

THE TEXTUAL HISTORY  
OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

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THE TEXTUAL HISTORY  
OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

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OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Changing Views  
in Contemporary Research

*Edited by*  
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and  
Michael W. Holmes

Society of Biblical Literature  
Atlanta

# THE TEXTUAL HISTORY OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AGLB	Vetus latina; die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel: Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel
ANTF	Arbeiten zur neutestamentliche Textforschung
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum. Series graeca
<i>CPG</i>	<i>Clavis patrum graecorum</i> . Edited by M. Geerard. 5 vols. Turnhour: Brepols, 1974–87.
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GCS	Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GNT <sup>4</sup>	<i>The Greek New Testament</i> . Edited by Kurt Aland et al. 4th rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001.
<i>HibJ</i>	<i>Hibbert Journal</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
J ECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JGRChJ	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament

- NA<sup>27</sup> Nestle, Eberhard, and Erwin Nestle. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Edited by Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland. 27th rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993.
- NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament
- NovT* *Novum Testamentum*
- NovTSup Supplements to Novum Testamentum
- NTGF New Testament in the Greek Fathers
- NTOA *Novum Testamentum et orbis antiquus*
- NTS* *New Testament Studies*
- NTTS New Testament Tools and Studies
- NTTSD New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents
- PG* J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia cursus completus: Series graeca*. 162 vols. Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857–86.
- RB* *Revue biblique*
- SBLTCS Society of Biblical Literature Text-Critical Studies
- SD Studies and Documents
- SNTSMS Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
- StPatr* *Studia Patristica*
- TSAJ Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
- TZ* *Theologische Zeitschrift*
- WBC Word Biblical Commentary
- WUNT Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament



# INTRODUCTION

## THE TEXTUAL HISTORY OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT: CHANGING VIEWS IN CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

*Klaus Wachtel and Michael W. Holmes*

In August 2008 the Institute for New Testament Textual Research and the German Bible Society convened in Münster a colloquium on the topic of “The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research.” Internationally renowned scholars representing a broad range of quite different views and methodological approaches gathered to discuss basic issues of New Testament textual criticism today. The first day of the colloquium featured the presentation and discussion of a series of invited papers, while the second day was devoted to an extensive introduction to the theory and practice of the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM) by its developer, Gerd Mink.<sup>1</sup> Mink subsequently expanded his contribution about contamination and coherence so that it includes much of the presentation he gave on the second day. Thus, the present volume documents the presentations from both days of the colloquium.<sup>2</sup>

The colloquium was initiated by the editors of the *Novum Testamentum Graecum: Editio Critica Maior* (ECM), the core project of the Münster Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, to discuss a decisive phase

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1. A comprehensive reproduction of his contribution can be found at [http://www.uni-muenster.de/NTTextforschung/cbgm\\_presentation/](http://www.uni-muenster.de/NTTextforschung/cbgm_presentation/).

2. Our sincere gratitude is due to Ryan Wettlaufer for reviewing the English of contributions by German authors.

of their work with partners and colleagues. The appearance in 2005 of the fourth installment of the ECM brought to completion the critical text and apparatus of Part IV of the ECM, comprising the Catholic Letters. An accompanying study volume, the core of which will be a textual commentary on the Catholic Letters, is currently being prepared. In the course of this work, the editorial decisions taken so far will be reviewed by means of the CBGM. Mink devised the CBGM as a method for the analysis of the manuscript transmission with the aim of reconstructing the initial text, that is, the form of text from which the transmission started. Thanks to the continuing work of the Institute since the appearance of the first installment in 1997, the revision can now be based on the full evidence for all the Catholic Letters, and this may lead to different results in some instances.

For the ECM user—who was first introduced to the concept of “coherence” in the second installment (2000), and then to the “Coherence-Based Genealogical Method” as such in the third installment (2003)—it will be much easier to comprehend the CBGM because now there is an online version of it that allows for a reproduction of the tables and graphs utilized for the method. The new application (“Genealogical Queries”) is available at <http://intf.uni-muenster.de/cbgm/en.html>.

In view of these circumstances—the completion of Part IV of the ECM, the availability online of key results of the CBGM, and the ongoing review of editorial decisions embodied in Part IV as the editors work on the accompanying study volume—it seemed a propitious time to discuss the ECM’s achievements, its methods, and associated questions with interested partners and colleagues.

