

# The SBL Greek New Testament

## Papers from the 2011 SBL Panel Review Session

*Michael Holmes, David Parker, Harold Attridge, and Klaus Wachtel*

Abstract: The 2011 SBL meeting in San Francisco included a panel review session on *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (ed. Michael W. Holmes; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010). The reviews are presented here along with Holmes' introductory comments and response. The papers retain their nature as oral presentations and are as originally delivered apart from minor corrections.

### 1. Introductory Comments by Michael Holmes

#### **Introduction**

On April 1, 2009, I received an e-mail from Bob Buller, Editorial Director of the SBL Press, asking if I might be interested in editing a new edition of the Greek New Testament. The invitation was so unexpected that the thought crossed my mind that this might be some sort of "April Fool's" joke on Bob's part. Any such suspicion was quickly dispelled, however, by the subsequent e-mail conversation that same day as I learned that the SBL, in keeping with its mission "to foster biblical scholarship," had partnered with Logos Biblical Software to sponsor the creation of a reliable electronic text of the Greek New Testament (GNT) that would be, with respect to both price and licensing restrictions, freely and widely available for scholars and students to download and use, and was seeking an editor to implement their vision.

The initial SBL/Logos vision was to do a modern re-make of the original Nestle text—to compare a number of modern editions of the Greek New Testament and where they disagreed, to adopt the reading of a majority of them as the text of the new edition. I had little interest, however, in a merely mechanical editorial procedure, and after some discussion proposed that a comparison of selected editions be utilized as a starting point for an editorial process that would produce a new, critically-established text that would (a) take into account as much of the available textual data and information as possible, (b) reflect developments and advances in the discipline's understanding of the history of the text, and (c) be freely and widely available in electronic form for scholars and students alike. After some weeks of further discussion, consultation, and negotiation between myself and the 4-person committee representing Logos and the SBL (which was represented by Bob Buller and Kent Richards), we came to agreement with respect to the vision for the project, and I accepted their invitation.

#### **Selecting the Editions**

A major topic of discussion during this time of consultation and negotiation was the matter of which editions to use as a basis for comparison. The selection of four editions to serve as primary resources for establishing the new SBL edition—Westcott & Hort, Tregelles, Robinson-Pierpont, and the Greek text behind the NIV translation—was based on a combination of considerations. The justly famous and widely influential text of Westcott & Hort— one of the

key texts used in the creation of the original Nestle text<sup>1</sup> and as the initial basis of comparison in the creation of the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*<sup>2</sup>—was an obvious choice, and it was available in a reliable electronic format.

As for Tregelles, a contemporary of Westcott & Hort, I've long been impressed by his independent and insightful judgment regarding textual matters, an impression confirmed by David Parker's assessment that Tregelles' textual judgments reveal a "consistency of view and breadth of appreciation" of all the available textual evidence not always as evident in the work of his major nineteenth-century colleagues, who display (to varying degrees) a tendency toward a preoccupation with the latest "big discovery."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as Tyndale House had recently made available a reliable electronic version of Tregelles' text, it commended itself as a good counterpoint to Westcott & Hort.

With respect to the Byzantine tradition, Zuntz long ago convinced me that at points it alone preserves the text in the form in which it first began to be copied and to circulate, and consequently it was necessary that it be represented in the mix. Furthermore, it is the textual tradition of choice for the Orthodox traditions, and so on that basis alone deserved to be included in an edition aimed at a world-wide audience. Among current printed editions, the 2005 Robinson-Pierpont edition is a reliable representative of that textual tradition, and was available in electronic format, making it a reasonable choice in this regard.

The choice of a modern critical edition was more complicated, if only because there are not many of them from which to choose. Furthermore, from the very beginning of the project the publishers were rightly concerned that the new edition have a clear and uncontested copyright—both for the sake of the new edition, and out of respect for existing editions. In light of these justifiable concerns it seemed best not to make any direct use of either the NA<sup>26-7</sup> or the UBS<sup>3-4</sup> editions in the initial stages of creating the SBL edition. Once this decision was made, then the reconstructed Greek text behind the NIV translation commended itself as an alternative. This edition represents, where it differs from the UBS/NA editions, the independent textual choices of the original NIV translation committee (an international group of competent New Testament scholars), yet (because the NIV translation committee used the UBS/NA text as its starting point) it also represents indirectly the NA/UBS textual tradition as well. In effect, using the Greek text behind the NIV allowed the project to maintain a clear copyright, to acknowledge (albeit indirectly) the well-earned excellence and justly-deserved stature of the NA/UBS editions, and to include (where the NIV differs from the NA/UBS text) a contemporary alternative perspective to the textual decisions of the editorial committee responsible for the NA/UBS editions.

Other editions were also considered and evaluated, and while each had its own strengths, each also had its drawbacks.<sup>4</sup> In the end, there was unanimous agreement to use a comparison

<sup>1</sup> Eberhard Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1898); cf. the 16th ed. (1936), 38\*; cf. also Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; trans. E.F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, eds., *The Greek New Testament* (New York: American Bible Society; London: British and Foreign Bible Society; Edinburgh: National Bible Society of Scotland; Amsterdam: Netherlands Bible Society; Stuttgart: Württemberg Bible Society, 1966), v.

<sup>3</sup> David C. Parker, "The Development of the Critical Text of the Epistle of James: From Lachmann to the *Editio Critica Maior*," in *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis: Festschrift J. Delobel* (ed. A. Denaux; BETL 161; Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2002), 329.

<sup>4</sup> Tischendorf, for example, in his eighth and final edition, relied rather too heavily on Sinaiticus. Von Soden, while still valuable as a source of information, built his text on flawed theoretical assumptions; and Vogels, Merk, and Bover are heavily influenced by von Soden. The original Nestle

of the editions of Westcott & Hort, Tregelles, Robinson-Pierpont, and the Greek text behind the NIV as the basis for the SBL edition, and the choice of these four editions to serve as the initial (but certainly not the only) resources for establishing the new text rests on a combination of historical considerations, text-critical theory, publishers' concerns, and pragmatic considerations.

### Paratextual Matters

In addition to deciding which editions to compare, a number of other editorial decisions about textual or "paratextual" aspects were required at the beginning of the project. In general, the SBL edition sought to follow existing standards or usage, rather than attempt to create new ones.<sup>5</sup>

With respect to orthography, for example, recent publications have reminded us first that questions involving orthography are more unsettled than we might have thought, and second, that there is much more work to be done before any new consensus can be reached on this topic.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, it was decided that the SBL edition would follow the orthography of the current standard, the Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich lexicon (BDAG).<sup>7</sup> The rationale is straightforward: BDAG is the standard lexical reference worldwide. For a text intended for similar usage, adopting *en bloc* the orthography<sup>8</sup> of the standard reference is both a logical and a user-friendly move.

As with orthography, so with other matters: with regard to elision, crasis, and the like, the text of Westcott and Hort has been followed; capitalization follows the pattern set by the third

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tradition was compiled on the basis of comparison of the editions of WH, Tischendorf, and (later, after Weymouth) B. Weiss, who like Westcott and Hort, was heavily influenced by Vaticanus; consequently the Nestle text (up through the 25th edition) is rather similar to WH. Like the WH edition, Nestle's work would provide a good starting point, but including both together would add very little to what one gains from either one alone. Similar considerations weighed against other potential candidates (such as the Greek text, edited by R.V.G. Tasker, putatively behind the New English Bible).

<sup>5</sup> At the same time, a degree of pragmatism may be acknowledged: one could invest substantial time on each of these matters without materially improving the final outcome.

<sup>6</sup> Cf., e.g., Timo Flink, *Textual Dilemma: Studies in the Second-Century Text of the New Testament* (Joensuu, Finland: University of Joensuu, 2009), who argues that "sometimes scribes Atticised the original Koine readings to their Attic equivalents, and at other times they modernised the spelling of the older Attic forms to their later Koine equivalents on the basis of the development of the Greek language" (p. 5); Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission* (WUNT 167; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed., revised and edited by Frederick William Danker; based on the 6th ed. of Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Thus ἀγνεία, not ἀγνία (so WH), or, e.g., in the case of words with movable ζ (cf. BDF §21), ἄχρη, μέχρη, and οὕτως are printed throughout, unless BDAG indicates otherwise (ἄχρης, Gal 3:19 and Heb 3:13; μέχρης, Mark 13:30, Gal 4:19, Heb 12:4; οὕτω, Acts 23:11, Phil 3:17, Heb 12:21, Rev 16:18). A rare exception to the guideline is the adoption of νοῦμηνιάς rather than νεομηνιάς in Col. 2:16.

<sup>8</sup> This includes both accents and breathings, though occasionally breathings are as much a matter of interpretation as of lexicography. In agreement with a minority of the membership of the UBS Editorial Committee (see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on The Greek New Testament* [London: United Bible Societies, 1971], 616 [a discussion of Phil 3:21 not found in the second edition]), the SBLGNT occasionally prints a rough breathing on oblique forms of αὐτός.

edition of my *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*,<sup>9</sup> punctuation generally follows that of Westcott and Hort,<sup>10</sup> while paragraphing (which varies widely in both editions and translations) in general follows the pattern of the NRSV.<sup>11</sup>

### The Apparatus

One of the last decisions to be made, and a significant one, was whether to include an apparatus under the text, and if so, of what sort. The initial impulse on the part of SBL and Logos was for a critical text only. The more I worked on and thought about the project, however, the more I felt that the need to include some sort of apparatus, in order to alert the reader of the text to those places where the textual tradition represented by the text was unsettled or uncertain. When translations nearly always include at least a selection of textual notes, it felt odd to contemplate a Greek text without any apparatus.

