

Westcott & Hort at 125 (& Zuntz at 60): Their Legacies & Our Challenges

Michael W. Holmes
Bethel University

[A note to the reader:

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Introduction

The designated theme of our session this morning is “Westcott and Hort at 125,” and it is certainly right and fitting that we commemorate the appearance in 1881 of their extraordinary two volumes of text and introduction.¹ At the same time, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the 175th anniversary of the appearance of the first Greek text to break completely with the *Textus Receptus*, namely Lachmann’s first edition of 1831,² and this year marks as well the 60th anniversary of the delivery of Günther Zuntz’s insightful lectures on *The Text of the Epistles*.³ In all, a remarkable quartet of scholars, and certainly worthy of our attention.

In the following remarks⁴ I will take something of a phenomenological approach as I survey their legacies today—not tracing every twist & turn or difference of theory in contemporary textual criticism, but trying to observe patterns or trends among results or outcomes. In so doing I run, of course, the risk of over-generalization, but in a discipline so committed to detail, it is perhaps good occasionally to lift our gaze and remember that the trees do comprise a forest.

¹ B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, [1,] *Text*; [2,] *Introduction* [and] *Appendix* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1881).

² K. Lachmann, ed., *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Berlin, 1831).

³ G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (Schweich Lectures, 1946; London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1953).

⁴ Portions of the following remarks draw heavily on Michael W. Holmes, “*The Text of the Epistles Sixty Years After: An Assessment of Günther Zuntz’s Contribution to Text-Critical Methodology and History*,” in *Transmission and Reception: New Testament Text-Critical and Exegetical Studies*, ed. Jeffrey Childers and D. C. Parker (Texts and Studies Third Series 4; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006) 89-113; and Michael W. Holmes, “The Text of P⁴⁶: Evidence of the Earliest ‘Commentary’ on Romans?,” in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World*, ed. by Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (TENT 2; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 189-206.

From Lachmann to Westcott & Hort

Among classicists, Karl Lachmann is remembered for the genealogical principle associated with his name and the sometimes startling effectiveness with which he employed it.⁵ Among NT textual critics, Lachmann is remembered for making a complete break with the TR: he was the first since Erasmus to start fresh and construct a text *de novo*. His NT legacy was both a text and the method by which he produced it. Ironically, that method was not the genealogical method for which he is justly famous, but a much different one that was first proposed by Bentley: to follow the oldest evidence.⁶ Under the best of circumstances it was a method ill-suited to produce a lasting result, and in view of the circumstances that did follow the publication of Lachmann's text, it was particularly ill-suited. A text produced by such a method is never more than a single discovery away from possible obsolescence, especially when it rests upon as narrow a documentary basis as Lachmann's text did: as Scrivener points out, "Lachmann's text seldom rests on more than four codices, very often on three, not infrequently on two," and for over 200 verses, only one.⁷ As it turned out, the decades between 1831 and 1881 witnessed a flood of new discoveries or material—e.g., the Curetonian Syriac in 1858, Cardinal Mai's edition of Vaticanus in 1857 (corrected edition, 1859), of which a facsimile edition appeared between 1868 and 1872, and most spectacularly, Codex Sinaiticus, which Tischendorf published in 1862. Quickly rendered obsolete, Lachmann's contribution, though never forgotten, was quickly bypassed

The discoveries that so doomed Lachmann's text benefited later editors, such as Tregelles and Tischendorf (who together with Scrivener, Burgon, and others were responsible for many of the discoveries). None, however, benefited more than Westcott and Hort, whose text washed ashore, as it were, on a flood of new evidence; indeed, the 28 years it took them to complete their work can be seen as a fortuitous delay, as it gave them time to assimilate and build upon these new witnesses, of which they took the fullest advantage. When they finally published their work in 1881, they presented not only a new text claiming to represent the "NT in the Original Greek," but also a fully worked out statement of method and a comprehensive description of the history of the transmission of the NT text, all of which were shaped in significant ways by these new discoveries.⁸ It is these three elements—text, method, and history—that together comprise their contribution and achievement.

⁵ Cf. Sebastiano Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method* (ed. and trans. by Glenn W. Most; Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁶ This he did, even when the oldest evidence was clearly wrong; his plan was to come back later and emend the text where necessary (so F. H. A. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 4th ed. [2 vols.; London, 1894] 2.234).

⁷ Scrivener, *Plain Introduction*, 2.233.

⁸ Birdsall observes that "we may see the importance of their work not only in the text established by them, but also the theoretical foundation which they supplied for it, and the relationship of the theory to the two magnificent uncial witnesses which were brought to light in the early years of their joint research and

Following its publication, their text (and its accompanying volume of introduction and notes) was, as Metzger observed, “at once . . . hailed as an achievement of primary importance. Reviewers not only in England, but also in Germany, France, and America, joined in praising the careful and methodical work” invested in the new edition.⁹ This is not to say that approval was universal, but on the whole their edition met with widespread acceptance and became, in Metzger’s words, “the most noteworthy critical edition of the Greek Testament ever produced by British scholarship.”¹⁰

In retrospect, it is hardly surprising that Westcott and Hort’s text enjoyed the success that it did: apart from its intrinsic merits and intellectual brilliance, it benefited from a reinforcing nexus of circumstances, including historical (the simultaneous publication of a revised translation largely embodying their text, which gave it more visibility than it might otherwise have received), ecclesiastical (in that they enjoyed the correct ecclesiastical affiliation and influence¹¹), and academic (they were leading scholars at one of the two proper universities,¹² and by sharing their provisional text with colleagues, they garnered the support of colleagues well in advance of publication).¹³ These other factors, however, did not create their success, but only amplified the degree of success earned on the basis of their intellectual achievements.

If it is no surprise that Westcott and Hort’s text enjoyed the success it did in their day, what is a cause for surprise is the degree to which it still influences the dominant texts of our day, a century and a quarter later.¹⁴ For some, this state of affairs is a cause of

reflection”—in short, a “combination of structured theory and objective evidence” (J. Neville Birdsall, “The Recent History of New Testament Textual Criticism (from Westcott and Hort, 1881, to the present),” *ANRW* 2.26.1 [ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1992] 102).

⁹ Bruce M. Metzger, “The Westcott and Hort Greek New Testament—Yesterday and Today,” *The Cambridge Review* 103 (1981) 75.

¹⁰ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) 129; 4th ed. by Bruce M. Metzger and Bart E. Ehrman (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 175.

¹¹ The effect of a lack of such standing may be seen in Scrivener’s comment re Tregelles: born a Quaker, “at an early age he left the communion in which he was bred, to join a body called the Plymouth Brethren . . . his last years were more happily spent as a humble lay member of the Church of England, a fact he very earnestly begged me to keep in mind.” (Scrivener, *Plain Introduction*, 2.241; cf. also note 1).

