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978-1-108-06605-1 - An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament:
With Remarks on its Revision upon Critical Principles

Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

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A N A C C O U N T
OF THE
PRINTED TEXT OF THE GREEK NEW
TESTAMENT,
AND OF ITS REVISION BY CRITICAL EDITORS.

§ 1.—THE COMPLUTENSIAN EDITION.

THE first *printed* edition of the Greek New Testament was that which formed a part of the Complutensian Polyglot; the volume in which the New Testament in Greek and Latin is contained was completed Jan. 10, 1514.

It may seem a cause for surprise, that while the sacred Hebrew originals of the Old Testament had been multiplied much earlier by means of the press, the case was so different with regard to the Scriptures of the New Testament in the original tongue. For this difference many reasons may be assigned. The Jews applied the invention of printing at a comparatively early period to the multiplication of the Old Testament in Hebrew: they were a numerous and prosperous body in many parts of Europe, and thus they were able to command both the skill and the pecuniary means needed to that end; besides this, there was a demand amongst them for Hebrew books.

The case with regard to the Greeks was wholly different. The capture of Constantinople by the Turkish Sultan (1453), and the bondage or exile of the Greek population, was an event which was almost synchronous with the invention of printing; and thus, although the dispersion of the Greeks led to the knowledge of their language and literature being acquired by many in Western Europe, yet it effectually hindered efforts on their own part to

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[More information](#)

print, and thus to multiply, copies of their Scriptures. Indeed, so many Greeks earned in their exile a scanty living by copying books in their own tongue, that they had a positive interest in not using the newly-invented art of printing.

Besides, the early attempts at printing Greek were so awkward and unpleasant to the eye, that few books were multiplied through the press in that tongue until greater skill had been manifested in the formation of the type. And so habituated were Greek scholars in that day to read Greek abounding with contractions, many of which were deemed by copyists to be feats of calligraphy, that the endeavours to print Greek with separate types were despised and undervalued.

In Western Europe, the Latin Vulgate was the form in which Holy Scripture was known and received : so that even on the part of theologians there was no desire for the original text ; indeed, the feeling was rather that every departure from the version of Jerome, such as it was after it had suffered from the hands of transcribers for more than a thousand years, would be a rash and dangerous innovation. The Old Testament in Hebrew was regarded as a book for the Jews simply, and no part of Holy Scripture was thought to be suitable for the edification of Christians in any tongue except the Latin.

The preparations made by the celebrated Spanish cardinal, Francis* XIMENES de CISNEROS, Archbishop of Toledo, for the publication of the first Polyglot Bible, commenced in the year 1502;† the work was intended to celebrate the birth of the heir to the throne of Castile, afterwards the Emperor Charles V.

* The baptismal name of this remarkable man was *Gonzalo* : this he exchanged for *Francisco*, when he entered the Franciscan order. Cardinal Ximenes was archbishop of Toledo, regent of Castile, and a Spanish general, while also executing other functions.

† It should be observed, that the Complutensian New Testament was not the first *portion* of original Greek which was printed. "The first part of the Greek Testament which was printed consisted of the thanksgiving hymns of Mary and Zacharias (Luke i. 42-56, 68-80), appended to a Greek Psalter published in 1486. The next consisted of the first six chapters of the Gospel by John, edited by Aldus Manutius, at Venice, 1504, 4to."—*Dr. Davidson's "Biblical Criticism,"* ii. p. 106. "The *fourteen first verses* of the Gospel of John. Tübingen 1514: in the Library at Stuttgart, an edition which has been incorrectly stated to be the whole Gospel of St. John, in Masch's *Le Long*, 3. iii. 624, and Marsh's remarks on *Michaelis*, i. p. 415." [Eng. ed. ii. 845.] *Eichhorn's Einleitung*, v. 249.

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[More information](#)

It receives its name, *the Complutensian Polyglot*, from COMPLUTUM, the Latin name of ALCALA, in Spain, where it was printed, and where the cardinal had founded an university. The editors of the part containing the New Testament were Ælius Antonius Nebrissensis, Demetrius Cretensis, Ferdinandus Pitianus, and especially Lopez de Stunica: in fact, this last-mentioned editor seems to have been the person who undertook the responsibility of preparing the Greek text under the cardinal's direction, and at his expense.

