

**Michael Dormandy, *Building a Book of Books: Textual Characteristics of the Early Greek Majuscule Pandects*. ANTF 54. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024. ISBN 978-3-11-099457-5. Hardcover, pp. x + 381, 73 color illustrations, 11 tables. €109.95.**

This work is a revised version of Michael Dormandy's doctoral thesis completed at the University of Cambridge in 2020 under the supervision of Dirk Jongkind. Dormandy's purpose is to determine how and why the four earliest Greek majuscule pandects (01, 02, 03, and 04) are valuable by examining their textual characteristics. Dormandy ultimately argues that the pandects are not only generally reliable guides for reconstructing the initial text but also benefit new philology, a more recent approach within the field of New Testament textual criticism. In order to demonstrate this, Dormandy developed an original method that analyzes variants categorically. After a brief introduction, Dormandy outlines this method in chapter 1. Chapter 2 is a historical overview of the pandects in which Dormandy submits the thesis that 01 and 03 were commissioned under Emperor Constantine (and possibly Constans for 03). Chapters 3–7 form the core of the study where Dormandy applies his method to Romans, John, Revelation, Sirach, and Judges, respectively. Chapter 8 is a summary of his findings and discussion of conclusions.

Dormandy's method is his primary original contribution. He begins by discussing the shortcomings of both the singular readings method (championed first by Ernest C. Colwell and then developed further by James R. Royse) and methods that analyze variants based on divergences from a critical text (specifically used by Kyong Shik Min, Barbara Aland, and Moisés Silva) for determining the textual characteristics and value of the pandects. Concerning the former, Dormandy agrees with Jongkind that “not all incorrect readings will show up among the singular readings.... On the other hand, not all singular readings are created by the scribe” (8). Thus, the singular readings method does not actually provide an accurate picture of what most scribes do most of the time. Furthermore, while some studies have confirmed Royse's conclusions, others have demonstrated how it produces misleading results.<sup>1</sup> Concerning methods that analyze

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1. E.g., Alan Taylor Farnes, *Simply Come Copying: Direct Copies as Test Cases in the Quest for Scribal Habits*, WUNT 2/481 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019); Elijah Hixon, *Scribal Habits in Sixth-Century Greek Purple Codices*, NTTSD 61 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

divergence from a critical text, Dormandy points out the inherent circularity in such approaches, since they seek to determine the textual accuracy of witnesses (specifically papyri and, incidentally, the pandects) from a critical text whose editors also believed in the textual accuracy of those same witnesses. Thus, agreement between the pandects and a critical text would not necessarily indicate that the pandects preserve the initial text well; their agreement could equally indicate that both are far from the initial text. Since the critical text relies heavily on the pandects, there is no objective way of testing the textual quality of the pandects by analyzing their divergences from a critical text.

Dormandy thus submits his method, which consists of two primary steps. The first step begins with Dormandy's own reconstruction of the initial text at each variation unit analyzed. By doing so, Dormandy claims he can avoid the circularity inherent in studies based on divergence from a critical text. He clarifies that he gives no significant weight to any single witness; he attempts to avoid a priori assumptions about which witnesses are "good." However, he does concede that, "other things being equal," he defers to the reading preserved in Greek witnesses prior to 500 CE (14–15). In addition to these external criteria, Dormandy is clear that he also considers internal criteria. Indeed, his approach relies heavily on internal evidence without lapsing completely into thoroughgoing eclecticism. He argues for Johannes Albrecht Bengel's canon of *lectio difficilior* as the logical basis for analyzing internal evidence. With these criteria in mind, Dormandy compares the text of each pandect to one another, as well as the NA<sup>28</sup>. Whenever the text of any of the pandects differs either from one another or the NA<sup>28</sup>, Dormandy includes that variant unit in his study. He determines the initial text at each of these locations and (in a manner not unlike the UBS rating system) assigns a grade of A, B, or C based on his confidence in the reading (19). His reconstruction of the New Testament initial text agrees with the NA<sup>28</sup>, Westcott and Hort, and Tyndale House editions 81–90 percent of the time (20).

The second step in Dormandy's method is to classify the variant(s) in each unit into one of five categories: transcriptional error, linguistic improvement, linguistic nonimprovement, harmonization, and/or content change (22). The order of these categories is intentional. Readings are only moved down the line if they cannot reasonably fit within any of the first categories. Thus, a reading will not be classified as a content change unless it cannot reasonably fit within any of the higher categories. Dormandy then assigns each variant a rating of A, B, or C based on his confidence level that

the variant does, indeed, fit within the category assigned (22). Dormandy also makes clear that he is concerned with studying the pandects as whole, complete works rather than the work of individual scribes. Thus, he does not differentiate between the work of individual scribes within the pandects, nor does he include later scribal corrections—only corrections made *in scribendo*. At the conclusion of the study, Dormandy analyzes the textual quality and value of each pandect based on the type of variants made in each and how faithfully it preserves the initial text.

