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TEXTUAL RESEARCH ON THE BIBLE

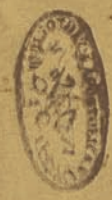
An Introduction to the Scholarly Editions of the German Bible Society

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ΚΑΤΑ ΛΟΥΚΑΝ





Codex Vaticanus, dating back to the fourth century, is regarded as one of the most important biblical manuscripts. With the exception of a few lacunae, it comprises the entire Old and New Testaments. At right are the end of the Gospel of Luke and the beginning of the Gospel of John.

TEXTUAL RESEARCH ON THE BIBLE

An Introduction to the Scholarly Editions of the German Bible Society

What Is Old Testament Textual Research?	4
I. The Biblia Hebraica by Rudolf Kittel (BHK)	9
II. The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)	12
III. The Future of the Biblia Hebraica: The Biblia Hebraica Quinta (BHQ) Project	12
 What Is New Testament Textual Research?	 16
I. The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece and Its History	19
II. The Greek New Testament and Its History	25
III. The Significance of the Two Editions Today	28
IV. The Outlook: New Testament Textual Research Continues	29

What Is Old Testament Textual Research?

All reliable translations of the Old Testament (OT, frequently called the Hebrew Bible - HB) into any language used today must be based on the ancient manuscripts that have survived to the present day. The important task of determining the Hebrew (most of the OT) and Aramaic (portions of Daniel, Ezra, and a few other verses) text most faithful to the original writings is a complex one because there is no document that dates to its biblical author (the autograph), but only carefully crafted, but not perfect, copies from later periods. Much of the prophetic writings, for instance, date from the 9th to the 6th centuries B.C., but the very oldest fragments of copies in Hebrew and Aramaic that exist come from the 2nd century B.C.

It was in the 3rd century B.C. that the Hebrew Bible was first translated into Greek; this so-called Septuagint is the oldest and most important indirect witness from that era for the wording of the Hebrew/Aramaic text. Further ancient translations were later added, above all the translation into the common ("Vulgata") Latin, the Syrian "Peshitta" and the Aramaic "Targum".

The oldest direct witnesses for the text of the Hebrew Bible are the manuscripts found in 1947 and thereafter in the Judean Desert that had been hidden in caves near Qumran on the western edge of the

Dead Sea. These ancient manuscripts include the remains of some 200 transcriptions of individual books of the Bible from the period between 150 B.C. and A.D. 70. Apart from one single transcription of the Book of Isaiah preserved in its entirety, the biblical texts from Qumran are mere fragments, on which in most cases a very limited number of legible words, often only a few characters, can be made out.

The oldest complete copy of the entire Hebrew Bible as we know it today is the Codex Leningradensis from the year 1008. Another ancient copy, the Aleppo Codex, dating from almost a hundred years earlier (A.D. 930), is unfortunately no longer complete. The Codex Leningradensis and the Aleppo Codex are two prime examples of the so-called Masoretic text (MT; see below pp. 6-7).

Old Testament textual research sets out to identify accidental errors in, as well as deliberate changes to, the text of the Hebrew Bible that were made over the course of time. It seeks wherever possible to correct these changes by first identifying variations in transmission through a comparison of the existing manuscripts against each other and against the ancient translations, and then reconstructing the original version by means of rigorous scholarly criteria. (See the next

section for the procedure used in New Testament textual research.) On the basis of manuscript evidence alone the best attainable wording of the Hebrew Bible is as it was around 200 B.C. Because of the incomplete nature of the text witnesses available to us today, this oldest attainable text form cannot, however, be reconstructed to the same extent in all cases. In order to present a uniform text in a printed edition of the Hebrew Bible, the construction of a text form corrected according to scholarly criteria (as in the case of the New Testament) must thus be dispensed with. Rather, it is expedient to print a copy of the “Masoretic Text” and then to list where necessary the extant textual variants in what is called the critical apparatus at the foot of each page. Also in this location any scholarly suggestions for improvement of the Masoretic text can be noted.

The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS), the outcome of the findings from more than 100 years of Old Testament textual research, follows this principle. The BHS is in universal use today and is esteemed among scholars from all Christian and Jewish backgrounds as a highly reliable edition of the text of the Hebrew Bible. It provides the basis both for training clergy in the original language of the Old Testament and is the basis of all reputable modern Bible translations.



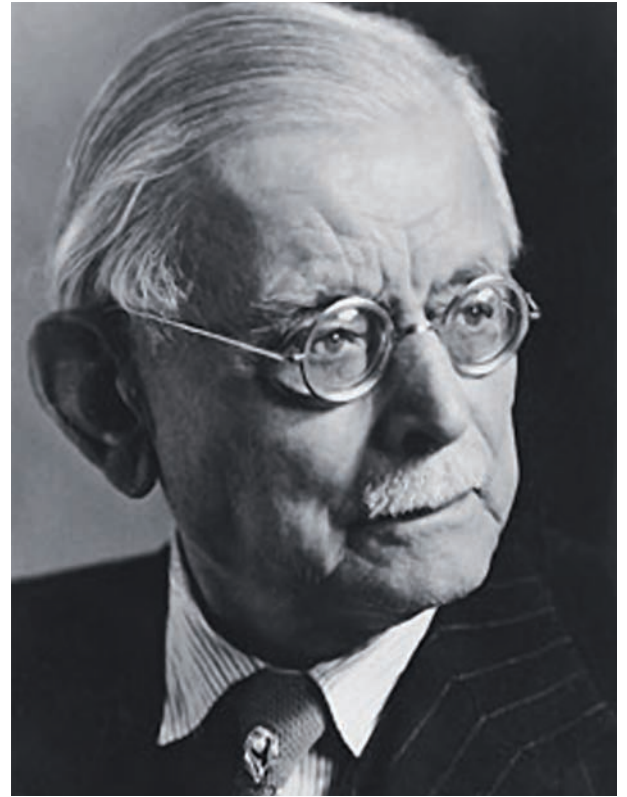
Codex Leningradensis. The illustration shows one of the elaborately executed decorative pages at the end of the manuscript. Quotations from Masoretic rules and biblical texts are written in geometrical patterns. At the center is a note by the scribe: “I, Samuel ben Jakob, wrote out this codex and provided punctuation and Masorah ...”

