CHAPTER THIRTY

THE INTERNATIONAL GREEK NEW TESTAMENT PROJECT’S VOLUMES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

When I came to reassess the work on Luke published by Oxford University Press in 1984 and 1987 I read through old correspondence, minutes and progress reports. In so doing I was all too conscious of a sense of *déjà vu*. Attempts at Anglo-German cooperation, links between Anglo-American committees, debates about whether or not to establish a critical text as well as assemble a thesaurus of variant readings, what collating base to use and print and so on recur—and still are recurring. The history of the project and its predecessors have also been plagued by repeated errors of judgement, delays, indecision and false decisions, lack of cooperation, occasional attacks of mumpsimus and all too often ill-feeling on a personal and institutional level.

Having read the reports and reactions to Legg’s editions of Mark and Matthew, and having been the editor responsible for bringing the Luke material through the press, and now being intimately involved in the John project have enabled me to see that history has a nasty habit of repeating itself.

The pre-history of the IGNT project is sufficiently well known that a mere sketch will probably suffice to refresh our memories. Fuller reports are available in articles by Neville Birdsall, Eldon J. Epp, David Parker and myself.¹

Our story begins in the 1920s. German scholars at annual conferences that had begun in 1922 had decided that the time had come to consider bringing out a ‘New Tischendorf’ especially as von Soden’s

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edition in the preceding decade was flawed and had not succeeded in updating the *apparatus* in Tischendorf’s 8th. edition in a reliable and usable way. And this is one of the leading leitmotifs in our continuing saga: the unassailable and continuing preeminence of Tischendorf’s edition, and the trail of bungled and inadequate or only partial attempts to supersede that edition.

These German conferences in the 1920s and their desires seemed not to be known to a British delegation prior to its attending the German conference in 1926 in Breslau. The British team comprising such luminaries as Kenyon, Streeter, Souter, and Burkitt, under the chairmanship of Headlam, the Bishop of Gloucester, proposed a similar enterprise and the Germans seemed to go along with the British plans largely because the carrot of a willing publisher, namely OUP, was dangled before them. The German scholars, however, were not happy with all aspects of the plan and had special misgivings about the British desire to use the Textus Receptus (= TR) as a collating base. Streeter in his *Four Gospels* pp. 147f. had already written that Tischendorf’s edition needed updating but that a thesaurus of readings produced from collations of manuscripts against a “Byzantine text” was needed.

In the event that Anglo-German cooperation seemed not to materialize. The project fizzled out after the Germans withdrew as no agreement could be reached over the text to be used as a collating base. It was a British committee which soon afterwards set to work on an *apparatus* to the Gospels with S.C.E. Legg as its editor, employed initially with a stipend of £250 *per annum*. Ironically the TR was not printed in the volumes on Mark (published in 1935) or on Matthew (in 1940). What seems to have been agreed—and certainly what was printed as the collating base—was the text of Westcott and Hort’s edition of 1881. In a prospectus appealing for funding to finance the project issued in Oxford in 1929 Legg writes that as early as 1927 Westcott and Hort’s text had already been selected for use. In effect what Legg provided was a belated *apparatus* to the WH text. Westcott and Hort did not print an *apparatus*, possibly because they believed that as they were publishing the original text of the Greek New Testament then secondary scribal aberrations in the footnotes were redundant, illogical and liable to befog their readers’ minds.

The scholarly world was not impressed with the results of Legg’s labours. G.D. Kilpatrick expressed misgivings about Legg’s volumes in *JTS* 43 (1942) pp. 30–4. T.W. Manson picked up on Kilpatrick’s lead in a review in a later issue of the same volume of *JTS* pp. 83–92. In warm-