¹² Birdsall noted the significance of the position “of the two ancient English universities within society, and their practically monopolist status in English speaking education and learning” (Birdsall, “Recent History,” 102).

¹³ J. L. North, “The Oxford Debate on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament,” etc., in *Studies in the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts*, ed. by D. G. K. Taylor (Texts and Studies Third Series 1; Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham Press, 1999) 4-5.

¹⁴ As Birdsall (“Recent History,” 102) observes, “Even after a century and more, we have not yet succeeded in erecting a new theory to account for our establishment of texts from evidence which has greatly increased in quantity and in the detail and accuracy in which much of it is known: and the texts we establish still bear an uncanny resemblance to their edition.” Of course, as D. C. Parker observes, perhaps the near identity of contemporary and earlier editions means that previous editors were essentially on the right track all along (David C. Parker, “The Development of the Critical Text of the Epistle of James: From Lachmann to the *Editio Critica Maior*,” in *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis: Festschrift J. Delobel*, ed. by A. Denaux [Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2002] 317-30, here 318).

considerable consternation, if only because of the tremendous increase in evidence since 1881. Westcott and Hort had available to them perhaps 20 majuscule (uncial) MSS and approximately 150 minuscule MSS (more were known, but not yet available)—and no papyri.¹⁵ Today¹⁶ the register of majuscule MSS stands at over 300, that of the minuscules at over 2850, and the list of papyri now numbers 118 (and the qualitative increase may be greater than the merely quantitative).

Yet despite this staggering increase in the number of known witnesses (which does not even begin to mention the increase in our knowledge of the lectionaries and the versions), the critical editions currently in widest use agree, both in general and in detail, with the text printed by Westcott and Hort.¹⁷ And so the question has been raised: “In view of the numerous, rich discoveries since Westcott and Hort, shouldn’t we have been able to produce something better and perhaps very different?”—“If exegetes still use a text only moderately different from” from that of Westcott and Hort, “what have our vastly increased manuscript discoveries and analysis done for us?”¹⁸ The implied answer seems to be, “not much.”

This question, however, is not a new one: Zuntz had already raised nearly the same question decades earlier. Zuntz, however, raised it not in reference to Westcott and Hort but to Lachmann a half century before them—a move which makes the question only more pointed: to quote Zuntz, as

“The inheritors of this tradition and commanding a store of invaluable material, we find ourselves stuck at the point which Bentley’s genius had discerned and which Lachmann, in all essentials, reached more than a century [now a century and three-quarters] ago. Why?”¹⁹

Part of an answer to that question lies, of course, in historically contingent factors such as the decision of Eberhard Nestle in 1898 to use Westcott and Hort as one of the

¹⁵ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 14-5, 74-78; cf. Birdsall, “Recent History,” 103. The numbers regarding MSS available to Westcott & Hort are from Epp, “Twentieth Century Interlude,” in E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee, *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (SD 45; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 86.

¹⁶ As of 7 November 2006, the website for the Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung (<http://www.uni-muenster.de/INTF/>) listed 118 papyri, 318 uncials, 2880 minuscules, and 2436 lectionaries (the actual number, of course, is somewhat less, since sometimes separate parts of one manuscript have received separate numbers; e.g., p64, p67, and possibly p4 are parts of the same manuscript).

¹⁷ NA²⁵ differed from Westcott and Hort in only 558 instances (K. Aland and B. Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Leiden: Brill, 1989; 1st German ed., 1981] 26), and the difference between Westcott and Hort and NA²⁶⁻²⁷/UBS³⁻⁴ is even less. Cf. Eldon Jay Epp, “Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism: Moving from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-first Century,” in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. by D. A. Black (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 17-76, here 48-50.

¹⁸ Epp, “Issues,” 51; E. J. Epp, “A Continuing Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism?” *HTR* 73 (1980) 137 (= Epp and Fee, *Studies*, 113 = Epp, *Perspectives*, 191).

¹⁹ Zuntz, *Text*, 8.

three sources of his now-iconic edition of the NT.²⁰ But to a far larger extent, the answer Zuntz gave to this question in 1946 still effectively holds: the editors of our current critical text, regardless of whatever theories they may hold or reject, follow the same narrow strand of evidence as Westcott and Hort.²¹ They followed the non-Western old uncials, whereas today the editorial committee responsible for our critical text follows the non-Western papyri and old uncials. The essential physiognomy of our text remains virtually the same as Westcott and Hort's, because we follow the same slender segment of manuscripts.

To be sure, the new discoveries have not been without effect: whereas Lachmann and Westcott and Hort gave us a text of the mid- to late-4th c., the papyri enable us today to present a text of the late 2nd / early 3rd c.—a gain of about a century and a half. This is no small achievement, but we must acknowledge that it is an achievement based largely on serendipitous discoveries of early papyri, and not on any significant development in methodology or historical reconstruction.

Furthermore, having reached what Zuntz termed “the barrier of the second century,” the discipline has hesitated, unsure how to move forward into what seems in many respects to be *terra incognita*: “the age, so it seems, of unbounded liberties with the text,” into which the ‘recensions’ which had been the “lodestars” of criticism “vanish in primeval darkness.”²² That is, “having followed” what is generally regarded as “the best line of the tradition back to its earliest known representative, textual criticism is uncertain about the use of the vast mass of the other evidence and hesitates to risk the step from the point attained to the original.”²³ Zuntz wrote these words, of course, about a decade before the availability of the Bodmer papyri, yet they have a strikingly contemporary ring to them, and describe well our current dilemma.

It is here, at “the barrier of the second century,” where the discipline, it seems, continues to hesitate, unsure how to move forward.²⁴ Why the continuing hesitation, and why the continuing unease over a critical text that remains so similar to that of Westcott and Hort? An attempt to answer these questions reveals much of the continuing legacy—positive and negative—of Westcott and Hort even today.

Westcott and Hort's text was based on three critical elements: (1) the use of *recensio* to eliminate the Byzantine text, (2) the use of internal evidence to eliminate the Western text, and (3) a fully-developed view of the history of the text as the operational context for (1) and (2). Each of these calls for discussion.

²⁰ Aland and Aland, *Text*², 19.

²¹ Zuntz, *Text*, 8.

²² Zuntz, *Text*, 11.

²³ Zuntz, *Text*, 11.

²⁴ Cf. Jacobus H. Petzer, “The History of the New Testament—Its Reconstruction, Significance and Use in New Testament Textual Criticism,” in *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis, and Early Church History*, ed. Barbara Aland and Joël Delobel (CBET 7; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994) 11-36, esp. 36.