## 1. THE INITIAL TEXT: CONSTRUCTION OR RECONSTRUCTION?

The concept of editing or reconstructing the original text is no longer a matter of course. What status can be claimed for the text of a critical edition? Is it at all justified to call it a reconstruction or recovery of a text no longer extant, or is it nothing more than a projection of our own thinking on the material that the transmission preserved for us? In view of contemporary discussions, it may be both appropriate and necessary to treat this subject more extensively here than would usually be required to introduce the contributions of David Parker and Holger Strutwolf.

The distinction made in the ECM between the “initial text” (*Ausgangstext*), on the one hand, and the original text as composed by the author, on the other, may be seen by some as a recourse to Karl Lachmann, who, according to his 1830 “Rechenschaft,” was not yet aiming for the true

reading but for the oldest among widespread variants in his *Editio Maior* of the New Testament.<sup>3</sup>

Lachmann's method<sup>4</sup> consists of "a complex of criteria for *recensio*":

1. rejection of the vulgate (i.e., the Byzantine text) and the requirement that the edited text should be entirely based on the manuscripts as determined by methodical recensio;
2. "distrust for manuscripts of the Humanist period";
3. reconstruction of the textual history and the genealogical relations linking the manuscripts;
4. mechanical determination of which reading goes back to the archetype according to clearly defined criteria (*stemma codicum*).

According to Lachmann, the reconstruction of the initial text would ideally result from a *recensio sine interpretatione*,<sup>5</sup> that is, without any internal criteria being applied. He distinguished two main classes of tradition of the Greek New Testament, Eastern and Western, in analogy with Bengel's Asian and African *nationes*.<sup>6</sup> He regarded readings shared by both classes as having equal value, regardless of whether the attestation from both supported just one or several variants. In practice, however, Lachmann usually followed the Eastern text, because very often the Western readings were transmitted in Latin only.<sup>7</sup>

But if a reading is attested by only a part of one class against agreement of the other part with witnesses of the other class, then it was rejected, even if—and this shows how strictly Lachmann followed the principle of reconstructing just the text form that was widespread in the fourth century—there was reason to believe that it was the genuine one.<sup>8</sup>

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3. Karl Lachmann, "Rechenschaft über seine Ausgabe des Neuen Testaments," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 3 (1830): 817–45; repr. in *Kleinere Schriften* (2 vols.; Berlin: Reimer, 1876; repr., Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1974), 250–72; cf. 826: ". . . ich bin . . . noch gar nicht auf die wahre Lesart aus, die sich freilich gewiss oft in einer einzelnen Quelle erhalten hat, ebenso oft aber auch gänzlich verloren ist, sondern nur auf die älteste unter den erweislich verbreiteten."

4. See Sebastiano Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method* (ed. and trans. Glenn W. Most; Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 115–18.

5. Karl Lachmann, ed., *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, vol. 1 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1842), v. On the discrepancy between claim and reality in this regard in Lachmann's actual editorial work, see Timpanaro, *Genesis*, 88–89.

6. See Timpanaro, *Genesis*, 85.

7. Lachmann, *Kleinere Schriften*, 2:258.

8. *Ibid.*, 257: "Was beiden gemeinschaftlich ist, sei es eins oder schwanken beide Klassen in gleicher Art, die eine oder die mehreren Lesarten zeigen sich als verbreitet und sind des Textes würdig: für gleich begründet gilt mir die Lesart

Fifty years after Lachmann's "Rechenschaft," the edition brought forward by Westcott and Hort finally overcame the reign of the *Textus Receptus* in New Testament scholarship.<sup>9</sup> By its very title, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, it signals the editors' confidence that it is possible to bridge the gap between the earliest attainable text and the authorial text. They devote an entire chapter of their *Introduction* to the question "whether there is good ground for confidence that the purest text transmitted by existing documents is strictly or at least substantially identical with the text of the autographs" and conclude that there is in fact "approximate sufficiency of existing documents for the recovery of the genuine text, notwithstanding the existence of some primitive corruptions."<sup>10</sup>