Background: “Masorah” and “Masoretic text”

*A peculiarity of the way in which the Hebrew language was (and, like Arabic, still is) normally written is that it is written without most vowels. For more than a thousand years, the consonants were written, but the vowels required for pronunciation had to be supplied by the reader. This is true of the Qumran manuscripts. This “consonantal” text of the Hebrew Bible has been regarded as fixed (not to be changed) since the first century A.D. and the Jewish people have ever since attached great importance to its precise transmission. The problem remains that the consonantal text frequently allows for different possible pronunciations and thus potentially also different meanings. Knowledge of the correct pronunciation and meaning therefore had to be passed down from generation to generation together with the written text. Around A.D. 600, Jewish scholars, the so-called Masoretes (literally “conveyors of tradition”) finally developed a system of **vowel and stress marks** that also precisely fixed or established the pronunciation and thus the meaning of the Hebrew Bible text. The Masoretes at the same time undertook textual research of the highest quality. In addition to establishing a fixed pronunciation and meaning, they also endeavored to secure the biblical text against mistakes in copying and, wherever possible, to correct existing errors. To this end, in the margin of their manuscripts they added detailed notes on writing (orthographic) variants, statistical information on the frequency of particular words, and even directions as to where they considered a reading different from the transmitted consonantal text to be necessary. This compendium of marginal notes is referred to as the **Masorah Parva** (“small Masorah”). Along with this lesser collection of notes, the Masoretes also compiled lists of entire passages from the biblical text distinguished, for example, by a characteristic orthographic variant, a particular sequence of words or other peculiarity. These lists, collectively referred to as the **Masorah Magna** (“large Masorah”), are included at the top and the foot of the pages of the Masoretic manuscripts. The highly meticulous work of the Masoretes gave rise to the term for the carefully copied biblical text that they made, the “**Masoretic Text**.” Because of their careful work done between the 6th and 8th centuries, from that time onwards there has been a largely uniformly transmitted version of the Hebrew Bible with only minor textual variations.*



***Rudolf Kittel** (*1853 in Eningen u.A.; † 1929 in Leipzig), Professor of Old Testament Studies in Leipzig, initiated the plans for a critical edition of the Hebrew Bible in 1901. The first edition of his *Biblia Hebraica* appeared in 1906.*



***Paul Kahle** (*1875 in Hohenstein; † 1964 in Bonn), Professor of Oriental Studies in Bonn and Oxford, recognized the eminent significance of the *Codex Leningradensis* for textual research and persuaded Rudolf Kittel to use this Codex as the textual basis of the 3rd Edition of the *Biblia Hebraica*.*

I. The Biblia Hebraica by Rudolf Kittel (BHK)

The beginnings: The First Edition of the Biblia Hebraica by Rudolf Kittel (1906)

Around 1901, the Old Testament scholar Rudolf Kittel (1853–1929) from Leipzig developed a plan for a critical edition of the Hebrew Bible. Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (BHK) was published in 1906 in two volumes by Verlagsbuchhandlung J. C. Hinrichs in Leipzig. As its basis, Kittel chose the Hebrew so-called "Textus receptus", edited by Jakob ben Chayim. This was a version of the Masoretic Text that Daniel Bomberg had published in Venice in 1524/1525. Through the centuries since its first publication, it had become universally recognized as the definitive text of the Hebrew Bible. Kittel printed this Hebrew text with its vowel and stress marks, but without the surrounding Masoretic commentaries and notes (the Masorah Magna and Masorah Parva). At the foot of the pages he included a concise critical apparatus with textual variants from other known Masoretic manuscripts and from the ancient translations (primarily the Greek Septuagint).

A milestone: The Third Edition of the Biblia Hebraica by Rudolf Kittel (1937)

In 1921, Württembergische Bibelanstalt (WBA) acquired the rights to Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* from the publisher J. C. Hinrichs. In addition to a reprint of the existing edition, a revision of this work was undertaken from 1925 onwards. The "Codex Leningradensis" from A.D. 1008 had been discovered by Paul Kahle in Leningrad, Russia, and because it was the oldest manuscript of the Masoretic Text preserved in its entirety, it subsequently served as the textual basis for this edition. The critical apparatus was divided into two portions; "slight variants and less important items of information" and "the real textual changes and other more significant matter." In this way the reader was provided with an evaluation of the significance of that information. Above all, however, the margins of this third edition included the Masorah Parva from the Codex Leningradensis, although without further treatment or explanation. The complete revision was published by WBA in 1937 as the third edition of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (BHK3). This publication laid the foundation for the high international esteem enjoyed by *Biblia Hebraica* and prepared the ground for the later BHS.



Codex Leningradensis, the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, from the year 1008. The photograph shows Folio 423 with the end of the Book of Ruth and the beginning of the Song of Solomon.



The further development of the BHK

In 1947, the discovery of the Qumran scrolls opened up a new dimension in Old Testament textual research. For the first time Hebrew/Aramiac manuscripts some 1,000 years older than the Codex Leningradensis became available as reference texts; This discovery cast entirely new light on the history of the texts, and the textual variants of the Qumran manuscripts could, of course, not be omitted from the Biblia Hebraica. For technical reasons, however, the typesetting of the BHK3 could only be modified to a limited extent. Moreover, the Hebrew matrices used in printing the BHK3 had

been lost or destroyed in the course of World War II. The variants from the two best-preserved Qumran texts, for example – the Isaiah Scroll (1QIs^a) and the Habakkuk Commentary (1QpHab) – both of which were extremely important to research, could not be simply incorporated into the existing apparatus. As a compromise, these Qumran variants were added to the respective volumes starting with the 7th Edition of 1951 as a third section of the critical apparatus in the margin of the pages and in a different typeface. Reprints of the BHK appeared in this form up until the mid-1970s.