1) The use of *recensio* to eliminate the Byzantine text.

In the history of NT textual criticism, the genealogical approach (or *recensio*) has two great achievements to its credit. First, beginning with Bengel, it helped bring a degree of order out of the chaos of the almost paralyzingly large number of extant New Testament MSS by allowing them to be sorted into groups—Bengel's “families, tribes, and nations,” or Griesbach's “recensions”—and thus (in Zuntz's words) “the principle of authority, as opposed to mere numbers, was therewith established.”²⁵

Second, in the hands of Hort and Westcott it proved to be a useful tool with which to overthrow the *Textus Receptus*. Westcott and Hort affirmed Bengel's principle; in fact, their famous and oft-quoted assertion that “ALL TRUSTWORTHY RESTORATION OF CORRUPTED TEXTS IS FOUNDED ON THE STUDY OF THEIR HISTORY”²⁶ occurs in precisely this section of their *Introduction*. They also went a step further, a step that (in Hort's words) “consists in ceasing to treat Documents independently of each other, and examining them connectedly as parts of a single whole in virtue of their historical relationships;”²⁷ Hort has in mind “... the genealogical relations of the principal groups of documents, or, what is virtually the same thing, *of their respective lost originals*.”²⁸ Having thereby reduced the entire Byzantine tradition to a single witness, they then constructed a *stemma* that placed it in a secondary, derivative position to both the Western and Neutral texts, and thereby eliminated it from any further consideration.²⁹

As is now well known, Westcott and Hort's use of the genealogical method in this way was fundamentally flawed.³⁰ Genealogy is properly applicable only to a closed or unmixed line of descent. Hort claimed, on the basis of eight examples of what he termed “conflate readings,” that the Western and Neutral texts could be demonstrated to be “antecedent to mixture,” and therefore were proper subjects for the application of the genealogical method.³¹ But this claim is simply wrong: no unmixed texts exist among the surviving evidence, and consequently the genealogical method, as Westcott and Hort employed it (treating mixed or contaminated text types as though they were individual manuscripts in a closed or uncontaminated tradition), is not applicable to the textual transmission of the NT.

²⁵ Zuntz, *Text*, 5; cf. Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 39-46.

²⁶ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 40.

²⁷ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 40, 39.

²⁸ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 93 (italics added).

²⁹ E.g., “Since the Syrian text is only a modified eclectic combination of earlier texts independently attested, existing documents descended from it can attest nothing but itself”; a Western + Syrian reading has “no appreciably greater presumption in its favour” than the Western group alone (Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 118).

³⁰ A point made with particular force and clarity by E. C. Colwell, “Genealogical Method: Its Achievements and Its Limitations,” *JBL* 66 (1947): 109-33; repr. *idem*, *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (NTTS 9; Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 63-83; see also Birdsall, “Recent History,” 145.

³¹ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 2.49-52, 93-119.

But even though the means by which Westcott and Hort completely eliminated the Byzantine tradition is invalid, their wholesale rejection of that tradition continues to deeply shape contemporary textual criticism—especially as exemplified by the editorial committee responsible for the UBS/NA text.

Here we have, I suggest, a key part of Westcott and Hort’s continuing legacy. Whether we look at the *Textual Commentary* published on behalf of the UBS/NA Editorial Committee, or at the introductions published by members of the Committee, such as the Alands or Metzger, or survey the discipline in general, we find, in practice if not in theory, a general rejection of the Byzantine tradition *en bloc*.

To be sure, there have been and are exceptions, and we will note them when we return to this point later on. For the moment, it is enough to observe, as part of Westcott and Hort’s continuing legacy, the widespread neglect (if not outright rejection) of the Byzantine tradition by the discipline as a whole.

2) The use of internal evidence to eliminate the Western text.

Having eliminated the Byzantine tradition from further consideration, Westcott and Hort were left with two early textual traditions, the Western and their Neutral. Here they were confronted by the fundamental limitation of a genealogical approach: when dealing with two early traditions, it is powerless to decide between them. Hence they turned to the only resource available: internal evidence. In their own words, “Where the two ultimate witnesses differ, the genealogical method ceases to be applicable, and a comparison of the intrinsic general character of the two texts becomes the only resource.”³² That is,

“Given only the readings of X and Y, Genealogy is by its very nature powerless to shew which were the readings of O. . . . we have, in reaching the earliest known divergence, arrived at the point where Genealogical method finally ceases to be applicable. . . . Here therefore we are finally restricted to the Internal Evidence of . . . documents.”³³

With respect to Internal Evidence, Hort’s summary and exposition of it continues to stand without peer. It represents the consolidation, integration, and fullest expression of a methodology for textual criticism developed and refined over the preceding three and a half centuries. The roots of modern text-critical method reach back to Erasmus (1516), and from him may be traced through Bentley (1720), Bengel (1734), and Griesbach (2nd ed. 1796-1806) to Lachmann (1831). Westcott and (especially) Hort (1881) then organized, synthesized, and articulated with an extraordinary clarity and logical rigor

³² Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 42.

³³ Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 56-7.

(betraying Hort's earlier training as a botanical scientist) the work of their predecessors in now-classic form.³⁴ Hort's achievement is an enduring legacy to the discipline.

The widespread admiration accorded the work of Westcott and Hort following its publication did not, of course, preclude criticism of some of its results. Setting aside the total rejection of both text and method by Burgon and others,³⁵ there was on the one hand criticism (from scholars such as Rendel Harris and F. C. Burkitt in England, and Theodor Zahn and Eberhard Nestle in Germany³⁶) of Westcott and Hort's devaluing of the Western textual tradition, while on the other hand Scrivener criticized their wholesale rejection of the Byzantine.³⁷ But even as these scholars disagreed with Westcott and Hort, they effectively assumed Westcott and Hort's methods, and often their history of the text, in arguing for alternative positions. Even today, those who argue for the Western text, such as Boismard, Amphoux, Rius-Camps, or Heimerdinger (to name only a few),³⁸ or for the Byzantine tradition, such as Robinson,³⁹ continue to work within a basically Hortian methodological framework. As Birdsall has observed,

“It will be clear from the survey of the history of textual theory that the debate has been conducted within the limits of the data upon which Westcott and Hort laid stress, and for the resolution of which their theories were propounded and the text established. It is a debate about the status and origins of the text-types which they called ‘Neutral’ and ‘Western’, or alternative interpretations of the evidence.”⁴⁰

To restate the main point in this section, Hort's statement of internal method remains the fundamental discussion. To borrow Eldon Epp's phrase, Westcott and Hort's method has become the “default setting” for contemporary criticism,⁴¹ setting the framework within which we conduct our discussions; even in disagreement, the

³⁴ On this topic see in particular E. J. Epp, “The Eclectic Method in New Testament Textual Criticism: Solution or Symptom?” *HTR* 69 (1976) 217-29 (= Epp and Fee, *Studies*, 144-154); Epp, “Issues,” 20-34.

