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THE BIBLE SOCIETIES' GREEK TESTAMENT: THE END OF A DECADE OR BEGINNING OF AN ERA?

The decade from 1955 to 1965 has seen at least one Greek New Testament or portion issued each year. This year also heralds the publication of the Greek New Testament. What does it all mean? Why yet another edition of the Greek New Testament?

The years just before and after the Second World War were relatively quiet ones in textual studies. Few publications of discoveries could portend the avalanche of editions which was soon to fall upon students of the Greek New Testament. The stones which seem to have started the avalanche were, one might say, the numerous papyrus fragments of parts of the New Testament which have kept turning up almost every year since the turn of the century. Until 1934 when the major papyrus pages and fragments of the Gospels, Acts, Letters of Paul, and Revelation in the Chester Beatty manuscripts, were published (designated P⁴⁵, P⁴⁶, and P⁴⁷) most of the papyri which had been found and catalogued were short and fragmentary; because of this, they were often difficult to assess in textual value.

The Chester Beatty papyri which gave very extensive portions of many books of the New Testament, provided stimulus for a great deal more study of the text of the New Testament. But not until 1956 when Papyrus Bodmer II, of the Gospel of John, P⁶⁶, appeared did scholars begin to have available almost complete portions of major New Testament books for study. Other Bodmer papyri provided another manuscript, including parts of Luke as well as John, P⁷⁵; one of Acts, and fragments of the General Epistles, P⁷⁴, and one of Peter and Jude, P⁷².

Significantly, the spate of discovery was accompanied by new publications or new editions of Greek New Testaments. Has there been another decade in the history of the published Greek New Testament when each new year brought to light a new printing or new edition of the Greek? The second revised edition of Souter (Oxford University Press, 1947), was but the harbinger of what was to come in the dynamic decade of 1955–1965:

- 1955 H. J. Vogels, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, 4th ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau and Barcelona: Herder.)
- 1956 E. Nestle and K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 22nd ed.
- 1957 23rd edition. (Stuttgart: Württemberg Bible Society.)
- 1957 A. Merk, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, 8th ed. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute.)
- 1958 E. Nestle and G. D. Kilpatrick, *Hē Kainē Diathēkē*, 2nd ed. (London: British and Foreign Bible Society.)

- 1958 G. D. Kilpatrick, *Mark: A Greek-English Diglot* for the use of Translators; corrected edition, 1961.
- 1959 *Matthew*: corrected edition 1961
(London: British and Foreign Bible Society.)
- 1959 J. M. Bover, *Novi Testamenti Biblia Graeca et Latina*, 4th ed. (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra.)
- 1960 E. Nestle and K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 24th ed.
- 1960 G. D. Kilpatrick, *John: A Greek-English Diglot*, corr. ed., 1961.
- 1961 *The General Letters*.
- 1962 *Luke*.
- 1963 *The Pastoral Letters and Hebrews*.
- 1963 E. Nestle and K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 25th ed.
- 1964 G. D. Kilpatrick, *Romans and Corinthians: A Greek-English Diglot*.
- 1964 R. V. G. Tasker, *The Greek New Testament*. (Oxford and Cambridge University Presses.)
- 1965 A. Merk, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, 9th ed.
- 1965 reprint, C. Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 8th ed., 1872. (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 2 vol.)
- 1965 E. C. Colwell, *The Oxford Critical Edition of the Greek New Testament*: St. Luke 22: 1–6, tentative brochure. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press.)

The astonishing number and variety of these editions can only be the signal of widely revived interest in the Greek text of the New Testament.

Why a New Edition of the Greek New Testament?

The Bible Societies' Greek New Testament, published in May, 1966, is the result of more than a decade of study. The edition attempts to incorporate the best features of many of the previous editions, as well as a number of new features which will make it especially useful for translators.

In 1954, after discussion with several leading New Testament scholars, the officers of the American Bible Society proposed to their Board of Managers a plan for preparing a new critical edition of the Greek text of the New Testament. Its purpose would be to provide the scholarly world with a text and apparatus representing contemporary developments in textual studies and providing evidence not generally accessible, and to provide for Bible translators, especially missionaries and nationals of the younger Churches, the basic tools with which to do their work more satisfactorily. The new edition was to be prepared by a representative group of New Testament scholars. The plan was then presented to a group of Bible Societies and four of them have since joined in the project: the National Bible Society of Scotland, the Württemberg Bible Society, the Netherlands Bible Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Experience with translators in many areas has shown that there is a definite need for an edition of the Greek text reflecting the results of contemporary scholarship more effectively than any of the existing editions. Translators, who often work without a large library of reference books or who have limited training in exegesis, theological students, teachers, pastors and scholars, encouraged the preparation of such an edition.

