

AN INTRODUCTION
to the
GREEK
NEW TESTAMENT

PRODUCED AT
TYNDALE HOUSE, CAMBRIDGE



DIRK JONGKIND

“*The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* is one of the most exciting publications in biblical studies in the last decade. This new and user-friendly critical edition of the Greek New Testament now has a superb companion in Dirk Jongkind’s *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament*. Jongkind describes not only how the *Tyndale House Edition* came to be but also how any critical edition of the Greek New Testament came to be. Jongkind does a superb job explaining very technical topics related to manuscripts, textual variants, the Textus Receptus, and more, and explaining why it matters. Your seminary professor can teach you how to read Greek, but Jongkind teaches you how to read a critical edition of the Greek New Testament. A must-have resource for all students of biblical Greek.”

Michael F. Bird, Academic Dean and Lecturer in Theology,
Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia

“This introduction to *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* took me by surprise. Textual criticism is an arcane discipline not well served by the combative and abstruse writing of many of its practitioners. Jongkind’s elegant yet almost carefree style, however, is refreshing for its clarity, simplicity, and irenic tone. This book is a delight to read on its own. The author goes to great lengths to make *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* accessible. His introduction is even an excellent primer on New Testament textual criticism. Jongkind introduces the reader to manuscripts, textual theory, praxis, major textual problems, and even brief theological reflections on the reality of textual variants. It is no easy task to render this field of study within the grasp of any interested reader, and Dirk Jongkind has done so in a remarkably disarming manner.”

Daniel B. Wallace, Senior Research Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary; Executive Director, Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts; author, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*

“Pulling back the curtain on the origins of the Greek New Testament, Dirk Jongkind explains where it came from, how it works, and why it can be trusted. If you have ever doubted the trustworthiness of the Greek text, you will find reassurance in this wonderful volume.”

Michael J. Kruger, President and Samuel C. Patterson Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte

“In *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament*, Dirk Jongkind provides the *raison d’être* for the *Tyndale House Edition* of the Greek New Testament and does so with his characteristic sagacity. I enjoyed reading this book, and I am happy to recommend it.”

David Alan Black, Dr. M. O. Owens Jr. Chair of New Testament Studies, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This book is the perfect introduction for reading and benefiting from *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge*. An easy read, it is brimming with helpful information—not just for orienting the reader to the Greek New Testament but also for covering broader issues like the basic principles of textual criticism and even a biblical theology of the transmission of biblical texts. Anyone interested in how the New Testament is compiled, or in the texts that stand behind it, will delight in this terrific resource.”

Constantine R. Campbell, Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“This clear and accessible introduction will be of great help to those learning about textual criticism for the first time, and especially to those wanting to make the most of the special features of *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge*.”

Roy E. Ciampa, S. Louis and Ann W. Armstrong Professor of Religion and Chair, Department of Religion, Samford University

“Dirk Jongkind’s *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* demonstrates the advantages of an edition of the Greek New Testament that is thoroughly acquainted with the individual characteristics of the early manuscripts and deeply engaged in the world of the scribes who produced them. This volume is valuable not only for its defense of the editorial aims of the *Tyndale House Edition* but also as a primer on the New Testament text-critical enterprise itself. It is a great read for anyone interested in grasping the basics of the discipline.”

Charles E. Hill, John R. Richardson Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

“Bible-believing Christians are often disturbed when exposed to the great variety of New Testament manuscripts. This book explains why we should consider this variety a wealth, instead of being afraid of it. It also provides readers with all they need to effectively use the recent academic edition of the Greek New Testament that was produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge.”

Lydia Jaeger, Lecturer and Academic Dean, Institut Biblique de Nogent-sur-Marne

“The editors of the *Tyndale House Edition* of the Greek New Testament claim that they have produced ‘the most accurate edition of the Greek New Testament published so far’ (with accuracy defined by faithfulness in representing the apostolic autographs). This is a bold declaration, and senior editor Dirk Jongkind does much to back up this assertion in his new introduction to the Greek New Testament. The book is precise, irenic, and lucid. Only time and broader scholarly scrutiny will adjudicate the claims of the editors. Nevertheless, even in the early days of its public appearance, *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* should be celebrated by all as a magnificent achievement. I heartily encourage my students to read it, and this introduction is an invaluable companion to that joyful enterprise.”

