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Review of Martin Karrer, et al., eds., *Novum*

Testamentum Graecum, Editio Critica

Maior VI: Revelation

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The long awaited *Editio Critica Maior* on the book of Revelation (ECM; ECM Rev) is now available, published as a four-volume set.¹ Significantly, ECM Rev includes over one hundred and seventy changes from the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (NA28) text, a subset of which will be analyzed for theological impact at the end of this review. The project began in 2011 under the leadership of Martin Karrer at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal, Germany with an editorial team including Darius Müller, Marcus Sigismund, Holger Strutwolf, Annette Hüffmeier, Gregory S. Paulson, and additional collaboration with Matthias Geigenfeind, Peter Malik, Oliver Humberg, Edmund Gerke, Nicola Seliger, and Juan Hernández Jr. ECM Rev is the fourth volume in the ECM project series edited by the Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF) at the University of Münster, Germany. The goal of this long-term project is easily deduced from its title—to produce a major critical edition of the New Testament (NT) in light of the many recent methodological and technological advances in NT textual criticism. In this respect, ECM Rev does not disappoint; the exceeding quantity and quality of research included in these four volumes are difficult to overstate. This review will cover each volume of ECM Rev with a specific focus on new developments and the ways ECM Rev is likely to affect future editions of the Greek NT and, consequently, English translations.

Volume 1 (*PART I Text [TEIL I Text]*) includes a relatively brief yet detailed introduction followed by the actual text of Revelation and critical apparatus. The introduction orients readers

¹The text and apparatus of all currently published ECM installments (Catholic Epistles, Acts, Mark, and Revelation) are available for free access through the INTF's New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room (NTVMR), <https://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/ecm>. However, all introductory and supplementary material is available only in the printed volumes.

to the ECM project overall and the unique contributions of ECM Rev. The ECM occupies a unique position among critical editions of the NT in terms of both purpose and method. Concerning the former, the stated purpose of the ECM is to reconstruct the *Ausgangstext* (“earliest attainable text” or “initial text”) of the NT manuscript tradition. That is, the earliest text that is possible to reconstruct from the manuscript and textual tradition as it currently exists. Since the resultant text cannot be definitively dated earlier than the second to fourth centuries (in most places), the ECM editors find the term *Ausgangstext* to be the most accurate. This stands in contrast to critical editions whose editors’ aim is to reconstruct the “original” or “authorial” NT text. The ECM is also unique in its employment of the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM) as one of the tools that can assist with textual decisions. Based on full transcriptions, the CBGM calculates pre-genealogical coherence (the percentage agreement between two witnesses without showing the direction of the relationship) and genealogical coherence (the relationship between witnesses based on the priority of readings).² Although still limited in some ways and by no means eliminating human judgment, the technological advances underlying the CBGM allow for an unprecedented amount of textual data to be analyzed and accounted for when making textual decisions. This method stands in contrast to other critical editions, many of which employ some form of reasoned eclecticism and analyze textual data based on the theory of text-types (e.g., Alexandrian, Western, Byzantine).

In addition to providing an explanation for how to interpret the text and apparatus, volume 1 contains a discussion about ways ECM Rev differs from previous installments in the ECM series, as well as how it differs from the text of Revelation in the leading critical hand

²For an accessible and thorough introduction to the CBGM, see Wasserman, Tommy, and Peter J. Gurry. *A New Approach to Textual Criticism: An Introduction to the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2017.

edition—the NA28. The former is elaborated further in subsequent volumes (discussed below); concerning changes from the NA28, the editors highlighted three major areas: (1) a list of 85 “new initial readings” (NIRs) introduced by ECM Rev as opposed to the NA28; (2) a list of 95 instances of “new initial orthography” (NIO) where the spelling differs from NA28; (3) a list of 106 split guiding lines—places where the ECM Rev editors were unable to determine the initial text and, thus, listed two readings as equally viable options (47*–58*). Eight of the NIR and NIO entries overlap; in total, ECM Rev introduces 171 new readings from the NA28. Questions about how these readings will impact future editions of the Greek NT and English translations are discussed below.

Volume 2 (*PART 2 Supplementary Material [TEIL 2 Begleitende Materialien]*) provides a host of material useful for further studies on the text of Revelation such as a list of singular readings from all witnesses included in the ECM Rev apparatus (16–66), and the percentage of agreement each witness had with one another (67–93). This volume also contains an extensive section on orthographic decisions. Unlike other critical editions, which follow so-called “standardized” spelling conventions of the Greek text, ECM Rev based orthographic decisions on “the main strand in the manuscripts of the first millennium” (111). The vast array of orthographic decisions included everything from minor itacisms and vowel changes to numerals and pictograms (111–189). The next major section provided a list of references in Revelation of the NT or LXX (191–192), as well as lists of extrabiblical sources that cite any portion of Revelation, such as Church Fathers and early Christian literature (197–235). Volume 2 also included an extensive discussion on the early versions and their unique place within the textual history of Revelation, including a commentary for when and how the versions impacted textual decisions in ECM Rev (308–389). The final major aspect of this volume was the discussion on