None of the editions listed above adequately presents a new critical text. The apparatus of Souter's 2nd edition was greatly enlarged over the first edition but the text was unchanged from that of 1910; it is an attempted reconstruction of the Greek text of the English Revised Version, but the Textus Receptus is retained where the text underlying the E.R.V. could not be reconstructed. The Nestle-Aland text, while it has gone through twenty-five editions and has radically changed in the scope and content of the apparatus, is still basically the text of the majority of the three outstanding editions at the turn of the century: Tischendorf, Westcott-Hort and Weiss. The B.F.B.S. 2nd edition of the Greek text was the text of the 1904 edition of Nestle except in some fifteen passages. Vogels, Merk and Bover each edited a Greek text accompanied by the Clementine Vulgate; while they present a wealth of data in their various apparatuses, they have not been widely used outside of the Roman Catholic world. In 1872 Tischendorf produced a text for his eighth edition which was heavily influenced by Codex Sinaiticus, but his apparatus has still not been superseded. The new Oxford Critical Edition, successor to S. C. E. Legg's editions of Matthew and Mark which used the Westcott-Hort as a base, will instead print the Textus Receptus and will include a very complete critical apparatus. The edition will be many years if not decades in the making; when it is finished it will only present data from which a critical text must then be constructed.

The only two really new editions are those of Kilpatrick and Tasker. Kilpatrick's work was intended to be the 3rd edition of the B.F.B.S. but was generally available 'for private circulation only'. For various reasons, this edition was not completed. Tasker, on the other hand, attempted to reconstruct the Greek underlying the New English Bible; it is a handsome edition to accompany an admirable translation, but there is no critical apparatus except for brief textual notes at the end of the volume, and the text has been criticized at some points.¹ Methodologically it is vulnerable on the ground that the committee worked from no single Greek text. Hence one cannot reconstruct 'the' underlying Greek, especially in matters of word order and sentence structure of the Greek. Even with all of these editions, a thorough editing of the Greek text was needed because none of them adequately reflect recent developments and discoveries of the past fifty years. Research in papyri, in the ancient versions, in the Greek manuscripts themselves and in manuscript families, is so extensive but so scattered in learned journals and inaccessible reference works that a cooperative endeavour was necessary to bring these important data together.

¹ See the reviews, for example by E. C. Colwell, *Interpretation*, April 1965, pp. 237-8; A. F. J. Klijn, *New Testament Studies*, 11.2 (1965), pp. 184-5; B. M. Metzger, *Classical Journal*, 60.4 (1965), pp. 180-2; Ian Moir, *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 16, January 1965, pp. 49-51; John Reumann, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 84 (March 1965), pp. 100-1.

The Editorial Committee

Textual criticism has advanced to such a point that only a committee of scholars can encompass the competence in many fields which is necessary for the production of a new Greek text. The sheer volume of data—more than 5000 Greek manuscripts, 8000 Latin manuscripts, 1000 Armenian manuscripts, in addition to hundreds of manuscripts in at least a dozen other languages—is beyond the capacity of any one scholar to read and evaluate properly.

Furthermore, it has been a long-standing principle of the Bible Societies that major translations and revisions should be done by committees rather than by individual scholars. A higher standard of accuracy and balance can obviously be obtained by committee endeavor. It was essential, therefore, that a Greek text specifically intended for use by committees in translation and revision, as well as individual translators, should itself be the result of committee cooperation.

In the preparation of this edition, there were four principal members of the editorial committee: Professor Kurt Aland (who also edits the Nestle-Aland Greek Text), Principal Matthew Black (editor of *New Testament Studies*), Professor Bruce M. Metzger (author of *The Text of the New Testament*), and Professor Allen Wikgren (director of the Chicago Lectionary Project). In the early years of the project, there was a fifth member, Professor Arthur Vööbus, but he was unable to continue with the committee.

Selection of Variant Readings

In the very nature of the case, any edition of the Greek text is a revision of what has been done earlier. In preparing this new edition, the committee based its work on the Westcott-Hort text since it was the pinnacle of 19th century textual criticism and has never really been superseded. The Westcott-Hort text was collated with the text of Merk, Bover, Vogels, Nestle, Kilpatrick and von Soden. Tischendorf's monumental edition was of course consulted continuously by the committee. In addition to collation of the texts, the committee selected variants from the critical apparatuses of Merk, Bover, Vogels and Nestle. For each of the 5100 passages collected, evidence was assembled from Tischendorf, von Soden, Legg and others. These passages formed the basis for the committee evaluation supplemented by collations of the Bodmer Papyri and the fascicles of the new Kilpatrick Greek text. Textual abstracts were also made from the principal commentaries in order to provide any new data or significant variants.