This Hortian confidence has been characteristic of New Testament textual criticism throughout the twentieth century, sometimes more cautiously, sometimes less so. Thus, Bruce M. Metzger states in the concluding paragraph of his *Text of the New Testament*: "Although in very many cases the textual critic is able to ascertain without residual doubt which reading must have stood in the original, there are not a few other cases where he can come only to a tentative decision based on an equivocal balancing of probabilities. Occasionally none of the variant readings will commend itself as original."<sup>11</sup> Kurt and Barbara Aland reach a similar conclusion: "Only in very rare instances does the tenacity of the New Testament tradition present an insoluble tie between two or more alternative readings."<sup>12</sup>

Yet towards the end of the century, two important publications gave evidence of a change of perspective. One is David Parker's monograph

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der einen Klasse und die ihr entgegengesetzte der andern: verwerflich ist (wenn auch vielleicht einzig wahr), für die nur ein Theil der einen von beiden Klassen zeugt" ("Every reading shared by both families, whether it is the only reading attested or both families vary in the same way, thereby proves itself to have been widespread [*verbreitet*] and is worth accepting into the text; a reading of the one family and a different one of the other family have equal authority for me; a reading attested only by one part of one of the two families is to be eliminated (even if perhaps it is the only genuine one)" [translation from Timpanaro, *Genesis*, 85]).

9. B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, vol. 1, *Text*; vol. 2, *Introduction*; and *Appendix* (Cambridge and London: Macmillan, 1881; 2nd ed., 1896).

10. Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 271, 276.

11. Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 246 (= 3rd enl. ed., 1992).

12. Kurt Aland und Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; trans. E. F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 280; trans. of *Der Text des Neuen Testaments* (2nd erg. und erw. Aufl.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1989), 282.

*The Living Text of the Gospels*,<sup>13</sup> and the other one is Eldon Epp's essay "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism."<sup>14</sup>

The latter reminds us of the gap between the earliest attainable text and what the author actually wrote. Epp assigns four levels of meaning to the term "original text." First, it can denote a "predecessor textform" or "pre-canonical original" that was used in the process of producing the canonical text form, for example, Q for the Synoptic Gospels. Second, "original text" may mean the text of the author on which the canonical text form is based, yet without being identical to it. One has to take redactional or editorial activities into account that added certain features to the text as it left the desk of the author. Third, the canonical text form may be regarded as the original. Finally, an "interpretive text-form," the exemplar of a distinct strand of transmission that was subjected to editorial activity, can be seen as "original" with regard to the group of manuscripts descending from it.

One may be tempted to accuse Epp of ignoring the well-established boundaries between redaction criticism, textual criticism, and different levels of the latter. His "canonical text-form" appears to be what is commonly called the archetype, while the "interpretive text-form" refers to the hyparchtype in philological terms. But this obviously is a strategy on his part to point out that the term "original text" requires a clear definition of its reference. It is time to consider the use of more clearly differentiating terminology.

One may begin with the traditional distinction between the archetype of a tradition and the authorial text that continues in common usage in classical philology to this day. Though in much of New Testament textual criticism as practiced during the twentieth century this distinction has been ignored or overlooked (or occasionally denied), methodologically it is no less important for New Testament textual criticism than it is for classical, as (to name only one example) Günther Zuntz has so fruitfully demonstrated.<sup>15</sup>

Recently a third term has been proposed to describe the text form of New Testament writings that the editors of the ECM aim (and claim) to reconstruct: the "initial text." The term goes back to the German "*Aus-*

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13. David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

14. Eldon Jay Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism," *HTR* 92 (1999): 245–81; repr. in *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays, 1962–2004* (NovTSup 116; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 551–93.

15. Günther Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (Schweich Lectures, 1946; London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1953).

*gangstext*," coined by Gerd Mink to designate the text established in the *Editio Critica Maior*. In his seminal study of "problems of a highly contaminated tradition" he defines "initial text" as follows: "The initial text is a hypothetical, reconstructed text, as it presumably existed, according to the hypothesis, before the beginning of its copying."<sup>16</sup>