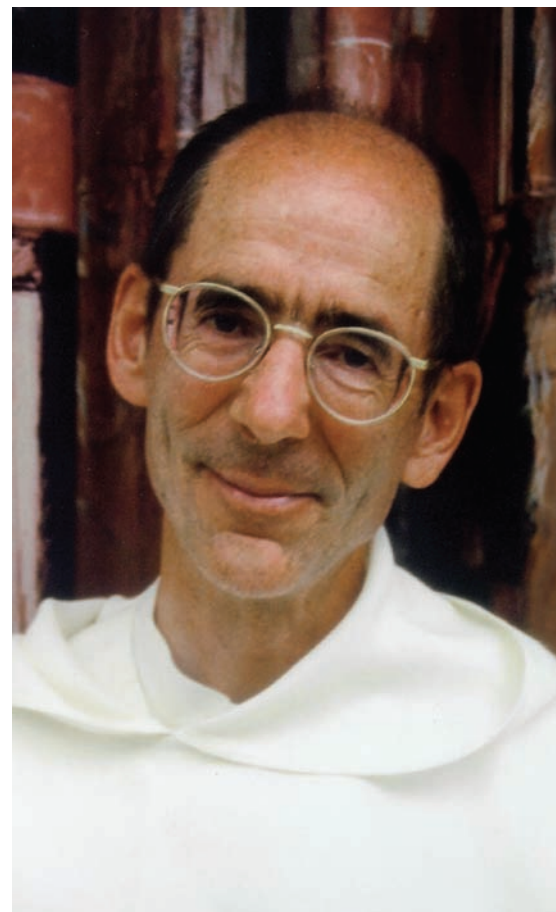
II. The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)

As the best printed edition of the Hebrew Bible, the BHK3 was in great demand. Naturally, as a result of the inevitable wearing of the printing plates, the print quality of the BHK3 deteriorated over the course of time. The need for a complete resetting was already becoming evident in the late 1950s. A revision also proved necessary for reasons of content, especially in view of the increasing number of text fragments from Qumran that were now coming to light as they were published by scholars around the world. This task of revising BHK3 was undertaken by Karl Elliger (Tübingen) and Wilhelm Rudolph (Münster) as managing editors in cooperation with Hans-Peter Rüger (Tübingen) and an international team of Old Testament experts. To distinguish the new edition from its predecessor, its title was given the supplement “Stuttgartensia.” In all important aspects, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)* followed its predecessor BHK3. As before, the Leningrad Codex served as the textual basis. For the first time, the codex was printed with a complete version of the Masorah, critically edited by Gerard E. Weil. The notes of the Masorah Parva appeared in the outer margin while the appropriately edited lists of the Masorah Magna were published in a separate volume, with a numerical reference system in the apparatus of the BHS. Unlike in the BHK3, the textual variants and suggested corrections were once more grouped together in a single apparatus, but the new critical apparatus was more concise and more clearly set out overall. The technical demands of this undertaking presented a major challenge to the WBA. For the Hebrew text, a specially modified typesetting unit had to be acquired and adapted, a suitable typeface produced, and typesetters appropriately instructed. The first fascicle of the BHS appeared in 1969 and the work was completed in 1977. By reason of its high reliability and quality, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)* has met with great acclaim worldwide and attained a large circulation. To this day, it has remained the only complete scholarly edition of the Codex Leningradensis, with all important text variants and suggested corrections presented as footnotes.

III. The Future of the Biblia Hebraica: The Biblia Hebraica Quinta (BHQ) Project

Since the BHS was first published, three decades have passed during which much has developed in the field of Old Testament textual research. Most importantly, the fragments of the Qumran manuscripts have now all been published; research into the Greek Septuagint has made considerable progress; and a new, complete large-edition of the Latin Vulgate is now

available. At the same time, different expectations are now placed on any edition of the Hebrew Bible. Of greatest importance, any new edition of the Hebrew Bible must provide a clear, reliable representation of all extant textual variants, insofar as they are relevant to biblical translation and exegesis. By doing so, the edition will place the reader in a position to make his or her own judgment of any given textual situation. The subjective views of the editor, on the other hand, are to recede into the background and be readily distinguishable at all times from the presentation of actual variants. The apparatus of the new *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ), which is currently being drawn up and published by an interdenominational team of international experts, follows these principles. Head of the Editorial Committee is the Swiss text researcher Prof. Adrian Schenker. The BHQ continues in the tradition of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* and is designated – after the first two editions of the BHK, followed by BHK3 and BHS – by the addendum “quinta” as its fifth, completely revised edition. As before, the textual basis is the Codex Leningradensis, the salient characteristics of which are now also rendered in print as precisely as possible, including the Masorah Parva and – for the first time – the Masorah Magna. The apparatus, devised in accordance with the principles outlined above, contains a wealth of new information. For the first time, the BHQ includes an accompanying commentary in which the editors elucidate their text-critical judgments, provide a translation of the Masorah Magna, and list and discuss the special characteristics of the Masorah Parva and Masorah Magna. After a preparatory period covering a good ten years, the first volume of the BHQ appeared in 2004; this contains a general introduction to the fundamental principles of the BHQ and to the processing of the five Megilloth (Ruth, the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther) including the commentary. Ezra-Nehemiah followed in edited form as the second volume in 2006 and Deuteronomy as the third volume in 2007. The volumes published to date have met with widespread international acclaim and are seen as a significant advancement of Old Testament textual research. Further volumes of the BHQ are currently in preparation.



*Adrian Schenker O.P. (*1939 in Zurich),
Professor of Old Testament Studies in
Fribourg (Switzerland), currently editor of the
BHS and Head of the Editorial Committee
for the new Biblia Hebraica Quinta.*

