AUTHOR'S STYLE AND THE TEXTUAL CRITICISM
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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ABSTRACT
Basic to the New Testament text-critical criterion that the reading which is best in accord with the general language and style of an author is most probably the original, is an expectancy that an author will be consistent in his use of language and style. This article challenges this presumption, by arguing that the complex literary origin of the New Testament documents makes it impossible to expect a consistent use of linguistic and stylistic features in the documents which constitute the New Testament.

One of the basic criteria in New Testament textual criticism for judging what is called the intrinsic probability of text-critically disputed passages, is to take that reading as the original which is best in accord with the general style of the author (cf e.g. Aland & Aland 1982:282; Metzger 1968:210; 1971:xxvii; Elliott 1968:7-8). To put this criterion into practice, one would determine whether a word, a grammatical form of a word or a grammatical construction in a disputed passage appears elsewhere in the work of the author. The purpose is twofold, namely to determine whether there are features typical of the author's style in the disputed passage, and/or to determine whether there are features not typical of the author's style in the disputed passage. If the former are found, it is usually concluded that, keeping the possibility of imitation of style by scribes in mind (cf Metzger 1968:178), the passage did originate from the author and that it is therefore not an interpolation, while the latter show that the passage did not originate from the author and that it must therefore be a later addition to the text.

An article by Boismard illustrates well the use of style for arguing in favour of the originality of a passage (Boismard 1981). Boismard analysed the longer texts (i.e. the so-called Western additions) in Acts 11:2 and 19:1. In these passages he respectively identifies thirteen 'lucanisms' (i.e. features typical of Lucan style) in Acts 11:2 and six in Acts 19:1. In both instances he concludes that the longer text could not have had another origin than the author of Acts himself (cf also Mackenzie 1985).

A second example, which illustrates the witness of style against the claims of the originality of a reading, can be found in Luke 22:19b-20, where no less than nine 'non-Lucan stylistic features' were found through the years (cf Petzer [1991]). From this it is concluded that this text could not have been written by the author of the Third Gospel (cf also Elliott 1971, 1981 and instances in Metzger 1971 for further examples).

Although this criterion functions in almost every method used to reconstruct the New Testament today, it does not have the same emphasis in each. The debate on the value of this criterion between the so-called

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'rigorous' eclectics, who are prepared to base much upon this criterion, and the 'reasoned' eclectics, who let this criterion play a less important role in their method, has not yet been settled. In addition, there seems of late to be a growing interest in and an awareness of the problems of the criterion. Metzger (1968:178) has sounded a few mainly practical warnings as to its use. Jordaan (1980, 1982) attempted to refine it in his study of word-order variation in the New Testament by determining the circumstances under which an author would deviate from his general language and style. Thomas Geer (1988) touched onto a very important matter when he questioned Boismard's conclusions, referred to above, by showing that there is no consistent definition of what constitutes a stylistic feature typical of an author (cf also Robert Hull 1988, who did the same with MacKenzie's conclusions — cf MacKenzie 1985). I myself have on occasion ventured to ask questions about the validity of the argument in the case of Luke 22:19b-20, claiming that there may be other reasons for the differences between the general style of Luke and the features which occur in this disputed passage, and that style as a criterion is therefore not applicable to this specific text-critical problem.

A very basic aspect of the criterion, which has not been attended to in any thorough manner, is the question of consistency. It does not require deep insight into the matter to see that the whole criterion is based upon the presumption that one can expect to find consistency in the use of language in a text, that is that the same words, grammatical forms and grammatical constructions will be used throughout the text for the same concept, each time reference is made to that concept: The conclusions in Boismard's analysis, referred to above, are based upon the fact that the words and constructions in the disputed texts coincide with the pattern established elsewhere in that author's work, and since consistency can be expected, all the passages are regarded as having the same origin. Similarly, the conclusions following the analysis of Luke 22:19b-20 are based upon the fact that the linguistic features in the disputed part do not coincide with the pattern established elsewhere and because of the expectation of consistency one can demand of the features in this (or any other) disputed part to coincide with the features elsewhere in the text if it is to be viewed as part of the original text. It often happens, however, that other evidence forces one to choose a reading not in accord with the general style of an author as the original reading (as e.g. in the case of Lk 22:19b-20 — cf the discussion of this variation-unit in the Textual Commentary). This phenomenon, usually left unexplained by critics, seems to indicate that the whole question of consistency might be more intricate and complex than meets the eye.

