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## A Fight for Scholarly Freedom

Castelli, S.

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## Summary

*Wettstein provided the first well-organized essay on New Testament text-critical methodology.* Wettstein was one of the main, unfortunately too often neglected contributors to the history of text-critical methodology in the first half of the 18th century. He responded to the need for new text-critical rules that was raised by his predecessors, notably Johannes Clericus, by contributing a separate chapter at the end of his *Prolegomena* 1730 devoted to nineteen “Observations and cautions” (*Animadversiones et cautiones*) necessary to judge the New Testament variant readings. Unlike John Mill, whose principles must be deduced from scattered references in his *Prolegomena*, and unlike von Mastricht, who wrote a short, practical vademecum with the main goal of dismissing most of Mill’s variants from his own apparatus, Wettstein presents a well-organized essay on New Testament text-critical methodology, thoroughly discussed with plentiful examples from the Church Fathers up to his contemporaries (Chapter 1).

*Thanks to new evidence from Wettstein’s manuscripts, the context, development, and sources of the Animadversiones of both the 1730 and 1752 editions can be explored in much greater depth than ever before.* The chapter of the *Animadversiones* 1730 was later reprinted, with a few yet substantial additions and omissions (§ 2.3), at the end of the second volume of Wettstein’s New Testament 1752, together with the principles on New Testament interpretation. By presenting the two sets of principles as a unit, our scholar highlighted the strict connection between textual criticism and exegesis (§ 2.1). An invaluable text for studying the genesis and the making of Wettstein’s *Prolegomena* 1730, and therefore also of the *Animadversiones* chapter, is the interleaved copy of von Mastricht’s *NTG* 1711, preserved by the Library of the University of Amsterdam. Some handwritten notes that point to a date before 1730, for example a list of conjectures, shed new light on Wettstein’s *modus operandi* in collecting material for his *Animadversiones* (§ 2.2.1). An intermediate step between the edition of 1730 and that of 1752 is provided by a copy of *Prolegomena* with Wettstein’s handwritten notes preserved in the Basel University Library. These notes show how Wettstein finalized his 1752 version of the *Animadversiones*, and his *modus scribendi*, with corrections sometimes *currente calamo* (§ 2.2.2). For his *Prolegomena*, and consequently for his *Animadversiones*, Wettstein made use of a massive quantity of sources: New Testament and Patristic manuscripts, as well as classical and modern sources. His quest for manuscripts was relentless, as shown by the corpus of letters to his cousin Caspar Wettstein and by his handwritten notes in the aforementioned editions of von Mastricht 1711 and of *Prolegomena* 1730: he requested Bentley’s collation of *Vaticanus*; he persistently requested from Cardinal Quirini the collation of Revelation from Rome (046) up to the last days before the publication of his New Testament; in vain he repeatedly appealed to Newton’s heirs to obtain the missing part of his manuscript on 1 Tim 3:16 and 1 John 5:7–8. Finally, the manuscript of Castellio’s *Ars dubitandi*—brought by Wettstein from Basel to the Low Countries—acquires a fundamental role for Wettstein’s argument on conjectural emendation (§ 2.4).

*Wettstein used the evidence of theory in order to leave behind the authority of the received text and enhance scholarly freedom.* Wettstein’s main goals in *Prolegomena* 1730 encompass a *pars destruens* and a *pars*

*construens*. The former leaves behind the authority of the received text, consequently enhancing scholarly freedom; the latter promotes a new method based on the manuscripts and on the critic's judgment. His position on conjectural emendation (v) is crucial in his *pars destruens*. He devoted a wide space to conjectures, both in the methodological framework of 1730 and in the apparatus of his later edition, and he openly defended their legitimacy in theory, in order to grant textual critics the freedom to intervene in the sacred text as in any classical text, and in order to fight the reverence shown for previous editions. In his methodological remarks, Wettstein comes close to Richard Bentley and brings to New Testament scholarship the boldness that the English scholar had displayed in his classical writings. This line of leaving behind the authority of previous editions and freeing textual criticism from any partisanship is further developed by Wettstein's principle that the orthodox reading should not be preferred *a priori*—a criterion used up to this day and first extensively discussed by Wettstein (§ 3.2.1). This was achieved even more through the pioneering position on the received reading (xix), which might be rejected even in doubtful cases; and through the principle claiming that printed editions are not authoritative—notably the received text, the very definition of which is questioned by Wettstein in his handwritten *Historia ecclesiastica* (iii; § 3.1.2). It was only one hundred years later that Lachmann's New Testament (1831) would utterly fulfil the requirements of the latter principle, which Wettstein had formulated as early as 1730.