13 יְהוָה לֵךְ מִן־כְּנַעַנָה הַזֹּאת: 13 וַיֵּלֶךְ בָּעֵז אֶת־רוּת וַתְּהִי־לָוִי
 14 לְאִשָּׁה וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה לָהּ הַרְיוֹן וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן: 14 וַתֹּאמְרָנָה
 הַנָּשִׁים אֶל־נַעֲמִי בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לָךְ נָאֵל הַיּוֹם וַיִּקְרָא^{16a}
 15 שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: 15 וַתִּהְיֶה לָךְ לְמֹשִׁיב וְכֹשׁ וּלְכֹלֵכֵל אֶת־שִׁבְתְּךָ כִּי
 כָּלִיתָ אֲשֶׁר־אַהֲבָתְךָ^a יְלִדְתָּו אֲשֶׁר־הָיָא טוֹבָה לָךְ מִשְׁבַּעַת בָּנִים:
 16 וַתֵּלֶךְ נַעֲמִי אֶת־הַיֵּלֶד^a וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶהוּ בְּחִיקָה^a וַתְּהִי־לָוִי לְאִמָּנָה:
 17 וַתִּקְרָאנָה לָוִי הַשְׁכֵּנוֹת שֵׁם לְאֹמֶר יֶלֶד־בֶּן לְנַעֲמִי וַתִּקְרָאנָה שְׁמוֹ
 עֹבֵד הוּא אֲבִי־יִשִׁי אָבִי דָּוִד: פ
 18 וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת פְּרָץ פְּרִיץ הוֹלִיד אֶת־חֲצִרֹן: 19 וַחֲצִרֹן
 20 הוֹלִיד אֶת־זֶם וְזֶם הוֹלִיד אֶת־עַמִּינָדָב: 20 וַעֲמִינָדָב הוֹלִיד אֶת־
 21 נַחֲשֹׁן וְנַחֲשֹׁן הוֹלִיד אֶת־שִׁלְמָה: 21 וְשִׁלְמוֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־בָּעַז וּבָעַז
 22 הוֹלִיד אֶת־עֹבֵד: 22 וְעֹבֵד הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִשִׁי וְיִשִׁי הוֹלִיד אֶת־דָּוִד:

סכום הפסוקים

של ספר פה

19 חציו ותאמר רות המואביה¹⁹

וסדרים ב

BHS and BHQ

*The end of the Book of Ruth
 and the beginning of the Song
 of Solomon in the Biblia
 Hebraica Stuttgartensia
 (left) and the beginning of the
 Song of Solomon in the Biblia
 Hebraica Quinta (right).*

- 1 Biblical text
- 2 Masorah Parva
- 3 Masorah Magna
- 4 Text-critical apparatus

Above the apparatus, the BHS
 includes a mere reference to
 the lists of the Masorah
 Magna; the lists themselves
 are printed in a separate
 volume, while the BHQ (as with
 the Codex Leningradensis itself)
 presents the entire wording
 from the Masorah Magna in
 the respective positions.

שיר השירים

CANTICUM CANTICORUM

1 1 [ס] שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמָה:
 2 יִשְׁקֵנִי מִנְשִׁיקוֹת פִּיָּהוּ
 כִּי־טוֹבִים דְּדִידָה^a מִיָּיִן: 3 לִרְיָח שְׁמִינִי^b טוֹבִים^a
 שְׁמֵן תּוֹרֵכִי שְׁמֵן עַל־כֵּן עֲלָמוֹת אֲהַבּוּ:

16 Mm 1806. 17 Mm 2431. 18 Mm 3668. 19 Ru 2,21, cf Mp sub loco.

Cp 1 1 1 וחד בשוקות 1 1 Mm 574.

14 ^a & τὸ ὄνομά σου = שְׁמִי || 15 ^a sic L, mlt Mss Edd אהבתך || 16 ^{a-a} > 5 || 18 ^a
 18sq cf 1 Ch 2,5.9–15 || 19 ^a & ^{AB} Appav; ^{re1} Αραμ, 1 ארם cf Mt 1,3.4 || 20 ^a & ^B
 Σαλμαν, ^{re1} Σαλμων || 21 ^a pc Mss ושלמה; ^B Σαλμαν, ^{re1} = ון.
 Cp 1,2 ^a & (V) μαστοί σου = דְּדִידִךְ, it 4^f || 3 ^{a-a} & ^a καὶ ὁσμὴ μύρων σου ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ
 ἀρώματα cf 4,10 || שמנים טיב || ש' תמרוק cf &, α' (V) ελαιον
 ἐκχεόμενον = ש' מורק.

1 שָׁרִי הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמָה:
 2 יִשְׁקֹנִי מִנְשָׁקוֹת פִּיָּהּ כִּי־טוֹבִים דְּדִיָּה מִיָּין:
 3 לְרִיחַ שְׁמִנָּהּ טוֹבִים שְׁמֵן תוֹבֵךְ שְׁמָהּ
 4 עַל־כֵּן עָלְמוֹת אֶהְבּוּהָ:
 5 מִשְׁכְּנִי אַחֲרֶיהָ נִרְוָהּ
 6 הַבֹּאֲנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו נִגִּילָה וְנִשְׁמַחָה בָּךְ
 7 נִזְכֶּרְהָ דְדִיָּה מִיָּין מִיָּשְׁרִים אֶהְבּוּהָ: ^ס
 8 שְׁחֹרָה אֲנִי וְנֶאֱזָה בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם
 9 כְּאֶהְיֶה קֹדֶר כִּירִיעוֹת שְׁלֹמָה:
 10 אֶל־תִּרְאֻנִי שְׂאֵנִי שְׁחֹרָתָה שְׁשׁוּפְתַי הַשִּׁמְשׁ

[1:3] לריח יו' וסימנהו ולקחת. ואת הכבש דואלה שמות. ראשית. והקטירים. ואת כל חלבה. ואת הקרב. מעל כפיחם. וזרק. מעיני. אך בכור. עלת תמיד. בכורים. ראש שנה. ולחמי אשר נתתי. שמניך טובים :o: [4] הביאיני ד' וסימ בצדקתי הביאיני יהוה. במראות אלהים. הביאיני המלך. הביאיני אל בית היין ודגלו :o:

