

The Case for Regularizing GNT Text Accents Like Punctuation and Spelling

Dennis Kenaga

A. Introduction

The proposal of this work is that critical editors regularize their accent policy for the GNT text and indicate that their text accents now come from the minuscule accent rules and thus are editorial like their punctuation, rather than based strictly on MSS. The editors should publish the accent rules and stick to them and eliminate accent anomalies like συνιδῶσιν in 2 Corinthians 10:12, even if those anomalous accents are in the 9th century hand of the MSS.

This is not a proposal to promote arbitrary modern editorial accent rules over the rules that governed the accents seen in the original MSS. It is a decision to make the modern text accents follow the accent rules of the minuscules as now found in the uncials, but to override the rare variant accents that violate the minuscule rules. Editors already regularly override MSS accents with the oxytone and enclitic accents. The idea is that God's creation and his Logos are majestic and orderly, not characterized by original imperfections that somebody thinks might be somehow preserved from the autographs. For accents, like punctuation, the chain from the autograph is irreparably broken, as text editors mostly know in practice already anyway, and as Daniel Wallace often asserts. This is not a proposal to eliminate word variants in the text.

Clearly, the implementation of this project and proposal depends on a defensible exhaustive recovery of those minuscule accent rules as seen in the early minuscules and in the early uncial accents taken later from the minuscules. Fortunately, although this accent rule-set is not published with programmatic precision for the texts yet, it is published in D. A. Carson's *Greek Accents: A Student's Manual*, and largely already agreed on by the text editors and publishers themselves. Almost but not quite. It is a nearly completed job just ripe for transparent completion. The number of accents such a policy will change is tiny.

B. The current extensive critical GNT text regularization/standardization policies

The GNT critical text publishing industry has regularized punctuation instead of following original punctuation. Punctuation changes from version to version and editor to editor. In NA 27 revised, NA and UBS adopted a uniform regularized common punctuation to help readers and reduce confusion.

No one accused editors of changing or violating the original punctuation because everyone knows that the GNT text has uninspired, non-original editorial punctuation. Readers appreciate this valuable NA/UBS service because even though systematic punctuation was introduced into minuscules about the 9th century, it was inconsistent, and no one wants to go back to that in full or cares exactly what it was. It had good general accent rules but was not from a reliable chain of copyists back to the autographs. It was not even from the uncials anyway and would not be helpful as a norm to follow exactly.

Everyone that studies manuscripts knows that the uncial scribes did not put spaces between words or use lower or upper case for proper names or quotes or paragraphs and that those refinements were not introduced until the time of the minuscules, but critical text readers, whose text comes from uncials, not from minuscules, appreciate the tidying up that the modern editors do for them to make reading easier. Few readers want to see the hundreds of original *nomina sacra* abbreviations in their GNT texts.

Some readers also know that the critical editors tidy up the spelling. For example, sometimes the majority or all of the early witnesses used to establish the text of γινώσκω in a particular verse wrote γεινώσκω instead, phonetically or conventionally according to the standards of the

time, but the readers do not want to see the word spelled γινώσκω in one place and γεινώσκω in another; so the editors standardize the spelling for the reader's convenience because the original would be erratic and confusing and such destructive diversity would degrade the product and add nothing of value to most readers' understanding.

This is helpful airbrushing, not changing or concealing the original. No one wants these spelling variant pairs, and NA has a strict editorial policy to make sure they do not occur in their manicured text. Is it possible that some of these spelling variants came down from the autographs transmitted by faithful copyists? There would be no way to establish that, and nobody cares about it, except that Tyndale House GNT 2017¹ preserves a few random samples according to some standards that those editors have. Daniel Wallace says we should not focus on the meaningless variants or the improbable ones.

Readers understand that whenever punctuation is added or removed after an oxytone word like πιστός, the editors may swap grave and acute according to well established accent rules. No one accuses the editors of violating the original accents when they follow the oxytone rules to override the original accents. No one cares what the original accents were (whether grave or acute), or that the editors changed them. People who imagine some kind of purity of preserving the autograph are naive and uninformed.

There are over 40,000 oxytone occurrences in the GNT (nearly 30%), all subject to editorial change. They are accent variant pairs like πατρός πατρός. Readers know that these accents may or may not be original, whatever "original" might mean for accents. Obviously, the definition for original accent (9th century MSS maybe) is different from the definition for original word (3rd century MSS maybe). In any case, their origin is so remote from the autograph that it is impossible to seriously assert that these text graves and acutes actually represent the autograph somehow.

The proclitics like ὁ and enclitics like τίς, τῖς, ἔστιν, ἐστίν, ἐστίν, ἐστίν switch accents regularly and blink off and on. Over 12% of word occurrences in the GNT are proclitic or enclitic. Hardly anyone is sure of all the accent rules for them, but such rules do exist and the editors already follow them strictly. Are the enclitic text accents the same as the accents on the oldest variants? Of course not. They can't be; they change when text punctuation changes. If the editors keep changing them, they can't both be original. Nobody cares, If some "original" MS enclitic accent was wrong, the editors do not hesitate to override and regularize it on the current texts according to their new punctuation.