Then Mink distinguishes the initial text from the text of the author, on the one hand, and, surprisingly perhaps, from the archetype of the manuscript tradition, on the other hand. It may be useful to explain the latter difference more extensively, because it is methodologically as important as the distinction from the text of the author. An archetype by definition is a manuscript (now lost) from which all extant manuscripts descend. As editors of the New Testament, we would be happy if we could reconstruct this manuscript's text reliably. Yet even if such a text could be recovered, it would not necessarily mean that the authorial text had been recovered. It is important to note at this point that the archetype already is the result of transmission bridging the span between the start of the tradition as attested by extant witnesses, on the one hand, and the authorial exemplar, on the other hand. We do not know what exactly happened to the text in this span of time, which might be called the initial phase of transmission. Some features of our manuscripts, such as the presence of titles for books and the *nomina sacra*, are signs of editorial activity in the initial phase.<sup>17</sup> There is also textual evidence (such as early patristic citations) that is likely to antedate the archetype of the extant manuscript tradition.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that oral tradition had an impact on written forms of the text, as Parker says in his contribution to the present volume. The author himself may have revised his text while copies of the unrevised form circulated already.<sup>19</sup> The initial reading may have been lost completely so that an emendation is necessary (see, e.g., 2 Pet 3:10 in the ECM). In short, an edi-

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16. Gerd Mink, "Problems of a Highly Contaminated Tradition, the New Testament: Stemata of Variants as a Source of a Genealogy for Witnesses," in *Studies in Stemmatology II* (ed. Pieter van Reenen, August den Hollander, and Margot van Mulken; Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), 25.

17. David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); trans. of *Die Endredaktion des Neuen Testaments: Eine Untersuchung zur Entstehung der christlichen Bibel* (NTOA 31; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

18. See, e.g., William L. Petersen, "What Text Can New Testament Textual Criticism Ultimately Reach?" in *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis, and Early Church History: A Discussion of Methods* (ed. Barbara Aland and Joël Delobel; CBET 7; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 136–52.

19. So W. A. Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts* (SNTSMS 71; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

tion of the initial text will incorporate readings that antedate the archetype. For methodological reasons, therefore, it is helpful to distinguish three possible stages: (1) authorial text, (2) "initial" text, and (3) archetypal text.

It is clear that there is no evidence that could prove that the resulting "initial" text ever existed in exactly the reconstructed form. The reconstruction remains hypothetical, although it claims to get closer to the authorial text than the archetype. Indeed, "[t]he simplest working hypothesis must be," according to Mink, "that there are no differences between the original [i.e. authorial] and the initial text."<sup>20</sup>

Mink is quite right to adopt this working hypothesis; the hypothesis, however, cannot be converted to an assumption or conclusion without further investigation. Here is where the classical step of *examinatio* (Maas) comes into play: once the earliest recoverable form of text (i.e., the "initial text") has been identified, it must be examined to determine if its readings also qualify as authorial. This is exactly what Westcott and Hort were doing when they raised the question of how reliable their reconstruction of the text was. At the end of their examination they identified some sixty-five instances of what they termed "primitive corruption"—places where the transmitted text did not preserve, in their estimation, the original text.<sup>21</sup> One must investigate, rather than assume, the nature of the relationship between "initial text" and "original text."

David Parker's position regarding the quest for the original text of the New Testament may be characterized by the following statement from his monograph: "The attempt to discern earlier forms of text, from which those known to us are descended, is an essential task in the critical studies of Christian origins. It does not follow that it is also necessary to recover a single original text."<sup>22</sup> In his conference paper Parker shows how the term "initial text" relieves the editor from the claim to restore *the* original. The initial text in fact is the result of attempting to discern the earliest attainable form(s) of text while the difference from the text of the author is carefully observed.

Holger Strutwolf stresses the aspect of methodological approximation to the authorial text by the very title of his contribution: "Original Text and Textual History." He emphasizes that the efforts to reconstruct the initial text are oriented toward the original as written by the author, although it must not be treated as an extant artifact. Like Parker, Strutwolf

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20. Mink, "Problems," 26.

21. See Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 288–310, esp. 279–82 (for specific readings, see the *Appendix*).

22. Parker, *Living Text*, 208.

has a deep respect for the manuscripts that actually came down to us, but for him the preeminent goal of textual criticism still is a reconstruction of the New Testament text that conforms as closely as possible to the text of the author.

## 2. CAUSES AND FORMS OF VARIATION

David Trobisch argues that, very much like a printed edition of our day, a New Testament manuscript is a product to which several persons contributed. Regarding the text and its arrangement these are, apart from the author, the publisher, the editor, the scribe (or typesetter) and readers (and correctors). What gave the pages of a manuscript their final form is the result of the cooperation of these persons. A most important consequence of this observation refers to the question of what we are actually trying to reconstruct as the initial text. As in his monograph of the same title, Trobisch argues that it is "The First Edition of the New Testament." He points out that this edition has to be carefully distinguished from the text of the author. Yet, on the other hand, it was the author's text that was arranged for the edition, in the case of Paul's epistles probably with the author's interaction. Thus, it is methodologically important to differentiate categorically the edition and the authorial text, but Trobisch's theory is obviously compatible with the aim to approximate the author's text as closely as possible.