Evaluation of Variant Readings

Each variant reading was discussed in detail by the committee, consulting commentaries and periodicals, as well as ancient and modern versions. The reading favored by the majority of the committee was adopted as the text and the letters A, B, C, D, were used to indicate the degree of certainty of the decision. An 'A' decision indicated little doubt in the committee's mind that the reading chosen was nearer the original text of the author. A 'B' decision indicated that there was some doubt in the mind of the committee about the reading chosen as the text. A 'C' decision indicated that in the view of the

committee, there was a considerable degree of doubt whether or not the text or the margin preserved the better reading. A 'D' decision indicated the highest possible degree of doubt.

In addition to the committee evaluation and selection of textual evidence presented in the apparatus, one of the committee members, Bruce M. Metzger, is writing a supplementary volume which will present the committee discussion notes for each of the apparatus passages and a number of other passages for which there is no apparatus in the present text. This volume will show the user how the committee evaluated the evidence and weighed the internal factors which can scarcely be shown in a textual apparatus. This volume should be available in two or three years.

Use of Square Brackets

In a number of passages the evidence was so evenly balanced that square brackets were used to indicate a possible omission from the text. Where the omission would affect translation, an apparatus is provided; if the omission would not normally affect translation, no apparatus was prepared.

Criteria for Selection of Variants in the Apparatus

It has been estimated that the Nestle-Aland Greek text has some 10,000 textual variants cited in the apparatus. With every new manuscript found, the number increases. Yet, the committee text has only about 1,500 apparatus passages. Is the number adequate for the translator?

From the beginning it was the purpose of this edition to restrict the selection of apparatus readings to those which were significant for translators, and, in some cases, other readings which were necessary for the establishing of the Greek text. A great many variants in the apparatuses of many editions are variants of spelling, word order, use of the definite article, or other types of variants which—while important in Greek—cannot normally be indicated in translation. This evidence, however, is included for variant readings for which this information is part of the variant but in which some other factor is more important.

Collection of Greek Manuscript Data for Apparatus

Two things impress one about most editions of the Greek text, even the major Greek texts of Tischendorf and von Soden. While a great many manuscripts may be used occasionally in the edition, few are cited consistently except for a handful of the major uncials and an even smaller number of minuscules. For example, the Nestle-Aland Greek text cites more than 260 minuscules; actually, however, of these 260 minuscules, only 26 are cited more than a dozen times in the entire New Testament! Most of them are cited less than half a dozen times. The same pattern runs through other editions of the Greek text, large or small.

The second thing characteristic about most editions is the fact that the usual pattern is to cite evidence only for or against a given reading, rarely to give evidence both for and against.

It was these two major deficiencies which the new apparatus was designed to overcome: it cites full evidence both for and against readings included in the apparatus. At the same time, it attempts to cite evidence more consistently. For example, the new text includes reference to 266 minuscules but the important thing is that 62 of them are cited consistently through the Gospels, Acts and General Epistles, Epistles of Paul, or Revelation. This will enable one to assess the actual value of a manuscript on the basis of its citations, not on the basis of what one guesses it might read.

The Introduction to the new text provides a full list of the manuscripts which were utilised for this edition. It distinguishes between those which were fully collated and those which were taken over from citation in other editions. All possible papyri were examined for this edition and 52 are cited in the apparatus; others were not cited because there was no apparatus at those points for which the papyrus was extant. Altogether, 169 uncials are cited; admittedly the great majority of them are extant for only a few pages, thus giving the appearance of being cited only sporadically. From more than 600 manuscripts examined, 266 minuscules were cited, on the basis of (1) known importance in textual criticism, (2) significant differences from the Textus Receptus, and (3) occasional citation where a manuscript was of particular value.

In a similar manner, a very large number of lectionaries (Church Lesson Books) were selected for citation; 150 of them are cited in this edition and 52 were systematically collated for the apparatus. This evidence has been all but ignored in other editions of the Greek text except perhaps in Bover who makes sporadic reference to 30 lectionaries.

Collation of the Versions

Because of the select nature of the apparatus, the versional evidence was especially important. Here, too, many editions have included this evidence only sporadically. In the new edition, however, all of the versional evidence was checked in order to ensure both accuracy of citation and relevance of evidence. Where the versional evidence supports two possible readings, this is indicated. In Mark 1: 1, when the Greek has two possible forms, *huiou theou* or *huiou tou theou*, Latin and some other versions can be cited for neither one of these readings directly since they have no definite article. On the other hand, this versional evidence is crucially important in support of these readings against the alternatives. Hence, the new apparatus says that the readings *huiou theou* or *huiou tou theou* are supported by the Old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, Armenian, Ethiopic and Georgian in addition to Latin Church Fathers and Greek Church Fathers whose writings are preserved only in Latin.