Nobody objects that the text is not preserving these original MSS accents because the editor's accents are better because they are rational and consistent and do not change meaning. Only the Tyndale House attempts to preserve a smattering of the 9th century minuscule enclitic accents inconsistently that violate the enclitic accent rules in their 2017 critical GNT, but hardly anybody else cares, because those "originals" they are preserving were not original in the text sense anyway. None of the accents were original any more than the punctuation was original. Accents are not an inspired part of the word that editors cannot correct. Scrivener understood this better than the critical editors; his TR accents are somewhat more regularized.

Where do the accent rules for GNT texts come from? The oral tradition has been passed down in the Greek speaking homelands since the time the gospels and epistles were written. Otherwise, the accent rules are easy to reverse-engineer from the minuscules, which were introduced in the 9th century. In that sense the majority of MSS and text accents are original, even though the accent marks themselves have not been passed down from the time of the

¹ *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge, Crossway, 2017*, p. 513

Alexandrian uncials. The majority of all MSS word variants must be rejected because in a contest there is only one winner, but some variants are rejected out of preference for earlier and better-attested MSS variants, while other variants are rejected or overridden due to reasonable editorial policies like accent rules, punctuation, abbreviation or spelling.

Do critical editors know what accents go on transliterated semitic nouns? Such nouns occur over 800 times in the GNT, and they are 84% oxytone. Dirk Yongkind, editor of the Tyndale House GNT 2017, says that critical editors ignore the original MSS accents and try to make the GNT text accents follow the Aramaic accents, which are usually on the ultima. Have you ever wondered why Ἀβιά is oxytone but Σινᾶ or Βαριωνᾶ is perispomenon, even though you pronounce them the same way? Who knows what methods the critical editors used? They probably found some that had been added about the 10th century and used the method described by Yongkind for others. There is no word-by-word documentation for these decisions. In the days of Internet, such justifications could easily be made available. In any case, no methodology exists to link those editorial decisions to the autograph, as Wallace warns the unwary reader.

Consider Γολγοθά́. That is the lexicon entry for Golgotha because that is how Westcott and Hort accented it originally in 1881. Then the critical editors changed it to Γολγοθά̇, but in the latest edition of NA and UBS they took the accent off Γολγοθα entirely in John but left it on in Matthew. Such trivial inconsistency seems quite arbitrary and unnecessary to the average person, especially with no justification given—the type of thing that Wallace classifies as meaningless, even if they might reflect some 9th century MSS scribal decisions which cannot be traced to the autographs or even to the original uncials.

Even though the critical editors presumably do have some reason known to themselves for this peculiar inconsistency, the accent could and should be regularized, just as the editors regularize hundreds of other accents. In contrast, the Tyndale GNT still keeps Γολγοθά́ both places. Which of the three accents that the critical editors have used is original? Who knows? Obviously, not the critical editors. Could the critical editors prove that Matthew put an acute or circumflex on the autograph but John left it off the autograph based on some accent marks some scribes put in 900 years later? This is just a preposterous chain of evidence. Why dignify the implication of a link back to the autograph with these shifting text accents?

According to Aland, the variant accents can't all be original. What do we conclude from this? We conclude that critical editors can and do keep on changing accents for hidden, mysterious reasons, and even today there is still no expressed principle yet that accents are more exempt from editorial improvements (according to some principles) than punctuation, in spite of what critical believers might think of accent originality in the text. The only things that are non-transparent are the deliberations and the rules used to decide. If accents can change, they can't all be original. You can't have it both ways. If text editors can consider 45% of accents subject to their changes (oxytones and clitics and others), they can change any of them. However, if the rules were published, the mysterious editorial accent-changes would come to a complete, sudden, merciful halt.

C. What do critical editors say about the originality of the accents or about changing accents?

Nothing, virtually nothing at all. They do not claim officially or specifically that text accents are original. They do not admit openly that accents only arose systematically in the MSS centuries after the words. They do not let readers know that they keep changing the accents and that many of them cannot possibly be original. Accent originality is essentially a taboo subject in the critical community. If you buy a printed copy of the uncial Vaticanus to see what the accents looked like, the accents are missing, even though there are actually accents on the Vaticanus

uncial itself. They have disappeared or been erased from the public copies. (They are on the actual uncial Vaticanus because some of Metzger's Vaticanus plates show them clearly.) The critical publishers apparently do not want you to think about the origin of accents in the MSS.

The critical community does not seem to want people to peer into those "original" accents very much. If you go online to see a facsimile of the uncial Vaticanus, you find that it is unavailable. With Sinaiticus, Vaticanus is the most fundamental document of the whole critical text enterprise, and it is unavailable. Daniel Wallace has a few pages of the Vaticanus uncials to see online, but they also lack the accents, apparently erased or faded out. What you get from the main Vaticanus website is a facsimile of a 10th century minuscule copy of the Vaticanus *with* accents, not the original uncial. It is the old switcheroo. People who won't show the basic documents are trying to hide something. It is time to come clean on the whole subject.

What accent info are the critical editors trying to hide? It does not take long to find out. Ask any critical-text believer if the accents in their texts are original and most of them will say yes, sure. Why wouldn't they consider the text accents original? They are told that these texts are from the oldest manuscripts, and accents are in the texts, and they have never seen the original uncials with accents, and the critical editors do not tell them in the introductions that the accents were added many centuries after the uncials were first copied, about the 9th century when the Byzantine minuscules were first invented. Critical followers seldom know these things. Many will not even believe when told.

