CHAPTER 14
The Text of the Pauline Corpus
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The raw material for any critical study of Paul’s theology and thought is found in the Greek text of his writings. These writings have a transmission history ranging from the historical act of the sending of the letter itself — or, alternatively, from the moment in which the first edition of Paul was released for copying — to the mechanized printing of the modern era. Text critics have busied themselves with the text of the New Testament and produced a substantial body of detailed studies and scholarly literature. This chapter will look at the Pauline corpus through the lens of a subdiscipline of biblical studies, namely, that of textual criticism.

Modern Editions of the Text of Paul

Since no separate edition of the Greek text of the Pauline corpus has been published, New Testament scholars usually restrict themselves to one of the two critical editions of the Greek New Testament, the Nestle–Aland twenty-seventh edition (NA27) and the fourth edition published by the United Bible Society (UBS4). Both of these are pocket editions and contain only a selection of the total variation found in the manuscript tradition and only part of the available evidence. They contain exactly the same text of the New Testament, having been produced by the same committee. The difference lies in the textual apparatus: the apparatus of UBS4 contains fewer variants but tends to give more information on the evidence for each of the variants cited, whereas NA27 has many more (but certainly not all) variants and presents the evidence more compactly. The text that these two editions share was already produced for NA26 (published...
in 1979) and UBS3 (published in 1975). As for the Nestle-Aland series of editions, these constituted an independent critical text only from NA26 onward. Before this, the text was that formed by a comparison of three late nineteenth-century texts, those of Westcott–Hort, Tischendorf, and Weiss (or Weymouth for the first two editions).

If one does not want to consult transcriptions of individual manuscripts, but still wants to gain access to a collection of variants besides those offered in NA27, a number of older critical editions are still very useful: (1) S. P. Tregelles, *The Greek New Testament* (1857–1872); (2) Tischendorf’s eighth edition, *Editio octava critica maior* (1869–1872); and (3) H. von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (second edition, 1911–1913). None of these is without errors or flaws, and one has to get used to von Soden’s rather eccentric way of presenting the evidence. A good conversion table to translate his manuscript designations to those of the now standard Gregory–Aland list can be found as an appendix to Kurt Aland’s *Kurzgefasste Liste* (Kurt Aland 1994). Also useful are the line-by-line collations by Reuben Swanson (*New Testament Greek Manuscripts*). The volumes on individual New Testament books compare a fair number of manuscripts and even pay attention to minor details. However, the volumes have not all been thoroughly proofread and need to be accessed with some caution. Four volumes of Pauline materials – on Galatians, Romans, and 1 and 2 Corinthians – have so far been published (Swanson 2008a–d).

### The Manuscripts of the Greek Tradition

The text of the traditional Pauline corpus does not have as many individual manuscript witnesses as the four gospels, but the quality and age of the manuscripts are by no means inferior to those of any other part of the New Testament. Papyrus manuscripts are normally designated with the Gothic letter \( \mathfrak{p} \); these manuscripts date from the second to the eighth century. Manuscripts written in capital letters on parchment (hence “majuscule” manuscripts) are designated by a number starting with 0, sometimes preceded by a capital letter, such as *Codex Vaticanus*: B (03); these date from the third to the tenth century. Minuscule manuscripts, written in a cursive Greek script on parchment and later also on paper, are designated by a simple number (for example, the Leicester codex: 69) and date from the ninth century until the advance of the printing press. Kurt Aland and co-workers (1991, 138) mention 798 manuscripts containing text from the Pauline corpus, though only 742 of these could be used in his 1991 work as some were inaccessible or otherwise lost. A large number of these manuscripts contain lacunae or are fragmentary.

The two earliest papyrus manuscripts are both paleographically dated around AD 200 (\( \mathfrak{p}^{12}, \mathfrak{p}^{16} \)). The first of these is a fragment of a codex leaf containing only parts of a few verses from Titus, but the second one, the Chester Beatty codex of the Pauline epistles, contains in its present form text from all the letters belonging to the traditional Pauline corpus (including Hebrews) except 2 Thessalonians, the Pastoral epistles, and Philemon. The codex was formed by folding fifty-two papyrus sheets together to form one large quire (which had 104 folios and thus 208 pages). Parts of eighty-six folios have survived and are currently kept in Michigan and at the Chester Beatty library.
in Dublin. The last remaining leaf ends with 1 Thessalonians 5 (the verso of folio 97), which leaves sixteen pages for 2 Thessalonians and, possibly, the Pastoral epistles. This would clearly not be enough for all the remaining text, and the discussion whether the Pastorals were included and continued on additional leaves, or whether they were never intended to be part of this collection, is still continuing (Royse 2008, 202–203).