1:2 דִּרְךָ S T | μαστοί σου G V (differ-vocal) | 6QCant (indet) || → v 4; 4:10; 7:13 • 3 לְרִיחַ שְׁמִנִּי מְטִיבִים (6QCant) (V) S | καὶ ὁσμὴ μύρων σου ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ ἀρώματα G (assim-4:10) • 4 שְׁמִנִּי G S | שמנים 6QCant V • שָׁמֶן תִּרְבֶּק • 6QCant | μύρον ἐκκενωθέν G | ἔλαιον ἐκχέμενον (א') (ע') V T | שמן וסוד • S ⇨ • 4 מִשְׁכָּנִי א' ו' V S | 3 pl pf G (differ-vocal) | 2 sg pf (ע') 6QCant • מִשְׁכָּנִי 6QCant א' ו' ((ע')) V S | 2 sg sfx G (harm-ctext) • אֶחָדֶיךָ (א') V S | foll εις ὁσμὴν μύρων σου G (ע') (assim-v 3) ⇨ • גִּרְדָּה G (א') (θ') V S T | 1 sg (ע') (exeg) | 6QCant (insuf) • הִבְאִנִּי G V | impv ו' S (differ-vocal) | 6QCant (indet) • תִּדְרֹךְ 6QCant (א') (ו') (ע') V | sg G • لَمَسْتُ S (exeg) • נָגַלְתָּ נִשְׁמָחָה • 6QCant G V | וְנִשְׁמָחָה נִשְׁמָחָה 6QCant S • נִקְרָה • G V S T | 1 sg (ע') • דִּלְךָ • 6QCant S | μαστούς σου G V | 6QCant (indet) || → v 2 • מִשְׁרֵם אֶהְבֶּהֱבִי G (א') ו' (ע') V (S) • שְׁלָמָה: • 5 בָּנוֹת G V S | בָּנוֹתִי 6QCant ⇨ • מִשְׁרֵם אֶהְבֶּהֱבִי • 6QCant ⇨ • שְׁלָמָה: •

What Is New Testament Textual Research?

New Testament textual research deals with the question of what form the precise wording of the Greek New Testament originally took. This question arises because all original manuscripts of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament – the records of the evangelists, the epistles of Paul, etc. – have been lost. Only transcripts from subsequent centuries have been retained (for the most part papyrus fragments from the second century and full manuscripts on parchment from the fourth century). Today, some 5,700 manuscripts are extant that contain the text of the New Testament or some part of it. They are complemented by biblical citations in the writings of the church fathers from the first few centuries, although it is often difficult to determine whether a church father intended a literal quotation of a scripture or a mere allusion. Finally, translations of the Greek Bible into other languages – especially Syriac, Latin, and Coptic from the 2nd and 3rd centuries – as indirect witnesses of the Greek text are a further important source for textual research. However, the reconstruction of the wording of the Greek Vorlage (that is, the text that *lay before* the translator) from its translation is often a very demanding task.

In some cases, considerable discrepancies exist between these manuscripts (differing “versions”); these are often due to mere oversights that arose in hand copying the texts from a master copy (or as dictated

by a reader), but in some cases result from deliberate “improvements” by the scribes, by means of which they endeavored to make the transmitted text clearer or more consistent. Research into the textual history of the New Testament sets out to reconstruct with scholarly care the original text of the scriptures and to trace the text’s subsequent history.

Textual research proceeds largely as follows:

- The individual manuscripts are deciphered.
- The texts reconstructed by this means are compared and discrepancies between them (variants) determined.
- The variants are analyzed. On the basis of a set of carefully designed criteria the degree of interdependence between the variants is investigated and – with a lesser or greater degree of certainty – the original version established. One particular criterion is especially decisive: *originality is accorded the one version which can best explain the origin of all other versions.*

The results of such textual research are then integrated into scholarly editions of the Greek New Testament. The version deemed original appears in the main body of text (principal text), and the most important

*Papyrus 52,
the oldest existing
fragment of a New Testament
manuscript (written c. A.D. 125).
On the front is the text of John 18:31-33,
on the back John 18:37-38*



variants are presented in an extensive list of notes at the bottom of each page (in the *apparatus criticus*, or critical apparatus). The reader is thus in a position to better understand the decisions of the editors and to form his or her own opinion. It is thus not the task of textual research to pass judgment concerning inspiration of the biblical text, nor on the question as to whether the text contains deficiencies or factual errors. Textual research is not in a position to contribute toward resolving such theological-hermeneutic issues.

The most widely distributed scholarly editions of the New Testament are the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* and the Greek New Testament.



I. The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece and Its History

Its Beginnings (1st Edition, 1898)

The *Novum Testamentum Graece* was first published in 1898 by Württembergische Bibelanstalt (Germany). It was edited by Eberhard Nestle and followed a simple but nevertheless ingenious principle: Nestle compared the three most significant editions of the Greek New Testament from the 19th century (Tischendorf, Westcott/Hort, and Weymouth; the last-mentioned was replaced by the edition of B. Weiss in 1901). Wherever one of these versions differed from the other two, Nestle adopted the reading given in the two identical versions and supplied a note in the apparatus showing the divergent reading. By this means, he grouped together the best findings of New Testament textual research from the 19th century and prevented one-sided views from becoming established. Nestle's edition, due to its wide distribution, ultimately displaced the "Textus Receptus", which among scholars had already long become obsolete, in churches and schools.

Kurt Aland

(*1915 in Berlin; † 1994 in Münster/Westfalen),
founder of the Institute of New Testament
Text Research and co-editor of the
Novum Testamentum Graece (Nestle-Aland)
and of the *Greek New Testament*

Eberhard Nestle

(*1851 in Stuttgart, died there 1913,
publisher of the first edition of the
Novum Testamentum Graece (1898)



Background: The “Textus Receptus”

Textus Receptus (Lat. for “[universally] received text”) is the name given to a form of the Greek New Testament that had been regarded as definitive in scholastic and clerical circles since the Reformation. This designation, used by the editor Elzevier, made it clear that this text was the form in general usage at the time (1633). Usually, already Erasmus of Rotterdam’s edition of the Greek New Testament (1516), upon which Elzevir’s edition was largely based, is regarded as a representation of the *Textus Receptus*. The *Textus Receptus*, having provided the basis of several important biblical translations from the time of the Reformation (e.g., Martin Luther’s German translation and the King James Bible), was widely distributed in the church. However, since the *Textus Receptus* was based on relatively late, unreliable manuscripts of the New Testament, the confidence placed in it by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars has meanwhile proven to be unfounded. Erasmus based his first edition of the Greek New Testament on four manuscripts of the so-called Byzantine family of texts that dated back only to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Although this text was for the most part transmitted from the majority of the existing manuscripts, recent research has found it to be a late development based on a form of the text that had already shown significant departures from the original text. Thus in the 18th century the *Textus Receptus* began to be called into serious question among scholars. Johann Albrecht Bengel, for example, designated in his 1734 edition of the Greek New Testament a list of passages for which readings different from those of the *Textus Receptus* can lay claim to originality. The editions of Tischendorf (1869, 1872) and of Westcott-Hort (1881) succeeded in superseding the *Textus Receptus* in scholarly research, but Eberhard Nestle’s “*Novum Testamentum Graece*” was the first to begin supplanting the *Textus Receptus* in clerical and liturgical usage. Revised translations of the Bible were subsequently produced in accord with the improved textual base, such as Luther’s Bible (1912, 1984) and the Revised Standard Version (1952), a reworking of the King James Bible. Today the *Textus Receptus* is the basis for relatively few modern translations of the New Testament, such as the New King James Version. The Orthodox Church also still makes use of a Bible strongly dependent on the *Textus Receptus*.

