

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM

It is my pleasure to introduce the important theme of textual-criticism here in Germany and especially here in Stuttgart. That is because it is Stuttgart which now houses the headquarters of the German Bible Society, formerly Die württembergische Bibelanstalt. The Stuttgart Vulgate is the best book to consult for Jerome's famous Latin translations of the scriptures¹; we also have as an ongoing series, *Vetus Latina*, the Old Latin Bible, sometimes known as the *Itala* in the Gospels; that is currently based in and edited from the Erzabtei at Beuron in Germany near the source of the Danube. Our most famous hand-edition of the New Testament is the Nestle text, now in its 28th edition² and shortly to be supplanted by a 29th that will be parallel to an electronic version of the Nestle text and *apparatus criticus*. It is named after its original editors, Eberhard Nestle (1851-1913) and his son Erwin Nestle (1883-1972), both of them very proud Swabians. In Germany at large the main centre for textual-criticism is the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung at the Wilhelms-Universität, Münster in Westfalen/Westphalia, about which we shall say more below. Also many famous text-critics from the past were from these parts of Europe. I am thinking of Konstantin von Tischendorf, Kurt Aland, Hermann

Freiherr von Soden, Vogels and Greeven as well as earlier luminaries such as Bengel, Wettstein, Griesbach, Lachmann and Buttmann.³

It will be noted that we use both »Textforschung« and »Textkritik« here. I suppose the latter is well-known and should be the proper professional name for the discipline practised by text-critics. Many outsiders though prefer »Textforschung« throughout as the word to use, especially amongst those who think that the word »criticism« is negative, implying a harsh judgement. That should not be the case because most practitioners are not harsh judges. For them »criticism« must merely mean »analysis«.

We quote as our »text«, just as if what follows were to be a sermon (and which, obviously, it is not!) words from Nestle 27 p. 3* (*Einleitung*) and pp. 45*-46* in the English *Introduction*. They are:

»Die Zielsetzung der vorliegenden 27. Auflage des Novum Testamentum Graece blieb unverändert die der 26. Auflage. Sie soll dem Benutzer einen begründeten Arbeitstext bieten und ihn zugleich in die Lage versetzen, diesen nachzuprüfen, bzw. gegebenenfalls zu korrigieren.«

»The purpose of the 27th edition remains the same as that of the 26th edition. It intends to provide the user with a well-founded working text with the means of verifying it or alternatively of correcting it«.

Those words are, unfortunately and strangely, omitted from NA28.

Let us now summarize what will follow: Textual criticism or textual research is the study of copies of any written work composed prior to the invention of printing which can easily stabilize a text. We are therefore speaking of course of any text, the original autograph of which is unknown and our purpose is to ascertain as far as is practicable the original text underlying all copies of it. Naturally we use it today of the New Testament in Greek.

Textual criticism is sometimes known as lower criticism, by which we must recognise its foundational character. Obviously »lower« cannot here mean its inferiority to any other branch of Biblical Studies, and certainly not (or never) inferior to, say, exegesis. This latter word, exegesis, or interpretation, must be built upon a text established through proper text-critical principles, unless all that one is trying to do is to write the distinctive exegesis of a particular manuscript, for example, that to be seen in Codex Bezae (= D 05). Usually, that is not the case and what one is attempting to do is to write an exegetical commentary on an edited text, usually a hybrid printed edition based on several differing manuscripts, selected by its editor(s). That is what is meant by an »eclectic« text: we are free to collect all distinctive readings

from among every extant witness of the New Testament proper but of course not only manuscripts of the Greek New Testament itself but from the early translations of it and from patristic citations of the scriptures, found in the surviving writings from early church fathers.

Many years ago when the British New Testament text-critic Neville Birdsall of Birmingham was being introduced to a new colleague, the latter said to him that textual critics were like the men who »rodded« drains to unblock sewers. Later the colleague then declared that, although he was glad someone else did such tasks, he himself did not choose to undertake labour of that sort; he preferred to be an exegete. By contrast to this colleague's views, we may see and ought to observe just how fundamental textual criticism must be in any theological and exegetical work on our New Testament texts. It is vital.

Like Birdsall's erstwhile colleague, few academics nowadays are prepared to »rodd« drains by devoting their research time to an analysis of extant manuscript witnesses, collating and then comparing newly emerging copies. To do so obviously requires much endurance and hard work, ploughing through grammars, concordances and full critical *apparatus* and displaying therein all the necessary linguistic skills, with the willingness to look at what are often deemed minutiae and, of course, with the requisite *Sitzfleisch* such work always involves. But there are sufficient scholars who do voluntarily devote themselves to such fundamental tasks. Most of these academics claim to be »eclectic« in their approach; that is, most of them feel free to

select the text to be printed from a small range of extant witnesses. Only a few, usually nowadays to be found in the USA, remain fond of and wedded to the mediaeval bulk of manuscripts, often labelled the Byzantine text-type, insofar as such adherence to the readings of the majority of New Testament manuscripts sounds very democratic.⁴

First, let us turn to the four canonical Gospels. The Belgian scholar, Joël Delobel regularly argued that the textual criticism of the Gospels and the Synoptic Problem needed to be studied simultaneously. Similarly, and more recently, when the directors of the University of Münster's Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung published their volume, *Parallelenperikopen*, in 2011 with its invaluable Appendix I »Auf Parallelstelleneinfluss zurückführbare Varianten«, it was in preparation for the, eventual, forthcoming volumes of *Editio critica maior* (= *ECM* hereafter) on each of the separate synoptic Gospels (Matthew; Mark; Luke). Other guides to parallels may be seen, not least in published editions of the Gospels in Greek, and especially those of Matthew, of Mark and of Luke, which often show readings in certain manuscripts, e.g. the editions by Reuben Swanson, Jenny Read-Heimerdinger with Josep Rius-Camps and in the synopses edited by Bernard Orchard, Heinrich Greeven, and by Kurt Aland etc..

As far as the extant Greek witnesses to Matthew, Mark and Luke are concerned, many of the earliest manuscripts which have been dated to the 2nd, 3rd or 4th centuries are very fragmentary and we just do not know the extent of their original

text. Most now contain only one Gospel, although 0171 and P75 today contain two (Matthew-Luke and Luke-John respectively); P45 contains all four Gospels, although none is preserved in its entirety. It may easily be observed that if any variants in these fragmented texts agree with another Gospel, even where the witness now has only one of the Gospels, it is likely to be deliberate harmonizing of the parallels that supplies the answer to our problem.

Harmonizations are readily pointed out to us whenever these occur within the four canonical Gospels, and those are easily exposed in printed synopsis texts and their footnotes. An important thoroughgoing principle is that text-critical variants which make parallels more dissimilar are likely to be original, although we always need to append to such a statement the useful get-out clause »other things being equal«. ⁵ Harmonizing variants may obviously involve not just substituted words but longer or shorter readings. Harmonization originally was a *result* and never an *intention* on the part of copyists. However, many changes would have been due to a scribe's familiarity with another Gospel (not necessarily always Matthew's).