Robert L. Plummer, Founder, Daily Dose of Greek; Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Encountering the Greek New Testament for the first time can be baffling. It need be no longer! Here is an admirably lucid ‘user guide’ to *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* that contains everything we need to know to read the Greek text with full understanding. The book includes excellent discussions of matters such as the nature of our manuscripts, how decisions about the text are made, and the various textual traditions that we possess. Highly recommended for all readers of the Scriptures!”

Paul Trebilco, Professor of New Testament Studies, University of Otago, New Zealand

“While this volume tells the story behind *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge*, it does much more than that. It is an excellent overview of the issues in New Testament textual criticism. Jongkind expertly and concisely guides the reader in explaining the complexities involved in grappling with the differences among manuscripts and discerning the most likely reading. All who read this book will approach their Greek New Testament with a greater level of confidence.”

Clinton E. Arnold, Dean and Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

An Introduction to the Greek New Testament

Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge

Dirk Jongkind

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Published by Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Erik Maldre

First printing 2019

Printed in the United States of America

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Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-6409-3

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-6412-3

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-6410-9

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-6411-6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Jongkind, Dirk, author.

Title: An introduction to the Greek New Testament, produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge / Dirk Jongkind.

Description: Wheaton, Illinois : Crossway, [2019] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018034123 (print) | LCCN 2018040972 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433564109 (pdf) |

ISBN 9781433564116 (mobi) | ISBN 9781433564123 (epub) | ISBN 9781433564093 | ISBN

9781433564093 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9781433564123 (ePub) | ISBN 9781433564109

(PDF) | ISBN 9781433564116 (Mobipocket)

Subjects: LCSH: Bible. New Testament. Greek. 1633. | Bible. New Testament. Greek. Tyndale House. 2017.

Classification: LCC BS1965 1633 (ebook) | LCC BS1938 .J66 2019 (print) | DDC 225.4/8—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018034123>

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Simon and Pete

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Your Greek New Testament and the Manuscripts

All Bibles and translations have stories behind them. Some Bibles are beautifully produced; others give you the text on cheap paper and in tiny font. Likewise, translations make choices that are celebrated by some and scorned by others. And New Testaments in ancient Greek are tools prepared by scholars for all who want to read and study these Scriptures in their original language. This little book tells the story behind *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* (short title *Tyndale House Edition*, abbreviated as THGNT) and is a tool for all who have the privilege to learn New Testament Greek.

It is worth clarifying what this little book is not. It is not a grammar of New Testament Greek. There are many other grammars for beginning and intermediate Greek. Neither is this an exegetical guide or a “New Testament introduction.” There are also plenty of those. Some of the good Greek grammars and New Testament introductions devote space to where the text they study comes from. This is also what we do in this manual,

but we do more. We look at Greek manuscripts and at how they transmitted the text. We explore errors in manuscripts and how to spot them. And we think about some of the answers others have given to the question, What should we print when publishing the Greek text of the New Testament? (and there have been a number of different answers to this question).

In the end, though, the main aim of this book is to help you read the *Tyndale House Edition* without any nagging and distracting questions about the text or the edition (or to answer these if you have them). I hope that after reading this introduction, when you pick up your Greek New Testament, you will do so with confidence and pleasure—even if you have only just started learning the language and barely recognize your first few words.

Translations and Editions

The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge is an edition of the text; it is not a translation. But what exactly is the difference between translations of the Greek, editions of the Greek, and “the original Greek”? Most people read the New Testament in a modern translation. These translations are based on a printed book that contains the Greek New Testament, which, of course, has been published since the invention of the printing press. Such a printed version of the Greek New Testament is an edition, because “the editor” has had to make all sorts of decisions on what text to print and how to print it. The goal of most editions is to give the original text as accurately as possible. The first such edition of the Greek New Testament ever printed and published was made in 1516 by a Dutch scholar, Erasmus of Rotterdam. The Spanish Complutensian Polyglot, which contains a Greek text of the New Testament, was printed earlier but published later.