But what sort of an apparatus, or how extensive? Let me say upfront that never was any thought given to trying to supply any sort of a comprehensive apparatus, such as one finds in the NA editions, for at least two reasons: first, the future format of any even partially comprehensive apparatus is an electronic rather than a print format, and it would be a poor use of resources to more or less duplicate an existing print apparatus at a time when the future of the apparatus genre is an electronic one; second, to attempt such an apparatus would require resources not available to the project. A more realistic possibility would have been to compile a limited apparatus similar to the one provided in the UBS *Reader's Edition* GNT (published in 2010). This apparatus offers, for a total of 280 variation units, the evidence of the papyri, 3 to 8 majuscules, and 1 to 4 minuscules (depending on the part of the New Testament in view). Such an apparatus certainly has its uses, but it also runs the risk of leaving either a misimpression of the manuscript, or the impression that a limited apparatus is sufficient for the task of assessing variant readings.

In the end, it was decided to offer an apparatus not of manuscripts but of editions, specifically the four editions used as the comparison base plus NA<sup>27</sup>. So the apparatus in the SBLGNT records all differences between the text of the SBLGNT and the texts of Westcott & Hort, Tregelles, NIV, Robinson-Pierpont, and NA<sup>27</sup> (except, of course, for those differences that fall into the category of “orthography and related matters” discussed above).<sup>12</sup> That is, the apparatus does not take note of differences that are solely a matter of orthographic variation or that

<sup>9</sup> Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); the edition capitalizes (1) the first word of a paragraph; (2) the first word of direct speech; and (3) proper nouns (a category that offers, to be sure, numerous opportunities for differences of opinion).

<sup>10</sup> Where WH employed two consecutive punctuation marks (such as a comma following or preceding a dash; see 1 Tim 1:5, 2:7), these have been reduced to a single mark. A high point regularly has been added before direct speech if no other punctuation is present. Other regular exceptions include instances where a textual decision or the adoption of an alternative paragraphing required a corresponding change in punctuation. Occasionally other changes have been made as required by context or interpretation (cf., e.g., the omission of a generalizing comma at the end of 1 Thess 2:14).

<sup>11</sup> Conflicts between NRSV paragraphing and WH punctuation were resolved on a contextual basis. For example, at the end of Phil 1:18, WH's punctuation was given preference over the NRSV paragraph break, whereas at Phil 2:14 the NRSV paragraphing was followed rather than the WH punctuation (which was changed accordingly).

<sup>12</sup> Since the publication of the SBLGNT, the editor has been alerted to one instance where a textual difference apparently was misinterpreted as an orthographic difference (and therefore by rule the Westcott & Hort reading was followed, and the difference was not included in the apparatus): Luke 3:32, Ἰωβὴλ WH] Ἰωβήδ Treg NIV NA; Ὠβήδ RP.



involve only elision, crasis, movable *v*, and the like; it does record all other differences between the SBL text and the texts of the five other editions just listed—more than 6,900 in all.

Basically, this apparatus does two things: first, it alerts the reader to the presence of variation in the New Testament text at those points where at least one of a representative group of editions have differed in their reconstruction of it, and second, it informs the reader of the textual choices made by the editors of those editions. Users of this apparatus who wish to know more than this will, of course, have to consult a traditional apparatus offering the evidence of manuscripts, versions, and patristic citations. In this respect, the SBL apparatus stands in a complementary relationship with the NA apparatus; in fact, at points its initial layout was modified to make it easier to correlate the SBL variation units with the NA apparatus.

In sum, the SBL apparatus is not at all meant as a replacement for a traditional apparatus; instead it serves as an intermediary between no apparatus and a traditional fuller apparatus. With no apparatus, the reader either must accept everything or wonder about everything. In contrast, the SBL apparatus, without pretending to offer the evidence necessary to evaluate the textual options, does offer the reader an indication of the relative textual stability of the text being read.

### **The Editorial Process**

The actual process of editing the text began by modifying an electronic copy of the Westcott & Hort text to match the orthographic and other standards of the SBLGNT (described above). Next, this modified version of Westcott & Hort was collated with the other three primary editions (Tregelles, NIV, and Robinson-Pierpont) in order to identify all points of textual agreement and disagreement between them. (This, and all other computer-based support work, was very capably performed by Rick Brannan of Logos Software.) The resulting files were the basis for the primary work of the editor, namely, deciding what to print as the text of the new edition—or to put the matter a bit more precisely, determining which variant(s) most likely represent the form(s) in which the text of each work first began to be copied and to circulate.

At this point, I “warmed up,” as it were, on two of the smaller books, Colossians and 1 Peter, in order to establish suitable and necessary procedures for creating, naming, and saving files, recording decisions, making notes, figuring out efficient and effective ways of handling various issues, etc. Once I had reliable and consistent procedures in place, I then moved on to the gospel of John, Acts, the Pauline letters, the Catholic Letters, and Revelation. I concluded with Luke, Matthew, and Mark, in that order, with this proviso: whenever I worked on a passage in Luke that had parallels in Matthew and/or Mark, I worked on the parallel passages simultaneously; similarly, while working on Matthew, any Marcan parallels not already examined were examined simultaneously. Furthermore, while working through Matthew and Mark individually, the tentative decisions made earlier regarding the text of passages paralleled in other gospels were reviewed in light of each gospel as a whole.

In this third and major stage of the process I systematically worked through the text of each book, examining the entire text, not just the places where there was disagreement among the four editions. Where there was disagreement among the four editions, I determined which variant to print as the text; occasionally, a reading not found in any of the four editions commended itself as the most probable representative of the text in the form in which it first began to be copied and to circulate and therefore was adopted. Similarly, where all four texts were in agreement, but variation existed in the manuscript tradition, it was necessary to determine whether to accept the reading of the four editions or to adopt an alternative reading as the text. In all, there are 56 variation units in the SBLGNT where I preferred a reading not found in any of the four primary editions, though in 31 of these instances, the preferred reading is given as an alternative (or marginal) reading by Westcott & Hort and/or Tregelles; if we include NA<sup>27</sup> in



ter a bit differently, whereas the SBL *apparatus* stands in a complementary relationship to the NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus, the SBL *text* stands as an alternative to other editions of the Greek New Testament. Edited using a methodology similar to that of the NA/UBS Editorial Committee but influenced by a different view of the history of the transmission of the text, the SBLGNT offers in many instances an alternative assessment of the textual data, one that takes into account as much of the available data as possible, reflects developments and advances in the discipline's understanding of the history of the text, as one editor sees them, and (c) in electronic form is freely and widely available.

On that note, permit me to conclude these remarks. To this point, I have tried to describe the process and procedures that produced the SBLGNT. To say more at this time would entail a shift from description to assessment, so I will turn the floor over to my colleagues who have been charged with that task.

## Review by David Parker

When I accepted the invitation to participate in this panel, I did not know that I was going to become an editor of the next generation of the UBS/Nestle-Aland editions. On the principle of declaring an interest, I should tell you that I now am. I am also executive editor of the International Greek New Testament Project and an editor of the *Novum Testamentum Graece Editio Critica Maior*. I tell you this for two reasons: first because as someone lucky enough to be one of the few people in any generation who get to edit the Greek New Testament, I ought to have something to say; and so that you know that I am speaking from a perspective that

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Yet the “distinctive character” is evident from other comparisons. Consider, for example, a comparison of instances of agreement between the SBL GNT + one edition vs. the other four; here WH, RP, and Tregelles all rank ahead of NA:

SBL WH ] Treg RP NIV NA	82
SBL RP ] WH Treg NIV NA	58
SBL Treg ] WH RP NIV NA	25
SBL NA ] WH Treg RP NIV	10
SBL NIV ] WH Treg RP NA	5

Here we get a rather different impression of the patterns of agreement, an impression strengthened if we add alongside the comparable figures for NA:

SBL WH ] Treg RP NIV NA	82	NA WH ] SBL Treg RP NIV	12
SBL RP ] WH Treg NIV NA	58	NA RP ] SBL WH Treg NIV	26
SBL Treg ] WH RP NIV NA	25	NA Treg ] SBL WH RP NIV	0
SBL NA ] WH Treg RP NIV	10	NA SBL ] WH Treg RP NIV	10
SBL NIV ] WH Treg RP NA	5	NA NIV ] SBL WH Treg RP	60

Earlier it was noted that there are 46 instances where the SBLGNT differs from the five editions included in the apparatus. A similar comparison of each of these other editions against the rest offers some context for this number:

NA ] SBL WH Treg RP NIV	14
NIV ] SBL WH Treg RP NA	43
Treg ] SBL WH RP NIV NA	150
WH ] SBL Treg RP NIV NA	353
RP ] SBL WH Treg NIV NA	4848

[NB: The numbers presented above are based upon a comparison of the corrected electronic version of the apparatus, and thus differ slightly from those published in the printed edition of the edition. For a list of the seven corrections affecting the apparatus, see: <http://www.sblgnt.com/about/corrections/>.]

associates me with those editions. In that situation, I am delighted that Mike Holmes has had the opportunity to give us his take on the editorial text. There is probably a temptation to view the SBLGNT as somehow a competitor to the other hand editions, namely the Nestle-Aland and the UBS editions. But from a scholarly point of view the concept of competition between editions is ridiculous. However strongly the testosterone flows, we must resist its siren call. We may wish to remember the words of Symmachus that “*We cannot arrive by one and the same path at so great a secret.*” Or as he might have said, “There are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream.” Ideally students of the Greek New Testament should have access to the differing views of scholars on the oldest recoverable text. They have this all the time of course through discussion of individual readings. But there is also value in getting someone’s overall take on the text, and this is what Mike offers us here.