*Wettstein printed the received text not as a submission to it, but as a further way to question its authority.* Wettstein's attempt to question the received reading explains also his choice to print in his New Testament the received text together with a mainly negative apparatus. Wettstein's decision to keep the received text in his 1751-1752 edition was not due to fear of his detractors, as has been believed for centuries. Rather, it was a practical and a strategic choice. Practical, because by printing a negative apparatus he could produce the massive number of variants that he had collated all his life, of which we still have extensive evidence. Strategic, because the negative apparatus would show his learned readers the questionable status of the received text. Moreover, the layout of his edition would play a crucial role in this strategic plan: the bottom of the text would no longer be a secondary place to which the choices of a fearful editor could be relegated, but rather a visible place in which Wettstein's own textual choices would catch the reader's eye at a first glance (§ 3.1.2).

*Wettstein was a pioneer in finding a method for New Testament textual criticism.* Wettstein was not only a pioneer in his *pars destruens* of questioning the received text and promoting intellectual freedom in the field of the *critica sacra*. He was also a pioneer in his attempt to find a new method for New Testament textual criticism. In his set of guidelines, Wettstein highlighted the internal criteria, in a formulation that—through Griesbach—has been transmitted to us today. Wettstein was the first to discuss extensively the principle of the orthodox reading (xii). He contributed to a sharper formulation of the criterion of *usus scribendi* (xi), and although he was not the founder of the principle of the harder reading, he was the first to write widely about it and to stress its corollaries (vii-x; § 3.2). He was also the first to argue openly for conjectural emendation, although hardly using it in practice (v; § 3.1.4). In the footsteps of Mill, Clericus, and Bentley, he highlighted the relevance of the indirect tradition, notably of the Church Fathers (xiv-xv; § 3.3). This trend was widely accepted also by later scholars: not only by his contemporary Bengel and by the critics of the following generation, Semler and Griesbach, but also by 19th-century scholars such as Lachmann,

Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort. Finally, in spite of his later theory on the Latinization of most of the ancient manuscripts, in his text-critical guidelines he still openly argued for the preference for the older reading (§ 3.4.1); and at the end of his principle on the majority reading he still clearly recognized that manuscripts should be weighed and not counted (§ 3.4.2 and § 3.4.3). The discrepancy between Wettstein's theory and his practice finds a threefold explanation. First, in Wettstein's view, his text-critical guidelines have a meaning *per se*, independently of the use that a critic might make of them. This is evident for the principle on conjectural emendation (v), on the received reading (xix), and on the orthodox reading (xii). Secondly, Wettstein was aware of the difficulty of writing absolute "rules" for textual criticism, and preferred to provide his learned readers with general guidelines. In other words, Wettstein knew from experience that guidelines are there as a general path to follow, but that the *mare magnum* of New Testament evidence entails in practice many exceptions. Finally, throughout his life, Wettstein's priority remained the collation of manuscripts: consequently, overloaded by a tight printing schedule and by the need to chase the collation of Revelation until the very end, he left the revision of his *Animadversiones* chapter, together with the composition of the rules for interpretation, to the summer of 1752 (§ 3.4.3).