Before the sixteenth century, the only way to reproduce a Greek New Testament was to copy all or part of it by hand. Consequently, early translations, made before the printing press, were translated from handwritten copies, or manuscripts. After the arrival of the printing press, modern translations were made from printed editions of the Greek, the first one being Luther's German translation of the New Testament in 1522, based on Erasmus's corrected, second edition of 1519 (see fig. 1.1). Over the centuries, various printed editions of the Greek New Testament have been made by using Greek manuscripts. At times, many manuscripts were used, while at other times, only a few (or even just one). There are also a surprising number of editions that are produced using only other editions, thus going

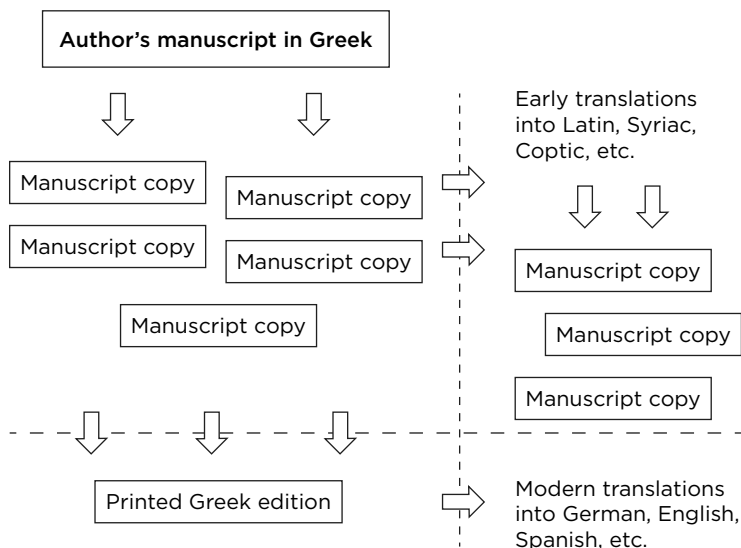


Figure 1.1 Manuscripts, editions, and translations¹

1. For simplicity I have left out of the figure translations made from printed versions of the early Latin translation, the Vulgate, or translations made from an English Bible.

back to the manuscripts only in an indirect way. The goal of the *Tyndale House Edition*, as is true of most editions, is to give the text of the original Greek as accurately as possible.

Editions of the Greek New Testament include accents, spaces between words, and chapter and verse numbers. These come mainly from later Greek manuscripts or, in the case of chapter and verse numbers, from the sixteenth century. In order to ensure a text that is as free from typos as possible, the THGNT started off by digitizing a Greek New Testament published in the nineteenth century by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles. That text was then thoroughly compared to the earliest manuscripts and many later ones. The hundreds of changes that were made in this process have resulted in what the editors trust to be the most accurate edition of the Greek New Testament published so far. And an accurate edition lies at the heart of further accurate work in translation and in the study of the fine details of the text.

How Precisely Do We Know the Text?

For many readers of the New Testament, it is a disturbing moment when they are told that differences in the wording of the Greek text exist between the various handwritten copies of the text. A first response may be that, therefore, the New Testament itself cannot be reliable. After all, if the “original Greek” is in doubt, how can subsequent translations be reliable? How can we know that the text has not been edited in such a way that the original message was lost, or worse, suppressed? Sometimes this line of thinking is even developed into the thought that because there are differences between manuscripts, the words of the New Testament could not have been inspired.² (Let me

2. For example, Bart D. Ehrman states, “For the only reason (I came to think) for God to inspire the Bible would be so that his people would have his actual words; but if he really wanted people to have his actual words, surely he would have miraculously preserved those words, just as he had miraculously inspired them in the first place. Given

put my cards on the table. I stand in the Protestant tradition of historical Christianity and therefore hold to a belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible.)

