
Translations of the Bible

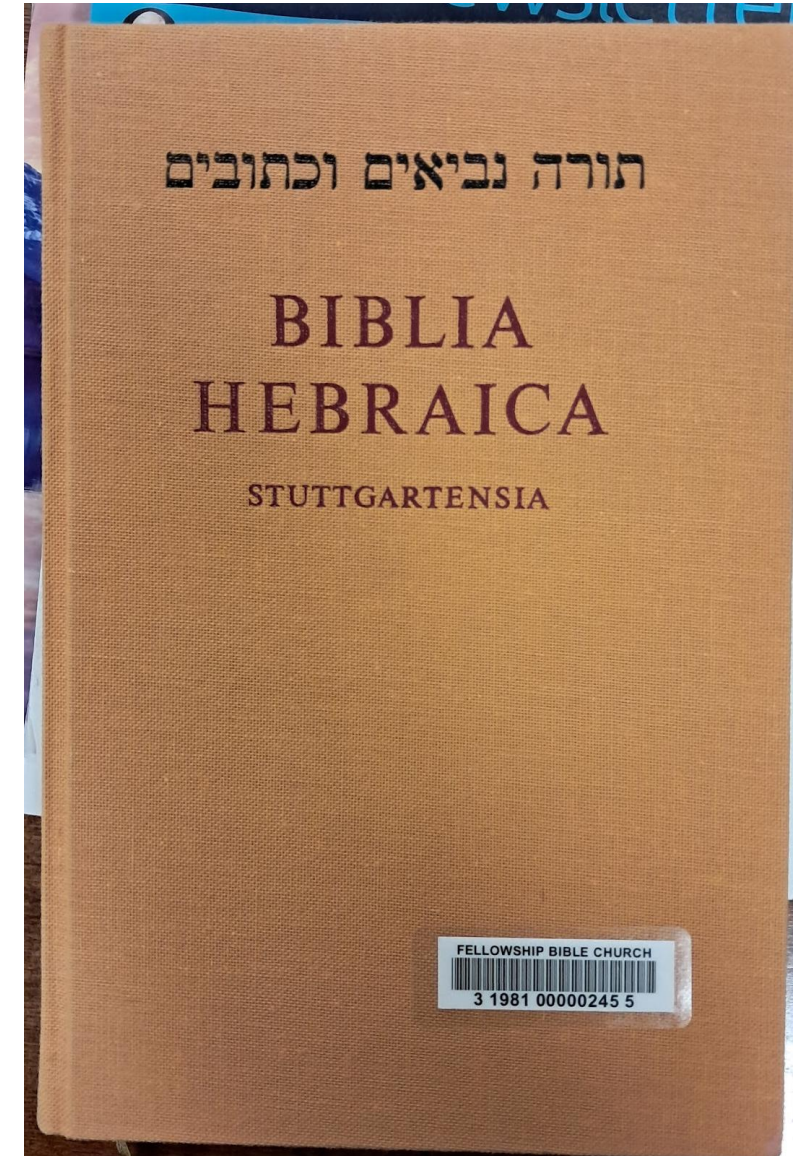


Week 3: Hebrew and Greek

Pastor Matt Postiff, Ph.D., Th.M.

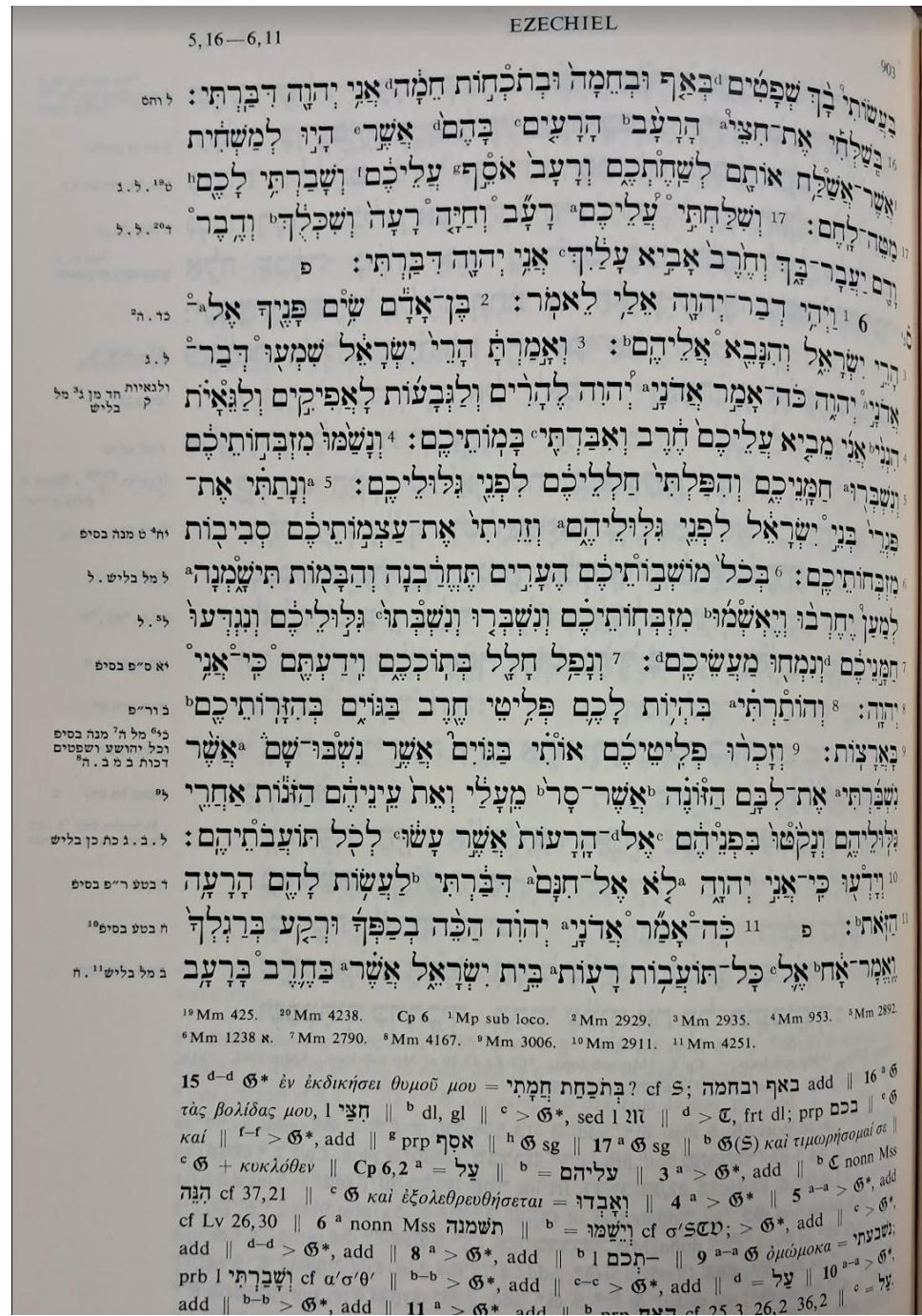
The Modern Printed Hebrew Bible

- Biblical Hebraica Stuttgartensia
- The words across the top read (from right to left): Torah, Nebi'im, and Kethubim (TaNaK).