Nevertheless, once the four-fold Gospel canon began to emerge (say, by the end of the 2nd century) then differences between texts could cause disquiet among the faithful, for whom deviations, inconsistencies and *errata* could be troublesome. Hence the need to alter one or more text to ensure that all parallels were brought into agreement, especially in the case of Jesus' *ipsissima verba* i.e. his actual spoken words. His instructions had to be made identical and

that must have involved deliberate change. Deliberate changes by a scribe and/or the community of believers instructing him, clearly reflect a later movement albeit one which in Christianity lasted for three-quarters of the texts' existence in order to remove the more conspicuous differences between them.

Let us move on now to explain what differentiates text-critics today. »Textual criticism is a science and an art-form« so say many observers. Both aspects of the discipline, its scientific approach to artefacts and its art-form when assessing the significance of variants, occur below. Few readers ever find fault with a scholar's »scientific« assembling of manuscripts or with the registration, collating and analysis of their often distinctive text, but it is the editorial decisions as to which reading represents the author's writing or, to adopt a piece of modern jargon, what the *Ausgangstext* (which may or may not be equivalent to the authorial text) may say that is of prime importance. This *Ausgangstext* is the original writing from which all surviving differences between manuscripts (i.e. their distinctive variant readings) derive and which, as a consequence, any of its »secondary« readings may occur in the footnotes, be these deliberate or accidental. Those are the places where readers may part company with the editors.

A recent book by Cambry G. Pardee⁶ may be seen as an expanded textual commentary on the three synoptic Gospels comparable to the one written by B.M. Metzger on the whole of the New Testament.⁷ Pardee spends a paragraph or more on the nature

of the allegedly harmonizing variants (e.g. on his pp. 339-367, as he does on the other manuscripts included here). These, together with his rating letters, U (= unlikely), P (= possible) etc., are in effect the »art« as opposed to the objective »scientific« presentation of the manuscripts and their readings. Inevitably, it is the »art« that may create further discussions and disagreements between the author and his readers. But these discussions offer much-needed food for thought, and we commend Pardee for them and all comparable writers for their clarity of presentation, caution and often wise judgements on such important issues.

By contrast to most allegedly »rational eclectic« text-critics and certainly to those who favour one text-type as the bearer of the original texts, my own work (or »art« of textual-criticism) has regularly been dubbed »thoroughgoing (text-criticism)«, by which term is meant that I seek the original wording in as many or as few manuscripts of any date, as long as one disputed reading agrees with the language, style and theology of the author. Modern critical hand-editions, such as Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* and the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*, both currently on the market, are favourably disposed to such a »cult«, despite neither being prepared always to follow its reasoning to a logical climax and conclusion.

Obviously, as a thoroughgoing text-critic, I must analyse every disputed reading against the recognised and proven language, vocabulary, style and theology elsewhere in each author's writings. This

means that I can secure the author's usage, mainly by pointing to undisputed parallels elsewhere in his text(s). As an increasing number of manuscripts are finally being read in their entirety, I am regularly told that my fund of available »firm« (undisputed) examples must inevitably decrease, thus making thoroughgoing eclecticism less scientific in its analyses. I am naturally conscious of such criticism, but my observation is that very few readings coming to light in recently collated manuscripts offer genuine *new* readings; mostly these manuscripts' texts reflect already-known existing readings. Recently collated manuscripts may obviously be added to an *apparatus*, but normally only to bulk up its testimony, and any brand-new variants in modern readings are usually examples of careless »accidental« errors and are often orthographical changes.

And as a so-called thoroughgoing text-critic, I, in contrast with colleagues who are »rational« eclectic critics, am therefore willing and prepared more often than they to accept a reading from any Greek manuscript be it alone, or alongside a sub-singular reading, or by contrast even where it has a vast number of supporters -- as long as its readings seem to be what a first-century author would have written. Language, style, usage elsewhere and theology must all play their parts in such decisions. Other criteria will follow shortly. As far as language and style are concerned, here I would argue that a first-century writer generally of a Jewish background would naturally slip into usage dictated by his mother-tongue. When writing an epistle in Greek to fellow-Christians or would-be disciples we must

remember that Paul of Tarsus wrote to the church in Rome, not in Latin, presumably in daily use by Christians there nor in Aramaic, probably Paul's own mother tongue, but in Greek. All twenty-seven New Testament books were and remain in their original language, Greek, until or after the times when churches needed to have their scriptures translated into Latin, Syriac, Coptic and later into other early Christian tongues once the religion had spread beyond those lands where Greek was normal or the *lingua franca*.

Thus, if we come across examples where there is a reading or a text that shows a Greek variant pitted against a *varia lectio*⁸ for (a) variant reading(s) in, say, the style and word-order of a Semitic tongue I would argue in favour of the latter, on the assumption that later scribes, possibly the learned men of their times, vehemently objected to unGreek expressions. The direction of change would always be towards a better Greek. In chapter 4 I shall turn especially to Semitisms found in manuscripts of the New Testament.

From those observations and *obiter dicta* we now turn to some popular, albeit wrong, understandings of what is regularly said about our extant manuscripts, i.e. those 5,000 or so witnesses that have chanced to survive for centuries from among an unknown but infinitely much larger number that were also written, used and read but later abandoned and lost or destroyed. Later, in our next chapter, I shall explain what these 5,000+ survivors are, but at the least one may see that it is a huge number, quite larger than our colleagues working on Greek or Latin classical texts have to work

on (and from). But this is also too large a figure to be capable of any one scholar or even teams or committees of scholars to comprehend all its intricacies. We shall see below that various methodologies have been harnessed to help us whittle down this huge figure for scholars to be able to cope with, read and eventually edit a critical edition with its important footnotes that can display an abbreviated sample of alternative readings (words) found in rival manuscripts.

Here come the most important principles that may be, and indeed should be, applied to the manuscripts by all editors:

1. It is a common misunderstanding to use the mantra: »The oldest manuscripts are the best«. Our main tasks in finding, collating and reading and then using all or any manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek are concerned partly with their dating, and partly with their distinctive readings, that is, any changes we note after comparing them with another witness, deciding which has the original wording as it left the author's hands (either the authorial text itself or failing that the earliest achievable source often now called, even in the Anglophone world, the *Ausgangstext*).⁹

Most textual critics and editors today are called eclectic critics because they choose to follow any reliable manuscripts, ideally belonging to a wide cohort of other witnesses, whether these are called »text-types« (a term going out of fashion) or textual families, especially if links to versional readings are there too. Eclectic critics disapprove of readings with little Greek support although if pressed I can readily

point to places in the popular Nestle hand edition currently on sale, especially to students, pastors and academics where its editors, who would indeed call themselves eclectic text-critics, print in the leading text readings supported by very few Greek manuscripts, and even in a few cases with no Greek support whatsoever.

Nestle *père* began his critical editions in 1898 as a compromise text and printed his main text based on two or three of the popular texts published under the names of three editions: Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and thirdly Weymouth (for his first three editions, although from 1901 onwards Weymouth was replaced by Weiss' edition of 1894-1900). Many still see in these early Nestle Greek testaments a reliability absent from later—or indeed more modern—editions.

