THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE'S 1904 NEW TESTAMENT EDITION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES¹

IOANNIS D. KARAVIDOPOULOS

Abstract. This article presents the Patriarchal edition of the New Testament of 1904, based upon the text of 116 manuscripts of lectionaries used in the Greek-speaking churches through the centuries. The article describes the non-use or very limited use of lectionaries in Western critical editions of the New Testament till the end of the 19th century - compared with this the Patriarchal edition has to be considered as an important scholarly achievement. The second part of the article deals with more recent attempts to edit the so called Byzantine text and postulates the principles that should guide a new edition of the Patriarchal text on the basis of new achievements in textual criticism.

Keywords: Patriarchal edition, lectionaries, textual-criticism

Scholars involved with issues of criticism and publication of the New Testament text, especially in the Orthodox world, know that in year 2004 one hundred years have passed since the Orthodox Church, or more specifically, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople published the first continuous, comprehensive Greek text of the New Testament in the Orthodox world. This text was published as *The New Testament, Approved by the Great Church of Christ*², by the Patriarchal printing house of Constantinople in 1904, containing a preface dated February 22, 1904.

In this short article we shall see, in the first section, the historic conditions under which this edition came on to the scene; and in the second section, the future prospects for a critical edition of the ecclesiastical text of the New Testament.

For the English translation of this article I express my deep thanks to Professor John Fotopoulos, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN (USA).

² Η Καινή Διαθήκη έγκρίσει τῆς Μεγάλης τοῦ Χριστοῦ Έκκλησίας, Constantinople 1904.

I

I will start by describing the broader climate prevailing in Europe from the 16th century to the early 20th century in relation to the Greek editions of the New Testament and, principally, to the kinds of manuscripts the New Testament editors took under consideration. The first editor of a Greek New Testament, Erasmus, in 1516 based his edition upon very few (six or seven) manuscripts of continuous text. It is not known how many and upon which manuscripts was based the *Complutensian Polyglot (Complutensis)* of the Spanish Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros, which circulated in 1552. However, at least one out of its six volumes (i.e. the volume which contained the Greek and the Latin texts of the New Testament) was ready in 1514. It should be noted at this point that among the members of the academic committee under the Cardinal's supervision was a Greek from Crete, Demetrius Doukas.

The Complutensis presents the following peculiar features: it lacks breath marks, the one-syllable words are accentless and the only accent on the rest of the words is merely a sign resembling the Greek acute accent, constituting what we refer to as the single-accent (monotonic) system which is used today in Greece. Nevertheless, a 12-page booklet is interposed in between the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Romans (N.B. Acts of the Apostles is placed after the Epistle to the Hebrews) and contains The Demise of Saint Paul, the Apostle, Deacon Euthalius's On The Time of Saint Paul's Sermons And On His Death Through Martyrdom, as well as Hypotheseis on the Epistles, all written in Greek. This booklet is printed in the same type of letters as in the rest of the edition, but with accents and breath marks along with a commentary "To those concerned", where the Cardinal explains that the single-accent system is reserved only for the ancient text out of deference to it since the ancient text lacked accents and breath marks.

The first scholar who really included lectionaries—apart from the other manuscripts—for his critical edition of the Greek New Testament was the English critic from Oxford, John Mill (in 1707), who had worked 30 years on its preparation. Lectionaries (*Eclogadia*), as is well known, is the name given to the manuscripts which contain the Gospel or Apostolic passages which are read during the liturgical year. Western scholars usually refer to them as "lectionaries" (from the Latin word *lectio* = reading), while in the East (apart from using the imported Western terms "lectionaries" and "ευαγγελιστάρια" [evangelistaria]) the Byzantine term εκλογάδια (eklogadia) is also used. Eight lectionaries from the Gospels and two from the Apostolic readings are counted among the manuscripts upon which John Mill based his edition. Later follow the editions of J. A. Bengel (1734), J. Wettstein (1751), J. Griesbach (1774 - 1811) and C. F. Matthaei (1782-1788) during the 18th and 19th centuries. F. Scrivener provides interesting information and a description of a large number of lectionaries in his book, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (1883).

THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE'S 1904 NEW TESTAMENT EDITION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In mid 19th century when critical editions started to replace the Byzantine Text which has been dominant up to that time, no use of lectionaries is found. The fact that K. Tischendorf (1894) did not use any lectionaries in his editions is paradoxical since he had discovered many lectionaries among the other manuscripts that he had discovered in various libraries and monasteries. Westcott and Hort (1881), the two English editors, also made little use of them. The fact that the German scholar Hermann von Soden, whose research focused on the Byzantine text of the New Testament, did not take the Byzantine lectionaries into consideration in his famous four-volume edition "Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt hergestellt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte" (1902-1913) was regarded as an "inexplicable riddle".

However, at about the same time (early 20th century) C. R. Gregory showed an impressive and suggestive knowledge of the lectionaries, as well as a positive evaluation of them. Although he did not proceed to publish a New Testament edition, he expressed his favourable attitude toward the use of lectionaries both in the preface he wrote on Tischendorf's 8th edition of *Critica Major* (1894) and in the three-volume work *Textkritik des Neuen Testaments* (1900 - 1909) where he counts and describes 1,599 lectionaries. Hence, the scholarly community for the first time acquired positive, responsible information about the Byzantine lectionaries. Nevertheless, during the same time E. Nestle, who since 1898 had initiated the well-known critical editions *Novum Testamentum Graece* did not take the contribution of the lectionaries into consideration during the preparation of the text (today the continuation of his work circulates as the 27th edition, well known as *Nestle-Aland*, while the 28th edition is also now being prepared, even in an electronic format).

This was the climate in which the Ecumenical Patriarchate's New Testament edition emerged, based entirely on Byzantine lectionaries. One can look up the history of this edition in one of the New Testament's Greek Introductions. With great brevity we would like to note the following.

The need for this edition—the primary and for the time being the only one—stemmed from the lack of liturgical uniformity in the text of the Greek New Testament existing in the Orthodox Church during the years of the Turkish occupation in Greece. This was due to the fact that some churches used handwritten Gospels and Apostlic texts (*Apostoloi*), while others used some of the printed editions from Venice which contained the pericopae that were to be read in the liturgical services. However, neither did the manuscripts always agree among themselves, nor did the printed editions always agree up to that time (1904).

For this reason, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the late 19th century (more specifically, in 1899) assigned a three-member committee consisting of two Metropolitans (Michael Kleovoulos of Sardis and Apostolos Christodoulou of Stavroupoli) as well as of Vasileios Antoniades, professor at the Theological

IOANNIS D. KARAVIDOPOULOS

School of Chalki, with the task of collecting and studying the manuscripts of Constantinople and Mount Athos, and with the preparation of a Greek edition of the New Testament that would provide "the best reconstruction of the most ancient text of ecclesiastical tradition and, more specifically, of the Church of Constantinople".

The numerous manuscripts and, in particular, their large number of their variants led the committee to be limited to only 116 manuscripts of Gospels and of Apostolic readings, out of which 45 were studied personally by B. Antoniades in both Constantinople and Mount Athos, while the rest he took into consideration by means of a collation that his co-workers had carried out in both Athens and Jerusalem. The chronological breadth of the manuscripts is wide since represented among them are texts read in the churches from the 9th to the 16th centuries, that is, for about eight centuries. However, most of the manuscripts that were used date from 10th to 14th centuries. The text of the New Testament that was prepared subsequent to the study and collation of the above manuscripts was published in 1904 and reprinted in 1912 with some corrections. This edition was printed at the Patriarchal printing facilities by using the appropriate printing and other machinery, as well as using typographical plates that were purchased from England, while the expenditure of printing under the Patriarchal care and pretention was undertaken by philhellenes and Hellenes manifesting their pious feelings to the Mother Church in this way". Gennadius, the Metropolitan of Heliopolis, noted in 1938 that, "It was an attempt made almost exclusively by the wise Professor Antoniades, although he did not have enough time available due to the numerous tasks stemming from his capacity as a professor, for a project demanding the contribution of numerous collaborators, a considerable length of time, and ample resources",4).

