

New Testament Textual Criticism
The Application of Thoroughgoing Principles

SBL Press

Supplements to Novum Testamentum

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New Testament Textual Criticism
The Application of Thoroughgoing Principles

Essays on Manuscripts and Textual Variation

J. K. Elliott

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This volume is dedicated to my wife, Carolyn, on the occasion of our Ruby Wedding. She has been a constant supporter of my work throughout the period when the articles included here were written.

This collection comes with heartfelt thanks.

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CONTENTS

Original Places of Publication	xi
Introduction	1

PART ONE

METHODOLOGY

Chapter One The New Testament Text in the Second Century: A Challenge for the Twenty-First Century	13
Chapter Two The Nature of the Evidence available for Reconstructing the Text of the New Testament in the Second Century	29
Chapter Three Thoroughgoing Eclecticism	41

PART TWO

MANUSCRIPTS

Chapter Four Singular Readings in the Gospel Text of Papyrus 45	53
Chapter Five T.C. Skeat on the Dating and Origin of Codex Vaticanus	65
Chapter Six Codex Bezae and the Earliest Greek Papyri	79
Chapter Seven A Greek-Coptic (Sahidic) Fragment of Titus-Philemon (0205)	103
Chapter Eight The Greek Manuscript Heritage of the Book of Acts	117
Chapter Nine Manuscripts of the Book of Revelation Collated by H.C. Hoskier	133

Chapter Ten	The Distinctiveness of the Greek Manuscripts of the Book of Revelation	145
Chapter Eleven	Recent Oxyrhynchus Papyri	157
a)	Six New Papyri of Matthew's Gospel	157
b)	Five New Papyri of the New Testament	160
c)	Seven Recently Published New Testament Fragments from Oxyrhynchus	165
d)	Four New Papyri containing the Fourth Gospel and their Relevance for the Apparatus Criticus	170

PART THREE

STUDIES AND PRAXIS

A. Textual Variation

(a) Short Studies

Chapter Twelve	The Influence of G.D. Kilpatrick	177
a)	ἐρωτᾶν and ἐπερωτᾶν in the New Testament	177
b)	The Position of Causal «ὅτι» Clauses in the New Testament	180
c)	τε in the New Testament	183
d)	καθώς and ὡςπερ in the New Testament	186
e)	Mark and the Teaching of Jesus: An Examination of λόγος and εὐαγγέλιον	190
f)	The Aorist Middle of ἀποκρίνομαι	199
g)	New Testament Linguistic Usage	203
Chapter Thirteen	Specific Variants	211
a)	ὁ βαπτίζων and Mark 1:4	211
b)	John 1:14 and the New Testament's Use of πλήρης	214
c)	John 1:18 'God' or 'Son': Stalemate?	218
d)	In Favour of καθήσομαι at I Corinthians 13:3	221
e)	δίδωμι in 2 Timothy	224
f)	When Jesus was apart from God: An Examination of Hebrews 2:9	226

(b) Longer Studies

Chapter Fourteen	Mark 1:1–3—A Later Addition to the Gospel?	235
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Chapter Fifteen	The Position of the Verb in Mark with Special Reference to Mark 13	243
Chapter Sixteen	The Last Twelve Verses of Mark: Original or Not?	253
Chapter Seventeen	The Text of Acts in the Light of Two Recent Studies	275
Chapter Eighteen	An Eclectic Study of the Book of Acts	287
Chapter Nineteen	The Language and Style of the Concluding Doxology to the Epistle to the Romans	315
Chapter Twenty	The Divine Names in the Corinthian Letters	325

B. Exegesis and Textual Criticism

Chapter Twenty-One	a) The Conclusion of the Pericope of the Healing of the Leper and Mark 1:45 combined with <i>Is ó ἐξελθών</i> a Title for Jesus in Mark 1:45? and The Healing of the Leper in the Synoptic Parallels	341
	b) Anna's Age (Luke 2:36–37)	353
	c) Is Post-Baptismal Sin Forgivable?	356
Chapter Twenty-Two	The Parable of the Two Sons: Text and Exegesis	359
Chapter Twenty-Three	Paul's Teaching on Marriage in I Corinthians: Some Problems Considered	373

C. Text-Critical Issues concerning the Synoptic Problem

Chapter Twenty-Four	An Examination of the Text and Apparatus of Three Recent Greek Synopses	385
Chapter Twenty-Five	Textual Criticism, Assimilation and the Synoptic Gospels	417
Chapter Twenty-Six	Printed Editions of Greek Synopses and their Influence on the Synoptic Problem	431