A Page from the Hebrew Bible

- The text is arranged from right to left in paragraphs. The bottom of the page contains text-critical notes.



Old Testament Text

- Aleppo Codex 925 A.D. earliest known manuscript that contains the full text of the Bible. (Pictured to the right.)
- Leningrad Codex of 1008 A.D.
- Ciiro Codex Prophets 896 A.D., Petersburg Codex Prophets 916 A.D., British Museum Codex Pentateuch 925 A.D.
- Many MSS after 100 – about 3,000. Masoretic Text, very accurate copying.
- Second Great Rabbinic Bible 1524-25 edited by Jacob ben Hayyim ben Adoniyahu, a Masorete, published by Daniel Bomberg. Standard edition of the Masoretic Text for 400 years through the 20th century.
- Problem: the oldest of these manuscripts is 1400 years removed from the end of the OT era, and nearly 2500 years removed from when Moses wrote the Pentateuch.



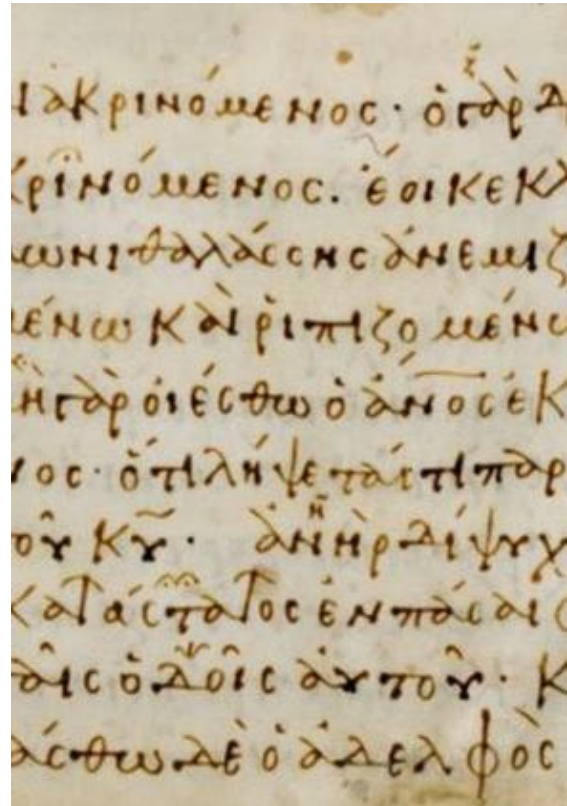
Enter the Dead Sea Scrolls

- Discovered first in 1947 in Qumran caves. Then explored fully from 1949 to 1956.
- The discoveries pushed back manuscript evidence for the OT by over 1000 years, to 250 B.C.
- The most famous is St. Mark's Isaiah scroll, complete and 1,000 years older than any prior Isaiah manuscript.
- Presently housed in Israel's "Shrine of the Book" in Jerusalem.
- Generally, these agree with later Hebrew manuscripts.
- All books except Esther are represented in the Qumran discoveries.

Another Important Player: The Septuagint, aka LXX

- **Greek** translation of the **Hebrew** Old Testament around 250-100 B.C. and supposedly the work of 72 scribes (probably Alexandrian, not Palestinian, Jews).
- Important because:
 - The diaspora Jews knew Greek. They needed translation just like we do today.
 - Helpful to reconstruct the Hebrew text from an ancient witness. They seem to be very close to the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts.
 - It is where Greek-speaking Christians got their OT from.
 - Commonly quoted by apostles and Jesus in the NT.
 - It started the use of theological terms that are picked up in NT.

The New Testament Text



- Uncial writing = capital letters, no spaces, no letters connect. Used for the NT up to the 9th century A.D. (left).
- Minuscule writing = lowercase, like cursive. Started around the 9th century A.D. (right)

The New Testament Text

- Papyri 127
- Uncials 322 ← Sinaiticus, 4th century, A Alexandrinus 5th century, B Vaticanus, 4th century
- Minuscules 2,907 ← after the 12th century, these were on *paper*
- Lectionaries 2,450 ← Scripture readings for church services; not “in order”
- Total 5,806
- Before 325 A.D., persecution. Copyists did what they could, but they were not professionals. Thus, the transmission history is fragmented and difficult to reconstruct.

New Testament Reliability: Much Better than Other Ancient Documents

Author/Book	Date Written	Earliest Copies	Time Gap	No. of Copies
Herodotus, History	480–425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides, History	460–400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	8
Plato	400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	7
Demosthenes	300 B.C.	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,400 yrs.	200
Caesar, Gallic Wars	100–44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs.	10
Livy, History of Rome	59 B.C.– A.D. 17	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs.	19
Tacitus, Annals	A.D. 100	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,000 yrs.	20
Pliny, Natural History	A.D. 61–113	c. A.D. 850	c. 750 yrs.	7
New Testament	A.D. 50–100	c. A.D. 100	c. 25 yrs.	5,806

New Testament: Many Other Languages

- Syriac, Coptic (Egyptian), Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic
- Latin, Gothic
 - Vulgate about 400 A.D. and it was the Bible in the West basically until the Reformation
- Obviously, this constitutes a lot of evidence that the Bible was translated very early in church history
- This encourages translation efforts ever since.

Having Many Manuscripts is a “Good” Problem to Have

- Because there are many MSS, and no two are exactly the same, we have to sift through a lot of data and figure out what represents the original text.
- Here is an important point: the **original manuscripts** have been lost. The **original text** has not been lost. It can be reconstructed from the thousands of ancient manuscripts and translations that are extant.
 - Extant means still in existence, surviving
- To some Christians, this is an inconvenience and can feel like an ‘attack’ on their certainty about God’s word.
- To others, it simply represents work that we need to do to not only continue to preserve the text, but to investigate all the evidence and make sure that we have a handle on what the original text must have been.
- This is not an exact science. Some translations “hide” this information from you. Others present it in footnotes that say something like “The best manuscripts...” or “Some manuscripts...”

