which again, means the same thing as 'the only begotten Son'. Vaticanus's μονογενης θεος reading would mean 'the only offspring God', which is indeed the same as saying 'the only begotten God', as the NKJV margin and the NASB correctly translate it, and also as the NIV shows in its marginal note.

John 3.16: 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son'. The Greek words for 'only begotten Son' are του

υιου αυτου τον μονογενη, 'his only offspring Son', which again, is exactly the same as saying 'his only begotten Son'.

John 3.18: 'because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God'. Again, the Greek words for 'only begotten Son' are του μονογενοϋς υιου, 'the only offspring Son'.

Hebrews 11.17: 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*'. The Greek words for 'his only begotten' ('son' does not occur in the Greek) are του μονογενη, which means literally 'his only offspring', the possessive pronoun 'his' being necessarily implied by the Greek grammatical construction.

1 John 4.9: 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world'. The Greek words for 'his only begotten Son' are του υιου αυτου τον μονογενη, which is more emphatic: 'his **only begotten** Son', placing emphasis on its being His **only** Son which He has given, His all-in-all.

What is the import of all this? The import is that God, properly speaking, cannot be *monogenes*, because He is in no wise the offspring of any other and because He is **not** descended from any other in any way. Accordingly, in the very least, the 'only begotten God' reading is a very harsh catachresis. But we shall argue this reading to be a heretical one, not only because of what it imports when taken literally, but **also because of its origin**. We must deem it to be a heretical reading because in fact it originated with heretics and was refuted by

the orthodox author of a very early work in the second century, as John Burgon shows us. (We shall cite this work shortly.)

John Burgon, the famous defender of the traditional text and of the doctrine of the Providential preservation of the Scriptures, in his book *The Causes of Corruption of the New Testament Text*, tells us that

It will be remembered that S. John in his grand preface does not rise to the full height of his sublime argument until he reaches the eighteenth verse. In verse 14 he had said that ‘The Word was made flesh’, etc.; a statement **which Valentinus was willing to admit**. But the heretic and his followers **denied that the Word is also the Son of God**. As if to bar the door against this pretence, S. John in verse 18 announces that ‘the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him’. **So he establishes the identity of the Word and the Only begotten Son**. What else could the Valentinians do with so plain a statement, but to seek to deprave it? Accordingly, the very first time John 1.18 is quoted by any of the ancients, it is accompanied by the statement that the Valentinians appeal to the words ‘the only begotten GOD who is in the bosom of the Father’— **seeking to prove that the only begotten is ‘the Beginning’, and is ‘GOD’**. They say that inasmuch as the Father willed to become known to the worlds, the Spirit of Gnosis produced the ‘only begotten Gnosis’, and therefore gave birth to ‘Gnosis’,

that is, to ‘the Son’ so that by the ‘Son’ the ‘Father’ might be known. Then they say that while ‘the only begotten Son’ abode ‘in the bosom of the Father’, He caused **that there on earth should be seen one ‘as the only begotten Son’** (alluding to His being made flesh in verse 14).

But note that the author of Excerpta Theodoti (also a 2nd century production) reads S. John 1.18 as we do.⁶⁹ [emphases added.]

Please note the following:

1. The Valentinians admitted that the Word was made flesh, but they denied that the Word is also the Son of God.
2. They taught that the only begotten, the Monogenes, was another entity altogether from the Son—that he was ‘the Beginning’, and that **he** was God.⁷⁰
3. They taught that the Monogenes, who was the Word and also the only begotten Gnosis or ‘secret knowledge’, was the one who was in the bosom of the Father from eternity, but not the Son.
4. They taught that this begotten Gnosis then caused the creation of Christ, who was ‘as’ the only begotten Son, but who was not Himself God, because He had flesh, and flesh to the Gnostics was inherently defective and evil.
5. But Burgon points out that the early writer who exposes the Valentinians in the 2nd century himself read John 1.18 just as does the Textus Receptus.

Indeed, the earliest Church Father which the third and fourth editions of the UBS Greek text cite for proof of the ‘only begotten God’ reading in the Greek is **Heracleon, a noted heretical follower of Valentinus who wrote a commentary on John, and who was confronted for his corrupt commentary by Origen.**⁷¹ The Arians used this reading of the text to promote their own heresy, as do also the modern-day Arians, the Russelites (Jehovah’s Witnesses), namely to promote their heretical view that Christ is not really God, but is of a similar essence as God; hence, he is ‘a god’, but not actually God. Hence, He is to them a ‘begotten God’.