Since the critical editors would not lie outright and say the accents were contemporaneous with the original words, why would the followers make such false assumptions about the contemporaneous age of the accents and text? Because they are academically captured, trained in the seminaries, and trust the editors and experts and publishers who deliberately keep them in the dark about the accent origins. The seminary professors are probably in the same boat with the students. People come with a sixth sense about taboo subjects and promotions and about not fitting in if they speak up in the wrong publication.

The critical editors expound their selection principles and publish their reasons and deliberations. Metzger wrote a whole book *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, full of reasons for the selection of individual variants. Not a single entry attempts to justify accent selection. Mum's the word! Silence. The subject of accent origin meets a stone wall of silence in the critical community. The editors don't say a word in the GNT introduction about the age of accents. We know that some kind of accents were invented before Christ, but they are not the same as the minuscule accents, which in turn are not exactly the same as the modern text accents. Probably a word about the real accent origin is buried somewhere in the mound of critical text literature, but most critical believers will never stumble onto it.

The critical GNT literature regularly mentions exceptional words like συνῆσιν in 2 Corinthians 10:12, but they never attempt to justify the accents or challenge them. The tacit assumption is that these anomalies are stubborn facts taken from the oldest MSS, and if Byzantine challengers don't like them, they just have to follow the science. Accent origin is a taboo subject from top to bottom in the critical enterprise. Yongkind is challenging that taboo in his 2017 GNT by making the accents even more irrational and diverse than in NA. He is going back to the 9th century "origins" (they cannot be original nine centuries after the autograph), thus exposing the secrets of accent origins that the critical editors have kept behind the veil all these years. Yongkind's GNT and revelations must be really irritating to the establishment critical editors, and they are just glad that hardly anybody is buying it.

D. Are the accent marks in the Byzantine texts like TR or in Alexandrian texts like UBS from original third or fourth century MSS?

The accents were not in the uncials like Vaticanus when they were written by the fourth century scribe. They were only added to the original text centuries later by a corrector after the minuscules with regular accents had been created. Original text means third or fourth century; original accents on the same MS means tenth century.

An Internet search for GNT accent originality takes one to a review on Christian Publishing House of the book *400,000+ Scribal Errors in the Greek New Testament*² by Edward D Andrews, president of Christian Publishing House, in which the insider reviewer (apparently Andrews himself) stated: “The original writing was retraced by a later scribe (usually dated to the 10th or 11th century), and the beauty of the original script was spoiled.[26] Accents and breathing marks, as well as punctuation, have been added by a later hand.[27]” Footnotes 26 and 27 refer to Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography*.³

The first quote [26] on p. 74 of Metzger’s *Manuscripts*, 1981, about Vaticanus, first states: “There appear to have been two scribes of the Old Testament and one of the New Testament and two correctors, one (B2) about contemporary with the scribes, and the other (B3) of about the tenth or eleventh century.” 4 paragraphs later, speaking of the Vaticanus New Testament, Metzger says in the second quote [27] “Accent and breathing marks, as well as punctuation, have been added by a later hand.”⁴

Andrews just put the two Metzger statements together and concluded logically that the “later hand” that added the accents to the third century Vaticanus had to be the tenth or eleventh century corrector. Andrews is another one of these recent upstarts trained in critical text editing who is finally letting the cat out of the bag on the fact that the MSS accents would all be rejected if they were subject to the same standards as the text because they only originate way too late for the critical text.

However, it is critical insider Dirk Jongkind, editor of the GNT Tyndale House, who spills the beans on the secret origin of the Vaticanus accents. He states: “Thus, for instance, γεινώσκω in John 10:14 represents a composite form consisting of letters from no later than the early third century with an accent from the age of minuscule superimposed. Breathings and accents are only sporadic in manuscripts before the age of minuscules.”⁵

All of this secrecy and rivalry between the Alexandrian critical-text camps and the Byzantine camp could so easily be avoided if the experts and editors of the camps would just emerge from the accent-silence taboo and the false implicit narrative of accent originality and proclaim openly to the followers that the MSS chain between the autograph and the text is irretrievably broken and can never be restored by looking at extant MSS, that we simply do not have a MSS transmission of original accents.

² https://christianpublishinghouse.co/2019/11/13/comparison-of-codex-sinaiticus-and-codex-vaticanus/#_ftn27 accessed 8-15-23

³ EDWARD D. ANDREWS (AS in criminal justice, BS in religion, MA in biblical studies, and MDiv in theology) is CEO and president of Christian Publishing House. He has authored over 220+ books. In addition, Andrews is the chief translator of the Updated American Standard Version (UASV).

⁴ Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 74.

⁵ Op. cit., 513

However, since Koine has been an unbroken spoken language for 2000 years and has preserved its ancient phonetic language patterns better than almost any other language on earth (all the words of Homer are still considered a part of the full modern Greek vocabulary), those accent rules are well known and already in use because they have been transmitted intact and can be published and used as the text standard. Secrecy only prevails where people have something to hide.