The statement that any early manuscript from antiquity, as is the case with our New Testament manuscripts, is more reliable than all later, potentially corrupted, copies seems sensible and sounds trustworthy. It is, however, false and deceptive. One could indeed be forgiven for assuming that a witness dated by experts in palaeography, that is scholars who can relatively accurately give us a rough dating (within, normally, a plus or minus twenty-five year margin of error on either side of a proposed date) to a literary manuscript that typically would not carry a date, unlike a legal document or private letter which may well do so. Recording the distinctive shapes of individual Greek letters, or noting whether certain ligatures belong to one period rather than any other, and listing the characteristics of handwriting are the stocks in trade of

such a scholar's armoury. In German, as in English, one may deduce that a piece of handwriting belongs to such or such a date or at least to one century if certain specific features of handwritten lettering and writing in general are identifiable.

So: let us assume that in general professional palaeographers get it right when they say that there are definite very early manuscripts from the 2nd, 3rd or 4th centuries. The fact that many of these witnesses are now badly fragmented—some reduced to a mere page remaining from its original—makes the task of reproducing from such a fund of manuscripts an edited Greek text such as a New Testament Gospel or one of Paul's letters more or less in their entirety extremely difficult to achieve. Even more so has this practice been applied to manuscripts that remain relatively intact and where one may declare that their text is more likely to represent the Holy Grail of the original writing, in other words to reach the words as they must have flowed from Paul's or his amanuensis' pen, or from the evangelist's stylus. The closer a document is to its original date of the composition being copied, we hear that it is as a consequence more reliable. There would be less chance of accidental errors to have occurred. Or so we are told!

But can we really know? Is that belief always true? H.-J. Vogels in 1955 said that such statements about ancient witnesses could be thus but only if we knew how many copies were made between the composition of that original and the ones we have and if we also knew how many or what sorts of changes were made at each copying. And those are very things that

we just cannot know. Scribes never tell us such information, even if they knew or even cared about such matters.

My former tutor at the University of Oxford, the Canadian George Kilpatrick (by then the holder of the university's New Testament chair, as the »Dean Ireland's Professor of the Exegesis of Holy Scripture«), used (correctly) to tell his students that the age of a manuscript and the age of a reading are only relevant if we have definite and accurate answers to such questions. In other words, following Vogels' message, he said that we need to compare the differences between what had apparently been written originally by its composer in the early years of Christianity and the actual manuscript-copy in our hands. (*En passant*, Kilpatrick was a thoroughgoing text-critic—and is probably the reason why I am too!)

Vogels had declared that most if not all of the deliberate changes found in our current stock of New Testament manuscripts would have been made *before* the canonical status of the books was declared. I assume that the Gospels at least in the so-called four-fold canon would have been collected together and deemed authoritative and/or scriptural by the end of the 2nd century. Deliberate changes may be identified in manuscripts that happen to have survived to modern times whatever their dates of writing but what Vogels (rightly in my opinion) was saying was that every deliberate and changed reading, even when such a change was seen as wrong and secondary in the views of modern scholars, would in itself inevitably and originally be a reading from antiquity.

The same date about the closure of the Christian Gospel canon may apply for much of the rest of the New Testament beyond the Gospels. I do not know. But several modern scholars suggest that the New Testament outside the four evangelists' works must certainly have reached that canon of scripture by the end of the 4th century, say. The seven Catholic Letters, possibly the three Pastoral Epistles written in Paul's name, the anonymous so-called Epistle to the Hebrews and the strange Book of Revelation are among the last of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament to have been given canonical status. And such a date is probably towards the end of the 4th century. But whatever the final date when the universal Christian churches, both Eastern and Western, finalized their canon of scripture Vogels and Kilpatrick state categorically that scribes and/or those communities who commissioned all copies of what became authorised canonical writings would have been loath to make deliberate alterations to what by then (the second or fourth centuries) was being treated as Scripture. Prior to the date when we fix the canonical status, all deliberate alterations had probably already occurred. Thereafter conscious changes to what by then was deemed Holy Writ would have been discouraged. (Clearly the usual crop of accidental errors, typographical slips, orthographical *errata*, omissions and maybe also *addenda* and all the usual faults to which all hand-copying is prone would occur at any time.) If what I say is probable then all conscious alteration and deliberate change must have occurred for the most part prior to the dates given to nearly

all surviving manuscripts. Most of our earliest papyri are to be dated after the years when such obvious and deliberate changes were made¹⁰.

2. »The more the merrier« is another popular mantra used by some textual critics, particularly by those favouring readings found in the majority of manuscripts. This statement too is wrong. The colloquialism sounds democratic. What seems to be very liberal could, however, easily be rephrased as »The Majority must Win« and used as a watchword meaning »Might is Right.«

But as with slogan no. 1 above, it is false to think that just because a variant is to be found in a majority of our extant witnesses (all of them chance survivors, let us remember) it must then represent what the original biblical authors actually wrote. The bulk of surviving witnesses could, theoretically, be descendants of an early falsely transcribed witness, whereas the sheer chance of survival could equally mean that those rare readings in a mere handful of manuscripts happen to be the (few) descendents of the original text—or the Ausgangstext. One example we shall refer to in chapter 4 is the famous shorter ending of Mark's Gospel. That shorter reading which has Mark end, abruptly, after chapter 16 verse 8, is found in only two or three Greek manuscripts. Yet I and most text-critics argue that that is what Mark wrote. Nestle's Greek New Testament has several other verses elsewhere that are based on only a few Greek manuscripts. The saw »The more the merrier« cannot be true.

We turn now to the final principle or rule cited by many practitioners; in this case I trust it too will be proven incorrect. It involves the alleged veracity and reliability of certain so-called »best« manuscripts.

3. The Cult of the Best Manuscripts. Westcott and Hort, two British scholars from the Victorian era, championed this cult and applied it, especially to Codex Vaticanus and to Codex Sinaiticus. These were their »best« manuscripts. More will appear in our next chapter on these two witnesses. Westcott and Hort claimed that those two witnesses had what was described as a »neutral« text.¹¹ Their distinctive readings — and those in Vaticanus in particular which had become more accessible by the mid-19th century — were deemed to be as close as possible to the original wording used by the biblical authors, Paul, Matthew, Luke and their contemporaries. These two manuscripts were deemed to be the »best« manuscripts in their eyes and they always tended to follow their readings, almost invariably. The Nestle texts thereafter have often been hailed, somewhat jocularly one feels, as Westcott's and Hort's text redivivus. What is true is that the Bible Societies' edition(s) and the German Bible Society's text in particular prefer readings found in Codex Vaticanus — ideally and particularly if or when they have the support of Codex Sinaiticus (= 8 01), early papyri and a goodly spread of other witnesses and versions from a wider pool. More of this later!