Arius used this argument in Alexandria and then before the Council of Nicea, and it was there that Athanasius set forth the genuine reading for John 1.18, which is ‘the only begotten Son’. This author suspects that it could well have been this very text that provoked the Greek Fathers of the Nicene Council to encourage a close examination of the copies of the New Testament that were then current, to have new ones conformed to the authentic copies yet stored in the apostolic churches in the Byzantine Empire. We must point out that the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts read ‘only begotten Son’ in John 1.18.

In conclusion, the origin of the ‘only begotten God’ reading of John 1.18 is traceable to the Valentinians of the 2nd century. Valentinus and the bulk of his followers were from Egypt and Valentinus was himself taught in Alexandria. This same reading was then utilised by Arius and his wicked horde (and is still used by their ilk today).

The traditional text reading of John 1.18 an ancient landmark and a bulwark against heretics

The traditional text reading of John 1.18, which reads ‘the only begotten Son’, is an ancient landmark, one set by the Church of the 4th century when it recovered the Byzantine text from the authentic copies of the Scriptures which had been faithfully kept in the apostolic congregations. The correct reading of this verse was a powerful engine against Arius and his heretical arguments before the Nicene Council.⁷² Proverbs 22.28 says, ‘Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set’.

In resurrecting the ‘only begotten God’ reading of the corrupt Egyptian text and by citing it in its margins, the editors of the New King James Version have in essence toppled an ancient landmark set up by the Church. They have allowed a foothold for heretics to find a haven in their Bible. ‘Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set’.

Other variant readings with origins in the tamperings of heretics as found in the marginal notes of the New King James Version

In his book *The King James Version Defended*, Edward Hills lists a number of

omissions in the Alexandrian text which were almost certainly the work of heretics to weaken the doctrines of Christ's Incarnation and Divinity.⁷³ **The New King James puts all these omissions in its marginal notes as potentially valid.** These verses include:

■ Luke 22.43–44: 'And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground'. These words, Hills tells us, are omitted from μ ⁷⁵, Vaticanus, the Coptic Version, and five other Alexandrian uncials. They are included in the vast majority of Greek manuscripts. The Church Fathers of the 4th century onward all cited these verses. In our opinion, Hills is right to trace this omission to the Docetists (who denied the humanity of Christ) of the 2nd century. The Docetists primarily lived in Egypt. The UBS Greek text, both the third and fourth editions, include this text, but they bracket it as doubtful. **The New King James enters this footnote on Luke 23.43–44: 'NU-Text brackets verses 43 and 44 as not in the original text'**. The inclusion of this reading from the 'NU-Text' shows that the editors of the NKJV are willing to give this omission some credence! Thus the editors of the NKJV would have us to be willing to consider that the testimony of Christ's sweating great drops of blood does not belong in the Bible!

■ Luke 23.34: 'Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do'. Again, this verse is omitted by Vaticanus and its allies. Hills believes, with others (Streeter and Rendel Harris), that this excision was made by Marcion, who

was anti-Semitic and who would have opposed Christ's praying for the Jews. Again, the New King James enters this footnote on Luke 23.34: '**NU-Text brackets the first sentence as a later addition**', again with no comment on the corruptness of the Alexandrian text which the Nestle-Aland/UBS text uses. So again the editors of the NKJV would have us to think that possibly Christ's prayer on the cross for His enemies does not belong in the Holy Writ!

We do not have time to itemise fully other verses in the Alexandrian text likely tampered with by heretics. However, Hills on pages 135–138 of *The King James Version Defended* lists John 6.68–69, Mark 1.1, Luke 23.42, John 3.13, John 9.35, John 9.38–39, John 19.5, Romans 14.10, 1 Timothy 3.16 (which is dealt with at great length by Burgon⁷⁴), Mark 9.29, Acts 10.30, 1 Corinthians 7.5, and 1 Corinthians 11.24, all of which show signs of tampering and **which all are footnoted as worthy of possible credence in the New King James Version.**

| Conclusions

We must now draw to a close with our first instalment of this review of the New King James Version. We have demonstrated that the editors of the New King James Version are wrong for including the corrupt readings of the Egyptian text in their marginal notes, as though they were potentially valid. They are wrong in disdaining the Providentially preserved text, the Textus Receptus. They are **very** wrong in including heretical readings from the Alexandrian text in their marginal notes,

enabling a heretic to find refuge in the NKJV from these notes. We have also demonstrated why the early Church was right in universally restandardising their manuscript copies, beginning in the 4th century, to conform to the apostolic Byzantine copies which were yet stored in the apostolic churches of the area within the Byzantine empire.