How to Read Text Notes in Your Bible

NIV Acts 8:37 <blank>

NKJV Acts 8:37 Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”³

Footnote 3: NU, M omit v. 37. It is found in Western texts, including the Latin tradition.

- What does NU, M mean?

New Testament Manuscript Families

- No manuscripts are identical.
- Categorized based along geographical/traditional lines and by “typical characteristics” of the text.
- **Alexandrian** – early dates; attached to Alexandria Egypt which was an ancient center of scholarship. Shorter or more difficult readings. Evidence shows it goes back to the second century A.D. so it is quite early. Carefully copied. Generally believed by most scholars to be closest to the originals.
- **Western**. North Africa, Italy, southern France. Less careful copying, more expansive, paraphrasing. Similar age as Alexandrian.
- **Caesarean**. In the gospels some scholars see a “family” here, but others doubt it is really a separate family. Mixed or intermediate.

NT Manuscript Families: One More

- The Patriarchate in Alexandria fizzled out and Islam impacted Africa. Rome and the Vulgate took over the west. Only in the east, Constantinople/formerly Byzantium, did they continue to speak Greek.
- Thus, the Byzantine Greek text formed, aka Majority text. It comprises about 80% of all manuscripts today, but not the majority of the oldest ones. It points to a text at least back to 350 A.D., and some argue that it witnesses to even more ancient readings.
- Most scholars of the Biblical text believe it to be a secondary text, derived from the three above text families.
- It is a longer form text, sometimes combining readings of Alexandrian and Western texts.
- Advocates decide between variants by favoring the variants found in the majority of existing Greek manuscripts, which happen to come from the Byzantine tradition.

Erasmus and the Textus Receptus

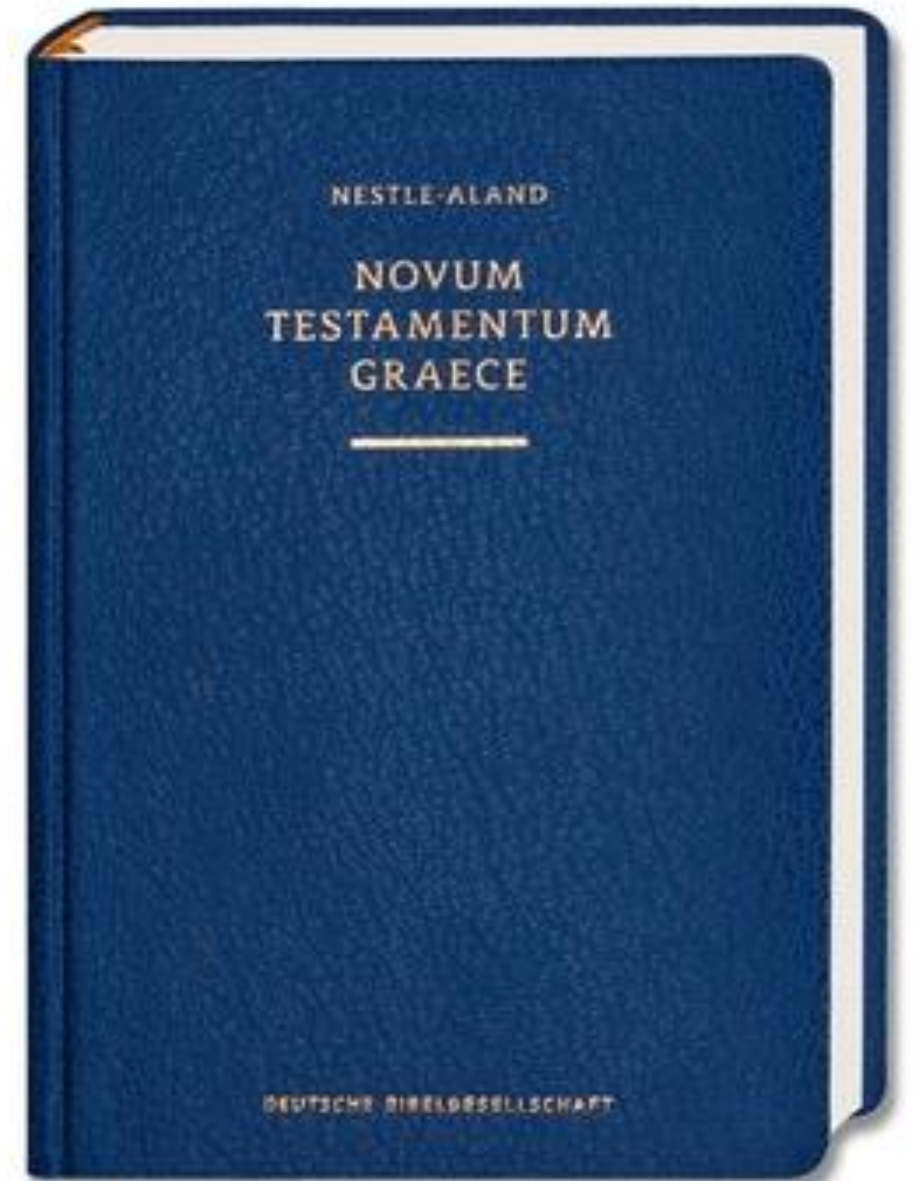
- Erasmus published a Greek NT in 1516. He was a Catholic priest and scholar. He used seven Greek MSS of the Byzantine manuscript family. This limited his work, especially in the book of Revelation with only one manuscript at his disposal. His text became known as the *Textus Receptus*, the “received text.”
- So, the Erasmus *Textus Receptus* is a subset of the Majority Text family, but does not always agree with it.
- So sometimes, the M text and the TR disagree with one another.

How to Decide Between Textual Variants?

- **Text criticism:** the scholarly study and comparison of ancient biblical manuscripts to reconstruct the most likely original wording (the *autograph*) of the Old and New Testaments.
- Older manuscripts or more manuscripts?
 - Critical text advocates favor older versus majority text advocates favor “more.”
- If you believe in the majority text, you will prefer the “M” text in the NT (not Masoretic Text, but Majority Text)
- If you believe that text-criticism is more complicated than manuscript counting (and the requisite preservation required for a higher number of manuscripts), then you will prefer a critical text called the “NU” text which considers the older manuscripts very carefully.
- Critical methodology considers various factors to determine if a text is more likely original.
 - Geographical distribution. Wider distribution points to earlier origin.
 - Older manuscripts. If they are provably older, they may be closer to the original.
 - Readings that most likely gives rise to the other readings are more likely original.
 - Harder readings are more likely original.