A further twelve fragments are all dated to the third century (eleven papyri, \(p^{12}, p^{15}, p^{27}, p^{30}, p^{40}, p^{49}, p^{65}, p^{87}, p^{111}, p^{114}, p^{118}\), and one majuscule parchment manuscript, 0220). Of these, only \(p^{30}\) contains text from more than one letter (1–2 Thess), and all are fragmentary. \(p^{40}\) is one of the more extensive as it consists of a series of eleven fragments from Romans 1–9; not only are these fragments very hard to read, however, but there is still uncertainty regarding the manuscript’s date. Aland dated it to the third century (in Junack et al. 1989, xxxix), yet the holding institution, the Papyrological Institute of Heidelberg, describes Aland’s claim as “kaum richtig” (“hardly right”) and dates it much later, to the fifth/sixth century. In total, there are five third-century manuscripts that contain only text from Romans, including the oldest fragment of the text of Paul on parchment, 0220. The limited amount of preserved material of many of these manuscripts makes it hard to assess their exact textual value or to say anything definite about the origin and context of the text. Most have text on the front and back, indicating that they formed part of a leaf, which was probably part of a larger codex: but \(p^{114}\) has the beginning of a few lines of Hebrews 1 written at the bottom of a page, whereas the other side of this fragment is without any text. It is possible that we are looking at “page 2” of a Hebrews codex and that page 1 was only used as a cover or title page. In the absence of more data, however, firm conclusions cannot be drawn. Another papyrus containing text from Hebrews 1 is \(p^{12}\). This manuscript is a private letter in Greek, in three columns, and written from Rome to Egypt probably in the third quarter of the third century. It has Hebrews 1:1 jotted above column two (not in the same hand) and Genesis 1:1–4 on the verso. There is a clear thematic relation between the two passages of Scripture, but there is no clear link to the text of the letter itself. Though fragments such as these provide a witness to the text of the Pauline corpus, they were clearly never intended to be a continuous text.

If we look then at the manuscripts dated third/fourth century and those within the fourth century, we see that the proportion of majuscule manuscripts on parchment increases (six parchments, \(K[01], B[03], 0185, 0221, 0228, 0230\), and seven papyri, \(p^{13}, p^{16}, p^{92}, p^{10}, p^{17}, p^{89}, p^{123}\)). Moreover, the total amount of text preserved on parchment outweighs by far the contribution of the papyrus manuscripts in this period. The largest of the papyri is \(p^{13}\). Written on the back of a scroll containing a Latin epitome of Livy, it is the only document in our survey that is a scroll rather than a codex. Each column is numbered, and about one-third of Hebrews is present. The column numbering suggests that another work preceded Hebrews. Before the scroll was reused for the biblical text, it was repaired and strengthened with strips of papyrus. \(p^{92}\) has text from Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians from two different folios. However, none of the other five papyri from the third/fourth or fourth century has text from more than one folio. \(p^{10}\) has been labeled a writing exercise, and it clearly betrays an inexperienced hand. Most of the papyrus sheet, which is well preserved, is left blank. Only at the beginning
of the verso is the text of Romans 1:1–7 written in what may well have been a school exercise. Though a witness to the text of Paul, \( p^{10} \) does not come from a manuscript containing the Pauline corpus. Parchment 0230 (dated fourth/fifth century by the original editors) is the earliest Greek–Latin manuscript of Paul, containing text from Ephesians 6. Only four lines are preserved: on the recto we find the Latin (Eph 6:5–6), on the verso the Greek (6:11–12). The text is laid out in short sense-lines, just as in the later Codex Claromontanus D (06), though the lines are shorter in the latter. If, as is likely, a page contained only a single column, then on each opening one would have had the Greek on the left hand page and the Latin on the right.

Among all the fourth-century manuscripts, the two that stand out are the majuscules Codex Vaticanus B (03) and Codex Sinaiticus \( \aleph \) (01). Though Codex Vaticanus is not complete in the Pauline corpus (the text from Heb 9:14 onward, including that of the Pastoral epistles and Philemon, is missing), Codex Sinaiticus is complete. At an early time, still in the production stage of the manuscript, one sheet was replaced in Sinaiticus, so that 1 Thessalonians 2:14–5:28 and Hebrews 4:16–8:1 are written by a different, but contemporary, scribe. The other parchment manuscripts from this period are, again, all fragmentary and contain only text from a single folio.