³⁵ On these cf. North, “The Oxford Debate.”

³⁶ Re Burkitt and Harris: see Birdsall, “Recent History,” 141-2. Re Zahn and Nestle: cf. E. Nestle, *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the Greek New Testament* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1901) 224-8.

³⁷ Scrivener, *Plain Introduction*, 2.284-301.

³⁸ M.-É. Boismard, “The Text of Acts: A Problem of Literary Criticism?” In *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis: Essays in Honour of Bruce M. Metzger* (ed. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 147-57; Léon Vaganay and Christian-Bernard Amphoux, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (2d ed., rev. and updated by Amphoux; trans. Jenny Heimerdinger; English ed. amplified and updated by Amphoux and Heimerdinger; Cambridge University Press, 1991); J. Rius-Camps and J. Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition*. I. *Acts 1.1-5.42: Jerusalem* (JSNTSup 257; London: T&T Clark, 2004); II. *Acts 6.1-12.25: From Judaea and Samaria to the Church in Antioch* (LNTS 302; London: T&T Clark, 2006); J. Read-Heimerdinger, *The Bezan Text of Acts: A Contribution of Discourse Analysis to Textual Criticism* (JSNTSup 236; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

³⁹ Cf. Maurice A. Robinson, “The Case for Byzantine Priority,” in *Rethinking New Testament Criticism*, ed. by D. A. Black (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 125-39.

⁴⁰ Birdsall, “Recent History,” 164.

⁴¹ Epp, “Rethinking,” 49.

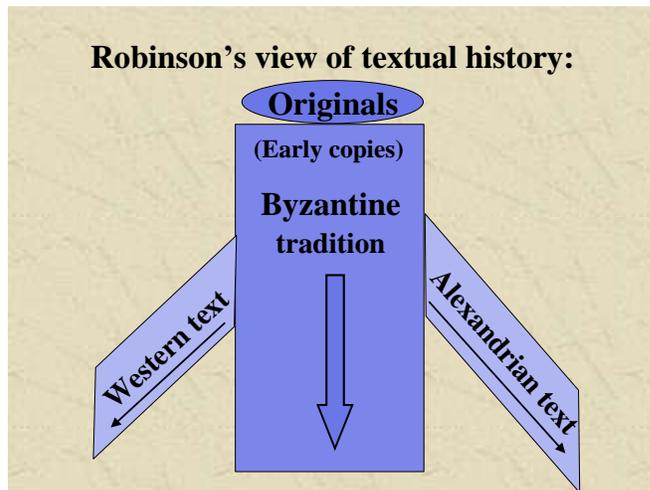
parameters of debate have largely been set by them. Here they clearly have a significant and enduring legacy.

3) History of the text.

The continuing debate about the Western vs. Alexandrian text just mentioned leads us to the third point of Westcott and Hort's legacy: their view of the history of the text. No method works in a vacuum; there is always an implicit or explicit history of the text with which it interacts.⁴² Zuntz has described the relationship between method and history as a fruitful circle:

Every variant whose quality and origin has ... been established must serve as a stone in the mosaic picture of the history of the tradition, for there is next to no other material from which it could be built up. At the same time the evaluation of individual readings depends to a large extent upon their place within this picture. This is another instance of that circle which is typical of the critical process; it is a fruitful and not a vicious circle.⁴³

In short, the evaluation of individual readings is greatly influenced by the critic's view of their relationship to the larger picture of the history of the text, and vice-versa, because there is a synergistic relationship between history and method.⁴⁴ Thus one's view of the history of the text is no less important than one's basic approach to methodology.



For example: Maurice Robinson works with the same “toolbox” of transcriptional and intrinsic considerations as virtually all the rest of us. Yet he has produced a quite different text.⁴⁵ A fundamental reason for this different outcome from the use of the same set of tools is that he works with a much different conception of the history of the text. On his interpretation of the history

⁴² On this point see further Michael W. Holmes, “Reasoned Eclecticism in New Testament Textual Criticism,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. by Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Studies and Documents 46; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 349-353.

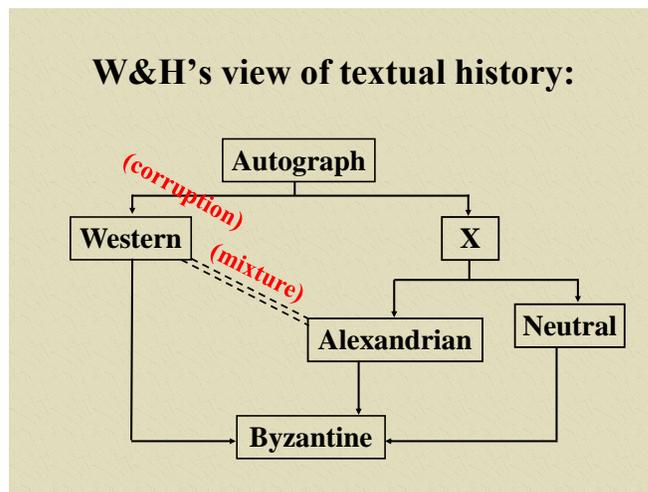
⁴³ Zuntz, *Text*, 13.

⁴⁴ See further Holmes, “Reasoned Eclecticism,” 349-353.

⁴⁵ *The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Byzantine / Majority Textform*, ed. by Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont (Atlanta, GA: Original Word Publishers, 1991; 2nd ed., Southborough, MA: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005).

of the text, it is impossible for a reading supported only by ‘Western’ or Alexandrian witnesses (or a combination thereof) to be an original reading, and this conviction deeply shapes his use of internal considerations.

For their part, Westcott and Hort developed a full and comprehensive portrait of the history of the transmission of the NT text, one that can be illustrated in diagrammatic format.⁴⁶



In this visual representation of Westcott and Hort’s views, it is clear (to repeat a point noted earlier) that the Byzantine tradition cannot preserve an original reading not found in at least one of the other two lines of tradition.

If today this way of viewing the Western and Alexandrian traditions has been variously modified (but with no particular consensus resulting), nonetheless

this way of viewing the Byzantine textual tradition—as a late secondary textual tradition with no independent access to the original—still largely dominates the field, as we noted earlier. One sees it clearly, for example, in the analysis and comments in the UBS *Textual Commentary*, which routinely give little more than merely cursory consideration to Byzantine variants, or in the Alands’ *Introduction*, which gives no real role to the Byzantine text in the search for the original text.