In this presentation I will focus on three questions:

1. Is this a critical edition, as it claims to be?
2. What is its textual status?
3. What might one consider its purpose to be?

In doing this, I will pay almost no attention at all to what many of you rightly suppose will be the subject of keenest interest to me, namely the textual decisions made by the editor. I would like to say at the outset that I have the highest respect for Michael Holmes as a scholar, and that I would like very much to engage with him in positive debate about the ins and outs of his decisions. But in my view there are some more pressing general issues which have to be addressed.

### **1. Is this a critical edition?**

It is worth noting that the edition itself never claims to be a critical edition. The statement we do have, found only in the preface, is that it is “critically edited,” which is a slightly different claim. The phrase is used three times, which suggests that it is carefully chosen. It is also found on the website and in the press release. The precise wording may be taken to indicate that the only critical activity has been the process of selecting the critical text. But I suggest that it is doubtful whether the difference will be recognised by everyone. The general tone accompanying the edition, if it is fair to draw on something so vague, seems to me to claim a great deal more, namely that this is a critical edition in the same way as the UBS and the Nestle-Aland. Moreover, it is rather hard to compare this edition with any other one unless we take the view that it has to be treated as claiming to be a critical edition, even if it avoids making that claim for itself. Take it the other way round, editors do not usually state of their product “This is more than a critically edited text, it is a critical edition.” So I will treat this one as though it claimed to be a critical edition.

We need first to note what is contained. The volume consists of an introduction, a text and an apparatus detailing the differences between the text and those of a number of printed editions. An appendix lists the differences between the text and that of the *Editio Maior* in the Catholic Letters. Are these the components of a critical edition? The wider question to be addressed is this: What criteria does an edition have to meet to be regarded as critical? At the most demanding level, I believe that we still await a truly critical edition of the New Testament. One might divide the past editions into two classes: those which made an important contribution to improving the critical text, and those which brought together a critical apparatus which set out the important data as it was known at the time. To the former class belong the editions of Lachmann, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort. To the latter belong those of Mill,



Matthaei and Tischendorf. A proper critical edition must combine the two. It must contain a scientifically constructed critical text and a critical apparatus which provides the supporting evidence. This is universally agreed. But I have come to believe that it must also contain a third component, the editors' justification for their decisions at each point of variation. No editor in the past has done this except in general terms (as for example Westcott and Hort did in their introduction). But I have come to believe that every edition should contain an explicit explanation for each editorial decision, i.e. at every point where there is a variant in the apparatus.

According to the criterion of a third component, the SBLGNT edition is not a critical edition. Even if we weaken my demand for a third element, and require simply a general explanation of the canons employed by the editor in choosing between variant readings, this edition does not meet the requirement. The closest that it comes is to give an explanation of the process of altering the Westcott and Hort text which was used as the basis (p. xi). But that tells us nothing about the grounds for the exact decision in each place of variation. We are directed to an external source for the editor's methodological and historical perspective in his chapter.<sup>15</sup> We may learn more from Mike's answers to questions in a posting on the Evangelical Textual Criticism blog. I will say a little more about this in a moment.

If we ignore the third component and require only that a critical edition contain a critical text and a critical apparatus, we find that it falls down on the second requirement. I do believe that the apparatus is helpful, in that it provides an early-twenty-first century extension to two existing tools: Scrivener's 1877 edition of the *Textus Receptus* with the variant readings found in the main critical editions and the under-used third appendix to the Nestle-Aland edition.<sup>16</sup> But this is not a critical apparatus. Indeed, it explicitly calls itself a "textual apparatus." The use of this term is dubious. It refers broadly to our entire system of writing with textual divisions and other conventions.<sup>17</sup> I find that it is sometimes used of a critical apparatus, even for example in the UBS edition.<sup>18</sup> But I wish it wasn't, because that kind of imprecision is misleading. Rick Brennan's online explanation writes that

No one apparatus is perfect for everyone. The NA<sup>27</sup> apparatus gives manuscript-level information to those who require it. The UBS<sup>4</sup> apparatus is geared towards translators. The SBLGNT apparatus complements these functions, pointing out readings of interest for further research, instead of competing with them.

I dispute that claim. In the context of the generation producing the *Editio Critica Maior*, the main value of this apparatus is in locating Mike's decisions within the history of the modern critical edition. I suspect that the author of the preface may be aware of this criticism, since there is a paragraph containing the statement that "by reminding readers of the continuing need to pay attention to the variant readings preserved in the textual tradition, it may also serve to draw attention to a fuller understanding of the goal of New Testament textual criticism" (p. viii). The problem is that the choice of editions to compare is a very inefficient and out-of-date way of achieving this. The Nestle-Aland and the UBS editions draw attention to the primary variations, those found in Greek manuscripts, versions and citations. But some of the most interesting variations are found in manuscripts that were not known to either West-

<sup>15</sup> "Reconstructing the Text of the New Testament," D.E. Aune (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, Chichester: Wiley, 2010, 77-89.

<sup>16</sup> *H Καινή Διαθήκη. Novum Testamentum Textus Stephanici A.D. 1550 ...*, ed. F.H.A. Scrivener, Cambridge and London, 1877. Nestle-Aland, 27th edition, 748-769.

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. <http://vocamus.net/jlh/2008/08/08/textual-apparatus-and-the-web/>.

<sup>18</sup> See also e.g. the reference to Tischendorf's textual apparatus at <http://bibleworks.oldinthenew.org/?p=837>.

cott and Hort or to Tregelles<sup>19</sup> and which fall outside the scope of the Robinson and Pierpont edition of the Byzantine text.<sup>20</sup> The only editions which contain the relevant variants are therefore the NIV (which only differs from the Nestle text in 231 places) and the Nestle-Aland/UBS text itself.<sup>21</sup> This brings me to my second question.

## 2. What is the textual status of the SBLGNT?

With regard to methodology, Mike states in the Blackwell Companion that he follows what is known as reasoned eclecticism. Rather surprisingly, he discounts the possibilities of stemmatological research on that grounds that

The classical method of textual criticism relied heavily on a genealogical approach that attempted to construct a “family tree” of surviving MSS in order to identify a “best manuscript” to follow in reconstructing the text of a document. But in the case of the New Testament this approach doesn’t work, due primarily to the problem of “cross pollination” discussed above.<sup>22</sup>

He also describes the theory of three text types using the traditional terminology. This is a little curious, since he totally ignores the opportunities afforded by the newer methodologies. Since the Nestle text was produced, Münster has shown a way of advancing to a profounder understanding of the textual history of the New Testament. So it is a little curious that this alternative text uses the same methodology as the current Nestle text, when the next generation is going to reflect recent progress.

I cannot escape the impression that there is an elephant in the introduction. It first waves its trunk on page xv, where we read that the textual apparatus “records all differences between the text of the SBLGNT and the texts of WH, Treg, NIV, RP, and NA.” What is striking is that we will only be told what NA stands for on page xvii. But it is strange, is it not, that an edition which sets out to do what this sets out to do takes as its base point two late-nineteenth-century editions, an edition of the majority text and an English translation, while ignoring the most influential text form of the later twentieth century? Is it actually possible to make an edition which ignores the Nestle-Aland/UBS editions? By the way, from now on for ease I shall simply call it the Nestle text. Of course it isn’t, and when on page xi the editor writes that “occasionally a reading not found in any of the four editions commended itself as the most probable representative of the text and therefore was adopted,” we must assume that the Nestle texts and apparatuses were providing at the very least the information about the readings that existed. What would be the point of an edition that failed to engage critically with the Nestle text? One has to say, zero. In fact, the engagement, while often underplayed, is never far from the surface. The preface states that “the SBLGNT differs from the standard text in more than 540 variation units.”<sup>23</sup> Presumably by “the standard text” it must mean the Nestle text. This was a claim used in the introduction to the 26th Nestle and rightly abandoned in the 27th after a good deal of

<sup>19</sup> Mike cites my approval of the Tregelles text in my comparison of the *ECM* text of James with earlier editors. I would not want to extend that to other parts of the NT without further study. It is worth noting that Tregelles produced his edition of the Gospels before Ⲙ (01) became available.

<sup>20</sup> And why if the edition is taking orthodox interests into account should it use the Robinson Pierpont edition rather than the *Apostoliki Diakonia* edition of Antoniadis?

<sup>21</sup> It has been suggested that the references to printed variants are a way for Mike to refer to manuscript variants on which he has made a decision (e.g. by J.K. Elliott in a review). But that seems to me impossible, on the grounds both of the point I have just made and because the list of differences has to be mechanically produced. Moreover, Mike also decided to reject all the editions at a number of places.

<sup>22</sup> p. 84.