Let us first have a look at the reliability argument. Is the text of the Greek New Testament unreliable because of differences between the manuscripts? One way to answer this question is to look at the important differences and the impact they make. Clearly, many of the differences affect how we read a particular sentence and how the text says what it says. But the actual content of a paragraph or a chapter—let alone that of a whole book—stands firm regardless. The message that is communicated comes across clearly even though there is interfering noise.

Take, for example, the opening phrase of Mark's Gospel:

Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ·

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God.

In most of our translations, there is a footnote relating to the words “Son of God.” This is what the ESV has:

Some manuscripts omit *the Son of God*.

And this is what the same footnote looks like in the *Tyndale House Edition*:

^{†1} υἱοῦ θεοῦ **Σ**¹ B D L W; υἱου του θεου A K Δ 69 1424; [‡] omit **Σ**^o Θ

Later we will learn about what all the various signs, letters, and numbers in these notes mean. All that is relevant now is that two manuscripts are listed that omit the phrase υἱοῦ θεοῦ, while there are also manuscripts that have υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. On

the circumstance that he didn't preserve the words, the conclusion seemed inescapable to me that he hadn't gone to the trouble of inspiring them.” *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 211.

the surface, it makes a big difference whether the words “Son of God” are present. Does Mark immediately at the start of his Gospel declare that Jesus is the Son of God? Has someone tried to alter the message of the Gospel by removing these words? Taken on its own, the presence or absence of “Son of God” in the opening line makes a big difference. However, after the reader has arrived at Mark 1:11 (“And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’”), the issue has resolved itself completely. Jesus is presented as the Son early in Mark’s Gospel.

Another way of answering the reliability question is to look for signs of deliberate tampering with the text. People have claimed to have found these, but they have also had to admit that these are few and far between and do not occur on the scale and frequency that one might expect if there were an attempt to systematically change the text.³ The phenomenon that comes closest to a deliberate alteration of the text is the cleaning up of the spelling that we encounter in the older manuscripts, which is at times rather rough. Recognize, however, that we have a surprisingly accurate knowledge of that text. We know the original Greek well enough to study the different authorial styles of Luke, John, and Paul. We can examine details such as the use of conjunctions and word order. And even minutiae such as the spelling of names have been so well preserved that we can study them. This shows that although perhaps we want to know more, we have very good access to the text. But just as for certain purposes we need images with as high a resolution as possible so that we

3. Again, Bart Ehrman, now in one of his scholarly books, states, “The changes appear to be made at an early date for theological reasons, yet they occur randomly in various textual witnesses, not at all with the kind of consistency one might expect.” *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 66.

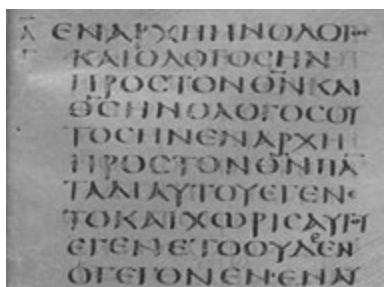
can zoom in on the tiniest of details, so we want to have a text that is as accurate as possible. For detailed language study and careful exegesis of the Greek text, we need a text that is reliable in the fine details. All understanding in communication is built around the process of re-creating a mental image of the meaning our conversation partner intends to communicate. And this is a matter of approximation; though it is easy to grasp the big picture of what someone says, it is sometimes only the good listener who detects the fine message and picks up on hints in the subtext.

But what about the theological question? Do textual variants in the Greek contradict the doctrine of verbal inspiration? Near the end of this book I hope to present the beginnings of a biblical-theological view of the transmission of the text. Suffice it to say here that it may be more helpful to start with what God has done than with what we think he ought to have done. God chose not to give us exhaustive knowledge of every detail of the text, though he could have done so. Still, he has given us abundant access to his words. In other words, to say that God inspired the words of the New Testament does not mean that God is therefore under an obligation to preserve for us each and every detail.

Textual criticism is a discipline of approximation; it is a discipline that strives to improve further the resolution of the image that is painted by the text. The main message of the text is clear, but we want to have the fine detail too—and evidently, much of the fine detail has been preserved. In the end, though, the main problem in understanding the New Testament is not any uncertainty about its precise wording but rather our inability to grasp and absorb the message in its full impact and complexity.