In the present paper, however, Trobisch focuses on another aspect. Editorial traits can also be used to identify distinct manuscript traditions such as that represented by codices D, E, and G of the Pauline epistles. In this context Trobisch asks how to deal with the possibility that there may have existed more than one edition of single New Testament books (like Acts, notably) or of collections of New Testament books.

Ulrich Schmid draws attention to important distinctions between the persons who influenced the composition of the text with its variants in the manuscript tradition. First, a scribe must not be confused with an editor who reserved the right to correct the text where it appeared necessary. Second, marginal additions are not necessarily meant to be editorial or scribal corrections. In many cases they may be readers' notes that crept into the text when a later scribe found them in the exemplar he had to copy and assumed that they were corrections to be incorporated into the next copy of the manuscript.

How important these distinctions are is shown by the theories of "orthodox corruption" that usually assign editorial activity to scribes. But their primary task obviously was to produce faithful copies of their exemplars. Their ethos was, according to a nearly proverbial maxim that



is cited also at the end of the Apocalypse (Rev 22:19), neither to add to nor to delete anything from the text being copied.<sup>23</sup>

Schmid demonstrates how readers' notes could intrude into the transmitted text. He refers to three intertextually motivated additions whose attestations show different aggregate states of attestation. The first example is a reading in the margin of  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  from a later hand that was not integrated into the text of any preserved manuscript (Luke 17:14). The second example is the interjection of the spear incident at Matt 27:49 that occurs in the running text of several venerable witnesses such as codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, but not in the mainstream tradition. Finally, there is the reference to Isa 53:12 in Mark 15:27 in the Byzantine tradition against a range of old witnesses.

### 3. CONTAMINATION AND COHERENCE

In his programmatic 1995 essay "Reasoned Eclecticism in New Testament Textual Criticism," Michael Holmes sums up the *status quaestionis* as follows: "It is not the eclectic method itself that is at fault, but our lack of a *coherent* view of the transmission of the text."<sup>24</sup> There could not be a better motto for a dialogue with the developer of the *coherence method*, which set out to remedy precisely this lack. It would be short-circuiting the discussion, however, to assume that Mink's method could provide the solution to the problem stated by Holmes. Holmes has in mind a rewriting of the history of the text, a better description of the transmission and its strands following the model of Zuntz's work on the Pauline epistles. Mink's coherence method takes all available historical information into account to assess the variants, but its own contribution is a structure of the transmission derived from the totality of textual assessments. Consequently, a more coherent view of the history of the text, for example, as a phenomenon of cultural history, is not within the immediate scope of the CBGM. It sequences the textual transmission in terms of ancestry and descent, and thus it results in a chronological order of successive generations of witnesses, but it does not address the question how they align with the history of copying the New Testament writings in the framework of Christian culture.

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23. The maxim is a topos already in classical times; see C. Schäublin, "Μήτε προσθεῖναι μήτ' ἀφελεῖν," *Museum Helveticum* 31 (1974): 144–49.

24. Michael W. Holmes, "Reasoned Eclecticism in New Testament Textual Criticism," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes; SD 46; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 350.

One virtue of Holmes's discussion of "open" or "contaminated" traditions is the clarification of terms describing the phenomenon. His suggestion to avoid pejorative terms such as "contamination" may help to guide us to a more productive way to deal with the problems traditionally labeled in this manner. In fact, it is not a realistic aim to purge the tradition of mixture. If we uphold Paul Maas's ideal of reconstructing the archetype *more geometrico*, we will indeed find confirmed his dictum that there is no cure for contamination.<sup>25</sup> But Giorgio Pasquali, in his lengthy review of Maas's brief treatise, presented abundant evidence for his thesis that no rich transmission of a text from antiquity is ever free from horizontal influence of the strands of transmission upon each other.<sup>26</sup> The real question can only be about how to analyze and assess the tradition in spite of such interdependencies.