This article seeks to examine the concept of consistency basic to this text-critical criterion. The thesis is that, contrary to the way in which the criterion is formulated and functions in New Testament textual criticism, it cannot be expected or presupposed that the language employed in the New Testament documents will of necessity be consistent, or, to put it differently, the stylistic patterns identified in those documents cannot be employed as a means of determining what was written in them originally and what not. As such this article is intended to contribute to the growing awareness of the problems of this text-critical criterion.
1. THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Behind the whole concept of consistency lies the notion that the text we are dealing with, was written by a single author. This is already clear from the formulation of the criterion: It is always the style of the author that needs to be taken into account. The reason for this formulation lies in the fact that, only when one views the text as being written by a single author, can it be understood how consistency in style can be presupposed. Only because Luke wrote every word in the Third Gospel, for example, and thus had control over every aspect of the language in his text, can it be understood why and how consistency can be expected. Analysing the language will thus reveal his control, that is which words and constructions he chose to express which concepts. A Lucan linguistic pattern can thus be established in this writing. Once such a linguistic pattern is established, it may be assumed that anything outside of that pattern originated at the hands of a different author and ought therefore not to be included in the text. In this way the text of the Third Gospel is used to analyse the linguistic and stylistic abilities and qualities of its author, which are then used to determine what he could and could not have written in case of dispute over variant readings.

The basic question that needs to be answered in the attempt to determine the usefulness of this criterion for the determination of the textual integrity of a passage, is thus whether the documents of the New Testament, in the form they are known in today, as based on the manuscripts, and in which they are being analysed for the purpose of putting this criterion into practice, were in fact written by single authors.

In order to answer this question, one has to look at theories of the origin of the New Testament and the results of centuries of literary and historical criticism, if taken seriously, seem to force a negative answer. Two aspects of these theories are relevant, that is the use of sources in the New Testament documents and the redactional process they went through in order to achieve the form in which they are known today.

1.1 The use of sources

The basic hypothesis behind the notion of consistency, described above, that is that the author has written everything in any given book of the New Testament, assumes, for example, that Luke, in writing the Third Gospel, could and did not say anything in the words of someone else. It is exactly at this point that the problems of applying the criterion start, for the New Testament is full of examples of authors ‘saying things in the words of other authors’.

The most obvious examples can be found in citations, where an author intentionally says what he wants to say in the words of another text from which he quotes. In these cases he is consciously and purposefully interfacing with other texts in order to convey meaning in the text he is producing, thus changing his language and style consciously and purposefully. This kind of influence from other texts is usually easy to detect, if the analyser knows the text to which reference is being made (i.e., the document cited from). The language and style in these parts are generally not regarded as representative of the language and style of the author under observation, because this part of the text was not originally written by
the specific author but by a different author, and was merely taken over from that author by the author of the text under observation. These texts are therefore not included in the establishment of the linguistic and stylistic pattern of the author under observation.