The 10th century Byzantine minuscules represented a flowering of transparency in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word separation and accents very much like the polishing that the current set of critical editors also engages in for the same reason: to attract readers to the beauty of God's Word. Let's pursue that trajectory together again instead of emphasizing what Wallace calls meaningless variants.

E. Does the critical text enterprise currently have a double standard on the meaning of "original"?

Obviously, the average critical-text supporter could be forgiven for not researching this far or connecting the dots the way insiders like Yongkind have done, since the critical editors hid the minuscule origin of the uncial accents so well. Almost certainly the critical editors do reveal the very late introduction of accents somewhere, because some people know, but who knows where they published it? It seems to appear dimly on p. 74 of Metzger's book *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, but is not clearly stated.

What do critical editors generally think of 9th century minuscules? They deprecate them because they are Byzantine and too late to qualify decisively for the critical-text selection vote. Critical editors frequently claim that they only go by early witnesses. It is their best claim to closeness to autograph status because the dry climate preserved Alexandrian MSS from an earlier time. Even though the claim that they are more original is disputable, the claim that the extant MSS are earlier is not in dispute. Critical editors say that they look at all the Byzantine variants, and this misleads believers into believing that the critical text is eclectic, but it is 100% Alexandrian. The latest NA is little changed from Westcott-Hort 1881, before the papyri were discovered.

No word-reading in the critical edition is ever taken from minuscules, regardless of how numerous, unless it happens to align with the early Alexandrian uncials. Therefore, the Byzantine text (minuscules), unless they are backed by a majority vote of the early uncials (parchment or papyri), are not needed anyway for text selection in the critical text, although the critical editors say they look at all the MSS. But the critical editors have a double standard when it comes to accents. Now, suddenly, they use 9th century witnesses for their text; only they do not advertise this secret to their followers. But people who stand outside can see what the critical editors actually do and their lack of accent originality and their dependence on Byzantine accent-rules, in spite of their rejection of the Byzantine MSS as original witnesses for selection.

F. How would a consensus be reached on the published minuscule accent rules used for future texts?

If no early accents have come down reliably from the MSS chain to the critical edition due to the 900-year hiatus, how could reasonable people criticize any old accent variant the editors happen to select—*συνιᾶσιν* in 2 Corinthians 10:12, for example? Why would that accent be singled out for rejection while the accent on its synonym *συνιούσιν* in Matthew 13:13 is taken as regular? An accent synonym variant-pair is two occurrences of the same lexeme and parsing with the same long-short syllable pattern. And remember, we are focusing on interior

accents (like συνιᾶσιν and συνίουσιν, penult and antepenult), since we already know that the ultima is a sea of editorial accent-changes in the modern texts anyway.

If extant MSS accents are discarded as the sole accent principle, the way the principle is discarded for punctuation, what takes its place as the new, proposed criteria? Fortunately, this question is easy to answer. We have already inherited an established body of accent rules from the minuscules. It is such a complex set of rules that virtually nobody bothers to learn them all, although D.A. Carson wrote a wonderful book on them, and even editors disagree on minor points, but they still agree on 98% of these rules. The only accent anomalies that really stick out like a sore thumb are those like συνιᾶσιν, for which there is no accent rule. Even the critical editors cannot think of one, although they are quite resourceful.

G. How valuable is the circumflex accent from the 9th century on the 4th century Vaticanus συνιᾶσιν, and how did that circumflex get there in the first place, instead of the regular recessive συνίασιν?

Probably the 10th century corrector-scribe who added the accents to the Vaticanus uncial original 6 or 7 centuries later was looking at a new minuscule copy with the accents like the minuscule Vaticanus that the Vatican Library has now and that it reveals in the online facsimile. It might even have been the same one, and the accents might even have been added in the Vaticanus library itself. It would be good if the critical text curators made those facsimiles or plates available to the public to inspect.

The thing to notice is that the Byzantine minuscule variant of the Vaticanus original ΣΥΝΙΑΣΙΝ in 2 Corinthians 10:12 is contract συνιοῦσιν, not the expected non-contract synonym συνίουσιν, as now seen in the Alexandrian Matthew 13:13. Although contract is surprising for a μι verb, that is what the Byzantine actually has there in some MSS, but non-contract συνίουσιν in others. Even the Byzantine accent originators were wobbly on this word-accent sometimes between 2 Corinthians 10:12 and Matthew 13:13.

ίουσιν, ιοῦσιν and ἰασιν are all valid active present indicative endings, but ἰᾶσιν is not, but the corrector scribe from the Byzantine era was not quite sure of all that because he was trying to blend his new accent with his old text, remaining respectful of both. Metzger did not like the corrector scribe who added the accents and says he unfortunately spoiled the beauty of the Alexandrian original as he darkened the ink on the original words and letters where he agreed with them but left it faded where he believed them to be incorrect.⁶

Remember, when the 10th century corrector added the accent, the Byzantine minuscule accent is actually the original and the unaccented Vaticanus uncial is now the copy. The velum is old but the ink on the accent is new. It would have been a simple copy from the minuscule to the uncial. The 10th century Vaticanus corrector that Metzger mentions disapprovingly merely copied the circumflex accent directly from minuscule συνιοῦσιν onto the uncial συνιᾶσιν without altering the vowel. It was a faithful copy operation with no awareness that it was an accent rule violation. The irony is that the accent work of this Byzantine-era scribe that Metzger did not like is now the very accent that the critical editors are claiming as somehow reflecting the oldest layer, the closest to the autograph, to defend in the text.