Although the fifth volume of the Polyglot, which contains the New Testament in Greek and Latin, was completed (as has been said) Jan. 10, 1514, the Old Testament was as yet unfinished; for the subscription to the fourth volume is dated July 10, 1517.*

The *publication* of the work, however, was delayed. There can be but little doubt, that some at least felt alarm at the innovation which would be introduced from the *church* taking for its instructor in Holy Scripture any language except the Latin: it is however worthy of remark, that the whole of this Polyglot edition was finished in the same year in which Martin Luther gave a stern shock to the corrupt theology which was then held and taught, by fixing to the door of the electoral chapel at Wittenberg his theses against the Romish doctrine of indulgences.

Before the *publication* of this work, on which the labour of so many years had been bestowed, Cardinal Ximenes had died;† and Pope Leo X., to whom it was dedicated, sent an authorization for its publication to his executors: this document is dated March 22, 1520. There was, however, some delay even after this; so that the work did not get into general circulation before the year 1522.

As this was the first *printed* Greek New Testament (although not the first *published*), it is natural that inquiry should have been

* Cardinal Ximenes says, in his dedication to Pope Leo X., that the New Testament was finished first. "Imprimis Novum Testamentum Græco Latinoque sermone excudendum curavimus simul cum Lexico Græcarum omnium dictionum: quæ posunt in eo legentibus occurrere: ut his quoque qui non integram linguæ cognitionem adepti sunt pro viribus consuleremus. Deinde vero antequam Vetus Testamentum aggredieremur: dictionarium præmissimus Hebraicorum Chaldaicorumque totius Veteris Instrumenti vocabulorum."

† Cardinal Ximenes did not survive its completion more than a few months. He died Nov. 8, 1517, at the age of eighty-one, in the twenty-third year of his primacy.

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[More information](#)

made for the MSS. on which the text is based. It need excite no surprise, that the editors have not themselves described the MSS. which they used: such a proceeding was not then customary; indeed, until some attention had been paid to textual criticism, few editors of works, whether biblical, classical, or patristic, seem to have thought of mentioning *what* copies they followed, any more than this would have been done by the transcriber of such a work, before printing had been invented: the archetype might be mentioned, or it might not; just as in the case of an edition of Milton or Bunyan, it is not common to state, in a reprint, *what* edition has been followed.

The Complutensian editors, however, though they do not *describe* their MSS., give us some information with regard to them. In their preface to the New Testament, they say, that “ordinary copies were not the archetypes for this impression, but very ancient and correct ones; and of such antiquity, that it would be utterly wrong not to own their authority; which the supreme pontiff Leo X., our most holy father in Christ and lord, desiring to favour this undertaking, sent from the apostolical library to the most reverend lord the cardinal of Spain, by whose authority and commandment we have had this work printed.”*

In this we may distinguish the *fact* which the editors record, from the *opinion* which they express. They must have *known* whether or not they used MSS. from the Vatican, and they were fully competent to record the fact; as to the antiquity of the MSS. or their value, they could not be supposed to give any judgment which lay beyond the horizon of their critical knowledge.

Cardinal Ximenes also bears a similar testimony as to the place from which he obtained the Greek MSS. He says, in his dedication to Pope Leo X., after mentioning the pains which he had taken to procure Latin, Greek, and Hebrew MSS., “For Greek copies indeed we are indebted to your Holiness, who sent us most

* “Non quævis exemplaria impressioni huic archetypa fuisse: sed antiquissima emendatissimaque: ac tantæ præterea vetustatis ut fidem eis abrogare nefas videatur. Quæ sanctissimus in Christo pater et dominus noster Leo decimus pontifex maximus huic instituto favere cupiens ex apostolica bibliotheca educta misit ad reverendissimum dominum Cardinalem Hispaniæ; de cujus autoritate et mandato hoc opus imprimi fecimus.”

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

kindly from the apostolic library very ancient codices, both of the Old and the New Testament; which have aided us very much in this undertaking.”*

When critical attention was paid to the text of the Greek New Testament, and to the MSS. from which the first printed edition was supposed to be derived, it was too hastily concluded from the editors' having mentioned that they had the use of very ancient MSS. from the papal library, that the celebrated Codex Vaticanus was amongst the number; and as the actual readings of that valuable document were then almost entirely unknown, the Complutensian text was relied on by some, as if it could be taken as the representative of the Codex Vaticanus.

