



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Paratexts of the Bible. Analysis and Edition of the Greek Textual

Third-party funded project

Project title Paratexts of the Bible. Analysis and Edition of the Greek Textual

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Organisation / Research unit

Ehemalige Organisationseinheiten Theologie / Kirchen- und Theologieggeschichte (Wallraff)

Department

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Status Completed

This project takes a new look at an old text. The Bible is a fundamental book for the history of religious beliefs, cultural history, art history as well as many other fields. For centuries it has been read and copied multiple times. Thousands of medieval manuscripts survive. The process of transmission is considered here from a totally new perspective. While biblical manuscripts have so far been largely analysed as witnesses to an original text ("Urtext"), this project approaches each manuscript as a single witness to an act of reading and re-interpreting the text. In recent literary theory, attention has been drawn to "paratexts", i.e. all material accompanying a main text. Virtually all biblical manuscripts have some of these features. Examples include brief introductions, biographies, tables of contents, poems, cross-references, prayers, and indexes. However, these paratexts have been neglected by scholars for two reasons: firstly because biblical studies traditionally concentrate on the "inspired text" itself; secondly because of the sheer amount of available material, which far exceeds the capacities of a single scholar. Moreover, being very short, these paratexts have often remained below the detection threshold, and since we are dealing with a rich and "liquid" transmission, many of them also present a methodological challenge.

The project will therefore adopt a new approach. Firstly, it will catalogue all available material in an e Clavis, taking into account recent developments in the fields of structural codicology and digital technology. Secondly, it will develop a set of categories according to which each paratext of the New Testament will be edited according to internal criteria. This will be done with a view to the intrinsic value of each manuscript witness. The final result will be a comprehensive and totally new picture of the Biblical text's "journey" through the centuries. This synthesis will be published as a monograph.

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