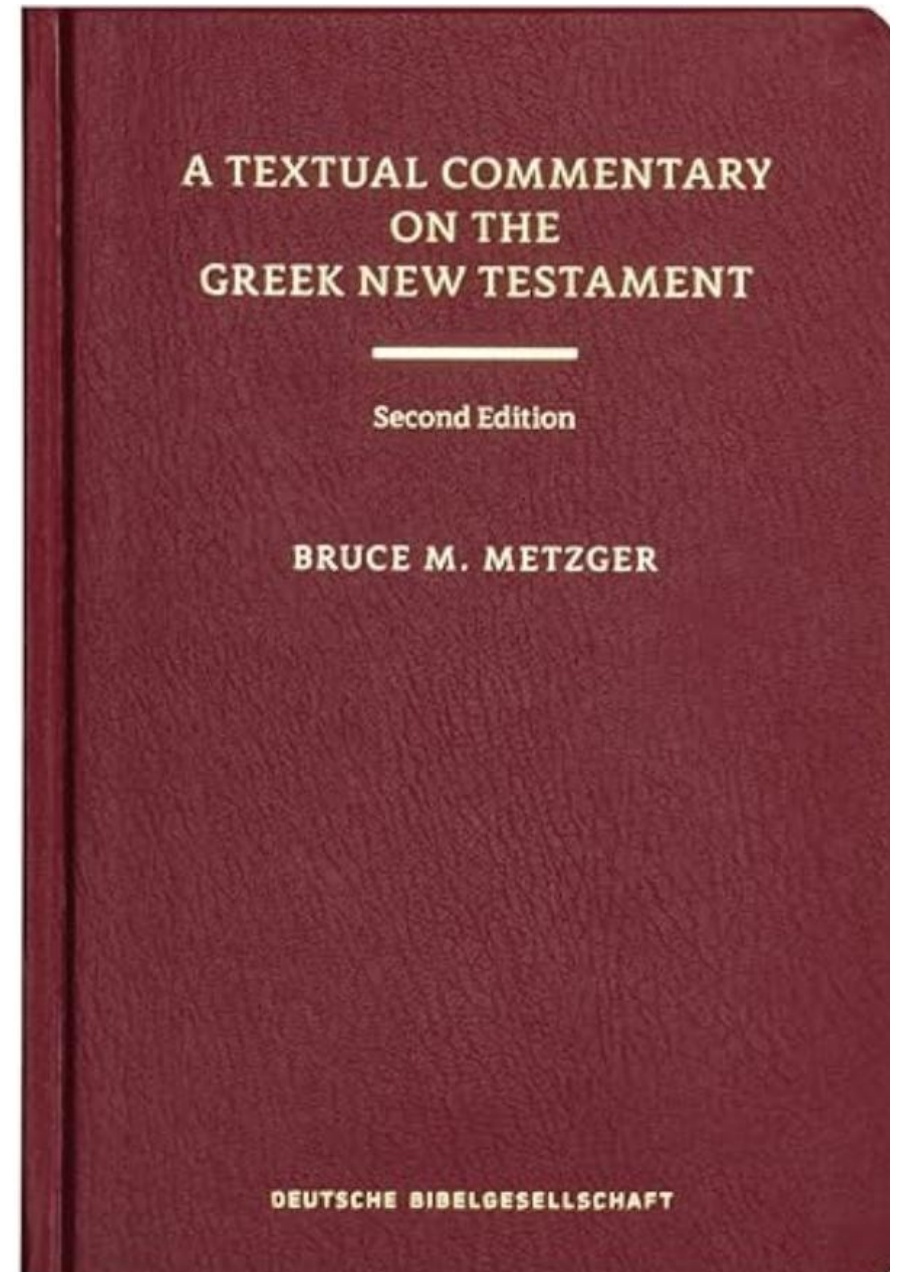
NA28 ← The N

- *Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th ed. 2012, German Bible Society, aka Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.*
- Also known as the Nestle–Aland edition because of its early and influential editors, Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland.
- A “critical text” based on scholars comparing many manuscripts and figuring out what variants are most likely original based on criteria mentioned above.
- Contains a critical apparatus with many footnotes about manuscript differences.
- Publisher: The primary publisher is the German Bible Society. Hendrickson and Tyndale in the U.S. are co-publishers and distributors.



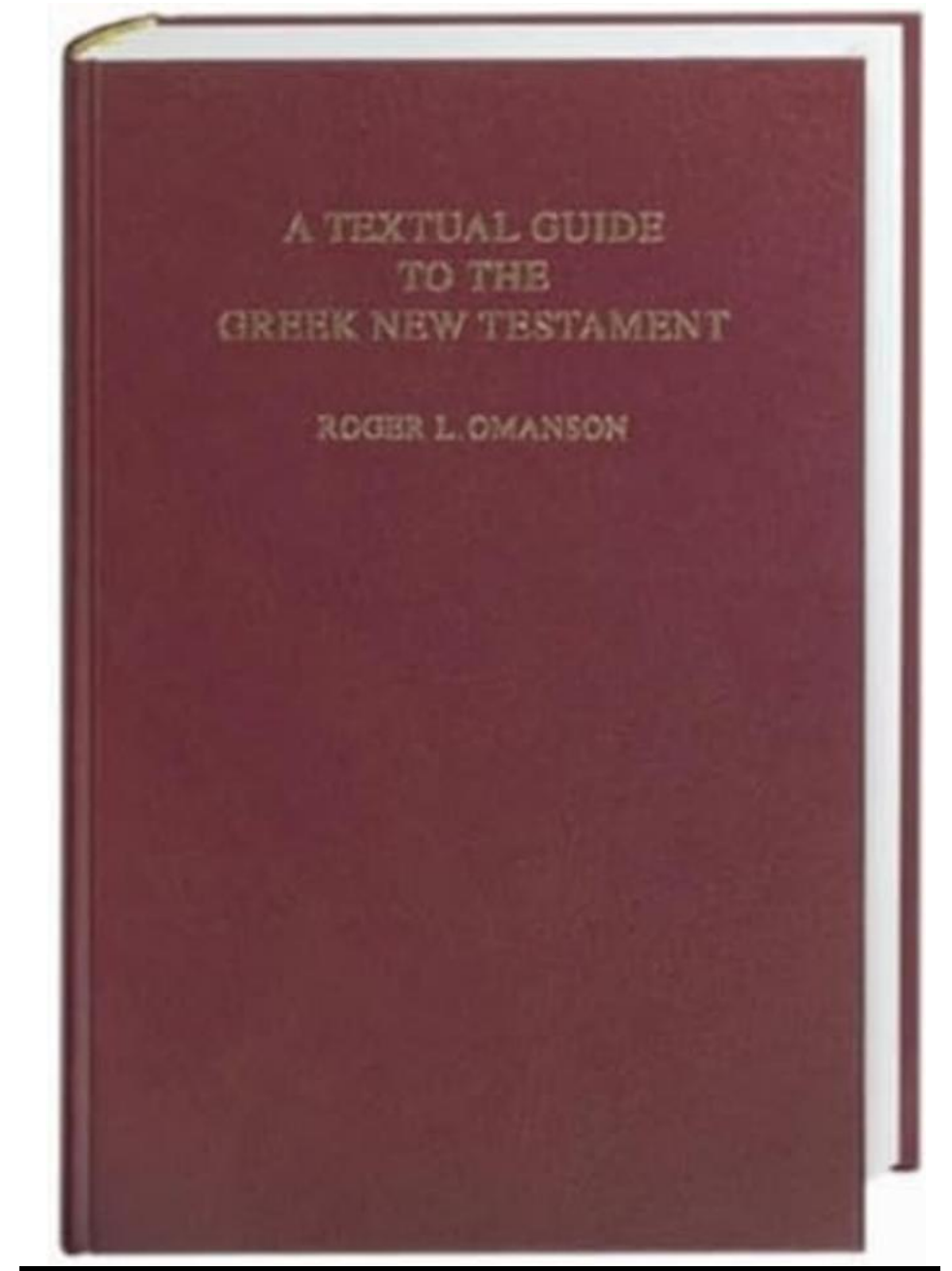
How Decide?