Now to introduce some common ideas used in our discipline:

First come

Semitisms and Atticisms

Atticism and the removal of Semitic word order and style generally were things that tried to improve the Greek text being transmitted. Chapter 4 will show us what types of variants are in mind here.¹² These and other unGreek words and usages fit well with the interests at Eusebia School of Theology (Stuttgart) and so we ought now to look out for Semitisms, Semitic word-order and usage, as well as unGreek, Hellenistic words and usages. I have as one of my several rules of thumb that a reading that removes a Semitism from the text is likely to be secondary. As we have already seen, my rules usually carry with them the health warning »other *things* being equal« by which I mean that among such exceptions (i.e. the »things« in my get-out clause) would exclude our making a New Testament author use a Greek expression not found elsewhere in his firm examples. My phrase therefore covers places where an otherwise potentially original variant has language alien to the author to whom the scribe attributes the reading. It may strike one that at some distant point in the future our judgements being based as they are on exhaustive research may mean that one can never be in a strong position to announce that Paul always does this or never ever does that. But even though an increasing number of witnesses are (eventually and »at long last«) being read in their entirety I detect that hardly any of these impact on our text. To repeat an earlier comment: a newly collated manuscript usually tends merely to bolster our existing stores of

variant readings and hardly ever reveals a hitherto unknown, proper, reading.

Semitisms belong to *the whole* of the New Testament, all its twenty-seven texts being written in the 1st century and mainly by writers whose mother tongue would have been a Semitic language, especially Aramaic. That assertion is even more true of those writers whose Greek was weak: John's and Mark's Gospels or the Book of Revelation rank at the bottom of a pile in which the best Greek (albeit heavily influenced by Semitic languages) occurs in Hebrews and Luke-Acts.

Obviously, one *must* read all the relevant books to assess how their author's Greek looks in every accessible witness. This means that we must obviously look at all variants, asking ourselves how scribes were influenced by the character of the Greek they were »merely« copying. Were such transcribers hack-copyists, being paid on piece work and therefore keen to reach the end of each current task? Or were some of them, say, monks interested in what they were copying?¹³ The latter could spend the necessary time to pore over the meanings and could, if they so wished, incorporate all the marginal annotations and queries that they, their contemporaries and predecessors added to their manuscripts thereby questioning the veracity of the wording before them, on which they had dedicated their lives?

Conjectures

We appreciate that the New Testament in its original language was Greek and in that language it has survived in some 5,000+ manuscripts i.e. far more than, say, any of

the Greek classics, barring Homer's writings. Also: Unlike the New Testament few manuscripts of the classics in their original languages come from any date near their original times of composition. We Biblical scholars are much luckier than our colleagues who work in *literae humaniores*. Many of their texts are highly fragmentary and they must use their not inconsiderable ingenuity to fill up the gaps when trying to edit a complete text. Our colleagues in classical studies are regularly obliged to use the conjectural readings proposed, mainly because many of the texts they work on lack the generous provision of manuscripts, such as those which New Testament scholars have at their fingertips.

Conjectural emendations or what are often »mere guesses« about what the author meant to write (regardless of what has survived) are our main concerns here. In the 19th century many scholars and churchmen from the Low Countries suggested a whole nest of variants which they like to argue must represent the original words, despite what survives in our stock of 5,000+ manuscripts. The *apparatus* to a Greek New Testament, particularly Nestle26, give many such conjectural readings and their proposer, usually with his name Latinized, e.g. de Clerc became Clericus, and so on! That number was drastically pruned by one half in the edition following.¹⁴ The Nestle editions have drastically pared the one-time common siglum, »cj« (= a conjectured reading, i.e. one lacking any Greek support), in their *apparatus*. Those who keep a keen eye on all changes made to published editions see that the conjecture previously printed in Acts 16:12 is now no longer allowed, although a new

and different conjecture is to be found elsewhere in that book, at Acts 13:33. Similarly, Münster now allows a new conjectured reading at 2 Peter 3:10.

But, nonetheless, alongside and contemporaneously with the increasing numbers of newly published or newly discovered manuscripts of the New Testament, some biblical scholars did indeed make or continued to make conjectured changes to the biblical texts, even where we may judge that such alterations represent mere inspired guesswork. Their conclusions are often highly ingenious. And that is their downfall! Few of these conjectures were accepted or are acceptable. At one time, I naïvely assumed that as we had over 5,000 or more manuscripts containing all or part of the New Testament conjectures were never needed. However, when I published an article in 2000¹⁵ I argued that Mark 1:1-3 could never have been written by the same author as that of the following words. No Greek witness was in support, so this suggestion was a pure conjectural emendation on my part. So: we need to reach decisions whether any such emendations are ever allowable, even if we assume that authors like the four evangelists always knew what it was they intended to write, that they always wrote sense and that their command of the Greek language was flawless.

Contents

Of the 5,000+ manuscripts registered only about 60 of them contain all twenty-seven books¹⁶. That is significant. Many are manuscripts that contain only the fourfold Gospel canon, others some or all of the

Pauline letters; many have Acts with (or without) some or all of the Catholic (General) Letters. Revelation, possibly because of its differing character and then its history, often –but not always—stands alone. A few manuscripts contain only the Book of Revelation from the New Testament alongside other non-Biblical writings.¹⁷ The bulk of extant manuscripts are Gospel manuscripts.

All permutations and combinations of manuscripts surviving contain a mixture of the twenty-seven books. But also, as already indicated, very few contain all twenty-seven, whatever the ordering of those may be. As we shall show later, some New Testament books share a manuscript with non-canonical works, including patristic citations and texts. Such hybrids show that those responsible for binding such disparate works together display the literary friends and associates of their Christian readers. All our surviving manuscripts ought to be examined as artefacts—what do they contain, how or where they were written and for whom, what, if anything, can one learn about and from a manuscript’s history and ownership(s). All such questions need to be asked even if some such queries inevitably draw blanks. QED: Where possible, we need to identify the status, origins and provenance of each manuscript as an *artefact*.¹⁸

Where Manuscripts are Housed

A full catalogue of manuscripts of the Greek New Testament needs to indicate where all these witnesses are currently housed. Among such popular locations one may find originals in libraries in Oxford,

London, Cambridge, the Vatican, Paris, Mount Athos and Athens. Some are in Germany, some now are in the USA (e.g. in Ann Arbor). Moscow, St Petersburg, and Sinai are also locations which own many famous manuscripts. Such information is to be found printed (i.e. in hard-copy) in Münster's *Kurzgefasste Liste*, currently now also available online. A new printed (third) edition is being prepared for publication soon. But democracy, being what it is, means that in today's electronically-connected world, those interested in seeing manuscripts up close and in the privacy of their own studies may download many such manuscripts because world-renowned holding institutions are gradually digitizing their manuscript treasures and making them available *gratis* to a potentially world-wide readership.