<sup>23</sup> The precise number is 547.

comment. These 540 variation units are from the text-critical point of view the most interesting thing about the edition. So I asked myself the question, what does the number “more than 540” mean in text-critical terms? Is it a lot? Is it hardly anything? I tried to answer this question by comparing the SBLGNT text with the Nestle text in the 153 test passages for John 1-10. I found that it agrees with Nestle in 140 out of 153 test passages. That is an agreement of 91.5%. In fact there are 34 differences in all of John 1-10, a difference every 255 words.<sup>24</sup> This average holds true across the whole New Testament.<sup>25</sup> The two texts are not as closely related as Byzantine manuscripts can be. For example, 1599 is a manuscript with 98% agreement with the Majority Text agreeing in all test passages with 16 other manuscripts. But it is a similar agreement to those we find within members of Family 1: for example, 205 agrees with 209 at 96.7% and with 565 at 90.8% and 2193 at 90.2%, giving a similar frequency of difference. Of course we are not dealing with manuscripts, and I am neither discussing the question of dependence of the one on the other nor questioning the view stated quite categorically by Mike that “the publishers were rightly concerned that the new edition have a clear and incontestable copyright—both for the sake of the new edition, and out of respect for existing editions. Thus in light of their concerns it seemed best not to use NA<sup>26-7</sup>/UBS<sup>3-4</sup> in the initial stages of creating the SBL edition.”<sup>26</sup> Following this procedure, starting with Westcott and Hort Mike produced an edition which in fact got closer to the Nestle-Aland/UBS text, since it differs from Westcott and Hort 879 times. This convergence is hardly surprising, given the impact of new manuscript discoveries since 1881. But on the other hand, the *Editio Maior* text of the Catholic Letters has a difference from the Nestle-Aland text every 316 words, so the net effect of Mike’s edition is fairly similar—if the Catholic Letters prove typical then the *Editio Maior* will eventually differ from the Nestle-Aland text 437 times! So what we have is a very similar text to the Nestle-Aland edition.

I turn now to the third question:

### 3. What might one consider the purpose of the SBLGNT to be?

Older scholars will remember the frustration of working on the Greek New Testament before the UBS editions and before the Nestle-Aland. The hand edition most people used—Nestle down to the 25th edition—had a feeble critical apparatus and a frankly confused text which was first based on a mechanical principle and had suffered haphazard emendation in the course of eighty years. There was also George Kilpatrick’s eccentric edition for the BFBS and there were other editions by Merk and Bover that were interesting but inadequate and inconsistent. When I was a student, the UBS edition opened my eyes to the wonderful new worlds of the material on which the critical text was based. It wasn’t just that there were variant readings to be explored, it was the witnesses, including in those days even exotic supposed Diatessaronic sources. Then in 1979 we finally got a systematic text and apparatus in the Nestle-Aland, 26th edition. At last philologists and exegetes were able to get a grip on an apparatus in which for the first time you could see virtually all the readings of the papyri which had had so great an impact on our knowledge, as well as many other witnesses systematically cited. Of course in an ideal world we would have had the *Editio Maior* first and the hand editions after, but the world is not ideal and at any rate the Nestle-Aland and UBS editions have been tools which have helped us to get much further than we could before. How does the SBLGNT fit in? By comparison with the Nestle and UBS editions, it feels like a throw-back to the nineteenth century.

<sup>24</sup> There are 8675 words in John 1-10 in Nestle-Aland.

<sup>25</sup> According to the statistics at <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/NT-Statistics-Greek.htm> there are 138,020 words in the Greek New Testament. Divided by 547 this gives a variant every 252 words.

<sup>26</sup> At <http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2010/11/sbl-gnt-three-questions-and-replies.html> (accessed 31.10.11).

We have the kind of apparatus of readings in a printed edition that Scrivener produced, and we have a text produced according to unknown criteria which seem (from my perspective at least) to pay too much attention to the theory of text types.

Positively, the edition meets the fears of those who believe that it is bad for the single text of the Nestle/UBS editions to have a monopoly. I believe that it is good for the discipline to have more than one text, I always regretted the demise of the old BFBS and Greek-English diglot editions, in spite of their weaknesses, and we need the stimulus of different approaches. I welcome Mike's contribution to discussion of variant readings. I hope that this edition will be studied. But I would hate any student or scholar to use this edition instead of the UBS or Nestle editions. By all means use it as well, but never instead of them. For one thing, when you see that Mike has followed a particular reading, look at the Nestle-Aland or the UBS apparatus and try to work out why he has made a particular decision. In other words, do not treat this as a competition between editions, but a challenge to think critically about all editions.

Do this above all to resist the influences of practical and commercial considerations. It would be naive to ignore them, so I will now comment on them. But we must not be ruled by them.

I suggest that there are two factors which we must not forget. The first concerns the commercial aspects of editions of the Greek New Testament. The sales have to be significant, and the publisher of such a text enjoys a global profile. It is bound to be an interesting proposition to a publisher. It may be in connection with this that one sometimes hears criticism of the role of the DBG and others in protecting the copyright of some elements of the Nestle and UBS stable of editions. But we should not forget that the DBG and its partners have used their success since the first UBS edition back in 1966 to invest significantly in research and scholarship. This re-investment has been critical in improving the quality of our critical editions, particularly the hand editions, over nearly half a century. And how many people are there here whose first Greek Testament was a UBS or Nestle-Aland copy that was given to them when they began studying? In how much worse a situation would scholarship be today without such editions?

The second feature which I note is that publishers everywhere are understandably worried at the threat to their traditional print basis by electronic editions. If I were a publisher, I would reckon that the best way to get around these problems would be by investing some money in a low tech project which gave me an electronic text that was indisputably my own. As a publisher, I would not be too bothered about the philological aspects of the case. But I'm not a publisher, I'm a scholar, so I would be worried if there were a threat to continuing investment in improving editions. I would be pleased to hear the views of the SBL on this, since it is not only a publisher, it is also a scholarly organisation. Here I come to what for me is a twist in the tail.

On page vii, the anonymous preface claims that "many scholars and students, especially those living in under-resourced regions, do not have easy access to an up-to-date, critically edited Greek New Testament in electronic form." The press release claimed "For the first time ever, students, teachers, pastors and laypeople throughout the world can access a reliable, critically edited version of the Greek New Testament for free electronically." Neither of these claims is justified. Go to NTTranscripts and you will find that for years everyone in the world has had access to:

- a critical text
- a critical apparatus
- transcriptions of selected manuscripts

Before long you will also have access to images and metadata in an online environment. The same is true in more detail if you go to the editions of John which we have produced in Birmingham. And all these resources are free. They have been produced, not commercially, but



with a variety of public and charitable funds and you can access them completely for free via your browser. What's more, you can view digital images of thousands of pages of the Bible in many languages in many websites. You can follow more than two million other people and study a virtual Codex Sinaiticus for free.

This, I suggest, is the future of scholarly editing. Print editions will become better, because they will be generated from the same collections of data as the online resources. User options in selecting and modifying texts will grow and become more flexible, so that everyone will be able to make their own version of the text and look at the implications. So the claim that this edition is a new dawn in text editing cannot be left unchallenged. The SBL should be concerned about its responsibility for a blurb which does the discipline the worst disservice since the Elzevir brothers claimed that theirs was a text *ab omnibus receptus*.

At the same time, it is ahead in one respect. I am pleased to see the SBLGNT available on Kindle, albeit it seems with a reduced system of sigla. It's leading the way here, though probably not for long. In ITSEE too we believe that we need to be making our materials available via all the new media that are emerging.

But I don't want to end on a negative note. Let other pens dwell on these matters. I am pleased that Mike has had this opportunity, one which rarely becomes available, and I hope that everyone will take his text seriously and read it alongside their Nestle-Aland or their UBS text. And I hope that all of us involved in developing digital resources and editing the New Testament will learn from one another. The stronger textual scholarship becomes, the more everyone will benefit.

## Review by Harold W. Attridge<sup>27</sup>

I first encountered the new SBL text last year around this time, when I was preparing to offer some remarks at another text-criticism section. I was asked to do so not because I'm a professional text critic or the son of a professional text critic, but as a "customer" of what text-critics produce. That is again the perspective that I bring to the table today.

I must say when I first saw the new SBL edition, I was both impressed and a bit perplexed. The edition was, I thought, a welcome addition to the tools available for the study of the New Testament. It was definitely a plus that the text, in a spiffy new font, was available electronically and downloadable for use by scholars and teachers throughout the world. Whatever else we say about the text today, the provision of this resource to one and all is a significant accomplishment of the SBL and we should be grateful to Michael, to Kent Richards, and to anyone else who worked on the text for their efforts.

But we are here to offer some critical reflections on the product, so let me turn to the perplexity that I felt when I first saw the text, before, that is, I read the careful and clear introduction that Michael has provided, which, in fact, addressed some of my concerns. (I hope that I'm not the only person in the room who does not like to read instructions before digging into a new computer program or a do-it-yourself bit of furniture construction.)

My perplexity focused on the apparatus to the new edition, an apparatus quite different from any with which I was familiar, particularly the Nestle-Aland and UBS editions, which I regularly use for most purposes. As we all know, the apparatuses in those editions point us, in various ways, to the manuscript evidence on which the edition is built. They display the primary data of variant readings from which the text critics have made their choices. The new apparatus struck me as an "apparatus lite," one that could have a problematic result of diverting

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<sup>27</sup> Thanks to all the colleagues who pointed out errors in the orally delivered version of these remarks.



readers of the Greek NT from the primary evidence that they should consider in dealing with textual issues.

The focus of the apparatus on modern editions also struck me as having a problematic relationship with a major emphasis of the text-critical work of recent years. While critics have not abandoned the effort to construct the most original form of the text recoverable from manuscript evidence, they have also discovered how instructive it is to explore the development of biblical texts through time. Tracing the biases of certain text types or examining the ways in which orthodox believers have corrected their sacred texts has opened fresh windows onto the dynamics of ecclesiastical history.<sup>28</sup> To pursue this kind of work requires attention to the detailed data of the manuscripts, details that are to be found, in varying ways to be sure, in more traditional apparatuses.