More difficult to detect are allusions and citations of which the sources are unknown, the problems of which are of course wellknown to those textual critics working with patristic citations from the New Testament. Examples of this kind of interfacing with other texts are difficult to detect, since one has to hypothesise in the attempt to identify them. However, a suggestion thereof in the New Testament might be found in liturgical passages, such as the Lord's prayer (Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4) or the institution of the Lord's Supper (Mt 26:26-30; Mk 14:22-26; Lk 22:15-20; 1 Cor 11:23-25). The similarity of peculiarities in the language and style of each of these passages suggests that the author has, in every instance, kept close to the source from which it was taken (cf Petzer [1991]). Whether they are verbal citations, loose citations or mere allusions is impossible to say, because of the lost originals. In fact, even seeing them as citations or allusions is uncertain and hypothetical and rests upon peculiarities and phenomena in the passages themselves which would be difficult to explain in any other way. However, that this kind of 'loose' citation of sources most probably played no small part in the origin of the New Testament documents becomes clear if one pages through the apparatus for parallel passages in UBS. There is almost no single verse, and certainly no single page, which does not list some kind of parallel elsewhere in or outside the Bible. In all of these instances the author knowingly or unknowingly interfaced with those other texts, taking over sentences, phrases and words. Just as in the case of the citation of sources, text written by other authors is taken over by the author of the text under observation and rewritten to form part of the new text.

This kind of 'undetectable' interfacing with other texts poses an important problem for the analysis of the language and style of a passage. Technically speaking this kind of interfacing with other texts also represents language not originating from the author writing the document under observation and ought therefore not to be taken into account when analysing his style, since they were originally written by other authors. However, because they are so difficult to detect, the matter is generally ignored and they are treated as if they were part of the original author's work, thus representing his general language and style. In this way text not originating from an author, is sometimes used to establish stylistic and linguistic patterns representative of that specific author and are then used as a norm for determining what he could or would have written.

The matter becomes more complicated when one looks at the broader use of sources, such as in the case of the synoptic Gospels, and the problem comes well to the fore when the nature of the agreements in parallel passages is being assessed. In taking a closer look at these parallel passages, one is often struck by the fact that some of them agree very strongly in wording and phraseology while at other times the agreement rather occurs in the contents, while the wording and phraseology differ rather sharply. The 'Plucking grain on the Sabbath' pericope (Mt 12:1-8; Mk 2:23-28 and Lk 6:1-5) provides a good example of the first group of stories
mentioned above. In the case of the narratives of the institution of the Lord's Supper (Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:19-20 and 1 Cor. 11:23-26) wording and phraseology also agree so closely that some words and expressions which do not appear elsewhere in the New Testament, even appear in more than one of these narratives.

On the other hand there are also examples of the second category: The whole of the Lucan passion narrative differs so much from both Mark and Matthew that it has not yet been determined with any amount of certainty whether Mark were in fact the source of the Lucan narrative.

There seems to be two possible explanations for this kind of phenomenon. It can either be explained as being a very definitive reworking of the source by the author of the text. This would imply that the author made a very detailed study of his source, deciding in such minute matters as for example the use of particles and prepositions which part of the source he wished to change and which part he wanted to reproduce in his own text. It can, on the other hand, also be explained in terms of 'coincidental' agreement. Some stories (those which agree fairly closely in wording and phraseology) might have been written very shortly after the author of the text had been in contact with the specific story (either because he had read a copy of the story or because he had listened to a retelling thereof), with the result that, when he wrote it down, much of the wording and phraseology of the original story was still fresh in mind and he interfaced with it very closely, sometimes without even being conscious of the fact that he did so. Other stories, in which an author took over the contents rather than the phraseology and wording, might have been written a longer while after the contact with the source, with the result that the author used more of his own natural words and phrases (or those of another source, now lost). The important point of argument is that the language and style employed to convey the message will (and does) differ from passage to passage, depending upon the 'quality' of the involvement with the source upon which the story is based. The mere fact of the parallel does however imply that Marcan linguistic and stylistic features actually occur in Luke's writings. Some passages contain quite a lot of these (ie those that agree closely), while others contain less (ie those that agree less closely). By not distinguishing between the two kinds of parallels, one is again, to a greater or lesser degree, using linguistic and stylistic features not representative of the original author's language and style to establish stylistic patterns for the original author of the book.

