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THE GREAT BIBLE TEXT FRAUD

Introduction

Much false information has been spread about the true Greek text of the New Testament and about its preservation in the Received Text, of the so-called Byzantine text-type, which is the basis of the King James Version. A major fault in many writers has been the adoption of a theory developed by a defender of the Received Text, Frederick Nolan, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nolan's theory was that the text-type used by Jerome in his production of the Latin Vulgate was concocted by Origen and Eusebius in Palestine in the third and early fourth centuries AD. This text-type is found in the very early manuscript Vaticanus, and in Sinaiticus its sister-text, and varies significantly from the Byzantine type. It is a principal, if not the major, source of corruption in texts of the Medieval period and up to the modern day. Nolan borrowed the theory from an earlier critic, Griesbach, but differed from the latter in that he believed the text of Origen and Eusebius, and therefore also of Jerome, was corrupt, whereas Griesbach believed it represented the authentic Bible text. Griesbach's position is that favored by liberal text-critics today. Since this corrupt text-type is in textual terms the Antichrist to the Christ of the Received or Byzantine text-type, Nolan's mistake has put Origen and Eusebius in a very bad light ever since amongst upholders of the priority of the Received Text. This small work is an attempt to put the record straight about the role of Origen and Eusebius in the textual history of the New Testament, and to demonstrate that the text of Origen and Eusebius was, in fact, the basis of the Byzantine text-type, — removing one, but not the most important, pillar from Nolan's theory, — whilst at the same time strongly affirming Nolan's preference for the Byzantine text-type and its modern representative, the Received Text. Nolan's adoption of Griesbach's view in relation to the text derived from Origen and Eusebius, has played into the hands of the proponents of the Vulgate ("Alexandrian") text-type: Origen and Eusebius were chief heretics of the Eastern communion, according to the deceived Roman Church to which Jerome belonged, whereas, in reality, they were the most prominent of a band of third-century teachers, Catholic in the original and proper sense of that word, committed to the "Logos theology", "Economic Trinitarianism" and "Subordinationism", or, in other words, to the true Biblical theology, of the sub-Apostolic Church. Origen himself was a direct disciple of Hippolytus (a fierce Biblical opponent of the false Roman Church of his day, in the latter part of the second and the first part of the third century AD), Hippolytus of the great spiritual warrior Irenaeus, Irenaeus of the martyr Polycarp, and Polycarp of the Apostle John, the Beloved Disciple of Jesus Himself. Origen, Origen's disciple Pamphilus, and Pamphilus' disciple Eusebius were thus in direct line of spiritual descent of the Messianic Jewish Church of the Apostle John, and the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures to which they devoted their life's work the very antithesis of the "emended collation of Greek book-form manuscripts" patched together for the First Church of Rome by Jerome, the pernicious effects of which are still felt, in the mangled texts employed to produce modern Bible translations, in a multitude of different languages across the globe.

1. THE PRESERVATION OF THE TRUE BIBLE TEXT TILL THE TIME OF EUSEBIUS

The true Bible text was preserved well into the third century AD in the form of a perfect copy of the Hebrew Old Testament, and the original Apostolic writings of the New Testament:

a) the Old Testament, in the original Hebrew and an accurate Greek translation, in Origen's Hexapla

b) the New Testament autographs (original documents) in local New Testament churches, according to (i) Tertullian writing in the first part of the third century AD, and (ii) Eusebius (supplemented by Jerome), and (iii) the Chronicon Paschale c. AD 354:

(i) Tertullian Prescription of Heretics cap. xxxvi and xxxvii
trans. C. Dodgson, London 1842, p. 470ff.

“XXXVI. Come now, thou that wilt exercise thy curiosity to better purpose in the business of thy salvation, go through the Apostolic Churches, in which the very seats of the Apostles, at this very day, preside over their own places; in which *their own authentic writings* are read, speaking with the voice of each, and making the face of each present to the eye.¹ Is Achaia near to thee? thou hast Corinth. If thou art not far from Macedonia, thou hast Philippi, thou hast the Thessalonians. If thou canst travel into Asia, thou hast Ephesus. But if thou art near to Italy, thou hast Rome, where we also have an authority close at hand. What an happy Church is that! on which the Apostles poured out all their doctrine, with their blood: where Peter had a like Passion with the Lord; where Paul hath for his crown the same death with John; where the Apostle John was plunged into boiling oil, and suffered nothing, and was afterwards banished to an island. Let us see what she hath learned, what taught, what fellowship she hath had with the Churches of Africa likewise. She acknowledged one God the Lord the Creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus the Son of God the Creator, born of the Virgin Mary, and the resurrection of the flesh. She joineth the Law and the Prophets with the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, and thence drinketh in her faith. That faith she sealet with water, clotheth with the Holy Spirit, feedeth with the Eucharist, exhorteth to martyrdom, and so receiveth no one in opposition to this teaching. This is that teaching, which I do not now say foretold that heresies should come, but from which heresies proceeded forth. But these were not of her, from the time when they began to be against her. Even from the seed of the cultivated, rich, necessary olive, the rough wild-olive ariseth: even from the kernel of the most delightful and most sweet fig springeth the empty and useless wild-fig. So also heresies are of our fruit, not of our kind, of the seed of truth, but, through falsehood, wild.

¹ “*Their own authentic writings*” is in Latin *ipsae authenticae literae eorum*, which is better translated as “the *originals of their writings*”, see Faber, *infra*, on this passage.

“XXXVII. If these things be so, so that the truth be adjudged to belong to us as many as walk according to this rule, which the Churches have handed down from the Apostles, the Apostles from Christ, Christ from God, the reasonableness of our proposition is manifest, which determineth that heretics are not to be allowed to enter upon an appeal to the Scriptures, whom we prove, without the Scriptures, to have no concern with the Scriptures. For if they be heretics, they cannot be Christians, in that they have not from Christ that, which following according to their own choosing, they admit the name of heretics. Therefore, not being Christians, they can have no right to Christian writings. To such it may be justly said, who are ye? when and whence came ye? not being mine, what do ye in that which is mine? In brief, by what right dost thou, Marcion, cut down my wood? by what licence dost thou, Valentinus, turn the course of my waters? by what power dost thou, Apelles, remove my landmarks? This is my possession. Why do ye the rest sow and feed here at your own pleasure? It is my possession; I have held it of old; I held it first: I have a sure title down from the first owners themselves,² whose the estate was. I am the heir of the Apostles. As they provided by their own testament, as they committed it in trust, as they have adjured, so I hold it. You, assuredly, they have ever disinherited and renounced, as aliens, as enemies. But why are heretics aliens and enemies to the Apostles, if not from the difference of doctrine, which each at his own pleasure hath either brought forward or received in contradiction to the Apostles?”

G. S. Faber, *The Difficulties of Romanism*, London, 1826, Appendix, p. 387ff.

RESPECTING THE AUTHENTIC LETTERS OF THE APOSTLES MENTIONED BY TERTULLIAN.

“It has been disputed, whether the *ipsae authenticae litterae*,³ mentioned by Tertullian in his treatise on Prescriptions, were the autographs of the apostles or only accurate transcripts of them*.

[Faber’s Footnote here reads: “* Tertull. de Praescript. adv. Haer. § xiv. p. 108, 109. See above, book ii. chap. 3. § II. 2. note.”]⁴

² Latin: *Habeo origines firmas ab ipsis autoribus*, see Faber, *infra*, on this passage.

³ Properly meaning “the originals of their writings”.

⁴ An example of the more limited view referred to by Faber is Dodgson, whose translation of the passage of Tertullian appears *supra*: Dodgson’s Footnote (h) p. 470, arguing against the translation “autographs”, reads as follows: “The expression “*authenticae litterae*” might certainly signify the “originals” i.e. the “autographs” as opposed to “transcripts,” as *authenticae tabulae, rationes, testamentum* in Ulp. l. 4. ff. Fa. Ercisc. lib. ult. ff. de Test. ap. Pa. “Graeco authentico,” (de Monog. c. 11.) the “original Greek,” as opposed to the Latin translation. The context, however, implies nothing more than the original Greek, “echoing the voice of each,” nor does the argument turn on their having these Epistles, addressed to them, but on their being Apostolic Churches, of which this was a proof. Aug. de Doctr. Christ, ii. 8. “In the canonical Scriptures follow we the authority of the majority of Catholic Churches, among which are such which were accounted worthy to have Apostolic sees and receive Epistles.” The “*authenticae litterae*” may also be opposed to the

“From his expression, *Percurre ecclesias Apostolicas*,⁵ when viewed in connexion with the subsequent context and with the avowed tenour of his argument, may, I think, collect, that he speaks of the apostolic autographs.

“I. Of this opinion, I draw out the proof, in manner following:—

“The passage is introduced with the supposed case of a person, who, for his soul’s health, is laudably curious to ascertain sound Christian doctrine. *Age jam qui voles curiositatem melius exercere in negotio salutis tuae*.⁶ Now the advice, which Tertullian gives to such a person, is, that he should resort to the Apostolic churches, in which the authentic letters of the apostles are still recited: and these Apostolic churches are evidently churches founded by the apostles themselves, as contradistinguished from minor churches founded only by their successors; for he immediately afterward explains himself by enumerating the churches of Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, and Rome. But of necessity this advice implies, that the inquirer after sound doctrine would find in these Apostolic churches what he would not find in any other inferior churches: and the matters, which he would find in these Apostolic churches for the settling of his faith, are distinctly specified to be the very authentic letters of the apostles; *ipsae authenticae literae eorum*.

“What then must we consistently understand by these very authentic letters of the apostles?

“If we understand by them accurate transcripts of the original autographs, we shall be reduced, by the tenour of Tertullian’s argument, to the manifest absurdity of supposing, that, at the latter end of the second century, no churches possessed transcripts of the original autographs, save those Apostolic churches to which the letters were directly addressed: for it is clear that Tertullian would never have thought of sending his inquirer specially and exclusively to the Apostolic churches, if the very same satisfactory information might have been gained from any other inferior church. Hence, the bare reason of the thing makes it evident, that the *ipsa authentica litera* could not have been mere accurate transcripts of the original autographs. But, if they were not transcripts, they must have been the autographs themselves.

“1. Accordingly, this conclusion perfectly agrees both with the whole context and with the evidently necessary tenour of Tertullian’s argument.

mutilated copies among the heretics, as he says of Cerdon, “of the Apostle Paul he receives neither all the Epistles, nor these whole.” *adv. omn. Haer. c. 51.*” — End of citation from Dodgson. Actually, the context, as Faber goes on to prove here conclusively, compels us to accept “autographs, originals” as the correct translation.

5 “Go through the Apostolic Churches”.

6 “Come now, thou that wilt exercise thy curiosity to better purpose in the business of thy salvation.”

“The learned father sends a curious inquirer after doctrinal truth to the Apostolic churches, rather than to any other churches which were not immediately founded by the apostles themselves. Why does he thus send him to the former, rather than to the latter? Because, in the Apostolic churches, he might satisfy his curiosity by an actual inspection of the identical autographs of the apostles: whereas, in other churches not founded by the apostles, though he might meet with numerous transcripts made from these autographs, he would peradventure be disposed to question their strict accuracy. The various Achaian churches, for instance, would have transcripts of the two epistles to the Corinthians: but the autographs would be deposited with the Apostolic church of Corinth. In a similar manner, the several churches of Macedon and proconsular Asia and Italy would have transcripts of the several epistles to the Philippians and Thessalonians and Ephesians and Romans: but the autographs would be deposited with the Apostolic churches of Philippi and Thessalonica and Ephesus and Rome. Hence says Tertullian to his inquirer, If you are in Macedon, you may resort to Philippi and Thessalonica; if in Italy, to Rome; if in Achaia, to Corinth; if in proconsular Asia, to Ephesus: for, in each of these Apostolic churches, a privilege which churches not founded by the apostles are unable to claim, you will find the identical authentic letters, that is to say (as the sense imperiously requires), the identical autographs of the apostles themselves.

“2. The present conclusion is confirmed, if it need any confirmation, by a subsequent phrase of Tertullian, which occurs in the course of the same general passage.

“In his character of a catholic as opposed to all innovating heretics, he speaks of possessing, from the very authors, the firm originals. *Habeo origines firmas ab ipsis autoribus.*⁷ Now, when both the argument and the entire context are considered, it is hard to say what he can mean by these firm originals from the authors themselves, if he do not mean the apostolic autographs.

“II. The existence of the apostolic autographs, in the time of Tertullian, draws after it a very important philological consequence: namely, that the apostolic letters were originally written in Greek.

“Tertullian repeatedly intimates, that St. Paul employed the Greek language in the composition of his epistles *.

[Footnote: “* Tertull. de Monog. § viii. p. 576. § xii. p. 580. Tertull. adv. Marcion. lib. v. § 33. p. 322.”]

Now, this intimation might, in the abstract, be disputed: but, if the autographs of the apostles were in his time still preserved in the apostolic churches, any error on the part of such a man as Tertullian, in regard to the language of these autographs, seems well nigh impossible. For a mere mechanical inspection of the autographs would verify their language: and even if Tertullian had carelessly hazarded an inaccurate assertion in consequence of his never having seen the autographs himself, he must

7 “I have a sure title down from the first owners themselves.”

forthwith have learned his mistake from some one of the many persons who had inspected them; and, in that case, he would doubtless have corrected it. Or, at any rate, if he had neglected to make a formal retractation, we may be morally sure, that some other writer would have exposed his singular mistake: inasmuch as the autographs could not have existed to the end of the second century in those apostolic churches to which there was evidently a continual resort, without at the same time their particular language being known almost universally.

“Hence, if I have proved, that the *ipsae authenticae literae*, which a curious inquirer at the end of the second century could find no where save in the Apostolic churches alone, must thence inevitably mean the autographs of the apostles: I have also proved, through the joint medium of that circumstance and the positive evidence of Tertullian, that the apostolic epistles were originally written in Greek.

“III. I subjoin the Latin original, that the reader may form a better judgment respecting the propriety of the foregoing remarks.

“Age jam qui voles curiositatem melius exercere in negotio salutis tuae, percurrere ecclesias apostolicas, apud quas ipsae adhuc cathedrae apostolorum suis locis praesidentur, apud quas ipsae authenticae literae eorum recitantur, sonantes vocem, et representantes faciem uniuscujusque. Proxima est tibi Achaia? Habes Corinthum. Si non longe es a Macedonia, habes Philippos, habes Thessalonicenses. Si potes in Asiam tendere, habes Ephesum. Si autem Italiae adjaces, habes Romam, unde nobis quoque autoritas praesto est.”⁸

(ii) Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V. 9-10, observing that a person called Julian received the bishopric of the church of Alexandria in the first year of Commodus, proceeds: “At that time⁹ there presided in the school of the faithful at that place¹⁰ a man highly celebrated on account of his learning, by name Pantaenus. For there had been from ancient time erected among them a school of sacred learning which remains to this day; and we have understood, that it has been wont to be furnished with men eminent for their eloquence, and the study of divine things. And, it is said, the aforementioned person excelled others of that time, having been brought up in the principles of the Stoic philosophy. It is said, that he shewed such ardor of affection for the divine word, as to be nominated also a preacher of the gospel of Christ to the nations of the East, and to have gone as far as India.¹¹ For there were yet at that time many evangelists of the word animated with a divine zeal of imitating the apostles by

8 “Come now, thou that wilt exercise thy curiosity to better purpose in the business of thy salvation, go through the Apostolic Churches, in which the very seats of the Apostles, at this very day, preside over their own places; in which the *originals of their writings* are read, speaking with the voice of each, and making the face of each present to the eye. Is Achaia near to thee? thou hast Corinth. If thou art not far from Macedonia, thou hast Philippi, thou hast the Thessalonians. If thou canst travel into Asia, thou hast Ephesus. But if thou art near to Italy, thou hast Rome, where we also have an authority close at hand.”

9 Viz. end of 2nd century AD.

10 Alexandria.

11 The ancient term “India” designated Ethiopia as well as India proper, the descent of both peoples being traced from Sheba and Dedan, sons of Raamah, the son of Cush.

contributing to the enlargement of the gospel, and building up of the church; of whom Pantænus also was one, who is said to have gone to the Indians; where it is commonly said he found the gospel of Matthew, which before his arrival had been delivered to some in that country, who had the knowledge of Christ: to whom Bartholomew, one of the apostles, is said to have preached, and to have left with them that writing of Matthew in Hebrew letters, and that it was preserved among them to that time. This Pantænus, therefore, for his many excellent performances, was at last made president of the school of Alexandria, where he set forth the treasures of the divine principles both by word of mouth and by his writings.”

Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, cap. 36: “Pantaenus, a philosopher of the Stoic sect, according to an ancient custom of the city of Alexandria, where from the time of the evangelist Mark there had been always ecclesiastical masters, was a man of so great prudence and learning, both in the divine scripture and secular literature, that, at the request of ambassadors from India, he was sent into that country by Demetrius bishop of Alexandria, where he found that Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles, had preached the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the gospel of Matthew, which he brought back with him to Alexandria,¹² written in Hebrew letters. There are also extant many commentaries of this person upon the holy scripture; but he was more profitable to the churches by his discourses.¹³ He taught under the reign of Severus, and Antoninus called Caracalla.”

(iii) *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf, p. 411 (MS P p. 219, this section of the work datable to AD 354 or thereabouts): “They bring Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium. It was early in the morning, and they did not enter into the Praetorium, so that they would not be defiled and could eat the Passover. There He was handed over to Pilate. It was the Preparation, about the third hour. This is what the accurate manuscripts read here, including the hand-written document of the Evangelist John, which is still preserved, by the grace of God, in the most sainted church of the Ephesians, being the object of veneration there by faithful pilgrims.”

2. THE FIFTY BIBLES SENT BY EUSEBIUS TO CONSTANTINOPLE

Fifty accurate copies of the authentic Bible Text, Old Testament and New Testament, were transported to Constantinople by order of Constantine from the scriptorium of Eusebius of Caesarea, who was the successor to Pamphilus and Origen, and who had access to Origen’s Hexapla and Origen’s copies of the Apostolic autographs. Ambrose (Letter LXXV To Clementianus §1) says of Origen that he was “less extensive” (Latin *minor*) in his treatment of the New Testament text, though only in comparison to the stupendous effort he put into the Old Testament Hexapla. The historical context of Origen’s work

¹² My emphasis.

¹³ *Sic* Jerome.

explains his emphasis on the Old Testament. The existing translation of the Old Testament into Greek, the Septuagint, was under attack, and Origen wished to put the Greek translation used by Christians on the surest possible Hebrew foundation. The Septuagint's Targum-like translation, reflecting pre-Christian Alexandrian Rabbinic exegesis, had been used to great advantage by Christians to support the claims of Jesus, and was therefore assailed now by those Rabbis who rejected Christianity, in spite of its high reputation in the past. They anathematized its idiosyncratic interpretations and its discursive, exegetical, departures from the letter of the original Hebrew. They commissioned scholars who sympathized with their viewpoint (like Symmachus and Theodotion) to translate the Hebrew into Greek afresh, and preferably in a way that would undermine the Christian's exegesis of the Old Testament prophecies. This shift in emphasis onto the literal, word-for-word, meaning of the Hebrew, necessitated for the Christians a new Greek translation, without the anti-Christian bias, and that became the focus of Origen's endeavors. The New Testament texts were less taxing, as the originals were still extant in Origen's day (Origen being a contemporary of Tertullian). The Apostolic foundational churches could be visited and the originals inspected and copied. Origen spent a considerable part of his life traveling to these distant churches in order precisely to ensure the conformity of his doctrine and writings to the most perfect Apostolic model, untainted by the fantastic heresies which had sprung up in the century preceding his. These were the inspired texts transferred to Constantinople in fifty magnificent copies: Origen's Hexaplaric Old Testament and the authentic New Testament writings of the Apostles. When Jerome came to revise the Latin Scriptures a half a century or so later, he had only to consult these perfect Origenic Bibles, copies of which had in the meantime been multiplied across the Christian world, to ensure the accuracy of his revision. He failed to do that. Instead, as we shall see, he patched together what he himself calls an "emended collation" of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. These Greek manuscripts were of highly dubious origin, and were selected if, and so long as, they agreed with the flawed and heretical Latin text used in the First Church of Rome. For his Latin Old Testament, he threw overboard the Septuagint in its various extant recensions, Origen's marked Greek translations in parallel with the Hebrew, and the Greek translations of Origen himself and Eusebius, and, basing himself largely on the Greek of the latter two scholars, but "emending" them where he thought necessary, attempted a translation of the Hebrew himself afresh into Latin, under the advice of Rabbis who rejected the claims of Jesus, and of the very persuasion controverted by Origen and the Greek Church of the East.