Of course, Michael Holmes knows the issues and, as his introduction points out, readers of the SBL edition's apparatus who want more detailed information can seek it in the other, regular editions. I hope that they will and won't be tempted to take this edition as the final word in matters of the text of the New Testament.

One might also, I suppose, make the point that focusing our attention on the modern editions is, in its own way, a kind of attention to the history of the text. Indeed, as I browsed through the apparatus, I paused on several occasions to reflect on the different editorial decisions that were in evidence. What was the basis for the decisions made by editors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when those decisions differed from the ones made by Westcott and Hort or Tregelles? Were the differences informed primarily by new evidence, or by a judgment about the appropriate fit of a reading or some other consideration? These are the kinds of constructive questions that the apparatus raises, but obviously cannot answer.

I should make one final comment about the apparatus as a whole. Whatever its strengths and/or weaknesses, it is a good thing that it is there. It would have been quite baffling to anyone interested in text-critical questions, at whatever level of sophistication, had there been no indication of how the editors decided on what to print as the text of this edition.

So much for general considerations. I should like now to react to a few test cases that may raise some more general issues. As you might expect, I'll focus on one of the texts that I have spent much of my spare time on, the Epistle to the Hebrews.

That "epistle" offers fewer variants than many other parts of the New Testament. Many are simple matters of word order. There are, however, some particularly interesting cases.

1. At Heb 2:9, the MS tradition reads that Jesus tasted death χάριτι θεοῦ, "by the grace of God." The apparatus of the SBL text lets us know that Holmes prefers χωρίς θεοῦ. Where does that come from? NA, and in more detail the UBS<sup>4</sup> indicate the attestation of the reading in a small number of minuscule manuscripts and several patristic witnesses. We can debate until cocktail hour whether we are confronted with an orthodox corruption or a conflation of Hebrews, certainly appealing to modern sensibilities, to the cry of dereliction in Mark, which I suspect may be the case. This is one case where the reader of the apparatus certainly should be curious about what lies behind Holmes' judgment.

2. While I'm on the subject of conjectural emendations, let me digress to 1 Cor 4:6, where a relatively nonsensical phrase can be explained as a marginal gloss integrated into the text. My mentor John Strugnell defended the suggestion, originally proposed by J.M.S. Baljon in

<sup>28</sup> For a useful summary of the current trends in text-criticism, see Eldon Epp, "Text Criticism and New Testament Interpretation," *Method and Meaning: Essays on New Testament Interpretation in Honor of Harold W. Attridge* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2011), 79-106, esp., 81-82

a doctoral dissertation of 1884,<sup>29</sup> which, as far as I know, has not won approval in any critical apparatus. His claim was that the phrase  $\mu\eta\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\ \alpha\ \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\rho\alpha\pi\tau\alpha\iota$  was a scribal gloss describing a correction of the following phrase:  $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\ \mu\eta\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma\ \varphi\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omicron\upsilon$ . The gloss says that the word  $\mu\eta$  was written above the letter  $\alpha$  in the conjunction  $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ . Strugnell's defense of an ingenious suggestion has as much merit as  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  in Heb 2:9, which does make it into the SBL apparatus. No doubt many other palmary emendations lurk in the secondary literature and should at some point see the light of day, but how would a reader of this text know of them?

3. Getting back to Hebrews. 3:2 presents another interesting case where Holmes differs from the source editions. The SBL text reads  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\omega\ \omicron\acute{\iota}\kappa\omega\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ , omitting  $\delta\lambda\omega$ , in conformity with the marginal note of WH. I think Holmes is probably right on this, and it should be noted that NA brackets the variant. But part of the rationale for thinking  $\delta\lambda\omega$  is secondary is that we are dealing with a portion of a scriptural verse, cited more fully in v. 4. One can understand how a scribe would want to include the whole verse and also how a stylist such as the author of Hebrews would hint at the verse before citing it more extensively, thus avoiding unnecessary repetition. In order to see this situation, it would be useful to have biblical citations marked in the text, as they are in different ways in NA and the UBS texts. There are, of course, many other reasons for marking scriptural citations and perhaps in subsequent versions of this text some system for doing so might be devised.

4. While we're in this paragraph of Hebrews, we should note one further point at which Holmes differs from his source texts. This is one of those cases where the apparatus would probably drive any intrigued reader to the fuller information available elsewhere. At Heb 3:6 the SBL text reads  $\delta\varsigma\ \omicron\acute{\iota}\kappa\acute{\omicron}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\mu\epsilon\nu\ \acute{\eta}\mu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  against the universal judgment of the source editions:  $\omicron\acute{\upsilon}\ \omicron\acute{\iota}\kappa\acute{\omicron}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\mu\epsilon\nu\ \acute{\eta}\mu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ . The nominative relative pronoun is well attested in early witnesses such as  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ , as, by the way, is the genitive, attested in  $\mathfrak{P}^{13}$ . I suppose the case is to be made that the nominative is the *lectio difficilior*, though the reading produces a very odd Greek clause. This is a variant worth noting, however odd. It is no doubt a good thing that the apparatus calls it to our attention, but should it really be printed as text?

5. Some intriguing textual problems are hidden by the apparatus, and Heb 9:2-3 is an example. From the SBL edition, we would not know that important witnesses ( $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$  A D\* vg<sup>ms</sup>) call the outer portion of the tabernacle  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omicron\nu$  in v. 2 and that some witnesses, including  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$  apparently read  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha$  for the inner portion of the tabernacle, just the opposite of what we would expect. Keeping your eyes on the modern editions eliminates this set of facts. All modern editors, like most scribes who transmitted our texts, know what the appropriate designations of the inner and outer sanctuaries should be, and they shape their printed texts to conform to their understanding. If ever there was a *lectio difficilior*, the readings of  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$  and related manuscripts would qualify. Is it possible that the author of Hebrews gave us such a reading? I have argued that he (or she) might indeed have done so,<sup>30</sup> but from the SBL apparatus, which simply notes the adoption by Tregelles of the arthrous  $\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha\ \tau\omega\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omicron\nu$  in v. 3, one would not know that such an argument was even possible.

<sup>29</sup> The suggestion is noted without attribution in Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911) 82; discussed in Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 86; Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Sacra Pagina 7; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999) 180, who also notes L. Alonso Schökel, *Understanding Biblical Research* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) 66-69.

<sup>30</sup> See H.W. Attridge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 236-38.

6. One last item from Hebrews: One of the little exegetical cruxes of the letter is found in 11:11 and its reference to Abraham, Sarah and the latter's marvelous conception of Isaac. Here the manuscript evidence conflicts with the basic judgment of most modern editors and commentators, including myself twenty-some odd years ago. Most manuscripts read that by faith Sarah received the power to sow seed (πίστει καὶ αὕτη Σάρρα δύναμιν εἰς καταβολὴν σπέρματος ἔλαβεν.) Impossible, we all thought, so an emendation is necessary. WH<sup>marg</sup> [followed by NA?] duly proposed that Sarah be put into the dative, as a kind of "dative of accompaniment," or some such cleverly devised grammatical category (αὐτῇ Σάρρα).<sup>31</sup> The result: it was Abraham who "received the power to sow seed." That was a plausible approach to the verse until colleagues pointed out that some reputable ancient gynecologists thought that both men and women had the power to sow seed.<sup>32</sup> The ancient manuscripts, and perhaps the scribes who transmitted them, may well have had the matter right from the start and here a modern conjectural emendation is unnecessary. I should note for the complete record that one other option is available, the reading of the Greek text behind the NIV and the manuscripts on which it is based. This text apparently solves the problem by making the reference to Sarah a parenthetical comment: αὐτῇ Σάρρα στεῖρα.

The last example illustrates many of the issues that the apparatus of the SBL edition raises. Should conjectural emendations be part of the text-critical record? I think they should, but they should be identified as such. Do the modern editions used to construct this text provide the best foundation for a new critical text? Perhaps, but we ought not accept their authority with a blind eye.

In conclusion, we can applaud the achievement of the SBLGNT and hope that it will serve teachers of the NT in this digital age throughout the globe. We should read the introduction carefully, and have our students do so, to learn what the possibilities and the limits are of the information provided here. We should not throw away our NA or UBS texts, because we'll need them to make sense of and to criticize the decisions that modern editors, including Holmes, have made. As we try to make sense of the ways in which texts grew and were shaped by the history of the communities that read and wrote them, this edition will be of limited use, relevant perhaps to the final stages of that history. As a tool for testing the waters of that last stage and the editorial judgments that were at work, it may, however, be helpful.

## Review by Klaus Wachtel

In the first paragraph of the [SBLGNT website](#), under the heading "Reliable", the new edition is advertised as "a critically edited text that differs from the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies text in more than 540 variation units". Two things are remarkable here. First, an edition that lists differences from its reading text in other modern editions is dubbed "critical". Second, differences from the NA/UBS text are seen as a token of progress: the more differences the more progress. A couple of years ago, Zondervan's "Reader's Greek New Testament" boasted 231 differences from the NA/UBS text. Now the SBLGNT reached more than 540 differences: more than 90 per cent better!

<sup>31</sup> See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 324-26.

<sup>32</sup> See Pieter Willem van der Horst, "Sarah's Seminal Emissions: Hebrews 11:11 in the Light of Ancient Embryology," in David Balch, Everett Ferguson, Wayne A. Meeks, eds., *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 287-302.