The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method

The most recent fad (= *Marotte*) to greet us is the so-called »Coherence Based Genealogical Method« (= CBGM). Previously, textual criticism had been applying the Claremont Profiling Method, the Local-Genealogical Method and so on. All of those were devised to deal with the huge bulk of Greek New Testament manuscripts — both continuous-text witnesses and lectionaries. The concept of the inevitable cross-fertilisation or mixing of the underlying textual character is a theme that must also be addressed. The Coherence Based Methodology was created by Gerd Mink, a *Mitarbeiter* in the Institute for New Testament Textual Research at the University of Münster, and is the latest such »-ism« designed to help editors. Results may be seen in the recent volumes published by the

German Bible Society in the series *Editio critica maior*, first — although, inevitably, somewhat cautiously — in its editions of the Catholic Epistles, but then more confidently in their recent edition of the Acts of the Apostles. The spacious layout in these text editions is highly commendable; they are, to adopt a current phrase, »user-friendly«. I am not privy to the extent to which CBGM influenced these editions but clues now exist in the German Bible Society's editorial writings. It strikes me that this newfangled methodology is easily compatible with many of the principles I have been doggedly following for decades, namely the dating of *readings*, not necessarily the dating of the artefact itself (i.e. a manuscript containing that text). »Tradent« is another jargon-term and neologism found in today's increasingly strident reports on the CBGM by its devotees to mean that the manuscripts are to be looked upon principally as the *bearers* of an earlier text. That too sounds convincing.

New Testament Apocrypha

Another discipline concerns the extra-canonical gospels, usually said nowadays to belong to the amorphous florilegium generally, albeit wrongly, called the New Testament Apocrypha. Such gospels are often quite early, and yet are secondary to the canonical four-fold canon. Sometimes these were composed to complete perceived gaps in the earliest gospels, and thus we read in apocryphal infancy gospels about Mary's early life, of Jesus' birth, and of the Holy Family's escapades and deeds of derring-do in their exile in Egypt. Jesus' doings as a young child figure in some childhood gospels. Similarly, Jesus is said in some extra-canonical yarns to have

been gainfully employed between Good Friday and Easter Day, especially by his raising the faithful dead from Hades, seen here not only as a person but as the waiting-room for the faithful dead as they await their ultimate fate. In the apocrypha Adam, the patriarchs and prophets were biding their time in Hades impatiently, until their rescue by the Messiah and Saviour. Apocryphal stories here not only fill in gaps in the canonical Gospels but they solve increasingly urgent theological problems such as: »What happened to the faithful dead who died prior to Jesus' earthly ministry?« The credal statement that Jesus descended into hell also came from these texts.

Other apocrypha contain additional sayings attributed to Jesus, some of these only as separate sentences now extant in, say, one amulet from antiquity. Such apocryphal stories and sayings may well be secondary and derivative but some were clearly popular throughout Christendom, leaving us a rich legacy of manuscripts of their texts not only in the original language but in several versions too. Numerous legends influenced Christian doctrines and, later, art. Mariology and orthodoxy's great feasts, much of the teaching on the ascension and resurrection of Jesus and on the afterlife occur in the non-canonical gospels. Many such teachings will, of course, be anathema to those who proclaim a Christian faith based on (canonical) scripture alone (»*sola scriptura*«) but no-one should deny the influence of these doctrines on others' faith.

Certain apocryphal sayings even influenced, albeit only occasionally, scribes of the New Testament proper.

On that minor, *recherché*, note, we turn now to chapter 2 to look at a few of the 5,000+ manuscripts and at the citations from manuscripts in writings of the Church Fathers and the early versions in Latin, Coptic, Syriac and the like.

The extant 5,000 or so manuscripts have traditionally been subdivided into the differing styles of handwriting i.e. those which use only block capital letters without spaces between words as opposed to those which use a form of joined-up writing for individual words, a form which I assume most of you use! The former sounds more difficult to decipher but which I find are not actually a problem. That style known as Majuscule script, or less accurately for Greek as opposed to Latin script »Uncial,« has generally followed inscriptions. It was a popular form of handwriting that seems to have continued up to the 9th century. Should anyone here come across a manuscript in that handwriting then you have a potentially old witness, one from Christianity's first millennium. Cursive handwriting is found from the 7th century up to (and even beyond) the invention of printing, especially, in remote or conservative places and is now referred to as a minuscule hand and thus gives rise to the word minuscule of manuscript witnesses. Most extant manuscripts are of course written like this, mainly of course because medieval manuscripts inevitably survive longer than earlier witnesses from late antiquity. I find that to read such manuscripts quickly one must study plot and list the features of the scribe's preferences and idiosyncrasies, especially how a scribe has written out certain combinations of letters. Some scribes used ligatures, joining toge-

ther certain, usually commonly occurring, letters, others abbreviate regularly recurring words like »and« or »but«. Only once one has successfully learned each scribe's handwriting can one then read with confidence what it is that a scribe has written.¹⁹

Majuscules are classified with an initial O (possibly the numeral zero or the initial letter of the French word »oncial«) and minuscules are now known by consecutive numerals beginning with 1.²⁰

Handwriting conventions are but one sub-division. Another separates the numbers of manuscripts written on papyrus from those composed on vellum or parchment or, very occasionally on paper. Thus the medium of the writing material is made to appear important. Papyri manuscripts are easily spotted, not least because they normally appear first in most listings.

Papyri usually come first in a list of manuscripts, in discussions in text books or in the critical apparatus (*apparatus criticus*) in the footnotes of a critical edition of a Greek New Testament, even a hand/pocket edition. P with number, usually superscripted, begins with P1.

But here as with all such qualifications we must not assume that the highest number tells us the total in each category how many extant witnesses are registered. There are only some 100 extant papyri and not 138, because sometimes dealers tore up a manuscript and sold different parts to different Western buyers to maximize their profits. Originally and unintentionally those fragments may have been registered separately, each therefore bearing a different number

prior to the publication of those portions of the same manuscript. If any reader finds an otherwise new manuscript in a library or from an archaeological dig, the convention is to tell the registrar in Münster.

What is surprising is that our fund of papyri (which is, justifiably and triumphantly assessed in the chapters to follow) has but seldom influenced an editor's choice of text in new critical editions. Papyri may figure first in many an *apparatus criticus*, and will appear in listings of all extant New Testament manuscripts, as here in Evans' book, but their distinctive readings and especially their allegedly original readings have not always been taken as seriously as some critics may have wished to see in a published Greek New Testament.

Finally we turn to the fourth sub-division: lectionaries. All other manuscripts are continuous text manuscripts i.e. from the start to the end of texts as originally written. Most manuscripts were written for church use. LL designed for the church's year, special feasts. The text that is contained may well be extremely important and significant. Lectionaries are often difficult to read and adequately describe and catalogue. Many of them, for instance, have the same text more than once, *especially* if a favoured biblical passage needs to be read throughout the ecclesiastical year, and often more than once.

It may surprise us to learn that our trove of manuscripts is increasing exponentially. This is partly due to teams of photographers e.g. those under Daniel Wallace's direction. It is also partly due to new finds or new publications of the results of

archaeological digs. (Those papyri found a century ago by Grenfell and Hunt, for example, are gradually, albeit slowly, carefully and conscientiously being published.²¹

We ought to note also that many erstwhile Communist states, such as Albania, are gradually re-discovering valued and potentially ›lost‹ manuscripts.²²

We now turn to the earliest copies of parts of the New Testament written on papyri and then on parchment. The two earliest codices that were originally complete copies of the New Testament in Greek (Vaticanus – B 03 and Sinaiticus or Codex Aleph = Ⲙ 01) contained the whole of the Septuagint (= the Old Testament in Greek commonly written as the Latin numerals LXX) and the whole of the New Testament. These are both majuscules.