*The humanistic theologian
and philosopher
Erasmus von Rotterdam
(1465–1539) published a critical
edition of the Greek New
Testament in 1516. This was
based on only four manuscripts of
the so-called Byzantine or
Majority text. This edition was
later regarded as a representation
of the Textus Receptus.*







Lobegott Friedrich Konstantin von Tischendorf

*(*1815 in Lengenfeld/Vogtland; †1874 in Leipzig) was one the most significant textual researchers of the 19th century. He endeavored to develop a Greek New Testament founded on manuscripts that were more reliable than those on which the “Textus Receptus” was based. His renown is due above all to the discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus in St. Catharine’s Monastery on the Sinai Peninsula, where in 1844 he found 129 parchment folios containing the text of a Greek translation of the Old Testament from the 4th century. Tischendorf was permitted to take 43 folios with him, while the remaining 86 remained in the care of the monastery. However, on a second visit in 1853, nothing further was known of these 86 folios. Tischendorf returned home disappointed, before undertaking a third journey in 1859. It was only by chance, on the evening before his departure, that the Oikonomos of the monastery drew his attention to a parchment manuscript in his cell. This was the remainder of the missing Codex. Moreover, not only the missing 86 folios known to Tischendorf now lay before him, but also a large part of the Old and the complete New Testament along with two further early Christian manuscripts. He had found the oldest complete manuscript of the New Testament.*

Further developments up to the present day

13th Edition (1927): The text of the 1st Edition was reprinted several times in subsequent years. Under Erwin Nestle, a son of Eberhard, this edition was for the first time further developed with the addition of its own apparatus criticus that cited not only other scholarly editions (see above), but also the most important reference manuscripts ("Manuscript xy reads: ..."). However, Nestle did not consult the manuscripts directly, but continued to compile his information on their readings from other scholarly editions.

25th Edition (1963): Kurt Aland (co-editor since 1952) was the first to verify the information in the text and critical apparatus against the originals themselves. Together with his colleagues at the Institute for New Testament Textual Research (INTF), which he established in 1959, he also extended the apparatus to include readings from many additional manuscripts. This new approach reached its early culmination in 1963 with the 25th Edition (thereafter known as "Nestle-Aland"), which has been frequently reprinted.

26th Edition (1979): The great manuscript discoveries of the twentieth century (especially of early papyri) necessitated a fundamental reorientation of the principal text and a rewriting of the apparatus, and these were both introduced in the 26th Edition. Ongoing work on both the *Novum Testamentum Graece* and the Greek New Testament (published in 1975: see below) was now being overseen by the same Editorial Committee (formed in 1955), and the principal text of the former edition was now identical to that of the latter one. The two most widely used scholarly editions of the Greek New Testament have thus since shared the same biblical text and differ merely in terms of their apparatuses, introductions, and appendices.

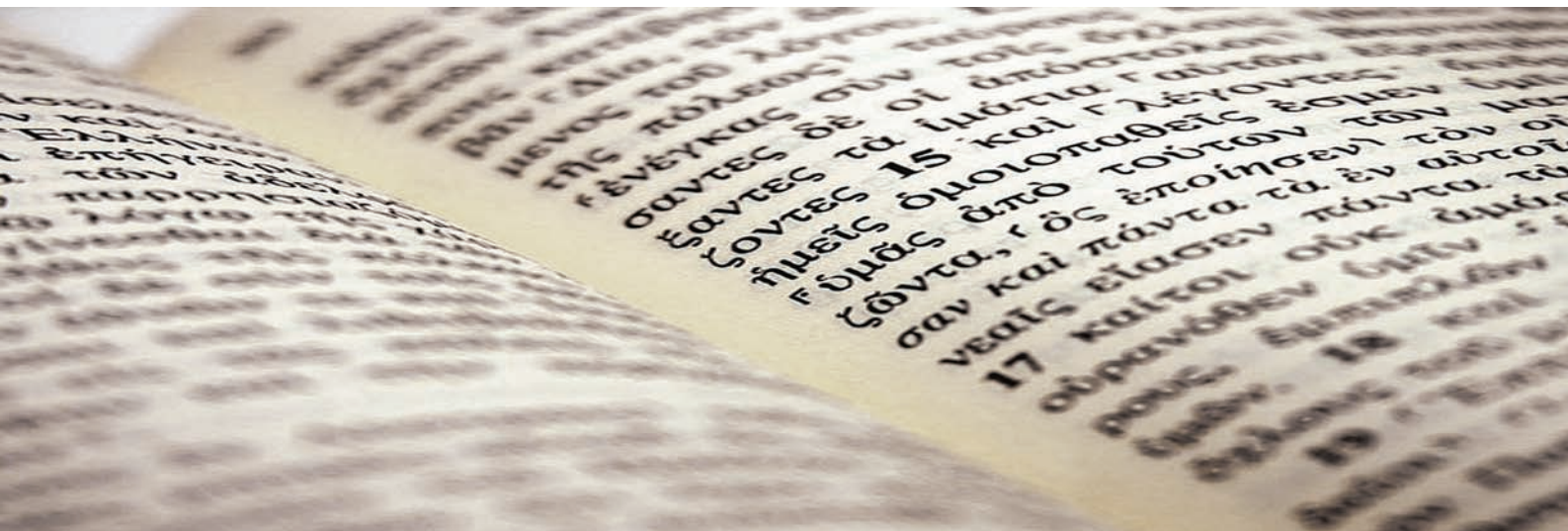
27th Edition (1993): In this revision, the text-critical apparatus in particular was once more extensively modified with a view to enhanced reliability and reader-friendliness.

The Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, from its first edition to the present day, has provided an outstanding working text suitable for study and research, as well as for church and school use, in a compact, affordable edition. It puts its readers in a position to make their own judgments in matters of New Testament textual research.

II. The Greek New Testament and Its History

The beginnings (from the establishment of the Editorial Committee up to the 1st Edition, 1966)

On the initiative of the American Bible Society (with the participation of the Scottish and Württembergian Bible Societies, and later of the Netherlands and British Bible Societies), a committee of experts was formed in 1955 to prepare for the publication of a new edition of the Greek New Testament. Its members included Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce Metzger, and Allen Wikgren. The new edition was to be specially oriented towards the needs of biblical translators. Accordingly, the *1st Edition* of the Greek New Testament (1966) offered in its apparatus only variant readings for passages that were particularly uncertain or were highly important for the purposes of translation and exegesis. The new edition provided translators with a clear and convenient means, using the alphabetical letters A–D, of grading each variant included in the Greek text as to the editors' certainty of its authenticity. In addition to the text-critical apparatus, the editors included a punctuation apparatus that laid out differences in punctuation relevant to the sense of the text in the various Greek editions and in significant modern translations. The principal text included a number of deviations from the text provided in the Nestle-Aland up to the 25th Edition.



ΠΡΟΣ ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΟΥΣ Α'

1 Παῦλος ὁ κλητὸς ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ² διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ καὶ Σωσθένους ὁ ἀδελφὸς **2** τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ τῇ οὐσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ², κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, [□] σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ, αὐτῶν ^τ καὶ ἡμῶν³. **3** χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

4 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ ἡ μου πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ δοθείσῃ ὑμῖν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, **5** ὅτι ἐν παντὶ ἐπλουτίσθητε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ πάσῃ γνῶσει, **6** καθὼς τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐβεβαιώθη ἐν ὑμῖν, **7** ὥστε ὑμᾶς μὴ ὑστερεῖσθαι ἐν μηδενὶ χαρίσματι ἀπεκδεχομένους τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. **8** ὅς καὶ βεβαιώσει ὑμᾶς ἕως τέλους⁴ ἀνεγκλήτους ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ⁵ [Χριστοῦ]. **9** πιστὸς ὁ θεός, ἡ δι' οὗ ἐκλήθητε εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

1 **10** Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες καὶ μὴ ἡ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁσχίσματα, ἥτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῖ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ. **11** ἐδηλώθη γάρ μοι περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί ὁ μου, ὑπὸ τῶν Χλόης ὅτι ἐριδες ἐν ὑμῖν εἰσιν. **12** λέγω δὲ τοῦτο ὅτι ἕκαστος ὑμῶν λέγει· ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ. **13** ^τ μεμερίσται ὁ Χριστός; ἡ μὴ Παῦλος ἐσταυρώθη ἡ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, ἡ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε; **14** εὐχαριστῶ [τῷ θεῷ]¹ ὅτι οὐδένα ὑμῶν ἐβάπτισα εἰ μὴ Κρί-

Act 18,1-11; 19,1
2T 4,20

R 1,1 · 2K 1,1 E
1,1 Kol 1,1 2T
1,1
1Th 2,14

6,11
R 1,7 · Act 2,21;
9,14,21; 22,16 R
10,12s Ps 99,6
Joel 3,5 2T 2,22 |
R 1,7!

R 1,8 Ph 1,3s 1Th
1,2; 2,13 2Th 1,3
E 5,20 Phm 4 · R
12,6 2K 8,1 |
2K 8,9; 9,11 ·
2K 8,7 R 15,14 |
Kol 2,7 Act 18,5

12,4!ss ·
Ph 3,20! · 2Th 1,7
1P 1,7,13; 4,13 L
17,30p |
2K 1,21
1T 3,10! · 2K 1,14
Ph 1,6,10; 2,16
Act 2,20 | 10,13! ·
10,16 1J 1,3

R 15,5!

11,18

3,3 G 5,19s

3,4,22 · Act 18,24! ·
9,5 · 3,23 2K 10,7
Mc 9,41

12,13 R 6,3s

Act 18,8; 19,29

*The beginning of the
1st Epistle to the Corinthians
in the Nestle-Aland Novum
Testamentum Graece (left)
and in the Greek New
Testament (right).*

- 1** Biblical text (principal text)
- 2** Text-critical apparatus
- 3** Punctuation apparatus (only
in the Greek New Testament)
- 4** Cross-references

*While the Greek New Testament
in its apparatus criticus
only refers to three passages
with deviations from the
principal text, the Novum
Testamentum Graece includes
17 passages (although in
much more compact form).*

¶ **1,1** ° ϕ⁶¹vid A D 81 | ° S A Ψ 1739. 1881 M b vg^s sy | txt ϕ⁴⁶ B D F G 33 pc it vg^{cl}; Ambst
• **2** ° 5-8 1-4 ϕ⁴⁶ B D*² F G b m; Ambst | txt ϕ⁶¹vid S A D¹ Ψ 33. 1739. 1881 M lat sy^(p) co |
[° J. Weiß cj] | ° te S² A^c D² Ψ 1739. 1881 M sy^b | txt ϕ⁴⁶ S* A*vid B D* F G 33. 81. 1175.
1506 pc • **4** ° † - S* B | ημων 491 | txt S² A C D F G Ψ 33. 1739. 1881 M latt sy co • **6** °
θεου B* F G 81. 1175 al sam^s; Eus | txt ϕ⁴⁶ S A B² C D Ψ 33. 1739. 1881 M lat sy co;
Ambst • **8** ° αχρι τ. D F G | τελειους ϕ⁴⁶ | ° παρουσια D F G | ° ϕ⁴⁶ B | txt S A C D F
G Ψ 33. 1739. 1881 M lat sy co; Ambst • **9** ° ρυφ D* F G • **10** ° -μα ϕ⁴⁶ 33 pc • **11** ° ϕ⁴⁶
C* 104 pc ar b d; Ambst • **13** ° μη ϕ⁴⁶vid 326. 2464* pc sy^p sa | ° ρη ϕ⁴⁶ (sy^p) | ° περι ϕ⁴⁶ B
D* • **14** ° † - S* B 6. 1739 sam^s bo^p | ° τ. θ. μου A 33. 81. 326 pc ar vg^{mss} sy^{p,h*} sam^s bo^{mss} |
txt S² C D F G Ψ 1881 M lat bo^{mss}; Tert Ambst