Joking aside, it is the edition itself that has to be reviewed in this session, and Mike Holmes can certainly not be blamed for the marketing strategy of Logos. First of all I would like to emphasize that the SBLGNT is a very welcome contribution to the text critical discussion by a representative of our discipline who has brought the methodology known as reasoned eclecticism into classical formulation in his many publications on the subject. This edition provides the votum of an acknowledged expert regarding each variant passage in the Greek New Testament that may deserve discussion, and it would certainly not be wise to ignore his opinion. However, a few critical remarks have to be made.

I am going to deal with two questions:

- 1) Is the new SBLGNT what it claims to be in the preface, namely a critical edition?
- 2) Do the editorial decisions show other signs of progress, apart from the number of differences from NA?

1) The meaning of the attribute in the term “critical edition”, as commonly used with a text transmitted from antiquity, has two aspects. It says that the editor treated the manuscript tradition critically and, secondly, that it enables the reader, by way of the apparatus criticus, to critically review the reconstruction of the text presented by the editor.

As to the first feature, I do not doubt that Mike Holmes has in fact scrutinized the manuscript evidence, i.e. critical apparatus of other editions than the ones mainly cited in the SBLGNT, for the textual decisions he made. Where a critical edition would present variants and manuscripts supporting them we find two editions from the 19th century, the New International Version representing Zondervan’s Reader’s Greek New Testament and the majority text edited by Robinson/Pierpont. The critical editions used most by scholars and students of our field, NA<sup>27</sup> and UBSGNT<sup>4</sup>, are cited as “NA” only where they differ from the New International Version.

Whatever the motives may have been for this kind of presentation, the result is division of labor between the SBLGNT and extant critical editions like NA and UBSGNT.

“Critical edition” is not a registered trademark. An edition documenting readings of other editions in its apparatus may be advertised as “critical” without any consequences. In light of the common use of the term, however, the SBLGNT is not, or is only at 50%, a critical edition because it does not feature an apparatus of variants assigned to the original sources.

This does not mean, of course, that scholars cannot gain from using the new edition. One may think of Westcott and Hort here, who left the documentation entirely to Tischendorf and others. Where would New Testament textual criticism be without them today? However, the reader will need at least one additional book on the desk providing a critical apparatus, preferably NA<sup>27</sup> (or, in the near future, NA<sup>28</sup>).

## 2) The textual decisions

Westcott and Hort published their introduction about a year after the text. In this introduction they carefully formulated their theory of transmission and the principles of their text critical method. Mike Holmes may consider to give a more extensive account of his editorial principles in the future and describe in more detail, how he established the text. This would be highly welcome. For now he points to a brief overview of his methodological and historical perspectives in the introduction. It is entitled “Reconstructing the Text of the New Testament”, a contribution to the Blackwell Companion to the New Testament, published in 2010. In Mike’s factual diction this short treatise gives a precise account of the text-type theory as it has been used in reasoned eclecticism since the late 19th century. Each of the text-types, Alexandrian, Western and Byzantine, is said to be defined by “distinctive variations” (81) and



“an identifiable pattern of variation” (82). The Alexandrian “appears to represent the result of a carefully controlled and supervised process of copying and transmission”, the Western “a tradition of uncontrolled copying, editing and translation”. The Byzantine, finally, is considered, “in view of the secondary character of many of its distinctive readings, [...] the least valuable for recovering the original text” (82). The methodological corollary of these statements is a characteristic reduction of complexity: “for the most part textual critics are usually dealing not so much with a collection of several hundred or more independent MSS, but more often with three textual traditions, whose evidence must be evaluated” (83).

This is not the place to discuss the text-type theory. For the moment it may suffice to say that there cannot be much doubt, in light of the preceding characterizations, which text-type is to be preferred. It is distinctly conservative to present this view as state of the art, because there has been some criticism of the text-type theory for years.

As Logos published the apparatus of the new edition as a text file, among other formats, we were able to import it into a database table. We could then copy all apparatus entries where either the SBLGNT text is like NIV while NA is cited for a variant, or where NIV is cited for a variant while NA is not cited for the text to get the passages where the new edition differs from NA<sup>27</sup>. (A suggestion for the second edition in parentheses: simply cite NA<sup>27</sup> in the apparatus.) We then had a basis for surveying certain features and tendencies in the new edition. Let me briefly refer to a few figures resulting from an evaluation of this list.<sup>33</sup>

One interesting trait is the high proportion of passages where the new edition sides with NA<sup>25</sup>. There are 260 such instances. At all these passages the new edition recommends a return to Nestle’s mechanical compilation of a reading text from three leading editions of the late 19th century: Westcott/Hort, Tischendorf and Weymouth (later Weiss and then von Soden). In 235 of these 260 passages the reading favored by Westcott/Hort is preferred. Spot checks confirm that many of these are passages where Westcott/Hort and Tischendorf, or Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, agree and we have a clear indication of the so-called Alexandrian text.

This shows a tendency to cling to the known and proven. Whether it will lead to lasting acceptance remains to be seen. At any rate it has to be booked on the positive side that the new edition has overcome the old prejudice against the Byzantine tradition which led, not least in NA<sup>26/27</sup>, to a rejection of readings just because they were supported by the Byzantine mainstream. Good examples are Mark 15:20 τα ἰδία, where NA rejects a variant although it does not harmonize with Matt 27:31, or Matt 19:21, where the anarthrous Byzantine reading δος πτωχοις is preferred to the smoother δος τοις πτωχοις in 03, 05 and 038.

In 231 cases where the SBLGNT opts against NA, the relevant reading is enclosed in square brackets in the NA text. The longer reading is favored only in 42 of these readings. On the one hand, this shows a clear preference for the shorter reading. On the other hand, we find a clear decision where the NA/UBSGNT editorial committee expressed uncertainty.

It is well known that there are many bracketed words in NA<sup>26/27</sup> and GNT<sup>3/4</sup> documenting that the editorial committee was in fact confronted with impasses at many instances. One might say this shows a weakness of editorial committees. In my view, however, it is a strength to point to difficulty in establishing the text, and to be able to say “We do not know”, if the pros and cons are evenly distributed.

<sup>33</sup> The list of differences can be viewed in the comparison document (TC-2012-PR-Holmes-Wachtel-comprison.PDF). I inserted “NA<sup>25</sup>” where it agrees with SBLGNT and I supplied square brackets where they are extant in the NA<sup>27</sup>/UBSGNT<sup>4</sup> readings.



SBLGNT

Mt 19:9 λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι ὅς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσας μοιχᾶται.

NA27

Mt 19:9 λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι ὅς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται ὧ.

Apparatus entry for the addition in NA27

<sup>†</sup> ρ) καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν (γαμῆσας B Z M) μοιχᾶται B C\* W Z Θ 078 f 1.13 33 M lat sy<sup>p,h</sup> bo | txt X C<sup>3</sup> D L 1241 pc it sy<sup>s,c</sup> sa bo<sup>ms</sup>

Parallel in the Sermon on the Mount

Mt 5:32 ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι, καὶ ὅς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ, μοιχᾶται.

Text passages copied from [www.ubsnt.com](http://www.ubsnt.com)

Extract from *Novum Testamentum Graecum - Editio Critica Maior: Parallel Pericopes (Special volume regarding the Synoptic Gospels)* ed. H. Strutwolf and K. Wachtel (Stuttgart: German Bible Society 2011)

