

Which text?

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As a dutiful student of theology, I purchased the Greek New Testament Immanuel Seminary (ALC's antecedent) advised, the scholarly Nestle *Novum Testamentum Graece*, the 24th edition (N²⁴) of 1960. This academically curated, critical edition of the reconstructed Greek New Testament text, including its apparatus of variant readings of extant manuscripts, has served me during my parish ministry and beyond. When the 28th edition of this Greek New Testament (NA²⁸) came out in 2012, I updated.¹ I soon realised how often the texts differ.

For Mark 1:1 my old N²⁴ reads, 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it is written...' My new NA²⁸ reads, 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God as it is written...' Does Mark claim Jesus is 'Son of God' here, perhaps a thematic statement as at 15:39 he has the centurion at the cross declare of Jesus, 'Surely this was the Son of God', or not? Which text do I take as part of Mark's Gospel and how do I decide? We need the discipline of textual criticism to help us.

The term 'textual criticism' can have negative overtones, perhaps suggesting cynicism about scripture, or lack of faith, or rationalism. However, it is *the* tool we use because we are open, honest, hiding nothing, people of truth, not avoiding any difficulties. We need to be confident that the text for exegesis is as close as possible to the original text of scripture, and this means we use textual criticism. Textual criticism involves the analysis of manuscript evidence to establish that text, since the original manuscripts of New Testament writings no longer exist. How else can we sort out whether Mark writes 'Son of God' or not in v. 1, and in many other places in scripture where we have to make a choice between what are called 'textual variants' or 'variant readings'? Variant readings in the Greek New Testament, as they have survived on media such as papyri and parchments, number in the hundreds of thousands.

Textual criticism can be difficult. 1. It requires a working knowledge of Greek. 2. It requires an ability to read the 'language' in the footnotes, the critical apparatus of our Greek New Testaments. 3. It requires a knowledge of the manuscripts, the primary sources we are dependent on, namely their dating, their textual character, something of their scribes' habits. 4. It requires knowledge of the rules of textual criticism. These rules are not some recent invention but reach back as far as Griesbach (1745–1812). They have been tried and tested.

We have different texts of Mark 1:1 because scholars who give us our New Testaments differ, not only on how they evaluate manuscripts and apply the rules of textual criticism,

¹ The *Novum Testamentum Graece* was first published in 1898 in Germany and was initially edited by Eberhard Nestle. His son Erwin Nestle was editor of the 10th edition (N¹⁰), published in 1914. His 13th edition of 1927 (N¹³) featured major changes, including the introduction of a separate critical apparatus. After Kurt Aland had become co-editor, the *Novum Testamentum Graece* became known as the 'Nestle-Aland' (hence the replacement of N* by NA* to indicate the edition in scholarship). For an overview of the history of this resource see, e.g. Nestle-Aland :: academic-bible.com.

but also because they come with presuppositions, assumptions and biases. They too are influenced by the issues of the day. This is evident in how they have responded to the role of women in the church in the last one hundred years or so. When we compare our Greek New Testaments over this period and beyond, and when we check the primary sources, the manuscripts, the bias against women becomes clear.

About one third of all Greek New Testament manuscripts, most importantly the earliest, are now online. We can check the evidence ourselves. A check of the manuscripts soon shows how many variant readings our Greek New Testaments have not displayed. The critical apparatus of our New Testaments shows only the tip of the iceberg, what the compilers of our New Testaments regard as significant or important. However, the choices these scholars make about what to include and what to omit reflect their biases, as will be outlined below. We see what we want to see! In the examples to be given, the finer details will be left out, but attention will be drawn to where they can be checked or can be provided.

1. *Junia or Junias?* Is the partner of Andronicus in Romans 16:7 a male, Junias, or a female, Junia? The NIV claims they are 'outstanding among the apostles'. This all depends on the choice of Greek accent. The circumflex accent suggests a man's name Junias, a name otherwise unknown but presumed to be the shortened form of a longer known name such as Junianus. The acute accent means the name is of a woman, Junia, a common name in Romans times.