Why Do We Need an Edition of the Greek New Testament?

Still, despite the general reliability of the text, it should come as no surprise that the Greek New Testament we are holding in our hands is not identical to the earliest and oldest manuscripts. There should be no surprise here, but often there is. A considerable gap exists between how we print the text in a modern edition and how it was written in the early manuscripts, as illustrated in figure 1.2.



1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. 2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. 3 πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν. 4 ἐν αὐτῷ

Figure 1.2 Opening of John in Codex Sinaiticus and Tyndale House Edition. Codex Sinaiticus is housed at the British Library. Used with permission.

For starters, invariably we use chapter and verse numbers, an innovation that was introduced in Greek New Testaments only in 1551, several decades after Erasmus's first edition of the Greek New Testament (1516). Then there are the spaces between words—in the early centuries, Greek was mostly written without word division, and the way we write out words such as θεός (“God”), Ἰησοῦς (“Jesus”), χριστός (“Christ”), and κύριος (“Lord”) differs from the contracted form normal in

early manuscripts (i.e., $\theta\bar{\varsigma}$, $\eta\bar{\nu}\varsigma$ or $\iota\bar{\varsigma}$, $\chi\bar{\rho}\varsigma$ or $\chi\bar{\zeta}$, and $\kappa\bar{\zeta}$). These contracted words, known as *nomina sacra*, are still visible in Greek iconography, and they offer quite a distinctive visual image on a page.

Not only is the presentation of the text different; every edition will have made decisions about spelling, paragraphing, breathings, and accents (if included) and also about which words to print. And the latter is perhaps the biggest question someone who publishes a Greek New Testament faces. What should we do when manuscripts differ from one another? How do we choose between divergent wordings of the same text?

This is an acute problem when considering the number of variants found in manuscripts. A recent estimate put the number at about 500,000, which would include all variants found in all manuscripts.⁴ The vast majority of these variants can be dismissed out of hand and do not warrant our attention. Though they can tell us about scribal tendencies and the copying ability of various scribes (or the lack thereof) and can sometimes help trace relationships between manuscripts, rarely do they have a claim to be original. Still, there are a considerable number of variants in the wording of the text that need to be looked at, and a number of those are mentioned in the lower margin of the *Tyndale House Edition*. Note, however, that this is a selection, and a selection is always imperfect.

Regrettably, there is no easy way to solve the problem of choosing between different manuscript readings, and when easy solutions present themselves, they tend to be highly unsatisfactory. Later we will look at the approach adopted for the *Tyndale House Edition* and also discuss (sympathetically, I hope) some alternative solutions and why we have not followed them.

4. Peter J. Gurry, "The Number of Variants in the Greek New Testament: A Proposed Estimate," *New Testament Studies* 62, no. 1 (2016): 97–121.

For the moment, it suffices to say that the question of which words to print is unavoidable, regardless of someone's preferred solution; it always involves a choice. We cannot simply print *the* original Greek text in a modern book. There are a whole set of choices to be made. And that is why we need an *edition* of the Greek New Testament.

*Is the New Testament text reliable?
What do we do with textual variants?
How do I use the Greek New Testament?*

This short book, written as a companion to *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge*, provides an overview of the *Tyndale House Edition* in particular and the Greek New Testament in general. Dirk Jongkind, one of the principal scholars behind this groundbreaking project, answers critical questions for understanding the biblical text so that readers can have clarity and confidence as they engage with the New Testament in the original Greek.

“A must-have resource for all students of biblical Greek.”

MICHAEL F. BIRD, Academic Dean and Lecturer in Theology, Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia

“*The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* should be celebrated by all as a magnificent achievement. I heartily encourage my students to read it, and this introduction is an invaluable companion to that joyful enterprise.”

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DANIEL B. WALLACE, Senior Research Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary; Executive Director, Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts

DIRK JONGKIND (PhD, Cambridge University) is the academic vice principal of Tyndale House, Cambridge. He is one of the primary scholars behind *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge*, serves on the editorial board of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, and is a fellow of St. Edmund's College and affiliated lecturer at Cambridge University.

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