10 Non moechaberis [56] Mt 5,32; 19,9 – Mk 10,11-12 – Lk 16,18	
<p><b>Mt 5</b>                  ...32 <sup>30</sup>ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι, καὶ ὅς <sup>40</sup>ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ, μοιχᾶται.</p>	<p><b>Mt 19</b>                  ...9 <sup>28</sup>καὶ <sup>30</sup>γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται.</p>
<p>32/30                  a ποιεῖ ... 1335(*f)                  32/32-34                  a αὐτην μοιχευθῆναι 01. 03. 05. 032. 038. 1. 13. 22. 33. 124. 174. 205. 209. 233. 346. 543. 788. 826. 828. 892. 983. 1071. 1230. 1582C. 2372T. 2786                  b αὐτην μοιχασθαι 019. 037. 042. 0211. 0233. 4S. 28. 118S1. 157. 273. 372. 517. 565. 579. 700. 713. 740. 792. 827. 863. 954. 1009. 1093. 1241. 1273. 1279. 1342. 1424. 1446. 1457. 1500. 1661. 1675. 2193. 2411. 2680. 2737. 2766. Byz [1333(Tf1). 1348f2. 2372Z]                  c αὐτον μοιχασθαι 732                  ↔ a/b 1582*                  ↔ b/c 1345                  - 02. 04. 09. 011. 013. 022. 024. 033. 034. 036. 043. 69. 79. 176. 222. 807. 829. 1253. 1331. 1344. 1574. 1582*. 1593. 2542                  32/36-46                  a καὶ ὅς εἰαν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ μοιχᾶται 01C1. 032. 037. 042. 0211. 1. 28. 33. 157. 205. 209. 517. 863. 892. 954. 1273. 1424. 1500. 1582. 1661. 1675. 2193. 2411. 2766. 2786. Byz [017C. 1335ZVf. 1346C. 1348*]                  b καὶ ὅς ἂν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ μοιχᾶται 01*. 017*. 4S. 13. 61C. 118S1. 124. 233. 346. 543. 555. 565. 700. 713. 788. 791. 792. 826. 979(*f). 1071. 1093. 1230. 1340. 1342. 1345. 1506. 1528. 1579. 1780                  c καὶ ὅς εἰαν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ μοιχᾶται 019. 579. 740. 1241. 1348C                  d καὶ ὅς ἂν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ μοιχᾶται 038. 61*. 827. 1009                  e καὶ ὅς ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ μοιχᾶται 174. 273. 1446. 1457. 2680                  f καὶ ὅς εἰαν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ μοιχασθαι 732                  g καὶ ὅς εἰαν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ μοιχᾶται 1346*                  h καὶ εἰαν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ μοιχᾶται 184. 348. 1279. 2726                  i καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσας μοιχᾶται 03. 150. 1110. 1326. 2737                  j καὶ ὅς ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσας μοιχᾶται 372. 828                  k καὶ ὅς ἂν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσας μοιχᾶται 983                  l καὶ ὅς εἰαν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσας μοιχᾶται 1692                  m f ὅς ἂν ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσῃ μοιχᾶται 1335T                  n om. 05                  ↔ a/b 1421                  ↔ b/d/k 0233                  - 02. 04. 09. 011. 013. 022. 024. 033. 034. 036. 043. 0233. 69. 79. 176. 222. 807. 829. 1253. 1331. 1344. 1421. 1574. 1593. 2542</p>	<p>9/28-34                  a καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται 01. 04C3. 05. 07. 09. 011. 017. 019. 031. 042. 18. 22. 35. 61C. 69. 131. 157. 174. 176. 205. 209T. 826. 828. 851. 863. 892. 1012. 1071. 1230. 1241. 1331. 1334*V. 1343. 1344. 1348. 1451. 1661T                  b καὶ ἄλλην γαμῆσῃ μοιχᾶται 79                  c καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται 013. 021. 028. 034. 28. 983. 1273                  d καὶ γαμῆσας ἄλλην μοιχᾶται 740                  e καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσας μοιχᾶται 030. 045. 047. 31. 118. 130. 150. 191. 209Z. 222. 372. 700. 735. 792. 979. 1110. 1328. 1329f1. 1330. 1335f2. 1336. 1339. 1341. 1345. 1347. 1457. 1506. 1661Z. 1780. 2372. 2542. 2546. 2737. 2786                  f καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσας μοιχᾶται 036. 3. 713. 732. 752. 791. 827. 968. 1093. 1296. 1333. 1334C. 1340. 1342. 1346. 1555. 1574. 1593. 1692. 1823                  g καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν μοιχᾶται 037. 038f. 041. 043. 13. 33. 124. 184. 233. 346. 348. 543. 565f. 788. 807. 1338. 1424. 1500. 1602. 1604. 2193. 2411                  h καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν μοιχᾶται 0211. 954. 1009. 1253. 1326. 1446                  i καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται καὶ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν μοιχᾶται 517                  j καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην ἀπο ἀνδρὸς γαμῶν μοιχᾶται 579                  k γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν μοιχᾶται 032                  l ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσας μοιχᾶται 03. 4. 273                  m ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν μοιχᾶται 1. 1582. 2680. 2766T. 2766ZVf                  n ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχασθαι καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῆσας μοιχᾶται 1502                  o ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι καὶ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν μοιχᾶται 022. 0233                  p καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι 61*. 555. 1279                  q καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι 1579                  r καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν μοιχᾶται 04*. 829                  s καὶ γαμῆσῃ ἄλλην ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην γαμῶν μοιχᾶται 16. 1528. 2726                  - 02. 024. 033. 1421. 1675</p>

It is clear that at most passages with brackets the reading with or without the bracketed text is defensible. However, it would be interesting to know what made the editor so sure at 231 variant passages with brackets in the NA text that the shorter reading is more likely to represent the initial text.

It is hard to discuss complex variant passages in a slot of 15 minutes. Yet I would like to give at least one example to show that a full apparatus of a representative selection of manuscripts is needed to adequately perceive complex textual problems. I prepared a handout to give a quick overview.

In Matt 19:9 Jesus says about divorce, “Whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another commits adultery.” The new edition, contrary to the general tendency, adds “and who marries a divorced woman commits adultery”. The reason probably is that the attestation of the shorter reading looks relatively weak in NA<sup>27</sup>, and because Codex Vaticanus, known for its tendency to rather shorten than extend the text, supports the addition together with the Byzantine mainstream. Rhetorically, however, the phrase does not fit very well with Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees’ question in Matt 19:3, whether a man is allowed to divorce his wife. The phrase has its place in a slightly different form in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5:32: καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ, μοιχᾶται.

Both passages are included in the apparatus of *Parallel Pericopes*, a special edition preparatory of the Synoptic Gospels in the *ECM*. You see a copy of the relevant page in the handout. The shorter reading is supported by 46 of the 159 manuscripts included, among them Codices Sinaiticus and Bezae, members of families 1 and 13 and representatives of the Byzantine K<sup>r</sup> recension. NA<sup>27</sup> shows additional support from three old versions. Codex Vaticanus, on the other hand, siding with the majority text here, is a weighty witness for the longer reading, given the tendency towards the shorter reading in this manuscript. However, if we look at the actual wording of the longer phrase, including the preceding clause, (see variant *l* under Matt 19:9/28-34) we observe that 03 does not share it precisely with the Byzantine majority, but has a special formulation shared by only two other manuscripts: 4 and 273. These are closely related to each other, but not to 03 in general. Hence it is likely that the reading arose at least twice independently. If we look at the reading of 03 in Matt 5:32, variant *i* on the lefthand side of the page from *Parallel Pericopes*, the source becomes clear immediately: 03 repeats its peculiar wording of Matt 5:32 in 19:9. The Byzantine tradition, on the other hand, is split into two main forms of the addition, one with γαμησας, matching the form of the added phrase in 03, the other one with γαμων. However, the preceding clause, καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται, is transmitted unanimously, if we disregard the fluctuation between γαμήσῃ (aor. subj.) and γαμήσει (fut.). The addition in Matt 19:9 is a clear case of textual adaptation to a more popular parallel.

In conclusion I want to express my appreciation again for the enormous effort undertaken by Mike Holmes to present an alternative to the NA/GNT reconstruction of the initial text. We have an independent vote of some weight now at each variant passage of any significance. It is obvious, on the other hand, that it is not yet possible to take all relevant evidence into account, because a comprehensive apparatus is still being produced. Before all relevant evidence is at hand, an edition like the SBLGNT can only be a preliminary expression of opinion. It will take a couple more years until the *Editio Critica Maior* will be out and its apparatus will be available in a database format ready for analysis. To be sure, its reconstruction of the initial text will not be established once and forever, but it will deserve being called a scientific hypothesis.

## Response by Michael Holmes

I'm grateful to each of the reviewers for their careful attention to and comments about the SBLGNT. I propose to offer replies regarding six points or aspects of their reviews.

1. Let me begin with Harold Attridge's perceptive and illuminating comments about several of the more difficult or interesting variants in Hebrews, especially as they illustrate the difficulty at times in reaching a decision. His comments remind me of a feeling I often had while working on the project. My office is located very near the international headquarters of the Target Corporation, whose logo is, of course, a red bulls-eye target. Many times, as I came to a decision about a particular variant, I felt as though I were painting a target on my back, knowing that there would be many who would disagree with the decision. But that is the nature of the discipline, and Harry has reminded us of the provisional nature of any edition of the text of the New Testament, and how every edition embodies a hypothesis about the history of the transmission of the text.

2. Next, the discussion as to whether the SBLGNT is a "critical edition": both David Parker and Klaus Wachtel raise the question of whether the SBLGNT meets the requirements of a critical edition. David, in particular, proposes what one might consider almost as the Platonic "ideal form" of a critical edition, one having three key characteristics, and then evaluates the SBLGNT in light of that ideal (which no edition of the Greek NT has ever achieved). As useful as it might be to discuss the issues raised by this Platonic ideal, I prefer to take an Aristotelian approach and deal with the artifact itself, which, as David acknowledges, the Preface carefully characterizes as a "critically edited text" (not a "critical edition"), and nowhere does the Preface or the Introduction claim anything more than that.

3. Third, regarding text-type theory: both Klaus and David contend that in editing the SBLGNT, I ignored recent advances (developed in Münster) in the understanding of the history of the text and relied too much on an outdated text-type theory,<sup>34</sup> and both do so with reference to a 2010 essay on textual criticism that I reference in the Introduction to the SBLGNT.<sup>35</sup> In reply, permit me to make three points:

(A) I grant that my article (written in 2004, but not published until 2010) now feels rather dated, and I could have done a better job at that time of indicating how I viewed some of these matters. In particular, if it had been written after the publication of Parker's *Introduction* in 2008, it would have looked rather different on this point.<sup>36</sup>

(B) In a marathon, the leading runners, looking back over their shoulder at those trailing them, may not always discern clearly differentiations between those behind them—they are

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<sup>34</sup> Parker: "He also describes the theory of three text types using the traditional terminology. This is a little curious, since he totally ignores the opportunities afforded by the newer methodologies. Since the Nestle text was produced, Münster has shown a way of advancing to a profounder understanding of the textual history of the New Testament. So it is a little curious that this alternative text uses the same methodology as the current Nestle text, when the next generation is going to be reflect recent progress"; "By comparison with the Nestle and UBS editions, it feels like a throw-back to the nineteenth century" and seems "from my perspective at least to pay too much attention to the theory of text types." Wachtel: the methodology reflects "the text-type theory as it has been used in reasoned eclecticism since the late 19th century. ... It is distinctly conservative to present this view as state of the art, because there has been some criticism of the text-type theory for years."

<sup>35</sup> Michael W. Holmes, "Reconstructing the Text of the New Testament," in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (ed. David E. Aune; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 77-89.