H. Does an accent anomaly like συνιᾶσιν embarrass or deter critical text proponents?

No. On the contrary, generally it emboldens them to double down and dig in their heels. For ordinary critical proponents, anomalies and imperfections are proof of originality, which is next

⁶ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, p. 74

to autographs, which is truth, they often think, ignoring the warning from Wallace. They do not admit that the accents were introduced in the 10th century and that the MSS chain back to the autograph is thus a ridiculous claim.

Why does challenging this one particular word $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$ galvanize the critical establishment to defend their anomalous text accents? Why have they been working so assiduously to keep the lid on the 9th century origin of the accents and steer people into supposing that they are a contemporaneous part of the text? Is there something built into the critical enterprise that will cause it to resist published accent rules? Is there something that will cause them to resist putting accents and punctuation in the same category, so that they are empowered to override 9th century MMS accent anomalies the way they override 9th century punctuation? What is at stake here for the critical enterprise on this one little accent on this one little word $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$ in 2 Corinthians 10:12?

Everything. This is the hill to die on for many. If the taboo of silence on accent origin has to be finally breached by tattletales like Yongkind and Andrews, this one word accent $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$ must be defended at all costs, or the entire critical project of preserving autograph imperfections falls into jeopardy. Whatever kind of talking points it takes to defend this anomalous accent—no matter how garbled and misleading the points and story line—the price must be paid. Anomalies are the center point of the critical enterprise. They are the basis of the claim that the Alexandrian text is closer to the autograph than the Byzantine text. There is no more perfect anomaly in the whole GNT than $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$. It does not have a language-pattern leg to stand on. It is the perfect wart. Don't you feel it in your bones?

The story line behind *lexio difficilior* is that the autograph was written by ordinary untutored humans, lacking the academic credentials of modern critical editors, and they made human grammar and spelling mistakes, and God used their human frailties to accomplish his divine will, and the Alexandrian scribes preserved those warts faithfully in their desert scriptoria (along with a huge number of variant mistakes that the editors reject accurately through their magic-but-scholarly and objective methods respected by all academia), but later, the Byzantine scribes came along and smoothed out the pristine rough autographs and spoiled their faithful copies just to make the Bible sound better and more respectable. Every critical believer has internalized the narrative of the good Alexandrian scribes and the bad Byzantine scribes.

In contrast, the critical goal is to get back to the original rough autograph—the truth—via the ancient Alexandrian uncials which have been miraculously preserved for us from the ravages of time. And there is no better vehicle than $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$, because normally linguists can cobble up some sort of contract etymology or other proven accent rule to defend any sort of stray circumflex reading they have selected over the other variants, but for this one, exceptionally no such magic is even possible. Thayer tried and fell flat on his face when he claimed it could come from implicit contract lexeme $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ or $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\omicron}\omega$.⁷ Bauer and Roberts and Metzger did not even dare try. If you are questing for rough originals, $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$ is the epicenter—if it is original.

On the other hand, if you think the Logos is rational and don't believe autograph accents are preserved in the MSS chain anyway and want to present Logos with reasonable transparent punctuation and accents as intended by the earliest 9th century minuscule scribes, then the price is so tiny. Just make $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$ follow the rules like the other 138,000 words. $\sigma\upsilon\nu\iota\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\nu$ is the pivot. It is not just one inconspicuous selected variant among thousands, as it might appear to the casual non-initiate.

⁷ <https://biblehub.com/thayers/4920.htm> accessed 9-19-23

Of course, once you make this one tiny principled concession, there are a very small number of other non-inspired arbitrary accents or non-accents like Γολγοθα that could be put on a par with the non-inspired punctuation and fixed up the way critical editors fix up the *nomina sacra* and the variant spellings like γεινώσκω for γινώσκω, the oxytone and enclitic accents, etc. The NA already does that kind of airbrushing on a large scale quietly, and I am OK with that and do not see it as cheating. These are just what Daniel Wallace classifies as meaningless variants. Is it time to accept that proliferation or perpetuation of meaningless variants in the text is meaningless and the accent-link to the autograph is irretrievably broken?

The Tyndale House GNT 2017 (p. 507), in contrast, thinks it is more purist and honest according to the critical principle of preserving the autograph imperfections to print the original γεινώσκω in some places but γινώσκω in others in their latest GNT, because spelling and accent conventions have evolved, and those editors are adhering more faithfully to the earliest inconsistent witnesses that could possibly have reflected the imperfections of the autographs. Obviously, the Tyndale House editors are dead-set against the proposal of following consistent published accent rules. As they say, they are opposed to imposing global uniformity on the text.

They impose all kinds of other selection decisions on the text, but not uniformity. They are diverse; so imposing diversity is good, right? Their claim to improvements over the NA/UBS is nothing but more diversity of meaningless variants. The Tyndale GNT is the arbitrary nitpicking trajectory of the whole diverse woke critical enterprise. However, if text accent rules were adopted, this destructive diversity direction could be reversed and the accent algorithms could be published for all to see and apply programmatically, beyond dispute.