- The *Textual Commentary* by Metzger (1914-2007), published in 2006, documents the decisions made by the committee on key texts in the New Testament.
- It does not document all the tiny differences, of which there are tens of thousands between the thousands of manuscripts. It addresses what he and the committee deemed to be significant differences.



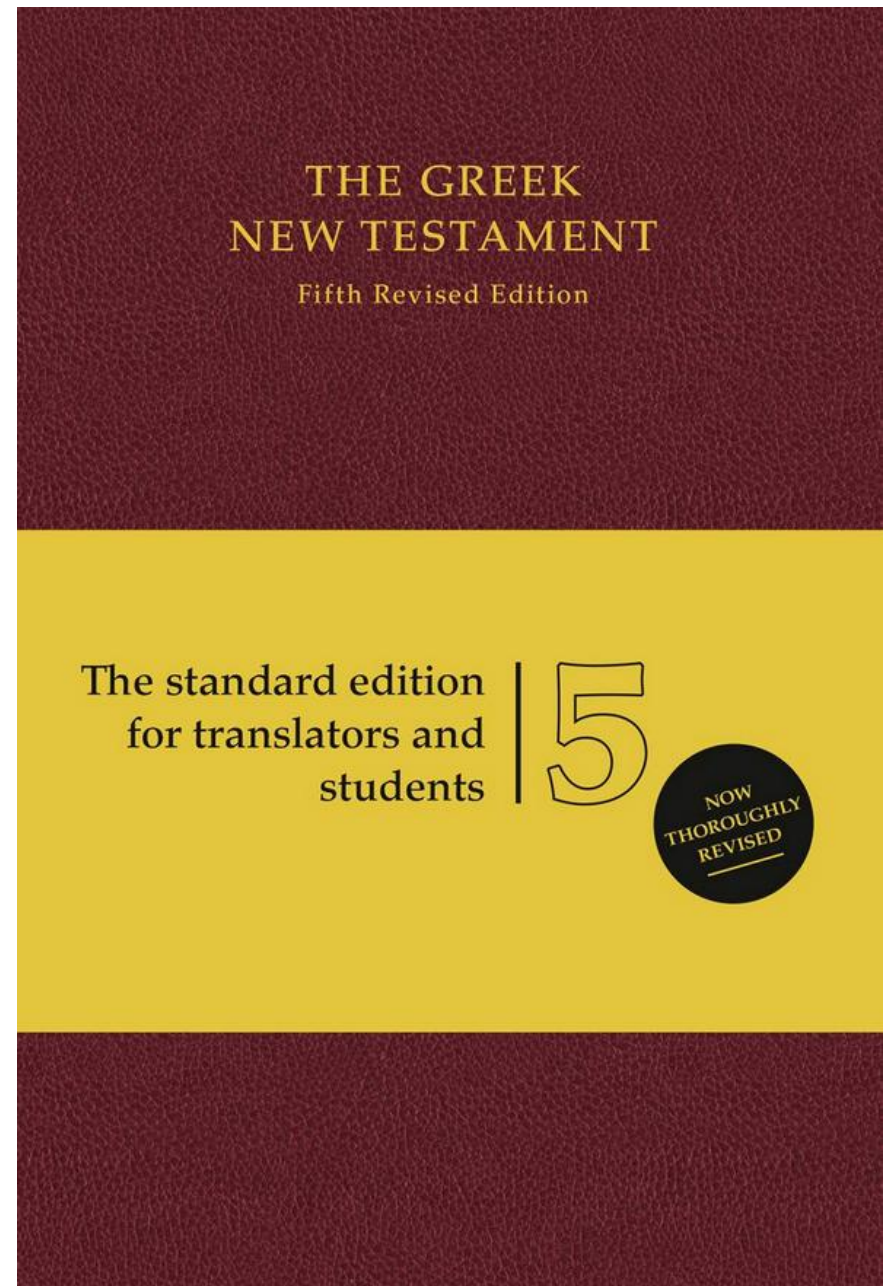
How Decide?

- Roger Omanson edited a similar work, published in 2019, that is called *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*.
- It consists of Metzger's notes, simplified and expanded especially for translators.