Chapter 2 is a historical overview of the four pandects under study. Dormandy argues o1 and o3 were both imperially commissioned and are likely included among Constantine's commission for fifty Bibles recorded by Eusebius and Athanasius. He then includes a brief paleographic history of all four pandects. His overall conclusion is that pandects were rare, expensive, and usually imperially commissioned. Thus, their study is a worthwhile endeavor. While Dormandy's argument for the imperial commissioning of o1 and o3 is bold, he could arguably press this point further to suggest that, due to their status, one could reasonably assume that the pandects preserve a carefully copied text that should be seriously considered when reconstructing the initial text.

In chapters 3–7, Dormandy moves into the study proper: the application of his method. At the beginning of each chapter, he includes a brief introduction including a reiteration of his rationale for choosing each book (e.g., for Romans, undisputed authorship, sufficient length, theologically important) as well as his method. In chapter 3, he clarifies that, in addition to including readings where the pandects differ from one another or the text of NA<sup>28</sup>, he will also “discuss any variation unit where the pandects agree with each other and with NA<sup>28</sup>, but there is still a case to be made that they do not have the initial text” (47). This new category is understandable but perhaps belongs in the section on method. Once Dormandy gets to Sirach (ch. 6), the method expands further. He includes a new category of variants, “conforming to the Hebrew” (249). The method is broadened again in the Judges section (ch. 7) to include “correction to the Hebrew,” “doubling,” and “lexical variation.” No doubt, these new categories seem warranted due to the different textual characteristics between the New Testament and LXX, but it seems again that their discussion belongs in the section on method. As it stands, it seems as if the method develops with the study in an almost ad hoc fashion. To present the data, each individual unit includes the initial text followed by variant reading(s) from the pandects and any other relevant witnesses. Dormandy includes a discussion

of the more “interesting” variants followed by a categorization (e.g., transcriptional error) and a grade of A, B, or C. The copious color images of manuscripts throughout these chapters is a welcome feature that allows the reader to see the more difficult judgments with which Dormandy wrestled.

In chapter 8, Dormandy provides tables with all his results (340–45). These are extensive and clear and aid in the understanding of Dormandy’s research. At the bottom of each table, he lists the total number (Absolute Number, AN) of variants each pandect made in each respective book followed by a mean (M) number of variants per ten verses. A brief summary of the total and mean number of changes in each book is as follows:

	o1	o2	o3	o4
Romans	AN: 22 M: 2.12	AN: 30 M: 2.88	AN: 47 M: 4.52	AN: 29 M: 2.87
John	AN: 105 M: 10.61	AN: 74 M: 7.47	AN: 42 M: 4.24	AN: 26 M: 3.66
Revelation	AN: 116 M: 15.06	AN: 59 M: 7.66	Not extant	AN: 50 M: 9.09
Sirach	AN: 28 M: 5.49	AN: 20 M: 3.92	AN: 18 M: 3.53	AN: 21 M: 4.12
Judges	AN: 157 M: 49.06	AN: 66 M: 20.63	AN: 163 M: 50.94	Not extant

The most immediate question would be, why not select books that are extant in all four pandects? Dormandy is clear that he chose Revelation due to its unique textual characteristics, hoping his method would contribute to this discussion (170). His selection of Judges is, in part, to “explore the recently discovered leaves of o1 and see if they shed light on the bifurcation of Judges between o2 and o3” (21). However, given the fact that Judges does not have a critical edition and is not extant in o4, this raises the question as to whether this was the best choice. It seems that a study on o1, o2, o3, and o4 would yield the best results from books that are extant in all four pandects and have critical editions. Furthermore, in the conclusion, he does not return to discuss clearly how his method contributes to either the textual questions in Revelation (although his results seem to confirm the primacy of o2 and o4) or the impact of newly discovered leaves in o1 and their bifurcation of Judges between o2 and o3. Dormandy’s research has the potential to provide valuable insight for both these topics, if developed further.

Dormandy's study demonstrates that in Romans all pandects preserve the text well but o1 best. In John, o3 and o4 most closely represent the initial text, and, in general, the pandects preserve the initial text of John less reliably than Romans. Revelation contains a high number of harmonizations and linguistic nonimprovements; in general, it is even less well preserved than John. All four pandects seem to preserve the initial text equally in Sirach. Judges is something of an outlier due to it having both a unique textual history (discussed extensively in 280–87) and a Hebrew *Vorlage*. Overall, while all four pandects “depart from the initial text to varying degrees relative to each other, in absolute terms, they generally preserve it well” (348). Dormandy bases this on the fact that, for any type of change, the mean number of variants for any book in any variant category is fewer than ten. This conclusion seems warranted, but it would be helpful to have some reference point. How often do other manuscripts vary per ten verses? Without this knowledge, all one can conclude with confidence is *how* the pandects preserve the initial text, not necessarily how *well* they do so.

