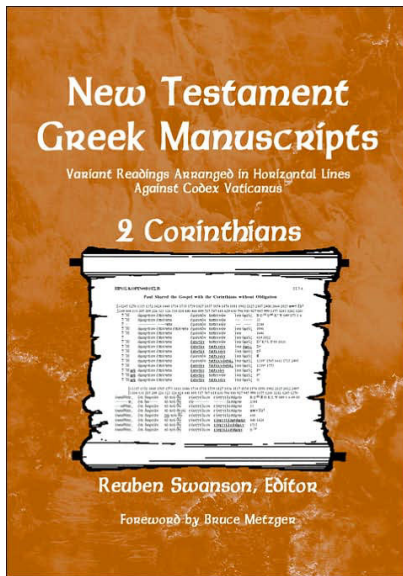


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Swanson, Rueben

New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus: 2 Corinthians

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The latest volume in Reuben Swanson's series *New Testament Greek Manuscripts* is on the text 2 Corinthians. The subtitle of the volume, *Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus*, is significant for Swanson's approach. In this book Swanson wishes to avoid the problems apparent in the eclectic apparatuses of current editions of the Greek New Testament. Swanson's objection to the eclectic texts (such as Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Westcott-Hort *The New Testament in Original Greek*, and the United Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament*) is that they frequently mix together different words and phrases from several different manuscripts without properly identifying their sources. Furthermore, all modern critical editions are an attempt to improve on the Textus Receptus by comparing additional manuscript evidence and by substituting readings that editors think more likely to be original. He holds that the basis for these modern editions remains a poorly crafted eclectic text, that the corrections to it in subsequent publications are based on an inadequate representation of the evidence, and that the support mustered for certain readings is often misleading or erroneous. What is more, it is Swanson's opinion that the eclectic method is suspect because readers can never know whether parallel passages in the Gospels are truly parallel or whether the parallels are artificially constructed by the editors. Swanson also questions the assumption that "an eclectic text is superior to an actual manuscript text that had been scripture for an early Christian community" (xvi).

In contrast to the eclectic approach, Swanson's edition is based on a new principle and a new methodology. The new principle was to choose an unaltered source document from the early church to be the text for this work; Swanson chose Codex Vaticanus (although incomplete in places, he thinks it more reliable than the complete Codex Sinaiticus). This same principle is being followed in Brill's Septuagint series edited by Stanley Porter and Richard Hess. The new methodology has three components. (1) Completeness—by "completeness" Swanson does not mean reporting all manuscripts, versions, lectionaries, and church fathers but rather the complete reporting of every variant from the sources used for this edition. So if a variant is cited from Codex D, the citation will include every variant from D, including misspellings and even insignificant variants, rather than a selection of variants that an editor himself or herself deems significant. The textual data for Swanson's edition is taken from two papyri, sixteen uncials, sixty-five minuscules, one church father, and four editions. The author also focuses exclusively on Greek manuscripts rather than Latin, Syriac, and Coptic materials. Here Swanson's approach is perhaps best described as "targeted completeness," since it is complete for the texts that it cites. It is not complete on the scale of the *Editio Critica Maior*, and one must question the exclusion of non-Greek language texts in want of a holistic approach. Also, the inclusion of Clement of Alexandria (the one church father) against one or even all of the apostolic fathers is an odd choice (for the New Testament in the apostolic fathers, see the recent works by Andrew Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett, eds., *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005]; idem, *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005]). To be fair, Swanson had to limit his selection of texts in some way, but one could suggest manifold ways in which his choice of materials could be broadened and improved. (2) Accuracy—Swanson contrasts his apparatus to the apparatus of Nestle-Aland, which he thinks both incomplete and full of inaccuracies, which he lists in an appendix. (3) Efficiency—Swanson, again in dissimilarity to Nestle-Aland, reports all variants in parallel lines so that the texts can be read both horizontally and vertically.

The special features of the edition by Swanson include: (1) Codex Vaticanus is included in full as the base text. (2) The text of Vaticanus is the top and lead line for each of the grouping of parallel lines. (3) The variants are in parallel lines under the Vaticanus text and listed according to similarity. (4) All variants of every kind from each source are reported in full. (5) The parallel-line format is easier to read and makes it easier to follow the train of variants. (6) The reporting of every variant found in the margins of the manuscripts gives a virtual facsimile of the sources used in the compilation of this edition. (7) Additional information (e.g., lacunae, *nomina sacra*) is presented in the footnotes. (8) The chapter and verse numbers are identical to the UBS⁴. (9) The section headings *kephalaia* and *titloi* are absent from Vaticanus and not used in the present volume. (10)

Section headings in English are mostly taken from the UBS⁴. (11) Variants occur in bold typeface, making them easy to identify in the text. (12) Poetic passages from the Old Testament cited in 2 Corinthians are indented as in UBS⁴. (13) The text and textual apparatus are identical in this book. (14) The citation of manuscript witnesses is supplemented by the citation of readings from UBS⁴, Westcott and Hort, and the Textus Receptus. (15) Swanson uses his own symbols to indicate a different verse order and additions in the text. (16) Typographical features are used to indicate differences between the basic text and what follows. (17) The selection of manuscripts was based on availability.