the paratextual project (393–426). This project began in 2019 and, although incomplete and technically separate from ECM Rev, sheds great light on textual matters. Thus, in an attempt to foster the relationship between text and paratext, the editors included some of the preliminary findings from this project into the apparatus of ECM Rev (volume 1). The discussion in volume 2 details the process of selecting witnesses to include in the apparatus, which paratextual features are highlighted in the apparatus, a guide for interpreting the apparatus, and additional related information. The inclusion of paratextual study is unprecedented in a critical edition and a most welcome contribution. Its inclusion is sure to enhance study in both domains.

Volume 3 (*PART 3.1 Studies on the Text [TEIL 3.1 Studien zum Text]*) functions like an in-depth discussion about method and related aspects underlying this edition. It begins with a lengthy editorial report from Karrer where he clarifies the bipartite goal of the ECM: to reconstruct the earliest attainable text (*den ältest erreichbaren Text*) and provide users with materials related to textual history with a specific emphasis on the first millennium (3). He then launches into a history of research on the text of Revelation beginning with Erasmus' 1516 edition through the modern period. This leads Karrer to clarify the goal of ECM Rev, namely, to provide researchers with necessary tools and evidence to study and understand the development of Revelation's textual history by tracing its major textual lines (*Hauptlinien*) from their initial development to the beginning of printing (16). Of the over 320 extant Greek witnesses for Revelation, 110 are used in ECM Rev to reconstruct the text including all the witnesses from the first millennium.³ Karrer then provided an in-depth discussion for some unique aspects of ECM Rev, most notably the use of lower-case Greek letters throughout the text except at the beginning

³This naturally includes all papyri and majuscules. Further, as with all ECM projects, the selection of witnesses is based on the previously conducted *Text und Textwert* project, which (for Revelation) compared the manuscripts at 123 test points (*Testellen*). For a list of the 110 witnesses chosen for ECM Rev, see 17–18.

of new sections (26–27) and the use of abbreviations (including nomina sacra) for select words throughout the edition (29–35). Concerning the latter, the full word is still spelled out with parentheses to emphasize its abbreviated nature (e.g., θ(εο)ς; ι(ησου)ς; κ(υριο)ς).

Following the editorial report, Darius Müller wrote a section that details the groundbreaking work the CBGM has done for tracing the textual history of Revelation. Previous critical editions of the NT utilized the theory of Josef Schmid, who identified four textual streams in Revelation: two older streams that he deemed most reliable for reconstructing the text (based on manuscripts 02/04 and P47/01, respectively) and two younger streams that, together, make up the majority of extant witnesses (Andreas; Koine); although, strictly speaking, no monolithic “byzantine” or “majority text” stream exists for Revelation.⁴ The application of the CBGM brought some surprising revisions to this long-held theory. First, while manuscripts 02, 04, P47, and 01 were all verified as generally reliable tradents of the initial text, the groupings Schmid identified are not clear enough to continue maintaining. Second, 025 was identified as the closest extant witness to the initial text. Additional witnesses in this older group include several minuscules such as 2846 and 1611 (133ff). Third, with help from the CBGM, the editors identified four other major streams that developed later due to various degrees of mixture between the Andreas and Koine traditions: the Arethas text (so named due to its connection with Arethas’ commentary), Family 104, Family 172, and the Complutensian text (a younger group that developed around the twelfth century and whose text is similar to the printed Complutensian Polyglot).⁵ The editors are not clear about terminology for these new textual groupings, using a

⁴Josef Schmid, *Studien zur Geschichte des Griechischen Apokalypse-Textes*, 2 vols., *Münchener Theologische Studie* (München: Karl Zink, 1955).

⁵Müller provides a rough theoretical sketch of how these traditions developed on 149. While Schmid had previously identified these mixed traditions, the ECM editors significantly refined his findings.

variety of terms such as “textual traditions” (*Texttraditionen*), “text forms” (*Textformen*), and “main texts” (*Haupttexten*) seemingly interchangeably. Regardless of terminology, these discoveries will cause textual critics to rethink most of what they believed regarding the textual history of Revelation. Two additional contributions of this section are by Markus Lembke, who provided a list of all extant Greek witnesses for Revelation grouped into one of the newly-identified textual traditions (164). He also produced a four-columned table that depicted the text of the Koine, Andreas, and Complutensian groups (the three largest “majority” groups in Rev) alongside the NA28/ECM Rev text for the entire book of Revelation (180–216). The utility of this table for further studies must not be overlooked. Such hidden gems are characteristic of the work overall.

