

Reply to Chris Stevens on Mark Billington and Peter Streitenberger, eds., *Digging for the Truth: Collected Essays Regarding the Byzantine Text of the Greek New Testament – A Festschrift in Honor of Maurice A. Robinson*, Norden: Focus Your Mission, 2014. ISBN 978-3-942729-81-9. Pp. 203. Hardback, €19.

- [1] I am grateful to Chris Stevens for his review of *Digging for the Truth* ([TC, volume 21](#)) but do not agree with his comment on my motivation. In paragraph 15 he writes,
“There is, however, one unstated feature that readers might perceive. While the articles are academic in tone, there is a sense the authors are defending a providential preservation of the Byzantine text form ... Timothy Finney reveals the motivation, ‘Does this mean that the New Testament is unreliable? God Forbid!’ ... The authors of this book believe in the divine preservation of the biblical documents, which is an acceptable evangelical position, and they are arguing that the preservation took place through the Byzantine text form.”
- [2] I can't speak for the other authors but beg to differ on my own view of the Byzantine text form. The final sentence of my article says, “I hope Dr Robinson will find this contribution interesting even though it stops short of endorsing the Byzantine variety as the initial text of the New Testament.” The context of my “God forbid” statement (a happy expression that I lifted from the Authorised Version of Paul's Letter to the Romans) is that I regard the New Testament text as reliable because it is based on a solid textual tradition where the great majority of variations can be eliminated from consideration because they are weakly attested or semantically insignificant.
- [3] There are findings in my contribution to the book that should generate interest. For example:
1. Multivariate analysis of a data set compiled by Dr Robinson from the UBS2 apparatus of the Gospel of Mark confirms the existence of a cluster of texts (P45, W, Theta, 28, 565, Sinaitic Syriac, Palestinian Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Origen) formerly known as the Caesarean text type.
 2. When a mode of analysis named classical multidimensional scaling is applied to the same data set it shows that Jerome's Vulgate lies between a group of Old Latin texts and the great cloud of Byzantine witnesses.
- [4] The second point has implications for the *terminus ante quem* of the Byzantine text. If Jerome started with texts like the above mentioned Old Latin group then the Vulgate's location in the classical scaling result implies that the "old Greek codices" he used to emend the text (*codicum Graecorum emendata collatione sed veterum*) were of the Byzantine type. This together with Jerome's view of the codices' age suggests that the Byzantine text type is older than generally thought.

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