From the fourth century on, the total amount of evidence becomes more extensive, but only two papyrus manuscripts merit special attention. The first, \( p^{99} \) (Chester Beatty codex AC1499, dated around 400), is listed as a New Testament papyrus, but does not contain any continuous text. It is a non-systematic Greek–Latin lexicon or glossary in which terms from parts of four Pauline epistles are translated. The same manuscript also contains Greek grammatical inflections. The other papyrus to be mentioned here is at present the latest papyrus with text from Paul. \( p^{61} \) consists of a number of fragments from a papyrus codex that may have contained the whole of the Pauline corpus. Text has been preserved from Romans, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, Titus, and Philemon. Aland dates this manuscript to around 700.

Many of the parchment manuscripts of Paul from the fifth century or later (over sixty are listed) do not contain much text, but a number of them do. From the fifth century comes Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus C (04), a palimpsest which was overwritten in the twelfth century with sermons of the Syrian church father St. Ephrem. A considerable number of the original leaves have been deciphered and were first published by Tischendorf. Also from the fifth century comes Codex Alexandrinus A (02), which contains the complete text of Paul except for 2 Corinthians 4:14–12:6. Variously dated to the fifth or sixth century, the Freer Codex of the Pauline epistles, I (016), is a heavily damaged codex of which eighty-four incomplete folios survive. A manuscript that has been reused twice (a double palimpsest) is 048 from the fifth century, with fragmentary text from almost every letter of the Pauline corpus. Of particular importance is the Codex Claromontanus D (06), a Greek–Latin bilingual manuscript with the two languages on facing pages. The text, which is virtually complete, has a close affinity with two other bilingual manuscripts of Paul: the ninth-century manuscripts Codex Augiensis F (010) and Codex Boernerianus G (012). Another majuscule manuscript of the Pauline corpus from the sixth century is Codex Coislinianus H (015), which is dispersed over no less than six holding institutions but is not complete (forty-one folios remain). Other more or less
complete majuscules that contain the text of Paul are K (018) with a hiatus in Romans and 1 Corinthians. Codex Angelicus L (020), the palimpsest Codex Porphyrianus P (025), 049, 0150, and 0151. All these date from the ninth century. In addition, there are complete majuscules from the ninth/tenth century, Ψ (044), and from the tenth, 075.

From the ninth century onward, most manuscripts were no longer written in the majuscule script but in a cursive (or minuscule) script. A number of these late manuscripts preserve an old text. That, for example, minuscule 1739 (tenth century) is a copy of a fourth-century codex has been argued on the basis of the citations from the church fathers in the margin (Metzger 1981, 112). Likewise, though the main text of minuscule 424 (eleventh century) is very similar to the standard Byzantine text of the day, it contains a series of corrections that must have been made against a manuscript with a minuscule 1739 type of text. Minuscule 1881 (fourteenth century) is also a member of the same text family and is of great importance. The earliest printed New Testaments were based on late minuscule manuscripts with a Byzantine text.

Other Testimony to the Text of Paul

The Latin tradition is the most extensive of all early translations. Here – unlike the situation in the Greek tradition – we know of an official edition commissioned and sanctioned by Pope Damasus. Around AD 383, Damasus asked Jerome to remedy the situation in which a variety of Latin versions of the Scriptures were in use by producing a definitive edition; it became known as the Vulgate. Much is known about the pre-Vulgate text from a number of manuscripts, but especially from citations by church fathers. A critical text is made available in the Vetus Latina series, though Romans – 2 Corinthians have yet to appear (see also Frede 1964). The text of Paul as found in most Vulgate manuscripts is first found in the work of Pelagius (early fifth century) and probably goes back to the edition made by Jerome. It is unclear whether Jerome produced a critical edition of the Pauline corpus or whether he sanctioned an already existing text; Parker (2008, 266) does not find any positive evidence that Jerome actually revised the text of Paul as he had done with the gospels. For the Vulgate text, the best edition is still that of Wordsworth–White (1913–1939). The only other early translation that is reasonably well preserved is the Syriac Peshitta, which originated probably in the fourth or early fifth century. The exact origins of this particular version remain highly uncertain, as is the question whether the Peshitta, which became the dominant text in both branches of the Syriac church, is the work of a single authority or of a number of different hands (Metzger 1977, 56–63). The Pauline corpus is available in a recent edition by Barbara Aland and Andreas Juckel (1991–2002).