At some point, don't you think that even NA will look around at people like Yongkind and Andrews and think that the path toward autograph imperfections and anomalies that they started on originally is finally going too deep into the weeds of diversity that it gives the game away? The critical enterprise is being pulled apart internally in two directions: polishing, and the weeds of meaningless diversity. Where is the majesty and beauty and oneness of the Creator and his Word? Let us remove the spots and wrinkles from the robes of righteousness and prepare for the wedding feast of the Lamb. Is polishing what the maligned Byzantine scribes were doing, as the critical narrative runs? Maybe a little, but not so as to alter meaning.

Is polishing what the critical text editors do now? Yes, as we have seen on a very large scale, but sometimes they also go in the opposite direction into the meaningless variant weeds without being forced to. The whole critical enterprise is pulled apart in two incompatible directions. Is the critical goal of preserving the warts really more honest, and does it improve anything, really? Probably not. Warts and myriads of uncertain variants actually repel rather than inspire. As followers of the Lord of Glory, we can demand better of our editors and publishers.

I. What is the history of the claims in the GNT grammatical literature that the accent in the critical text on συνιᾶσιν is invalid?

None. I find no such claims or challenges anywhere in the GNT text or grammatical literature or commentaries or lexicons, although the accent sticks out like a sore thumb and is thus frequently mentioned in the literature. This article represents the first objection known to the author to the critical accent on συνιᾶσιν, although there may be others not available to Internet search engines.

The reason for this failure to even identify the fact that the accent on συνιᾶσιν is anomalous, I believe, is that the grammarians and commentators have little interest in challenging odd text accents (and mistakenly think they are original and testify to original authenticity according to

the alleged “*lexio difficilior*” critical rule). Originality is a mantra in a world where the trail from the earliest MSS accents to the autograph has gone stone-cold dead for over ten centuries. Critical proponents believe, without looking into the matter, that the text editors are doing their best to preserve the original MSS accents faithfully, even though they do not do that for original punctuation, where editors use principles instead.

Notice that in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 10:12 Metzger carefully says that the committee chose the *spelling* from the best MSS; he says nothing about how they chose the *accent*, because they just did not have any best MSS for that. Metzger did not even like the scribe that added the accents. It is a joke on Metzger that Metzger and the whole critical enterprise dislike 9th century scribes and their smoothing corrections, and yet now the very accent originated by such a scribe becomes the cornerstone of the critical claim to the rough original that needs to be defended.

J. Why do most commentators that analyze the verse discuss the dative parsing of 2 Corinthians 10:12, even though they all know it is indicative, and why does everyone agree that 2 Corinthians 10:12 is indicative?

Sinaiticus, which is full of errors rejected by the critical editors, has an invalid variant οὐ συνίσασιν which is obviously garbled (invalid extra σ) because, as everyone agrees and as Metzger indicates in his *Textual Commentary*, 1994, this variant could only be a circumstantial dative participle agreeing with “ἑαυτοῖς,” but dative participles take only μή, not οὐ, and the context can only make sense with the indicative οὐ. No dative is indicative, and only active present indicative works here. The only inflections in the GNT ending with -σασιν (-σασι), besides the perfect indicative ἴσασι from οἶδα, are the dative active first aorist participles ἀκούσασιν, ἀμαρτήσασιν, ἀπειθείσασιν, βασιτίσασι, πιστεύσασιν.

However, our dispute is over the accent, not the text. Even though the syntax family of συνίημι, including the common ἀφίημι or its alternate συνίω, never uses the ending -σασιν even in the LXX, it is possible that the Alexandrian scribes might have borrowed the -σασιν ending from εἰσίσασιν (from the lexeme εἰσεῖμι), which is the only other present active finite -σασιν ending in the GNT, but it still lacks the circumflex. The present active indicative penult circumflex is always contract, but -ᾶσιν is not contract.

K. How do we know that συνιᾶσιν violates the accent rules? Who would make up these rules and impose them?

Indicative present active συνιᾶσιν with circumflex in 2 Corinthians 10:12 has a normal recessive synonym συνίουσιν in Matthew 13:13—if, as the critical editors believe, συνίουσιν is not contract. How do we know that there is no accent rule authorizing the penult circumflex on -ᾶσιν? There are 3206 active present indicative occurrences in the GNT. According to the universally accepted minuscule accent rules, other than 732 contract verbs, all 3206 present active indicatives are recessive. And no contract can ever be -ᾶσιν. Contract may end in -ᾶτε but not in -ᾶσιν.

This is a simple, absolute accent rule gathered from the minuscules on a very large sample size, violated only by συνιᾶσιν. Recessive means the accent is as far left toward the start as possible. There are three recessive subtypes: (1) short ultima and three or more syllables like συνίουσιν; (2) long ultima and two or more syllables like ἀπάγω; (3) accent on the first syllable like ζῶμεν or or δεῖ. Out of over 19,000 finite verb occurrences in the GNT, not a single one ends in -ᾶσιν other than the anomalous συνιᾶσιν and the dative participle συναναβᾶσιν in Acts 13:31. We see that even if the best uncial variant is ΣΥΝΙΑΣΙΝ, the text accent would still be recessive συνίασιν, like εἰσίσασιν.