We hope, God willing, to address the following matters in a further instalment.

1. We will address why the Reformed forefathers were right in following Greek minority readings in eight places of the Scripture where those readings have overwhelming Latin support—the Textus Receptus here does the right thing in recovering the original apostolic text. Therefore the false accusations against the Textus Receptus, namely that it corrupted the Byzantine text with Latin readings, is patently false.

2. We will address the manifold inaccuracies of the von Soden critical text upon which both the Hodges-Farstad and Pierpont-Robinson Byzantine majority texts are based, and which readings the New King James has deemed fit to footnote in its textual apparatus. We shall show that the discrepancies that these so-called Byzantine majority texts have against the Textus Receptus are the fault of the shoddy workmanship of those who have produced these texts, in their misguided reliance on the error-riddled critical text of Hermann von Soden. Therefore, we will necessarily argue that Christians are much better advised to stay with the Received Text.

3. We shall demonstrate the many translational deficiencies of the New King James, and we shall show the seriousness of the doctrinal impact these deficiencies have, especially when combined with the readings from the Nestle-Aland critical text—how these changes necessarily weaken sound doctrine in that version.

We have been forced to defend the Textus Receptus, and that because of an attack upon it from a supposed friend. The New King James Version may well have translated its New Testament from the Textus Receptus, but it has done so in such a way that it has attacked that text's purity by setting up the readings of the Alexandrian text and of the so-called majority text of Hodges-Farstad as implicitly superior. The preface to the New King James Version attacks the Textus Receptus as being not very scholarly, and then includes for us the readings that 'most scholars hold to', thus implying that these readings are better.

In including the very corrupt readings of the resurrected Alexandrian text in the marginal notes—the text which was put to rest by the Church for fourteen centuries and that rightly so—the New King James has thrown down ancient landmarks and made their translation of the Bible a potential haven for heretics by including heretical readings from the Alexandrian text as footnotes. Had they held to the 'good old paths' laid down by the forefathers of the historic Church, these same heretics would have found no quarter whatsoever in their version.

It is hoped that our remarks concerning the method in which Providence preserved

the authentic readings of Scripture will have been helpful to the reader, namely in demonstrating how the early Church recovered the best text by referring to the authentic copies stored in the apostolic churches in Byzantium.

May the Lord bless our feeble endeavours thus far. In the meantime, I encourage all who read this to hold fast to the good old paths: to the Textus Receptus and to the Authorised Version, which is the most faithful English translation of the Providentially preserved text.

Jeremiah 6.16 ‘Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls’.