The other source of information on the textual history of the Pauline corpus is citations by church fathers, including commentaries on the text and even discussions of known variant readings. Though the works of these church fathers have themselves come down to us by means of a manuscript transmission and modern editions, they provide essential information for the textual criticism of Paul (note also the discussion on Marcion below).
Organizing the Evidence

Text-types

The text of the Pauline corpus presents us with fewer problems than that of the gospels, Acts, or the Apocalypse. Though there are important variations in the text, the extent of the differences between the text-types is much less than in the gospels. Recently, the traditional concept of “text-types” has itself come under criticism, with several prominent scholars voicing reservations about the imprecision of the term (Parker 2008, 171–174); a more fluid concept of the whole textual tradition is preferred. Kurt Aland and co-workers (1991, 165) dismiss the notion of a Western text in Paul, arguing that the character of the variants attested by the so-called “Western” witnesses of Paul, D (06), F (010), and G (012), is very different from the typical Western variants in the gospels and Acts. Thus, though the unique textual character of these three manuscripts is not denied, this does not, in Aland’s view, justify labeling these manuscripts as representatives of a distinct text-type. On the other hand, though organizing the manuscripts in a plot diagram on the basis of statistical methods (such as multivariate analysis) has not attracted a large following in text-critical circles, preliminary results indicate that the concept of text-types is still maintainable, but without the suggestion that such a text is the result of a single recension. Eldon Epp suggested the designation “textual cluster” or “constellation” (1995, 16). All in all, there remains some practical advantage in maintaining the traditional terminology. The three traditional text-types – “Alexandrian,” “Western,” and “Byzantine” – can be recognized in Paul, but there is considerable overlap between them.

A particular pitfall for New Testament scholars is that of transferring wholesale to the Pauline corpus distinctions learned in the textual criticism of the four gospels. In point of fact, some important manuscripts that contain both the gospels and Paul differ in their textual character and the quality of the text between these two major subdivisions. Codex Alexandrinus A (02) has clear Byzantine affinities in the gospels, but is “Alexandrian” in Paul. Similarly, Codex Vaticanus B (03) appears to have a higher proportion of less-reliable readings in the Pauline corpus than elsewhere. The point can be illustrated from Romans 9, a chapter for which NA27 lists seven variants where Vaticanus has a reading with only minimal additional support, and none of these is deemed original.

As Weiss (1896a; see below) extensively demonstrated, the Byzantine text-type is well represented in the majuscules K (018), L (020), and P (025); the Western text in D (06), F (010), and G (012); and the Alexandrian text in ℵ (01), A (02), B (03), and C (04). The early papyrus p⁴⁶ belongs to the Alexandrian group as well, though it has a considerable number of non-typical readings.

Aland’s Text und Textwert

To date, the most ambitious attempt to order and classify the Greek manuscripts of the Pauline epistles is the set of four volumes published by Kurt Aland and co-workers in the series Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments (1991).
The manuscripts are classified on the basis of 251 test passages selected from throughout the corpus. The test passages were chosen to achieve a number of goals. First, they function to separate the bulk of Byzantine manuscripts from the manuscripts that contain an older text. Second, the test passages help to establish whether a manuscript has a similar type of text throughout the Pauline corpus or whether it changes character. Third, the test passages help to illustrate the history of some early corruptions in the non-Byzantine witnesses that never entered the majority text. The variants attested in a single test passage are numbered using a fixed scheme. Variant 1 is always the majority text (which includes the Byzantine text but need not be limited to this text-type); variant 2 is the reading regarded as the original text; and variants 3 and higher list alternative readings that do not belong to either group. Readings that are both considered original and found in the Byzantine tradition are labeled 1/2. This group of readings often contains places where one or more manuscripts of the Alexandrian tradition do not preserve the original text.

The data resulting from collating all the Pauline manuscripts are presented in a number of ways. The results organized by manuscript are given in the Gesamtübersicht; in the introduction to each of the individual letters, each manuscript is ranked according to its percentage of old readings; and the collation of all manuscripts for each test passage is found in the Resultate der Kollation. Then there are two lists in which a manuscript is compared with other manuscripts, measured in a percentage of agreement. In the first list, the Hauptliste, a manuscript is listed together with its closest relatives in descending order on the basis of agreements in non-majority variants only (i.e., where the manuscripts share a variant reading of types 2, 1/2, and 3ff., but excluding cases where they share a reading found in the majority text [=type 1]). In the separately bound Ergänzungsliste, the closest relatives are again listed, but this time on the basis of a comparison of all agreements in the test passages, including those in which the majority reading is shared.

Despite their cumbersome format and the plethora of statistical data, the volumes of Text und Textwert on the Pauline corpus are still indispensable for any serious textual criticism of Paul. They provide information on the manuscripts that most often agree with the NA26 and NA27 text, give information on the consistency of relationships to other manuscripts over the different books of the Pauline corpus, and indicate the proneness of a manuscript to contain singular or poorly attested readings. Criticism of the method followed by Aland pointed out that these volumes presuppose knowledge of the “oldest text” before assessing the quality of a manuscript, and that the grouping of variants in the various categories presupposes a certain view of the textual development and transmission. Additionally, comparing manuscripts on the basis of a percentage of agreement (a two-dimensional comparison) does not do justice to the complexity of interrelations. However, the fact that each manuscript is compared to every other manuscript obviates much of the latter objection.