Afterwards, when Greek MSS. were more extensively investigated, it was thought that those of the Complutensian Greek New Testament were probably still preserved at Alcalà; and thus when the Danish professor Moldenhawer was in Spain for the purpose of examining Greek MSS., he visited Alcalà in 1784, in hopes of finding them in the university library. He could find none there of the Greek New Testament; and he imagined that, for some reason of suspicion, they were kept secret from him. At last he was told that, about the year 1749, they had been sold to a rocket-maker, *as useless parchments*. Michaelis, in mentioning the result of these inquiries, says, “This prodigy of barbarism I would not venture to relate, till Professor Tychsen, who accompanied Moldenhawer, had given me fresh assurances of its truth.”

This account was for many years repeated and believed, until, in 1821, Dr. Bowring cast some doubt on it: he did not however fully clear up the story, or explain how it originated. But we can *now* go farther, and say that the inquiry of Moldenhawer, and the reply which it received, were alike grounded on mistake. Dr. James Thomson made careful inquiries as to the MSS. belonging to the university of Alcalà, and the result (including an

* “Atque ex ipsis quidem Græca Sanctitati tuæ debemus: qui ex ista apostolica bibliotheca antiquissimos tum Veteris tum Novi Testamenti codices perquam humane ad nos misisti: qui nobis in hoc negotio maximo fuerunt adjumento.”

The editors also say the same thing, in their preface to the reader, as to the *Greek* MSS. They add however, “Quibus etiam adjunximus alia non pauca: quorum parte ex Bessarionis castigatissimo codice summa diligentia transcriptam illustris Venetorum senatus ad nos misit,” etc.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

account of the investigation made several years before by Dr. Bowring) was published in the *Biblical Review* for March, 1847.* Thus we can regard as an ascertained fact, that all the MSS. which were formerly known as belonging to Cardinal Ximenes, and which were preserved in the library at Alcalà, are now, with the rest of that library, at Madrid; that the catalogue made in 1745 correctly describes the MSS. which still exist; that at the time of the alleged sale to the rocket-maker, the library of Alcalà was under the care of a really learned and careful librarian, who caused all the books of the library to be rebound.

It remains, however, a fact, that a sale to a rocket-maker did take place at the time mentioned; but it could not have been of MSS. belonging to the library; so that there can be but little doubt, that the “useless parchments” thus disposed of, were the old covers of the books in the library, compacted of vellum and folded paper.

Don José Gutierrez, the librarian at Madrid, furnished Dr. J. Thomson with a catalogue of the Complutensian MSS.; † and from this it appears, that the principal ones used in the Polyglot are all safely preserved: the Greek New Testament is, however, contained in none of them; also the one containing the LXX. does *not* include the Pentateuch.

And thus we can only suppose that, when Moldenhawer was inquiring at Alcalà for what that library never had possessed, and when he thought that the MSS. were concealed from him, the librarians, to remove the suspicion, and to satisfy his inquiries in some manner, referred to the sale of “useless parchments” in 1749, as if it set the question at rest. Neither the Danish professor nor yet the Spanish librarians seem to have thought of the previous question, “Were any such MSS. *ever* in the library at Alcalà?”

As, then, the other MSS. used by the Complutensian editors are still in existence, and as the collection contains none of that part of the LXX. which comprises the Pentateuch or of the Greek New Testament, we have only an additional reason for believing

* See the Appendix to this section, where Dr. Thomson’s communication to the *Biblical Review* is subjoined.

† See the Appendix to this section.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

(what indeed never need have been doubted),* that the account given by the cardinal and the editors was a simple fact, that Greek MSS., both of the Old and the New Testament, were furnished from the Vatican library; and to that library they were no doubt returned, when the object was accomplished for which they had been lent. Stunica, in his controversies with Erasmus, mentions a MS. which he calls Codex Rhodiensis, and which seems to have been his own; he cites it occasionally as an authority, but nothing more is known about it, nor did Stunica ever so describe it as to make its identification possible.

