

Review of the Greek New Testament - Robinson / Pierpont 2018

Background

For some time "The Greek New Testament - Byzantine Textform / RP 2018" has been available in bookstores (VTR, Nuremberg). It is available as a 630-page paperback and appears under the ISBN 978-3-95776-100-2 in the size of 5.1 x 1.3 x 7.8 inches for a price of \$19.99 / £18.50. Here are some of the features of this edition: the text, differences from other editions, technical details, and a summary appraisal.

Unlike other editions of the Greek New Testament (notably Nestle-Aland) the basis of the present edition of the New Testament is the so-called Byzantine text. Despite that there is consensus on the term "Byzantine", it is questionable, since there this text form was spread everywhere, even to Egypt, not at all in Byzantium alone, not even in the heyday of this empire. Thus, Clement of Alexandria in Egypt (born about 150 AD), far away from Byzantium and long before its dominance, uses the Byzantine text. This is long before the actual so-called Alexandrian text, whose name is also questionable, since Clemens used so-called Byzantine text (and that in Alexandria) long before the two representatives, the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus appeared. In addition, a textual form can not be reconstructed on the basis of numerous singular readings, so that "Alexandrian text", which has numerous singular varieties of both manuscripts, can hardly be assessed as textual form per se or even a transmission lineage (singular readings, i.e. with no predecessor or successor manuscripts). The problem with the terms Byzantine vs. Alexandrian may be summarized inasmuch that these local attributes do not correspond to the historical facts, because, as already described, there is Byzantine text long before the Alexandrian text in the Alexandrian area. The Byzantine text is everywhere, not in Byzantium alone. In addition, singular types of a single manuscript do not establish an own text form, yet the consensus speaks in terms of the Nestle-Aland edition as the "Alexandrian text", implausible as it may be.

The Byzantine text (as presented in this edition) is the consensus of all the surviving Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and not like the edition of Nestle/Aland a modern, novel and never in a single manuscript ever so existing amalgamation of two specific, supposedly better quality manuscripts (Codex Vaticanus, followed by Codex Sinaiticus, or Codex Alexandrinus, which, as it were, replaces the missing Codex Vaticanus in Revelation). Statistics show that the Codex Vaticanus, because of its numerous peculiarities, is furthest from the consensus of the New Testament transmission (about 127 papyri, 322 majuscules, 2911 minuscules, 2453 lectionaries). The Codex Sinaiticus has e.g. in Luke's Gospel alone 632 singular readings, which no other handwriting beside him has. In addition, these codices are constantly in disagreement with each other and on the basis of conflicting witnesses, a consensus is impossible. Here again reference is made to the Gospel of Luke, in which both manuscripts contradict each verse almost twice. In the synthesis of both manuscripts in the edition of Nestle/Aland an artificial text emerged quasi in the test tube from a liberal theological laboratory of our time. The idea came from the theologians Westcott / Hort, who wanted to put an end to the hitherto predominant Textus Receptus. Nestle / Aland has left their text unchanged, besides some details, and even the current 28th edition has not really improved. These heterogeneous manuscripts were thus, so to speak, welded together or combined into a new text, which, as already indicated, had never historically existed in the tradition of the New Testament. The