One result of the comparisons in Text und Textwert pointed out by Aland (1991, 147–148) is that the Byzantine text is shown to have a large influence on the whole textual tradition of Paul; there are few manuscripts with a predominantly independent and old text. Also, manuscripts frequently change in textual character; minuscule 33 (ninth century), for example, has a strongly Byzantine text in Romans, but a non-Byzantine text in 1 Corinthians.
Marcion and the Text of the Pauline Canon

According to the testimony of the early church, the heretic Marcion (expelled from the Roman church in AD 144) had perhaps a greater influence on the rise of variant readings in the Pauline corpus than anyone else. Marcion produced his own Pauline corpus, the Apostolikon, in which he eliminated many references to Paul’s use of the Old Testament and, to a certain degree, edited and rewrote other phrases or passages. Tertullian dealt with many of the so-called textual changes introduced by Marcion in Book 5 of his Against Marcion. Some of the readings he notes occur sporadically in actual manuscripts, but there is not a single manuscript that has been shown to contain the text of Marcion with any measure of consistency. Indeed, some of Marcion’s readings that are explicitly condemned by Tertullian are now regarded as cases in which Tertullian’s own biblical text was corrupt (for example, Gal 2:5, which Tertullian read without the οὐδὲ; see Tertullian Against Marcion 5.3; Harnack 1924 [Beilage], 70–71). Despite Harnack’s assertion that Tertullian used a Latin translation of Marcion’s Apostolikon, it seems almost certain now that this was not the case (Schmid 1995, 40–59). Besides Tertullian’s discussion of Marcion’s interpretation and text of Paul, the other sources for particular readings of Marcion’s Apostolikon are the dialogues of Adamantius and Epiphanius’s treatment of Marcion in the Panarion.

What can be said about the nature of the text with which Marcion started? Clabeaux (1989) attempted in a monograph-length study to reconstruct this text. The method Clabeaux used to filter out the pre-Marcionite readings from the attested Marcionite readings was to disregard readings that are the result of the tendentious theological agenda of Marcion, and to allow readings that can be explained as having originated in merely mechanical errors or that are also found in manuscripts that cannot possibly have been influenced by Marcion. According to Clabeaux, the eighty-two remaining readings correlate most closely to a particular type of text within the Old Latin (the I group, found in Rome and central Italy from the second half of the fourth century). Schmid (1995, 17–23) raises objections against some of Clabeaux’s criteria, noting, for example, that he does not reckon with the possibility that mechanical errors could have occurred in the Marcionite texts themselves after he made his edition. Moreover, according to Schmid, both the transparency and execution of the work leave much to be desired. Therefore, Schmid offers his own reconstruction of those parts of the Apostolikon of Marcion for which positive evidence exists and uses it as a basis for further work. It is unlikely that Marcion is the source of the Western text; rather, Schmid concludes, Marcion derived his text from a text-form that also lies at the base of the Old Latin and Old Syriac.

The Pauline Collection

Marcion may have been the first person to be charged with deliberately altering the text of Paul, but he is also the first one about whom we know that he worked with a specific collection of Paul’s letters. From Tertullian, we know that Marcion accepted only the letters to the seven churches plus that to Philemon. The order of these letters is also unique, not found in any extant manuscript: Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans,
1 and 2 Thessalonians, Laodiceans, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon (though Epiphanius makes mention of Philemon after Colossians). Placing Galatians at the head of the collection may have been for doctrinal reasons, though an order based on a perceived chronology is also possible. The order Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans is also found in the Old Syriac, but there the order of the remaining letters is substantially different. Laodiceans is the letter known as Ephesians. This order of the Pauline corpus is also reflected in the so-called Marcionite Prologues, a set of brief introductions to each letter preserved only in the Latin manuscript tradition. Whether these prologues in fact come from the hand of Marcion or from an orthodox author is still under debate (Schäfer 1970; Dahl 1978; Schmid 1995, 284–294). If these Prologues are pre-Marcionite, they may provide the earliest evidence of a fixed and organized collection of the Pauline corpus that existed very early in the second century.

Our current order of the letters is found in most Greek and Latin (Vulgate) manuscripts and is first explicitly found in Amphilechius of Iconium (d. 394; see Frede 1966–1971, 294). In this order, Hebrews appears as the last letter, but elsewhere it is placed between the letters to the seven churches and the Pastorals (Paschal letter of Athanasius [AD 367]; Codex Sinaiticus ℵ [01]; Codex Vaticanus B [03], though without the Pastoral letters), or immediately after Romans (p46, with Galatians and Ephesians transposed). Other variations are found, but rarely do these represent more than an idiosyncratic or accidental order. Of these, the order in the Muratorian Canon is among the most eccentric: Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, Thessalonians, Romans.