L. Published accent rules would eliminate synonym accent variant pairs like συνίουσιν συνιάσιν.

A rational feature of regular accents is that synonym accent variant pairs like συνίουσιν συνιάσιν with the same lemma and parsing and syllable pattern but different accent types in 2 Corinthians 10:12 and Matthew 13:13 will be eliminated by changing συνιάσιν to regular recessive συνίουσιν. The TR has the same accent type, συνιοῦσιν, in both verses, although different from either critical variant. (According to Thayer, συνιοῦσιν is a contract form from a presumed συνιέω variant.⁸) These proposed synonym restrictions will only be for interior accents on the penult and antepenult and perispomenon because oxytone accents and proclitics and enclitics are already a sea of change ignoring the MSS accents anyway. Spelling variant pairs with the same syllable pattern like εἶπον εἶπαν are OK as long as they have the same accent type. There are lots of these. This proposed subjection of the text-accent to explicit accent rules will not in itself alter any current critical word or spelling variants.

ἀνάβηθι and ἀνάβα are not synonym pairs, even though they have different accents types on the same parsing, because those accent types are caused by regular accent rules on different syllable patterns. εἶπας and εἶπών (from λέγω) have different accent types on the same syllable pattern, but second aorists and sigmatic aorists follow different accent rules; they are not a synonym pair, because εἶπών is oxytone.

Similarly, present active participles συνίων συνιείς have the same syllable pattern and parsing and different accent types. However, they are not synonyms because one is oxytone. The μι and ω participles follow different known accent rules, even though their indicative counterparts συνίουσιν συνιάσιν do not follow separate accent rules. Critical and Byzantine συνίουσιν συνιοῦσιν would be a synonym pair, but they are not in the same text. How are these accent differences justified by lexicon experts like Thayer? According to Thayer, συνιοῦσιν comes from a συνιέω lemma but συνίουσιν comes from a putative συνίω lemma. Such reverse engineering seems somewhat circular, but that is how lexical experts justify the contract variants. These rules were all established in the minuscules long ago—although not quite always perfectly followed—because they did not have electronic quality control.

M. Why is the number of young theological students interested in GNT texts increasing?

Two hundred years ago, a prospective pastor or priest would ask, “How can I lead the lost to the truth of Christ as set forth in God’s Word?” However, now, increasingly, Satan is once again asking boldly, “Did God really say?” Does that text faithfully reproduce the autograph? Men are saying, “My text is a more faithful copy of the autograph than yours.” This comes from the lips of clergy. They try to shame users of the TR because their translation comes from an outdated text. They have favorite texts, as if they were discussing sports teams or global warming theories.

Naturally, this question of what exactly God said seems to come first. A young person will feel a burning need to settle this disturbing question first and will read many books and opinions. Publishers understand this. Besides being intensely interesting in itself, GNT MSS studies have academic prestige, a career path forward, the prospect of making new and important discoveries to publish and become a respected expert and teacher in an esoteric field that will put the young people in a position to know what others do not know.

Yet Daniel Wallace says that the number of meaningful differences between the texts is 1/5th of 1%; and it does not really matter much which Greek Bible you read, he says. They all contain

⁸ <https://biblehub.com/thayers/4920.htm> accessed 9-19-23

all the truths of the faith. Although the logical conclusion is that GNT text-variants and selection are a sideshow compared to the truth of Christ—a tempest in a teapot—nevertheless, the perceived reality of text selection and MSS studies is still glittering. People want to be on the winning team—the new inclusive eclectic text team—and get away from the narrow old partisan texts like TR.

So what we see is that the critical text falsely advertises itself as eclectic, implicitly at least. When the critical studies catalog the Byzantine texts along with the Alexandrian ones and say that the editors look at them all, they make their followers believe they are eclectic. Their stated criteria do not say to chose only Alexandrian texts, but the NA, the text of all popular modern translations except NKJV, is an Alexandrian text, whose differences from Alexandrian Westcott and Hort 1881 are *all* what Wallace would call meaningless. A glance at the two texts together (Westcott and Hort and current NA) anywhere in Bible Hub or Swanson will confirm this. Other lines like Western are not big enough by comparison to qualify as families. The only two main MSS lines for texts are Byzantine or Alexandrian, as Aland says. It is like the two-party system in politics.

The critical text, for all its academic prestige, belongs to one of the two main parties, just like the Patriarchal text or TR or Robinson's majority text.⁹ There is not a single passage from the Byzantine tradition in NA or UBS that does not also come from the Alexandrian MSS. Anyone who doubts this claim that no text is eclectic should go find an exception. Testing and original personal research are the path to truth. Little training is needed. Anyone could find it, *if* such a passage actually existed. Bible Quest or Bible Hub online or Swanson makes it easy. The critical enterprise is Alexandrian-partisan, not unifying and not eclectic. No GNT texts will ever be non-partisan. Eclectic text is a widespread delusion that needs to be dispelled by the light of day.