prevailing copying errors (among others) of both manuscripts are textual omissions. The region is far removed from the places of the New Testament autographs, both locally and linguistically, and thus corrections based on the original of the New Testament writers were de facto impossible - quite unlike the Byzantine text. Errors and blunders such as omissions were often unintentionally committed by copyists when they worked unfocused, sloppy, and without due respect for the sacred text. This is shown by typical errors, e.g. with the same endings in the template, the text was skipped in between. As clarification a simple funny analogous English example is given: A sentence like "A mouse buys a house. Lives in it for some years" may be found in an original manuscript. A copyist reads "A mouse" in the original and writes this part correctly in his copy. Then he looks with his eyes in the original again, to see, where he just stopped or the next word he wants to read and then write, and slips on the word with the same ending, namely "house". Since he does not seem to be content, he omits the text in between, so that in his copy "buys a house" is missing and in the copy "A mouse Lives in it for some years" written. This is what the experts call "aberratio oculi" or "digression of the eyes" at places with same endings or "homoioteleuton". Most often, this error occurs when the same ending is at the end or beginning of a line, so a single glance and carelessness ensures that God's Word is not copied exactly. Accordingly an edition based on these manuscripts is much shorter, Nestle / Aland and Robinson / Pierpont have large differences in the number of words. For example, the ending of the gospel of Mark in Nestle / Aland is declared to be false and not genuine, although the opposite has been proved, with this omission having other causes (since the place of the long text of the original there was omitted in the relevant copy, which was intended to justify an omission). As the writer knew the long text (the space was left out in his copy), he might have ended his work prematurely, or had other trivial reasons for not copying the text to the end, if that omission had been in the original, then how could 99% of the other manuscripts, in simple terms, all add the same text, apart from variants, adding the same name?). Thus, the text of Nestle / Aland 28 has a total of 138,013 words (98.47%), RP 140,146 (100%). This is 2,133 words less in Nestle / Aland or 1.53% less text, not counted is the long ending of Mark and the "spurious" section of the pericope of the adulteress (John 8), besides the other texts and verses in double-parentheses in Nestle / Aland. This is due to the misconception that it is believed that the writers of God's Word have supplemented the short original text with additional text, which was implausible and contrary to any practice of copyists, for they should, wanted and have written that (aside from human inadequacies), what they had to copy. When a copyist has actually added missing text in a manuscript, this is always clear and obvious in the handwriting to read and easily recognizable because he often wrote the missing text to the edge or over the sentence. In the edition or combination of the two manuscripts by Westcott / Hort or Nestle / Aland, the Codex Vaticanus (B) was often given preference over the Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph) in the selection of readings, although this was the furthest from the consensus is, probably for that very reason. Sequences such as B + Aleph BB B + Aleph B + Aleph B Aleph B + Aleph B + Aleph B Aleph BB etc. were created when combining the two codices. Although there are attempts for explanations in textual commentaries for this arbitrary method, these appear intransparent and methodically questionable. No reader knows, for example, why once B, once Aleph was used, if both, as so often, both differ. As you can easily see, the text modules composed in this way yield sequences that can not be found in any manuscript, so that one has to speak of an artifact.

One could cite many more reasons that show that both codices are by themselves of poor quality (for example, the frequency of nonsensical, ungrammatical, or substantively impossible readings). After all, the Codex Sinaiticus had several proofreaders who recognized many errors of the copy first hand, only these are not taken into account in the editions.

The reason for this is that very bad copies of papyri were already made in the region of Egypt before that could not be sufficiently corrected due to the remote life and also negatively influenced the codices. The autographs of the New Testament writers were simply too far away and one would have had to travel a long way to see the original from Egypt, say the Gospel of John in Ephesus in today's Turkey. As an example the Alexandrian papyrus P66 may be mentioned here. Its copyist certainly had not mastered Greek; analogous to the English, the manuscript is covered with errors such as "fother" instead of "father", indicating that the Copyist did not know better.

Comparisons show the dependence of the Egyptian papyri and the two codices (based on so-called error inheritance). In addition, mathematical comparisons show that when individual texts are far removed from the original, they increasingly show features that the consensus does not know (measurable in terms of the number of singular types, for example). Proximity to the original, on the other hand, is shown by the consensus of manuscripts that are independent of each other, not just copies of copies. Contrary to other assertions, there was never any central control over the transmission of the New Testament, since the New Testament was a free text that anyone could copy and which went in a star shape from the place of the originals into the world at that time and was also translated into many different foreign languages. An examination of the manuscripts already shows this alone in the fact that manuscripts produced by the respective copyist's own individual portions, which distinguishes them from others and this shows their independence. However, there are also copies of copies that can be recognized by the fact that they incorporate the characteristics of the previous manuscript. Overall, however, it is about the independent consensus in the assessment of readings, If copyists and copies have the same text without knowledge of each other, this speaks for originality and closeness to the original. How could it happen if one assumes the the short text oft he two codizes to be genuine that all other scribes invented one and the same additional text to the short original text? Under the impression of the urgent warning at the end of the Book of Revelation not to omit or add anything to the Bible (!), godly copyists probably did not intend to conceive, invent or complement or harmonize a Bible word (or to take words form other passages and add them to other verses). That would mean, contrary to the warning of God himself, to cheat to a great extent and deceive the readers.