Eusebius, *Life of Constantine IV* xxxvi and xxxvii.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Constantine's Letter To EUSEBIUS On The Preparation OF COPIES OF THE SCRIPTURES.

"Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to Eusebius.

“It happens, through the favoring providence of God our Savior, that great numbers have united themselves to the most holy church in the city which is called by my name.¹⁴ It seems, therefore, highly requisite, since that city is rapidly advancing in prosperity in all other respects, that the number of churches should also be increased. Do you, therefore, receive with all readiness my determination on this behalf. I have thought it expedient to instruct your Prudence to order fifty copies of the sacred scriptures (the provision and use of which you know to be most needful for the instruction of the Church) to be written on prepared parchment in a legible manner, and in a commodious and portable form, by transcribers thoroughly practiced in their art. The procurator of the diocese has also received instructions by letter from our Clemency to be careful to furnish all things necessary for the preparation of such copies; and it will be for you to take special care that they be completed with as little delay as possible. You have authority also, in virtue of this letter, to use two of the public carriages for their conveyance, by which arrangement the copies when fairly written will most easily be forwarded for my personal inspection; and one of the deacons of your church may be intrusted with this service, who, on his arrival here, shall experience my liberality. God preserve you, beloved brother!”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW THE COPIES WERE PROVIDED.

“Such were the emperor’s commands, which were followed by the immediate execution of the work itself, which we sent him in magnificent and elaborate volumes of a threefold and fourfold form.* This fact is attested by another letter, which the emperor wrote in acknowledgment, in which, having heard that the city Constantia in our country, the inhabitants of which had been more than commonly devoted to superstition, had been impelled by a sense of religion to abandon their past idolatry, he testified his joy, and approval of their conduct. ”

* The parchment copies were usually arranged in quaternions, i. e. four leaves made up together, as the ternions consisted of three leaves. The quaternions each contained sixteen pages, the ternions twelve. Valesius in loc.

14 Viz. “Constantinople”, meaning “the City of Constantine”.

3. JEROME'S PREFACE TO HIS LATIN REVISION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS, DEDICATED TO DAMASUS, POPE OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF ROME

(From Codex Amiatinus.)

“You urge me to compose a new work,¹⁵ based on an old one¹⁶ with the result that, long after varying forms of the text of the Scriptures¹⁷ have been dispersed abroad throughout the whole world, I am to sit, like an Arbiter of Disputes, and, on account of their disagreeing amongst themselves, to determine which are they that agree with the true Greek text. A labor of genuine devotion this, but a presumptuous one, and attended by great dangers, to pronounce judgment when one is bound to be judged oneself by others, to alter the language of the man of full years, even as it charms the whole world with its melodious strains, and drag it back to the first babblings of infants. What man, indeed, learned or unlearned (we can expect the reaction to be the same), will not pick up the volume, take his first dip into the contents, spot that what he is used to reading has been altered, and immediately burst out into a tirade of denunciation, condemning me as a forger and sacrilegious vandal, who dare to add, alter, correct, anything found in ancient books? Against such opprobrium, two thoughts give me consolation: one that it is you yourself, the Supreme Religious Authority, who instruct me to do this; and the other, that that is not true which undergoes variation even the testimony of the calumniators confirms.

“If faith, indeed, is to be maintained in the Latin forms of the text, let them tell us, Which? for there are as many variant forms of the text, almost, as book-form manuscripts. But if the truth is not to be sought from the majority, why not go back to the Greek source, and correct those parts which either have been badly rendered by damnable translators, or have been perversely emended by inexperienced and presumptuous individuals, or have been added to or altered by careless scribes?

“My problem, it follows, is not with the Old Testament, which was translated by the Seventy Elders into the Greek language, and so reached us in three stages.¹⁸ I am not inquiring what Aquila, what Symmachus, understand about a passage, or why Theodotion takes a middle course between the modern and the ancient.¹⁹ Let that be the true interpretation to which the Apostles gave their sanction.²⁰ I am talking now about the New Testament, which, there is no doubt, is Greek, excepting the Apostle Matthew, who first published the Gospel of Christ in Judaea, using the Hebrew script. This assuredly is out of harmony with our manner of speech, and leads off into different streams and courses, and must be traced back to its one original source. I exclude those manuscripts which are named after Lucian and Hesychius, and which the perverse contending of a limited few promotes, and which are useless, the

15 Viz. a revision of the Latin version.

16 The older Latin version.

17 In Latin.

18 That is, from (1) the original Hebrew, through (2) the Greek translation of the Seventy, the Septuagint, to (3) the Latin translation of the Septuagint being worked on by Jerome.

19 Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion were translators of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, using different principles and methods of translation.

20 When they included Greek translations of the Old Testament Hebrew in their New Testament writings.

one as well as the other, for emending anything in the Old Testament in light of the translation of the Seventy, and are no aid in emending the text of the New Testament, since the Scriptures earlier translated into the languages of many nations show they are false, as they have been added to.

“Therefore this little prefatory work deals with four Gospels only, no more, whose order is as follows, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, *by an emended collation of Greek book-form manuscripts, but ancient ones too. We have used our pen sparingly, to the extent that those readings only which appear to have changed the meaning have been corrected, and those left at the conclusion of the aforesaid process, which do not differ much from the Latin reading to which we are accustomed, we have permitted to remain as they were.*”²¹

Jerome’s method, as stated and implied here, was scurrilous. He admitted the variety and scribal corruption of Latin texts in the West, and announced his intention to produce a standard and correct Latin text, as he was commissioned by bishop Damasus of Rome. (A little historical background on Damasus, bishop AD 366-384: he was installed as bishop of the First Church of Rome with the help of an armed mob, and with the slaughter of upwards of one hundred and thirty in the basilica of Sicinius, to the considerable consternation of the Roman government, and the disgust of thoughtful pagan observers, after a prolonged violent struggle over the succession.) At that time, as Jerome himself admitted (Letter CXII. 19, ed. Migne PL 22, col. 928), there was hardly a Church Library anywhere which did not have a copy of Origen’s Bible texts. But, instead of using some local Origenic resource, or even going to Constantinople in order to translate the officially sanctioned Origenic Bible into Latin, as he should have done, Jerome amazingly took as his standard the *existing Latin text which was current in the First Church of Rome* (literally “the customary Latin reading”, customary, that is, to Jerome, Damasus et al.) and went round looking for any Greek manuscripts which agreed with that in any part of their text! Many of these manuscripts were of no great antiquity, as he specifically says he used “ancient ones too”. Patching together in this manner an assortment of Greek texts of different ages, milieus, and qualities, to match the Latin, he ennobled with the name of “an emended collation of Greek book-form manuscripts”. The word “emended” is explained by the phrase immediately following, which tells us, that on occasions, though “sparingly”, Jerome found it necessary to “correct” the text (*viz.*, as demonstrated by the word “emended” in the phrase immediately preceding, to “correct” the GREEK TEXT) only where *the meaning appeared to have changed!* In other words, if no Greek manuscript could be found to match the Latin, then he resorted to emendation of the Greek, back translating from the Latin, on the following grounds: that the Latin translation was made from an “original Greek text” which had since become corrupted or lost (though, in truth, it only existed in Jerome’s mind), and could be “restored” by examining many different surviving manuscripts, or, in the last resort, by back translating from the more perfect Latin text. Note how similar this procedure is to modern Textual Criticism as it has evolved since the nineteenth century.

21 The Latin of the last few lines from Tischendorf’s Codex Amiatinus reads thus: “Igitur haec praesens praefatiuncula pollicetur quattuor tantum evangelia, quorum ordo iste est, Matthaeus Marcus Lucas Iohannes, codicum graecorum emendata conlatione sed et veterum. Quae ne multum e lectionis latinae consuetudine discreparent, ita calamo temperavimus ut his tantum quae sensum videbantur mutare correctis reliqua manere pateremur ut fuerant.” There follows a description of the Canons, an ancient system of cross-references in the Gospels, used by Eusebius and as represented in Jerome’s new Latin version.

To justify his use of a Latin *translation* as a standard, Jerome pointed to the Septuagint, the Greek *translation* of the Old Testament favored in the Greek-speaking East, though it differed widely from the letter of the Hebrew. Many Greeks refused to accept any alteration to the Septuagint, even when, as was the case with the Greek translation made from Origen's Hexaplar Hebrew text, the new Greek translation adhered more closely to the original Hebrew. The recensions of Lucian (popular in Byzantium and the Greek East) and Hesychius (in Alexandria and Egypt) were criticized for that reason. Jerome now implied the Latin translation of the New Testament current in his circle was equivalent in value to the Septuagint translation of the Old. As any Greek admirer of the Septuagint would do in relation to that translation, if it was threatened by a rival pointing to the original Hebrew, Jerome damned what he supposed to be "alterations" to the original Greek text of the New Testament by Lucian and Hesychius. Eusebius, on the contrary, highly praised Lucian: this he certainly would not have done supposing he had been guilty of adding words to the inspired text of the New Testament. Lucian and Hesychius edited the accepted Greek translation of the Old Testament, where they believed it was deficient or corrupt, but there is no evidence they tampered with the text of the New Testament, in an age when the autographs were still extant. The "additions" of Lucian and Hesychius imagined by Jerome, clearly, were passages in the New Testament where Damasus' debased Latin text had *omissions*. By way of contrast, the quite incredible blatancy of Jerome's arrogance in respect of his own "editorial" work on the Holy Scriptures is demonstrated by the following quotation from his preface to the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon: "In that book which is entitled by most the Wisdom of Solomon ... I have restrained my use of the pen, since I only want to dedicate my effort to the *emending of the Canonical Scriptures, to works which are certainly authentic*, rather than to dubious ones." Jerome persistently uses words like *emendavi* and *correctavi*: let the reader take note, and consider how that might explain the divergence of readings in text types similar to that of Jerome's Vulgate vis-à-vis the Byzantine type.

Jerome's pleading in favor of the Septuagint seems merely to have been a ploy to support the ridiculous expedient of using the Latin translation of the First Church of Rome as his standard. As soon as he had produced his revised Latin New Testament, he dropped his earlier plan to translate the Septuagint into Latin for the Old Testament, claimed he had lost the major part of what was already completed of it through the fraud of a third party, and rushed off to a hermit's cavern in Palestine in order to translate the Hebrew afresh from Origen's Hebrew text with the help of unconverted Rabbis! This in spite of the existence of excellent translations of the Old Testament texts into Latin, from the Greek translations of Origen and Eusebius, by Hilary bishop of Poitiers, the patron of the illustrious Martin of Tours, and Eusebius bishop of Vercelli, the former of whom had been followed also by Ambrose of Milan. (Letter CXII *ut cit. infra*.) In the event, translating direct from the Hebrew seems to have been too much for Jerome, and he resorted, unsurprisingly, to "*emending from the Greek*". He describes his method as follows (Letter CXII. 20, ed. Migne PL 22, col. 929, emphases mine): "My aim has been, not so much to do away with the older attempts,²² which I translated into Latin *emended from the Greek* for the men who speak my language, but rather, to provide, for their open perusal, those testimonials which were overlooked or *corrupted by the Jews*, so that our people could know what the *real Hebrew writings* contained." Note also here the typical anti-Semitic slur. His claim to be able to divine where the

22 That is, as he has just stated, the Greek translations of the Old Testament texts by Origen and Eusebius.

Hebrew had been “corrupted” and to restore the “real Hebrew writings” is remarkable. Contempt for the Hexapla, corresponding to that evinced for the accepted Hebrew text, is demonstrated by the disdain he directs at Origen for his use of the Greek translation of Theodotion, that is, as he emphasizes, of an unconverted Jew, to supply portions of text, marked by Origen with asterisks in the Hexapla, which were missing in the Septuagint (*ibid.*, col 928): but remember, Jerome himself used unconverted Jewish Rabbis to elucidate the Hebrew for him! A magnificent example of Origen’s Hexaplar Greek text of the Old Testament, of the sort which in Jerome’s time had spread all over the ecclesiastical world, and which Jerome is talking about here is found in Codex Sarravianus (G) of the 4th or 5th century AD, 130 leaves of which are at Leiden, 22 at Paris, and 1 at Leningrad. It is basically the Septuagint, with superfluous passages marked with obelisks, and sections, marked with asterisks, inserted from other Greek translations of the Hebrew where the Septuagint was deficient. The letter (ed. Migne CXII) in which Jerome voiced these prejudices was composed by way of reply to the renowned Augustine of Hippo, who dared to question the worth of Jerome’s new translation, and who, in fact, and very wisely, made no use of it. One of Augustine’s complaints was that in his original Latin translation of the Septuagint, Jerome employed obelisks and asterisks in imitation of Origen, even to excess, marking passages which were superfluous and missing as compared to the Hebrew, but failed to do the same in his latest translation direct from the Hebrew. Augustine’s implication is that Jerome’s new text did not correspond precisely with the Hebrew, and left variations unmarked, potentially misleading the reader. (Letter CV, *ibid.*, col. 833.) Jerome brooked no criticism. His letter is a sneering, patronizing, riposte to Augustine, accusing him in so many words of being an ignorant dunce in the field of textual criticism. He explains away the variations comically by claiming translator’s license, that his translation was a free, or “dynamic”, rendering, rather than an “equivalent”, word-for-word, one.

Jerome’s final product, the Latin Vulgate, including both Old and New Testaments, thus entirely dispensed with the texts accepted by the majority of Greeks. It rejected the authentic Apostolic writings for the New Testament, and based itself, instead, on the “emended collation of Greek book-form manuscripts” patched together by Jerome. For the Old Testament, it spurned both the accepted Septuagint Greek translation, in all the extant recensions, and the more literal Greek translations based on Origen’s Hebrew, and, emending from the Greek of Origen and Eusebius, followed a Rabbinic exegesis of the Hebrew which was anti-Christian, of the kind expressly rejected by the Greek Churches of the East.

4. JEROME’S VULGATE AS THE MAJOR SOURCE OF TEXTUAL CORRUPTION IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The lengths to which Jerome was prepared to go in order to bolster the Latin translation used in Damasus’ church, implies it was already invested with an aura of sanctity and infallibility. No doubt the

aberrant dogmas of the First Church of Rome had become intertwined with proof texts found only in that text. The same attitude towards the Latin Vulgate thrived in the Middle Ages, and was eventually enshrined in Canon Law. It became a serious offense to use any Bible text except the Latin Vulgate.

One of the Greek texts used by Jerome to put together his “emended collation of Greek book-form manuscripts” was almost certainly Codex Vaticanus, dating from the fourth century AD. It would have been amongst the more recent Greek texts employed by him. Latin “codex” means “book-form manuscript”. It is called “Vaticanus” because it has been in the Vatican Library from at least just prior to the Reformation. The involvement of this manuscript in Jerome’s project has been demonstrated by the presence of text-critical marks (two dots) in its margins next to passages of the Greek where variant readings are known to have existed in *Old Latin* texts. The latter, of course, are the differing, and really, or supposedly, corrupt, Latin texts which the Vulgate of Jerome was intended to replace. Only Jerome at the period of history when these dots were inserted was interested in such a comparison with Old Latin readings. The text-critical marks showed immediately to the reader how often, and in what places, this particular Greek manuscript differed from the Old Latin texts, and where other Greek readings would be needed to substantiate the standard Latin proposed by Jerome. The manuscript was known to Erasmus and early Reformation Protestant scholars as one which harmonized closely with the Vulgate of Jerome. They rejected it, because their intention was to place before Renaissance and Protestant readers in a popular, printed, form, the original Greek text (the so-called “Byzantine” text) which predated Jerome’s revision, or translations therefrom. The readings of Codex Vaticanus have led some to suspect that earlier in its genealogical history its text was edited by heretics, for example, by adherents of the tenets of Cerdon and Marcion. The latter were second-century, anti-Semitic, Gnostics, who both spent a considerable time in the body of the First Church of Rome, and left traces of their heresies in the later Sabellian system. Cerdon is mentioned by Tertullian in *Against All Heresies* (“adv. omn. Haer.” c. 51), cited in the note of Dodgson, *supra*, and Marcion in Tertullian’s *Prescription of Heretics* cap. xxxvii, cited *supra*. It was Sabellianism, adopted at the turn of the third century AD by a corrupt bishop of the First Church of Rome, that largely shaped the Trinitarianism of the fourth-century Roman Church, and ultimately the Roman dogma that Mary was the “Mother of God”. This is the kind of Greek text Jerome favored, as it supported the unique readings of the heretical Latin text current in Damasus’ church.

There are, in fact, only two major types of Greek text. This has become increasingly clear to modern scholars, as they have groped their way in the academic gloom, through the labyrinth of New Testament textual criticism, with only the faint light of reason to guide them. One is the Byzantine or Majority Greek text, represented in the vast majority of Greek manuscripts, this type being remarkably consistent and uniform. The other is the so-called “Alexandrian” type represented initially by Codex Vaticanus and its sister-text Codex Sinaiticus, the latter discovered by Tischendorf in the nineteenth century in St Catherine’s monastery in Sinai. Since we have exposed the methodology involved in the use of this type for the production of Jerome’s false standard Latin text, the Vulgate, which was then imposed on the churches wherever Roman ecclesiastical authority prevailed, it is obvious it should be rejected by informed readers. In one passage even the majority of the Byzantine type have been infected by it, namely in I John 5. 7, the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” passage. In the Received Text I John 5. 5-9 reads:

“5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.

8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.”

Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus omit verse 7, relating to the “Three Heavenly Witnesses”, and Vaticanus has three dots (rather than the more usual two dots) in the margin here. This shows that when the Codex was used for Jerome’s project, there existed other manuscripts in Latin known to Jerome (and probably the third dot means “many Greek texts too”), which had the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” reading at this place. Though you might find the passage included in some modern editions termed “Vulgate”, it was not in the original Latin Vulgate of Jerome, as proven by the oldest and best-authenticated manuscripts, Amiatinus, from Bede’s Northumbrian scriptorium, and Fuldensis, which passed through the hands of Boniface, the notorious, and murderous, Roman “missionary” to Germany. Fuldensis is the earliest extant text of the Vulgate, dating from the middle of the sixth century, a mere hundred years or so after Jerome’s own era. It shows clearly what kind of documents Jerome’s edition was based on, as it contains prologues to the Pauline epistles of Marcionite origin, if not from the hand of Marcion himself. They are overtly anti-Semitic. They condemn proponents of the “Jewish Scriptures”, the “Law and Prophets”, and twist early Church history by representing all pre-Pauline missions as heretical and Judaizing, including, in the case of Corinth, those which looked to Peter and Apollos for their inspiration. In Codex Amiatinus, on the other hand, the prologues to the four Gospels represent the beliefs of “Dynamic Monarchian” or “Adoptianist” Gnostics, of the sort who were influential in the First Church of Rome at the time Marcion was propagating his alternative, Docetic, version of Gnosticism.