A second point is also evident in Westcott and Hort’s view of the history of the text: agreements between Neutral witnesses and Western witnesses represent, in Westcott and Hort’s view, Western intrusions into an otherwise pure tradition.⁴⁷ This view too is still very much alive and well, as is clear from the *Textual Commentary* published by the UBS/NA editorial committee.⁴⁸ As one reads through the volume, one finds P⁴⁶, for example—a manuscript whose proto-Alexandrian character is indisputable—occasionally characterized by the Committee as a ‘Western’ witness, or readings found in it described as a ‘Western’ assimilation, expansion, or intrusion. The implication of comments of this sort is clear: ‘Western’ readings are a corrupting outside intrusion into an otherwise pure ‘proto-Alexandrian’ witness or textual tradition.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Cf. Metzger, *Text*, 134 [= *Text^A*, 180].

⁴⁷ Cf. Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 167, 228, 244, 258-9.

⁴⁸ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994 [1st ed.: London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971; corr. ed., 1975]).

⁴⁹ Cf. Holmes, “The Text of P⁴⁶,” 198-9.

As an example, consider the Committee's evaluation of Romans 14:21, where we find the following variants:

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|--|--|
| (a) προσκοπτει η σκανδαλιζεται η ασθενει | P ^{46vid} S ^c B D F G Ψ 0209 33 1881
Byz lat sy ^h sa Ambst |
| (b) προσκοπτει | S ^a A C 048 6 81 945 1506 1739 pc r
sy ^p bo Marcion Origen NA ²⁷ |
| (c) λυπειται | S* |
| (d) λυπειται η σκανδαλιζεται η ασθενει | P |
| (e) προσκοπτει η ασθενει | sy ^{pal} |
| (f) σκανδαλιζεται η προσκοπτει η ασθενει | 1984 1985 m Chrys |

The Editorial Committee, which prefers the second variant, (b), justifies its decision in these words:

“The Textus Receptus incorporates a Western expansion [*i.e.*, *reading (a)*] ... which gained wide circulation ... Other variations in various witnesses suggest that the original text was modified or expanded by copyists who recollected 1 Cor 8.11-13.”⁵⁰

Notice how reading (a), which one could describe as having broad support from primary Alexandrian (P^{46vid} B 33 sa), Western (D F G lat), and Byzantine witnesses, is reduced to merely a “Western expansion” incorporated by the TR: surely a minimalist reading of the evidence, but one that is both typical and revelatory of the Committee's attitude towards Western and Byzantine evidence.⁵¹

Today, there are certainly those who disagree with Westcott and Hort's formulation of the history of the transmission of the text. For the most part, however, it would appear that their basic outline of textual history is still followed by very many in the discipline. If there is any significant modification of it in practice, it is that the original reading is to be found in the Alexandrian tradition a bit less often than Westcott and Hort thought, and correspondingly a bit more often among readings supported by small numbers of ‘outlying’ MSS, which form, however, no discernable pattern but instead align with one another in constantly changing and ever-shifting relationships.

In short, the legacy of Westcott and Hort's historical reconstruction still lies heavily upon us, and it has left us in an impasse. To the extent that we follow them in rejecting out of hand the Byzantine tradition and dismissing the Western text on internal grounds, we end up following the same narrow line of witnesses as they did, and confront

⁵⁰ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*², 469.

⁵¹ For a full argument in favor of reading (a), see Michael W. Holmes, “Reasoned Eclecticism and the Text of Romans,” in *Romans and the People of God*, ed. by S. K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1999) 187-202, here 199-200; other examples are discussed in Holmes, “The Text of P⁴⁶.”

the same chasm they did when we hit the limits of those witnesses—though now the edge of the chasm is the end of 2nd c. rather than the mid-4th, as was the case for Westcott and Hort. But either way, they and we come to a halt when the one remaining line of evidence comes to an end.

Not all, of course, are stuck here: there are those who on internal grounds argue for the priority of the Western text,⁵² but by and large, they have failed to persuade more than a few of the rest of us of the cogency of their case.

Others have argued for, if not the Western text as such, then at least for following the earliest attested readings (primarily patristic).⁵³ But in critical respects this is essentially the same approach as Lachmann, and is subject to the same criticism: the earliest surviving evidence does not, on that ground alone, have some inherent right or intrinsic claim to be considered original simply because it is the earliest surviving evidence. That circumstance certainly gives it a reason to claim serious consideration, but no more, unless there be other good reasons to decide in its favor. An example in point: for much of the Pauline corpus, P⁴⁶ preserves our earliest surviving evidence. Yet at points this witness is clearly corrupt, and in some instances preserves what seem to be tertiary readings—corruption of a corruption, as it were, two steps removed from the original, yet preserved in our earliest surviving witness.⁵⁴

The Contribution of Zuntz

To this impasse created by following only one narrow strand of evidence to the exclusion of others, as Westcott and Hort did, Zuntz offers a solution, one rooted in an alternative reconstruction of the history of the text, and in a re-conceptualization of the role and function of *recensio*. To these two aspects of Zuntz's solution I wish now to turn.

1) An alternative view of the history of the text.

In Zuntz's opinion, Westcott and Hort's view of the history of the transmission of the text requires modification in at least three respects.

(1) The sharply drawn lines of descent reflect too much the lingering influence of the classical concept of *recensio* and its goal of a *stemma* of manuscripts. In the Westcott and Hort diagram above, it is not a *stemma* of manuscripts, of course, but of textual traditions

⁵² See note 38 above.

⁵³ See, for example, various articles by William Petersen: e.g., William L. Petersen, "What Text Can New Testament Textual Criticism Ultimately Reach?" in *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis, and Early Church History*, ed. Barbara Aland and Joël Delobel (CBET 7; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994) 136-52; William L. Petersen, "The Genesis of the Gospel," in *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis: Festschrift J. Delobel*, ed. by A. Denaux (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2002) 33-65; William L. Petersen, "Patristic Biblical Quotations and Method: Four Changes to Lightfoot's Edition of *Second Clement*," *VC* 60 (2006) 389-419.

