The Oxford Greek New Testament - a review article

J J Petzer

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this article is to review the two volumes of The New Testament in Greek: The Gospel according to St. Luke, which appeared in 1984 and 1987 respectively at the Clarendon Press in Oxford. The article contains a description with critical notes of the main features of these two volumes of the text of the Third Gospel.

The latter part of 1987 witnessed the appearance of the second volume of The New Testament in Greek: The Gospel according to St Luke (the Oxford GNT, as it will be called hereafter). The first volume appeared in 1984. Both were published by Clarendon Press in Oxford. These two volumes of the text of Luke are the result of the so-called International Greek New Testament project, launched late in the forties, the purpose of which was to edit a text of the Greek New Testament with a full apparatus criticus. The project was carried out on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean by a committee of British and American textual critics. Although it was foreseen at the beginning of the project that the apparatus for the whole of the New Testament would have been completed in a decade or two, in the end it took almost four decades to complete only the apparatus of the Third Gospel (cf Elliott 1983; Colwell, Sparks, Wisse & McReynolds 1968 for a description of the history of the project). An examination of the main features of these two magnificent volumes shows, however, that it was four decades well spent, not only because of the detail and accuracy of the information presented in these two volumes, but also because it resulted in important methodological developments in the quantitative analysis of the relationship between manuscripts.

The Oxford GNT is presented in two volumes. The first contains an introduction (16 pages) and the text and apparatus of Luke 1-12 (229 pages), and the second the text and apparatus of Luke 13-24 (255 pages) with an appendix, containing corrections to the first volume (6 pages). Both volumes are supplemented with a loose page containing a list of all the witnesses cited in the apparatus, which makes the use of the apparatus much easier and timesaving.

1 THE INTRODUCTION
The introduction in the first volume, though short, contains some valuable information to assist the user of the text. It contains a historical retrospect, a short discussion of the general principles of the edition and the limitations of...
the quotation of the evidence, a somewhat more detailed discussion of the plan of the editions, and, finally, a list of the sigla occurring in the apparatus. This is followed by a list of all the names of committee members and contributors to the project.

The valuable introduction clarifies many aspects of the text and apparatus. If it is to be criticised, it is because of its brevity. Since not all the manuscripts containing Luke are quoted in the apparatus and since those quoted have been selected by means of a profile method of classification (see discussion below), it would have been helpful if the method of selection was summarised (instead of the mere reference to an article in the Journal of Biblical Literature for a description of the method) and if the groups, represented by each manuscript in the apparatus were stated in full. The same goes for the lectionaries. It would also have made the use of the text easier if a list of the sigla used for the church fathers was included instead of the mere reference to the sources for the sigla. Though it would have been impossible to include all the abbreviations used in the patristic apparatus in such a list - the list published by the Vetus Latina Institute for the Latin fathers amounts to a whole book (cf Frede 1981) - at least the sigla for the names of the Fathers could have been included without using much more space.

2 THE TEXT AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE APPARATUSES

The information in the text is presented in the following manner: At the beginning of each chapter all the witnesses which are deficient are listed. This is followed by the presentation of the text and the apparatus. The base text is the 1873 edition of the Textus Receptus (TR), which means that the apparatus contains all the readings which differ from the TR. This is one of the aspects of the edition which received much criticism, especially from Aland (cf e.g Aland 1965:184-185; 1979:8-9). The use of the TR as basis is not to be interpreted as a statement on the value of the TR as such and this edition therefore does not represent a return to the text of the TR in the same sense as the Greek New Testament according to the majority text (Hodges & Farstad 1982). The TR was used for practical reasons. Since the majority of the witnesses cited in the apparatus agree with the TR and differ from modern critical texts, the use of the TR as basis makes the apparatus smaller and the whole edition thus more economical and less expensive (cf Elliott 1986:129). It also has the advantage that the readings in the apparatus represent the earlier readings. On the other hand, Aland's criticism is not altogether invalid, and it is also true that in using the TR instead of a critical text as the basis of the apparatus, an opportunity for progress in the search for the original text of Luke was indeed lost. This edition thus does not represent any methodological advance in finding the original text of the third gospel.