It has been alleged, that if the date in the subscription to the Complutensian New Testament be true, it is impossible that it could have been edited from Greek MSS. sent by Pope Leo X. Bp. Marsh says (Notes to Michaelis, ii. 846), "Now Leo X. was elected pope March 11, 1513;† and yet the subscription at the end of the Revelation bears date Jan. 10, 1514. If therefore the MSS. were sent by Leo X., they must have arrived when at least three parts of the Greek Testament were already printed; and yet the editors, in the preface at least, mention no other MSS." It does not appear on what data Bp. Marsh forms his conclusion, as to when the printing commenced. As the first edition of Erasmus was completed in a *far shorter* time (see the following section) and as he was at that time overburdened with other editorial cares, which he had to sustain alone, there appears to be no sufficient reason for judging that the editors of the Complutensian text, who were several, and not distracted by other labours, could not have accomplished this work in the manner in which they say that they did. In fact, this argument only appears to be one of the many cases in which supposed improbabilities are brought forward to set aside direct testimonies.‡

* The doubt seems to have been diffused, if it did not originate, through a remark of Wetstein on the subject: "Neque dubito, quin, si accuratior inquisitio fieret, iidem illi codices, quibus usi sunt editores, adhuc hodie Compluti reperirentur, argumento ducto ex Melchioris de la Cerda Apparatu Latini Sermonis, Bibliothecæ Hispanicæ, p. 61." Wets. Proleg. in N. T., p. 118.

† Precision is needed here, as it is a question of time. Leo was *elected* on the 28th of Feb. 1513, and *crowned* on the 11th of March.

‡ There seems to be no ground for questioning the date in the subscription to the volume of this book which contains the New Testament. We have the testimony of Cardinal Ximenes himself, that this volume (the fifth in order) was printed the first,

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[More information](#)

One reason why it was important to ascertain, if possible, on what MSS. the Complutensian edition was based, is, that, as being one of the primary texts, it is desirable to know what its authority may be, and how far readings which may have emanated from it are rightly retained in other editions. But as the MSS. used by the editors are wholly unknown, we can only form a judgment as to their antiquity and value from the text itself; and this we are able to do very decidedly. Bishop Marsh observes (“Lectures on the Criticism of the Bible,” page 96), “Wherever modern Greek MSS.,—MSS. written in the thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth centuries,—differ from the most ancient Greek MSS., and from the quotations of the early Greek fathers, in such characteristic readings the Complutensian Greek Testament almost invariably agrees with the modern, in opposition to the ancient MSS. There cannot be a doubt, therefore, that the Complutensian text was formed from modern MSS. alone.”

Although doubts may be felt as to the erudition of the Complutensian editors, it need not be questioned that they really regarded the MSS. which they used as being ancient and valuable. Such subjects were then but little investigated; and the work of editing the Greek New Testament was altogether new. That they were not very skilful in their work, may be seen from the circumstance that, in Heb. vii. 3, they have blended the *title* of the section of the epistle with the *words* of the text thus, *μενει ιερευς εις το διηνεκες, εν ω οτι και του Αβρααμ προετιμηθη. θεωρευτε κ. τ. λ.** It also need not be questioned, that the editors fully intended to use their MSS. fairly; although, from their reverence for the Latin, they would certainly have regarded any Greek reading as being defective, if it did not accord with their

—that then the Lexicons, etc., were prepared; but the volume containing this apparatus, and the four which comprise the Old Testament, were all five printed and finished by July 10, 1517. This leaves but little more than eight months for each volume, to say nothing of the time occupied in preparing the Lexicons, etc. If the date Jan. 10, 1514, be doubted, as being too early, it makes the expedition used in printing the other volumes only the greater. But, really, the fact that the other five parts were printed in so few months each, is an argument that the New Testament volume was not long in the press.

* It may, indeed, be said that this was an oversight on the part of Stunica and his coadjutors, which must not be judged too severely, as reflecting on their scholarship: in illustration of which reference may be made to the edition of the Latin and Greek Codex Laudianus of the Acts, published by Hearne in 1715, who in Acts v. 24 (in the

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[More information](#)

valued translation. That they must in general have followed their Greek MS. (or MSS.) simply, is plain, from the passages being but few in which such an accusation could be made, as that of alteration to suit the Latin.