| Endnotes

1. Arthur L. Farstad, *The New King James Version in the Great Tradition* (Nashville, TN, USA: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), p. 34.
2. *Holy Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, TN, USA: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982), p. vi.
3. David Cloud, *What about the New King James Version?* <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/whatabout-nkjv.html>.
4. Ibid. Daniel Wallace cites 1,858 differences which he counted (*Bible.org*, ‘Some Second Thoughts on the Majority Text’, http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=673). Michael Marlowe says that there are 1,005 meaningful differences between the Hodge-Farstad majority text and the Textus Receptus, although he does not tell us which edition of the Textus Receptus he employed (*Bible Research*, ‘What about the Majority Text?’, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/majority.html>). Mr Cloud’s count probably includes stylistic and spelling differences, along with grammatical differences which do not impact the meaning of the text. Still, 1,005 meaningful differences is a significant change!
5. Farstad, *New King James Version*, p. vii.
6. Nolan says, ‘If we must receive the Corrected Text of M. Griesbach, to the exclusion of the Greek Vulgate [i.e., the Textus Receptus], we must accept it as a demonstrative proof of the general corruption of the sacred text, and of the faithlessness of the traditional testimony on which it is supported, for a period extending from the apostolical to the present age’ (Frederick Nolan, *An Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate or Received Text of the New Testament* [London, England: R & R Gilbert, 1815], p. ix). This work may be obtained on CD from <http://www.solascripturapublishing.com>.
7. Herman C. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies: a Study and an Indictment*, 2 vols. (London, England: Bernard Quaritch, 1914).
8. There appear to be only two instances in which the Textus Receptus actually incorporated a Latin reading into the Greek text. Those are Acts 9.5 and Revelation 22.19 (although the Authorised Version does put the majority Greek reading for Revelation 22.19 in the marginal notes). There also appear to be two spelling errors, one which makes for an actual change in meaning. One spelling error is found in Revelation 17.4, where the copyist spelled ‘unclean’ as ακαθαρτητος instead of ακαθαρτα. This little blemish in no wise impacts the meaning of the verse. The other verse in which the spelling error does impact the meaning slightly, and which is a typographical error, is found in Revelation 17.8. The error is found in the words ‘the beast which was, and is not, and yet is’. The words for ‘yet is’ are καιτερ εστιν where the reading should be και παρεσται. (The words were broken in the wrong place.) και παρεσται is the reading of all the Greek manuscripts. This changes the phrase to read ‘the beast which was, and is not, and **is about to be**’. We agree with Dr Edward Hills when he says that this very minor blemish could be remedied with a mere footnote (*King James Version Defended* [Des Moines, Iowa USA: Christian Research Press, 2000], p. 202). **These four very minor blemishes in the Textus Receptus** (often made much of by modern textual critics) **are nothing to be compared with the thousands of errors one encounters in the Egyptian texts**, nor with the Coptic readings (which number in the hundreds in the four Gospels alone) and readings tinctured by heretics which are found even in the Nestle-Aland/UBS text. We shall be enlarging upon the Coptic corruption of the Egyptian text, and how the

Nestle-Aland/UBS text is a resurrection of the Egyptian text of the 4th century, during the course of this article.

9. Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN, USA: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1985), p. xv. The editors say: 'For the evidence of the Majority text, the present edition rests heavily upon the information furnished by Hermann von Soden in his *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*'. Also reference is made to William G. Pierpont and Maurice A. Robinson, *The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Byzantine/Majority Textform* (Rosewell, GA, USA: Original Word Publishers, 1991), p. xiii, 'The present Byzantine/Majority Text was jointly edited and refined by Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont during the period 1976–1991. The primary textual apparatuses utilised in the preparation of this edition were those of Hermann Freiherr von Soden and Herman C. Hoskier'. These same apparatuses were utilised by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad in their majority text edition of the Greek New Testament. Von Soden was utilised almost exclusively by both these editions for all books except Revelation, where Hoskier was consulted, although in a critical fashion.

10. H. C. Hoskier, 'Von Soden's Text of the New Testament', *Journal of Theological Studies* 15 (April 1914): 307. This is available on microfiche at Dallas Theological Seminary.

11. Frederick Wisse, *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence as Applied to the continuous Greek text of the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962), pp. 16–17. Here Wisse reviews von Soden's very great inaccuracies in collating the evidence in Luke 1.

12. Tertullian, 'Prescription against Heresies—Tertullian', Peter Holmes, trans., *Public Service Projects Index*, <http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/txv/tertul.htm>.

13. Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines, IO, USA: The Christian Research Press, 1984), pp. 120–121.

14. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies*, 1:8.

15. C. P. Hallihan, 'The Latin Vulgate', *Quarterly Record* (April–June 2007), 579:8.

16. Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism* (Nashville, TN, USA: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), pp. 40–41.

17. Timothy E. Gregory, *A History of Byzantium* (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 135–139.

18. Matthias F. Wahba 'Monophysitism: Reconsidered', *CopNet*, <http://www.coptic.net/articles/MonophysitismReconsidered.txt>. In this online article, Father Wahba, who introduces himself as 'a priest of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria', asserts that Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria in AD 451 refused to affirm at the Council of Chalcedon the 'in two natures' and insisted on the 'from two natures'. That is, he refused to affirm that Christ is one divine Person Who has two natures, one divine and one human, but rather tenaciously asserted that one new nature, the Logos Incarnate, arose 'from two natures'. The Coptic Orthodox Church, with all the Oriental Orthodox Churches, are monophysite to this very day.

19. 'Miaphysitism', *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miaphysitism>.

20. B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (Peabody, MA, USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), p. 92, cited in Maurice A. Robinson, 'New Testament Textual Criticism: the Case for Byzantine Priority', *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*, <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol06/Robinson2001.html#footnote155>.