Jerome gave an account of his attitude to the disputed passage of the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” in his prologue to the Catholic Epistles, which is as obvious, in respect of its motives and objectives, as the Marcionite prologues. This was quoted by Erasmus, but he failed to make much sense of it, perhaps because he accepted (or affected to accept) the hagiographical view of Jerome’s integrity. Apprised of Jerome’s principals, the reader will readily understand what he is saying in the passage cited *infra*. By the by, the omission or retention of the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” is herein demonstrated to have been the major textual contention in respect of the Catholic epistles at the very beginning of the Nicene age: and that shows, in turn, that the passage existed in a significant portion of the Greek texts, and had already been erased in a similarly significant portion, in the pre-Nicene period. The heretics who omitted it, therefore, were not Arian anti-Trinitarians, as has been generally assumed, since they belonged to the Nicene age, but pre-Nicene heretics, in fact, Artemonites, who objected to it for other

reasons, as will be demonstrated as the argument proceeds. The relevant section of Jerome's prologue reads as follows (from Codex Fuldensis):

“For the first of them [the Catholic Epistles] is one [Epistle] of James, [then] two of Peter, three of John, and one of Jude. Now if the text as written by them [viz. the Apostles] had also been faithfully rendered into Latin by the translators, then they would neither have imposed any ambiguity on their readers, nor have brought condemnation on themselves for varying from it, especially in that place where we read in the first Epistle of John a passage concerning the unity of the Trinity (and, in fact, we find many errors, deviating from the true faith, have arisen in that letter as the result of the work of unfaithful translators), by keeping at this place in their edition only words for three, that is, for water, blood, spirit, and by omitting the testimony of Father, Word and Spirit, the effect of which is that the Catholic faith is greatly strengthened, and, further, that the single substance of the divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is thoroughly demonstrated. As for the other Epistles, to what extent the edition of others departs from our own, I leave to the prudence of the reader to discover. O Eustochius, virgin of Christ, when you ask me, without knowing what you ask, to show you what are the true Scriptures, you expose my old age (whatever that may be) to the gnashing of the teeth of enemies, who pronounce me a falsifier and corrupter of the Holy Scriptures. But in such a case as this, I tremble not at the antagonism of my emulators, nor shall I deny the request to those who demand of me, what are the true Holy Scriptures.”

The convolution in the second sentence has led some readers to disconnect the phrase about “keeping ... only words for three, ... and ... omitting the testimony of Father, Word and Spirit” from its governing phrase, which is “nor would [faithful translators] have imposed any ambiguity on their readers, nor have brought condemnation on themselves ...” (that is, as he goes on to say, by “keeping only words for three ... and ... omitting ...” etc.). Once the two phrases have been disconnected, it has then appeared as though Jerome is treating the omission of the Trinitarian testimony as a deviation from the true faith, when actually he is advocating that omission. The same is proven, as has already been stated, by the earliest and most reliable texts of Jerome's Vulgate, Fuldensis and Amiatinus, which omit the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” accordingly. A further confusion has arisen through Jerome's statement about the corroboration of “the single substance of the divinity” which resulted from what was, in his opinion, the correct reading. The general assumption has been Jerome thought the inclusion of the Trinitarian testimony confirmed the doctrine of the Trinity, and therefore was a good thing, whereas what he meant, as we shall see, was the reverse: that the inclusion of the Trinitarian testimony involved the “single substance of the divinity” in a separation from the “single” substance of water, blood and (human) spirit. For Jerome's text not only omitted the “Three Heavenly Witnesses”, it also described the three earthly witnesses as “one”, contrary to the Byzantine text, according to which they “agree in one”. The heretical reading of Jerome viewed the three earthly substances in a Marcionite (“Docetic”) manner, as a unique single substance, rather than three distinct essences. This, in turn, reflected an underlying heretical belief, characteristic of “Docetism”, that Jesus' body was not real material, but some kind of divine, phantasmal, manifestation of the Triune supreme being.

A minority of Greek texts, — not the majority of the “Byzantine” type examined and published to date,

— and the early Latin translation used in the North African pre-Nicene Church include the omitted passage, and internal evidence proves it to be the only possible, original, Greek reading, though it has now become popular to trumpet the heretical reading of the “Alexandrian” text-type. Richard Porson, a virulent opponent of the authenticity of the text said in 1790: “Produce two actually existing Greek MSS. five hundred years old, containing this verse²³ and I will acknowledge your opinion of its genuineness to be probable.” More than two such manuscripts are extant. Codex Ottobonianus (miniscule 629), including the passage, is of the 14th century. If this roughly estimated date be considered just a little too late to meet Porson’s criteria, then we have several manuscripts with the “Heavenly Witnesses” in the margin from much earlier: miniscules 221 (10th century), 635 (11th century), and 88 (12th century), as well as at least two lectionaries including the Greek of this passage in their readings (Lectionary 60, dated to AD 1021, and 173, dated to the 10th century). Porson’s retraction should stand. The oldest of the marginal references *predates all but eight of the texts which omit the “Heavenly Witnesses”, and is roughly contemporaneous with another one, viz. miniscule 1739.*

However, the extent of the practice of omitting the passage, as the manuscript tradition bears witness, and the negative evidence in Codex Vaticanus of its existence prior to the mid-fourth century AD, suggests it was excised early, most likely by Artemonites in the sub-Apostolic period. The probability the text was edited by Artemonites occurred to Vedelius (ob. 1642), and his suggestion was taken up by Wittichius (1625-1687) in *Theologia Pacifica*, Leiden, 1675, p. 219f., citing Vedelius, *Opuscula Theologica*, p. 49 seqq.; cf. also Ittigius (1644-1710), *De Haeresiarchis*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1703, p. 232. Artemonites did not believe the Spirit of God, that Spirit Who is “one” with the Father and the Word according to verse 7, and is otherwise the “Truth” (verse 6), was distinct from the human “spirit” in Jesus in His fleshly form of water and blood (verses 6 and 8), as this passage tells us It was; according to those heretics, the “Dunamis”, or “Christ”, or Spirit of the Triune supreme being, came down into the merely human Jesus at His baptism, and replaced his own human spirit. Artemonites were known to emend the Scriptures, each teacher of the heresy in a different way, and their doctrine was said to have been the only one held by all the bishops of the First Church of Rome preceding Victor, at the end of the second century AD. So the intrusion of their reading here, in the Latin text preserved in the First Church of Rome up to the time of Damasus, is understandable. In Jerome’s Vulgate a further alteration is found: the three earthly essences are there said to “be one”, rather than to “agree in one”, as described *supra*. This alteration reflects the underlying “Docetist” sympathies of some other editor, the Docetist heresy being so named after the theory that Jesus only “appeared” (Gk. *dokeo*) to have a fleshly, material body: according to the Docetists Jesus was a phantasmal manifestation of the Supreme God, and not really human at all, therefore the three material constituents of his body mentioned in I John 5. 8 must merely have “appeared” to be three, whilst in actuality being a single, phantasmal, or divine, substance. There were thus two levels of editing to which the text was subjected in ancient times. It was altered by Artemonites around the second century AD to remove any hint of a difference between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit in Jesus; again, some time before the mid-fourth century AD, it was edited by a Docetist heretic to make the three earthly elements one substance, not three. Both doctrines, Artemonism and Docetism, were denounced by the Apostle John in this very same first Epistle. He called those who believed that “Jesus was not the Christ” lying “Antichrists” (I John 2. 22);

23 I John 5. 7.

and here he had in view the Artemonite heresy, in some early form, as Artemonites separated the purely human “Jesus” from the heavenly being “Christ” which they said descended into him at baptism. John subsequently described the denial that Jesus “has come in the flesh” also as a dogma of Antichrist (I John 4. 3). Here he was referring to the Docetic heresy that Jesus was a phantasmal manifestation of God, and did not have a body consisting of matter. Note John says every “spirit” which does not confess Jesus has come in the flesh is Antichrist. A person might use the *words* “Jesus has come in the flesh”, but the *spirit* of their doctrine is what John is talking about.

Both heresies sprang from a common source. In the Book of Acts, Chapter 8, verses 9 to 24, mention is made of a practitioner of occult arts called Simon, whom the Apostles came across in Samaria in the early days after Pentecost. Simon claimed conversion and was baptized, but was subsequently exposed by the Apostle Peter as an imposter. According to reliable second-century AD Christian writers, Hegesippus, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, this person migrated to Rome in the days of Emperor Claudius and there influenced many believers to accept his twisted form of Christianity. In Samaria Simon preached that he himself was the “Great Power [Gk. *Dunamis*] of God”. According to a citation of Simon’s own writings called the “Great Announcement”, preserved by Irenaeus’ disciple Hippolytus (Refutation, VI. 19), his beliefs were more fully expressed as follows: Simon taught that “Because the spiritual beings ruled the cosmos badly, through their love of power, he [Simon] came himself to rectify the state of things, transfigured into the likeness of the superior entities, powers and spiritual beings, and so appeared as a human, though he was not human, and appeared [from the Gk. *dokeo*] to suffer, when he did not actually suffer, but thus appeared to the Jews as Son, in Samaria as Father, and amongst other nations as Holy Spirit, and stooped to being denominated by men with whichever name they pleased.”

From this very odd system two major heretical streams branched off. One propounded that Jesus was a “mere man” into whom the Spirit or *Dunamis* of God (viz. Simon himself according to the “Great Announcement”!) descended at his baptism by John the Baptist, empowered the “mere man” Jesus with miraculous power, and then abandoned him before he died on the cross; thus the “mere man” suffered, but not the “Christ” or “Dunamis”. This was the heresy variously called “Psilanthropism” (literally “mere-man-ism”), or “Adoptianism” — because the “mere man” Jesus was “adopted” by the “Dunamis” to *become* the Son of God, — or “Dynamic Monarchianism” — from the Gk. *Dunamis*, the divine “Power” itself which descended into Jesus. Early exponents of this form of the heresy in Asia Minor were Carpocrates and Cerinthus, the latter of whom, at least, was known to and rejected by the Apostle John when he set up his missionary work in Ephesus. This was the doctrine denounced by John in his first Epistle as separating (the man) “Jesus” from the “Christ”. Artemon was an exponent of the same heresy in the succeeding generation.

The other form of Simon’s heresy taught that “Christ” was a direct manifestation of God, a divine apparition or phantasm, and not really material, though he “appeared” (Gk. *dokeo*) to be so. This was the Docetist (“Apparition”) heresy, promulgated by Simon’s disciple Cerdon and Cerdon’s disciple Marcion. It was the doctrine rebuked by John which denied that Jesus Christ had come “in the flesh”.

In case one should suppose this is all merely of academic interest, an historical oddity, it must be remembered the Docetists taught that, though the human body of Jesus was phantasmal, Jesus actually had a material body, — but that material body *was the bread of the Eucharist*. (For fuller information, refer to [this](#) link [<http://www.christianhospitality.org/resources/first-church-rome-online/first-church-rome>, Chapter: The Founding of the First Church of Rome and Its Corruption by Simon Magus and Cerdon, footnote 27.) These Docetists were, in fact, worshipers of the “Good God”, Serapis, who appeared in the form of grain and bread, according to Egyptian paganism, and whom the heretics identified with Jesus in an attempt to merge Christianity with paganism. The name “Good God” was translated as “Chrestos”, the “Good One”, in Greek, and “Chrestos” was treated (incorrectly) as being identical to the Greek “Christos”, Christ, the Messiah. Chrestos was written with the *chi-rho* symbol, like a conjoined X and P, *chi* (X) and *rho* (P) being the first two letters of his name in Greek, and this became the symbol of the god of the First Church of Rome, — who was actually, therefore, Serapis the “Good God”, the bread-god. Transubstantiation as taught by the First Church of Rome today, the belief that the wafer of bread offered in the mass is the literal, fleshly, body of Jesus, to which one must bow down in worship, is the precocious offspring of this warped ancient theology, and therefore the very dogma denounced by John as Antichrist.

As for the supposed phantasmal human body of Jesus, that, too, was borrowed from Egyptian paganism. Serapis was, in his highest form, the sun-god, and therefore had a diaphanous body of celestial light. When he “became” the grain (just as sunlight is absorbed by plants which subsequently germinate in the earth), he had to be born of his “Virgin Mother”, the earth-goddess Isis, also known as Maria. She was called by the Egyptians the “Mother of God”. His infant form, born of Isis, was called Horus. This was the Egyptian Trinity of gods, Isis, Horus, Serapis, that is, the Mother goddess, Isis, the god who was the Son, Horus, and the Father god, Serapis. It was a triune god of “spiritual” light and goodness which the heretics Cerdon and Marcion set in opposition to the dark and malevolent “god of the Jews”, the god of the Old Testament and the creator of matter, matter being the realm of evil, and spirit of good, according to the doctrine of the dualist Magians whom the heretics parodied. The initial letters of the names of the divinities comprising this Trinity, IHS (Isis, Horus, Serapis), became “Christianized” in the First Church of Rome, and were passed off to the ignorant public as though they represented the first three Greek letters of the name Jesus (spelled IHSOUS in Greek). If this was true, why only the first *three* letters? Now, when the Father god, Serapis, the sun-god, passed through the womb of Isis to form Horus, he was in a radiant body formed of sunlight. This pagan myth was “Christianized”, too, in the First Church of Rome: Jesus was believed to have passed through the body of the Virgin Mary at birth like a ray of light, without breaking her hymen, and thus to have preserved her perpetual virginity. Adherents of Roman Catholic dogma believe this today. The candles prevalent in Roman ceremonial are symbolic of the pagan light-god who is the real object of worship in that cult, and originally were used only in pagan liturgies, not at all in pre-Nicene authentic Christianity. Thus, when the Roman Catholic prelate, dressed in the robes of the ancient Roman priest, marked with the letters IHS and the *chi-rho* symbol, offers up the round, sun-shaped wafer of bread at the candle-lit altar in the sacrifice of the mass, he is the living embodiment of the ancient priest of Serapis, offering up the bread-body of the pagan god.

Note even the name of the historical virgin mother of Jesus was altered to suit the Egyptian myth. Her

actual name was Hebrew, Miriam, Aramaic Mariam, and is usually spelled Mariam in the Textus Receptus, only twice, and in the same passage of John's Gospel in an account of the Resurrection appearances, Maria. (John 20. 11, 16. Maria here is usually taken by commentators, wrongly, to be Mary Magdalene.) The form *Maria* is a native Aramaic name, meaning, "the Well-fed One", and seems to be used in this passage of John by Jesus Himself as a new spiritual name to replace the form Mariam (which has a negative meaning, "their contention"), as He renamed Simon *Kepha*, in Aramaic, or, in Greek, Petros, "the Rock" etc. This spiritual name suited the new situation in which Mary had at the Cross been committed by Jesus to the care, and therefore feeding, of the Apostle John as to a new son (John 19. 25-27). The First Church of Rome changed the name Mariam when used of the mother of Jesus uniformly to *Maria*, which was the native Egyptian name of the pagan goddess, not related to the Aramaic Maria. Now, being in every respect a direct manifestation of God, according to the Docetist and the dependent Sabellian systems, not truly human at all, and by choosing to be born of Mary in the world of time, Jesus had turned his mother into the "Mother of God": and that, of course, was the title of Isis in Egyptian paganism. The Apostolic writings tell us what the historical virgin really was: she was the mother merely of the frail, fleshly, material, body, capable of dying, in which God tabernacled in His fullness. As the Angel Gabriel said to Mary (Luke 1. 35): "That holy *thing* which shall be born of thee shall be *called* the Son of God." That holy *thing* was the material, fleshly body of Jesus only. Mary certainly was not the mother of God, the Spirit, nor of the pre-existent Word, the Son of God, Who took up His abode in that body. Along with pagan Egyptian theology, the First Church of Rome adopted pagan iconography and idolatry. The common depiction of the Mother-goddess Isis holding on her lap the infant Horus, was transmogrified into the "Chrestian" image of "Maria" holding her infant child "Chrestos". Pagans bowed down to this image as an idol of Isis and Horus, and deluded Christians as an "icon" of the Virgin Mary and Jesus.

The festival popularly supposed to be the quintessence of Christianity, that is, the festival of Christmas, was invented by Artemon, of the other persuasion, the Adoptianist heresy, and he composed the "lectiones", or liturgical Scriptural readings, which were recited during the celebration. Telesphorus, the second bishop of the First Church of Rome at the beginning of the second century AD, adopted this festival, including the Midnight Mass (Liber Pontificalis, s.n.), in accordance with the tradition (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, V. 28) that all the bishops of the First Church of Rome up to the end of the second century AD were Artemonites. (Telesphorus was seventh in succession of ordination from the Apostles, but only the second bishop of the First Church in Rome, viz. that Church of which Victor was bishop at the end of the second century AD, Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, III. iii. 3, and apud Eusebius, *ibid.*, V. 24. 14.) The Christmas festival was of special interest to this brand of heretics because Christ was identified by them with the sun-god Serapis, and therefore was held by Egyptian paganizing pseudo-Christians to have been born of the "Virgin" (the pagan virgin goddess Kore, i.e. Maria, Isis) on the day of the birth of the sun-god (whom they called "Aion", another name for Serapis, reborn as Horus) on the 6th January. (Epiphanius, Panarion, Haer. 51, 22.) This is still the date of the birth of "Christ" (i.e. Chrestos, Serapis) in the East. However, when the heretical followers of Cerinthus came to Rome the date of the birth of the sun-god in Rome was 25th December. This had to be combined, in some way, with the eastern date, so Cerinthus' doctrine was adapted by Artemon to make 25th December the date of the birth of the "mere man" Jesus, in the manger, attended by the animals, Mary and Joseph etc., and 6th January was retained as the birth-day of "Christ", the *Dunamis* or "Power" which was born into the world when he descended into the "mere man" Jesus at his

baptism, the so-called “Epiphany”, on the 6th January. (Ananias of Shirak, on the disciples of Cerinthus and Christmas, “Counter upon the Epiphany of Our Lord and Savior”, ed. trans. Conybeare, in *The Expositor*, 1896, pp. 321-327, id. *ibid.*, p. 323f., and Paul of Taron, on Artemon’s role, *Ad Theopistum*, p. 222, apud Conybeare, *Key of Truth*, pp. clvi-clviii, and p. 185.) There were twelve days between these dates which were later celebrated as the “twelve days of Christmas” — or should we say “Chrestmas”?