It has been argued that the Pauline corpus was the first section of the New Testament to be brought together (Trobisch 1989; 2000). Trobisch takes issue with any model that assumes a gradual development of the collection, as suggested for the whole New Testament by Theodor Zahn. To Trobisch, there is ample evidence to suggest that a deliberate and edited edition of Paul lies at the very root of the Pauline corpus; the original edition may even go back to Paul himself. As evidence for such an edition, he cites the use of the nomina sacra (i.e., the practice, almost universal in the manuscript tradition, of contracting certain names and words such as Jesus, Christ, God, and so on, rather than writing them out in full) and the common use of the codex, a feature characteristic of early Christianity. Trobisch also notes that the arrangement and number of writings within the four collections that make up the New Testament (the four gospels, the praxapostolos [Acts and the Catholic Letters], the Pauline collection, and Revelation) are fairly constant. The opposite view was defended by Aland, who argued on the basis of the changing textual character between the individual letters of Paul within a single manuscript that the existence of such early collections is extremely unlikely (Kurt Aland 1979b).

**Studies of the Manuscript Tradition and its Variants**

In the space of this chapter, it is not possible to discuss the numerous studies on individual manuscripts or specific variants. The best sources for finding such studies are Elliott (2000; supplemented in Elliott 2004 and 2007) and literature references in good
technical commentaries. An overview of the past century of scholarship should start with the German scholar Bernhard Weiss, who prepared a Greek text of the New Testament and accompanied this text with a series of detailed studies of the manuscript tradition (1896a; 1896b). His study of the Pauline corpus was published separately. All elements of the method that Weiss used are still found in current New Testament textual criticism, though the balance between the various criteria and particular judgments have shifted. His edition of the Greek text became very influential on various editions of the Nestle text. The first Nestle edition (1898) was based on the editions of Tischendorf and Westcott–Hort, with the text of Weymouth assigned the deciding vote in case of any difference. From 1901, the place of Weymouth was taken by the text of Weiss, though the actual printed text was only sparingly changed. The principle of preferring the majority reading of Tischendorf, Westcott–Hort, and Weiss was rigorously applied in Nestle’s thirteenth edition from 1927 (Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland 1987, 19–20).

The main focus of Weiss lies on eleven manuscripts written in majuscule (Greek capital script) that contain most of the traditional Pauline corpus, including Hebrews. The manuscripts are divided into three groups, though Weiss avoids labeling these with a specific name. The majuscles K (018 Codex Mosquensis), L (020 Codex Angelicus), and P (025 Codex Porphyrianus) form a group that most would call the Byzantine text. Three Greek–Latin bilingual manuscripts – D (06 Codex Claromontanus), F (010 Codex Augiensis), and G (012 Codex Boernerianus) – constitute the second group (the “Western text”). The last group is formed by ℵ (01 Codex Sinaiticus), A (02 Codex Alexandrinus), B (03 Codex Vaticanus), and C (04 Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus). Weiss also mentions a manuscript E (Codex Sangermanensis), a ninth-century copy of D, which is listed in the second group. None of these groups provides direct access to the oldest attainable text, and in Weiss’s view, none of these groups is in its entirety dependent on any of the other groups. Here Weiss differs from the reconstruction of the transmission of the text proposed by Westcott–Hort, who argued, mainly on the basis of the situation in the four gospels, that the Byzantine text was derived from both the Western and the Neutral/Alexandrian groups. Still, Weiss concludes that B (03) is a very good witness to the text of Paul, one that often, against all the others, or with support from some of the other members of its group, retains the original reading. These conclusions are based on an extensive discussion of many individual variants under the general headings of substitutions, additions/omissions, and transpositions.

Probably the most important methodological rule used to decide between variants is to choose the variant that best explains the rise of the other variant(s) in a given passage. Differences between textual critics arise over the type of explanation given of how one variant derives from the other. Weiss emphasized the importance of the influence of parallels and similar constructions elsewhere in the text. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 1:6, “testimony of God” (τὸ μαρτυρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ) is found in a few manuscripts (B F G) instead of “testimony of Christ” (τὸ μαρτυρίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ, attested by most other witnesses). Weiss was confident that the text should read “testimony of Christ” (so also NA27) since the name “God” is likely to have been introduced through the influence of a similar expression (at least in many manuscripts) in 1 Corinthians 2:1. Likewise, the article before “Christ” (ὁ Χριστός) in 1 Corinthians 1:17 as found in B F
G (and, unknown to Weiss, also in $\text{p}^{46}$) is explained as influenced by the expression “cross of Christ” (σταύρος τοῦ Χριστοῦ) later in the same verse. Though Weiss did not make great contributions to the theory of textual criticism or advance his own reconstruction of the earliest transmission history, he made many fine judgments on individual readings.