Among the most valuable and practical contributions of volume 3 is the textual commentary by Karrer and Müller, which provides detailed discussion on all major textual decisions (225–400). The textual commentary (like virtually all of volume 3) is in German, which limits its readership to those proficient in German. Given the fact that the editors chose to translate the punctuation commentary (volume 4) into English, the decision to leave the text commentary untranslated is surprising. Regardless, it remains invaluable and includes a thorough discussion on every relevant item. Volume 3 concludes with various additional studies such as Jan Krans’ in-depth discussion on conjectures in Revelation (417ff) and several minor essays such as Ulrich Huttner’s on the spelling of city names in Rev (479ff).

Volume 4 (*PART 3.2 Studies on Punctuation and Textual Structure* [*TEIL 3.2 Studien zu Interpunktion und Textstruktur*]) details perhaps the most innovative addition of ECM Rev, namely, its complete revision of punctuation and segmentation. Three major aspects stand out from this volume, the first being an editorial report by Karrer on the segmentation project, which

is unique even among previous ECM publications. Compared to NA28, ECM Rev introduces 710 changes to punctuation and segmentation (3). Karrer traced the history of segmentation in the NT Greek text, which is most heavily influenced by printed editions beginning with the *Textus Receptus* (TR, based largely on later Greek manuscripts). With the advent of eclectic texts based on critical methods, punctuation decisions took a more hybrid approach—partially influenced by previous printed editions and partially influenced by modern linguistic conventions. Karrer pointed out how such approaches rely largely on the interpretive (subjective) decisions of editors (27ff). Instead, a critical edition should strive to reconstruct the earliest attainable segmentation features from the mainline of the most ancient manuscripts. Such an approach relativizes interpretive decisions on the part of the editorial team and leaves them in the hands of translators. Thus, the punctuation in ECM Rev is largely based on the mainline (*Hauptlinie*) segmentation of manuscripts from the first millennium.

In addition to the revised punctuation throughout the text of ECM Rev, the editors included an apparatus in volume 1 with punctuation variation among the manuscripts, which leads to the second major aspect of volume 4—a commentary on the segmentation decisions made throughout ECM Rev. Karrer wrote the segmentation commentary, which is then translated into English in its entirety by Hernández. The commentary begins with an explanation of the segmentation features as they appear in the text, as well as the textual apparatus. In order to accurately represent the variety of the segmentation traditions in the manuscripts, which developed gradually and were by no means monolithic within the first millennium, the editorial team introduced a number of new punctuation marks to ECM Rev (81ff; 233ff). The topic of segmentation includes aspects beyond the sentence level to that of paragraphs and major sections (comparable to modern chapter divisions). ECM Rev also reconstructs these more “macro”

segmentation features (e.g., Logoi, Kephalaia), which are based largely on the tradition from Andrew of Caesarea’s text and commentary.

The third and final major feature of volume 4 is a reader’s version of the entire text of Revelation reconstructed according to the mainline segmentation of manuscripts within the first millennium. This feature is quite a treat for users, as it pulls all aspects of the study together. While it could arguably function more accessibly at the end of volume 1, its current placement aptly summarizes the study. One aspect that readers must keep in mind is that the reconstructed *segmentation* of ECM Rev is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the segmentation as it appeared in the reconstructed *text* of ECM Rev. In other words, let us assume that the reconstructed text of ECM Rev reflects a text that existed anywhere between the second and fourth centuries, although it may be later in some places. The reconstructed segmentation, while based on witnesses from the first millennium, generally represents a period much later—more like the mid- to late-Byzantine period. (In fact, some decisions on segmentation required the consultation of witnesses later than the first millennium, 81; 233). Thus, ECM Rev produces (oversimplifying, of course) a second-fourth century *text* with eighth-tenth century *segmentation*. This is not necessarily negative; readers must simply be aware that the segmentation of ECM Rev represents a later period in the tradition than the text. Furthermore, the segmentation is still the result of later interpreters and users of the text. ECM Rev reproduces the *earliest* segmentation, not necessarily the most *accurate*; interpretive decisions remain. These cautions, however, apply to the users of ECM Rev. Both translators and editors of Greek NTs must clarify their goals before *de facto* accepting the segmentation of ECM Rev. Gratefully, the ECM Rev team provided all necessary information for users to easily and accessibly make such critical judgments, simultaneously setting a new standard for future ECM installments.