A central and guided arrangement is certainly out of the question here, since most places where the Word of God was copied were not even in contact to each other; to give a real example, monasteries near Jerusalem, in Greece on Mount Athos, and in Constantinople in today's Turkey have a practically identical text. The task of the copyists, and they have done a great job, was to copy God's word, to omit nothing or add anything. If the Westcott / Hort and Nestle / Aland theory were correct, then the New Testament tradition would be a great catastrophe, since one or two manuscripts preserved the original text far from the originals, spreaded in two copies, and the genuine readings have to be put together by liberal modern-day theologians in a comprehensible way, and the rest of the copyists' works (let's say 99.99% of the remaining copies, i.e. several thousand manuscripts) were only elaborate additions, or rather fakes of God's Word. This irrational scenario, unhistorical as it would be in itself, would only be possible through a large-scale, centrally controlled counterfeiting or harmonization, since almost all copies have the same text. This necessity makes this scenario virtually completely unlikely. Thus in Revelation 5:9 the word "us" is missing in the Codex Alexandrine only - all other manuscripts have this word. If the copyists are did not know, arranged or were under central control (due to the sad divisions in Christendom, that would be impossible anyway), how could everyone come to add the word "us" together? It is only plausible that a single scribe did simply not copy this word. In addition, transitional manuscripts would have to be found (analogous

to the missing links of the so-called evolutionary theory), i.e. transitions from the shorter to longer text. However, these manuscripts do not exist, analogously as the so-called evolutionary theory would show transitions between the species. The tradition of the New Testament can not be explained in such a way that the original can be represented by the combination of only two manuscripts, with the deficiencies described above. To sum up, the edition of the Word of God in the form of the Nestle / Aland edition is completely useless, failed and dubious for both Christians and others, even though the publishers stand for academic credibility and their idea are presented very complicated and so attractive to some. In the secular realm there are indeed plausible methods of authenticating the original on the basis of surviving manuscripts, theologians such as Westcott, Aland, etc. were not aware or not making use of their insights (see Paul Maas' works on textual criticism in classical works). Because of their negative attitude to God's Word, readings that challenge the New Testament as the Word of God have entered in the Nestle / Aland text. An example of this is a copying error: the names Arni and Admin in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus in Luke 3:33, which were never in the original and thus, because of the falseness, question God's Word as a whole. The manuscripts of the Byzantine text, however, provide a consistent text and are not difficult to present in consensus as in the present (or previous) edition. The theory of transmission is quite simple, often too simple for people who want to complicate it. God's Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was freely copied from the places where the originals were stored, and went all over the world. The original is recognizable in all different manuscripts and all the singular copies have characteristics of where they came from, namely the original. Very simply, it would be the job of a publisher to eliminate special or individual errors of the manuscripts (singular readings, and not to do exactly the opposite), also of lines of transmission, and then to present the text that is shared by all manuscripts in an edition. It is impossible that the original text can be recognized in only one or two manuscripts, because all copies have the inherent ability to refer to the original. Therefore, if virtually all of the New Testament tradition is declared corrupt, it is dubious to declare a particular handwriting as qualitatively superior, which is at first sight due to the high rate of blunders (which, for instance, make Codex Vaticanus untenable and recognizable). Therefore, the issues of Robinson / Pierpont hardly have undergone significant changes in the text and it will be in the future, nothing expected. The manuscripts with Byzantine text are reliably handed down and even later manuscripts show little deviation from the old text, because the writers recognized the New Testament as God's word and were stubbornly trying to deliver the text. Even the early papyri in Egypt can be attributed to the Byzantine text, if one can recognize copying errors, e.g. the above-described skipping of text at the same ending before and after. From the early days, there is generally no large inventory of manuscripts, but the large number of succeeding manuscripts suggests the great spread of the Byzantine text in the early days, because subsequent manuscripts inevitably have forerunners, but either worn out, destroyed by opponents or due to the transfer the text of papyrus on parchment or due to the transition from one font to a modern one and were no longer kept or used. Moreover, in the Egypt area, it has been possible for climatic reasons that ancient manuscripts have survived to this day, from the quality of the text to it, that says virtually nothing, because, and this principle is important, it is about the age and quality of the Text and not the age of the material, even if this allows numerous conclusions.