⁵⁴ A major example is the ending of Romans 16 in P⁴⁶: see Harry Gamble, Jr., *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* (Studies and Documents 42; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 141.

that is given—and that is precisely the problem, for no major textual tradition is so sharply defined as to be capable of being reduced to such a scheme. Thus, as Zuntz puts it, the concept of a clearly defined

“*genealogical descent* ... must go. Every manuscript, of course has ancestors and, very often, also descendents; but we cannot identify them except in the case of a few small groups of late manuscripts. The tradition ought to be visualized, rather, as a broad stream, of which the extant manuscripts and other witnesses yield occasional, rare samples.”⁵⁵

This idea of the tradition as a broad stream, with the surviving evidence representing only small scattered subportions of it, is, in my opinion, an extraordinarily fruitful aspect of Zuntz’s historical reconstruction.

(2) The term “Western” ought to be applied to variants attested *only* by Western witnesses. That is, a variant attested by Western witnesses and also, e.g., by Origen or Ephrem, ceases to be ‘Western’ in a meaningful sense.

(3) This second point is to be closely linked to the third, which is:

“The Byzantine text did not originate from Western elements being grafted upon an Eastern tradition; this view of Griesbach, adopted by all his successors except von Soden, is wrong (and von Soden is still more wrong). The Byzantine text is a late fixation of the Eastern tradition only. Its so-called Western elements are really primitive elements of the Eastern tradition. The Byzantine text contains some few original elements for which no, or almost no, ancient evidence survives.”⁵⁶

This last point is a particularly critical one, for it shapes in an absolutely fundamental way how one views (and thus evaluates) the manuscript tradition. We noted a moment ago that the view of Westcott and Hort—that ‘Western’ readings are a corrupting outside intrusion into an otherwise pure ‘proto-Alexandrian’ witness or textual tradition.—is still very much alive and well.

Zuntz, on the other hand, offers a significantly different analysis. In his opinion, the “outstanding feature” of the group of witnesses he termed ‘proto-Alexandrian,’ and in P⁴⁶ most of all, is the presence of

‘Western’ readings, or rather, those readings which have disappeared from the later ‘Alexandrian’ manuscripts (and often also from other Eastern witnesses) but recur in the West. The presence of these readings does not make the group ‘Western’ in any legitimate sense of the term; the ‘Alexandrian’ character of the ‘proto-Alexandrian’ witnesses is established by unequivocal facts. This element, common to the earliest Eastern and to the Western traditions, is a survival from a pre-‘Alexandrian’ and pre-Western basis, the traces of which, most marked in P⁴⁶,

⁵⁵ Zuntz, “The Text of the Epistles,” 254.

⁵⁶ Zuntz, “The Text of the Epistles,” 254.

gradually disappear from the later ‘Alexandrian’ tradition but often reappear in later Eastern witnesses, as well as in the West.⁵⁷

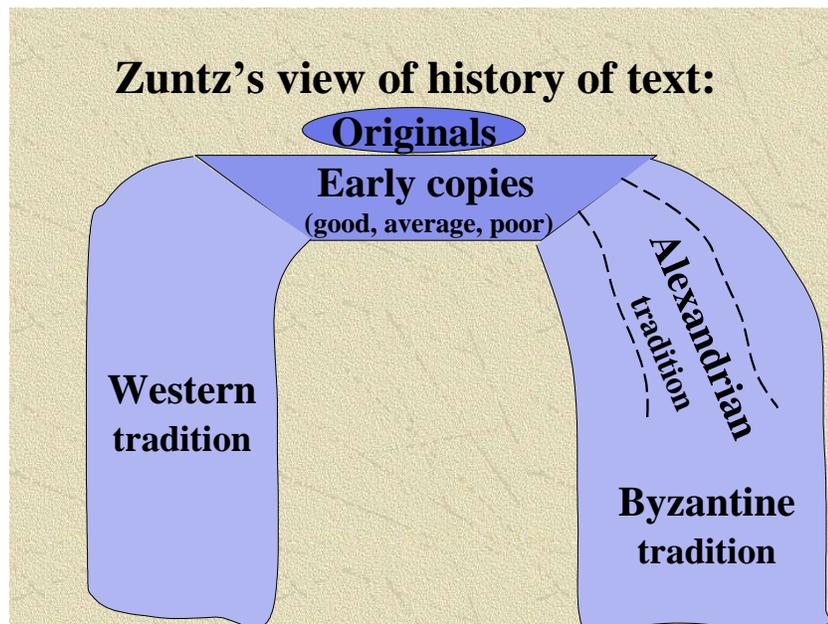
From Zuntz’s perspective, the evidence yields “one paramount conclusion: Western readings in non-Western witnesses are, generally, ancient survivals. They are not, in the relevant witnesses, secondary intrusions into a previously pure form.”⁵⁸

In other words, from the earliest stages of the New Testament textual tradition—Zuntz characterized it as a “reservoir”—there flowed two major textual streams, the Western and the Eastern. The Western developed its own characteristic features, which do not appear in Eastern witnesses (but some Eastern

features do appear in the Western tradition, due to the work of Jerome). The Eastern tradition flowed separately, and eventually received fixed form as the Byzantine imperial text. The Alexandrian tradition represents an early main channel of that stream, one that was able to avoid many (but not all) of the faults of the tradition which preceded it, but which also lost some good readings which other channels preserved and passed along to the Byzantine text.

Two critical implications stand out on this view: (1) the Byzantine text alone may on occasion preserve original readings; and (2) any reading with both Western and Eastern support, though not necessarily nor often original, must nonetheless be very ancient, and thus may offer clues to the early history and transmission of the text.

With regard to the first point, Zuntz is by no means the only one to have pointed this out,⁵⁹ and he has been echoed by others since, such as A. W. Adams (in his revision of F. G. Kenyon’s *The Text of the Greek Bible*) and G. D. Kilpatrick,⁶⁰ and among active



⁵⁷ Zuntz, *Text*, 156-7.

⁵⁸ Zuntz, *Text*, 142.

⁵⁹ Cf., e.g., Westcott and Hort’s contemporary, F. H. A. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 4th ed. (2 vols.; ed. by E. Miller; London, 1894) 2:274-301.

⁶⁰ Cf. A. W. Adams (in his revision of F. G. Kenyon, *The Text of the Greek Bible*, third ed. rev. and augmented by A. W. Adams [London: Duckworth, 1975] 212-3); Birdsall (see next note); G. D. Kilpatrick

textual critics today the work of Klaus Wachtel deserves mention in this regard.⁶¹ But of this group Zuntz is one of only two I am aware of (the other being Birdsall⁶²) to develop the implications of this insight sufficiently to support a robust hypothesis regarding the history of the transmission of the text, and then to allow that history to shape one's judgment on readings.