The fact that there are three synoptic Gospels means that there are solid grounds of comparison. This makes it easy to hypothesise about the involvement of sources in these books. It is not so easy to hypothesise as to the involvement of sources in other books of the New Testament, since there are no parallels. It might, however, not be unfair to expect the same pattern in the case of other books. The problems created by the so-called 'we-sections' in Acts might be an indication thereof. In the Third Gospel there are also signs of involvement of different sources which had an influence on the language and style. It has been established that three distinctive styles are actually employed in this book: The first four verses display a good classical style, the next couple of chapters a very Semitic style and the rest of the Gospel an ordinary Hellenistic style.
Where these different styles originated from is not known, but the phenomenon also seems to indicate the involvement of sources. The important point of argument here is the fact of the existence of differences of style in the same document, which is devastating to the presumption that language found in a document ought always to be consistent.

The involvement of sources in the origin of the books of the New Testament has two important implications for the subject discussed in this article. Firstly, as has been explained above, the fact that an author wrote parts of his text in the style of another author means that the influence of other authors is present in the text under observation. Consequently, the language and style employed in these parts technically do not represent the language and style of the original author of the text under observation, but rather those of the author of the source from which it was taken. If these passages are analysed as if they were written by the original author of the text under observation, it means that language and style which are not representative of the author are regarded as constituting linguistic and stylistic patterns typical of him and used as a norm for determining what he could or could not have written. The basis of comparison is therefore suspect. The results of the analysis are therefore also suspect.

More important, however, is the fact that the involvement of different authors, albeit indirectly, presupposes difference in language and style, because no two authors write in the same way. The stylistic pattern established as representative of the author of the Third Gospel, therefore actually represents a conglomeration of different styles, the differences, however, not being acknowledged as such in the establishment of the pattern. Judging a disputed text in such a way seems unfair, since the possible linguistic and stylistic differences between a disputed text and the ‘style of the author’ might be due to a closer involvement with the source from which it was taken. Because such an involvement of sources is not acknowledged in the pattern used as the norm, it can also not be identified as such in the application of that norm, with the result that the differences lead to a conclusion that the disputed passage was not originally part of the text under observation.

1.2 The role of redactors
The use of sources in the origin of the books of the New Testament must make it clear that not everything written by an author originated from his own hand and that different authors were involved in the origin of a text such as the Third Gospel. Where one can, however, object to this by arguing that the involvement of these authors is indirect and ‘behind’ the origin of the text under observation, acknowledgement of the involvement of redactors in the origin of the New Testament documents puts the direct involvement of different authors in the origin of these texts beyond dispute.

Decades of literary criticism of the books of the New Testament have proved that the form of the New Testament documents which is currently known in the manuscripts, is most probably the result of processes by which the original texts were mutilated over a period of time by redactors and scribes (is there a difference?), who rewrote some of them, added to
others, omitted from others, combined others, etcetera.

Because, however, of the sharp distinction between the redactional and scribal involvement in the New Testament, which has traditionally been maintained and is still maintained today, the consequences of the redactional history of the New Testament for the reconstruction of its text is not fully appreciated. The reconstructive task of textual criticism is regarded as limited to the manuscripts and the form of text with its variation in the manuscripts. Except for a few abortive attempts at very mild conjectural emendations (of which only one has made it to the New Testament used today — Acts 16:12), textual criticism does not allow itself to go beyond the manuscripts and argue about the originality of passages not disputed in manuscripts. This is the task of redaction criticism. This practice of course presupposes an historical or chronological difference between the involvement of redactors and scribes in the earliest transmission of the text: The text was first reworked redactionally and only after the completion of the work of the redactor did the scribes take over.