Swanson also includes several appendices to the volume on 2 Corinthians.

1. Passages marked with a marginal umlaut [¨] in Vaticanus to indicate that the scribe of Vaticanus was aware of variant readings in other sources. Yet we should note that the function of the umlaut remains debated.
2. Several examples of *kephalaia* *majora* and *titloi* in 2 Corinthians, or summary headings, which occur in some manuscripts as early as the fifth century.
3. Problems in the apparatuses of Tischendorf, UBS⁴, Nestle-Aland²⁷, and those in Kenyon's transcription of the Chester Beatty Papyri, all in relation to 2 Corinthians. A large number of these problems/errors occur in areas where the editors of UBS⁴ and NA²⁷ try to fill in blanks in the lacunae in the manuscripts. It is this "filling-in" that Swanson seeks to question. I think it would have been more helpful if Swanson differentiated between errors of citation and errors of interpretation, which are not strictly the same kind of errors.
4. A list of misleading and incorrect variant readings in Kurt Aland's *Arbeiten zur Neutestamentlichen Textforschung: Text und Textwert der Griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments II: Die Paulinischen Briefe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991).
5. A list of variant readings from Greek Manuscripts for 2 Corinthians not usually cited in the apparatuses of current critical editions.
6. Unique and bizarre readings in manuscripts in 2 Corinthians not reported in current apparatuses (e.g., the reference to Luke in 2 Cor 8:18 in MS 1175).
7. The omissions in various manuscripts of 2 Corinthians.
8. The order of the New Testament books in the manuscripts used in Swanson's edition.

Toward the end of the introduction Swanson lays out his motivating principle and goal. After working in the field of textual criticism for many years, he has come to the conclusion that it is “impossible” to try to reconstruct the “original writing of the author” and the “actual words written by the writer” (citing Kirsopp Lake, xxix–xxx). That is because the first complete and continuous texts of the New Testament are removed from the original autographs by a space of two or three centuries. We possess only fragments of copies of the autographs, the early texts were already in a state of flux, and the reasons for preferring one reading over another can depend on one’s background, training, and theological bent. In Swanson’s mind, the task of trying to reconstruct the “original pure text” is a “delusion,” since what is reconstructed is “fictional” (xxxix). What Swanson proposes instead is using Christian manuscripts to study the various historical and sociological situations of one or more Christian communities where these manuscripts originated. All the manuscripts functioned as scripture in early Christian communities, and it is of heuristic value to outline the historical, sociological, religious, and theological conditions in which these manuscripts were penned. In which case, textual criticism becomes a subset of church history rather than a pursuit for the earliest witnesses to the original autographs. While I think that certain aspects of Swanson’s approach has merits, especially using a single manuscript as a template for comparison, whether reasoned eclecticism is quite so futile as he alleges remains an open question, and Swanson’s few brusque remarks are unlikely to convince everyone. The criteria used in textual criticism are designed specifically to allay the kind of subjectivism that Swanson warns about, so it is inaccurate to caricature the enterprise as devoid of any objective methodology or pursuing unrealistic goals.

The text of Vaticanus and the variants listed beneath are laid out simply, and it is relatively easy to follow the train of variants. The font size is economical but not so painfully small that one has to squint, and Swanson is able to contract much information onto one page without detracting from the legibility of the data. The use of bold fonts makes it very easy to identify the significant variations without having to read through every line of text. The list of the *nomina sacra* and New Testament book order in manuscripts is also a helpful resource for those seeking such information quickly. It would have been helpful if Swanson included a section with a complete running Greek text of Vaticanus in either miniscule or uncial form without the copious list of variants so that one could read the Vaticanus text in full without the distraction of variations. That would make the volume more comprehensive and useful than it already is.

The vast amount of work and detail that has gone into this book on the text of 2 Corinthians is quite breathtaking. Swanson’s *New Testament Greek Manuscripts* have been around for quite some time and are a resource that benefit scholars and students who are interested in the textual history of the New Testament and the sociology of that

textual history as well. His volume on 2 Corinthians is a commendable addition to that series.