The errors in the papyri and the two codices can be interpreted only with the Byzantine text as original and are not vice versa plausible. They are also stored according to historical quotations (Tertullian, Passover Chronicle); the originals continue to the places where they sent or where they were kept. The equation, that a late manuscript is necessarily an inaccurate copy, is, as I said,

completely implausible, since gross errors in certain areas, where Greek was already no longer mastered when copying also happened early, especially in the Egyptian area. It is therefore decisive in which attitude to the text and with which care a copy originated.

The competence of the Greek language is also important, less so when a writer has copied the text. It is, according to the evidence, even that some ancient manuscripts in the area of Egypt were copied very poorly (in the case of Papyri 66, arguably the worst handwriting of the entire transmission of the New Testament), as they were made sloppy and without competence of the Greek language, as copying errors show (the copyists did not realize that they were making mistakes, a native speaker would not go undoing any of these kinds of mistakes - there are examples in P66 in each verse).

In addition, there is clear evidence that distinctive features of the language in Egypt at that time had influence on the local manuscripts, indicating a deliberate intervention in the biblical text (recension). A later manuscript, if the original was good and the writer did a good job, is often much better, especially since, as I said, the originals did not disappear and continue to be checked and copied.

Therefore, and for many other reasons (printing numerous singular types, copying errors and obvious grammatical, spelling and content errors that were never present in the original), the attempt by Westcott / Hort and, consequently, Nestle / Aland to faithfully present the New Testament is now really failed completely. Also, the editors did not believe that the text is God's Word, so that in liberal circles of Christianity and academic scholarship for certain reasons, the artificial text of Nestle / Aland is often preferred. Other even more eclectic editions (i.e., the editors arbitrarily choose readings from different codices or papyri as described. The reasons remain unclear to the reader and are, even if the method is termed "scientific" and thus stands for perceived credibility) of the Alexandrian text such as that of M. Holmes (SBL) or previously of Soden's are even more problematic because of the methodology (radical eclecticism) and non-transparency, so that they are not mentioned (as well as the edition "The Greek New Testament", Tyndale House, Cambridge, but for other reasons). They have used problematic methods of textual criticism and as such anyway no claim to originality.

The view of the transmission of the New Testament would be fatal, since the entire tradition is therefore declared to be false, corrupt, unreliable and untrustworthy, as Nestle / Aland postulate. For both the Holmes and Nestle / Aland editions, the question remains, as with a free and uncontrolled text, of all the scribes, who usually did not know each other (because of the differences in time and place), had "added" all one and the same text , This can not even be explained by the recently presented process theory, much less by the coherence-based method that is being championed in Münster, where the edition of Nestle / Aland is published. The latter method even goes so far that readings without a single Greek manuscript evidence (the end of the principle "it is written") have been included in the text. Although the name of the method sounds very learned and scientific, it is only useless if you have the goal to represent the original text. The publishers of Nestle / Aland no longer even have this claim, but the goal is to have a text at the time X (so-called "Ausgangstext"), the original is no longer in focus, because this is no longer to represent or to reconstruct.

In order to conclude the distinction to useless editions positively: In the foreword of this issue, the editors of Robinson / Pierpont 2018 confess to the New Testament as God's word and see God in their work committed.

Other editions of the so-called Byzantine text

Also, the text, as Robinson / Pierpont present, stands out from other attempts to print the Byzantine text. For example, in Revelation, while essentially, but not only, the Koine text is considered (the group of most manuscripts). An attempt was always made to reach consensus, even if there were sometimes divisions in the tradition. Therefore, correctly, not only a pure majority text (i.e., simply the reading with most manuscripts) can be printed (even if it is the case), it is not about counting manuscripts, but about weighing and considering the transmission. Thus, the term "majority text" is also not suitable. In Revelation, this is meaningfully not plausible, since readings can also have a spread in other lines (Andreas text, etc.), so it's not about pure mechanical counting of majorities. It is a bonus if Robinson / Pierpont 2018 differs from Hodges-Farstad in Revelation (and the PA in John 8) in some places, though otherwise there is much agreement.