Chapter Twenty-Seven Resolving the Synoptic Problem using the Text of Printed Greek Synopses	459
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PART FOUR

REVIEWS OF RECENT CRITICAL EDITIONS

Chapter Twenty-eight The <i>Editio Critica Maior</i>	471
a) Reviews	472
i) James	472
ii) The Petrine Epistles	486
iii) 1 John	498
iv) 2, 3 John and Jude	502
b) i) Reactions to James and 1,2 Peter	507
ii) Changes in the Exegesis of the Catholic Epistles in the Light of the Text in the <i>Editio Critica Maior</i>	522
Chapter Twenty-Nine The United Bible Societies' Fourth Revised Edition and Nestle-Aland 27	541
a) The Fourth Edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament	541
b) The Twentyseventh Edition of Nestle-Aland's, <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i>	560
c) The New Testament in Greek: Two New Editions	569
Chapter Thirty The International Greek New Testament Project's Volumes on the Gospel of Luke	575
Chapter Thirty-One The <i>Marc Multilingue</i> Project	595

APPENDIX

Chapter Thirty-Two Manuscripts, the Codex and the Canon	613
Publications by J.K. Elliott	633
Indexes	659

ORIGINAL PLACES OF PUBLICATION

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2. "The Nature of the Evidence available for restructuring the Text of the New Testament in the Second Century" in Christian-B. Amphoux and J. Keith Elliott (eds.), *The New Testament Text in Early Christianity: Le texte du Nouveau Testament au début du christianisme. Proceedings of the Lille Colloquium, July 2000. Actes du colloque de Lille, juillet 2000* (Lausanne: Editions du Zèbre, 2003) pp. 9–18.
3. "Thoroughgoing Eclecticism" in Scot McKendrick and Orlaith O'Sullivan (eds.), *The Bible as Book: The Transmission of the Greek Text* (London: the British Library and New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2003) pp. 139–45.
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(Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2001) pp. 39–53 (= *Supplimenti alla Rivista Biblica* 38).

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32. “Manuscripts, the Codex and the Canon” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 63 (1996) pp. 105–23.

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of essays represents a selection of fifty seven articles on textual criticism which I published in various journals and books over the past forty three years.

The introductory section (I) includes articles on the methodology I apply. My approach to textual criticism has been dubbed ‘thoroughgoing eclecticism’ and it follows the paths laid by George Kilpatrick and, before him, C.H. Turner and A.C. Clark. The first chapter is for a general readership, possibly new to the field; it is a condensed version of the inaugural lecture I delivered at the University of Leeds on the occasion of my appointment to a personal chair as Professor of New Testament Textual Criticism and, as such, was obviously directed to non-specialists. Chapter 2 is related to it; originally it served as an introduction to a specialist conference in Lille on second-century Christianity. In it I focus on how textual criticism can play its part in providing useful insights into that era. Chapter 3 is more narrowly directed by setting out thoroughgoing eclecticism’s guiding principles. That too came from a conference (in 1998 as one of a number of such events sponsored by the Scriptorium Center for Christian Antiquities at Hampton Court, Herefordshire) during which differing text-critical methodologies were explored. I show awareness there of charges made against thoroughgoing eclecticism.¹

Thoroughgoing eclectic critics are often misrepresented as having little interest in manuscripts, codicology or palaeography. Kilpatrick and I never subscribed to the opinion, still sometimes to be heard, that we treat manuscripts as mere carriers of variant readings. In practice I have been concerned with the age and character of manuscripts as well as their distinctive readings. It is true that thoroughgoing criticism does not favour a reading merely because it occurs in a “superior” witness or comes from a particular group of manuscripts, nor if it appears in an old manuscript, nor as part of the majority of witnesses.

¹ Other examples giving expositions of my methodology appear in the Bibliography at the end of this volume. The most recent is a survey of the discipline in Albert Melloni (ed.), *Dizionario del sapere storico-religioso del Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010) pp. 897–907.

Nevertheless, the character of a manuscript may often be determinative: a scribe prone to omission or one given to glosses or the expansion of divine names, for example, would be treated with due caution when one is assessing variants of those types.

In any case, all manuscripts are seen as having been *used* by their original owners as containing the canonical scriptural text, and thus their readings, however maverick a modern critic may brand them, would once have been read as relevant and orthodox. Section II has chapters on some of the popular manuscripts I have examined: P⁴⁵, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Bezae. Chapter 6 on Bezae came from a conference devoted to a study of that manuscript in Lunel in 1994. Chapter 7 contains my edition of a peculiar Greek-Coptic bilingual manuscript (0205), which is still intriguing: the current registry of Greek New Testament Manuscripts is inclined to link it, falsely in my view, with 0129 0203 and lectionaries 1575 1576. More attention to the interrelationship, if any, of all these registered witnesses is needed. Two other articles in this section deal with broader topics: the manuscript heritage of Acts and of Revelation, both those being books with distinctive textual characteristics, setting themselves apart from other New Testament books.