This battle has been going on for 200 years. It took wing when Tischendorf discovered the Sinaiticus. For the first 100 years, everybody understood that it was a hostile contest. Some people might think the critical text is now finally unifying, since it has won over academia, most seminaries and most of the people they respect, and no new popular translations from the Byzantine texts have come out since the NKJV. However, this narrative is impossible to maintain. It will keep on springing leaks. There will always be a Yongkind or Andrews to expose the partisan secrets of the critical text (even if inadvertently in their enthusiasm), even though they are avid critical text advocates themselves.

The critical text editors are hush-hush about the extensive polishing that they do, cataloged extensively above, along the lines of minuscule amenities to attract book buyers, while at the same time being harsh critics of the Byzantine scribes for doing the same thing. If they emphasized their polishing while deprecating the polishing of their rival, they would expose their own double standard. Instead, they tell of the romantic story of miraculous rediscovery of original imperfections in the oldest MSS supposedly bearing a whiff of the musty autographs.

So naive souls like Jongkind and Andrews believe what the critical editors say in their public cover-narrative even more avidly than the critical editors themselves do. These souls notice the tension between the two critical tendencies and want to be even more true to the emphasized tendency of being closer to the rough autograph than the conflicted critical editors themselves are. They do not know what the savvier critical editors know. A dash of diversity and academic prestige makes for a good sales story, but too many meaningless variants repel buyers. There

⁹ Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*, 2005 (Logos Bible Software)

is a delicate balance between the two opposite pulls that should not be upset at the expense of the attractive editing.

Although Byzantine and Alexandrian are the two poles available in GNT texts, the Byzantine never existed as a partisan text because it was always with the living church as its tool. God gave the Bible to the *church*, not to be put in a library somewhere, or revived from a dump. In the third and fourth century, when the Alexandrian texts were written, they were not rivals to other texts. However, when the Alexandrian text was resuscitated in the 19th century as the academic newcomer-challenger, it was a text of partisanship that suggested advances in meaningful variants that will never actually be able to be proven. Strife with its rival is its life. The critical enterprise rests on the foundation of partisan rivalry and will never escape this dark origin, no matter how complete its victory.

If the critical editors were more forthright about things like the origins of their accents and the fact that, although they look at Byzantine texts, they do not actually use them for text selection, this would take some of the false glitter and allure off from “eclectic” critical text studies and put it in the proper, somewhat grubby, partisan category where it belongs. Young people should grasp that GNT texts will always be a partisan project. The seduction of the autograph is a dead end of “hopium.”

The promise of the autograph is just the pot of gold glimmering at the end of the rainbow to lure leprechauns. There will never be any truth-breakthrough to the autographs. The papyri were a huge development in the critical enterprise—more than Westcott and Hort ever expected. It proliferated variants, but no new truth-breakthrough to the autographs occurred. The papyri were also Alexandrian and changed the critical Alexandrian text in no way other than what Wallace calls meaningless details. They had more scribal errors than the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. They were *older but worse*, contrary to the critical narrative. The attraction of the autograph is a trap that has already played out and lost its luster; the young hopefuls are hurrying to catch a plane whose departure time is long past.

With this insight, young people in seminaries and Bible colleges could set critical texts in their proper perspective and get back to their calling, helping people seek Christ in the “one holy catholic and apostolic church,” and in the Bible. We cannot expect academia and publishers to sacrifice themselves and do this job voluntarily. They will not do it. It must come from a groundswell of people who demand it because they see the Alexandrian critical enterprise for what it is: a sower of the seeds of doubt by magnifying the importance of meaningless variants in God’s word as its sales pitch.

Let me clarify. There is nothing wrong with critical editing *per se* to get a Greek text within one of the two camps for translations. The objection is just to the claim that critical editing does, or ever could, escape the choice between the two MSS camps which differ in many meaningless details but little from each other in their coverage of Christ’s truth. If you are reading a Greek text, you have no choice but to choose, unless you use both. If you are looking for a reason to choose one camp over the other, you are going to have to find the reason outside the realm of MSS studies and critical text-editing and closeness to the rough autograph. Text study will not help with that. The choice will come from some human authority like academia or publishing houses, but each follower of Christ is still personally responsible for selecting the earthly authority.

The Alexandrian and Byzantine MSS lines cannot be blended the way Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are blended by critical editors every few words, because the Byzantine would swamp the Alexandrian, because the Alexandrian did not pass down through the great ages of the church before it was recently resuscitated. The result of an attempted critical blending would be the

Byzantine majority text. The GNT text students should get used to the fact of the two main MSS lines and their edited texts and read whichever text they like better, or better, read both, and put the questions of superiority or closeness to the autograph in the remote background where they belong, and focus on faith in Christ.

Publishing a complete set of accent rules and putting the regular accent on συνιάσιν would open the floodgates and help break the critical logjam of taboos about originality, where the rivalry between the two camps has been stuck for the last 200 years. If we abandon the hope or claim of getting closer to the autograph, we could turn down the temperature and bring about the calm waters and peaceful coexistence advocated by Wallace. Eight or nine hundred years later (the age of συνιάσιν) is not autograph territory; it is published-editorial-rules territory in the already extensive practice of editorial polishing to make God's Word more rational and attractive in the areas where the trail to the autograph is lost forever. Lovers of the church who adopt that position might say, "If it is optional, I am going to choose the Byzantine, because it is the Bible handed down by the church through the ages, back when it had a better grip on culture before the present disintegration."