<sup>36</sup> David C. Parker, *An Introduction to New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

all just “back there.” Analogously, both David and Klaus are deeply involved at the “leading edge” of new research that may reshape the discipline’s understanding of the transmission of the text, and differences between those of us trailing them may not be as evident from their vantage point. This may especially be the case if one associates (as Klaus appears to do in his 2009 SBL presentation<sup>37</sup>) text-type theory with the “recension theory” of text-type origins. But in my programmatic 2002 essay on reasoned eclecticism, I make it quite clear that I reject the idea of recensions as the source of text-types, textual streams, or whatever term one may wish to use.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, it is Zuntz’s image of a wide textual stream, within which flow various main and side currents, that shapes my perceptions of the history of the text. I think we do observe, particularly in the Gospels and Acts, various identifiable currents within the main broad stream, one of which, for example, is formed of those manuscripts which have traditionally been called “Alexandrian.”

(C) Furthermore, it is worth observing that to date the *Editio Critica Maior*, which gives us the fullest view yet of the entire textual tradition, is available for the Catholic Letters only—the part of the New Testament for which it has long been granted that text-types or textual streams or whatever are least in evidence, if present at all. So here the *ECM* volumes have confirmed what those who have thought about the matter generally suspected. For the gospels and Acts, most of us are in the position of waiting to see the evidence that has, apparently, already persuaded our colleagues involved with the *ECM* that the patterns observed in the Catholic Epistles hold true also for the Gospels and Acts. Suspension of judgment pending the availability of evidence is not the same as disagreement. And on this matter, I think the Zuntzian metaphor with which I work results in an approach that is much closer to the views of Klaus and David than it is to any sort of traditional “text-type” views. I should probably write something up on the issue to clarify matters.

From this discussion of larger methodological issues, we may turn to the evaluation of the character of the text itself.

4. Klaus notes that of the 547 instances where the SBLGNT differs from NA<sup>27</sup>/UBS<sup>4</sup>, the SBLGNT agrees with the reading of NA<sup>25</sup> in 260 (47.5%) of those instances, and concludes that in these instances the SBLGNT “recommends a return to Nestle’s mechanical compilation of a reading text from three leading editions of the late 19th century” and represents “a tendency to cling to the known and proven” (Wachtel, p. 18). But the level of agreement with NA<sup>25</sup> is not a useful metric (and certainly not a basis for attributing motive). Consider, for example, the case of the *ECM* of the Catholic Epistles, which differs from NA<sup>27</sup> in 24 instances: of these, the *ECM* agrees with NA<sup>25</sup> 33% of the time, and it agrees with NA<sup>25</sup>, Tregelles, and/or Robinson-Pierpont in 75% of those instances where it differs from NA<sup>27</sup>. Would anyone conclude from this comparison that the *ECM* “recommends a return to Nestle’s mechanical compilation” or to other 19<sup>th</sup> century texts, or that it represents “a tendency to cling to the known and proven”? Of course not; the comparison neither reveals nor implies any such thing, not in the case of the *ECM* and not in the case of the SBLGNT.

A bit later, Klaus notes that there are 231 instances of disagreement between the SBLGNT and NA<sup>27</sup> that involve bracketed readings in NA<sup>27</sup>, and that in 189 (82%) of those instances, SBLGNT prints the shorter reading, leading Klaus to wonder “what made the editor so sure . . . that the shorter reading is more likely to represent the initial text” so frequently. At first glance,

<sup>37</sup> Klaus Wachtel, “The Byzantine Text of the Gospels: Recension or Process?” Paper presented to the New Testament Textual Criticism Section, SBL 2009 Annual Meeting. Available at: [http://www.uni-muenster.de/NTTextforschung/cbgi\\_presentation/ByzEvvPDF.zip](http://www.uni-muenster.de/NTTextforschung/cbgi_presentation/ByzEvvPDF.zip).

<sup>38</sup> Michael W. Holmes, “The Case for Reasoned Eclecticism,” in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (ed. David Alan Black; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 77-100 (here 92-98).



this perhaps does seem a bit one-sided in favor of the shorter readings, and it may be; if so, I suspect that a fair number of instances will be due to the specific approach I followed in dealing with variants involving synoptic parallels.<sup>39</sup>

But there is a larger issue lurking here, one that may be raised by asking why, in the case of these 231 instances of bracketed readings, the NA/UBS editorial committee favored the longer reading 100% of the time? Now of course they almost certainly did no such thing—but given the way the editorial committee used brackets, we have no way of knowing how often the committee, when deadlocked, slightly favored the longer reading and how often it slightly favored the shorter. The way the committee used brackets—at times, it seems, almost as a way to work around a deadlocked committee discussion—creates a bias in favor of inclusion. Even if the committee was leaning 51%-49% towards the shorter reading, the choice to indicate doubt by including the reading in brackets creates a longer text—and even though brackets are around the word, it nonetheless gets read as part of the text. Perhaps we ought to consider using empty brackets—“bracketed space”—as well as bracketed words as a way of indicating a high degree of doubt.

David takes a different approach to the matter of comparisons: using the Test Passages for John 1-10 as a basis of comparison, he notes that NA<sup>27</sup> and SBLGNT agree 91.5% of the time.<sup>40</sup> But this is simply a new form of the old method of noting how often two manuscripts agree in comparison to the *Textus Receptus*. Such a method, which can reveal relative levels of agreement, neglects to give attention to the instances where the two witnesses disagree—and in the case of the SBLGNT and NA<sup>27</sup>, it is the places where the two differ that will be more revealing of the nature of the relationship between the two.<sup>41</sup>

5. With regard to Klaus's discussion of Matt 19:9 and the sample page from the new *Parallel Pericopes* volume: I fully agree with Klaus regarding the need for a “full apparatus of a representative selection of manuscripts,” and concur that in the absence of such a resource, any decision can only be a preliminary expression of opinion. The publication of this new tool is very welcome, but the availability of a full apparatus does not, of itself, decide the matter—it only indicates the evidence that any proposed solution must take into account. Precisely here I would like to suggest that the evidence provided by the handout reveals a situation more complex than his proposed solution indicates.

Notice these points: first, Vaticanus presents, in 5:32 and 19:9, probably the most harmonized pair of divorce sayings of any manuscript I have examined, a circumstance that raises a question as to the weight of its testimony in this case. Second, in the last phrase in 5:32, all but four witnesses read the  $\delta\varsigma \xi\acute{\alpha}\nu$  + subjunctive construction; the four exceptions (including Vaticanus) read the articular participle found in 19:9. Third, in 19:9, in contrast, every manuscript that includes the longer phrase presents the articular participle construction—not a single witness, even among those that display evidence of harmonization to 5:32 earlier in the verse, shows any trace of harmonization to the  $\delta\varsigma \xi\acute{\alpha}\nu$  + subjunctive construction of 5:32. This is a major clue that casual harmonization to 5:32 is not the likely source of the longer form of 19:9. It may be that the longer form of 19:9 originated as a marginal note (I do not think it did, but it is possible), but if so, it must have happened at a very early stage in order to affect so uniformly

<sup>39</sup> The specific approach I follow is described in my introductory remarks above.

<sup>40</sup> Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, Klaus Wachtel and Klaus Witte, eds., *Text und Textwert der Griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments, V, Das Johannesevangelium, 1. Teststellenkollation der Kapitel 1-10* (ANTF 35-36; Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> I suspect that an analysis of the differences may indicate, e.g., that the SBLGNT is more inclined to favor Byzantine readings than is NA<sup>27</sup>, and, when the textual tradition fragments (as in, e.g., Matt 15:30 or 1 Cor 12:9-10), it is less likely to adopt the reading of Codex Sinaiticus than is NA<sup>27</sup>.



such a large portion of the textual tradition. In any case, the full apparatus confirms just how complex are the textual variants involving the divorce texts.<sup>42</sup>

6. To turn to one last matter: David, quoting a claim from the Preface and another from a press release regarding ease of electronic access to the SBLGNT, suggests that, “Neither of these claims is justified,” and offers the “NTTranscripts” website as a counter-example. Not being responsible for the press release, I’ll ignore it; the claim in the preface, however—that “many scholars and students, especially those living in under-resourced regions, do not have easy access to an up-to-date, critically edited Greek New Testament in electronic form”—is another matter. The rejection of this claim is offered by one who enjoys unlimited and continuous access to a high-speed Internet connection—something that his example (the excellent “NTTranscripts” website) requires for “easy access.” Yet it is precisely this matter of continuous Internet access that is the issue in many regions and locations. What the SBLGNT does provide that the “NTTranscripts” website does not is free access to a downloadable, critically-edited text that does not require a continuous Internet connection in order to utilize it. Moreover, “free” in this case means not just “at no cost,” but also, thanks to a generous End User License Agreement, largely free from license restrictions (which is not the case for the new, and quite excellent, sites for NA<sup>27</sup> and UBS<sup>4</sup> hosted by the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft).<sup>43</sup> So I will stand by the claim in the preface regarding ease of access.\*

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<sup>42</sup> See further Michael W. Holmes, “The Text of the Matthean Divorce Passages: A Comment on the Appeal to Harmonization in Textual Decisions,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 651-64.

<sup>43</sup> During the discussion time, a PhD student from the Philippines confirmed that access to a reliable Internet connection is in fact an issue in some regions, and that in such instances the downloadable SBLGNT does offer a level of access to a critical text that is not otherwise available.

\* *Editors’ note (15 November 2012): some minor errors in grammar and orthography have been corrected since this document was first published.*