In 1927 the Nestle 13th edition changed the acute accent, up to that time the only accentuation in Greek New Testaments, to the circumflex accent. Junia became Junias. The United Bible Society edition of 1958 followed suit. From then until 1998, references to Junia gradually disappeared, even from the critical apparatus. She disappeared without trace! Our Greek New Testaments, the UBS (Bible Society) and Nestle (NA), in their 1998 printings restored Junia. Why the change back to the old text? I claim a small part. An article I wrote provoked a response.² With some corrections, the topic was strengthened and added to by classical scholars which convinced those who give us our Greek New Testaments to restore the female Junia. Now Junias has disappeared without trace! Those who, like me until recently, work with Greek New Testaments from the 1960s until 1998 have it clearly in the Greek that Junias the man, not Junia the woman, is Andronicus' companion in Romans 16:7. No surprise if one should believe the bible does not say a woman was an apostle, so they should not be ordained.

A proposal to the 2018 LCA NZ General Synod, accepting Junia, claimed she was 'known to the apostles', not 'outstanding among them', exclusive of the group, not included among them. As support Euripides who wrote five centuries before Paul is cited as authority for that interpretation. He used the Greek 'en' plus the dative in reference to people with an exclusive meaning, so Junia is 'known to the apostles'. However, a reading of Romans 16 in the Greek shows at least ten examples where Paul uses 'en' plus the dative in reference to people, only inclusively. We can disregard Euripides.

2 Ray R. Schulz, 'Romans 16:7: Junia or Junias?' *The Expository Times* 98, no. 4 (1987): 108–110.

2. *Punctuation of 1 Cor 14:33–34.* The NIV begins a new paragraph mid v. 33 and reads, 'As in all the congregations of the saints women should remain silent in the churches.' The old KJV reads in v. 33, '...peace, as in all churches of the saints. 34. Let your women keep silence in the churches.' The joining of v. 33b to v. 34 universalises the silencing of women in the church. This creative punctuation began in our Greek New Testaments in the early 1900s. First a comma broke up the two parts of the sentence. This began in the first Bible Society Greek New Testament of 1904, and in Nestle's 8th edition in 1910. Gradually in the changing editions the comma has been removed and even a new paragraph has been formed at v. 33b. That is still the situation today. Those who argue against women being ordained have their Greek New Testaments to support their case.

The joining of v. 33b to v. 34 not only universalises the silencing of women, by creating a clumsy sentence in Greek with 'in the churches' repeated, it rules out vv. 34–35 being a later addition to Paul, an interpolation, the conclusion of many scholars based on both internal and external evidence. Yet this almost *completely disregards the evidence*. Having checked over 300 manuscripts (last count 331) with this text I have found only one, with another uncertain, having the punctuation current in our major Greek New Testaments. These two have very late dates, of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. All the other manuscripts have the equivalent to our full stop, the Greek colon at the end of our v. 33.

As noted above, scholars, depending on their assumptions, select from the pool of variant readings according to what they think is important or not worth reporting. From checking the manuscripts with this text I note forty-three manuscripts which close off v. 33 with 'as I teach' (*διδάσκω* in Greek; *doceo* in Latin). This matches Paul's style in 1 Cor where he closes off sentences also at 4:17 and 7:17 with 'as I teach'. This reading from quite early manuscripts does not allow the joining of v. 33 to v. 34. A different grammatical form would be needed in v. 34 if it applied to the silencing of women. From the few Latin texts I have checked, 'as I teach' appears to be the standard reading. We have to find for ourselves this quite prominent variant reading which counts against the joining of v. 33 to v. 34.

Further, manuscripts from both the 'Western' and 'Byzantine' text forms,³ few though they are, which place our vv.34–35 after v. 40, do not contain any words from v. 33 which would be necessary if v. 33 were part of v. 34. In these texts the v. 37 'command of the Lord' cannot refer to the silencing of women for they have not yet been mentioned.

Many scholars have been convinced that the silencing of women in vv. 34–35 was not Paul's, and this has been noted in the textual apparatus of most Greek New

3 Although not all of the extant manuscripts have exactly the same textual variants or are completely identical, it is possible to identify groups of related manuscripts based on the similarities of the variants contained within these. Similar variants consistently occurring in a group of manuscripts represent a common textual tradition, or a text-type. The following text forms are typically distinguished within contemporary scholarship: 1) the 'Alexandrian' text-type (or 'Minority Text'), 2) the 'Western' text-type, and 3) the 'Byzantine' text-type (or 'Majority Text').