Now to the majuscules on parchment and to B 03 or Codex Vaticanus, now, as its name tells us, is housed in the Vatican Library, the other is the justly famous Codex Sinaiticus from St Catharine's Monastery on Mt Sinai—hence of course the name – this latter is associated with its »discovery« by the 19th century German academic Constantin Tischendorf, latterly calling himself *von* Tischendorf on the strength of his honours from Russia.

Old catalogues from the Vatican library show that it looks as if it possessed this Biblical manuscript in Greek by 1443 and 1475 although the manuscript itself was written eleven centuries earlier. The scribe(s) then were probably working in Caesarea and perhaps the manuscript was composed for the newly founded churches

especially in the new capital of the Eastern Christian empire, Byzantium named Constantinople, today's Istanbul. T.C. Skeat a famous librarian in London who as a young man received the bulk of Codex Sinaiticus when it first arrived in England in 1933; he maintained his interest in Biblical manuscripts right up to his death at the advanced age of 96 in 2003. Skeat argued in several places that both aleph and B may have been among the 50 manuscripts commanded by Emperor Constantine for his prestigious new churches. As these two are among the very few that contain the whole of the Old Testament and the New Testament in Greek and are both the earliest such manuscripts extant this claim is possible. Both are clearly beautiful creations. We do need to ask why it was that after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 it may have been wise, tactical –even tactful–and safe to offer B 03, as a great treasure to the Western church, hence its arrival in Rome. Skeat suggested that although we know nothing of B between the 4th and 15th centuries i.e. between its date of composition and its appearance out of the blue as it were in the Vatican by 1475 it may have arrived in Italy for the inter-church conversations at Florence-Ferrara.²³

Aleph. It is our only manuscript known by a Hebrew letter of the alphabet. Now that we have far more manuscripts extant than those known by letters of the Latin alphabet from A to Z, plus the distinctively different letters of the capital Greek letters all manuscripts including the unique Codex Sinaiticus are officially known now by their prosaic numbers prefixed by a zero or capital O. Sinaiticus (Ⲙ) because of its importance is 01 and Vaticanus (B) is 03.

The story of its finding is well known in Sinai and does not require much retelling. Even the children's series in English, Ladybird Books tells the story of Tischendorf and his miraculous discovery of the manuscript in 1853 - during the first of his three visits to the venerable Greek orthodox monastery in the Sinai peninsula. Elaborations of the background to and results from its being published are found in various publications by Tischendorf himself and more recently by Christfried Böttrich and the ubiquitous writer from North America, Stanley Porter, who wrote a hagiographical study of Tischendorf and his work.

Codex Sinaiticus contains more than the conventional twenty-seven books of the New Testament proper but (at least) two further works: »The Shepherd« by Hermas and »The Epistle of Barnabas«.

These and possibly other so-called Apostolic Fathers' writings were included because they and others like them stood on the fringes of those books that were comparatively easily adopted by the church because of the early dates of composition, their supposed apostolic authorship and influence in the wider church. (Usually the Apostolic Fathers now stand in collections of non-Biblical manuscripts.) But we do need to assess the significance not only of those in Codex Sinaiticus but also 1 Clement and 2 Clement, now read in Codex Alexandrinus (A or 02). Because those two works, orthodox in their theology, early dates and importance to the literate Christian faithful, were also clearly on the fringes when the church needed to define which of its growing number of texts were to be deemed canonical that is given

the status of Holy Writ and of especially divine status. One may assume that these pandects if such a term applies to Greek as well as to Latin manuscripts that contain the whole of the Old Testament and the New Testament were prepared precisely to indicate that these – and no more were the special canonical texts of Christians. The canon lists and what we may see in contemporary early manuscripts is that the canonical status bestowed on certain books was principally one of exclusion and not so much inclusivity. Such a necessity may well have become necessary when the Eastern Empire was founded in the late-fourth century. Skeat's supposition may therefore be correct. Even if only these two manuscripts are the sole survivors of the fifty actually expected and possibly written at the Emperor's command. It is however interesting to repeat that of our currently known stock of manuscripts only some sixty contain all 27 New Testament books and even among those it occasionally looks as if Revelation was added only as an afterthought.

Most extant manuscripts of the New Testament contain only one part of the whole. This may be for purely practical reasons; very few manuscripts were ever intended to be complete. Very few of the extant 5,500 manuscripts were ever meant to hold all twenty-seven New Testament works; I know of a mere sixty extant today. Also, if we look at the sheer bulk of, say, Codex Sinaiticus, once a complete Bible containing the Old and New Testaments written in the 4th century, it was obviously huge in size and very heavy to carry around and it was deemed impractical to use it in church for any readings to be taken from it. Also,

the costs and the time involved in writing everything anew would be prohibitive for most private owners or small worshipping communities. As the four gospels were the most frequently penned for reading aloud, for private study and for consultation, it was often only the four gospels that would commonly or normally need rewriting. That is probably why most of our currently extant witnesses contain only those four books.

But to return to Codex Sinaiticus. This manuscript gives an astonishing array of relevant information in its apparatus mainly because, somewhat akin to P66 which we highlighted above, contains many corrections or changes dating contemporaneously with the original 4th century scribe. It is a pity that we know nothing of how textual variants originated. The nearest we get is Codex Sinaiticus itself because we can actually see editorial changes being made—and sometimes unmade, e.g. the original exclusion then restitution of John 21:25 and subsequent cancellation of Lk 22:43-44—all done in the scriptorium either by the scribe correcting his own work or by a professional *diortetes*. Modern criticisms of Tischendorf's *bona fides* now may see that Tischendorf and the Russians behaved »correctly« in the *affaire*. If only we had comparable manuscripts from the 2nd century! Similarly, as we can readily read in numerous places, Sinaiticus, like many other manuscripts, was divided up in differing locations. Codex Sinaiticus is now located in Leipzig, St Petersburg, London and most recently ironically in St. Catharine's at the foot of Mount Sinai where several folios were re-discovered mostly in the 1960s. London acquired the bulk

of the manuscript for the British Library in 1933 when Stalin, more interested in Westerner's money than in Biblical manuscripts Offered what the USSR owned of Codex Sinaiticus. It owned these pages of the manuscript because of Tischendorf's gift to the Czar in 1862 to mark the 1000th anniversary of what became the Russian Empire.

Previously as an East German of that generation he had been taught Russian at school, an attribute that proved useful in his being able to read the Russian documents, duly and dutifully preserved in the archives in St Petersburg and Moscow. Among the concluding works by Kurt Aland is his biography of Tischendorf with its vindication of his dealings with the Sinai monks. The results of his research exonerates Tischendorf of any wrongdoing and explains that 19th century diplomatic niceties were duly and dutifully followed to the letter.