Given the prominence accorded papyri witnesses by many Biblical scholars, I have kept my eye open for publications of further New Testament fragments that may be relevant in an apparatus. Articles I have published on recently edited Oxyrhynchus papyri are included here. (Other discussions, some 'forthcoming', where I have engaged with their alleged importance, may be seen in my Bibliography.)

Inevitably, articles of this sort in section II need frequent updating as more manuscripts are registered, and in some cases my figures and statistics may sometimes be slightly out of date. For the current state of play with the registered manuscripts the electronic list maintained by the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung in Münster needs to be consulted via their website links.

When we turn to section III we reach the kernel of thoroughgoing principles and practice. Subsection A deals with textual variants. We start off in chapter 12 with a sequence of short studies of particular grammatical and stylistic features. The influence of G.D. Kilpatrick lies behind the seven articles reproduced here, ordered by date of the original printing. When first published, they were acknowledged to be based on papers I had inherited as Kilpatrick's literary executor and on topics we had discussed together. Those were printed with the

approval of his family. They appear again in recognition of his ongoing inspiration. Elsewhere, I was privileged to reproduce many of the articles Kilpatrick himself had published in a collection that appeared soon after his death,² and references to many of those articles are found in footnotes throughout the present collection as will be clear from the index.

Chapter 13 is a sample of interesting variants that display my methodology. Those are ordered by Biblical sequence. Many other earlier pieces had appeared in a collection I published in 1992.³ Chapters 14–20 contain a series of longer articles on important text-critical cruxes. For example, chapter 16 concerns the endings of Mark, a perennial interest of mine—and indeed of most textual critics. The chapter here came from a symposium held at Wake Forest, NC to highlight differing approaches to the problem of the textual traditions at the end of Mark. The proceedings, which included my contribution, were assessed by Darrell Bock in a concluding section of the published collection and it is gratifying that he found my approach convincing.

Chapter 17 collects together a number of variation units in Acts which I discuss in relation to two then recently published books. A number of these are discussed in relation to Atticism, to author's style and to homoioteleuton—all constantly applied topics in my work on textual criticism. Chapter 18 is related to 17 and also sets out a number of these text-critical topics and adds to those variants relating to Semitisms, to the place of the LXX and to orthography in relation to variants in Acts. Chapter 19 deals with a problem comparable to the variants at the end of Mark, namely the problem of the endings to Romans. Again, language and author's usage are dominant in the discussion.

Subsection B on exegesis and textual criticism is in many respects an unnecessary and false division because all the discussions in section A are concerned with variants found in witnesses that were deemed to be manuscripts of canonical scripture. No variants should be treated as instances where one 'merely' proves the likeliest direction of change from an original to a secondary text. There, as in section B, the concern

² J.K. Elliott (ed.), *The Principles and Practice of New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays of G.D. Kilpatrick* (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 1990) (= BETL 96).

³ J.K. Elliott, *Essays and Studies in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Cordova: El Almendro, 1992) (= *Estudios de Filología Neotestamentaria* 3).

should be to assess the significance of *all* readings, their meaning and the probable motives for change. The discussion of the 'meaning' is, of course, 'exegesis' in the jargon of the discipline. In chapter 21 I assemble three studies on Mark 1:45, representing differing angles on a problematic verse. Chapter 22 is a long study of a particularly problematic textual crux, the Parable of the Two Boys in Matthew 21. The study following, on Hebrews 6, uses my text-critical work on language and style to try to resolve another theological crux, the issue of post-baptismal sin. Chapter 23 on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 contains a number of exegetical and text-critical issues, which I examined many years ago but which I still stand by. Again, I try to base my arguments on language and author's usage.

Sub-section C brings us to the synoptic problem. Prompted by the stimulating exchanges during the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas'* synoptic problem seminars at its annual meetings, which I regularly attended, I began to examine the rôle of the text printed in many synopses as well as overarching issues of the bias (or otherwise) of published synoptic presentations and, more crucially, my analyses of the decisions reached about the synoptic problem when only one particular Greek text was employed. I was also involved in many of the special conferences convened to assess what is often called the new Griesbach theory propounded by William R. Farmer and Bernard Orchard. Their colloquia reached a climax in a lengthy conference in Jerusalem in 1992. Its proceedings included my piece on the influence of printed editions of Greek synopses on the synoptic problem, included here as chapter 26.