Holmes sees the remedy in a reasoned eclecticism based on more precise knowledge (or at least an acknowledged hypothesis) about the textual history. He wants to improve the outcomes of reasoned eclecticism by improving this knowledge. Mink introduces a new methodological tool into textual criticism: the analysis and interpretation of coherence, both pre-genealogical and genealogical. Holmes puts the focus on assessing individual variant passages (what Kurt Aland termed the "local-genealogical method"). But the challenge of such a procedure has always been this: How does one relate the individual choices to the larger whole? Does the choice made at any one point of variation "make sense" or "cohere" with those made elsewhere? Precisely here is where the CBGM makes its contribution: it extrapolates the results of all individual assessments to derive tendencies from these and thereby come to an overall picture, the structure of the transmission in light of which individual assessments can then be reassessed. Mink demonstrates that coherence can be utilized as a new class of evidence that can guide us along the way to a far more discriminating application of the external criteria supplied by the extant manuscripts.

#### 4. THE CANONS OF NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM

More than thirty years ago, Eldon Jay Epp published an essay entitled "The Eclectic Method in New Testament Textual Criticism: Solution or

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25. Paul Maas, *Textual Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), 49; trans. of *Textkritik* (3rd ed.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1957; 1st ed., 1927).

26. Giorgio Pasquali, review of Paul Maas, *Textkritik*, *Gnomon* 5 (1929): 417–35, 498–521.

Symptom?"<sup>27</sup> He arrived at the diagnosis that eclecticism is in fact symptomatic of the basic problem of our discipline: the lack of "objective" criteria (in the Lachmannian or genealogical sense) for determining originality of readings. This circumstance has not changed; given the fundamentally "open" character of the New Testament textual tradition (see Holmes's essay), there is no possibility of proving that the reading that brings the most weight onto the scales of textual criticism really renders the original wording of the author. Can this ever change? The original manuscripts as they left the authors' desks are lost. Even if we had them, we would still not be able to check the extent to which the authors themselves may have introduced variants into the transmission. We have to face the categorical gap between authorial and initial text again. We also need to be aware that textual criticism cannot measure and weigh its evidence like physical objects but has to understand and interpret it: it is an art, not a science, to paraphrase Metzger's well-known dictum.<sup>28</sup> We have to base our conclusions on probabilities rather than on deductive logic (à la Lachmann). Hence, Epp insistently reminds us of the fact that text-critical decisions are part of the hermeneutical process and that "the exegete becomes the final arbiter." This means that it is all the more important to analyze the evidence methodically and to describe text-critical problems as objectively as possible. In this regard the formulation of clear-cut criteria or probabilities as offered in Epp's paper is indispensable.

Keith Elliott is well known as an advocate of 'thoroughgoing eclecticism' as developed by his teacher George D. Kilpatrick. This method dispenses with conclusions about the quality of witnesses for the assessment of readings. According to Kilpatrick and Elliott, knowledge of the author's style is decisive. If a reading fits the stylistic pattern, it does not matter in which manuscript, version, or citation it is preserved. So one may be tempted to ask what relevance a critical apparatus can have for thoroughgoing eclecticism. Yet Elliott was one of the editors of the Luke volumes of the International Greek New Testament Project featuring an extensive critical apparatus, and in his contribution to the present volume he advocates as full an apparatus as possible. Like other editors, thoroughgoing eclectics need a critical apparatus for documentary purposes. It presents the evidence that was sifted and at the same time shows that the reading selected for the text has support in the extant tradition. Elliott seems to share the optimistic view of Hort, Aland, and others that the ini-

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27. Eldon J. Epp, "The Eclectic Method in New Testament Textual Criticism: Solution or Symptom?" *HTR* 69 (1976): 211-57; repr. in *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays, 1962-2004* (NovTSup 116; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 125-73.

28. See Metzger, *Text*, v.

tial reading must be preserved in some source. Moreover, the apparatus is important for finding passages without variants, because without them there is no basis of firm examples that enable the editor to survey the features of the author's style. At any rate, thoroughgoing eclecticism rejects conclusions based on the quality of witnesses. This is the corollary of the supposition that the initial reading can be found in any witness regardless of its relationship with others.

## 5. SUMMARY

To be sure, it is evident that a reconstruction of the initial text of our transmission is not of like importance for all contributors. However, each of them confirms from his particular perspective that a reconstruction of the earliest attainable text is useful and feasible. In sum, the present volume offers an overview of current perspectives on methodology in striving for this goal.