With regard to the second point, as long as readings with both western and eastern support are viewed as western intrusions into the eastern tradition, they are easily dismissed along with the rest of the western tradition. But if we view them as Zuntz does, then they become pointers to the handling and fate of the New Testament text in the earliest period of its transmission: even when secondary, they are nonetheless illuminating. In other words, the still-influential Hortian-influenced view of the history of the text has wrongly led us to toss out valuable clues to the first century of its transmission.

2) A re-conceptualization of the role and function of *recensio*.

A history of the text, however, in and of itself, is insufficient, for as we noted earlier, one's history of the text works synergistically with one's method. And it is precisely in the area of method that Zuntz makes one of his most brilliant and yet most overlooked contributions: he adapted the classical method of *recensio* to the realities of a contaminated textual tradition. His key move is this: the recognition that in an "open" or contaminated tradition, characterized by cross-pollination between witnesses, one cannot eliminate any textual tradition or source from consideration in the effort to determine the archetype of the text of the New Testament and to understand the earliest stages of the transmission of the textual tradition.

In a closed or uncontaminated tradition, such as one often finds in the classics, *recensio* is used to determine an unequivocal *stemma codicum*; once the archetype of the *stemma* has been determined, the rest of the witnesses may be eliminated from consideration. But in a contaminated or cross-pollinated tradition, the construction of a

("The Greek New Testament Text of Today and the *Textus Receptus*," in *The New Testament in Historical and Contemporary Perspective*, ed. by H. Anderson and W. Barclay [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965] 189-208 [= *Principles and Practice*, 33-52]); H. A. Sturz (*The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism* [Nashville: Nelson, 1984]); and (with less emphasis) Metzger (e.g., *Text* [1st ed.], 212 [4th ed., 306]).

⁶¹ Klaus Wachtel, *Der Byzantinische Text der Katholischen Briefe: Eine Untersuchung zur Entstehung der Koine des Neuen Testaments* (ANTF 24; Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1995); Klaus Wachtel, "Early Variants in the Byzantine Text of the Gospels," in *Transmission and Reception: New Testament Text-Critical and Exegetical Studies*, ed. Jeffrey Childers and D. C. Parker (Texts and Studies Third Series 4; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006) 28-47.

⁶² Birdsall, "The New Testament Text," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1: *From the Beginnings to Jerome* (ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) 332-77; cf. J. N. Birdsall, "Textual Transmission and Versions of the New Testament," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. by J. W. Rogerson and J. M. Lieu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 237-49.

stemma is impossible. To deal with such cases, Zuntz re-defines *recensio* as “the assessment of all available witnesses” and employs it not to identify a single manuscript or line of tradition as closest to the archetype, but rather to identify, variant by variant, the *reading(s)* closest to the archetype at any given point in the tradition.⁶³ That is, whereas in a closed tradition one seeks the closest discernable manuscript, in a mixed or contaminated tradition, in which the lines of descent are thoroughly confused, one seeks instead, on a variant-by-variant basis, the closest readings.

These readings are then subjected to *examinatio*, which seeks to assess “the quality of the most ancient reading or readings attained by *recensio*.” Those readings that prove satisfactory in terms of internal criteria are accepted as original; but in those cases “where the tradition fails to yield such a reading, *emendatio* strives to recover, by means of conjecture, the original wording.”⁶⁴ In short, Zuntz proposes that “in a vast and contaminated tradition, *historical insight* can, and must, take the place of the fixed abstractions at which the *recensio* of a less complex tradition arrives.”⁶⁵

Hort viewed the Byzantine text, as we have noted, as the result of mixture of Western and Neutral traditions. At the same time he argued that the Western and Neutral traditions were both anterior to any mixture, and thus could be treated largely as homogeneous entities.

In contrast, Zuntz, on the basis of his evaluation of the earliest recoverable readings, became convinced that *all* surviving textual traditions are contaminated by cross-fertilization, and thus no tradition could be excluded from the process of *recensio*. All traditions, in other words, have something to contribute to our understanding of the earliest stages of the text.

In a statement that brings together his alternative view of the history of the text and his re-conceptualization of the role and function of *recensio*, Zuntz points out that

The recovery of the original text, if it is to be attempted scientifically, depends upon the illumination of its history in the second century. The modern criticism, by its disregard for the Western evidence, robs itself of one of the means for elucidating this history. The widespread view that ‘the’ Western text is ‘the’ text of the second century indeed stands in need of rectification ... yet it contains a large element of truth which we cannot afford to neglect. The rejection *en bloc* of the ‘Byzantine text’ similarly tends to rob us of a most helpful instrument. This rejection is due to Griesbach, who ... considered [as did Hort after him, one may add, with even greater influence] the late text to derive from the two earlier

⁶³ There is an evident similarity here between Zuntz’s procedure and that of the Alands’ “local-genealogical” approach (Aland and Aland, *Text*², 34: “applying to each passage individually the approach used by classical philology for a whole tradition”)—though Zuntz operates with a much different view of the history of the transmission of the text than the Alands do. It is curious that the Alands’ handbook essentially makes no mention of Zuntz.

⁶⁴ Zuntz, *Text*, 12.

⁶⁵ Zuntz, *Text*, 10 (emphasis added).

‘recensions’ combined. We shall show that this view is erroneous and thus gain another clue to the early history of the tradition.⁶⁶

If Zuntz is correct, as I think he basically is, then one reason for our continuing impasse is that we have, by our general disregard for Western and especially Byzantine evidence, robbed ourselves of important data that could shed light on the earliest history of the transmission of the text.

Another reason for our continuing impasse is the failure to carry our method to its logical conclusion. *Recensio* can indicate the closest surviving reading, but it cannot, even as modified by Zuntz, tell us whether it is the original reading.⁶⁷ This is where the further stages of *examinatio* and, if necessary, *emendatio*, come into play. Yet it is precisely here that the discipline has declined to go. In practice, and often in theory, the assumption is widespread that the original reading must have survived somewhere among the extant witnesses. Some assert this as a matter of principle;⁶⁸ others do so by default, by declining to take seriously, even if only theoretically, the possibility of the need to emend the text of the NT. This failure amounts to a squandering of our resources, a neglect of evidence that if properly used, could enable us to penetrate beyond the limits of the extant tradition. Here both Westcott and Hort and Zuntz agree against the contemporary rejection or neglect of emendation. We tend to forget, the title of their edition notwithstanding, that Westcott and Hort marked some sixty-five places where they suspected the presence of some primitive corruption antecedent to all extant witnesses, and recognized in these cases the need for emendation.⁶⁹ Here is a part of their legacy that needs to be recovered.

