



Josef Schmid

***Studies in the History of the Greek Text of the
Apocalypse: The Ancient Stems***

Translated by Juan Hernández Jr., Garrick V. Allen, and
Darius Müller

Text-Critical Studies 11

Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018. Pp. xxxviii + 298. Paper.
\$42.00. ISBN 9781628372045. Hardcover. \$57.00. ISBN
9780884142829.

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An important contribution to the study of the Apocalypse text is made available for the first time in English translation by the publication of this volume. More than sixty years ago, Josef Schmid, the twentieth-century titan of Apocalypse textual criticism, produced a monumental work comparing Apocalypse manuscripts. Schmid's original work, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Textes* (Studies in the History of the Greek Text of the Apocalypse), contained three parts: *Der Apokalypse-Kommentar des Andreas von Kaisareia* (The Apocalypse Commentary of Andrew of Caesarea, 1955); *Die alten Stämme* (The Ancient Stems, 1955), the translation of which is the volume under review; and *Historische Abteilung Ergänzungsband, Einleitung*, (Historical Supplementary Volume, Introduction, 1956), which reviewed the manuscript tradition of the Apocalypse commentary by Andrew of Caesarea and its reception history. Schmid was the first scholar to attempt a comprehensive analysis of the text of the Apocalypse by examining every available manuscript known at that time, including manuscripts that contained the commentary of Andrew of Caesarea. The commentary of Andrew of Caesarea, archbishop of Cappadocia, is important to the text of the Apocalypse because approximately one-third of all Greek manuscript copies of Revelation contain the commentary. The predominance of the Andreas commentary resulted in an Apocalypse text-type known as the Andreas text, or Av. Schmid was the first to catalogue the Andreas manuscripts and examine the Andreas text.

The study of the Apocalypse text has posed both distinctive challenges as well as exceptional opportunities due to its unique reception history in the Greek tradition. Although Revelation was accepted universally as apostolic in the Eastern Church from the second century, it lost support due to its strange style and content. By the mid-fourth century, when the New Testament canon was taking its final shape, influential clergy raised doubts about Revelation's apostolic pedigree and succeeding in undermining its acceptance in the East. Revelation was never seriously disputed in the West, but by the end of the fourth century it was almost universally rejected in the Greek East, Athanasius's famous canon of 367 notwithstanding. Since the lectionary began to take shape in the fifth century, Revelation never found a place within the prescribed readings, cementing its status as uncanonical in the Orthodox Church until nearly the modern era.

The exclusion of Revelation from the canon and lectionary dramatically impacted its textual transmission, resulting in a unique situation as compared to the text of other New Testament books. The Apocalypse was copied far less frequently. Only about three hundred Greek manuscript copies of the Apocalypse exist, compared to thousands of copies of the gospels. Because it was not regarded as Scripture, Revelation was excluded from the lectionary, not only resulting in fewer copies overall but also the absence of an ecclesiastical standard or preferred type-type. Since Revelation was excluded from the canon, it was not combined with other New Testament manuscripts, as we typically see: Gospels and Acts, the Epistles of Paul, Hebrews and the General Epistles. This meant that Apocalypse manuscripts were copied and survived along two trajectories: as a mystical but nonscriptural work either standing alone or, more commonly, inserted in manuscripts alongside patristic sermons, lives of saints, apocryphal acts and other miscellaneous spiritual writings; and the manuscripts of the commentary of Andrew of Caesarea. Breaking with the prevalent opinion in the East, Andrew regarded Revelation as Scripture and wrote his commentary in 611 CE. His commentary was extensively copied and ultimately became the basis for the acceptance of Revelation into the canon by the East.

Schmid's work on the Apocalypse text had been preceded in the twentieth century by the work of Hermann von Soden and Herman Charles Hoskier, both of whom had completely ignored the Andreas text in their studies. Since one-third of the Apocalypse manuscripts contained the Andreas commentary, ignoring the Andreas text-type was a significant omission in the study of Apocalypse texts and could no longer be ignored. Josef Schmid undertook the effort to examine all Apocalypse manuscripts to determine whether an early text form of the Apocalypse could be discovered by an examination of the Andreas text-type.

Schmid's results, published in the 1950s, marked the most important contribution to the work of textual criticism of the Apocalypse to date. As part of his work on the Apocalypse text itself, Schmid also created and published the first critical text of the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* by Andrew

of Caesarea.¹ Since Andrew of Caesarea's commentary led to the acceptance of Apocalypse into the New Testament canon by the Orthodox Church, Schmid's critical text and his analysis of the influence of the Andreas commentary was an important contribution in itself. But the Andreas commentary was secondary to Schmid's primary purpose: to analyze all of the available Apocalypse manuscripts and determine whether or not the *Urtext* could be discovered.

The textual analysis of Schmid, previously available only in the original German, is now accessible through the considerable efforts of Juan Hernández Jr., Garrick V. Allen, and Darius Müller and by the publication of this present volume by SBL Press. Hernández, Allen, and Müller translated and edited Schmid's 1955 volume *Die alten Stämme*, which describes the various Apocalypse manuscripts. The book begins with the introduction written by the three translators/editors, who analyze and explain the need for the present translation (xvii–xxxvii). They begin by noting the tremendous advances that have occurred in textual criticism since Schmid's day in the form of new tools, methodologies, and advancements in science and other disciplines such as paleography. They give due credit to Schmid for his impressive work while still acknowledging some of Schmid's errors, for example regarding the corrections in Codex Sinaiticus, an area in which Hernández has considerable expertise.