Versions

One also looks at versions as an editor of even a Greek New Testament. Thus one usually includes in one's critical apparatus the Latin manuscripts, the pre-Jerome text found in manuscripts usually called the *itala* or, better and more commonly of the whole Latin Bible as the Old Latin. Then one adds the Vulgate, usually associated with the name of St Jerome, even if he edited only parts of the old Latin manuscripts, despite (or perhaps, regardless) of his having been allegedly commissioned to do the work throughout the Old and New Testaments by the then Pope, Damasus. (Today some 10,000 Vulgate manuscripts are extant, although they, unlike manuscripts of the Greek New Testament remain largely

unread by scholars and unregistered in the ways Münster does.

Variants

We now need to undertake our greatest, but most difficult of tasks for all editors of critical editions: the choice of what to print as our main, running, texts.

As a starting point we need to decide on the two major additions or omissions at the end of Mark's Gospel and the Pericope Adulterae commonly found in John or even occasionally in Luke's Gospels respectively. But, even more controversially, we need to say what our printed text and alternative readings are at, say, John 1:18 (»Son« or »God«), what precisely did Luke have Jesus say at the Last Supper; what do we print for Matthew's parable of the two boys in 21:28-32; how is Jesus described at each point where the variants Jesus, Christ, Lord etc. occur in differing manuscripts? Those and countless other problems may be seen not only in the *apparatus criticus* of a printed edition of the Greek New Testament text but by readers of modern editions in, say, English where the footnotes regularly advise users that certain »authorities« (i.e. manuscript witnesses) remove, add, or change certain words. Do we wish to accept a longer or a shorter text? Are scribes more likely to have accidentally omitted a word or words due to carelessness, tiredness and palaeographical considerations or are they more likely to have deliberately changed or added words deliberately to clarify the original? Those and similar questions are encouraged by translators and editors (such as Nestle-Aland 27th edition pp. 45*-46* or p. 3*); many publishers nowadays allow

their readers the democratic choice to make changes to a text. »Transparency« is the »in« word; readers of even scripture are permitted to make their own choices when certain theological conundrums defeat even a learned editor. A mock or tactfully anonymous quotation repeating the previous twenty words to resemble what examiners typically put before students (usually with the addition of the command »Discuss«) could be given here!

Our samples here below are often theological, and certainly relevant to exegetes. Similarly: Just what was it that Jesus is reported as having said about men who divorce their wife? More flippantly, looking at the parallels in the canonical gospels and their textual variants we may similarly ask: Just what should obedient disciples pack for their journey, sandals, scrip or food, and how many staffs ought they take? More profoundly we observe: Does Luke's Gospel refer to Jesus' Ascension or not? These are all indicators of used and living texts, venerated by believers and by people prepared to alter and then abide by Holy Writ. It hardly matters if we decide that 90% or even 95% of the New Testament is textually secure and where any textual *errata* there are easily resolved, if there still remain 5% or 10% of the New Testament Greek text where it is unresolved or textually uncertain. These disputed passages are critically important. Changes were frequently made to make the texts conform to a prevailing theological party-line and therefore make them more relevant to the reader. Living texts, therefore, were used, and clarified, and, from an early date, deliberately changed. Such approaches outlined here may be anathema

to some, but they will need to be considered alongside what we may read below.

It is readings like those above where text-critics may prefer to draw stumps (if I may use a cricketing term) and admit defeat, just as the editors of the *Editio Critica Maior* do if they cannot resolve a dilemma; instead, they print in parallel two (occasionally even three) equally viable alternatives whenever the text line (the leading line) splits.

APPENDIX

Erasmus of Rotterdam

This name, Erasmus of Rotterdam, was the one preferred by the famous humanist and scholar throughout his life. In the 500th anniversary honouring the first Greek New Testament to be published I noted that Erasmus himself thought of himself as very comfortable and extremely well-housed in Basle. In a letter written to his friend Johann Witz²⁴ he said as much—and, as our American friends would say, »and then some«! And that despite his possible birthplace in the then tiny and insignificant port of Rotterdam. Some modern Dutch doubt this legend and certainly say he maintained little if any contact with his alleged birthplace. Possibly that was because his father was (supposedly) a celibate, Catholic, priest.

One could argue that the subsequent and inevitable adherence by many faithful Christian readers to the *Textus Receptus*, that version of the printed Greek New Testament, ultimately dependent on Erasmus' first edition of 1516 and regularly reprinted up to 1904 (in the BFBS edition). This was

exactly what followers of differing versions of the Latin Bible had been doing for centuries. The essentially protestant and Greek *Textus Receptus* was, by and large, maintained by subsequent editors for over 350 years (and, indeed, up to the present day in some quarters) and that too may be a type of inerrancy. Fortunately, Craig Evans does not use the bizarre expression »the providential protection of Holy Writ« when referring to the Byzantine text-type — especially as such protection is denied to non-Biblical manuscripts and to other scribal writings!²⁵

One of the major concerns raised is the length of time a manuscript may have been in use and therefore read before its possible recopying. Churches, monasteries and individuals tried to conserve and preserve their texts in manuscript sheets and in codex form. Thoroughgoing textual critics, therefore, may declare with confidence that even though an artefact (i.e. a manuscript) may be given a date on palaeographical grounds by the experts, regardless of the age and origin of any readings found within it, it may have subsequently survived in use for a few further centuries before it was eventually recopied. Only then could its distinctive text be found to have influenced a much later manuscript. That is why, above, I was prepared to show that merely because a witness is mediaeval its text may go back, say, only very few steps or stages of copying to the presumed *Ausgangstext* or even to the authorial text itself.

Coupled with that it is noticeable just how durable many parchment and indeed papyri texts are. We are used to seeing papyrus fragments which now are badly

abraded, torn or eaten into by white ants, but in their heyday they would have been complete and easily legible pages in perfectly formed codices. Today's funds of papyri have obviously been subjected to weather and to time. Several papyri from Oxyrhynchus, for instance, are very old scraps indeed and all of them were found disposed of as rubbish in the spoil-heaps alongside other discarded matter. The scraps had been discovered in the late 19th century or in the early decades of the 20th century. Such manuscripts would have been written some 1,600 years previously, yet, nowadays, these fragments may still gradually yield legible writings, private letters, legal documents, literary works, as well as biblical and apocryphal texts too.

Theodore Skeat, the great papyrologist and librarian at the British Library, whose name has occurred regularly here where he ended his distinguished career as its Keeper of Western Manuscripts, was determined to explode the wrong teachings that papyrus was expensive and fragile. Skeat, in many articles and elsewhere, was successful in showing that papyrus was plentiful, especially in Egypt, was not prohibitively expensive for the average *literati* and as a writing medium would last for decades and centuries if cared for properly. Obviously what he said about papyrus was equally true of parchment (*vellum*).