*Wettstein did not regard the majority reading as an iron rule.* As is well known, Wettstein mostly preferred the reading of the majority of the manuscripts. He had highlighted that preference since his review of Bengel's New Testament in 1734, and further explained it in his handwritten *Historia ecclesiastica*, which I have dated to 1746–1747 (§ 3.4.2; § 4.2). Yet, the majority reading is not an iron rule for Wettstein, as is usually stated in secondary literature. In several cases, Wettstein could forsake the agreement of the Greek manuscripts in favour of internal criteria (§ 4.3); sometimes, he would prefer the reading giving a better meaning; in exceptional cases, he would choose a conjecture by a fellow scholar (e.g., Mark 10:30; Eph 1:1; § 4.4). He did not follow strict rules, and often took each reading as a single case. Moreover, in the case of Revelation, he presents a very innovative text that mostly agrees with the MCT. From a methodological point of view, Wettstein emphasizes the internal criteria in theory and sometimes displays eclecticism in the application of his guidelines in practice (§ 4.5).

*Wettstein's work played a crucial role in the formulation of internal criteria.* Wettstein's work was praised in his own and in the following centuries for its sound scholarship. Notably, the *Animadversiones* have found broad approval, from the first reviews of *Prolegomena* up to contemporary scholarship (§ 5.1; Introduction, § 2). Yet, Wettstein has more often been questioned for his idiosyncratic theories, such as his radical Latinization theory, and for his inconsistency between theory and practice (§ 5.2). Wettstein's merits for text-critical methodology were largely overlooked during the 19th century, when Lachmann's and Westcott and Hort's method favoured external criteria, and when internal criteria were attached to the name of Griesbach. However, during the 20th century, the increased awareness of the limitations of a merely genealogical method on contaminated traditions brought internal criteria more openly to the fore. In particular, the classicist Giorgio Pasquali acknowledged Wettstein's crucial role in the formulation of internal criteria, even before Griesbach. In New Testament scholarship, the eclectic method, either reasoned or thoroughgoing, gave internal criteria more weight. And although it is too early to assess whether CBGM will go in the same direction, in

some specific cases CBGM has confirmed the preference for a reading made on the basis on internal evidence (§ 5.3.2).

*Wettstein demonstrated the importance of the critic's judgment and he defended the application of conjectural emendation in the critica sacra.* With his text-critical principles, Wettstein created a milestone in the history of text-critical methodology, and his legacy endures to this day (§ 5.4). Wettstein was a pioneer in his century, but also for the following generations, in his attempt to debunk the authority of the received text, and to search for a new method, no longer based on the authority of an edition, but on the authority of the manuscripts (§ 5.4.1). He contributed a well-organized, thoroughly discussed essay where, even before Griesbach, he formulates most of the internal criteria still valid for all branches of textual criticism. Through these criteria, he highlighted the value of the critic's judgment, which is still fundamental to the CBGM (§ 5.4.2). Specifically, Wettstein's plea for the legitimacy of conjectural emendation is meaningful to the current debate on conjectural emendation in biblical scholarship, both for Hebrew Bible and New Testament textual criticism (§ 5.4.3).

*Wettstein's New Testament should be considered a prime example of an 18th-century "historical turn."* Wettstein has left a lasting legacy not only in his text-critical principles, but also in his New Testament. Unlike what has been believed so far, Wettstein's New Testament offers a very modern and pioneering historical perspective on textual criticism. He reaches this goal through his mainly negative apparatus. The negative apparatus was to be read together with a massive number of sources, references, and conjectures, and together with a "second apparatus" providing the historical context of a word or a concept. In so doing, Wettstein gave voice to "rejected" readings as well as to rejected conjectures: he created an unprecedented "historical apparatus," showing a pioneering attitude towards a historical perspective on textual criticism. Wettstein's historical interest explains the enormous number of sources, references, and conjectures, which are not meant—or not only—to retrieve the "original" reading; moreover, his historical perspective is displayed by the occasional interrelation of first and second apparatus, and by the juxtaposition of text-critical principles and principles for interpretation. More than any of his predecessors, in his 1751-1752 edition Wettstein showed a "historical turn" *ante litteram* (§ 5.4.4).