Heretics of both persuasions are known to have tampered with the New Testament texts to bring them in line with their own tenets. They claimed they were “correcting” the texts, which had been altered, supposedly, by “Judaizers”. The Docetists of Marcion’s camp accepted only the writings of Paul and of Luke (Paul’s disciple), precisely because Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles and not to the Jews. The Adoptianists, on the other hand, accepted all the Scriptures in common use in the Church, though there were usually additions, like the Wisdom of Solomon, in their collections. The heretical versions of the New Testament texts were disfigured by deliberate omissions and supplemented words and phrases. We do not need to conjecture what such texts would look like, as they have survived to this day — in the Latin Vulgate of Jerome. The “Dynamic Monarchian” (Adoptianist) prologues to the Vulgate Gospels in Codex Amiatinus, and the Marcionite prologues to the Pauline Epistles in Codex Fuldensis, are what one would expect to find at the head of the corresponding Scriptural compositions, in a copy of the New Testament which mixed the specifically Marcionite Pauline Corpus with the specifically Artemonite (Adoptianist) text in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. Both “text-critical” schools, that of Artemon and that of Marcion, played a significant role in the doctrinal development of the First Church of Rome in the second century AD. At the beginning of the third century, an intellectual presbyter of the First Church of Rome called Caius expressed an interest in, and a questioning of, the text-critical accuracy of these sectarians (Eusebius, *ibid.*, citing the work of Caius, Photius, *Bibliotheca*, codex 48), at a time when a new heresy, Montanist Noetianism, or Sabellianism, had been adopted by his Church. As taught by the latter-day bishops of the First Church of Rome, Noetianism/Sabellianism merged, and to a certain extent reconciled, the disparate doctrines of the earlier Docetist and Adoptianist heretics, in a new construct culled from the pagan philosophy of Heraclitus “the Obscure”. It was based on the idea that Father, Son and Holy Spirit were different names for the One God, representing so many “modes” or phases of His being. In this construct the humanity of Jesus was not only obscured, but effectively obliterated, in the divinity. The “Son”, Jesus Christ, was, according to the Noetians, God in an absolute sense, not the living Image of God, stamped on humanity, as He was in the authentic letters of Paul, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was, consequently, in the same absolute sense, the “Mother of God”. Noetianism, like Adoptianism and Docetism, was a development of the doctrines of Simon Magus, as can be seen from the extract of Simon’s “Great Announcement” cited *supra*. This, therefore, was the time, and the presbyter Caius the man, to produce a synthetic Greek text edited superficially throughout in accordance with the Noetian/Sabellian dogmatic system, which combined the Marcionite Pauline corpus with the other Artemonite New Testament Scriptures, of precisely the kind represented in Jerome’s Vulgate. The synthetic Greek text was probably first produced by Caius in the early part of the third century AD. It is likely to have gone through various editions in the third and first half of the fourth centuries AD, as it was adapted by heretics favoring this or that particular stream of the synthetic tradition. Some time within the same period it was translated by private persons for their own use into Latin. Augustine claimed several such Latin translations were made before his time, but without “official” sanction. One

particular set of Latin texts passed into the hands of Damasus, and it was this version which Jerome revised.

We return now to a more detailed examination of the “text-critical” work of these heretics. Marcionite readings in the Pauline corpus are found already c. AD 200 in codex p46 from Egypt. Codex p46 omits the words “in Ephesus” in Ephesians 1. 1, which is a reading typical of Marcionite texts, since Marcion believed the letter to the Ephesians was actually sent to the Laodiceans. He thus hijacked an ancient exegesis of the first verse of the Epistle, going back at least to the era of Origen (Origen in Cramer’s *Catena ad loc.*, also Basil Contra Eunomium II. 19), which highlighted what might be understood to be the grammatically “redundant” use of the Greek word “ousin” (“are”) in Ephesians 1. 1. The word appears in the phrase “to the saints who *are* in Ephesus” in that verse, Gk. *tois ‘agiois tois ousin en Ephesoi*, standing instead of the more common *tois ‘agiois tois en Ephesoi* (the former, or longer, phrase only occurring here in the Pauline Epistles in this precise form). The word *ousin*, “are”, Origen suggested, might be an indirect reference to the “presence” of the “I AM” in the person of the saints; — a typical early Christian midrash, this, of the kind employed by Rabbis in that same era to expound the grammatical mysteries of the Hebrew Scriptures. Marcion, taking his cue from the midrash, cut out altogether the following words “in Ephesus”, and left the text to read nonsensically “to the saints who *are*” — period. Doubtless he intended it to convey some mysterious docetic truth about the saints, but it happily allowed him also to maintain his theory that the letter was written to the Laodiceans. Marcionite churches spread in Egypt following Marcion’s expulsion (for political, more than dogmatic, reasons) from the First Church of Rome in the latter third of the second century BC, and this explains the presence of a typical Marcionite text there c. AD 200 in the form of codex p46. Precisely the same heretical omission of the words “in Ephesus” is found in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, as written by the original scribe, though the missing words were supplied subsequently in the margin by another hand. These were the kind of readings, incorporated in the deviant Latin text favored by Damasus, that Roman Jerome and his ilk in the fourth century were eager to make mainstream and impose on the Greeks of the East.

The secondary emendation of I John 5. 8 by an adherent of Marcion-like Docetist tenets is perfectly in line with the editorial work of Docetists elsewhere: for example in I Timothy 3. 16, where “*God* was manifested in the *flesh*”, proving the reality of the incarnation in matter, was changed to “*He* who was manifested in the *flesh*”, and Acts 20. 28, where “the Church of *God* which He purchased with *His own blood*”, in Greek *tou idiou aimatos*, proving that God had become flesh and blood to purchase our redemption, was changed in some Greek texts to “the Church of the *Lord*, etc.” (The identical phrase used in the Received Text, “*His own blood*”, referring to Christ, occurs in Hebrews 9. 12.) In Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus the order of the words was changed to produce the ambiguous phrase, *tou aimatos tou idiou*, which could mean “His own blood”, but could equally well mean, “the blood of His Own”, the relationship of “His Own” to “God” being left unstated. In the oldest texts of Jerome’s Vulgate (Fuldensis and Amiatinus), not only is I John 5. 7 omitted, but I Timothy 3. 16 is altered to, Great is the mystery, “which” was manifested in the flesh, not “God” was manifested in the flesh, and Acts 20. 28 has indeed the “Church of *God*” correctly, but that is said to have been purchased, in the Vulgate’s Latin, *sanguine suo*, “with his blood”, which is not a clear statement in that language that it was the blood of God’s own body with which it was purchased, as it is in the Greek, but could mean

simply “the blood over which God claimed ownership, or, authority by relationship, or, which God used for His purpose” or even, if one wanted to be perverse, “*its* or *her* blood”, that is the “blood of the Church”!

The popular modern version known as the New International Version (NIV) has all three key heretical readings. The NIV is based on the “Alexandrian” text-type which underlies the Latin Vulgate, but professedly on surviving Greek manuscripts only, not directly on the Latin. I John 5. 6-8 reads in the NIV (omitting the “Three Heavenly Witnesses”): “6 This is the one who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.” A footnote in the NIV to verse 8 reads, deceptively: “Late manuscripts of the Vulgate ‘*testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.*’ (not found in any Greek manuscript before the fourteenth century).” Apart from the blatant, and textually irrelevant, reference here to the Vulgate, by which is meant the official Latin Vulgate of the Roman Catholic Church of the later period, not Jerome’s own work, the statement about the fourteenth century is simply a lie. I Timothy 3. 16 reads in the NIV (changing “God” to the vague and mysterious “He”): “16 Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: *He* appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.” As for Acts 20. 28 the NIV becomes as deceitfully ambiguous as Jerome’s Vulgate: “28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of *God*, which he bought with *his own blood*.” In case one thought here one could simply connect “his own” with “God”, and understand, correctly, the reference to be to the blood of God’s own body, the NIV supplies two footnotes: one is on the word “God”, stating, “Many manuscripts ‘*of the Lord*’”, as though that heretical reading is of equal validity, therefore “God” is not really the Supreme Eternal Being, but some lesser “Lord”; and, on the phrase “his own blood”, the following, “Or *with the blood of his own Son*”, which shows the NIV followed the heretical reading of Vaticanus, Sinaiticus etc., and which is so much as to say, this is a perfectly acceptable alternative translation of the Greek (though actually Gk. *tou idiou* in that reading means “His Own”, whoever that may be, not “His own *Son*”). Compare this with the Vulgate’s ambiguous *sanguine suo*. The NIV would warm the cockles of Jerome’s heart.

Returning now to Jerome’s era, all three heretical readings are found also in Codex Alexandrinus (4th to 5th century). This codex has a Byzantine text-type in the Gospels, and an “Alexandrian” type in the remainder of the New Testament, in which latter these heretical readings are found. The “Heavenly Witnesses” passage in Alexandrinus is eccentric, but brings out the centrality of the Spirit in relation to its true exegesis, which the emendation was attempting to combat: literally translated, Alexandrinus reads, “This is he who came by water and blood *and spirit*, Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and *the spirit*. And it is *the spirit* that bears witness, because *the spirit* is truth. For there are three that bear witness, *the spirit*, and the water, and the blood, and the three agree in one.” It is disputed whether the two uncial letters in Codex Alexandrinus (OC) at I Timothy 3. 16 represent the word Theos “God” (was manifested in the flesh), that is, whether a stroke should be seen in the middle of the “O”, making it the initial Greek letter *theta* of the standard two-letter abbreviation, *theta* and *sigma*, for “Theos”, “God”, or whether these letters should be read “hos”, “he who” (was manifested in

the flesh). From a strictly paleographic point of view, either is possible, but the codex's "Alexandrian" text-type in other readings outside the Gospels favors the latter of these alternatives. In Acts 20. 28 Alexandrinus reads "the Church of the *Lord* which He purchased with His own blood", instead of the correct "Church of *God*".

Along with these key texts, there are numerous other instances in which emendations have been made to suit the Docetic heresies of Cerdon, Marcion and Noetianists/Sabellianists. For example, Acts 4. 24-25 reads in the Received Text ("Byzantine" text-form) "24.²⁴ O Master, You are He Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25. (You are) He Who said [lit. are the speaker] through the mouth of Your servant David, Why did the heathen rage, etc." In Codex Alexandrinus the words "our Father" and "the Holy Spirit" are inserted into the text at this place, but in a way that tortures the Greek, thus (literally): "You are he who are the speaker of *our Father* through *the Holy Spirit* of the mouth of David your servant, etc." The identical reading is found in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. The additions italicized were made to "correct a Judaizing error" the Docetists saw here. In the text as it stands God is addressed as the Maker of heaven and earth. That simple truth contradicted the Docetist belief that God Himself had nothing to do with the creation of "evil matter", which the Docetists understood to be the work of an inferior or evil being, called the Demiurge. The object of the emendation, therefore, was to separate the supposedly inferior Master god who made matter (heaven, earth, sea), from God "Our Father", and turn him into the subordinate, and errant, "speaker" of the "Father" through the Holy Spirit. The Trinity of Supreme Beings, including the Father and the Holy Spirit, according to the heretical theory espoused by the First Church of Rome, was not the Creator of matter. Only a spiritual God of this type, far above the evil world of matter, could be, according to their philosophy, the God and Father of the Apostles. At the same time, in the emended text the Apostles are represented still as acknowledging the Jewish king David to be the servant of the Master god. The Jews, the Docetists thought, were the people of the inferior Creator-god. All Jews were vilified by the heretics, along with their Old Testament God. So, in Jerome's Vulgate (Codex Amiatinus) the passage reads: "Master, you who made heaven and earth and the sea and everything in them, who spoke, *by the Holy Spirit* through the mouth of *Our Father*, of your servant, David, etc." Unsurprisingly the NIV has the same heretical additions of "our father" and "the Holy Spirit", though in that translation the "father" seems to be David. (A mysterious divine "Father" separate from the Creator would be too blatantly heretical.)

There is circumstantial evidence that Codex Alexandrinus was connected with "tablets" of the Scriptures provided by Athanasius (c. AD 296-373) to Emperor Constans. Long after the Origenic Bibles were deposited in Constantinople, and in spite of those Bibles' sufficiency in all textual respects, Constantine's successor, Constans (emperor of Italy and other regions in the West AD 337-350), requested the notable theologian Athanasius of Alexandria, who was in Rome at the time, to supply him with "tablets" (Gk. *puktia*) of the Holy Scriptures. This has been taken to demonstrate the opposition Origen's work encountered in official circles in the West, and a desire to replace it. The stated aim may have been to obtain, in combination with the New Testament Scriptures, a text of the Old Testament according to the Septuagint, authenticated by Athanasius, instead of the recent and controversial edition of Origen, as the Septuagint was the popular choice. Athanasius supplied the "tablets" as instructed.

24 The Apostles pray to God as follows.

The traditional history of Codex Alexandrinus and other internal indicators associate it with this era. A woman called Thecla was the scribe who produced the manuscript, according to a note in Arabic attached to it, and she has been thought to be the Thecla with whom Gregory Nazianzen corresponded (Letters, ed. Migne PG 37, nos. 56, 57, 222, 223) in the latter part of his life (c. AD 300-392), the contemporary of Athanasius. The codex includes a preface written by Athanasius, who himself latterly was a contemporary of Damasus and Jerome. It also bears the hallmarks of post-Nicene diplomacy, attempting to reconcile the increasingly divergent parties of the Eastern and Western forms of Christianity, as it combines Origen's "Byzantine" or Eastern text-type in the more popular Gospels, with "Alexandrian" or Western text-type readings in the rest of the New Testament, the latter being of overriding interest to theologians and dogmatists.

Neither Athanasius nor Thecla can be blamed for Codex Alexandrinus as it has come down to us, but it could well have resulted from a reworking of Athanasius' text in the latter parts of the New Testament by an advocate of the "Alexandrian" text-type. One wonders if behind the request of Constans was a plot to get Athanasius' name attached to a Greek copy of the Scriptures in the Latin West, which could then be modified to accord with the Latin translation of the Roman Church, and fobbed off on the Greeks of Constantinople, thus spreading the heretical Latin readings in the Greek East.

Since there is no evidence that any later revisions were given official sanction by the Byzantine court, the few typical "Alexandrian" deficiencies in some texts of the "Byzantine" type current in the Greek East thereafter, like the omission of I John 5. 7, are probably explicable by the supplanting of the authentic Origenic text by this mixed text-type resulting from the request of Constans. Athanasius' reputation in the Greek East will have helped the spread of such readings. Amongst the lower social classes, economy dictated which parts of the New Testament were attested in more than one text-form, as it was rare for a manuscript of the complete New Testament to be found outside of an official library or a wealthy man's private collection. Most readily available, and therefore lower in price, were codices of the Gospels. In the Greek East a divergent text of the Gospels would be immediately apparent, as one could compare the heretical codex with one's own other copy, or with that of a neighbor. The effect would be a diminution in the number of copied heretical texts. And that is the situation as we find it, the Byzantine text of the Gospels being relatively pure. The second most widely available portion of the New Testament was the Pauline corpus. Here, too, divergent readings would be easily spotted. The Byzantine text of the Pauline Epistles is of a corresponding purity. Much rarer in ancient times were copies of the Johannine Epistles, and it is in the first of the Johannine Epistles that the divergent reading of I John 5. 7-8 is attested in texts of the Byzantine type even in Greek-speaking areas. In this sole instance the common Byzantine text-form is deficient. Another restraint on the availability of variant text-forms in the East was the limited geographical area under Byzantine influence, which became more limited as the Medieval period ran on. A deficient text might be the only one readily available within the zone where Greek was spoken. In the Latin West, by contrast, large areas of the former Roman Empire continued to speak Latin for official and ecclesiastical purposes, therefore variant texts were more widespread and the imposed Latin Vulgate was not the only one available. In the older Latin translations which were still copied well into the Medieval period, the ancient Byzantine text-form, including I John 5. 7, survived. This in spite of a concerted effort by the monk Cassiodorus to make all Latin texts (and even Greek texts by emendation of the Greek) conform to the Vulgate, and

a similar standardization of the Latin texts by order of Charlemagne, though the details of the latter effort are obscure.

One can see that the First Church of Rome had much invested in the Vulgate and Codex Vaticanus, and Erasmus' rejection of both and the use of his Greek text by the Reformers after him was, as might be expected, highly resented by the Roman party. Reformation scholars held to Erasmus' Byzantine Greek text well into the beginning of the nineteenth century. Then a reaction set in, as the Church of England was infiltrated by Jesuits hoping to turn it back to the Vulgate and away from the Sola Scriptura (or Sola Scriptura Byzantina) of the Reformed Churches. They found a fertile field in England at that time to sow their seeds of "Textual Criticism". The English upper classes feared the spread of French revolutionary fervor and therefore welcomed Jesuits and other Roman Catholic prelates, driven from France during the Revolution, as a potential bastion against Trade Unions, strikers and similar promoters of social discontent at home. The reaction against revolution spawned an animus against rationalists, humanists and liberals, even against responsible ones, like Erasmus. Many in the Church of England, including Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, and their circle, turned against the Greek text of Erasmus and his successors back to the Vulgate-like tradition of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus to provide them with what they claimed was the purer and more original Greek text. The riches and prestige of the Church of England fell behind them, and their pseudo-scholarly arguments won the day. First came a "revision" of the King James Version (the latter representing the true original Byzantine text), that revision being called the "Revised Version", and not long thereafter a flood of new English translations, as well as translations into other languages, based on the readings of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. The initial stages of the assault on the Received Byzantine Text included a blatant and deceitful attack on Erasmus himself by Tregelles (pronounced Tre-gel-les, three syllables). Tregelles joined the Plymouth Brethren, along with his cousin, B. W. Newton, who was a priest in the Church of England, caused a schism in that fellowship by promoting a significant difference with the movement's leading light, J. N. Darby, over prophetic doctrine, and (when the first failed to cause a breach) by bolstering the overweening clerical pretensions of Newton, then, finally, retired to the Church of England. At the same time he and his cousin were wreaking havoc in the central Brethren Church in Plymouth, Darby was driven from Switzerland, where he had been conducting a very successful and popular Brethren revival, by a political revolution orchestrated by Jesuits, which resulted in a threat on his life. On arriving back in Plymouth, Darby denounced the clericalism promoted by Tregelles and Newton as *Romish* in nature, supported by the arguments, as he put it, of *High Churchmen with a leaning towards Popery*. Tregelles' love for the Vulgate text-type was consistent, clearly, with his ecclesiastical prejudices.

5. THE MYTH OF ERASMUS' "BACK TRANSLATING"

The text-critical attack on the Textus Receptus involved a diversion and a feint. The diversion was to direct attention away from the real basis of the Textus Receptus, which is the magnificent 1550 folio edition of Robert Éstienne, Robertus Stephanus, of the royal Press in Paris. It was hard to discredit this great scholar-printer or his sources, the latter being principally a set of fifteen very ancient and correct manuscripts obtained from the Library of the King of France himself. Stephanus emphasized their excellence. The great Reformation scholar Beza put his seal of approval on these sources, as well as on the editorial methods of Stephanus and the editions resulting from them. The manuscripts were returned to the Royal Library once the work was finished, but, like those used by the Complutensian team, have since “gone missing”. The havoc wrought can be illustrated by the fact that in the *locus classicus* of I John 5. 7 even Stephanus’ different set of manuscripts with a variant reading (seven manuscripts omitting only the words “in heaven” in that verse) are no longer to be found anywhere in the world, — in fact, no such reading is attested in any extant manuscript whatsoever, — quite apart from the more numerous and more correct manuscripts which Stephanus followed in the main body of the text, and which, on account of their antiquity, according to his own testimony, were worthy almost of “adoration”. Since the early printed editions are equivalent in every respect to manuscript authorities, all these employed by Stephanus should be added, by the by, to the list of witnesses in respect of any given Greek reading in the New Testament. The hostile theological Doctors of the Sorbonne were already demanding from Stephanus detailed information about the manuscripts he used to print his Bibles before his enforced flight to Geneva, and three hundred years of book-burning, expurgation and indexing thereafter by opponents of the Reformation have ensured their consignment to oblivion. It is disingenuous for critics of the Textus Receptus after the Counter Reformation’s continent-wide and centuries-long censorial fury to demand the production of these manuscripts before they accept the authenticity of Stephanus’ work: his Bibles, for example, were specifically targeted in the Prohibitory and Expurgatory Index of the Roman ecclesiastical authorities for over two hundred years after his decease. Due in part, then, to an inability to diminish the credit of Stephanus’ sources, and in part to the nobility of Stephanus’ own character, and the boldness of his Christian witness on behalf of the Lutheran Reformation (for which he suffered persecution and personal loss), the text-critics found it more convenient to concentrate their fire on the text published in several editions over twenty years and more preceding Stephanus by the Renaissance scholar Erasmus. Erasmus was a pioneer in the field, but succeeded in defining and identifying the genuine Byzantine text which had been mangled over the Medieval period by correctors accommodating it to Jerome’s Vulgate. His text, settled over five editions, from 1516 through 1535, agreed remarkably with the text of Stephanus 1550. We thus have two independent witnesses to the correctness of the Textus Receptus, though the palm goes to Stephanus’ edition, in view of the superior quality of his sources. The text-critical diversion was to claim the Textus Receptus published by Stephanus was little more than a reprinting of the earlier text of Erasmus. Additionally, Erasmus, like all pioneers, had to overcome formidable obstacles to achieve his aims. His struggle to identify the correct Greek text, and the textual blind alleys and byways he was compelled the meanwhile to negotiate, left him open to attack. The text-critical feint was to misinterpret statements made by Erasmus in the process of that struggle as indicators that Erasmus acted nefariously in his production of the Greek Testament.