21. *The New King James Version*, p. 1220.

22. Michael Marlowe, 'A Statistical Comparison of Editions of the Greek New Testament', *Bible Research*, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/stats.html>. Marlowe states in his last paragraph entitled 'Some Observations on the Findings': 'From these findings it may be seen that where the critical texts diverge from the sixteenth-century *Textus Receptus*, they largely agree with one another. 72% of the translatable differences from the *Textus Receptus* were agreed upon by Tregelles and Tischendorf long before the publication of the Westcott-Hort text. The Westcott-Hort text (1881) departs furthest from the TR. The Nestle text (1979), though it largely corresponds with the Westcott-Hort text, differs from it in 551 places. In 295 (54%) of these places it returns to the readings of the TR. The Nestle text also has the highest percentage agreement with each of the others, ranging from 78% with Tregelles to **85% agreement with Westcott & Hort**'. [emphasis added.]

23. Eldon Jay Epp, 'The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism', *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, no. 3 (Sept 1974), 93:389.

24. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies*, 1.7–8.

25. Kurt Aland, 'The Present Position of New Testament Textual Criticism', *Studia Evangelica* (Berlin, Germany: Akademie-Verlag, 1959), p. 730. Dr Aland confesses that the Greek text of Egypt prior to the 4th century was a 'Mischtext', a mixed-text, and that accordingly the Alexandrian uncials of the 4th century were the result of recensions. He says, '[w]e cannot return to the principles of Westcott-Hort any more than to those of von Soden'. He means by this that the textual critic can no longer embrace Hort's opinion that Vaticanus was a 'neutral' text, just as the textual critic also must reject von Soden's 'I-H-K' classification of the manuscripts, which was fraught with mistakes.

26. Frederick G. Kenyon, 'Hesychius and the Text of the New Testament', *Memorial LaGrange*, J Gabalda et al, eds. (Paris, France: Librairie LeCoffre, 1940), p. 248. Kenyon denies the likelihood that Vaticanus was a recension of the martyr Hesychius of the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries, as von Soden to the contrary thought to deduce from the writings of Jerome. However, Kenyon fully admits that 'Bousset is almost certainly right in regarding it [i.e., Vaticanus] as an Egyptian text'.

27. Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 48.

28. Kenyon, *The Text of the Greek Bible—a Handbook for Students* (London, England: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd, 1958).

29. For example, Wilbur Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text II*, 3rd ed. (Eugene, OR, USA: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), p. 22.

30. Kirsopp Lake, *The Text of the New Testament*, 6th ed. (London, England: Rivingtons, 1928), p. 76.

31. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies*, 1.i.

32. Constantin von Tischendorf, 'The Discovery of the Sinaitic Manuscript', *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*, <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/extras/tischendorf-sinaiticus.html>.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Note what Robert Waltz, a strong critical text supporter, says: 'Like all the Coptic versions, the Sahidic

has an Egyptian sort of text. In the Gospels it is clearly Alexandrian, although it is sometimes considered to have "Western" variants, especially in John. (There are, in fact, occasional "Western" readings in the manuscripts, but no pattern of Western influence. Most of the so-called "Western" variants also have Alexandrian support.) As between B and Ⲛ, the Sahidic is clearly closer to the former—and if anything even closer to ⲡ⁷⁵. It is also close to T (a close ally of ⲡ⁷⁵/B)—as indeed one would expect, since T is a Greek/Sahidic diglot'. He says that the Sahidic Coptic is far closer to Vaticanus (B) than to Ⲛ or Sinaiticus. But he also notes that the Sahidic is very close to ⲡ⁷⁵ and to T, a Greek/Coptic polyglot. *The Encyclopedia of New Testament Textual Criticism*, <http://www.skypoint.com/members/waltzmn/Versions.html#Sahidic>.

35. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies*, 1.20.

36. George Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect, Otherwise Called Sahidic and Thebaic* (London, England: at the Clarendon Press, 1910).

37. See Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic* (Macon, GA, USA: Mercer University Press, 2000), pp. 11–12, for the explanation of this.