ENDNOTES

- 1 R. Weber (ed.), *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* 4th. edition, 1994.
- 2 *Novum Testamentum Graece* (1898 ff).
- 3 To those we must add an arbitrary selection of non-German scholars such as Souter, Tasker, Orchard, Noll, Legg, Farstad & Hodges, Robinson, Metzger, Merk, Bover, Boismard, O'Callaghan and Amphoux. Some of these names will also crop up again in these chapters.
- 4 When I visited an extremely conservative seminary in North Carolina to lecture there I was surprised to see in its parking lot decals on automobile fenders which told me that the King James Version was the only true English-language translation of the Old and New Testament text: »If it ain't the KJV it ain't the Bible«, I read. (British English would render this as: »...in its car-park transfers on car bumpers which told me...«; and the KJV is usually known as the AV (= »The Authorised Version«) on the British side of the Atlantic!)
- 5 Another rule commonly used in work on variants concerns the maxim that longer texts were often accidentally shortened; that goes against the old saw *brevior lectio potior*. (See James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early New Testament Papyri* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) = NTTSD 36.) In chapter 4 I hope that my examples of the phenomenon of a longer versus a shorter text in variation units will readily demonstrate that a longer text is usually original and that scribes, if aided by orthography or palaeographical considerations, could sometimes carelessly shorten the texts they were copying. (I am clearly not saying that the reverse never happened but I submit that adding to a text, which inevitably took longer and demanded mental effort, was comparatively rare.)
- 6 *Scribal Harmonization in the Synoptic Gospels* (Leiden: Brill, 2019) = NTTSD 60.
- 7 *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* 2nd edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).
- 8 Often abbreviated as *v.l.* (plural = *v.ll.* or *variae lectiones*).
- 9 More on this expression, see above and also ch. 3.
- 10 We read about the datings of manuscripts and behind such datings lies a methodology that is often problematic: it is seldom as scientific or as accurate as its practitioners would like. But many New Testament experts like to defend the antiquity of certain variants. If a reading is old or is found in what our experts tell us is a very old manuscript then it is allegedly a favoured or privileged witness. Westcott and Hort's Greek testament bears the pompous title *The New Testament in the Original Greek*; cf. the same title used by Maurice Robinson for the Byzantine text of 2005 (published by Chilton, Southborough).
- 11 Terms like »Western« and »Neutral« to describe certain manuscripts are all faulty and are generally being

abandoned—a move spearheaded by the researchers at Münster.

- 12 Modern scholars who argue against that view say that a scribe steeped in the languages and usage of 1st century Palestine may well alter what we see as a perfectly acceptable piece of Greek and change it to the Koine used in the wider Hellenistic world of the first century. The same may be said in favour of Atticizing readings: some critics of the methodology I espouse sometimes say that a scribe alert to such matters as Atticism may, centuries later, often alter Attic Greek (that is Greek written in 5th century BC Athens and therefore deemed to be classical Greek) into Hellenistic or Koine Greek in the belief (mistakenly I would say) that the original authors may well have written in that archaic manner. Such reasoning strikes me as special pleading. Articles by Kilpatrick and by Elliott on Atticism occur in the bibliography towards the end of this book.
- 13 T.C. Skeat argued that being a scribe, and especially one who was a mere hack-copyist, was a relatively humble post. A scribe was paid *pro rata*. He claimed that a scribe was paid by the number of stichoi copied, a stichos being defined either as the equivalent of an average hexameter line or else as 15-16 syllables. An early 3rd century papyrus in the British Library quotes two differing rates of pay, presumably determined by the quality or style of writing. It gives 28 drachmas per 10,000 stichoi or 13 drachmas for 6,000 stichoi i.e. *c.*20 drachmas for 10,000 stichoi. To earn these not very princely sums a scribe in the first few Christian centuries working at the higher of these two rates would, in order to earn 28 dr., have had to copy 350,000 letters. Given a scribe's typical humble background and education, any deliberate changes such as Atticisms to be made to a manuscript, would have needed a person with high literary or theological interests than the normal professional copyist (scribe) – and, as well as that, have sufficient time to consider what was needed, possible even to consult other copies if he was able to do so.
- 14 Conjectures do not figure at all in the *apparatus criticus* to Nestle28.
- 15 » Mark 1:1-3: A Later Addition to the Gospel?« *NTS* 46 (2000): 584-8.
- 16 Most modern editors speak of these corpora as e (evangelia = Gospel manuscripts), a (= Acts + Catholics, sometimes separated into a and c), p (= the Pauline corpus including Heb) and r (= the Book of Revelation). Thus, some manuscripts may contain all or some of apc; others only er, for example.
- 17 All of the non-Biblical writings seem to be Christian and Patristic texts.
- 18 Hurtado's and de Hamel's books along these lines appear in our concluding bibliography. Fuller details about these categories follow.
- 19 »Palimpsest« is a strange word but one often found in writings about textual criticism. Those who are fluent in Greek may see here a com-

bination of two Greek words *palin* meaning again with a form of *psaw* = to rub. It refers to manuscripts that are recycled. A redundant manuscript can have its original text rubbed out and the papyrus or parchment could then be re-used for a new writing. It may be possible to rediscover the underwriting and it may sometimes be the case that it is the expunged underwriting that is the one that contains the Biblical text. (Not always but »sometimes«!) Palimpsesting was relatively common as it was cheaper to reuse a codex or (sc)roll. Again, the cost may have played its part. Scrolls typically were used on only one side, the side that was on the inside of a rolled-up work; the outsides of the sheets that formed the roll were not used. Another positive reminder is to say that palimpsests may show that, because many owners and users of manuscripts were often reluctant to throw away writings, any surviving recoverable and legible under-writing which can currently be deciphered in a rewriting shows the longevity of those readings. That may be seen in Latin as well as in Greek palimpsests. For instance, once churches decided to adopt Jerome's Latin Vulgate, because of its allegedly authoritative version of the scriptures, it can be seen that by writing the Vulgate onto a previously perfectly functional, albeit by then unwanted, Old Latin rendering, the manuscript may reveal that its (Old Latin) under-writing had probably remained in use underneath

the palimpsesting. In some cases, therefore, the Itala or Old Latin text which had been written several centuries earlier continued to be read in that community until the overwriting was added in its stead.

- 20 T(alismans) and O(straka). Nowadays some wish that other and further categories should be included, even to maintain the earlier but now abandoned categories O and T.
- 21 OP often contains biblical material.
- 22 Didier Lafleur, a researcher in Paris, has published his latest discoveries: Didier Lafleur with Luc Brogly, *Greek New Testament Manuscripts from Albania* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) (= *NTTSD* 57).
- 23 In the famous Greek Bibles (Old and New Testaments), especially the Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, all have the three synoptic Gospels in their entirety. Possibly the rarity of many complete copies of the New Testament (and indeed the Old Testament as well), huge in format and unwieldy to carry around in church, was obviously a sign that these books were never intended for public reading or private devotion, unlike many other manuscripts which were originally intended to be used for such purposes. The mammoth editions were written when Byzantium's ecclesiastical powers had emerged to define the extent of Christianity's scriptures. An instruction to do so may even have emanated from Emperor Constantine himself as some scholars, e.g. the famous papyrolo-

gist and librarian, T.C. Skeat, have been wont to publicize.

- 24 The name Witz was (thoughtfully) latinized into »Sapidus« according to contemporary conventions.
- 25 Craig Evans, *Jesus and the Manuscripts* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2020).

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