The question arising now is the following: has the period of liturgical disuniformity ended definitively? Do we hear in the Divine Liturgy or in the sacraments (i.e. in the mysteries), or in the other rituals exactly the same text everywhere? We had the opportunity to point out some characteristic elements featuring the lack of uniformity among the editions of the New Testament available in Greece in the context of last year's (2003) liturgical conference held in Prokopi, Euboia which was organised by the Committee for the Liturgical Renaissance under the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece.

П

The Patriarchal edition of 1904, even though it was based on a limited number of manuscripts and lacked the possibility at that time of being assisted by today's advances in technology, was the first serious effort in the Orthodox Church

³ Preface, The New Testament, Approved by the Great Church of Christ.

⁴ Πῶς οἱ Ἀμερικανοί, *Ορθόδοξία* 13 (1938), 75.

THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE'S 1904 NEW TESTAMENT EDITION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

to produce a uniform text of the Greek New Testament which has been reproduced for many decades, and is still being reproduced not only by *Apostoliki Diakonia* but also by other Christian organisations in Greece such as *Zoe* and *Soter*, as well as by many other publishing houses. There are, however, certain minor differences between these editions, and especially between those of the continuous text and the older editions of the liturgical pericopae. The recent edition of the lectionary by the *Apostoliki Diakonia*, carried out in collaboration with the Greek Bible Society, is a striking example of absolute agreement and uniformity between the continuous Patriarchal text and the liturgical text of New Testament readings.

Whatever shortcomings have been observed in the Greek New Testament editions of the past, they cannot be a factor that inhibits something better occurring in the future. Basileios Antoniades himself pointed out at the end of the Preface to the Patriarchal Edition of 1904 that, just as happens in all human endeavours, this edition has certain imperfections, especially as a first attempt. He adds, "But the word of God is not bound by human imperfections ... for it is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe".

Which are the positive elements allowing us to be optimistic that a critical edition of the Greek ecclesiastical text of the New Testament may become reality in the near future?

- 1. The thought about the necessity of a well-studied edition of the liturgical text matured among the international academic community long ago. This desire has been expressed by both foreign and Greek textual critics. At this point, it should be taken into consideration that a critical edition of the text of the Gospel of John was prepared and edited by the "Centre for Editing of Religious Texts" (now called "The Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing") at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, with participation by the United Bible Societies, the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster, Germany, and by some Orthodox scholars including the writer of this article. The edition has been created for academic purposes and as a gesture of appreciation toward the textual tradition and toward today's praxis in the Orthodox Church. This edition, *The Gospel according to John in the Byzantine Tradition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), is also available in electronic form at www.iohannes.com
- 2. The critical editions of the New Testament during the 18th and 19th centuries constituted a serious evolution in the field of New Testament textual

⁵ Έλογάδιον. Άποστολικὰ καὶ Εὐαγγελικὰ ἀναγνώσματα τῶν Κυριακῶν καὶ Έορτῶν, Κείμενο-Μετάφραση, Athens 2003.

IOANNIS D. KARAVIDOPOULOS

criticism, as did the well-known editions of Nestle-Aland and *The Greek New Testament* of the United Bible Societies (UBS) in the 20th century. In the United Bible Societies' 4th edition of *The Greek New Testament*, the contribution of Byzantine lectionaries which were given close attention by a research group from the University of Thessaloniki is considerable. Regarding the promotion of the ecclesiastical text, I should mention two editions of the New Testament from the USA: the edition of Z. C.Hodges - A. L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (1982/1985) as well as the foundation of a society for the promotion of the Byzantine majority text referred to as the "Majority Text Society" in Dallas; and the edition of M. Robinson - W. Pierpoint, *The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Byzantine / Majority Textform* (Atlanta, 1991). Both of these editions show that there is a revival of the interest in the Byzantine text, mainly in the USA, in late 20th century.

Let us not forget that critical editions of the Greek New Testament comprise an artificial text. These editions are the result—on the basis of scientific principles—of a large portion of manuscripts (geographically and chronologically), but such editions have never been read in the liturgical life of the church. Conversely, the so-called Byzantine text, that which we have referred to repeatedly in this paper as the "liturgical" or "ecclesiastical" text, has been read for many centuries (and is still being read) during the liturgical assemblies of the Orthodox Church primarily in Greek speaking areas, but also in many other lands (however, not in all) by translation into local languages.