The use of the TR furthermore means that probably more original readings are contained in the apparatus than in the text. From this point of
view, the editions by Legg, being based on Westcott and Hort’s text, are thus more valuable. However, bearing the reasons for the use of the TR as basis in mind, one also feels that the editorial committees were justified in their choice, since not only could scholarly differences as to the original reading in many textual problems among such a large number of participants in the project have centered the attention on the text, rather than the apparatus and thus have postponed the results of the project even further, but, more seriously, it could have lessened the value of the apparatus even today in the sense that the attention of the user would undoubtedly have been focused on the textual choices of the committee rather than the apparatus. By using a "neutral" text - neutral in the sense of a text that is generally agreed not to be the original in any way - the attention is fully focused on the apparatus and the value of the apparatus.

The text is represented verse by verse with the apparatus of each verse following immediately. Three sets of notes are given: first a list of witnesses which are deficient for the verse (in addition to those deficient for the whole chapter); second a full statement of the quotations of the patristic evidence with a full reference to the place of quotation (and the edition used for the collation); and finally the apparatus containing the variations in the witnesses, arranged in two columns, containing the reading of the text, without its supporting witnesses, and the variant with a list of witnesses which support it. Sometimes a fourth set of footnotes, and index to the lectionaries, is included just before the statement of deficiency. Much information is given in these apparatuses which are relevant not only for those interested in the text of the New Testament, but also for exegetes and others who wish to check quotations (and therefore also expositions, readings and uses) of specific passages in the Greek New Testament by the fathers.

3 STATEMENTS OF DEFICIENCY

The statements of deficiency, given for all manuscripts with a continuous text of the verse (and chapter in the case of the statements at the beginning of the chapters) enable the user to know exactly what the state of the manuscripts cited in the apparatus is. In every instance this set of notes contains not only a reference to manuscripts that are deficient, but gives the exact words or letters missing in instances where the whole verse is not deficient.

4 THE PATRISTIC APPARATUS

The patristic apparatus is one of the most important features of this text, which not only distinguishes it from previous apparatuses in texts of the Greek New Testament, but makes the apparatus useful for purposes other than text-critical purposes as well. It contains a full statement of quotations and adaptations in patristic texts of the verse or parts of the verse concerned, by citing the actual quotation of the father by means of citing the first and last word of the quotation. The user can thus clearly see which part of the text is
quoted by the father. Although the whole quotation is not given in this apparatus, it can accurately be reconstructed by referring to the textual apparatus, which contains all the variants from the text. If the father is thus not listed there, the user can with certainty know that the quotation is exactly the same as the text in that verse. In this way the user can actually reconstruct every single patristic citation from the third gospel from the information contained in this apparatus. The editors of this volume have thus met an important need by compiling this apparatus.

However, there are a number of problems, well known among textual critics, which make it difficult to use patristic citations for the purpose of reconstructing the original Greek New Testament (cf e.g Ehrman 1986; Elliott 1986:136-142; Fee 1971a; 1971b; Prigent 1972; Frede 1972). Some of them and the way in which they are handled in this apparatus ought to be kept in mind when it is used for whatever purpose.

First is the problem of which gospel the father is quoting from. When quoting from parallel passages, it is sometimes impossible to tell from which gospel he was quoting. In the case of variation among the manuscripts of one gospel, in particular where harmonisation could have played a part in the origin of certain readings, it is then very difficult to determine whether the quotation comes from the harmonised (corrupt) reading of the one gospel, or whether it comes from the gospel to which the reading was harmonised. This is a problem no textual critic can solve without a detailed analysis and sometimes even with this kind of analysis it is impossible to tell. The policy adopted by the editorial committee in such instances was to give the quotation and reference in all such cases of doubt rather than to make a decision on their own or to omit them. This represents an attempt to be over-exhaustive rather than to omit important information. This enables the user to make up his own mind.

The second thing which seems somewhat of a problem for the user, depending on what purpose the apparatus is used for, is that both the quotations by the Latin and Syriac fathers are given in Greek. This reveals that the main concern of the apparatus is the Greek text and underlines that the purpose of the whole of the apparatus is to give the variation from the Greek. Again the committee had to choose between two possibilities. Considered from a text-critical point of view, the correct choice was made, since the reference of the quotation enables one to analyse the details of the quotations, if one wishes to use the apparatus for other purposes than the examination of the Greek text.