The next major contribution to Pauline textual scholarship is found in the work of Hans Lietzmann (1933). In his introduction to Romans, he gives a comprehensive overview of all the available materials and of his own understanding of the earliest textual history of the Pauline corpus. He contends that all the various text-forms in existence go back to a single collection of Paul’s letters, the content and (in its essentials) order of which were everywhere preserved (1933, 1–2). A rather different view of the earliest shape of the text was advanced by Günther Zuntz (1953) in his landmark lectures of 1946. Seven years passed between the delivering and the publishing of these Schweich lectures, a study that still stands as a monument of critical and reasoned scholarship (Holmes 2006). Zuntz was the first to include the Chester Beatty papyrus containing the Pauline corpus ($\text{p}^{46}$) in a comprehensive view of the history of transmission. Though he concentrates on Paul, and mainly discusses variants from 1 Corinthians and Hebrews, Zuntz holds that his reconstruction can be applied to the entire New Testament. In the very first stage, the letters of Paul were copied individually. Already very early on, around AD 100, the letters were brought together into a corpus, and an edition was issued. However, at that time a rather lax attitude to copying existed within the church and many corruptions entered the text. As these became dominant and widespread, the result was the “Western text.” In Alexandria, a philological attitude existed which was concerned with preserving (or re-creating) a relatively pure text. The earliest testimony to Paul, $\text{p}^{46}$, clearly shows influence of this purer text that was being developed in Egypt. It was from this text that the Coptic versions were translated. It is important to note that these two branches, the Western and Eastern (or Alexandrian) texts, are by no means internally homogeneous; they do not go back to a single recension and cannot be reduced to a single voice. Later, in the eighth century, the Byzantine text was produced within the Eastern tradition; consequently, it too contained very ancient readings. For Zuntz, therefore, it would be dangerous to ignore any of the witnesses and textual traditions, since any one of these can contain the original reading.

The earliest period, before individual letters were brought together to form a Pauline corpus, has left very few traces. One must distinguish between the “original” (i.e., the letters as written) and the “archetype” (the version from which all known copies arise). One example of a primitive, pre-edition corruption is the phrase “to judge between his brother” in 1 Corinthians 6:5, where Zuntz assumes that Paul must have written “to judge between a brother and his brother.” Another is Hebrews 11:4, where Zuntz accepts Cobet’s conjecture $\text{HAEIONA}$ (“more agreeable offering”) instead of $\text{PAEIONA}$ (“more offering”).

Bruce M. Metzger published a commentary on selected variants of the UBS3 Greek text in 1971 (second edition for UBS4 in 1994), reflecting the reasons behind the decisions made by the committee responsible for the text. In the first edition, a little over 170 pages are devoted to discussing 494 variants in the Pauline corpus (250 variants from Romans to 2 Corinthians, 244 from Galatians to Hebrews); the second edition
contains 162 pages and 517 variants (238 from Romans to 2 Corinthians, 279 from Galatians to Hebrews). Though many of the discussions are extremely succinct, they provide good insight into how the committee tried to balance external and internal evidence (i.e., how well a particular reading is attested in the textual tradition, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, how likely it is deemed to be original in a particular context, bearing in mind the author’s style, transcriptional probabilities, and so on).

David Parker (2008, 246–282) discusses the Pauline collection in the context of his study of New Testament manuscripts and their texts. He starts by investigating the testimony of the individual letters to the process of their own composition, then treats their gathering into one corpus and subsequent transmission. Parker also gives an overview and assessment of the nature of the three most important versions, the Syriac, Latin, and Coptic.

Some Selected Problems

The following are among the best known textual problems in the Pauline corpus and illustrate the various issues and types of evidence brought to bear upon text-critical questions.