Testaments by drawing attention to Jan Willem Straatman. The reading is marked with '–*Straatman c*' to indicate the source of the conjectural emendation on this passage.⁴ Straatman made his case in Dutch in 1863 so this is not new.⁵ Other evidence points to vv. 34–35 having a history of its own, indicating they are not Paul's text. I have a list of six manuscripts which are of a later date and carry the later form of the text. Our critical apparatus helpfully identifies these later forms of the text for us with the signs for the later text (Ⲙ or Byz., symbols for 'Majority' or 'Byzantine', names for the later text). However, these six manuscripts in vv. 34–35 only, have a text from 700 to 1100 years older, indicating these verses have a separate history.

I have made a more detailed presentation on Junia and the punctuation of 1 Cor 14:33b–34 elsewhere.⁶

As a supporter of Junia I quote the opinion of another of her supporters, Chrysostom (349–407). In his commentary on Romans⁷ he says of Junia, 'Wonderful! How great the understanding of this woman that she should even be worthy of the title of the apostles' (Βαβαί, πόση τῆς γυναικὸς ταύτης ἡ φιλοσοφία, ὡς καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων ἀξιωθῆναι προσηγορίας).

3. *Phoebe the leader.* Phoebe of Romans 16:1–2 has had to fight for recognition. Paul uses the same word for her in the same form as he did for Christ in Rom 15:8. The KJV translates 15:8 '...Jesus Christ was a *minister* of the circumcision...', but the same word for Phoebe is translated '... is a *servant* of the church...' Note the assumptions of the KJV. Phoebe is further described in these verses as 'leader'/'helper'. Our Greek New Testaments give us a choice between two Greek words for her, *προστάτις* or *παραστάτις* (*prostatis* or *parastatis*). Literally, of these two words the first means 'stand before', therefore 'leader' or similar; the second means 'stand beside', therefore 'helper'. This can appear to be a 50/50 choice. The NIV translates here, '...she has been a great help to many...' That reflects either the choice of *parastatis* or a questionable watered-down version of *prostatis*. The primary sources, the manuscripts, paint a different picture, not two choices of somewhat equal standing, but three possibilities not at all equal. Our New Testament compilers have chosen not to give us the third option, namely *προστάτης* (*prostates*), the masculine form of *prostatis* with the same meaning.

4 According to Ryan Wettlaufer, conjectural emendation is an 'advanced method of textual criticism that has been profitably employed for several centuries. Specifically, it is the act of restoring a given text at points where all extant manuscript evidence appears to be corrupt.' Ryan D. Wettlaufer, *No Longer Written: The Use of Conjectural Emendation in the Restoration of the Text of the New Testament, the Epistle of James As a Case Study*. New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents 44 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 3.

5 Jan Willem Straatman, *Kritische studiën over den 1en Brief van Paulus aan de Korinthiërs* (2 vols., Groningen: Van Giffen, 1863–1865), 1:134–138.

6 Ray R. Schulz, 'Twentieth century corruption of scripture,' *The Expository Times* 119, no. 6 (March 2008): 270–274.

7 *Patrologiae Graeca* 60, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1862), col. 670.

In my earlier *LTJ* article⁸ I drew attention to how assumptions about women's roles have also determined the choice of meanings in our major New Testament lexicon.⁹ Here I update to show the unbalanced choices our compilers have made for the New Testament text. From the more than 300 manuscripts referred to, 77 read *prostates*, 3 *parastatis*, each of the latter's meaning questionable as outlined, and the rest *prostatis*. Seeing they did not see, for their assumptions found no place for the quite frequent reading *prostates*. They have blown out of proportion the significance of the very dubious *parastatis*. So which text do we choose here? On the basis of our primary sources the choice is between *prostatis* and *prostates*, each with the basic meaning of 'leader'.

The evidence shows that 'which text' really matters. As we have seen, the editors of our major Greek New Testaments in the last century selected or overlooked evidence from the primary sources, and adjusted their texts to downplay the role women played in the churches of the New Testament.

- 8 Ray R. Schulz, 'Phoebe, προστάτης, as leader,' *Lutheran Theological Journal* 53, no.1 (May 2019): 16–21.
- 9 W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, a Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957). See further Ray R. Schulz, 'Phoebe, προστάτης, as leader,' 18 nn. 5, 7.

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