Chapter 24 examines the distinctive text of the synoptic gospels in the synopses edited by Aland, by Orchard and by Greeven and, in the process, notes some corrigenda that were required. In so far as Aland's *Synopsis* is concerned many were attended to after its 12th edition, but most of the general points I made then still apply to the later editions. I note that the term 'Standard Text' to refer to the Nestle text, and to which great objections were raised in many quarters, was quietly dropped. Chapter 25 came from a SNTS seminar held during the Paris meeting in 1978 and chapter 27 from a series of annual seminars I took part in at the Protestant theological faculty in Montpellier, in this instance during the 1992 session. Both show how judgements made on the interrelationship of the gospels are intertwined with the Greek New Testament text being used. The moral in most of these studies is that workers on the synoptic problem must keep a close eye

on textual variation within each synoptic parallel. Textual criticism is crucial throughout any scholarly work on the Greek New Testament but nowhere more so than in the synoptic parallels.

My assessing various printed synopsis editions in section III leads on to articles on other printed editions of the New Testament in section IV. These include some review articles. An analysis of editions has been an important part of my published work.⁴ Many of the opinions I offer here apply to all editions of the various texts. Thus comments on Nestle²⁶ clearly apply to Nestle²⁷ too. Chapter 29 (a) and (b) deal with the latest editions of the UBS text (identical with the equivalent Nestle edition) and 29 (c) considers the need for these two editions of basically the identical text. Chapter 30 treats of the International Greek New Testament Project's (= IGNTP) Luke volumes; as the executive editor who brought those volumes to completion and who saw them through the press, I found it chastening to reflect on the history of the project at a conference held at the University of Birmingham in 1999. Birmingham had by then become the centre of the next project commissioned by the international committee, namely the Fourth Gospel. Under David Parker's leadership, work on John started in 1987 and is still in progress, now in association with the *Editio critica maior* (= ECM) in Münster. (That collaboration between IGNTP and the Münster Institut is one of the most welcome and healthy developments in the globalisation of work on matters text-critical. It was unthinkable a generation ago despite the paucity of qualified workers in the textual vineyard. The close international links between text-critics of all hues now forged is the most logical and productive liaison that has occurred during the lifespan of the articles collected here.)

The IGNTP-ECM partnership will produce an edited text, and we await this edition with interest. Previous volumes produced under the aegis of IGNTP (and its predecessor CGNT, the committee for the Critical Greek New Testament) printed an apparatus using the text of Westcott and Hort as a running base (for the volumes on Matthew and Mark) or an edition of the *Textus Receptus* (for the volumes on Luke).

⁴ Details of my other reviews, not reproduced here, are to be found in the Bibliography at the end of this volume, notably items numbered 15, 18, 20, 30, 31, 32, 36 in the section of Articles in Refereed Journals and 9, 23, 27, 29, 31, 43, 190, 266 in the section headed 'Reviews' where my assessments of earlier editions of Nestle, the United Bible Societies' text (= UBS), Metzger's *Textual Commentary* and the first edition of Hodges and Farstad's majority text appear. Some shorter discussions occasionally appear within the ongoing series 'Book Notes' in *Novum Testamentum*.

Since I delivered that paper in Birmingham it needs to be reported that William Petersen, whose work on the Diatessaron was highly commended, died at a comparatively young age, and it also ought to be noted that Carroll Osburn's papers relating to his preliminary work on Acts have now been transferred to Münster.

In this section (Part Four) I concentrate on the current achievements of the *Editio critica maior* and I give this edition prominence by reproducing my articles on ECM at the beginning of the section (chapter 28). Among them I include my reviews of all four of its fascicles containing the Catholic Epistles as well as two assessments; one (chapter 28 (b i)) in the collection of papers from the NOSTER conference of 2001 re-assesses James and 1 and 2 Peter; the other (chapter 28 (b ii)) in the Earle Ellis *Festschrift* assembles my reactions to the text of James, 1 and 2 Peter and 1 John.

In chapter 31 I turn to the Marc multilingue project with which I have been involved over several years. The chapter sets out the principles and purposes of this work. The project aims to present not an edited text but the history of Mark in Greek and in most of the early versions. My chapter gives samples of the Greek and Latin. The current progress can be accessed at www.safran.be/marcmultilingue.