However, looking at the nature of the two kinds of passages in dispute, ie redactionally and textually disputed passages, and the arguments used to substantiate the cases for their respective inauthenticity, one wonders whether there is in fact a real difference between the two processes and whether the difference is not merely a case of coincidence, resulting from the coincidental reflection of some of these problems in the extant manuscripts. A few examples will substantiate the case. Is there really a difference between the 'textual' problems in Mark 16 (cf Aland 1969; Elliott 1971) and John 7:53-8:11 (cf Ehrman 1988), on the one hand, and the 'redactional' problems in John 21 (cf Reim 1976), the end of Romans (cf Gamble 1977; Elliott 1981) and the composition of 2 Corinthians (cf Pelser 1988) on the other hand? Looking at the nature of the evidence produced to argue the inauthenticity of these passages, there does not seem to be any difference, for, apart from the fact that the former are reflected in the manuscripts and the latter not, the internal evidence in all cases is basically the same and there seems to be almost general agreement that all were added to the 'original texts' some time during the earliest transmission of the text. Yet, because of the fact that some of these problems are not reflected in the manuscripts, they are treated as part of the 'original' text. In one instance the disputed text is thus kept in the document and even used to establish stylistic patterns for the original author of the document, while in another instance the disputed text's claim to form part of the document is not being observed. Very often the same argument (ie style) is used to substantiate the decision.

When one turns to smaller additions, the matter becomes worse because of the quantity of text involved. Many of these smaller additions to the text have left their mark on the manuscript evidence. Everybody is familiar with texts such as the end of the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:13); the first words spoken by Jesus on the cross (Lk 22:34), the Lucan narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper (Lk 22:19b-20), the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22:43-44), the Angel stirring the water at Bethesda (Jn 5:3-4) and the doxology at the end of Romans (Rm 16:25-27), to mention only a few of the better known examples. The most obvious example of them all is to be found in the text of Acts, to which so many readings have
been added in the 'Western text' that this text is approximately ten percent longer than the Alexandrian text (Metzger 1971:260). In many of these cases differences in style are used to support documentary evidence against these readings being original to these texts (cf Ehrman & Plunkett 1983:408-409 for Lk 22:43-44; Elliott 1981 for Rm 16:25-27; Fee 1982:210-215 for Jn 5:3-4; Petzer 1991 for Lk 22:19b-20). Apart from the manuscript evidence, there, however, seems to be little difference between these smaller additions, disputed because of their absence in certain manuscripts, and other texts with redactional problems. In the Third Gospel, for example, one can find a number of texts with an unusually high amount of *hapax legomena* (e.g Lk 4:8; 6:38; 10:34 — cf Ehrman & Plunkett 1983:409). In the Fourth Gospel one can also find text-critically fixed verses with unusually high percentages of non-Johannine stylistic features (e.g Jn 2:14-16 — cf Fee 1982:211). Probably the best known of all, are the problems of literary interpolation in the Pauline epistles (cf Walker 1987, 1988). Because these latter parts are all text-critically fixed, that is occur in all the known manuscripts of these texts, they are treated as belonging to the original versions, i.e they are treated as though they were written by the authors of the books under observation. Apart from the manuscript evidence, it is however never explained why the same argument (the style) is regarded as a convincing indication of inauthenticity in some cases and in others not.

The important point of the argument in this article lies in the use of style for arguing both cases. Style is used on the one hand to establish (text-critically firm) parts of text as being those of a redactor, not the author, but their right to be part of the text is acknowledged since the problem of authenticity is coincidentally not reflected in the manuscripts. The same argument is then used to argue that other (text-critically problematic) parts of text cannot belong to the text, since the problem of authenticity is coincidentally reflected in the manuscripts. Thus the same argument is used, to argue, that a certain part of the text should be allowed to remain in the text, even though it was not part of the original and that another part should be removed from the text because it was not part of the original text. The fact that redactional changes to the original text are acknowledged, but left to stand in the text, implies that parts of the text under observation were not originally written by the author, but taken over from other texts. This presupposes difference in style and language in the text being analysed. If this is true, how can the same argument be used to remove parts of the text merely because they do or do not appear in some manuscripts? Using the criterion in this manner is actually a contradiction in terms, which renders it all but useless.