38. For the reading of the Coptic spellings of these proper names in the Sahidic Coptic Version of the New Testament, see Horner on Matthew 1. For the identical spelling of them which Vaticanus uses, in exact conformity to the transliterations of the Sahidic Coptic, see Tischendorf's edition of Vaticanus in *Novum Testamentum Vaticanus*, 1868, available on CD from <http://www.solascripturapublishing.com>.

39. Sturz, *Byzantine Text-Type*, p. 68, footnote 30.

40. Bruce Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, p. 206. On this page, Metzger tells us, 'Another instance of a manifestly erroneous reading is εἰ τις σπλογγυα και οικτιρμοι at Phil. ii. 1, which **could have arisen when the original amanuensis misunderstood Paul's pronunciation of εἰ τι σπλογγυα...**' (emphasis added). Now, if indeed the amanuensis misunderstood Paul, as Metzger postulates he could have, then **an error was written into the original autograph**, and the original writing would thus not have been inspired and inerrant! This author borrowed this book from Dallas Theological Seminary; I give worthy commendation of a previous reader who wrote 'NO!' in the margin. By the way, the Textus

Receptus **correctly** renders the phrase εἰ τινα σπλαγγνα καὶ οὐκτιρμοι, which translates ‘if [there be] any bowels of mercy and compassion’, where Vaticanus says ‘if any **one** bowels of mercy and compassion’. But Metzger is so addicted to Vaticanus, he would rather deny the infallibility of the autographs than say that the Textus Receptus is right and Vaticanus wrong!

41. Ibid., pp. 41–42. (By ‘haplography’, Metzger means that the copyist confused and accidentally omitted certain letters; see pages 188–189.) Metzger reiterates that Ninevah was written into π⁷⁵ from the Sahidic Coptic in his book *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 136.

42. Horner, *Coptic Version*, p. 314.

43. Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest Greek Manuscripts* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001), p. 551, where the authors have transcribed the text, with the lacunae (the missing portions), into minuscule Greek letters and the text for Luke 16.19 is there displayed.

44. Hills, *King James Version Defended*, pp. 128–129. Hills here notes the Ninevah reading in the Coptic which Metzger points out in π⁷⁵. Hills also notes other Coptic readings in π⁷⁵.

45. Aland, ‘Present Position’, p. 730.

46. ‘Origen and Origenism’, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11306b.htm>.

47. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies*, 1.8–9

48. Note the following quote from Edward F. Hills, ‘A New Approach to the Old Egyptian Text’, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, no. 4 (December 1950), 69:345: ‘In 1771 Griesbach published a careful study of the quotations of Origen which indicated the affinity of that father to codices B, C, and L’. All three of these uncials are Alexandrian. Hills then cites J. J. Griesbach, *Opuscula Academics*, J. P. Gabler ed. (Jena, Germany: Frommann, 1824), 1.226–317.

49. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies*, 1.9–10.

50. Note the following quote from ‘The Matthaen Text of Origen in His Commentary on Matthew’ by K. W. Kim (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, no. 2, [June 1949], 68:133). ‘In the course of my study I have discovered that Origen usually prefers shorter readings. He omits quite often some important pronouns, prepositions, articles, conjunctions, particles, clauses,

and even whole verses. If a text follows consistently a certain pattern of omission, it is an indication that the text belongs to a certain text-type. There are about 100 cases of important omissions in the 400 verses of Origen’s quotations from Matthew alone’.

51. Hills, *King James Version Defended*, p. 144.

52. Hills cites *Origenes Werke*, ed. E. Preuschen (Leipzig, Germany: n.p., 1903), 10.385–388. By Aleph and B, Hills refers to Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.

53. Cloud, *What about the New King James Version?*. Again, we do not embrace every view of Mr Cloud’s without reservation. However, he has here most accurately listed all the omissions of the Nestle-Aland/UBS text as they are indeed footnoted in the New King James Version itself. See <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/whatabout-nkjv.html> for the full listing.

54. Trinitarian Bible Society, *A Textual Key to the New Testament*, <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/articles/a100.pdf>.

55. The *Catholic Encyclopedia*, in paragraph entitled ‘Universality of the Redemption and the Final Restoration’.

56. See ‘The Second Council of Constantinople’, *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Council_of_Constantinople.

57. The *Catholic Encyclopedia*, ‘Origen’.

58. See Nolan, *Inquiry*, pp. 4–5. Dr Nolan reviews the work of M. Griesbach, who sought to revise the New Testament Greek in the early 19th century to the standard of the long-rejected Alexandrian Greek text, which Griesbach ‘determines by the authority of Origen’.