The third problem concerns the sources of the patristic material. As far as was possible critical editions of the fathers (which is vital for using the fathers as textual witnesses) were used. Unfortunately, it was not possible to use critical editions for all the patristic material, since not all the fathers, especially the Greek fathers, have been critically edited thus far. In order not to be incomplete, the committee decided to include material from the
Migne's Patrologia, rather than to omit it or to restore the fathers' texts anew from the available manuscripts before including the readings in the apparatus (which would have been an immense task and would have postponed the publication of the text for decades - cf e.g. the reconstruction of Didymus, the Blind’s quotations from the gospels by Ehrman 1986). The fact that the sources of the quotations and the editions from which they were taken, are given in the patristic apparatus reduces this problem somewhat, since it enables the user to know which citations were taken from critical sources and which not. Notwithstanding these problems, this part of the apparatus is very valuable and the patristic information in this text is probably the most accurate and exhaustive of any apparatus of the third gospel ever published.

5 THE TEXTUAL APPARATUS

The textual apparatus is so arranged that it first gives the reading of the text, followed by a colon and the variant with the list of witnesses containing the variant. Each variant reading is treated individually. As regards the manuscripts, the evidence of all the papyri and uncial manuscripts are given, while the minuscules and lectionary evidence were selected. One hundred and twenty-eight minuscules and forty-one lectionaries are cited. The minuscules include all the minuscules with an ancient text, such as 565 and 700, as well as a selected group of minuscules representative of the Byzantine or Koine Text. These latter minuscules thus each represent a group of minuscules which share the same basic textual profile. The procedure of selection of the latter was developed in the sixties and became known as the Claremont profile method, named after the place of its development (cf e.g. Epp 1967; Richards 1977a; 1977b; Wisse 1982; Wisse & McReynolds 1970). This method was developed with the sole purpose of classifying these minuscules for this apparatus. The method is a sample method, which means that only a portion of the text was analysed in order to classify the manuscripts. It is also a quantitative method, which means that manuscripts were classified according to the percentage of agreements and differences with other manuscripts. The lectionary evidence was treated more or less in the same way.

Though it is impossible to represent the text of all the minuscules individually — there are just too many with the same or almost the same text — the selection of minuscules for the apparatus is in more than one way one of the problems of this apparatus. The fact that neither the procedure of selection, nor a list of manuscripts represented by each minuscule in the text, nor the profiles of the groups, are listed or discussed in the introduction, makes it impossible to know what the position of other minuscules of Luke, not cited in the apparatus, is as regards their text. At least a list of the members of each profile could have been included in the introduction, while a more detailed description of the profiles of each group and the means of selection would have made the text much more useful. Of less direct
relevance to the user of the text, but methodologically no less important, is the fact that the method of selection is not without its problems. Without going into the details of criticisms against the profile method (cf e.g. Ehrman 1987:43-44), I wish to refer to only one problem of this method, i.e. the fact that it classifies by means of sampling. The occurrence of block mixture in manuscripts has in the past lead to wrong classifications of manuscripts, and the danger of classifying manuscripts in this way is not unknown. Codex Washingtonianus is a classic example of such a mixed text, belonging to different text-types in different parts (cf e.g. Metzger 1968:213-215). A sample method, especially when the sampling is done by using whole chapters rather than smaller portions in each chapter, cannot detect this kind of mixture accurately, with the result that some detail might get lost in the process. However, having said this, it ought immediately to be said that it would have been an immense task to classify all minuscules containing Luke by means of a detailed analysis, which, if it had to be done to secure a fair amount of accuracy, would probably have made it more worthwhile to collate and include the readings of all the minuscules in the apparatus. One would hope to see a development and refinement of the method of classification, wherein this and other problems are attended to in future editions of this kind (such as the refinements proposed by Ehrman 1987; 1986).

The sigla for the manuscripts are standard and the so-called Gregory-Aland system was used. The exception is Codex Sinaiticus, which is represented by a capital S (for Sinaiticus) and not the usual Hebrew Aleph. Uncials with Greek sigla have, however, been referred to in the normal way. One wonders whether the time has not come to start referring to all the uncial reading by means of their numbers only instead of their names or letters, as is already being done with regard to the papyri, minuscules and lectionaries, since the traditional way of reference does tend to make it appear as if these manuscripts are of some kind of special value, which is today, after the discovery of the papyri, only true to a limited extent of a very few of these uncial.