The idea that the great Renaissance scholar Erasmus should be guilty of “back translating” from Latin to Greek, and thus of “inventing” an ancient Greek text of the New Testament, is so ludicrous it might be thought no modern scholar could entertain it. But a whole generation of text critics have espoused

precisely this belief, in a spirit quite the opposite to that of a true critic.

The myth of Erasmus' "back translating" goes hand in hand with the legend that he included the "Three Heavenly Witnesses" of I John 5. 7 in his third edition of the Greek New Testament, only when forced to do so against his better judgment. We shall deal with the legend first. Supposedly Erasmus had made a public promise to insert the passage referring to the "Three Heavenly Witnesses", if any scholar could find a single Greek manuscript containing it. On being presented with a "British" manuscript, which, unbeknown to him, had been forged to include the reading especially to meet his challenge "back translated" from the Latin, Erasmus reluctantly inserted it, and only because he had given his word. This legend has been debunked by modern Erasmus researchers. It resulted from a misconstruction of Erasmus' Latin combined with a confusion of different events: 1) Erasmus claimed in reply to a critic named Lee, that if he had found a single Greek text containing what he described, significantly, as the "missing" (Latin *aberat, minus*) passage at I John 5. 7, he would have included it in his first two editions; 2) Erasmus added, that he had not been negligent, as he had been accused of being by Lee, in omitting the passage, and his proof would be in the outcome of this challenge: that Lee should provide him with a single Greek manuscript containing it, and then, additionally, prove that Erasmus could have had access to it; it should be noted here Lee claimed Erasmus would "certainly" have found such Greek manuscripts, if had looked thoroughly, which implies several were known to Lee; 3) Erasmus on a later occasion was in receipt of a Greek manuscript of "British" origin, which included the passage, but Erasmus suspected this particular manuscript was not only of relatively recent date, but may also have been "back translated", in parts of its text, from the Vulgate Latin, as he knew had been a practice in prior times. Still it supplied the passage in Greek, and his doubts about the quality of the manuscript as a whole did not outweigh the necessity to supply what he accepted, without question, to be "missing" at this place in the Greek text, so Erasmus inserted it from the reading contained in the British manuscript. The particular form of the passage in Erasmus' third edition (1522) and other citations of his from the adjacent verses of the Epistle of John, are identical to that found in a "British" manuscript, located in Dublin Trinity College, Codex Montfortianus of the 15th or early 16th century, and it is presumed by most authorities this was Erasmus' "British" source. In light of the accusation that the "British" manuscript was produced "on order" to confute Erasmus, it should be noted that Codex Montfortianus, though of no great textual worth otherwise (as Erasmus, in that case, perceived), has a unique combination of readings which are not found in any other source, and is unlikely, therefore, to have been produced merely to provide Erasmus with the Greek text of the "Three Heavenly Witnesses". If that had been its purpose, it would have been of a more typical type throughout.

This was not the end of the story. By the time Erasmus brought out his fourth edition, there was a better Greek text available to him than he had found in the "British" manuscript. That was the Greek Testament published by the official sanction of the Roman Catholic Church itself as a principal part of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible of Cardinal Ximenes of Alcala in Spain. In the postscript at the end of the Apocalypse this work is dated to 10th January 1514, though it was not made available to the public till 1522. The Greek text therefore predates Erasmus' first edition. It is a text of the Byzantine type, and well produced. The manuscripts containing the Greek Testament were obtained by the Complutensian editors from the Papal Library, but have since, unhappily, been lost track of. According to the preface they were the "oldest and most correct copies" (*exemplaria vetustissima et*

emendatissima). Amongst them was a “Rhodian” manuscript often referred to by the principal editor Stunica and by Erasmus. The Complutensian text included the “Three Heavenly Witnesses”, and Erasmus modified his final and approved text of I John 5. 7 from that source, though the only textual difference between the improved and the earlier version was the addition from the Complutensian text of the Greek definite article for “the” Father, “the” Word and “the” Holy Spirit.

In one other respect Erasmus, wisely, did not follow the Complutensian, and that was in the omission in the Complutensian of the very last phrase in I John 5. 8, “and these three agree in one [Gk. *eis to ‘en*]” (referring to the spirit, the water and the blood), and in the transfer in the Complutensian of the identical Greek phrase *eis to ‘en*, as though it meant are “one” (*unum sunt*), when it truly means “agree in one”, to verse 7, with reference to the Father, Word and Holy Spirit. There in verse 7 it stood in the Complutensian instead of the authentic Greek *‘en*, simply, which does mean are “one”, as in Erasmus’ reading from the “British” manuscript. The Complutensian editors were good enough to provide a marginal note to this passage, showing what they had done and why, but Erasmus ignored it. It will not surprise the reader to discover the omission and related transfer arose because of the textual corruption of Jerome’s Vulgate. Jerome’s Latin text omitted the “Three Heavenly Witnesses”, but it also stated that the earthly witnesses, spirit, water and blood, “are one” (“*unum sunt*” in Fuldenis and Amiatinus), instead of the correct “agree in one”, according with the Greek *eis to ‘en*. The purpose of this alteration shines through: by omitting the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” Jerome’s text reflected the Artemonite denial that the heavenly Spirit of God was distinct from the human spirit in Jesus, then by declaring the spirit, water and blood actually to be “one”, that is, one in substance, the three earthly material elements were proven to be, not three different substances, but *a single divine substance* which merely “appeared” (*dokeo*) to be three. In his own day Jerome, along with his bishop Damasus, was accused of Sabellianism (Jerome, *Epistolae* XV. 3, ad Damasum, Migne PL XXII. col. 356). Jerome rejected the charge, and truly he was not, strictly speaking, a Sabellian: he was a Callistian, — though the difference between the Noetian doctrine of Callistus, bishop of the First Church of Rome in the first quarter of the third century AD, and that of the guru Sabellius, a member of Callistus’ congregation, was hard to define, even for the acute Hippolytus, who knew both heretics personally. Indeed, Jerome’s doctrine included the belief, according to the very words of Jerome himself (*ibid.* 4, col. 357) in refuting the charge of heresy, that “all created things besides *only appear to be, and are not ... God alone* who is eternal, who has no beginning, *truly bears the denomination ‘being’*.”²⁵ This is the Noetian/Sabellian belief precisely. Hence, of course, the three substances of spirit, water and blood, amongst the rest, were only three in appearance, and, in actuality, one divine essence. The Docetist (Sabellian) heresy enshrined in Jerome’s text was thereby confirmed.

The sequence of events consequent upon Jerome’s emendation is easily explained. When, in the course of the Medieval period, the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” were re-inserted in some Latin copies from Old Latin texts, and were correctly described as being “one” (“*unum sunt*”), the Greek was “back translated” to read identically in both clauses *eis to ‘en*, since the Latin read the same now in both clauses (“*unum sunt*”). Properly, of course, the Greek *eis to ‘en* does not mean “are one”, but “agree in one”. Thus the belief could arise, or be established, based on the understanding that Latin “*unum sunt*” (“are one”) is the same as the Greek *eis to ‘en* (one in agreement), that the Father, Word and Holy Spirit

25 Latin *essentia* = Greek *hypostasis* = “being”.

“are one” only by agreement, or that the unity of the Trinity is not one of substance, but of consent. The omission of the final clause in I John 5. 8 is common in Latin texts of the later Medieval period, and reflects the decision of an ecclesiastical Council, the Fourth Lateran of AD 1215. For dogmatic reasons, in order to counter the doctrine of Abbot Joachim that the Trinity was indeed merely a unity of consent, rather than of substance, the phrase was struck from Latin copies in relation to the spirit, water and blood. Joachim had unwittingly exposed the heresy lurking behind the Vulgate’s Latin: three different material substances could never be described as “one in substance” (except by a Docetist heretic), therefore they could not be said to “be one” (“unum sunt”), nor in Greek *eis to ‘en*, which was incorrectly understood to mean “are one”, on the basis of the common Latin reading. Thomas Aquinas’ solution was that this final clause in I John 5. 8 was not extant in the *true copies*, and that it *was said* Arians had inserted it to subvert the doctrine of the Trinity. The note to this effect was included in the Complutensian margin. After the Fourth Lateran Council, the final phrase in I John 5. 8 was commonly excised from the text. Of course, this whole procedure demonstrates the lack of respect for the Holy Scriptures characteristic of the Roman Church throughout the Middle Ages. Their dogma was not based on Scripture, Scripture was altered to suit dogma. It is precisely the method followed by Jerome already in the fourth century. It also demonstrates why individual texts alone, no matter how old, are not sufficient to determine the true Scriptural reading. An historical understanding of the methods adopted by the transmitters of the text is necessary to avoid textual error.

In conclusion, it can be deduced from Erasmus’ use of the word “missing” with reference to the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” in his correspondence with Lee, then from his inclusion of that passage in a particular form, though from a poorer quality source, in the third, and his retention of it, in the very slightly improved form, and with the support of the widely accepted Complutensian text, in every subsequent edition of the New Testament, that the mature, and considered, opinion of this brilliant Renaissance scholar, was that the passage itself was authentic. If the recalcitrant critic should determine to fix on Erasmus’ suspicion of “back translating” from the Latin Vulgate in the “British” manuscript, and then conclude the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” had been “back translated” from the Latin Vulgate, too, it should be pointed out, Jerome’s original Latin Vulgate, as proven by Codex Amiatinus and Codex Fuldensis, *did not include* the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” at all! Thus, there was nothing originally to “back translate” from. Or rather, there existed in Medieval times a multitude of Latin texts which combined, in a thoroughly confused way, passages “corrected” to accord with Jerome’s Vulgate, with uncorrected passages retained from the Old Latin (pre-Vulgate) versions. Some of these Old Latin readings accurately represented the original Apostolic text. It was from this confused textual tradition that the later editions of the Vulgate were concocted and passed off as the “official Vulgate Latin”. The commonly accepted Vulgate of Erasmus’ day was one such, and it included the “Three Heavenly Witnesses”, preserving, in this instance, completely contrary to the original system of the Latin Vulgate authorized by Jerome himself, the pre-Nicean authentic Greek text. So, if the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” had been “back translated” from the Vulgate, as these critics insinuate (but for which process no proof, by the nature of it, can ever be forthcoming), then the result was a reversion merely to the primitive and authentic Greek text.

But this argument only holds good in relation to the earlier insertion in Erasmus’ third edition, which was obtained from the “British” manuscript, and that assumed (with the emphasis on assumed) to be

Codex Montfortianus. It has no bearing whatsoever on the Complutensian reading which Erasmus used to produce his final and approved text. That was available for publishing before Erasmus brought out his first edition, and was the text officially sanctioned by the Roman ecclesiastical authorities. No one could accuse the Complutensian editors of “back translating” to confound Erasmus. That has not restrained the more fanatical upholders of Codex Vaticanus and the “Alexandrian” text type, however, who have spotted “back-translations” on every textual corner, and in the Complutensian, whenever the reading has not suited them. Critics of Erasmus here are stuck between a rock and a hard place. If they wish to assert the Complutensian reading was “back translated” to prove Erasmus’ first edition defective, they have to accept, of course, that it was printed after Erasmus’ first edition, and that, in turn, would confirm Erasmus was the first to print a Greek Testament. If they wish to deprive Erasmus of that honor, they have to assume the date 1514 on the Complutensian means it was printed then, and was therefore the first printed edition, though not offered to the public till later (c. 1522), and in that case they cannot accuse it of containing a reading manufactured to embarrass Erasmus.

Setting these ridiculous and uncritical animosities aside, we can say certainly that the Complutensian editors cherished no love for their Greek text, which they looked at askance in comparison to the Vulgate Latin text. The Greek column was, as they saw it, a “crucified thief” hanging alongside the “Savior”, that is, the Latin Vulgate, column. Their attitude is understandable, though wrong-headed, given its Byzantine, and therefore anti-Vulgate, flavor. They happily and clearly marked where it differed from the Latin, and had no interest in manufacturing “back translations” to make the columns match.

As regards the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” in the Textus Receptus, the accusation of “back translating” is a dead issue. The Textus Receptus is based squarely on the editions printed by the great Renaissance scholar-printer, Robertus Stephanus, which agreed in this section with Erasmus’ final, fourth and fifth, editions, and had the support of the Complutensian. The same text was later largely reproduced by the Elzevirs. Stephanus had a whole range of valuable manuscripts from the Royal Library in Paris containing the same reading as in Erasmus’ latest editions, as well as a few (which he rejected), omitting only the words “in heaven” in I John 5. 7.

We shall find by and by a double standard is applied in the matter of “back translating”. When the question is of the “Three Heavenly Witnesses” then “back translating” is assumed as a matter of course by the modern “critic”, who concentrates his fire on Erasmus’ second-rate “British” manuscript and ignores the damning fact that Erasmus’ final text had the support of the Complutensian: this was approved by the highest authorities in the Roman Catholic system, and amongst them vociferous critics of Erasmus. But when it comes to the actual practice of “back translating” adopted in the Medieval period by scribes who altered the Greek Byzantine text to accord with the corrupt Latin Vulgate, the modern “critic” as assuredly asserts it is a figment of the imagination.

From all this we can see clearly what Erasmus’ view was of “back translating” from the Latin. It should have struck Erasmus’ critics that if he had, in fact, ever indulged in the practice himself, then he could

simply have “back translated” the missing text of the “Three Heavenly Witnesses”. There was no need to search out a Greek codex containing the reading. With a few strokes of his pen the troublesome hiatus would have been filled. The time and effort Erasmus exhausted in procuring this and those other texts missing in the Greek manuscripts initially available to him, prove his fidelity in adhering to the Byzantine Greek text as attested in the “oldest and most correct copies”.

The myth of Erasmus’ own “back translating” from Latin into Greek must have a particular historical context, therefore, to explain its genesis. That, too, was the heated debate which followed Erasmus’ publishing of his first edition of the Byzantine Greek text of the New Testament. Erasmus’ learned opponent Sepulveda objected to Erasmus’ failure to use Codex Vaticanus in the publishing of his text. (For the relevant correspondence see Sepulvedae Opera, Madrid, 1780, Letters of Erasmus and Sepulveda, 1534.) Erasmus responded that he had good reason to reject Vaticanus. Greek manuscripts in the West had been known to be emended (“back translated”) by reference to the Latin. Erasmus claimed that when Greek Orthodox Christians were admitted into the Latin communion at the Florentine Council in AD 1439, included in the articles of settlement was the stipulation that their Greek Bibles had to be “corrected” to match the Latin Vulgate. Sepulveda replied, he had seen no such article, that is, *in writing*, and Erasmus countered that his information was from the highest source, that he had been given the information verbally by Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall of Durham, England, who had assured him such was the case, whether or no the disgraceful procedure was incorporated in the official account of the pact. Sepulveda himself admitted as “probable” at least one such emendation of the Greek to conform to the Latin. (Letter of Sepulveda in Erasmi Opera, iii. col. 1762.) It is interesting to note here, Erasmus implicitly associated Codex Vaticanus with the practice of “back translating”, and that may well be because he was aware of its compatibility with the Vulgate, and of the admission of the Vulgate’s author that he “corrected” Greek manuscripts to match the Latin text. It is obvious, in the light of this disputation, that over-zealous defenders of the Vulgate had a vested interest in throwing at Erasmus some of his own dirt.

The myth of Erasmus’ “back translating” is based on a misconstruction (to put it in the kindest possible light) of statements made by Erasmus in his Apologia addressed to Stunica of the Complutensian team, in his Annotations to the Apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, and in his replies to the criticisms of Lee. Erasmus used an expression in the course of his Apologia addressed to Stunica which was misunderstood by the eighteenth-century Pietist Bengel (one of the two leading lights of Pietism at that time, the other being Zinzendorf), and the misunderstanding encouraged Bengel to give less credit than deserved to Erasmus’ work on the Book of Revelation. This was a springboard for Bengel’s own critical work on the text, which was of particular interest to him as a student of Biblical prophecy. Semler took up Bengel’s initiatives in the text-critical field, and Griesbach followed on from Semler. Griesbach at the end of the eighteenth century produced a critical text and a critical theory which provided the model for the nineteenth-century assault on the Textus Receptus. Bengel himself was a conscientious scholar, though prone to fits of erratic exegesis, like his prediction, based on an idiosyncratic interpretation of chronological statements in the Book of Revelation, that Christ would return on 18th June 1836! This should warn us to beware of novel theories broached by Bengel and to examine with more than normal diligence statements made by him in support of such theories. Bengel’s criticism of Erasmus’ textual work on the Book of Revelation falls in this bracket.

Bengel (Bengelius, Apparatus Criticus ad Novum Testamentum, 2nd ed., Burkius, 1763, p. 495) read in Erasmus' Apologia addressed to Stunica the following passage: "In Apocalypsi non suppetebat nobis nisi vnicum exemplar, sed vetustissimum, quod nobis exhibuit eximius ille litterarum heros Ioh. Reuchlinus." This means: "For the Book of Revelation only [non ... nisi] one copy was immediately available to us (or, served our purpose), but that was a very ancient one, which John Reuchlin, that illustrious hero of the literary sciences provided for our perusal." Erasmus says here he had a *single* Greek manuscript for the Book of Revelation immediately available (suppetebat, i.e. "at hand"), or, alternatively, suited to the purpose for which it was required (suppetebat = sufficiebat, "be suitable, sufficient"), and that was provided to him by Reuchlin. In his Apologia addressed to Lee (Antwerp 1520, *infra*) Erasmus repeats this assertion, but there makes clear that occasion was when he was absent from Basle specifically for the purpose of consulting Reuchlin's manuscript: *then* he had *only* this manuscript *ready to hand*, or, *uniquely suited to requirements* ("quod tum nobis erat vnicum", i.e. the manuscript "which *at that time* [tum] was the only one [sc. available] to us, or, uniquely suited our requirements", using the identical word "vnicum" for "only one, unique" as in Bengel's citation), but *in Basle* he had others available to him, and he was able also to fetch readings from elsewhere. The "copies" (plural) which Erasmus had for the Book of Revelation are mentioned several times by him, as will be shown in the account following. Unfortunately Bengel mistook the meaning as: "No more than one copy was *ever* available to us." As well as ignoring the historical context of Erasmus' statement, Bengel's understanding discounted the alternative interpretation of the word "suppetebat", viz. "suited to the required purpose", which is as natural semantically as the first. He concluded, quite wrongly, and in opposition to what Erasmus actually says, that Erasmus only ever had this single codex of Reuchlin to provide him with the complete Greek text of the Book of Revelation for his first edition.