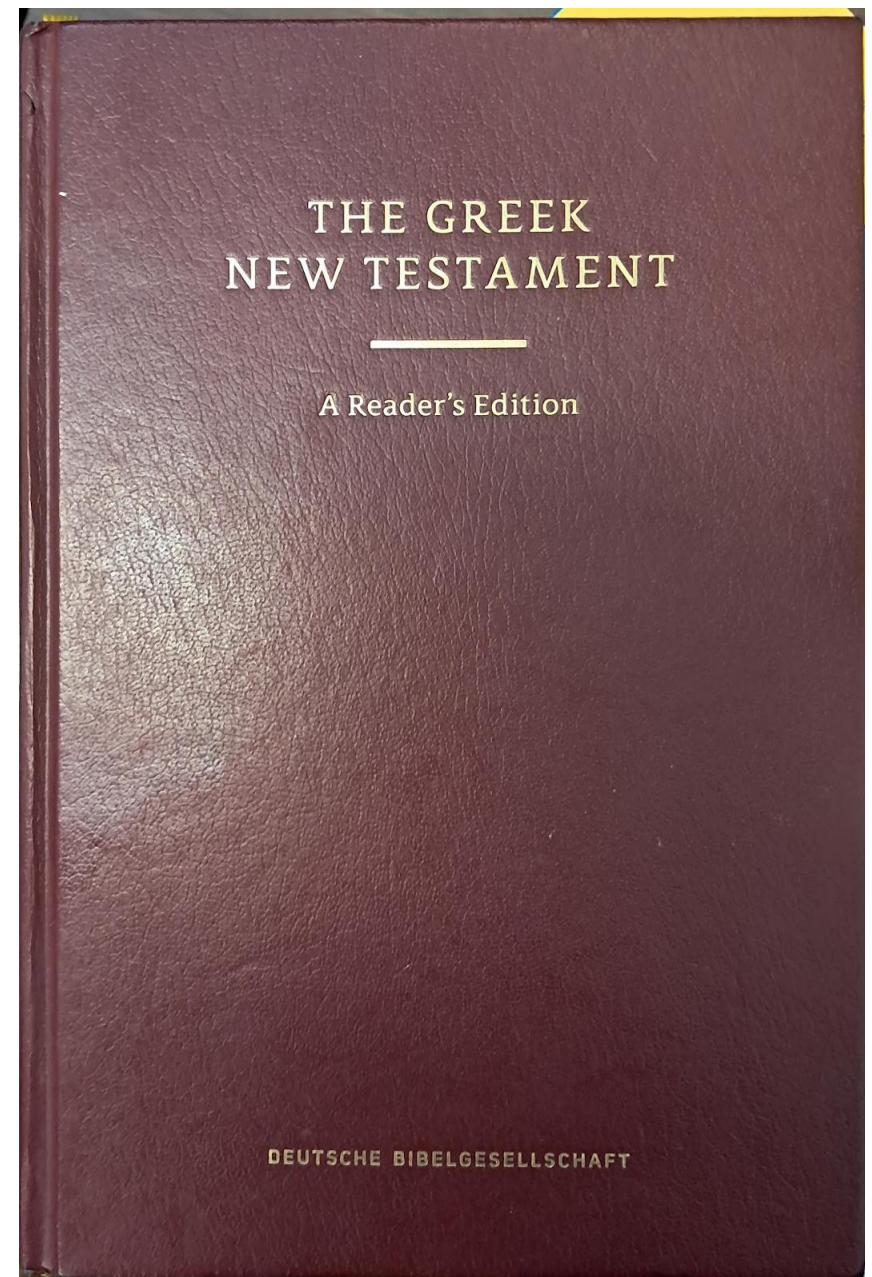
UBS5 ← The U

- *The Greek New Testament Fifth Revised Edition by the German Bible Society (United Bible Societies), 2014.*
- **Text:** It shares the same core Greek text as the Nestle-Aland 28th edition (NA28), with minor differences in punctuation.
- **Purpose:** It is designed for students and translators of the New Testament's original language.
- **Publisher:** The primary publisher is the German Bible Society.
- **Features:** The 5th edition incorporates readings from newly discovered Papyri (Papyri 117-127) and features an updated, highly legible Greek font.
- **Apparatus:** More selective critical apparatus for translators that address differences significant for them.



Reader's Ed.

- The Greek New Testament: A Reader's Edition.



Reader's Ed.

- Paragraphed on top, with a small critical apparatus beneath.
- And at the bottom is an aid to the reader who is unfamiliar with Greek vocabulary. This aid includes words that occur 10 or fewer times in the New Testament.

15.29-40 ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ 366

29 ἀπέχεσθαι¹ εἰδωλοθύτων² καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν^{3*} καὶ πορνείας,⁴ ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες⁵ ἑαυτοὺς εὖ⁶ πράξετε.⁷ Ἐρωσθε.⁸

30 Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἀπολυθέντες κατήλθον⁹ εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν, καὶ συναγαγόν-
τες¹⁰ τὸ πλῆθος ἐπέδωκαν¹¹ τὴν ἐπιστολήν.¹² 31 ἀναγνόντες¹³ δὲ
ἐχάρησαν¹⁴ ἐπὶ τῇ παρακλήσει.¹⁵ 32 Ἰούδας τε καὶ Σιλᾶς καὶ αὐτοὶ
προφήται ὄντες¹⁶ διὰ λόγου πολλοῦ¹⁷ παρεκάλεσαν τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ
ἐπεστήριξαν,¹⁸ 33 ποιήσαντες δὲ χρόνον ἀπελύθησαν¹⁹ μετ' εἰρήνης ἀπὸ
τῶν ἀδελφῶν πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστείλαντας²⁰ αὐτούς.* 35 Παῦλος δὲ καὶ Βαρ-
ναβᾶς διέτριβον²¹ ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι μετὰ καὶ
ἐτέρων πολλῶν τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου.

Paul and Barnabas Separate

36 Μετὰ δὲ τινὰς ἡμέρας εἶπεν πρὸς Βαρναβᾶν Παῦλος, Ἐπιστρέψαν-
τες²² δὴ²³ ἐπισκεψώμεθα²⁴ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς κατὰ πόλιν πᾶσαν ἐν αἷς κατη-
γγείλαμεν²⁵ τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου πῶς ἔχουσιν. 37 Βαρναβᾶς δὲ ἐβούλετο
συμπαράλαβεῖν²⁶ καὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην τὸν καλούμενον Μάρκον· 38 Παῦλος δὲ
ἤξιον²⁷ τὸν ἀποστάντα²⁸ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀπὸ Παμφυλίας καὶ μὴ συνελθόντα²⁹
αὐτοῖς εἰς τὸ ἔργον μὴ συμπαράλαμβάνειν τοῦτον. 39 ἐγένετο δὲ παρο-
ξυσμὸς³⁰ ὥστε ἀποχωρισθῆναι³¹ αὐτοὺς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, τὸν τε Βαρναβᾶν
παραλαβόντα³² τὸν Μάρκον ἐκπλεῦσαι³³ εἰς Κύπρον, 40 Παῦλος δὲ ἐπι-