How will ECM Rev likely affect future English translations of Revelation? Based on my own analysis, of the 171 NIR units, only 15 (13 verses total) will impact English translations. Of these 15, I deem only 6 theologically significant.⁶ Of the 106 split line readings, 16 will potentially affect English translations, only 4 of which I deem theologically significant.⁷ Thus, by my judgment, the following 10 readings could impact English translations in a theologically significant manner: (1) 6:17/18 changes αὐτῶν (“their”) to αὐτοῦ (“his”), which depicts the wrath as belonging to God alone rather than to both the Lamb and God. This change lowers the Christological and Trinitarian emphasis in the NA28 reading. (2) 20:5/1 omits the phrase οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν νεκρῶν οὐκ ἐζησαν ἀχρι τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἐτη (“the rest of the dead ones did not live until the thousand years were complete”). This phrase is significant due to its chiliastic subject matter, and its omission leaves the question open about who all will participate in the “first resurrection” depicted in the passage. (3) 21:6/8–10 changes γεγοναν. ἐγώ (“Then he said to me, ‘it is done. I am the alpha and the omega’”) to γεγونا ἐγώ (“Then he said to me, ‘I have become the alpha and the omega’”). While the ECM reading can be variously interpreted, it can suggest that God’s title of alpha and omega/beginning and end is the result of His activity in transpiring events rather than something inherently His. (4) 22:12/30–32 changes ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ (“his [work] is”) to ἐσται αὐτοῦ (“his [work] will be”). The shift here is subtle, but the future tense of the ECM reading conveys a vague nature for when the depicted judgment occurs, which could have eschatological implications. (5) 22:21/14–18 changes παντῶν (“[with] all”) to παντῶν τῶν ἁγίων (“[with] all the saints”). The ECM reading limits the final doxological blessing to followers of

⁶Minor NIR units: 5:9/40–44; 12:8/6; 13:10/6–10; 13:10/20–30; 16:18/34–36; 17:8/40; 18:2/32–54; 18:3/6–20; 20:9/44–54. Major: 6:17/18; 20:5/1; 21:6/8–10; 22:12/30–32; 22:21/14–18; 22:21/20.

⁷Minor Split lines: 2:16/4; 2:27/24; 3:7/56–60; 5:13/40; 10:1/6–8; 10:8/36; 11:12/4; 12:18/4; 14:6/6–8; 14:8/4–8; 16:5/18–32; 21:3/10–14; 21:3/66–68; 22:21/11. Major: 2:7/52–54; 2:13/48; 5:10/14–18; 16:5/18–32.

Christ rather than all readers in general. (6) 22:21/20 adds the word ἀμην (“amen”) to the end of the book, which may seem minor, but it emphasizes the epistolary genre of the book and adds a liturgical element. (7) 2:7/52–54 is a split reading between του θεου (“of God,” NA28) to του θεου μου (“of my God”). The fact that Jesus is the speaker makes the Christological emphasis in the latter reading lower than the former. While Jesus does occasionally refer to God as “my God,” it usually seems to be accompanied with intentional echo to the Old Testament (e.g., Mk 15:34; Rev 3:12). (8) 2:13/48 is a split reading between αντιπας (“Antipas,” NA28) and αντειπας (either the aorist participle, “the contradictor” or aorist indicative verb “you [did not deny my faithfulness and] contradict [me]”). In the first reading, a specific martyr named Antipas is identified. In the second reading, the substantive participle “contradictor” functions as an honorary appellation given to a faithful martyr who “contradicted” opposing authorities. The verbal option alters the syntactical construction to connect αντειπας with the preceding clause.⁸ (9) 5:10/14–18 is a split reading between βασιλειαν και ιερεις (“a kingdom and priests,” NA28) and βασιλεις και ιερεις (“kings and priests”). In the former reading, the followers of the Lamb are depicted as priests within a single kingdom. In the latter, the followers are identified more individually as both kings and priests. (10) 16:5/18–32 is a split reading between ει ο ων και ο ην ο οσιος (“you are the one who is and was, the holy one,” NA28) and ει ο ων και ο ην οσιος (“you are the one who is and was holy”). The former reading emphasizes the eternal nature of God along with His holiness; the latter only emphasizes His holiness.

Overall, ECM Rev is a tremendous work of scholarship that will effectively alter the landscape of studies on the Apocalypse. I highly recommend acquisition of ECM Rev for all theological libraries. The price of these volumes may make individual purchase difficult,

⁸For an in-depth look at these readings, see the essays by Hans Förster (403–408) and Thomas Paulsen (409–411) in ECM Rev volume 3.

although their value for textual scholarship makes acquisition all but necessary for those within the field of textual criticism, especially any who work with the text of Revelation. The edition does, however, promise to make the Greek text and apparatus freely available on the NTVMR, and the CBGM will also be online as well for anyone to use (both the NTVMR edition of ECM Rev and CBGM Rev are works in progress at the time of writing). I would encourage all NT scholars and theological students to familiarize themselves with the major changes introduced by these volumes. Any student, pastor, or serious lay person interested in the text of Revelation should make extensive use of the ECM text and apparatus on the NTVMR. The tireless labor and expert scholarship evident on every page of these four volumes make it well worth the wait.