59. Bruce Metzger, *The Early Versions*, p. 101 on ‘The Introduction of Christianity into Egypt’.

60. Tertullian, chapter 38.

61. For more on Marcion’s excisions and mutilations of the New Testament, see ‘Marcionites’, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09645c.htm>, which sums up what was written concerning him by the early Fathers Irenaeus and Tertullian and others.

62. Some believe that the source of the difference between God and Son is a *nomen sacrum*, a device used in the early church in which the sacred names were abbreviated with a line over them indicating the

abbreviation. In its use, as Edward Hills points out, all one has to do in the Greek is but alter one letter used in the *nomina sacra* for Son and one has the abbreviation for God (*King James Version*, p. 134). The most recognised of these is 1 Timothy 3.16, ‘God was manifest’, in which ‘God’ is found in some manuscripts as a *nomen sacrum*. The great majority of the Greek manuscripts have ‘God was manifest’ and very few indeed have ‘who’ or ‘which’ (*God was Manifest in the Flesh*, A103 [London, England: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1993], p. 12).

63. Richard Longenecker, ‘The One and Only Son’, *The NIV: The Making of a Contemporary Translation*, George Barker ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Academic Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), pp. 119–126, cited in Michael Marlowe, ‘The Only Begotten Son (ο μονογενης υιος)’, *Bible Research*, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/only-begotten.html>. In his article, Marlowe asserts that *monogenes* means ‘only begotten’. Marlowe’s article is also peerless in its exposure of the many mistakes Longenecker makes in his article, especially in understanding and citing ancient Greek authors and the Septuagint.

64. Marlowe, ‘The only Begotten Son’.

65. Athanasius, ‘Defence of the Nicene Definition’, *Athanasius: Select Works and Letters in Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Philip Schaff, ed., <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.html>, pp. 361ff.

66. A catachresis is an improper mode of speaking or misapplication of words, as when the Scripture speaks of God purchasing the Church with his blood in Acts 20.28. God, properly speaking, is a Spirit, and does not have flesh or blood—though God in the Person of the Son has a human body with blood, so we must understand Acts 20.28 as speaking in a way that transfers the human characteristics of Christ to His divinity: ‘... The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood’, the Authorised Version rightly translates it.

67. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies, The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, Philip Schaff, ed., <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.html>, 1.450–455.

68. Athanasius, *Defence*.

69. John Burgon, *The Causes of the Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels* (London, England: George Bell and Sons, 1896), pp. 215–217.

A copy of this book is available on CD at <http://www.solascripturapublishing.com>.

70. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*.

71. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo Martini, Bruce Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. corrected (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1983), p. 322, in a footnote on John 1.18. Arius is also cited as an authority on this reading. Though some sound authors also quoted the text this way, they were all from Egypt or Africa, save for Irenaeus who was in Gaul (now Lyons, France), and doubtless had a text of a Western family after the fashion of the Latin text that was current in that area of Europe at the time. As we have said, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexander cited the ‘only begotten God’ catachretically because it was the only text they had to hand at the time and ‘unto the pure all things are pure’ (Titus 1.15), which is to say, they made good use of a bad text. However, Heraclion and Arius used the reading to promote their heresies.

72. Marlowe states: ‘Athanasius in his *Defence of the Nicene Definition* (ca. 353), points to the word *μονογενης* in John 1.14 as one Scriptural proof for the teaching.

It has been shown above, and must be believed as true, that the Word is from the Father, and the only Offspring proper to Him and natural. For whence may one conceive the Son to be, who is the Wisdom and the Word, in whom all things came to be, but from God Himself? However, the Scriptures also teach us this... John in saying, “The Only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him”, spoke of what He [*sic*] had learned from the Saviour. Besides, what else does “in the bosom” intimate, but the Son’s genuine generation from the Father?”

Marlowe cites as his source A. Robertson, *Athanasius: Select Works and Letters in The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, 4.364. (Marlowe, ‘Only Begotten’.)

73. Hills, *King James Version Defended*, pp. 129–138.

74. John Burgon, ‘Proof of the Genuineness of God Manifested in the Flesh’, *The Revision Revised* (Paradise, PA, USA: Conservative Classics, n.d.), pp. 98–108, 424–501. This book is available on CD from <http://www.solascripturapublishing.com>.

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