The Shape of Romans

Kurt Aland labeled the issue of the original shape of Romans the most difficult problem confronting the textual critic (1979a, 284; see also Gamble 1977; Parker 2008, 270–274). The position of the doxology 16:25–27 varies among the manuscripts (after 14:23, after 15:33, and after 16:23), the inclusion of 16:24 is highly uncertain, and some Latin systems of chapter headings are evidently based on a version of Romans lacking the final two chapters. Marcion’s text of Romans, too, did not contain chapters 15 and 16, and it may well be that this short form of Romans was what he received. All these factors point to a complicated textual history. Which form of Romans is original? Are chapters 15 and 16 part of the letter? Interestingly, there are no manuscripts that lack the text of chapters 15 and 16, though in minuscule 1506 chapter 16 alone is missing (Aland 1979a, 297). Various explanations have been suggested, ranging from an early accidental loss of the final chapters to a deliberate attempt to edit the letter for more general usage (a similar explanation is given for the absence of “in Ephesus” in Eph 1:1). Alternatively, chapter 16 has been explained as the greetings section of a letter sent to Ephesus that became attached to Romans.

Hebrews 2:9

Though the overwhelming majority of Greek witnesses of Hebrews 2:9 read that Jesus “might taste death by the grace of God” (χάριτι Θεοῦ), some manuscripts read “without God” (χωρίς Θεοῦ). This latter reading has also been found in some Syriac and Coptic
manuscripts, in the margin of a Latin manuscript, and in patristic discussions of the passage going back as far as Origen, who concluded that both readings convey the same truth (Comm. John 1.256). Some have argued for the originality of “without God” as being in line with the theology of Hebrews (Ehrman 1993, 146–150), attributing the alternative reading to an attempt by the orthodox church to eliminate a Christologically difficult text. Others (for example, Metzger 1994, 594), working from χάσω συν Θεού, see the second reading as a scribal lapse or the intrusion of a marginal comment that belonged originally to the previous verse.

Romans 5:1

Is the mood of the main verb in Romans 5:1 subjunctive (“let us have peace with God”) or indicative (“we have peace with God”)? The subjunctive ἔχωμεν was the more popular reading in the nineteenth century (Tregelles, Tischendorf, Westcott–Hort) because of its stronger external attestation. Internal considerations, taking note of the nature of Paul’s argument, have led many to adopt the indicative ἔχωμεν, reading the verse as a statement of what the justified already possess. Confusion could arise easily because it is likely that already in the first centuries of the transmission of the New Testament, the difference between the Greek letters omicron and omega was no longer heard. Similar variants occur at several places (for example, 1 Cor 15:49; Heb 12:28).

Issues in 1 Corinthians

Two well-known variant readings, in which the choice is between two different lexical items, are found in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 2:1, the options are “mystery [μυστήριον] of God” or “witness [μαρτύριον] of God.” Both words are used in the near vicinity of 2:1: “mystery” in 2:7, “witness” in 1:6. The external attestation is stronger for the second reading, but many believe that the use of “mystery” fits better with the following verses. The change of a single letter makes a great difference in 13:3, where the choice is basically between καυχήσομαι and καυχήσομαι (i.e., “hand over my body to be burned” or “hand over my body so that I may boast”). Since the second reading is the more difficult one, it has been argued that it is easier to explain the rise of the first from the second than vice versa. On the other hand, the sense of the second reading may be so difficult that it actually harms the natural flow of the passage. Both readings have good support.

The verses in which women are ordered to keep silence (1 Cor 14:34–35) have attracted extensive debate. Some argue that, since these verses are transposed to a position after verse 40 in the Western text, they are not original but represent a non-Pauline interpolation (see, especially, Walker 2001, 63–90). However, the textual basis for this claim is rather slim.
1 Thessalonians 2.7

A variant in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 has spawned an impressive amount of discussion and literature (see Fee 2009, 65–71). The difference between the two readings is a single letter, ν. Either the text reads ἐγεννηθημεν νήπιοι (“we were as children”) or ἐγεννηθημεν ἴηπιοι (“we were gentle”). Based on internal grounds, many commentators have preferred the reading “gentle,” but the external evidence favors “children.” The transcriptional closeness between the two readings becomes even more apparent when one realizes that, as a rule, the text in the oldest manuscripts was written in scriptio continua; that is, without accents, breathing marks, and word divisions.

1 Timothy 3:16

In 1 Timothy 3:16, all modern translations read something like “he was revealed in flesh.” However, the majority of later Greek manuscripts read “God” as the subject of this phrase. Here, the difference is even less than a full letter, ΩΣ (the relative pronoun) over against ΩΣ (with a horizontal stroke over both letters, a contracted form of Θεός). A number of words and names, such as “Jesus,” “Christ,” “God,” “Lord,” and “Spirit,” were written in these contracted forms (nomina sacra), in which only the first and last letter(s) were represented. This practice originally arose out of reverence, but in some manuscripts nomina sacra are applied to any qualifying word, irrespective of whether the referent was sacramal or non-sacramal. In this particular variant, it appears that the relative pronoun was mistaken for, or rewritten as, a nomen sacrum.

References