These facts must make it clear that once the form of text in the manuscripts and the variation in the manuscripts are accepted as normative for determining what formed part of the 'original' texts, it is not the words of the original author which are the object of reconstruction any longer. It is then a redacted text which is being dealt with — a text in which a number of authors have directly participated, each changing, adding to or omitting from the original text, becoming a co-author of that text. This of necessity resulted in stylistic differences, so that any pattern be-
longing to in the original text written by the original authors, will have been destroyed and interrupted by hapax legomena and other strange features. Treating all these elements of different authors on the same level in establishing a stylistic pattern results in a distorted pattern which can in no way represent the language and style of the original author and can therefore not be used as a norm for determining originality in text-critically disputed passages.

These passages therefore aggravate the problems pointed out in the discussion of the sources above, since, once they are accepted as later redactional additions to or reworkings of the original versions of these texts, the direct involvement of different authors in the creation of these texts must be acknowledged. The situation is therefore very similar to that described above, the only difference being that in these cases the involvement of the 'other authors' is direct, each redactor or scribe changing, omitting or adding, becoming an actual co-author of the text under observation.

The same problems as in the case of the sources, discussed above, are therefore again encountered when those parts of text originating from the hands of redactors are analysed as if they were written by the original authors. It means that once again text not written by the original author is used to establish the stylistic and linguistic patterns regarded as representative of the original author. Once again text not written by the original author is used to determine what he could or could not have written. It seems that in this way we are possibly judging apples by comparing them to pears.

Moreover, the second problem also recurs. Allowing for the participation of redactors in the origin of the text means that more than one author was directly involved in the origin of the text, which implies difference in style by default. Using it as a norm for judging a disputed text will therefore have the same effect as that described above: The possible linguistic and stylistic differences between a disputed text and the stylistic pattern said to be representative of the author might be due to a redactional change to the original text. However, since the involvement of redactional activities and the changes to the general language and style are not distinguished from the language and style of the original author, the disputed text can also not be identified as a redactional change rather than a scribal change if the pattern established in the above way is applied as a norm, with the result that the differences must lead to the discarding of the disputed passage as unauthentic.

2. AUTHOR OR TEXT?
The basic problem of the whole enterprise lies in an important theoretical concept which textual criticism has not yet acknowledged. As has been said above, in the formulation of the criterion under scrutiny in this article it can already be seen that the whole matter focuses on the author, that is the human being writing the document and not the text. What is being analysed is however in fact not the author, but the text and conclusions as to what the author did and did not do, are drawn from the phenomena confronted in the process of the analysis of the text. For example, coming across a part of text which interfaces with another text is taken to imply that the author deliberately quoted from the other text. Whether this is
in fact what happened, or whether the author used the formulations of the other text without even knowing that he did so, is impossible to tell. It cannot be determined with certainty when the author was citing, when he was alluding, or when he produced something from out of his own mind. The author cannot be analysed. All that can be analysed, is the result of his activity, that is the text. The analysis can therefore not represent the author or the linguistic and stylistic abilities and qualities of the author. It can merely represent linguistic and stylistic qualities of the text under observation.

This implies that in the application of this criterion, it is in fact not the author who controls the use of language, which is the normative element, but the text, which is the result of the (author's) control of language, which becomes the norm. What is therefore to be determined in the analysis is not what the author's linguistic and stylistic patterns imply with regard to disputed passages, but rather what the linguistic and stylistic qualities and patterns of the text imply. The text should be used as the norm to reconstruct itself. The text itself should reveal what is genuinely part of it and what not. What needs to be done is to search for the signs in the text which would reveal what was originally written in it and what not. The text must, so to speak, define and reconstruct itself.

The question to be answered at this point is whether the text (and, in the case of this article, the text of the New Testament) can in fact play this role. Can the text be used as norm in the place of the author? Can the text thus reconstruct itself? For two reasons the answer has to be negative. In the first place it presupposes a problematic view of a text, a view which completely dissociates the text from the interpreter and puts it upon a pedestal as a fixed and closed entity, with rounded-off and closed structures and patterns waiting to be 'discovered' by the critic, who is able to approach the text tabula rasa and in fact 'discover' those patterns.