By mistaking the meaning of Erasmus in this phrase, Bengel opened a Pandora's box of questions and anomalies in respect of Erasmus' readings in the Book of Revelation. (Id., *ibid.*, p. 496, 500.) For example, since Reuchlin's codex was defective at the end, and missed off the last few phrases of the text, where did Erasmus procure the Greek text for those last few phrases in his first edition? Also, if Erasmus only had the single codex of Reuchlin, how does his text of the Book of Revelation differ occasionally as between his first, second and third editions? One possibility, Bengel speculated, was that readings from the unpublished Complutensian had somehow found their way to Erasmus, another was that he used conjectural emendation, a third was that the Reuchlin manuscript (which Bengel had searched for, but failed to locate) contained marginal glosses which had sometimes been received into Erasmus' text. At Revelation 2. 3, 5, 14, 17. 4 (8?) and 22. 11, Bengel suspected that the Reuchlin manuscript was defective, through deterioration and wear, and that Erasmus had therefore supplied the deficiencies from the Latin manuscripts. The Reuchlin codex was rediscovered by Delitzsch in the middle of the nineteenth century and Bengel's speculations about its quality and marginal glosses shown to be mistaken. The missing verses at the end of the Book of Revelation mentioned by Erasmus were, however, as he said, missing, through the loss of the final page.

Occasionally (*id.*, *ibid.*, p. 500) Bengel spoke more definitely of Erasmus' use of the Vulgate as the basis for his text in a few passages in the Book of Revelation, as if he had "back translated" from the

Latin where Reuchlin's text failed him, but he had not actually discounted the other possibilities (id., *ibid.*, p. 496). The effect of Bengel's criticism, though founded on false premises, was that it allowed him a certain latitude in selecting readings in the Book of Revelation differing from those of the *Textus Receptus*, on the authority of which he might formulate his idiosyncratic prophetic exegesis. Bengel's misunderstanding of the phrase in Erasmus' *Apologia* was copied unwittingly by later scholars, e.g. by Wetstein at the beginning of the eighteenth century and Michaelis at its end (Introduction to the New Testament, trans. Marsh from 4th German ed., 2nd ed. 1802, vol. II. pt. I, p. 312f.), and was thus passed on as "received wisdom" to nineteenth-century writers like Tregelles. The tendency to diminish the number of Erasmus' Greek authorities became more pronounced the deeper Bengel's mistake entrenched itself in the text-critical consensus. Statements of Erasmus like the one found in the introductory *Apologia* to his fifth edition that, just as Valla used seven "bonae fidei" Greek codices (book-form manuscripts), so he used "four" such codices for his first edition, and more for his later editions, were seized on and misconstrued, to convey the impression that these were the sum total of the Greek texts he had available. Erasmus states more than once, as demonstrated *infra*, that he had several "copies" ("exemplars") of even the scarcest text, the Apocalypse. For the latter, in at least one instance, he identifies his source: viz. the unpublished Aldine edition in Venice, which was based on manuscripts differing, in parts, from those drawn on by Erasmus for his first edition. In that instance a reading was obtained, on Erasmus' instructions, by his co-editors in Basle, either in person, or by correspondence, from the Aldus printers. The exemplars mentioned by Erasmus were most probably, therefore, either his own copies of the "oldest and most correct" manuscripts, or those of his illustrious co-editors, supplementing the four *original* documents referred to *supra*. An example of the former is Erasmus' "revised copy" (*recognitum exemplar*) of the text of the Apocalypse obtained from the Reuchlin codex which he sent to Basle to his co-editors, along with the instructions to procure from the Aldine edition the one reading he was missing.

Tregelles differed from most of the critics who preceded him in his overarching concern to reimpose the Vulgate-like textual readings of Codex Vaticanus and other manuscripts of the "Alexandrian" text-type in the academic halls of Protestant England, which had up to then faithfully upheld the authenticity of Erasmus' text. The single misunderstanding of Erasmus' Latin by Bengel became a plethora of misreadings by Tregelles. The important part played by Tregelles in regard to the re-establishment of the readings rejected by Erasmus is pointed out in his obituary from the Independent newspaper, 1 July 1875: "He²⁶ *did far more than any other writer*²⁷ to overcome the blind and unreasoning prejudice²⁸ which existed in England in favor of the *textus receptus*, and which prized the inaccurate and uncritical²⁹ edition of Scholz on account of its demerits. The change of opinion on this subject in conservative England within the last thirty years is marvellous, amounting almost to a revolution. The language indulged in by Bloomfield in the preface to his Greek Testament, about the "temerity" of Griesbach, and "his perpetual and, for the most part, needless cancellings and alterations of all kinds," would now sound very strange, unless perhaps from Dr. Burgon or some kindred spirit. Though the treatises of Prof. Porter and Dr. Davidson, the works of the Rev. T. S. Green, the articles of Prof. Westcott and Mr. Hort, and the later editions of Alford's Greek Testament have contributed to this

26 Tregelles.

27 My emphasis.

28 *Sic.*

29 *Sic.*

result, yet to Dr. Tregelles the credit of effecting the change is pre-eminently due.³⁰

A classic example of Tregelles' destructive criticism is his treatment of Erasmus' statement about the missing phrases at the end of Reuchlin's codex. Erasmus' own words are as follows (Annotationes in ed. 1516, p. 675): "Although at the end of this book,³¹ I found a few words in our texts, which were missing in the Greek exemplars, those in the end we supplied on the basis of Latin (texts)." Erasmus' Latin reads : *Quamque in calce huius libri, nonnulla uerba reperi apud nostros, quae aberant in Graecis exemplaribus, ea tamen ex latinis adiecimus.* This absurdly was taken by Wetstein at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and subsequently by Tregelles, to mean that the missing words at the end of Erasmus' Greek text of the Book of Revelation were BACK TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN VULGATE BY ERASMUS, BECAUSE SUPPOSEDLY HE HAD NO OTHER COPY OF THE GREEK TEXT OF REVELATION THAN THE CODEX HE BORROWED FROM REUCHLIN. This is the reverse of what Erasmus is saying. He refers right from the start to the Greek EXEMPLARS (plural) which he had access to, and this proves he had more than Reuchlin's codex. One of many confirmations Erasmus consulted a number of Greek manuscripts of the Book of Revelation before publishing his first edition is provided on that same page of his Annotationes, where he observes: "In the *Greek book-form manuscripts*³² which I have seen, the title was not 'of John the Evangelist', but 'of John the Theologos.'" Now, these Greek copies, he went on to say, did not have a few words in them at the end of the Book of Revelation, which were found in "our" texts, meaning in the Latin-language texts in common use in ecclesiastical circles in the West, and, more specifically, in Erasmus' editorial circle; however, "we", that is, Erasmus himself and his editorial companions, supplied *those same missing Greek words* on the basis of the Latin. Note that "our" (meaning, "available to us Western editors") is contrasted with "I" (meaning Erasmus himself), "I found in *our* texts ..." etc.; and "our" is contrasted with "Latin". Erasmus does not say he found words absent in the "Greek", but present in "our", copies, which "he" then supplied from "our" copies (which is what he would have said if he had "back translated"), but he says "we" (that is, he *and* his co-editors) supplied the missing Greek words "ex latinis". The last phrase could mean (a) "from [ex] Latin (texts)", or (b) "on the basis of [ex] Latin (texts)", or (c) "working from [ex] Latin (texts)", with the word "texts" in each case understood, or alternatively (d) "from the Latins", meaning from Western, or more specifically, Italian sources, "Latin" being a common literary term for Italian. As in sense (a) Erasmus could be understood to have "back translated" from Latin to Greek, Lee accused him of doing precisely that. Erasmus' repulsion at monkish "back translating" from Latin to Greek explains the outrage he directed at Lee ("Os impudens! Impudent mouth!") in response to his unwarranted accusation. He says (Opera, ix, 1706, col. 150): "Not content with that, he [Lee] accused me of an *impious crime*³³ ... that in the end of the Book of Revelation I added a small number of words in a Greek codex from our Latin copies". Erasmus, of course, in this respect, should be considered innocent, until, and unless, conclusively proven guilty. He promised *ibid.* to reply to the accusation in his response to Lee's note CCXLIII, and that is where we find Erasmus' own explanation of the phrase "ex latinis" in the Annotationes (Opera, ix, 1706, AD CCXLIII, col. 246, and see in full *infra*): Erasmus and his co-editors filled the missing Greek at Revelation 22. 19 temporarily with the Latin, awaiting the procurement of a Greek copy containing the

30 My emphasis.

31 Viz. the Book of Revelation.

32 My emphasis.

33 My emphasis.

missing verse. He said he included this fact in his notes (“Annotationes”), so that the reader would know what had been done, and this, it is to be understood, is what we find printed in the Annotationes to the 1516 edition. Evidently Erasmus meant “ex latinis” in senses (b) or (c) *supra*. In his *Apologia* addressed to Lee printed at Antwerp in 1520 (cited in full *infra*), this editorial process is explained in greater detail: Erasmus instructed his co-editors to obtain the missing Greek reading from the *Venetian* press run by the family and friends of Aldus, which had access to a range of Greek manuscripts not immediately available to him. In the mean time he wrote down in the copy forwarded to his co-editors the Latin passage which the Greek was intended to replace. They did as they were instructed. Venice being in Italy, sense (d) *supra* can be included in the range of possibility: that the missing Greek was supplied “from the Latins”, that is, from Italian sources. If Erasmus’ original note to his co-editors read something like “supply the Greek from the Aldine printers ‘ex latinis’”, it may have been unclear to the editors themselves, and to the printer of the remark in the Annotationes of the 1516 edition as published, precisely which meaning was intended by Erasmus: whether “working back *from the Latin* with which I have temporarily filled the lacuna, and providing the Greek equivalent”, or “*from the Latins*, i.e. from the Italians”. Either way, the missing Greek was supplied from the Venetian printers’ *Greek texts*, as Erasmus instructed. In reply to a flurry of accusations by Lee that Erasmus was guilty further of accommodating the Greek to the Latin, contrary to his own principles, Erasmus pointed out (*ibid.*) that the procedure resorted to here, — filling a perceived gap in the Greek text, — was necessary because of the unique manuscript tradition of the oft-disputed Apocalypse, as it was not in the better attested Gospels and Epistles; additionally, the Apocalypse, by its simple style and its orderly narration, made this omission, the final flourish at its end, and therefore easily lost in transmission, obvious. Erasmus’ statement in this connection (*ibid.*) that he and his co-editors “were not about to venture to do in the Gospels or in the Apostolic Epistles what we did here”, has likewise been misinterpreted, by those ignorant of the text-critical motive, as an admission of guilt on his part with respect to the editorial procedure just described, when it is simply a statement of fact.

Wetstein went one step further than Bengel in his criticism of Erasmus. In addition to copying Bengel’s mistake about Erasmus’ access to the single manuscript of Reuchlin, Wetstein misinterpreted the two detailed passages of Erasmus in the latter’s responses to Lee concerning the last few verses of the Book of Revelation, which are referred to briefly in the preceding paragraph. In the first passage Erasmus noted that a single verse, or a “few words” (*verba perpauca*), as he put it, were missing in the Greek, and that verse was Revelation 22. 19. Here, clearly Erasmus was referring to the Greek copies (plural) he had access to, including, but not limited to, the Reuchlin manuscript. Since Revelation 22. 19 in the original condemns anyone who “takes away” from the words of the book, one might think suspicion would fall initially on Latin scribes for having deliberately omitted the verse in their Greek texts, in order to cast doubt on the orthodoxy of the Greek copies. However, Erasmus thought scribal error was to blame, through “homeoteleuton”, that is, that the scribe saw “this book” at the end of a line in verse 18 and wrongly skipped over the intervening phrases to recommence his copying at the next occurrence of “this book” in verse 19. As he said, this was a common source of scribal omissions in the medieval manuscripts. Erasmus went on to say that in the process of editing his text of the Greek Testament he supplied the missing words from “our Latin copies” (meaning the Latin texts available to Erasmus and his co-editors, which contained the verse) and marked what he had done in the accompanying annotations, leaving a gap in the Greek which could be filled when a Greek copy with the missing verse was found. As we shall see in the second quotation *infra*, the missing Greek text was inserted by

Erasmus' fellow-editors before the text was published. Wetstein ridiculously misinterpreted this quite correct editorial procedure as an admission by Erasmus that he "back translated" from the Latin in his published Greek Testament.

Erasmus' words are as follows, first in Latin, then in translation (Wetstein, Prolegomena in Novum Testamentum, 1764, p. 331f., citing Erasmus "contra Leum §. 243" = Opera, ix, 1706, AD CCXLIII, col. 246):

"Quoniam Graecis nunquam magnopere placuit liber Apocalypseos, rarus habetur apud illos. Itaque quum cuperemus nihil abesse nostrae Editione, aegre extorsimus ab Inclyto viro Ioanne Capnione vestustissimum Codicem, Commentarium habentem in hoc opus. Ex eo contextus verba describenda curavimus. In calce vero scribarum incuria deerant haec: *Et si quis diminuerit de verbis libri Prophetiae huius, auferet Deus partem eius de libro Vitae et de Civitate sancta, et de his, quae scripta sunt in isto libro.* Sensimus autem scribam per eam occasionem errasse, quod quum bis ponatur *in isto libro*, ille ad posterius oculos deflexerit, relictis quae sunt in medio. Siquidem ad nullum lapidem frequentius impingunt librarii. Dubium non erat, quin essent omissa, et erant perpauca. Proinde nos, ne hiaret lacuna, ex nostris Latinis supplevimus Graeca, Quod ipsum tamen non nolimus latere lectorem, fassi in Annotationibus, quid a nobis esset factum, vt si quid dissiderent verba nostra ab his, quae posuisset autor huius operis, lector nactus exemplar restituerit."

Translation: "Because the Book of Revelation never particularly suited the Greeks, it is rarely found among them. And so, since we were desirous that our Edition³⁴ should be remiss in no respect, with considerable effort we extorted out of that Illustrious man John Capnio³⁵ a very ancient codex, which contained a Commentary to this work. From that we could ensure the words that belong together were correctly transcribed. But at the end³⁶ the following words were missing by a scribal error: 'And if anyone shall take away from the words of the prophecy of this book, God shall take his part out of the book of Life and from the Holy City, and from those things which are written in this book.' But our impression was that a scribe had made a mistake in that instance, since, as the words 'in this book' occur twice, his eyes passed involuntarily over to the latter occurrence, thus omitting the phrases in between. And indeed, book-writers make no mistake more frequently than this. There was no doubt these words had been omitted by error, and that their number was small. Therefore, to avoid a gap in the text, we made good the Greek from our Latin copies. But since we did not want this to escape the notice of the reader, we made mention of what we had done in the annotations, so that if our words differed in any way from those which the author of this work originally set down here, the reader once having procured a copy would be able to restore the original."

Erasmus incidentally notices here "words that belong together" (contextus verba) could be discovered using the commentary in the Reuchlin manuscript. The interweaving of the Biblical text and the

34 I.e. Erasmus' first edition of the Greek text.

35 Reuchlin.

36 Of the Book of Revelation.

commentary has been imagined by Erasmus' critics as a hindrance to the procurement of the true reading (as if words of the commentary could be, and were, mistaken for Biblical text by Erasmus), when, in fact, this was the reason he particularly valued it: for if, by some scribal error, the wording of the text of Revelation itself had become corrupt, the interwoven commentary would ensure, by its discursive description, what the original reading should have been. Erasmus shows us how he used it to his advantage in the passage of the Book of Revelation concerning the church of Ephesus (Rev. 2. 3). As reproduced in the Reuchlin codex, the text read *ebaptisas*, "thou hast baptized", when the commentary in the same codex showed no reference to baptism. Hence Erasmus suspected, correctly, a scribal error, though he was not able to restore the correct reading in his first edition. In addition, as proven when Reuchlin's codex was rediscovered by Delitzsch in the mid-nineteenth century, the commentary was ascribed in that codex to Hippolytus c. AD 200. That is why Erasmus valued it highly, as it could be presumed to reflect the exegesis of the pre-Nicene sub-Apostolic fathers of the school of St. John himself, the author of the Book of Revelation, Hippolytus being the disciple of Irenaeus, Irenaeus of Polycarp and Polycarp of St. John. Though the commentary was reworked by Andreas and Arethas in much later times, there seems to good reason to doubt its being, indeed, in its most basic and original form, the work of Hippolytus.

Wetstein went on to quote the other passage from Erasmus' *Apologia* addressed to Lee (cited as "Antwerp 1520") in which Erasmus talked about the same missing portion of the Greek text at the end of the Book of Revelation. This passage detailed how, when he was absent from Basle, and had only the text of Reuchlin available to him, Erasmus was still not able to supply the missing verse in the Greek, because Reuchlin's text omitted several "verses" at the end of the Book of Revelation. He then sent a copy edited from Reuchlin's Greek text to his editorial companions, in such a way that the Greek could be inserted in the proper place, and telling his editors that they should supply this missing Greek from the "Aldine edition". Here Erasmus was referring to the Greek Testament being prepared at that time by the family and friends of the printer Aldus in Venice. This Aldine text was not published till 1518, one complete year and more after Erasmus' first edition of 1516, but it had been in preparation for several years prior. It was based, in part, on manuscripts differing from those used by Erasmus. In this case, clearly, Erasmus had information that the Aldine edition contained the missing verse, and, indeed, in the 1518 Aldine edition, as eventually published, Revelation 22. 19 is identical to the wording in Erasmus' first edition. In view of the speed with which Erasmus is known to have arranged for the printing of his first edition, it is probable the missing Greek reading was conveyed to Erasmus' co-editors in Basle by letter from Venice. We now know where Erasmus obtained his Greek text for the single verse which was missing in his other Greek copies and which was absent (with a whole set of verses) in the Reuchlin codex because of the missing last page: Erasmus' co-workers procured it from the Aldine Greek Testament in its unpublished form. There were accompanying annotations in the editorial process, telling the reader the Latin was a temporary expedient. This whole section was similarly misinterpreted by Wetstein, and in addition to presuming Erasmus "back translated" from the Latin in his first edition as published, he additionally, though less importantly, saw a contradiction between the "few words" of the single verse missing, according to the first quotation, and the several "verses" mentioned in the second, though Erasmus was talking about different episodes: the first related to the Greek codices (plural) referred to constantly by Erasmus, which omitted the single verse cited here, and the second to the unique Reuchlin codex, which omitted all the last few verses. Of course, the confusion existed only in Wetstein's mind, and resulted from his swallowing the original lie

that Erasmus had access to no more than a single manuscript.

Again Erasmus' own words in Latin are followed by a translation (Wetstein *ibid.*, p. 332, citing Erasmus' *Apologia ad Leum*, Antwerp, 1520 [no page numbers]):

“In calce Apocalypsis in exemplari, quod tum nobis erat vnicum, nam is liber apud Graecos rarum est inuentu, deerat unus atque alter versus. Eos nos addidimus secuti Latinos codices. Et erant eiusmodi, vt ex his, quae praecesserant, possent reponi. Cum igitur Basileam mitterem recognitum exemplar, scripsi amicis, vt ex editione Aldina restituerent eum locum. Nam mihi nondum emtum erat hoc opus. Id ita, vt iussi, factum est.”