There seems to be a discrepancy in the method concerning the rating system. Initially, Dormandy claims that he will rate each unit based on his confidence in his reconstruction of the initial text (19). Later, the rating seems to apply to the variant classification (22). Dormandy seems to conflate these two rating systems. Do they apply to his confidence in the initial text or variant classification? In practice, it seems more like the latter, especially because Dormandy frequently lists several variants in a single unit. In his conclusion, however, Dormandy seems to view the rating system as referring to both initial text and variant classification: “the vast majority of all the variation units I have analyzed, including content changes, are rated A, suggesting there is little significant doubt about the initial text or the type of change” (353). However, surely these are two separate items. For example, the second unit under Rev 13:8 consists of Dormandy's initial text, *two* linguistic improvement in o1 *and* a transcriptional error, *two* transcriptional errors in o2, and a linguistic improvement o3 (214–15). This entire unit is given a B rating. Does this indicate Dormandy's confidence level for the entire unit or only part? A more specific system could increase clarity.

How reproducible is this method? If applied by other textual scholars, would they reach similar conclusions as Dormandy? Perhaps, but the unavoidable subjective judgment involved both in determining the initial text as well as classifying the variants suggests otherwise, unless Dormandy

creates his own critical edition of the text that other users employ. Further, it is not clear how Dormandy's study escapes the circularity inherent in others such as Min and Aland. In their method, early papyri were determined to be accurate tradents of the text because they agreed heavily with a critical text that assumed the same thing. To avoid this circularity, Dormandy claims he will not give undue weight to any single manuscript by considering it particularly good. Yet "in order to minimize subjectivity, I generally follow the objective procedure of preferring the reading attested by the majority of continuous, Greek witnesses from prior to 500, according to the dates in the catalogue at the back of NA<sup>28</sup>" (14). In many cases, the pandects *are* the primary continuous Greek witnesses from prior to 500 (e.g., Revelation). Thus, this method still ends up placing significant weight on the pandects. Dormandy is clear that this is a guideline rather than a rule, only applied when other things are equal (15); he is willing to go against this when the situation calls for it. But is he really avoiding the circularity of others who used a critical text by simply creating his own?

The application of the method is at times a bit undisciplined. Dormandy is clear that he intends to analyze every variation unit where the pandects differ from one another or the text of NA<sup>28</sup>. He later extends this to include passages where none of the pandects arguably preserve the initial text (47). However, Dormandy includes several units that do not fit any of these descriptions. In some cases, this is understandable: he deems several units as irrelevant to the study due to in-scriptorium correction or orthographic variant, but the text is unclear.<sup>2</sup> In such cases, a discussion is warranted. However, Dormandy also lists several units where there is seemingly no problem or do not seem relevant to the study at all because the pandects are not discussed.<sup>3</sup> In Rev 1:10 (180), he provides two ratings for the same variant. (He is perhaps referring to two different variants within the same unit, in which case it seems appropriate to divide the unit.) In Sir 13:7 (253), Dormandy argues that the pandects preserve the initial text of *εσχάτω* but lists *εσχάτων* as the initial text. However, these inconsistencies are minor, and their content does still contribute valuable information to the broader topic.

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2. John 1:4 (97); John 1:13 (98); John 17:15 (138); John 20:27 (164); Rev 12:10 (197); Rev 12:14 (202); Sir 13:11 (256).

3. Units where there is seemingly no problem: Sir 47:18 (272); Sir 47:22 (274); Judg 6:3 (291). Units that do not seem relevant to the study: Judg 6:15 (310); Judg 6:16 (312); Judg 6:22 (319).

Despite some shortcomings, this work is commendable overall. Unlike most who specialize in New Testament textual criticism, Dormandy was bold enough to marry LXX textual studies with the New Testament. While his selection of Judges has some drawbacks, no one can deny the immense work he put forth to understand its unique textual characteristics and apply his method appropriately. In this sense, his study is truly one of o1, o2, o3, and o4 as *pandects* rather than merely tradents of the New Testament text. His method, overall, is thorough and well-developed. The categories Dormandy chose for classifying variants was especially keen, being broad enough to encompass a variety of textual changes without becoming overly rigid. While it risks the same circularity of methods that utilize a critical text, Dormandy's approach at least places this danger at the fore of the study, which can help mitigate a priori bias toward the pandects. Significantly, Dormandy actively resists undue primacy on the pandects, yet his study still reveals their accuracy as tradents of the text. In general, his attempt to challenge and move beyond commonly accepted methods to develop his own is laudable. His study also confirms that most readings are not content changes and thus not theologically motivated. The scribes of the pandects generally sought to copy the text(s) in front of them accurately rather than to create their own based on a theological agenda. At a time when textual critics are reevaluating the value of these works for the field, a study such as Dormandy's is a welcome and valuable contribution.

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