The attempt of W. Pickering to promote a later secondary line within the Byzantine tradition in his edition is also exceeded. The new Text und Textwert volume has shown the secondary nature of the the f35 line of transmission, although this feature was already known before. Thus, the Edition of W. Pickering is not unimportant. For historical purposes and comparisons in contrast to Nestle / Aland (whose text is historically meaningless, since it has not existed) it is quite interesting, especially for the history of the Byzantine text.

The Textus Receptus (TR), though still having some agreement with Robinson / Pierpont and the other editions of the Byzantine text, is the worst representative of all these editions. However, it is even miles ahead of the text of Nestle / Aland because of its proximity to consensus. The TR relies only on a very small number of manuscripts in Revelation, e.g. just a single and even a very bad copy with numerous comments or glosses that have nothing to do in an edition of God's Word. In places where the TR differs from RP, RP invariably provides the better and original reading to the reader. However, this text has an important impact story and should be important to some for the reason. Similarly, according to Antoniades, the text is comparatively unimportant because it is based on the lectionaries, which are to be distinguished from the copies of God's Word themselves, since they have been adapted for church purposes. Thus, the present edition of the Byzantine text is to be given preference over all others.

The technical side of the edition

In the apparatus, this edition has noted significant differences within the Byzantine transmission. Personally, I find this very enlightening and on closer inspection, these show up as secondary, but still often interesting if you are interested in the history of the Greek text. Thus one finds the readings, e.g. taken into account by f35, there.

An essential difference to the edition of Nestle / Aland is the missing apparatus with manuscript information. Of course, this is not feasible, because if the manuscripts would be listed individually, which prove a reading, it would be per verse already several pages only on letters and numbers, how the called manuscripts are named. By contrast, the Nestle / Aland apparatus alone provides an alibi function, suggesting verifiability, reliability and credibility. Only this is tendentious and so simplistic and one-sided, such as the reality is turned upside down, if only a few manuscripts are listed, and the interesting manuscripts (building the consensus) are summarized by the label "Byz", comprising almost all Manuscripts, sometimes 99.99%, and are counted as one single reading (so one of the promoters of this edition). Interesting variants in the Byzantine text disappear and the picture emerges that one has to treat the many different manuscripts, as I said, as a single manuscript or as

a single witness. Although there is no apparatus in this edition, this is not a defect, since the Nestle / Aland apparatus gives readers a false impression, namely, that the decisions are well attested, which is not the case. It is alarming what is not printed in the Nestle / Aland apparatus. A reader interested in this is well served by an apparatus such as Laparola (which roughly lists the versions), von Soden, Text und Textwert, or by CNTTS. As von Sodens' work requires a lot of corrections (notation, classifications and hard to understand), CNNTS is currently the best option, although the manuscripts are only partially listed, but Computer based research is possible with this apparatus. Works that provide full collation data, ie evaluations of all manuscripts of a certain reading, are also the most suitable, so that an interested reader can get a picture (provided for the Book of Jude, and as test passages by Text und Textwert). Unfortunately, the faulty textual theory makes the Editio Critica Maior also very tendentious, the Byzantine text is not adequately represented there. The new Text und Textwert volume for Revelation makes a plausible way to interpret the data well. Here the courage of the publishers is to be praised, that the Codex Sinaiticus, one of the two manuscripts on which Nestle / Aland is based, was declared as a very bad copy, which does not make a good picture over long distances. In the lifetime of Kurt Aland, this true statement would have been unthinkable. If God allows, the missing apparatus will be replaced by a textual commentary on the decisions and their justifications by the publisher. The best option now is to use the apparatus of W. Pickering or the simple one of Hodges / Farstad; for details: Van Soden, CNTTS. Unfortunately, the overpriced editions of the Editio Critica Maior are too biased to provide a neutral picture to a reader who may not be deeply involved in the issue. Therefore, it is advised against, even if some new data were worked out. For the price they do not do enough and for those interested in the Byzantine text it is not sufficient. Thus, an apparatus in the edition would probably be too problematic as it is not possible to print the data without many pages of manuscript numbers for each verse (and the groupings of von Soden are sometimes questionable). But there are enough ways to help yourself.