Contemporary challenges

I have suggested two reasons for the discipline’s current impasse in the face of the mysteries of the second century: first, the continued Hortian shape of the history of the text adopted (if only by default) by many textual critics and the consequent neglect of the Byzantine tradition as a potential carrier of original readings, and second, a short-circuiting of the most widely used methodology. I have also suggested that Zuntz’s revisions of Westcott and Hort with respect to both these points offer the prospect of a way past that impasse. In order to make continued

⁶⁶ Zuntz, *Text*, 11-12.

⁶⁷ Cf. Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 66; Zuntz, *Text*, 282-283; Colwell, “Genealogical Method,” 109-33 (= *Studies*, 63-83).

⁶⁸ E.g., Aland and Aland, *Text²*, 291-5; J. K. Elliott, “Thoroughgoing Eclecticism in New Testament Textual Criticism,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. by Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (Studies and Documents 46; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 322.

⁶⁹ Cf. Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 279-82; Zuntz, *Text*, 12; see also his analysis of 1 Cor. 6:5 (*Text*, 15).

progress, however, there are also some associated issues with which the discipline must come to grips along the way. These include (but are not limited to) the following points.

1) What are we trying to recover? In recent years some writers have, not without reason, problematized the meaning of the phrase “original text.”⁷⁰ But even as that has been done in a general way, there is still a need to become more specific about just what it is we are trying to recover, and the relation of that to what authors presumably wrote.

Many of those associated with the *Editio Critica Maior* project now speak of an ‘Ausgangstext’ or ‘Initial Text,’ the earliest recoverable stage of the tradition—a very sound move overall, as it declares what they believe to be the status of the text they are seeking to recover.⁷¹ A question, however, immediately arises: what is the relation of this Ausgangstext to the origin (or origins) of the tradition? To answer this question will require us to go beyond the stages of *recensio* and *selectio*, where we now comfortably stop, to *examinatio* and perhaps even *emendatio*, as I indicated earlier.

How we answer this question—which must be answered, I would argue, for each book or sub-corpus in the NT—will shape our perception of what we are trying to recover. It will also have implications for our methodology: e.g., if we decide that all surviving witnesses descend from a single manuscript, which itself was a copy, then we raise the possibility of universal shared agreement in error—as in 1 Cor. 6:5, for example⁷²—which then in turn implies the need for emendation—a step the discipline has avoided. But on what methodological or historical grounds? If one wishes to say that emendation is not necessary, then one must offer a convincing history of the text that justifies that decision. So far, the claim has proceeded more by assertion than evidence.

2) Closely related in all this is the issue of the metaphors or images we employ to portray the transmission of the text. The widespread practice of thinking in terms of a stemma or family tree of genetic descent reveals how much the heritage of the classical genealogical approach still shapes our thinking. Zuntz tried to propose a different image or metaphor, that of streams of tradition. In view of his declared title, I anticipate that our next speaker will take up this matter as well, and I look forward very much to his remarks,⁷³ and anticipate that he will stimulate our thinking in this respect. In any case,

⁷⁰ Cf. Holmes, “Reasoned Eclecticism,” 353-4; Petersen, “What Text,” 136-7; E. J. Epp, “The Multivalence of the Term ‘Original Text’ in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *HTR* 92 (1999) 245-81 (= Epp, *Perspectives*, 551-93).

⁷¹ *Editio Critica Maior/1-2 Peter*, 23*; *ECM/1 John*, 29*; cf. K. Wachtel and D. C. Parker, “The Joint IGNTP/INTF Editio Critica Maior of the Gospel of John: Its Goals and Their Significance for New Testament Scholarship” (paper present at the SNTS meeting, Halle, August 15, 2005); online: http://www.itsee.bham.ac.uk/online/2005_SNTS_WachtelParker.pdf.

⁷² Cf. Zuntz, *Text*, 15-16.

⁷³ Holger Strutwolf, “Alexandrian, Western, Byzantine? A Plea for a Paradigm Shift in New Testament Textual Research.”

the lingering effects of genealogical terminology must be lifted from how we conceptualize the transmission history of the NT text.

3) Another matter of current interest is the question of fluidity vs. stability in the NT textual tradition. Some (such as Koester and Petersen, and Bovon) have argued for a great deal of fluidity prior to Irenaeus, to the extent that it is claimed that our recovered texts look nothing like the original, about which we know next to nothing except that it doesn't look like our current text.⁷⁴ On a different place on the spectrum of views we have a proposal from Trobisch that the entire NT textual tradition descends from an authoritative edition of the Greek Bible made in the early middle of the 2nd c.⁷⁵ Between these options there are, of course, countless other possibilities, and the answer may vary from book to book or corpus. The history of the transmission of Luke and especially Acts, which embody all the problems of the Western text, is likely quite different than that of John, for example, whose earliest recoverable textual strand (that of P⁷⁵-B) bears many demonstrable signs of being a non-recensional text.⁷⁶

In short, the question of fluidity versus stability has tremendous potential implications for how one views the history of the transmission of the text, and requires, I suggest, more serious exploration than it has received to date.

4) Any exploration of that question, however, must be correlated—in a way that has not yet been done—with the evidence of the surviving manuscripts. To illustrate: I find the idea of an authoritative edition difficult to accept in view of the tremendous variety of order and arrangement evident among the extant manuscripts; the diversity of the order and arrangement of books in the earliest surviving copies of the LXX, e.g., are difficult to reconcile with Trobisch's concept of an authoritative edition two centuries earlier. In short, as Harry Gamble⁷⁷ has modeled for us, we need better to integrate our studies of canon,⁷⁸ paleography, *nomina sacra*, Septuagint, etc. with our study of the history of transmission of the NT text.

⁷⁴ Helmut Koester, "The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century," in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission*, ed. by William L. Petersen (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) 19-37; F. Bovon, "The Synoptic Gospels and the Non-canonical Acts of the Apostles," *HTR* 81 (1988) 19-36 (= *Studies in Early Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005] 209-225); Petersen, "What Text?"; Petersen, "Genesis of the Gospel".

⁷⁵ David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁷⁶ Gordon D. Fee, "P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵ and Origen: The Myth of Early Textual Recension in Alexandria," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. by M. C. Tenney and R. N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 19-45; J. N. Birdsall, *The Bodmer Papyrus of the Gospel of John* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960).

⁷⁷ Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995).

⁷⁸ On this topic see Michael W. Holmes, "The Christian Canon," in *The Oxford Handbook on Early Christianity*, ed. Susan Harvey and David Hunter (Oxford University Press, forthcoming). [*now published*: (2008) 406-426.]

As we do so, we may, if we follow the guide that Zuntz has left for us, yet find a way to unravel the mysteries of the New Testament text in the second century, and thus to move beyond the barrier that stopped Westcott and Hort, and still in large measure stops us.