Translation: “At the end of the Book of Revelation, in the copy which on that occasion was the only one available to us (for that book is rarely found amongst the Greeks), more than one verse was missing. Those we added following the Latin codices. And it was done in such a way, that they could be restored to their rightful place following those that preceded. When therefore I sent off a revised copy to Basle, I wrote my companions that they should restore that passage from the Aldine edition. For that work was not yet in my possession. It was done precisely as I ordered.”

Erasmus refers in both these citations to the fact he supplied the gap *initially* from Latin codices, awaiting the procurement of the Aldine Greek text. These passages were written by way of reply to the unwarranted accusation of Lee, that Erasmus' reference to “supplying” the missing words from “Latin” manuscripts in his *Annotationes* meant he was guilty of the very “back translating” he condemned. Erasmus thus clarified the very brief statement in the *Annotationes*. If any of his co-editors had mentioned the temporary Latin expedient, it could have been seized on unjustly by his enemies as evidence of “back translating”. By describing his editorial procedure minutely, Erasmus may have hoped to dispel any doubts arising from that ambiguity.

It should be said here Wetstein, like Bengel, had reasons of his own for questioning the authenticity of the text published by Erasmus. Wetstein held Socinian (“Arian”) beliefs, opposed to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. These would naturally lead him to reject readings in the Received Text supportive of that same doctrine. According to Wetstein himself it was his visit to Bentley in England which inspired Bentley to reject Erasmus' text in favor of a Vulgate-like text. Bentley's theories met with stiff opposition in eighteenth-century England, and Wetstein fell into disfavor likewise on the Continent when his Socinian sympathies became known.

The following are quotations from Tregelles in the nineteenth century, showing how he seized on Bengel's speculation, like Wetstein had done in the eighteenth, and turned it, in his case, into the prevailing text-critical myth, the very cornerstone of the nineteenth-century assault on the *Textus Receptus*, that Erasmus “back translated” from the Latin. (My emphases in italics.) Be it noted this is

the same Tregelles who resisted vociferously Erasmus' claim that Greek manuscripts had been emended deliberately to agree with the Latin. I quote (An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament, London, 1854, p. 21):

“For the Apocalypse he³⁷ had but one mutilated MS., borrowed from Reuchlin, in which the text and commentary were intermixed almost unintelligibly. And thus he used here and there the Latin Vulgate for his guide, retranslating into Greek as well as he could. This was the case with regard to the last six verses, which from the mutilated condition of his MS. were wholly wanting.”

My comments: The total fallacy of these assertions has been demonstrated *supra*. Notice Tregelles in this instance does not cite Erasmus' own Latin, as he does in the two cases *infra*, perhaps because Erasmus' use of the plural “exemplaribus” (“copies”) in his very description of how he compared the readings in *several Greek codices* with the fuller Latin texts at the end of the Apocalypse, shows quite clearly, to any unbiased mind, he had more than Reuchlin's Greek codex available to him. If that is the true reason for Tregelles' failure to cite Erasmus verbatim, then he must be judged malicious, rather than merely ignorant, in his scathing attack. The improbability that Tregelles misunderstood the import of Erasmus' Latin in the two cases *infra* referred to as “proof”, points inevitably in the same direction, though it is at odds with Tregelles' habitual posture, which was that of a fervent defender of the inspired original text, as he imagined it, underlying our present copies. Tregelles' tainted account has been adopted uncritically, in view of the reputation he enjoyed, even by scholars of a more conservative persuasion, who otherwise would be deemed supporters of the Textus Receptus.

To continue the quotation from Tregelles (*ibid.*): “In other places, also, he³⁸ used the Latin Vulgate to supply what he supposed to be deficient in his MSS., in the same manner in which the Complutensian editors had done, only with greater frequency

(*Ibid.* p. 23:) “In *proof* that Erasmus at times used the Vulgate to amend his Greek MSS., where he thought them defective, we need only turn to his annotations for *proof*. Thus, Acts ix. 5, 6, we find in the annotations: “Durum est tibi.) In graecis codicibus id non additur hoc loco, cum mox sequatur, Surge; sed aliquanto inferius, cum narratur haec res.”³⁹ And yet in his text there is the full passage, answering to the Latin,⁴⁰ *skleron soi pros kentra laktizein: tremon te kai thambon, eipen, kurie ti me theleis poiesai? kai o kurios pros auton, anastethi,*⁴¹ instead of the simple reading *alla anastethi.*⁴²”

37 Erasmus.

38 That is, Erasmus.

39 Erasmus' Latin means literally: “It is hard for thee) In the Greek book-form manuscripts that is not added, which follows presently, Arise; but it appears a little further on, when the narrative gets round to it.”

40 The following italicized passages are in Greek script in Tregelles.

41 Which means: “[Jesus speaking] It is hard for you [Paul] to kick against the pricks. And trembling and amazed, he [Paul] said, Lord, what would You have me to do? And the Lord said to him, Arise.”

42 Which means “But arise”.

My comments: Tregelles fails to translate Erasmus' Latin, which he takes to be "proof" that Erasmus back translated from the Latin Vulgate, but the Latin means literally: "It is hard for thee) In the Greek book-form manuscripts that is not added, which follows presently, Arise; but it appears a little further on, when the narrative gets round to it." What Erasmus is commenting on is the account of the conversion of Paul, or Saul, — as he was known at the time, — where Jesus appeared in a supernatural light, and said to Paul, "I am Jesus Whom you persecute. It is hard for you (Paul) to kick against the pricks. Trembling and amazed, he (Paul) said, Lord, what would You have me do? And the Lord said to him, Arise, and go into the city [Damascus] and it will be told you what you must do." What Erasmus is saying is that the Greek book-form manuscripts he had access to did not have the phrase "Arise etc ..." immediately following the phrase "I am Jesus Whom you persecute", but a little later on, with intervening phrases, "It is hard for you ... Trembling and amazed etc. ...", following the one and preceding the other. That is all. Erasmus, in other words, knew of texts which omitted the intervening phrases, and he is noting his Greek copies included them, and therefore he retained them. And that clearly is the true reading, because otherwise we would have a nonsensical juxtaposition: "I am Jesus whom you persecute. But Arise, go into the city, etc.", so much as to say, "Yes you are persecuting me, but, never mind, Saul, go into Damascus and I shall tell you can do for me in future"! Tregelles turns Erasmus' meaning completely around and, astonishingly, takes him to be saying that his Greek copies did *not* include the whole of the passage following the phrase "I am Jesus Whom you persecute", namely, the combination of phrases "It is hard for you etc., through, Trembling and shaking etc., ..." all the way to "Arise etc. ...", and that therefore he back translated the required Greek from the Latin Vulgate! The whole transaction is a fantasy. Actually, Erasmus makes no mention of Latin here in any context, and he may be referring to Greek texts, or texts in some other language, or quoted by ancient authors, which omitted the intervening phrases. That the Vulgate happened to coincide in this instance with the Greek texts of Erasmus is an irrelevance. Tregelles presumes, and it can be only because he wants to presume, Erasmus back translated.

Continuing the quotation from Tregelles (*ibid.*): "Again, on Acts viii. 37, the note is, "Dixit autem Philippus, Si credis &c.) et usque ad eum locum. Et jussit stare currum, non reperi in Graeco codice, quanquam arbitror omissum librariorum incuria. Nam et haec in quodam codice graeco asscripta reperi sed in margine."⁴³ And this verse, little as is its claim to be considered part of Holy Scripture, was inserted by Erasmus, as being supposed to have been incorrectly omitted in his MSS.; and from his edition, this and similar passages have been perpetuated, just as if they were undoubtedly genuine."

My comments: Again Tregelles invents a "back translation" when Erasmus is talking about something else. Erasmus says this passage was omitted in "the Greek book-form manuscript" (singular) that is, the one he had been following principally up to that point (because it is known, and widely acknowledged, he had more than one for Acts), but he "also" found it written "at this place" (asscripta means literally "written at", that is, as the context shows "written at this place") in one book-form manuscript "in the margin". His use of the word "also" at the beginning of the last sentence, shows he had "also" found it

⁴³ Erasmus' Latin means: "Now Philip said, If you believe, etc.) and so forth to that place in the text 'And he commanded the chariot to stand still' I did not find in the Greek book-form manuscript, although I think it was omitted through a scribal slip. For I found this also written at this place in a certain Greek book-form manuscript, but in the margin."

in at least one other Greek manuscript, and there in the body of the text. Tregelles' fantasy dissolves in the face of what Erasmus actually says, but here, too, Tregelles fails to provide a translation of Erasmus' Latin and the reader is left to presume he has fairly represented Erasmus' sense. A casual reading of the Latin, along with Tregelles' confident assertions, might give some credibility to his myth in the mind of a careless student, but since the two Latin passages *supra* alone are quoted as "proof" for Tregelles' belittling of Erasmus' remarkable achievement, the Latin should certainly have been examined more closely by the scholars, and in some cases, great scholars, who blindly followed Tregelles' destructive criticism.

Tregelles rounds off his textual assassination of Erasmus by lavishly praising the Complutensian text produced by Cardinal Ximenes as a foil (*ibid.*): "In such cases, we repeatedly find the Complutensian editors, in spite of their reverence for the Vulgate, give the Greek as they found it in their copies; although from their mode of editing they must have been very well aware of the difference between it and the Latin by the side; where, in fact, they fill up the Greek column in such a manner as to make the variation conspicuous. In such places, if the Complutensian text had ever acquired a place in common use, the many who now uphold what they read, traditionally, just because they are accustomed to it, would have been as strenuous in repudiating words as spurious, as they now are in defending them as genuine."

When Reuchlin's codex was discovered by Delitzsch in the middle of the 19th century, one might have expected the conjectures built on the myth that this was Erasmus' sole authority for the Apocalypse to be exposed for the fantasies they were. That was not to be. On the contrary, Delitzsch fell into the mold of the ax-wielding, Erasmus-bashing, anti-Textus-Receptus, pseudo-rationalist text-critic made fashionable by Tregelles. The two formed a kind of text-critical alliance, the sole purpose of which, so far as is evidenced by the meager information published immediately following the discovery, was to do down Erasmus' use of Reuchlin's codex. In view of its historical importance, a professional edition of the text is the least they might have provided, but a few cursory notes were all, in the event, that were offered to the public. In these, however, no opportunity was lost to take a swipe at Erasmus. Delitzsch's obscurantism in his treatment of Erasmus' editorial work is remarkable. It is reminiscent of Tregelles' attitude, reflected in the citations given *supra*, though the tone has shifted from that of illustration and demonstration to that of confident assertion and undeniable fact. More than once Delitzsch contradicts the plain statements of Erasmus that he employed several *copies* (plural) of the Apocalypse, and insists he had only Reuchlin's codex. Delitzsch's treatment is found in *Handschriftliche Funde*, Heft 1, Leipzig 1861. He marks points of interest in the Reuchlin codex vis-à-vis Erasmus' text. Straightaway, at Revelation 1. 2, Delitzsch quotes Erasmus' comment that he found a small passage in the "Greek *codices*⁴⁴" that was not in the Latin copies, yet he refuses to accept the statement on the face of it, since Erasmus, he assumes as a matter of course, "only had Reuchlin's codex". He therefore imagines Erasmus must be referring here, indirectly, to the Greek manuscripts used by Valla, whose commentary with notes was highly prized by Erasmus. Again, on Revelation 1. 7, Erasmus observes in his 1527 edition: "This is the reading in the Greek *copies*⁴⁵ 'kings and priests'".⁴⁶

44 Plural, my emphasis.

45 Plural, my emphasis.

46 In Greek script.

Also the Spanish copy had ‘kingdom’ for ‘kings’⁴⁷”. On this very straightforward statement Delitzsch comments, without ado, “The Graeca exemplaria⁴⁸ are simply the Reuchlin Codex”! Another blank refusal to accept Erasmus’ factual assertion that he used several Greek copies for the Apocalypse. Similarly, on Revelation 10. 2, Delitzsch remarks: “*Biblaridion*⁴⁹ ‘Little book’ ... In later editions of the Annotations, Erasmus says, not so frankly as he was accustomed,⁵⁰ ‘Certain⁵¹ had *biblaridion*.’” On this innocent assertion, Delitzsch makes the expected comment: “These *quidam*⁵² are simply the Reuchlin Codex”. The pontifications of Delitzsch quoted here are aside from the derogatory remarks scattered throughout on Erasmus’ methods and motives, and the wholly illusory aspersions further cast on him in the extensive notes to Revelation 22. 16ff., where he is imagined, of course, to have “back translated” from the Latin Vulgate. A less impartial and text-critically neutral *tour-de-force* it would be difficult to imagine.

6. A SUMMARY OF OTHER EARLY PRINTED WITNESSES TO THE BYZANTINE TEXT.

a) The Complutensian

The absurd and excessive veneration of the Complutensian editors for the Latin Vulgate is proved by the following sentence from their Preface to the Old Testament: “We locate the Latin translation of the Blessed Jerome in the middle, as though between the Synagogue⁵³ and the Eastern Church,⁵⁴ placing, as it were, Jesus, that is, the Roman or Latin Church, in the middle between the two thieves on either side.” The New Testament Greek text is of the Byzantine type, but inferior, in respect of its congruence with the Textus Receptus, to the text of Erasmus, to the Aldine, and to that of Colinaeus. Nevertheless its general agreement with the text used to form the Stephanus 1550 was, according to Stephanus himself, “remarkable” (Preface to the 1546 “O mirificam” edition).

b) The Aldine Edition

47 In Greek script.

48 “Greek copies.”

49 In Greek script, instead of *Bibliaridion*, both meaning “little book”.

50 *Sic*.

51 Latin *quidam*, in the plural number, viz. copies.

52 ‘Certain’ viz. copies.

53 Meaning the Hebrew text.

54 Meaning the Septuagint Greek text.

This has been falsely claimed to be a reproduction of Erasmus' first edition, with unique variations. On the contrary, as has been demonstrated, Erasmus used its unpublished readings in at least one instance, whilst working on his first edition, to supply text missing in the manuscripts available to him. The Aldine edition of 1518 agrees well with Erasmus' text and is an independent, and early, witness to the veracity of the Textus Receptus.

c) The Edition of Colinaeus.

As with the Aldine edition, the edition of Simon Colinaeus, Paris, 1534, has been assumed to be largely a reproduction of Erasmus' text, with variations. The truer estimate would be that it supports the veracity of Erasmus' text, and consequently of the Textus Receptus.

7. THE EDITIO REGIA OF STEPHANUS 1550

The number of manuscripts used by Stephanus in the production of his first three editions was elucidated by Huyshe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. His findings can be downloaded in PDF format [here](#). A summary is found in *The British Magazine* vol. 3, London 1833, pp. 285:

“Upon his⁵⁵ petition to his high-minded patron, Francis I.,⁵⁶ he was accommodated with the use of fifteen MSS. from the royal library; out of these, and some one private MS., he formed the text of the “O mirificam,” of 1546.⁵⁷ This stock he nearly doubled while he was preparing for the glory of his life, the folio of 1550; and when the text of that splendid edition had been formed from it, he selected seven of the fifteen royal MSS. and six of the private, numbered 2-14, to give opposing⁵⁸ readings to his first volume (the Gospels and the Acts) which together with those of one of the previous editions,⁵⁹ No. 1, are given in the inner margin. As a sufficient number of these thirteen MSS. contained the epistles of St. Paul, and the remainder of the third part of the sacred text (the catholic epistles) there was no alteration made in the opposing materials for giving various readings thus far, in the second volume. But in the Revelations (the 4th part of the sacred text) all the thirteen of the first selection failed. A new selection then became necessary, and No. 15 was taken out of the royal MSS., and No 16 out of the private MSS., with the printed edition,⁶⁰ to furnish opposing⁶¹ readings to the new text, there. A reading or two was given from each of the two last selected MSS., in the previous part of the work, probably

55 Stephanus'.

56 The king of France.

57 Stephanus' first edition.

58 I.e. variant.

59 The Complutensian.

60 The Complutensian.

61 I.e. variant.

(as I have imagined) to shew that the royal MS., No. 15, contained the whole of this second volume;⁶² and that the private one, No. 16, contained the whole New Testament. The original set of MSS. then amounted to little more than half of what were obtained in the whole, for the text of the folio; and exactly half of that set, (viz., eight of the royal MSS.) and about one half of those that were obtained afterwards, together with the Complutensian print, made up the set that was taken first and last to oppose⁶³ the text of the folio in the marginal readings. Such was the theory of a pamphlet⁶⁴ entitled “Specimen of an intended publication &c”⁶⁵ namely, that Stephanus had fifteen MSS. from the royal library, but that he had, in all, 16 MSS., “posterioribus diebus,”⁶⁶ for the first edition of 1546; that these were increased, as might naturally be expected, by his keeping his son so long searching the libraries of Italy, to thirty, and more, for the folio;⁶⁷ and that a selection was made out of the whole, to furnish opposing⁶⁸ readings in the margin. ”

Huyshe’s conclusions are based on the totality of written statements in relation to his sources by Stephanus himself, and not on *a priori* assumptions that Stephanus was mistaken or misleading, which is the usual approach of text-critics. The Royal Library drawn on by Stephanus had benefited recently from the attention of the Greek scholar John Lascaris (1445-1535). Not only an evangelist of Greek language and literature in Renaissance Italy, and a member of the Greek Academy of the printer Aldus Manutius in Venice, Lascaris was also a pioneer himself in the printing of Greek texts. He had fled Constantinople with his father when it fell to the Turks, and in his new home of Italy had served Lorenzo de’ Medici on a mission to Greece, with permission from the Sultan, aimed at recovering valuable Greek manuscripts. He made a second journey for the same purpose somewhat later. He brought trunk-loads of rare and precious manuscripts across to Italy as a result, and subsequently helped Francis I, Stephanus’ royal patron, furnish his library at Fontainebleau on the outskirts of Paris. The Medicis’ personal library wound up in the French Royal Library, too, through the marriage of Catherine de’ Medici with Henry II, the successor to Francis I, in 1533. We may well believe Stephanus when he says his manuscripts from the Royal Library had “that appearance of antiquity which calls forth a feeling, almost, of adoration”.

The folio edition of 1550 is the foundational Textus Receptus. The first edition, the “O mirificam” of 1546, like almost all first editions, was capable of improvement, and was so improved in the second of 1549, but mainly in the third of 1550, by reconsulting the precious manuscripts from the Royal Library. The fourth edition of 1551, on the other hand, was produced at a time when Stephanus no longer had access to those manuscripts, and he was compelled to leave Paris because of threats from his ecclesiastical enemies jeopardizing his life and liberty. The manuscripts from the Royal Library were returned, according to Stephanus’ own testimony, to the Royal Library, and, like those used for the Complutensian, have never been seen again. Stephanus’ fourth edition of 1551 was done for the benefit of Latin readers, not principally as a separate edition of the Greek text. The Greek text in the edition of

62 Viz. the Pauline epistles.

63 I.e. give variants for.

64 By Huyshe.

65 London, 1827.

66 “At a later date”.

67 Viz. the Editio Regia of 1550.

68 I.e. variant.

1551, almost identical, of course, to that of 1550, stood in the middle column between the Vulgate's Latin on the left and Erasmus' Latin on the right, presumably by way of mockery of the Complutensian, and commentary on the comparative worth of Erasmus' Latin, as if his is the "thief on the right". Where this printing differs from the 1550, excepting mere printing errors, the 1550 is always to be preferred, considering Stephanus' reduced circumstances at the time and his lack of access to the Royal Library. Later some of Stephanus' secondary manuscripts passed to Beza, who also had notes of Robert's son Henri collating those and other manuscripts, some discovered by Henri in Italy. Where Beza preferred this or that reading for his various editions of the New Testament, he relied mainly on these resources. His formed the basis of the Elzevir editions, which provided the form of text received on the Continent. However, Beza was more interested in producing a Latin translation for regular use by the Christian public, and not another Greek edition. At no time, more importantly, did he have access to the manuscripts from the Royal Library, which are the basis, letter by letter, of the *Textus Receptus* of Stephanus 1550. The Elzevir editions, therefore, are not in the same category as the Stephanus 1550, and do not represent the Received Text *sensu stricto*.

