

AN EVALUATION OF THE BIBLE SOCIETIES'
TEXT OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT
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The Greek Testament edited by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allan Wikgren for the Bible Societies presents itself as especially adapted to the needs of translators. Accordingly, we learn that the project was "initiated, organized and administered by Eugene A. Nida" (preface, p. vi). Dr. Nida is a veteran of linguistic analysis and consultation in language reduction and translation work.

This edition of the Greek Testament does not supersede the Nestle series, which will continue.

The critical apparatus to the text is as promised "a full citation of representative evidence for each variant selected." The entire text is not treated with equal thoroughness, but only readings "necessary for the establishing of the text" or "significant for translators" are treated. For example, the evidence cited for the omission of the *Pericope adulterae* exceeds that cited in Nestle's 25th edition by listing four additional uncials (X, Y, 053, 0141); six additional cursives; the lectionaries; the Coptic, the Gothic, Armenian, Georgian versions; the Diatessaron; and Cyprian, Chrystostom, Cyril, Comos and Theophylact are added to the Patristic testimony.

Citation of evidence as well as the legibility and explanatory material will make the volume a valuable teaching tool. The full display of evidence for disputed readings demands a more extended consideration of less well known manuscripts, versions and patristic sources.

The editors have devised a four-point scale for expressing the degree of certainty for each variant adopted. A signifies "virtually certain"; B, some "degree of doubt"; C, considerable degree of doubt; D, high degree of doubt. In the case of *pericope adulterae* mentioned above, omission is "A" in the scale—virtually certain.

A third feature of this edition is the treatment of about six hundred places where punctuation is significant for interpretation. Various alternatives are suggested, as to whether there should be a major break, a minor one, or none at all; whether a question, statement or command; etc. The opinions of modern editors and translators are then cited. In the case of Romans 9.5, the editors decide for a major break after *κατὰ σάρα*, printing their text with the Greek colon.

In each of these distinctive features here reported—fuller citation of witnesses, evaluation of degrees of certainty, and treatment of punctuation—there is valuable teaching material. Further, problem passages are highlighted and the student is warned that a decision is needed. It is probable that the display of learning and the prestige with which this new text appears will persuade many to acquiesce in the decisions of the editors.

The orientation of the Bible Societies' Text to questions of the theory

of textual criticism and history of the text must wait for the promised supplementary volume, which is being prepared by Professor Metzger. The volume promises to give the committee's reasons for the adoption of the reading selected.

G. D. Kilpatrick, in his review of the Bible Societies' Text (*JBL*, LXXXV, iv, pp. 479-81), has rightly judged that evaluations of the work are premature before we have the above-mentioned companion volume in hand.

However, the obvious remark may be made that this new edition of the New Testament Text does not differ markedly from the Westcott-Hort and Nestle texts. This opinion is based on the following data.

(1) Frederick C. Grant, in his chapter "The Greek Text of the New Testament" in the pamphlet *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament*, lists 47 test passages running throughout the New Testament. He says the textual editors of the RSV have followed the combination of Vaticanus-Sinaiticus-Chester Beatty (or some one or two of them) in the 47 test cases. In 29 cases Westcott and Hort, Nestle, and the Translators' Greek Testament are in complete agreement. This agreement is in line with Grant's remark, "And it is really extraordinary how often, with the fuller apparatus of variant readings at our disposal, and with the eclectic principle now more widely accepted, we have concurred in following Westcott and Hort. Not that we agreed in advance in favor of Hort—quite the contrary, there was no such unanimity; our agreement is really a tribute to Westcott-Hort, which is still the great classical tradition of modern times." (p. 41) And Kenneth Clark agrees: "Despite the latest discoveries and newest researches, New Testament studies today reflect the continued dominance of the Neutral Text." (*Dodd Festschrift*, p. 39) Thus the indications are that the text of Translators New Testament is close to the standard critical editions of Westcott-Hort and Nestle.

(2) It is interesting to note the decisions of the editors in the following problems.

In Mark 7.4 the editors have chosen the βαπτίσωνται of the Textus Receptus; in Jude 5 Ἰησοῦς appears. Such decisions are surely indicative of an eclectic freedom. In Jude 5 was found the one conjectural emendation adopted in the text of the RSV (reading "he who"). The editors of the Translator's New Testament have felt free to print Ἰησοῦς.

It is noteworthy that the new edition has been produced with translators in mind. It is of considerable strategic importance that a text has been furnished appealing not only to translators who are refining the many translations of literate peoples, but also to translators such as those of the Wyclif Translators, who are putting Bibles or portions of it for the first time in the hands of many.

The fundamental aim of textual criticism is the recovery of the autographic text as nearly as possible. Now the judgment of Warfield and others was that the agreement of Neutral and Western texts would on the principles of Westcott and Hort give us the autograph. This concep-

tion is challenged by F. C. Grant. He says, "Instead of tracing back the text to its original in the autographs by a steady process of convergence following back to a common source the divergent lines of descent, we shall have to stop when we get to the second century." (*op. cit.* p. 40) In confirmation Grant cites the opinion of Kenyon: "In the first two centuries this original text disappeared under a mass of variants, created by errors, by conscious alterations, and by attempts to remedy the uncertainties thus created. Then, as further attempts to recover the lost truth were made, the families of text that we now know took shape." (Quoted by Grant, *op. cit.* p. 40) Kenneth Clark indicates a similar line of thought in his article "The Effect of Recent Textual Criticism upon New Testament Studies" in the C. H. Dodd Festschrift volume. "With reference to the recovery of the original New Testament Text, we may expect to find the informed critic more sober and patient than others. Although many thoughtful Christians have come to believe that this objective has been virtually won, awaiting only a finishing touch, the critic is sobered by the realization that the best critical text so far achieved now holds little assurance of being the original text and that to work back from the one to the other has become increasingly difficult." (p. 30) And Kurt Aland, in his paper "The Significance of the Papyri for New Testament Research" (*The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt.) says: "Let us consider for a moment the aim, which we want to achieve. This can be so defined: to establish the original text of the New Testament, that is, the text form in which the New Testament Writings were officially put into circulation. Already Westcott and Hort have striven to reach this goal. . . their aim was to determine "the original words of the Apostles and writers of the New Testament." We would not define ours in such terms. For, by means of textual criticism, we can only get back as far as an early redactional stage, if so far." (pp. 341-42)

Thus this new edition of the Greek Text appears in a context of experimentation and the use of the eclectic method in textual criticism. Kenneth W. Clark, in his article "The Effect of Recent Textual Criticism upon the Study of the New Testament" in the C. H. Dodd Festschrift volume, says: "In textual criticism we have reached the end of an era and entered upon a new cycle of investigation. . . As early critics sought to perfect the TR, so critics since Westcott and Hort have sought to perfect their 1881 text. The eclectics of that day and this improved the text here and there though without a fundamental principle to guide them. Years ago F. C. Grant observed that we must return to the point where older scholars such as Griesbach and Lachman left off. Really, our day is comparable to that of Bentley in that materials have been gathered in great quantity, while we await the first proposal for a more adequate history of the primitive text." (pp. 29-30)

How the edition of the Greek Testament now before us will affect this challenging new situation remains to be seen.

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