Schmid's errors and his outdated methodology do not render his work useless, the translators conclude. Even though more than sixty years have passed since Schmid published his work, no scholar has attempted such a comprehensive study of the text of the Apocalypse. Therefore, Schmid's work stands unparalleled and has never been superseded. Hernández, Allen, and Müller also note that Schmid did not simply report on the manuscripts but produced a critical assessment of all previous text-critical work on the Apocalypse. They then turn to the task of grappling with and attempting to define Schmid's use of terms, such as Stem, Group, Family, Type, *Urtext*, and so on, because Schmid himself was not always consistent in his use of these terms. This in itself is a necessary and important contribution of this volume. The translators' introductory chapter continues with a brief summary of Schmid's conclusions regarding the major text forms of the Apocalypse, a discussion of his theory and method, and their own assessment of the value and shortcomings of Schmid's work as a transitional work: pioneering for its time but showing its age today. Finally, the translators' introduction concludes with a look to the future and the hope that methodologies embraced by modern textual criticism will "broaden the conversation" and "close the gap" between the work, assumptions, and techniques popular during the time of Schmid and our own.

1. For more on Andrew's commentary, see Eugenia Constantinou, *Guiding to a Blessed End: Andrew and His Apocalypse Commentary in the Ancient Church* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013); and *The Apocalypse Commentary of Andrew of Caesarea*, trans. Eugenia Constantinou, FC 123 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011).

After the translators' introduction, the translation itself is presented. The original work was divided by Schmid into three main sections and is presented in the same manner: (1) Schmid's original introduction, (2) "The Major Stems of the Greek of the Apocalypse and their Interrelationships," and (3) "The Linguistic Style of the Apocalypse." The first section (1–44), Schmid's original introduction, is a valuable analysis of the scholarship on the Apocalypse text in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He reviews the work and conclusions of many textual critics, including Tischendorf, Westcott, Hort, Lagrange, Weiss, Bousset, Charles, and Hoskier. Schmid also mentions briefly the versions in other languages, such as Latin and Armenian, and studies of the history of the Apocalypse in other versions. Schmid then turns to the goals of his investigation, which include ascertaining and detailing the characteristics of the two recensions *A ν* and *K* and the relationship between them, where *AC* stands opposed to the rest of the tradition, whether *AC* is truly a "neutral text," and the relative value of the tradition's witnesses. He then lists the various manuscript witnesses, where the manuscripts are located, and whether they stand alone or are combined in with other works. He also discusses the place of the Apocalypse within the transmission of the New Testament.

The second section, "Major Stems" (45–181), is the primary section of the book and consists of Schmid's analysis and conclusions of the Apocalypse text forms. Schmid identified the main Apocalypse text-types as the (1) Andreas text type, or *A ν* ; (2) Koine or *K*; (3) *A C* Oikoumenios; and (4) the group that includes *P⁴⁷*, Sinaiticus, and Origen. Oikoumenios had written the first Greek commentary on the Apocalypse at the end of the sixth century, and his text followed the *AC* manuscript tradition. Schmid begins with the Andreas text, then moves to the Koine. He lists the variants and discusses the relationship between *A ν* and *K*, evaluating the opinions of the scholars who preceded him. The chapter continues in similar fashion with his examination of older text forms, *AC* Oikoumenios, followed by *P⁴⁷* S Origen and the textual variants that characterize those traditions, again offering his own opinion of their value and relationship as well as commenting upon the opinions of previous scholars. Schmid also includes quotations of the Apocalypse by early Greek ecclesiastical writers such as Origen, Hippolytus, Methodios, as well as witnesses found in ancient papyri and parchment fragments in this chapter.

By his analysis, Schmid concludes that the entire Greek tradition of the Apocalypse text consists of four stems: *AC*, *P⁴⁷* S, *A ν* , and *K*. *A ν* and *K* are distinct recensions and not independent of one another but have a common stem that is clearly recognizable. The older text is found in *AC* and *P⁴⁷* S, with *AC* being more reliable. However, *AC* is not identifiable with the *Urtext*, since it also exhibits significant linguistic violations. Surprisingly, each of the four text forms preserves the *Urtext* in some places. He also concludes that *A* preserves the most important witness; however, the Andreas and Koine traditions are older than Codex Sinaiticus and therefore older than *A* and *C* themselves (154–58).

The third and last section of the book, “The Linguistic Style of the Apocalypse” (183–263), consists of Schmid’s discussion of particular linguistic characteristics of the Apocalypse, including morphology, cases, nouns, pronouns, verbs, conjunctions, and so on. After analyzing the peculiar forms, Schmid concludes that they go back to the author himself and not to the redactor or the tradition. He confirms that AC is “generally neutral” in ways that other witnesses are not, though not in orthography. AC is also not free from real corrections, and the preference for the AC text by Westcott-Hort and Charles “without limitations” is unfounded (262).

The book concludes with an appendix containing Schmid’s errata, a bibliography, and indices of biblical citations, modern authors, and subjects. Overall, this volume provides important and needed access in the English language to a landmark work in the study of the Apocalypse text tradition. The translators accurately and successfully captured not only the content but the ethos of Schmid’s work, even the “feel” of the original as we follow the thought process behind Schmid’s conclusions. Finally, the translators spared countless readers the struggle required to read Schmid’s challenging German original. Good translations are always greatly appreciated, and the dedication involved in making another author’s work accessible to a wider audience is often not given the recognition it deserves. The translators will certainly achieve their goal to stimulate discussion and fresh new approaches to the study of the Apocalypse text by producing this English translation of Schmid’s work.