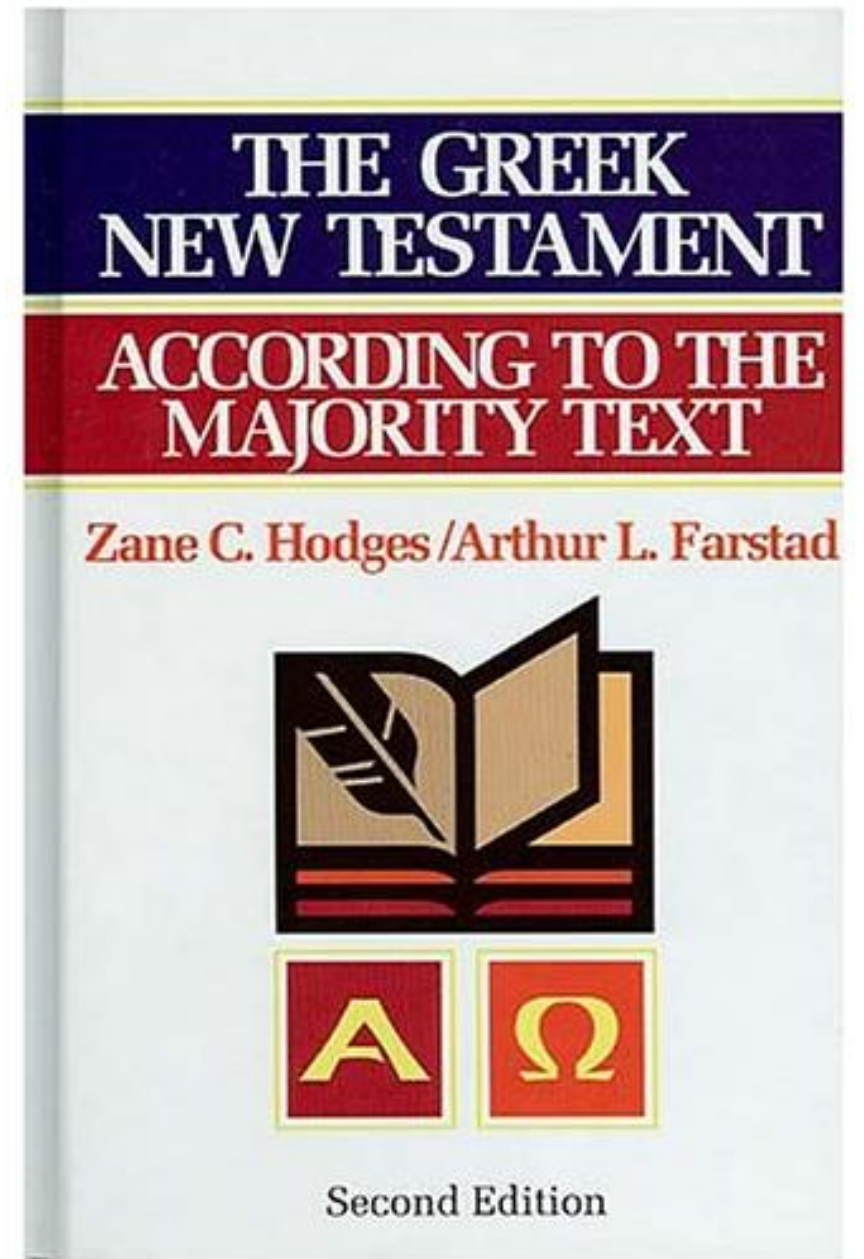
15.29 καὶ πνικτῶν κ' Α' Β C 81 // καὶ πνικτοῦ φ⁷⁴ κ' Α² 33 1739 Byz // omit D
15.33 omit verse 34 φ⁷⁴ κ' Α B 81 Byz // add verse 34: ἔδοξε δὲ τῷ Σιλᾶ ἐπιμεῖναι³⁴ αὐτοῦ
(C αὐτοῦς for αὐτοῦ) 33 1739 // ἔδοξε δὲ τῷ Σιλᾶ ἐπιμεῖναι πρὸς αὐτοῦς, μόνος δὲ
'Ιούδας ἐπορεύθη D¹ (D¹ Σιλᾶ for Σιλᾶ and omit πρὸς)

¹ ἀπέχω pres mid inf, mid abstain from
² εἰδωλόθυτος, -ου n, food offered to idols
³ πνικτός, -ή/όν, strangled
⁴ πορνεία, -ας f, sexual immorality
⁵ διατηρέω pres act ptc mpnom, keep
⁶ εὖ, adv, well
⁷ πράσσω 2p fut act ind, intrans do
⁸ ῥώννυμι 2p pf pas impv, be healthy ("Ἐρωσθε = Our best wishes to you)
⁹ κατέρχομαι 3p aor act ind, go down
¹⁰ συναγω aor act ptc mpnom, gather together
¹¹ ἐπιδίδωμι 3p aor act ind, give
¹² ἐπιστολή, -ῆς f, letter
¹³ ἀναγινώσκω aor act ptc mpnom, read
¹⁴ χαίρω 3p aor pas ind, be glad
¹⁵ παράκλησις, -εως f, encouragement
¹⁶ εἰμί pres act ptc mpnom, be
¹⁷ πολὺς/πολλή/πολύ, much (διὰ λόγου π. with many words)
¹⁸ ἐπιστηρίζω 3p aor act ind, strengthen
¹⁹ ἀπολύω 3p aor pas ind, send off
²⁰ ἀποπέλλω aor act ptc mpacc, send
²¹ διατρίβω 3p impf act ind, stay
²² επιστρέφω aor act ptc mpnom, return
²³ δὴ, emphatic particle, then
²⁴ ἐπισκέπτομαι 1p aor mid sub, visit
²⁵ καταγγέλλω 1p aor act ind, preach
²⁶ συμπαράλαμβάνω aor act inf, take along
²⁷ ἄξιός 3s impf act ind, think (something) best
²⁸ ἀφίστημι aor act ptc msacc, intrans leave
²⁹ συνέρχομαι aor act ptc msacc, go with
³⁰ παροξυσμός, -οῦ m, fierce argument
³¹ ἀποχωρίζω aor pas inf, pas separate
³² παραλαμβάνω aor act ptc msacc, take along
³³ ἐκπλέω aor act inf, sail
³⁴ ἐπιμένω aor act inf, remain