Their estimate of the Latin Vulgate is shown by the astonishing comparison which they use, in connection with the arrangement of the Old Testament; where that version occupies the central column, with the original Hebrew on the one side, and the Greek LXX. on the other: this they compare to the position of Christ as crucified between *two thieves*,—the unbelieving synagogue of the Jews, and the schismatical Greek church.*

With this feeling of veneration, it can cause no surprise, that in 1 John v. 7, 8 they should have supplied in the Greek the testimony of the heavenly witnesses; and also that they should have omitted the concluding clause of the eighth verse. In both these changes they evidently thought that they were doing right; for in the controversy between Stunica and Erasmus, the latter inquired by what authority the Complutensian editors had inserted 1 John v. 7, and whether they really had MSS. so different from any that Erasmus himself had seen: to this the answer was given by Stunica, “You must know that the copies of the *Greeks*

MS. folio 38 b.), inserted a *Latin word* in the Greek column as two Greek words; reading thus:

και ο στρατηγος
τον ιερου
και οι αρχιερεις
εθανμαζον
MENTE και διηγορουν,

and in a note he reflects on the inaccuracy of Mill, who had cited the various reading without *μεν τε*. The word really belongs to the Latin column, which precedes the Greek: thus,

MIRARI COOPERUN† ΕΘΑΥΜΑΖΟΝ
ET CONFUNDEBANTUR MENTE ΚΑΙ ΔΙΗΓΟΡΟΥΝ,

where the length of the Latin line causes it to run on into the Greek column.

* “Mediam autem inter has Latinam beati Hieronymi translationem, velut inter synagogam et Orientalem Ecclesiam posuimus; tanquam duos hinc et inde latrones, medium autem Jesum, hoc est Romanam sive Latinam ecclesiam collocantes. Hæc enim sola supra firmam petram ædificata (reliquis a recta Scripturæ intelligentia quandoquidem deviantibus) immobilis semper in veritate permansit.”

Profound, however, as was their reverence for the Romish church, they knew nothing of those dogmas which were authorised at Trent, thirty years afterwards, for canonising the Apocrypha. “At vero libri *extra canonem*, quos ecclesia potius ad ædificationem populi, quam ad auctoritatem ecclesiasticorum dogmatum confirmandum recipit: Græcam tantum habent scripturam,” etc.

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[More information](#)

are corrupted; that OURS, however, contain the very truth.”* This was quite enough for them; and this *passage*, in this edition, demands particular attention, because it is in this one place that the Greek Testaments in common use have been affected by the Complutensian text.

In *omitting* the final words of ver. 8, *καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἔν εἶσιν*, Stunica and his coadjutors were guided by what they considered to be the judgment of the Lateran council, and the authority of Thomas Aquinas; for they justify the non-insertion by a note in their margin; this being one of the *very few* annotations which they have subjoined. On the same grounds as they assign for the omission in the Greek, these words are left out in Latin MSS. subsequent to the year 1215.

Besides this passage, however, there are very few places in which the charge of conforming the Greek to the Latin has been suggested; although the variations of the two must have been prominently brought before the attention of the editors, because they affix a letter of reference to each word, and they use the same letter again in the Latin column, to connect the two texts verbally, where that is practicable. It should be added, that the Latin Vulgate is given by the Complutensian editors with more accuracy than had previously been shown in printing it.

Stunica and his fellow-editors have not given the Greek text with the common accents; but they have marked every word of two or more syllables with an acute accent on the tone-syllable. In their preface, the editors refer to the peculiar manner in which they had printed the Greek; and they defend it on the ground that accents, breathings (which they omit, except in the case of *ῥ*), etc., are no parts of the genuine text, and that they are omitted in the more ancient copies, and consequently they wished to leave the sacred text with “its majesty and beauty untouched”: they add, however, that they have marked the tone-syllable of each word with a simple *apex*, “not as the Greek accent, but as a mark and sign for the guidance of the reader.” So that, if the “grace and majesty of the text” depended on its not being printed with any grammatical additions, it would be as much

* “Sciendum est, Græcorum codices esse corruptos; nostros vero ipsam veritatem continere.”