3. Should one look at scholarly production in the field of the biblical studies in Greece after World War II, i.e. during the second half of the 20th century, one will notice a huge bibliographic explosion, but a very limited number of studies on New Testament textual criticism. This could be explained by the fact that the needs of post-war Greece were so numerous and of such nature that they justified the priority of theological and exegetical studies. Today, however, since we find ourselves in early 21st century we can verify that "the time has come near" to give due consideration to the area of textual criticism after so much progress has already been made in all other areas of biblical studies. Specifically, a critical edition of the ecclesiastical text is imperative.

In my opinion, the characteristics of this edition should be the following:

- a. The well-known Ecumenical Patriarchate's 1904 edition should serve the base text for the aforementioned edition.
- b. The manuscripts upon which the edition is to be based for the improvement of the text i.e. the choice of the most prevalent readings and of the critical apparatus (the so-called *apparatus criticus*) will certainly be more than the 116 manuscripts that were used for the 1904 edition and they will represent more geographical areas.
- c. Not only the collaboration of specialists who are Greek will be required (the number of whom is extremely limited), but also collaboration with

THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE'S 1904 NEW TESTAMENT EDITION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

international research centres, such as The Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster, Germany; The Centre for Editing of ReligiousTexts at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom; and probably other such centres so that the great experience of the aforementioned research centres can be utilized.

d. It is more than obvious that such a scholarly enterprise cannot be based merely on the good will of Greek and foreign biblical scholars (which is certainly well known), but it requires generous financial support primarily from the Church for obtaining the necessary technological-electronic infrastructure, for copies of Byzantine manuscripts, for the remuneration of the researchers, and for other needs essential to the project.

* * :

I do not, however, wish to conclude this article with financial issues, which are certainly essential. I wish to do so with a theological remark.

The Church has journeyed through history for twenty centuries, producing theology and creating civilisation with important works of art. It confronted heresies on the one hand, while on the other it nourished its members with hymns, rituals of worship, and teachings, leading them to holiness. All these have been accomplished despite any kind of differences among biblical manuscripts, despite the omissions and imperfections of copyists, and despite the errors occurring later in printed editions.

As the word of God "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), sustaining the consequences of human nature (albeit "without sin", according to Hebrews 4:15), in this way also the words of the Son and Logos of God taking the form of human language and being written down in manuscripts sustained the consequences of human weakness. The frequently tired copyists of the manuscripts (monks or people living in the world) sometimes made errors unconsciously, while at other times they consciously "improved" the text on the basis of their own philological knowledge.

Nevertheless, the above theological position towards the imperfections of the manuscripts neither excuses nor justifies the negligence or indifference of contemporary editors of the New Testament. Neither does it constitute a reason for us today to avoid a serious occupation with the publication of a carefully studied text of the Holy Scriptures with its variant readings which constitute a part of the ecclesiastical tradition. A critical edition of the ecclesiastical text is not useless scholasticism, but it is an expression of our love for the word of God.

There is an urgent need today for a new edition of the New Testament—a critical edition at this time—100 years and more after the first basic edition by the Ecumenical Patriarchate which was created without a critical apparatus (apparatus criticus) of the ecclesiastical or liturgical text of the New Testament (i.e. the Byzantine text as referred to by foreign scholars). This new edition will consider as many manuscripts as possible. In other words, it will have a broader basis of manuscripts that did the 1904 edition.

IOANNIS D. KARAVIDOPOULOS

If the Church during the centuries has occupied itself with the copying of the manuscripts, with the reconstruction of the biblical text (as an example I would like to mention the critical work done by Lucian of Antioch, the presbyter and martyr, in the 4^{th} century), if the Church has adorned some manuscripts with beautiful iconographic illuminations (μικρογραφίες), with ornate decorations of the capital letter beginning paragraphs (αρχικά γράμματα), and with creatively shaped designs (επίτιτλα), and has shown its concern with manuscripts in every way, why would the Church not be in a position today to proceed with an edition of the New Testament with scholarly specifications and, above all, with a uniform text?

Ioannis D. KARAVIDOPOULOS Professor Emeritus, University of Thessaloniki Greece