ΠΡΟΣ ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΟΥΣ Α

Greeting and Thanksgiving

1 Παῦλος κλητὸς ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ¹ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ καὶ Σωσθένης ὁ ἀδελφὸς^a **2** τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ οὐσῇ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις,^b σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ, αὐτῶν καὶ ἡμῶν.^c **3** χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.^d

4 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου² πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ δοθείσῃ ὑμῖν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, **5** ὅτι ἐν παντὶ ἐπλουτίσθητε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ πάσῃ γνώσει, **6** καθὼς τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐβεβαιώθη ἐν ὑμῖν, **7** ὥστε ὑμᾶς μὴ ὑστερεῖσθαι ἐν μηδενὶ χαρίσματι ἀπεκδεχομένους τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. **8** ὅς καὶ βεβαιώσει ὑμᾶς ἕως τέλους ἀνεγκλήτους ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ [Χριστοῦ]³. **9** πιστὸς ὁ θεός, δι' οὗ ἐκλήθητε εἰς

¹ **1** {B} Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ⁴⁶ B D F G 33 it^{ar}, d, f, g, mon, r vg^{ww}, st cop^{sa} eth geo¹ Chrysostom Cyril; Ambrosiaster Pelagius Augustine // Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ⁸ A Ψ 0150 6 81 104 256 263 365 424 436 459 1175 1241 1319 1506 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 1962 2127 2200 2464 Byz [L P] Lect it^b, o syr^p, h cop^{bo} arm geo² slav Origen^{lat} Cyril^{lem} Theodoret; Victorinus-Rome

² **4** {A} θεῷ μου⁶¹vid⁸ A C D F G Ψ 6 33 81 104 256 263 365 424 436 459 1175 1241 1319 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 1962 2127 2200 2464 Byz [L P] Lect it^(ar), b, d, f, g, mon, o, (r) vg syr^p, h cop^{sa}, bo arm geo slav Origen Eusebius Athanasius Chrysostom Cyril; Victorinus-Rome Ambrosiaster Hilary Ambrose Pelagius Augustine // θεῷ⁸* B eth Severian^{vid}

³ **8** {C} Χριστοῦ⁸ A C D F G Ψ 0150 6 33 81 104 256 263 365 424 436 459 1175 1241 1319 1506 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 1962 2127 2200 2464 Byz [L P] Lect

^a **1** P: RSV TEV FC NIV NRSV ^b **2** NO C: RSV Lu TOB ^c P: RSV TEV NIV Lu REB NRSV ^d **3** NO P: TR // S: RSV TEV FC NIV VP Lu TOB NRSV

2 τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ... Ἰησοῦ 1 Cor 6.11 πᾶσιν ... Χριστοῦ Ac 9.14 **3** Ro 1.7 **7** τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν ... Χριστοῦ Lk 17.30; 2 Th 1.7; 1 Th 2.13 **8** Php 1.6; 1 Th 3.13; 5.23 **9** πιστὸς ὁ θεός Dt 7.9; 1 Cor 10.13; 1 Th 5.24

Further developments up to the present day

3rd Edition (1975): The Committee's intensive work brought about a fundamental overhaul of the Greek New Testament, and its revised principal text also became the basis for the 26th Edition of the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (see above). For this edition the punctuation apparatus and the index of Old Testament allusions and quotations were also thoroughly reworked by the Translation Department of the American Bible Society.

3rd Corrected Edition (1983): While the principal text subsequently remained largely unchanged and was modified (along with the punctuation apparatus) only “in matters of punctuation”, the Institute for New Testament Textual Research (INTF) subjected the *apparatus criticus* to a thorough revision, based on the work for the 26th Edition of Nestle-Aland (see above), published in 1979.

4th Edition (1993): In tandem with revisions made to the 27th Edition of the Nestle-Aland, the *apparatus criticus* of the Greek New Testament was upgraded once more (while the principal text was retained in unmodified form). At the same time, the punctuation apparatus was again reworked by an expert from the United Bible Societies (UBS).

The Greek New Testament is not intended as a basis for comprehensive text-critical work, but provides a foundation for translations of the New Testament worldwide. It presents to its users a reliable Greek text, and for selected passages – wherever significant variants exist in the New Testament manuscripts – elucidates the course of its development.

III. The Significance of the Two Editions Today

The current editions of the Novum Testamentum Graece and the Greek New Testament offer their readers the distillation of more than 100 years of research. They are in worldwide use today and are accepted widely throughout the church as the basis of work on and with the Bible. They provide a foundation for nearly all modern biblical translations. They serve as the basis of training in New Testament studies for clergy and teachers both at state universities and at institutes of clerical training. Yet as before, these texts continue to be constantly reviewed and improved. Revised new editions are currently under preparation, which will incorporate the findings of the latest textual research.

IV. The Outlook: New Testament Textual Research Continues

Together with the Greek New Testament, the *Novum Testamentum Graece* has over the past few decades attained an undisputed leading position among New Testament scholars. The principal text of these editions – except for minor details – has remained unmodified for nearly thirty years. However, this does not mean that New Testament textual research has reached its culmination or that it will at any time in the future. On the contrary, the INTF, supported by the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities, is currently working on an entirely new edition of the Greek New Testament, the *Editio Critica Maior*, which will document the history of the Greek text through the first millennium on the basis of Greek manuscripts, ancient translations, and significant citations of the New Testament in ancient Christian literature. This edition promises to offer insight into several questions, such as how and why a text changes in the course of history, and how a text came to be received in the early Christian era. As the original biblical text is being reconstructed with a newly developed method, it has become evident that the existing text requires extensive modification.

The first installment of this edition appeared in 1997. Since then the Catholic Epistles (James, 1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John and Jude) have been printed. The Acts of the Apostles and, in cooperation with the renowned “International Greek New Testament Project”, the Gospel of John, are currently under preparation. The entire *Editio Critica Maior* is projected for completion by 2030.

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