The division of the books of the New Testament of the present edition (and earlier) are unfortunately unusual today, but correspond to the classification of the historical tradition of the Greek manuscripts. The otherwise often used are to be traced back to the Latin Vulgate. At least the Greek manuscripts had the following divisions: Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, so-called Catholic or general epistles (not to be confused with a great designation in Christendom), then the Epistles of Paul, which correctly includes Hebrews, even if the author, evidently Paul, is not mentioned there, followed by Revelation.

As for the structure of the present edition, it can be said that it is still unclear whether the adhesive stitching for intensive use does its job for a long time, but other editions of the same kind by the same publisher have done so, although God's Word is more widely used than other books. The elegant edition of Chilton by Robinson / Pierpont 2005 (hardcover and thread stitching) has not lost any pages since its acquisition after its release and still looks almost like new, but is no longer sold.

The difference in the from RP 2005 to 2018 is mainly orthographic in nature or punctuation (e.g., commas). Those who are hardly interested in the commas anyway, will be more interested in some places, where the original could better represent. Essentially, there is only one passage in the Revelation that was to be improved since the RP 2005 edition. The reading has already been improved before the Text und Textwert volume confirmed this decision. Otherwise the improvements are often of an orthographic nature or only important for punctuation or accents. Those who find these things secondary anyway, since they were not present in the original, will not expect much need of corrections in the text itself.

The text is provided with chapter headings that not everyone likes, because they are subjectively and differently classified by the different publishers and are not always useful. I have not tested them. The apparatus has listed all deviations of Nestle / Aland. This may be interesting for some. Personally, I have no interest in that because these readings are not relevant. But it does not really bother. There is a cheap edition on Amazon, which omits these and prints the bare RP text, but its formatting is flawed.

The print is bold and therefore easy to read. The width of the book is roughly 15% shorter than the Chilton 2005 edition, but the text itself, the key, is the same length. Only the page margins are smaller in this edition, but if you do not want to write anything into the book, it does not matter. A disadvantage of the present edition, however, is that you can not put the book open on the table, so you must probably hold it in the hand (or press it on the table, although this is not advisable for a book). This is the biggest disadvantage in contrast to Chilton's RP 2005, which is unfortunately no longer sold but is offered used on Amazon. Those who prefer the comfort of opening the RP 2005 edition at the table and have little need of the mentioned changes, can also wait to see if VTR or another publisher will publish a hardcover edition. This is, as I said, a cheaper edition, which provides the identical text version of 2010, but has some errors in the Layout, but the text is correct. If you really have to pay attention to the price; this is an alternative for folks with low-income.

The copyright of the edition

It is pleasing that the biblical text is not subject to copyright, even though the quality is far ahead of other editions. The publishers do not earn money with God's Word, nor have taxpayers or paid employees been employed, as is the case with funding for liberal theological institutions that produce other Greek text editions already mentioned. So anyone can copy and redistribute the text without having to pay for it. God's Word is meant for that, not to earn money or enforce copyright rights.

Summary

In summary, the text of RP 2018 is unrivaled. It is fair to say that it is equivalent to the original, so that one can and should agree with the choices made with regard to the text. The edition of VTR is reasonably affordable (even if there are cheaper alternatives with the same text, but with some qualitative losses in the layout), while you just have to accept that it is no hardcover and has adhesive edge. Who accepts that, is well advised. A long-term use is still pending. I hope for wide acceptance.

I have no economic or other advantages, if I hereby make a positive assessment (in particular of the Greek text itself), and I have no dependence on the publisher or publishers.

My desire is for Christians to read the original word of God's Word in a reliable edition. In my estimation, this is possible.

Ingolstadt, 24.4.18

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