In the case of the New Testament, it secondly presupposes a simple view of the origin of the New Testament documents — a view which cannot explain some facets, aspects and features of the documents under observation, in particular the linguistic and stylistic fluidity of the books of the New Testament, which have to be accounted for (or at least acknowledged) in the analysis of the stylistic patterns of a book. There seems to be two possible explanations for this phenomenon. Either it suggests that the authors of these texts were inconsistent in their use of language, or else it implies the involvement of other authors, that is the influences of sources, redactoral and scribal activities on the text. Acceptance of the first explanation renders the criterion useless without argument, since the basic premise of the criterion is contradicted. The only way in which the criterion can possibly function under these circumstances is if a detailed analysis of the influences upon the author's style can reveal when, why and how far he was prepared to deviate from his general linguistic and stylistic pattern, ie if the analysis is based upon those parts of text which represent the 'true' linguistic abilities of the original author only (such as was attempted by Jordaan in his study of variation in word-order in the Third Gospel, cf Jordaan 1980, 1982). Acceptance of the
second possibility also renders the criterion useless, for reasons which have been discussed earlier in this article. The only chance of it having any kind of success under these circumstances is if it can be accurately determined which parts of the text originated from the original author and which from redactors, in order to once again base the analysis on only those parts of text that originated from the original author of the original text.

Only when such a nuanced analysis of the text can be made can one start thinking in terms of analysing the abilities of original authors (though for reasons which will not to discussed here, it is still questionable whether this kind of analysis is possible). New Testament scholarship has shown both options to be very difficult, if not impossible, enterprises. This is inter alia clear from the simplistic patterns presented by analysts of the text. Establishing these kinds of single and simplistic patterns of linguistic and stylistic usage in the text means that one forces different entities on different levels and with different histories, origins, functions and purposes into one and the same big whole, merely because they coincidentally occur in the same unit of text, without acknowledging the differences between them or even that there are such differences. There is nothing wrong with this kind of analysis as such, as long as it concerns the text and not its author. However, using this pattern as a means of qualitative judgments in the case of disputed readings cannot be justified, since it cannot represent anything except a coincidental conglomerate of various individual linguistic and stylistic usages by individual authors randomly combined in the same unit of text. Such a pattern represents little and can suggest little either about the stylistic qualities of any author, or the origin of the text or any disputed part of it.

It is therefore impossible to devise any theoretical foundation for the practice of employing such a coincidental conglomerated textual pattern for the purpose of deciding the fate of parts of a text, which are disputed because they do not occur in certain manuscripts known today. Once differences in the language and style of a text is acknowledged, it becomes impossible to base conclusions as to the originality of any part of the text upon arguments of this nature, since the signs emitted by the text are ambiguous and coincidental, and can therefore not be used as a basis for conclusions.

3 CONCLUSION

Enough has been said above to make it clear that consistency in style cannot easily serve as a basis for the analysis of language and style, or as a norm for determining originality in text-critically disputed passages in the New Testament. The linguistic and stylistic habits of the original authors of the New Testament cannot be analysed, and the linguistic and stylistic patterns of New Testament texts cannot be used to reconstruct these texts, because of their linguistic and stylistic fluidity.

Does the above discussion imply that a consistent use of language and style cannot be found in a document? Certainly not. But this is not the point of the article. The point is that it cannot be presupposed and used as a criterion for determining textual integrity. This kind of qualitative judgment as to the use of language can only be established after an
analysis of the language and style of the whole document, which means that one has to decide beforehand what the document in question, looks like, before analysing the language and style employed therein. Such a qualitative judgment can only be the result of analysis and not the basis and presupposition for analysis, and can therefore not be used to establish what the original text of a document looked like.

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