Majority

Text ← The M

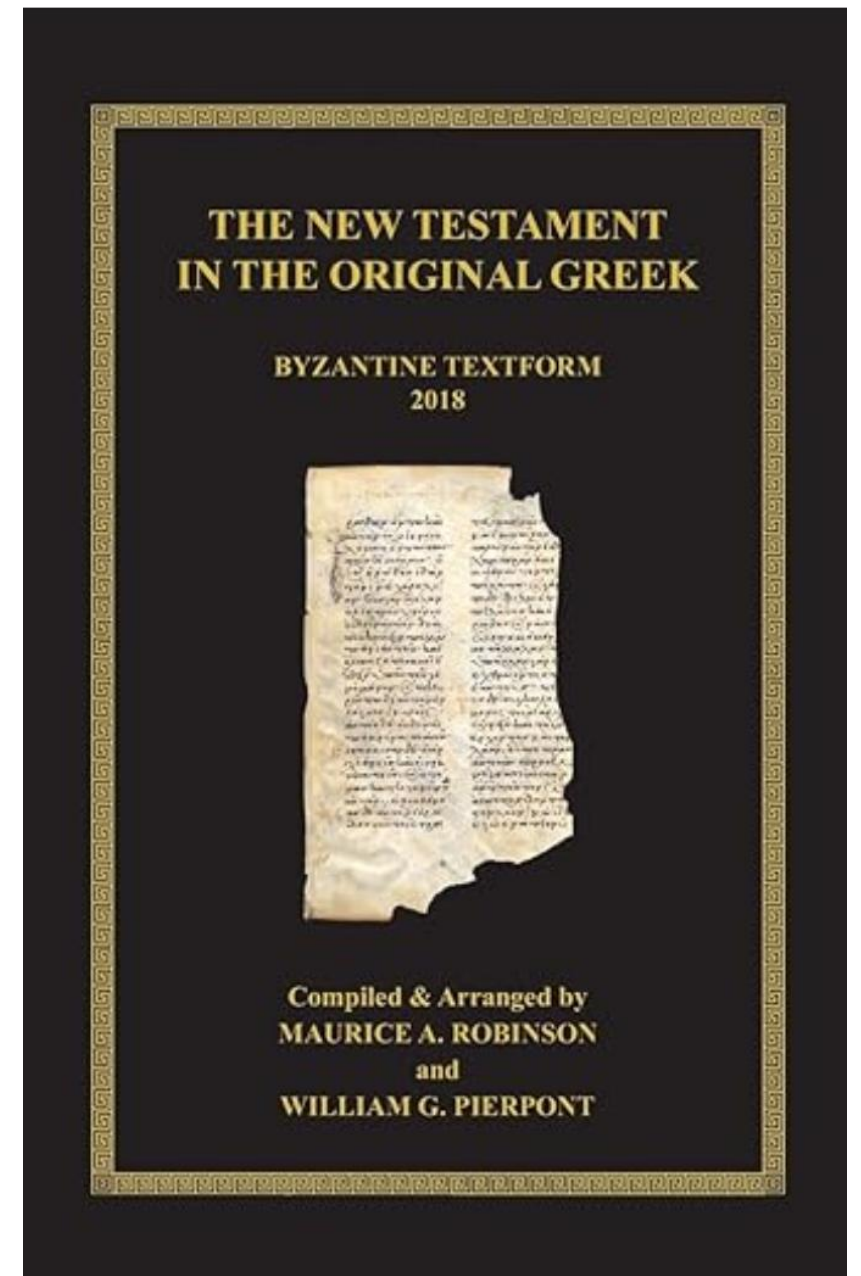
- *The Greek New Testament According to Majority Text*, 2nd ed. Hodges and Farstad, 1985.
- When the NKJV footnotes mention the M text, they are referring to the 1982 edition of this text, also by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, titled *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*. The changes to the text in the second edition are very few, mostly typographical and accent marks.



Majority

Text ← The M

- There are other printings of the majority text, with some differences. One is *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2018* edited by Maurice Robinson and William Pierpont.



Majority

Text ← The M

- Family 35 is a subset of the Byzantine (Majority) Text family of manuscripts.
- A few scholars favor it because of its uniformity and self-consistency.
- Abbreviation **Kr**.

THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT
According to Family 35
Third Edition



Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD

Back to Our Example in Acts 8:37

NIV Acts 8:37 <blank>

NKJV Acts 8:37 Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”³

Footnote 3: NU, M omit v. 37. It is found in Western texts, including the Latin tradition.

- This note says that both the Nestle-Aland / UBS text *and* the Majority text omit verse 37. This means that only a relatively small number of manuscripts, those connected to the *Textus Receptus*, contain the verse.
- In such a case, since both modern major text traditions (critical and majority) agree that the text is not original, it is my judgment that they are correct and the *Textus Receptus*, is incorrect.

Corrupting the Text?

- Question for understanding: Does the absence of Acts 8:37 from the NIV mean that the NIV translators have removed the verse from the Bible or corrupted the text of the Bible?
- This question assumes something: that the KJV / Textus Receptus are the gold standard text, and that we infallibly know that. But we do not.
- Not at all. It means that they followed the Greek critical text which looked more manuscript data and made the determination not that they need to *remove* the verse, but to the contrary that the other Greek manuscripts followed by the Textus Receptus/KJV wrongly *added* the verse!
- Substantial “meaningful and viable” differences are less than 1% of all textual variants.
- The major differences are three: 1 John 5:7-8, John 7:53-8:11, and Mark 16:9-20.

Other Examples

- The longer version of 1 John 5:7-8 is an example where NU and M agree that the shorter version of the text is correct. Because of this, it is best not to use this text as a proof for the Trinity.
- In the next example, the critical text and majority texts disagree. This makes it harder (for me at least) to be *sure* which is correct.
- John 7:8 NKJV I am not **yet** going up to this feast. M and a couple of papyri include **yet**.
- John 7:8 ESV I am not going up to this feast. NU omits *yet*.
- The question is: does the word in **bold** belong or not? The difference comes down to a word spelled *οὐκ* in one manuscript tradition versus one spelled *οὐτω* in the other. It has two different letters (or one different and one additional). The NKJV is the easier text to interpret; the ESV is harder. Which you think is original does not much matter to this point: Jesus did not lie. Either he was not yet going, or he was not at that time going.

Homework Due Week 4

- We are reading the book of James several times this semester. As you read, highlight or take a few notes to share with the class. Maybe something was interesting, or you learned a new way a verse might be understood, or something else worth noting.
- If you normally use a particular translation, do NOT use that one for these exercises.
- Formal equivalent translations: NASB, NKJV, ESV, ASV, KJV, LSB
- Functional equivalent or “mediating” translations: NIV, TNIV, HCSB, NET
- **Paraphrase-type translations: Living Bible, Good News Translation (GNT, TEV/GNB), New Living Translation, Contemporary English Version, The Message, God’s Word, New Century Version**
- See Fee & Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation*, p. 12 for abbreviations and p. 28 for a chart of different translation types.
- Submit a one-paragraph reflection, maybe highlighting one or multiple verses that you noted as standing out or that sounded different from when you have read it before.

Homework Due Week 4

- You have selected the person you will do your final project on and gathered resources about that person.
- **Now, take notes from your resources—unstructured, just collect lots of facts and information. Submit those notes in Canvas.**