The following quotations from standard historical authorities are intended to background the life and work of Lascaris and to illustrate the high quality of the Greek and other manuscripts in the French Royal Library at this period. First a summary of Lascaris' life from Aldus Manutius and the *Development of Greek Script and Type in the Fifteenth Century*, by Nicolas Barker, 2nd ed., Chiswick Book Shop, 1992, p. 15f.:

"Janus Lascaris was arguably the greatest of all Greek scholars of the first generation after the Fall of Constantinople. Born in or near the city about 1445, he escaped with his family who fled first to the Peloponnese, and thence c. 1458-60 to Crete. His ability must already have been evident, for Cardinal Bessarion asked him to come to Venice, whence he sent him to the University of Padua. There he studied under Demetrius Chalcondyles and probably remained in Bessarion's service until his death in 1472. At this point there is a gap in what is known of Lascaris' life. In March 1472 Chalcondyles with Theodore Gaza and Andronicus Callistos had gone to Bologna to pay their respects to Bessarion. Chalcondyles was clearly restless and considering other projects, which he may well have discussed with Lascaris; eventually he decided to go to Florence, in succession to Argyropoulos, and he arrived there in September 1475. It is possible that he and Lascaris had been together in the interval; it was probably about 1475 that Lascaris too went to Florence, also to teach Greek. Among his pupils was Marcus Musurus, who became the chief editor of Aldus' Greek texts. Between about 1489 and 1492 Lascaris was sent by Lorenzo de' Medici on two extensive journeys to search for Greek manuscripts in the Levant. While in Constantinople he made a contract with Niccolò da Siena, a doctor living there, for the purchase of manuscripts. The contract is dated 17 December 1491, and among the authors listed are Plato, Plutarch (both first published by Aldus) and Lucian (first published by Lascaris himself); one of the witnesses is 'Aristobulus yerodionaconus', the son of Michael Apostolis

"Returning to Florence five days before the death of his patron Lorenzo, he soon set up his own Greek press, using the capital alphabet only. His reasons for this, that the letter forms hitherto used were neither easy to print nor hung well together and were altogether too interwoven and convoluted, led

him to revive the ‘ancient forms of the letters, now long obsolete’, which he considered much better adapted to printing, for the printers and other craftsmen associated with them. His first three books are all in capitals, without accents; accents and lower-case alphabet, of the ‘convoluted’ form, were introduced about 1495, inspired, Proctor suggests, by the example of Aldus. The press of Lascaris survived the fall of Piero de’ Medici and the entry into Florence of Charles VIII of France. In August 1495 he drew up an inventory of the Medici manuscripts which detained him in Florence until October. Pretty soon after, he followed Charles VIII back to France, but not before he had time to visit Venice where Aldus was printing Theocritus and other pieces (in the first major piece of Greek printing), and to correct some proofs, possibly *currente prelo*. Knös suggests that he joined the court at Lyon in November.

“The rest of Lascaris’ life was preoccupied with the creation of a permanent base for the teaching of Greek, first abortively in France and then successfully with the establishment of Pope Leo X’s college on the Quirinal at Rome. His life was spent between France and Italy; he died in Rome in 1535. His other main interest had been the reclamation of his native country from the Turks, and this dominated his time as French ambassador at Venice (1503-13). He also found time to aid his fellow Greeks there; his charities are recorded in Musurus’ preface to the Aldine Pausanias (1516). He was a member of the Aldine academy. Aldus dedicated his edition of the *Rhetores Graeci* to him in terms which show how much he owed Lascaris, for encouragement, help and manuscripts. He was, in short, the Colossus of Greek scholarship in the first generation of the Greek press.”

Next from *The Literature of the French Renaissance*, vol. 1, Cambridge, 1904, by A. A. Tilley, p. 18f.

“In 1522 Budé had been appointed to the newly-created office of ‘master of the king’s library’ at Fontainebleau, and not long afterwards the king began to form there a collection of Greek manuscripts. His first acquisition was made in 1529; it consisted of fifty volumes purchased for him by Girolamo Fondulo, a native of Cremona and a man of considerable learning. In 1542 he bought the collection of Georges de Selve, and in 1545 Cardinal d’Armagnac presented him with twenty-four volumes. The chief hunting-ground for Greek manuscripts at this time was Venice, and here the copying of manuscripts formed a regular industry among the exiled Greeks.⁶⁹ About 1540 the most renowned of these copyists, Angelo Vergecio, was persuaded to enter the French king’s service.

“In 1544 Francis moved to Fontainebleau the library at Blois which he had inherited from his predecessor Louis XII. It contained 1891 volumes, including about forty manuscripts which Janus Lascaris had brought to France in 1508. The great majority of these volumes consisted of manuscripts, there being only 109 printed volumes. In 1545 Vergecio made a list of the Greek manuscripts, which amounted to about 190. In a library like this which had a quasi-public character manuscripts were of more service to learning at this stage of its development than printed books, for they were freely lent to various Paris publishers, and books were thus rapidly multiplied. Before 1528 hardly any Greek books were printed in France, but in that year a real start was made, and four Greek books, all of some

⁶⁹ Exiled, that is, from Constantinople and the Muslim-occupied areas of Greece and the neighboring territories.

importance, were printed. In 1530 the work received an impulse from an unexpected quarter, for no less than eleven Greek books were printed in that year by Gerardus Morrhuis in the Sorbonne itself. One of them was a Greek-Latin lexicon. Still greater encouragement came from the appointment of a king's printer for Greek in 1539. The first holder of the post, Conrad Néobar, died a year after his appointment, and he was succeeded in 1540 by the well-known Robert Éstienne,⁷⁰ who already held the office of king's printer for Hebrew and Latin."

The ultimate source of some of the most valued Greek manuscripts brought across to Italy and then into France by exiled Greek scholars was the monastic center at Mount Athos:

Edward Edwards. writing in *The Library Chronicle* Vol. 1, 1884 p. 106f.:

"The monks⁷¹ contrived to make fair terms with the Mohammedan conquerors of Constantinople. For a small yearly tribute, honestly paid, they obtained confirmation of their privileges, which were honourably observed. It is said that when under Mohammedan rule the number of the ascetics reached to 10,000; but long before they attained to these large numbers, MSS. and libraries had ceased to be a primary object of care.

"Some of the first and most precious of the early book-treasures of Mount Athos came from Caesarea.⁷² Thence, for example, came a portion of a Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul, transcribed at Caesarea in the sixth century, bearing on its face the certificate of its transcriber, and made, there is good reason to believe, from a MS. in the handwriting of St. Pamphilus.

"If the good monks of S. Athanasius, who had treasured up this precious relic of the destroyed Caesarea, bringing with it associations for ever sacred, could have looked down upon their too-busy successor, Igoumenos or Abbot Macarius, who, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, plumed himself upon the energy with which he 'restored' his library and made it look respectable, — like some other 'restorers,' his congeners amongst ourselves, who hide Christian paintings, if they themselves are poor, behind whitewash; if rich, behind 'the best wainscot,' and who cut away Christian sculpture to make room for comfortable pews — they must have had a pang of horror. The too-antiquated MSS. were, thought Macarius, most usefully employed as stiffeners and end-papers for bindings of new ones. From S. Athanasius these relics came to Paris (hid in the bindings for which Macarius had used them), and they passed, with the noble collection of Seguier and of Coislin, to the Library of the Kings of France, as I have elsewhere related.

"Amongst the earlier explorers of these Monastic Libraries, when they had ceased to be amongst the

70 I.e. Stephanus.

71 Viz. of Mount Athos.

72 I.e. Neo-Caesarea, Kayseri in Turkey, an early center of Origenic Christianity.

primary objects of the care, the industry, and the pride of their owners, was John Lascaris, who is said on credible authority to have brought from Mount Athos about 200 volumes of Greek MSS. These, it is probable, were collected by Lascaris about the year 1480.

“Eventually, Abbot Macarius had successors even more unworthy than himself. Old travellers report that certain monks of S. Athanasius of a later date were such devoted lovers of the gentle craft, that when they ran short of appliances for attaching the bait to the line, they had recourse to the fly-leaves of early MSS., and when the fly-leaves were used up did not stop there. Others even sold manuscripts by the pound-weight to Turks of Salonica, to make cartridges.

“Yet, despite all these ravages, so rich were the libraries, so assiduous had been the labours of the monks of old time in the Convents of Monte Santo, that amongst the twenty subsisting communities recent explorers have reckoned an aggregate of about 8,000 manuscripts, Greek and other, ranging in date from the tenth to the sixteenth century. Those of the tenth century are especially numerous. Gospels and Psalters occur of all the schools of Eastern caligraphy — Greek, Roman, Cyrillic, Georgian, Armenian, Arabic. Greek fathers and Byzantine chroniclers are, of course, abundant. The few classical authors that occur in manuscript are of recent transcription, but most commonly they present themselves in the printed editions of Venice of the sixteenth century. Amongst these are many Aldines, especially at Xiropotamu, where there is also a considerable collection of the theology of the Reformation period, in German as well as in Latin.”

The work of Lascaris in Paris is summarized as follows by G. Sandy, *The Classical Heritage in France*, Brill, 2002:

“The classical literary riches of Italy had become known to French intellectuals in the course of the military campaigns waged in Italy between 1492 and 1518. Until that time, to rehearse Petrarch’s famous assessment, Greek works were scarcely known in western Europe outside of Italy. Janus Lascaris accompanied or followed King Charles VIII in 1495 from Naples to France. Thereafter, during his intermittent stays in France, among other duties to French kings from Charles VIII to François⁷³ I, he managed Louis XII’s library at Blois and later, along with Budé, that of François I when it was transferred in the late 1520s to Fontainebleau.

“At Blois Janus Lascaris collaborated in the management of the library with Claude de Seyssel, who produced several French translations of Greek works for Louis XII. De Seyssel had studied Greek in Italy at the University of Pavia and was thus able to appreciate the value of the library of the dukes of Milan that Louis XII took to Blois after the military campaigns of 1499 to ‘recover’ his duchy. The preface to his translation of Xenophon’s *Anabasis* and *Life of Cyrus* reports that Janus Lascaris, who had been hired by Louis XII to catalogue the Greek manuscripts in the collection, provided a

73 = Francis.

translation ‘de grégois en latin’⁷⁴ that de Seyssel in turn rendered in French. De Seyssel’s translation of Diodorus Siculus’ *History* (or *Bibliotheca*, as it is now called) underscores the rarity of Greek manuscripts in France at this time. He and Lascaris were able to provide the translation of only Books 18-20 (of the total 40 books), which they complemented with Plutarch’s *Life of Demetrius*, because the other books were not to be found. De Seyssel’s French translation of Appian was also based on Lascaris’ version.

“The Greek nucleus of the library at Fontainebleau comprised some 40 manuscripts brought to France in 1508 by Janus Lascaris. François I commissioned the Italian Gerolamo Fondulo to search in Italy for other Greek manuscripts. By 1529 this enterprise had enriched the royal collection at Fontainebleau by some 50 Greek manuscripts. François I also made use of various ambassadors to Venice, which as the principal point of entry to Italy for Byzantine refugees and as the beneficiary of Cardinal Bessarion’s legacy of Greek works was especially well endowed with Greek exemplars readily available for copying. Like Jean de Pins, George de Selve and George d’Armanac, who were prelates as well as ambassadors, Guillaume Pelicier, the bishop of Montpellier, took advantage of his ambassadorial posting to Venice to acquire Greek exemplars, employing on occasions at least twelve copyists. He seems to have been an especially benevolent employer, asking François I several times to provide him with money so that he could pay the copyists, ‘Lesquels pour estre pauvres et chassés de leur pays de Grece ne peulvent attendre longuement leur payment.’⁷⁵ During his first ambassadorship (1539-1542), Pelicier supervised the production of 136 Greek manuscripts, most of them secular and representing a rich cross section of ancient Greek literature, ranging from Aristotle and his commentators, medical and military writers to Homer and his commentators, Pindar and Aristophanes. Like Napoleon in Egypt almost 300 years later, the ambassadors were often accompanied by scholars who assisted in the enterprise of uncovering and interpreting the riches that were previously unknown in France. For instance, Pierre Danès joined Georges de Selve in Venice in 1535 and helped him procure Greek manuscripts. At Fontainebleau itself the French Crown employed the illustrious copyist Angelo Vergecio, who designed the Royal Greek types that were later (1552) purchased and used by Robert Éstienne.⁷⁶ The result of these and other efforts was that by the time of François I’s death in 1547 the royal collection contained between 500 and 600 Greek works that would eventually enable the Bibliothèque nationale de France to house the largest number of ancient Greek manuscripts in the world.

“Finally, under this heading of books and manuscripts a few words should be added about the printing of Greek books in France, since the topic is inextricably linked to the availability of Greek books there. The two names that were to become synonymous with the printing of Greek in France in the sixteenth century were Josse Bade and the Éstiennes⁷⁷. The son-in-law of a Lyon-based German printer, Bade became in turn the father-in-law of four Paris-based printers, most notably the elder Robert Éstienne (Robertus Stephanus), whose father, the elder Henri, had established a press in Paris near the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Éstienne family was to be intimately involved in Greek

74 ‘From Greek to Latin’.

75 ‘Who, being poor and chased out of their country of Greece, cannot afford to wait long for their money.’

76 Stephanus.

77 The Stephanus family.

printing and scholarship both in Paris and Geneva throughout most of the century, starting with the elder Henri's attendance at the lectures of the first royal readers in Greek at the newly founded Collège royal. As royal printer (*librarius regius*), the elder Robert Éstienne was reimbursed by the French Crown for the cost of the Greek Royal Types that had been designed in 1540 at Fontainebleau by François I's Greek scribe Angelo Vergecio and executed by the French engraver Claude Garamond in 1541. These types, the *typii regii*, were to be the model throughout Europe for approximately two centuries. Robert Éstienne used these types to print *editiones principes*, beginning with Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* in 1544 and concluding with the Appian of 1551."

As an example of the quality of Lascaris' MSS. the following is excerpted from "Demosthenes On the Crown", W. W. Goodwin, New York, 1905 p. 281f.

"The Manuscripts of the Oration on the Crown.

"1. The chief of all the Mss. of Demosthenes, the basis of the present text, is S[igma] or S, of the tenth century, written on parchment, no. 2934 of the Greek Mss. of the National Library of Paris. On its last leaf is written, in a hand of a later period, *Bibliion monês tôn Sôsandrôn*,⁷⁸ showing that it once belonged to a society of monks named after Sosander, who is not otherwise known. The manuscript first appears in Europe in the possession of Janos⁷⁹ Lascaris, a learned Greek, who left Constantinople after the Turkish capture and was in high favour with Lorenzo de' Medici at Florence. Lascaris was twice sent by Lorenzo to Greece and the neighbouring lands in search of manuscripts for the Medicean library. How rich a store he brought back to Florence may be seen from the curious manuscript now in the Vatican library, which was published by K. K. Müller in the *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* for 1884. This contains a wonderful list of 300 or 400 books which were "bought" for Lorenzo by Lascaris, and also a *pinax tôn bibliôn tou Laskareôs*, '*aper echei par' 'eautou*.⁸⁰ Among the latter we find *Dêmosthenês, pergamênon*.⁸¹ The same volume probably appears in a list of the books of Lascaris made after his death at Rome in 1535. Here we find *Dêmosthenês, palaios*,⁸² no. 34 (corrected to 35). In the catalogue of the books of Cardinal Ridolfi, who is said to have acquired the books of Lascaris after his death, we find "35. *Dêmosthenous logoi xb'* [Gk. = "62 Discourses of Demosthenes"]," evidently the same book.

"Ridolfi's manuscripts after his death came into the possession of Queen Catherine de' Medici. The title "Demosthenis Orationes" appears in a catalogue of the Queen's library, in the inventory of her goods after her death in 1589, and again in 1597 in the list of her books which had passed into the Royal library.⁸³ The Codex S[igma] still has a splendid binding of red leather, bearing the united arms of France and Navarre and monograms of Henry IV., with the date 1602. From this time it appears in

78 Gk. = "Book of the monastery of the Sosandrians".

79 Otherwise "Janus" and "John".

80 Gk. = "Table of the books of Lascaris, in his own possession".

81 Gk. = "Demosthenes, a parchment".

82 Gk. = "Demosthenes, ancient".

83 Of the king of France.

the various catalogues of the Royal library, until it was entered in the catalogue of 1740 with its present number 2934. We are therefore safe in assuming that S[igma] is one of the manuscripts which Lascaris, as the envoy of the Medici, brought to Florence from Greek lands at about the time of Lorenzo's death in 1492; and it may have come from Mount Athos, as Dindorf asserted.

“The manuscript is written with great care, in large square upright minuscules, which mark the transition from the uncial to the cursive text. *It is unquestionably by far the best manuscript of Demosthenes, and with its recently discovered companion L it forms a distinct class, which preserves a purer and older text than any others. The passages are few in which S[igma] and L₁ are not decisive against all other Mss.*⁸⁴”

The text of Stephanus' first edition of the Greek Testament of 1546, the “O mirificam”, was formed solely on the basis of the manuscripts from the Royal Library, but other texts provided support to that process, including the Complutensian, by way of collation. These supplementary texts agreed in a remarkable way with Stephanus' own authorities. So says Stephanus in his Preface to that edition: “Inasmuch as we were provided with several book-form manuscripts, having that appearance of antiquity which calls forth a feeling, almost, of adoration, — resources supplied to us without obstacle from the Royal Library, — we produced our edition from those, in such a way that we did not allow *a single letter to be included, which was not attested in the majority of them, and those the better quality books.*⁸⁵ In addition, we had the support of other texts, including the Complutensian edition, which Cardinal Franciscus Ximenes of Spain had instructed to be printed on the basis of the most ancient book-form manuscripts from the Library of the Pontiff Leo X. We found these, by the collation we undertook, to be most often in remarkable agreement with our texts.” (Latin: “Siquidem codices nacti aliquot ipsa uetustatis specie penè adorandos, quorum copiam nobis bibliotheca Regia facile suppeditauit, ex iis ita hunc nostrum recensuimus, ut nullam omnino literam secus esse pateremur, quam plures, ii que meliores libri, tanquam testes, comprobarent. Adiuti praetera sumus cum aliis, tum uerò Complutensi editione, quam ad uetustissimos Bibliothecae Leonis X. Pont. codices excudi iusserat Hispaniarum Cardinalis Franciscus Simenius: quos cum nostris miro consensu saepissime conuenire ex ipsa collatione deprehendimus.”) The “O mirificam”, in turn, formed the basis of the Editio Regia of 1550. The major difference was the 1550 benefited from the manuscripts Stephanus' son had gathered in Italy, in addition to those from the Royal Library, transcribed letter by letter in 1546, and still available for consultation and the confirmation of readings by Stephanus in Paris. It represented the acme of Stephanus' critical work, and the finest edition of the Textus Receptus. It was based on manuscripts far surpassing any in circulation today, manuscripts which were almost immediately thereafter confiscated, destroyed, or secreted in the vaults of the Vatican by the censors. Still they are faithfully represented for us in the text it, and it alone, preserved, by the providence of God, through the medium of print.

84 My emphasis: note the quality of Lascaris' MS.

85 My emphasis.