The volume ends with one additional article (on the canon of the Old and New Testaments) as an appendix. That paper arose from a symposium held at the University of Sheffield in 1995 under the aegis of the British Library. The interconnection of canon and text is well established, hence its inclusion now. The article analyses the most significant manuscripts and identifies the major differences between them in respect of their contents and the sequences of the books. It is argued that the reason why the contents of the separate sections of the New Testament became relatively firmly fixed from an early date was because Christianity used the codex form from its beginnings. For the Old Testament the contents were more fluid. The article draws attention to the differences not only between the Hebrew and Alexandrian canons but also between the often fluctuating contents of Hebrew, Syriac, Latin and Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament. It is shown how the main manuscripts, especially within the Greek tradition, have affected modern printed editions of the LXX. A description of how the varying traditions in Latin and Greek have influenced modern versions is also included here. A perennial question is the extent to which the stability of a text was affected by its acceptance in a canon. As far

as the New Testament is concerned, this is a highly relevant question when assessing the textual history of Jude, Revelation and Acts.

Also in the end-matter is a listing of my published writings. This includes not only books and articles but also reviews. In many longer reviews, especially of reference tools, of editions of the New Testament text and of books about textual criticism, I often include text-critical examples and try to further discussion, inevitably from a thorough-going critical standpoint, thus making some issues raised in such reviews relevant to issues discussed in this book as a whole.

Inevitably, when rereading one's own *oeuvre*, one tries to detect changes in approach or opinion. One hopes that readers and reviewers will interpret changes in one's opinions and judgements over the years as signs of progressive thinking rather than as inconsistencies and lapses! Certainly, as time has passed I have adopted a different view of an original text and whether such a thing can be achievable or indeed should be the main aim of a New Testament textual critic. Eldon J. Epp articulated⁵ the concern felt about the use of the word 'original'. I note that many practising text-critics (with the notable exception of those for whom nothing but the Majority text or a form of the Textus Receptus will fit the description, 'original' text) side with Epp's quandary and analyses. I now accept the consensus view that the most that text-critics can hope to achieve is the promotion of the likeliest *Ausgangstext*, that is, the earliest recoverable form of the textual tradition from which all deviant readings can be traced and that what one is mainly concerned to show is the rich variety of plausible and intelligible readings that existed and which may serve to illustrate the multifarious texts of the New Testament in early Christianity.

Another change is that over the years when I (and others) have been writing on textual criticism there is an increasing hesitation to speak confidently about the history of text-types. Watertight categories, proto-Alexandrian, Caesarean etc. and others to which one would routinely try to assign witnesses are now less used. Once again, it is left to Eldon Epp as the doyen of commentators on matters text-critical to articulate that change and to promote in their stead broader categories, such as the 'D' type, i.e. a loose association of manuscripts

⁵ In "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism" reprinted as chapter 20 in Eldon Jay Epp, *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Papers 1962-2004* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) (= *Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 116).

that cluster around Codex Bezae or the ‘B’ type, that may be used of witnesses that share characteristics with codex Vaticanus.⁶ Text-types had already been abandoned by the Münster Institut in their series *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften* and are not used by them in their series *Editio critica maior*. Instead, critics are increasingly unwilling to use the old categories, speaking instead now of family allegiances between manuscripts or of clusters in order to group manuscripts which exhibit shared characteristics.

Older articles in this collection and, of course, elsewhere that speak of text-types need adjustment and nuancing to take account of the current consensus that views the conventional categories as defined in Metzger’s handbooks or in Aland and Aland’s *Text of the New Testament* as passé.

Another major point of debate in textual criticism is the rôle or relevance of conjectural emendation. In the past I have been of the opinion that the sheer number and variety of extant manuscript witnesses to the New Testament Greek text and the multitude of early versional evidence obviate the need to have recourse to what often amounted to inspired guesswork to restore the wording allegedly intended by the original author. The inclusion of some earlier conjectures by Biblical scholars and exegetes such as those displayed in the apparatus of the Nestle text were seen as quaint historical museum pieces giving an insight into a now outmoded procedure. While that represents my earlier view I now confess to being less sceptical of allowing such intrusions into a text and am more tolerant of the opinion that on occasion it may be necessary to admit that no one manuscript preserves the wording used by our first century author.

* * *

In preparing these reprints silent corrections have been made to the originals. A post-scriptum has been added to some articles to update information. House-style has been standardised; the original page numbers have been added in the outer margins where appropriate.

⁶ In among other places “The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism”; reprinted in his *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism* esp. pp. 92–5; “The Papyrus Manuscripts of the New Testament” reprinted as chapter 15 in *ibid.* pp. 422f and “Textual Criticism in the Exegesis of the New Testament” reprinted as chapter 17 in *ibid.* especially pp. 90–2.

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