Preparation of the Punctuation Apparatus

Some modern translations and Greek editions indicate some possible punctuation alternatives to the punctuation of the Greek text. In this edition,

a more complete selection is presented, along with supporting evidence. Almost certainly the original manuscripts written in capital letters, did not have marks of punctuation; these are modern conveniences which stem from about the 9th or 10th century when scribes began to write manuscripts in a running or cursive hand and to include accents, breathing and punctuation marks. Occasionally the uncials had a few marks of punctuation, but these are not common.

There are even marked differences between modern editions of the Greek text. Some punctuate more fully than others; some indicate direct or indirect discourse and some do not. Five representative Greek editions and ten modern translations are chosen for citation in the punctuation apparatus.

Many unforeseen obstacles were found during the preparation of this apparatus. Some punctuation marks are not used at all in editions of the ancient Greek New Testament, such as colon (two dots), semi-colon, quotation marks and exclamation marks.

Even more difficult to assess were the differences between punctuation as used in modern translations. Actual punctuation marks had to be classified into groups depending upon the function of the mark of punctuation in a given context, not according to the actual mark used. For example, a *major break* is the term adopted to describe a major break in the punctuation of a given passage; this might include a period (full stop), colon (raised period), colon (two dots), semi-colon, and sometimes even a comma. A *minor break* is the term describing a colon, semi-colon, comma or even a translational 'and' when no actual punctuation mark was used in the translation. The most important result of this analysis was the recognition that two or more punctuation marks often occur in relationship and the significant factor is not the actual mark of punctuation used but the contrast between the two breaks which the marks signify.

The *question mark* even proved to be flexible in actual usage. Greek can express a question by means of a question mark, or a period in cases of rhetorical questions. Versions use the same marks but also an exclamation mark, since this can signify either a rhetorical question or an emphatic statement and the difference between the two is not always clear. Consequently the apparatus cites the actual mark of punctuation (question or exclamation) in order to show the variety of possible interpretations.

Another kind of break for which it was necessary to retain the actual punctuation mark was the category of what might be termed interruptive punctuation: some degree of syntactical break or interruption was felt, but interpreters differ on the actual mark used. Thus, what one editor may feel is a syntactic break necessitating a dash, another may feel warrants a period; another may use ellipsis dots to indicate an even stronger type of break. These interruptive breaks were often found to occur in pairs: some editors and versions used a dash at either end, others use periods, parenthesis marks, or even a pair of commas to accomplish the same purpose. The actual mark used depends upon the understanding of the translator; the apparatus helps provide the translator with the range of relevant data and possible alternatives.

Summary of Special Features

1. A text in readable 11 point Porson type, with Old Testament quotations set in contrasting bold type. The type face and page layout were especially chosen to encourage ease of reading even under adverse lighting conditions. Poetic and liturgical passages are given poetic indentation.
2. English paragraph headings and parallel passages following the series prepared by The United Bible Societies.
3. A simplified critical apparatus with evidence cited for and against 1,500 selected variant readings. Footnote markers are used and special symbols and Latin abbreviations are avoided.
4. Evidence is systematically cited throughout a given section of the New Testament (Gospels, Acts and General Epistles, Epistles of Paul, and Revelation). More than 500 manuscripts and versions are cited, and more than 200 Church Fathers.
5. Committee evaluation by means of letters A, B, C, D, indicated for each reading cited in the apparatus. A supplementary volume in preparation will give committee discussion notes.
6. Inclusion in the apparatus of all marginal readings from the major English versions so that the text may be used with any of these editions.
7. Punctuation apparatus for 600 passages in which there is significant difference of meaning. Evidence is cited from five editions of the Greek and ten English, German and French translations.
8. New reference system with specific identification of length and source of quotations.

Conclusions

In no sense did the committee intend that this new edition should be final or that it should replace other editions. Each will serve its own purpose and fulfil its own role as an aid in understanding the history of the text and in the study of Scripture. The committee plan to revise their work as new evidence becomes available and scholarly studies advance. The new edition stands at the end of a remarkable decade of work on the text of the New Testament. The Bible Societies hope that this new edition will mark the beginning of a new era of vigorous study of the Scriptures, fresh translation into the languages of the world and renewed application to the lives of its peoples.

The edition of 975 pages, including Preface, Introduction, Text and Index, will be available in two editions: maroon plastic, U.S. \$1.39; red morocco, \$4.40. Copies may be obtained from the Bible Society office in your area.