As regards the versions, readings from the Vulgate and Old Latin, the Syrian, the Persian and Arabic Diatessaron, the Coptic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, Gothic and Old Church Slavonic, are cited in the apparatus. The sigla used for the versions are different from those in the standard texts. They are, however, logical and easily understandable and are printed in bold type so as to make them easily visible. The siglum used for the Old Latin, Lvt, instead of the it of the UBS and other editions, is a good development, since the latter is derived from Itala, a sub-text-type in the Old Latin text and can therefore mistakenly be taken as referring to only that part of the Old Latin tradition, thus excluding the African form of the Old Latin text. Among the many problems in citing versional evidence in an apparatus (cf e.g. Elliott 1986:132-136) is the formal and structural differences between languages (cf e.g. Metzger 1977 for examples). It is, for example, difficult in instances such
as the omission or addition of the article or differences in word order, to decide which reading is supported by the version. The editorial body chose not to print the evidence of the editions in these instances. In many instances a severe difference between the Greek text and a versional reading makes it necessary to write out the versional reading in full. Since some of the languages of the versions are not well known, such as Ethiopic, Armenian, Gothic and even Coptic, and would therefore mean nothing to the user of the text if the reading were cited in those languages, the editorial committee decided to print the readings in those instances in English. Though this is in itself a problem, it is probably a good choice, since it enables the user of the text not acquainted with those languages to still evaluate the evidence of that version, albeit to a limited extent. One wonders, however, if a better idea would not have been to cite the evidence in both the language of the original and in English.

Following the versional evidence in the apparatus is the evidence from the fathers. In addition to the discussion of the problems in the evaluation and use of patristic citations, discussed above, there are a number of peculiar problems with regard to the citing of patristic evidence for the variants in a textual apparatus. It is therefore necessary to take a brief look at how the Oxford GNT handles this matter, without repeating what was said earlier. A serious problem is the omission of a reading in patristic sources. Because of the fact that by far the most patristic quotations do not supply a continuous text, but are short quotations, consisting of a single verse or phrase, it is difficult to determine when a reading is omitted by a father. The only instances when a father can positively be cited as in favour of the omission of a passage is when he supplies a long quotation or when he comments upon a text with a lemma. The editors of the Oxford GNT adopted the correct policy in these instances by citing a father as evidence only when it is absolutely certain that it supports the reading in dispute. In addition it is well known that the fathers did not always quote verbatim from a written source, but that they quoted either from memory or sometimes adapted the reading of the text for their own purposes. The editors of the Oxford GNT therefore distinguished between direct (verbatim) quotations and adaptations by citing them separately in the patristic apparatus and by only referring to the reading in the textual apparatus. It thus enables one to refer back to the patristic apparatus to accurately determine the quotation in dispute. Allusions are, however, not included in the apparatus and it is unfortunate that at least references to allusion are not included, since allusions do sometimes supply valuable information as regards the state of a reading.

6 TECHNICAL ASPECTS
The two volumes are technically well prepared. The information was compiled with great care and is presented accurately. The apparatus is presented in a way which makes it easy to use.
7 CONCLUSION
Notwithstanding all the good features and attributes of this apparatus, it must also be said that the apparatus has its limitations. Even with the abundance of evidence presented in this apparatus it is still not possible, for example, to study the style or vocabulary of the third gospel in full. It is still not possible to determine where certain words and expressions occur in variant readings cited only in the apparatus and not in the text. To enable the user to do this, it is necessary to compile a full concordance to the text and apparatus. This problem, however, is not only a problem of this text, but a basic problem of any text-critical apparatus in general, and it will most probably stay a problem until more extensive computer-aided research techniques are developed and used.

The editorial committee as a whole and the final executive editor, J Keith Elliott in particular, ought to be congratulated with the result of this magnificent project. This text will for a very long time in the future stand as the most important source of the textual criticism of the third gospel, not only because of the immense amount of information in the apparatus, but also because of the accuracy and care with which the information was selected and presented. It will stay the most important source for both the study of individual variation-units in Luke's Gospel, as well as the study of individual manuscripts and their texts in this gospel. As such it meets the need for a full apparatus of the text of the Greek New Testament, expressed over the past years by so many textual critics (cf e.g W J Elliott 1976), albeit at this stage only for the third gospel. It also sets the standard and the parameters for future compilations and editions of full apparatuses for other New Testament books and stands as an example of what could be reached when scholarly differences and differences of opinion are set aside and scholars work together in what is mutually agreed upon in the interest of the development and progress of the discipline. The final editors, the editorial committee, and every contributor to the project (of which many are not alive anymore to see the fulfillment of a lifetime's work) are to be congratulated with the final result of decades of painstaking work.

WORKS CITED


J H Petzer, Department of Greek, University of Potchefstroom, Potchefstroom. Republic of South Africa.