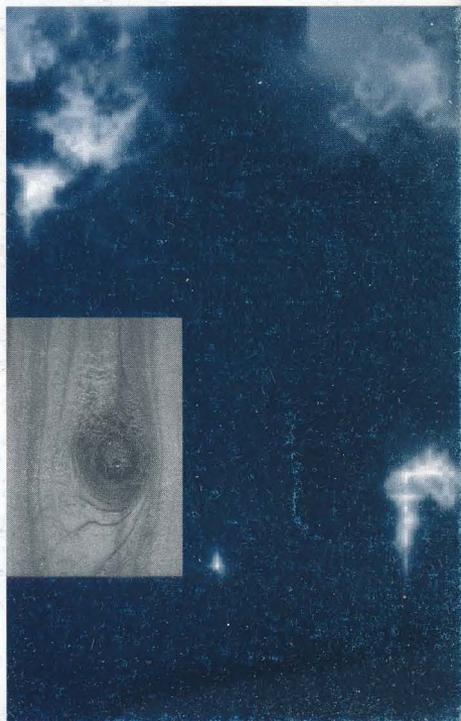




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Editorial

The current issue contains the lecture given at this year's AGM by Professor J. Neville Birdsall, who is Emeritus Professor of New Testament Studies and Textual Criticism at the University of Birmingham. The lecture has led to one response so far from a reader. We always welcome comments from readers; it shows that there is some interest 'out there'!

We continue to publish the Cumulative Index for the years 1939 to 1970. We hope readers will bear with the time that this will take, but are sure that this is preferable to publishing the whole index in one issue.

Next year's lecture is to be given by Dr. Caroline Berry on some aspect of the Human Genome Project, and it is good to report that considerable response has been aroused in the Essay Competition which bears on the same issue.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM for this year, 2001, was held on Monday, 14th May at University College, London, with the Chairman, Dr. Terence Mitchell presiding. The Minutes of the meeting of 2000 were accepted, and these are published in Bulletin no. 28. Great regret was expressed at the loss of our President, Professor D.J.E. Ingram. An appreciation of David Ingram was published in Bulletin no. 29.

The Vice-Presidents were nominated and elected for further terms of office. In addition, the Revd Dr. R.H. Allaway, Dr. Terence Mitchell and Dr. A.B. Robins,

who formally retire, were re-elected for a further term of office.

The Hon. Secretary, Mr. Brian Weller, presented the accounts for the year, which have been independently examined. These accounts may be seen upon application to Mr. Weller.

There being no further business, the Revd Dr. Michael J. Collis took the chair and introduced Professor Birdsall, the evening's speaker. The lecture appears in this issue.

The Sources of the Words of New Testament Scripture

J. Neville Birdsall

I am very grateful for the invitation to give this lecture to the Institute and to those friends and colleagues who honour me by their presence. The letter of invitation expressed the opinion of Council that "it would be helpful to have an overview of the present status of the manuscript evidence for the text of the New Testament". I had by express invitation published in your journal *Faith and Thought* for October 1995 an article on *Principles of Textual Criticism*¹. Desiring to meet this second opportunity to address you, this time in person, I have attempted not to repeat myself and thus have divided the content, in a proportion of about two thirds and one third. The first section surveys the different types of manuscript materials, describing them and their interest, and the second states in briefer compass what I expressed at length in the article I have mentioned.

The survey must be a rapid "birds-eye-view" since these sources are each as units of research subject to examination, collation and definition of their mutual relationships, as well as to the interpretation of them as witnesses both to original wording and to its transmission. The latent subject matter could expand to constitute many lectures. I hope that, in spite of the compression, you will be left with a clear impression both of the wood and of the trees (as the proverbial phrase has it). I shall look at "the trees" i.e. individual manuscripts and other sources, and outline the shape of "the wood", that is, the significance of the whole.

I decided to include with the lecture as given a few visual illustrations. For reasons of time these were limited to Greek manuscripts, including on Greco-Latin bilingual. Regrettably neither other versions nor any patristic manuscript could be fitted in. The plates shown were copied from *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* by Bruce M. Metzger² but for reasons of copyright cannot be reproduced

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in their published form. I trust that this collection will be readily found in public libraries and elsewhere and that readers of the lecture will find easy access to them. I give a description of the salient features much as these were given *viva voce*, but with one or two added footnotes.

Reverting to the proverbial metaphor, we may say that in the "wood" are "trees" of three distinct genera. The predominant genus consists of manuscripts of the New Testament in whole or part, written in Greek. A second genus of very varied species consists of manuscripts of the same texts translated into languages of antiquity, as the Church established itself in the territory where each was the vernacular or the *lingua franca*. These translations are usually termed "versions". Those in Latin, Syriac or Coptic are nearly as old as the basic Greek. Later, Armenian, Georgian and Gothic appear in the period of the Roman empire, and in early post-imperial times Arabic, Ethiopic, Old English and Slavonic, amongst others. A third genus of materials is termed quotations or citations, ranging from explicit quotations to tangential allusions. It lies partially hidden in commentaries, sermons, theological treatises, hymns, liturgies, eulogies of martyrs and saints, inscriptions and so on. These categories are found in both Greek and the languages of the versions.

A special category of manuscripts in all ancient languages written on parchment is that of the *palimpsest*. This term, meaning in Greek "twice rubbed" indicates a re-used manuscript "rubbed again" with pumice after earlier use to remove the old writing, as it had been in its first preparation as new parchment. On the lower strata of such a document there can lie hidden both literature previously lost and copies of known documents more ancient in age or of earlier recension. A number of important Biblical manuscripts have been preserved in this way - more often partially than in full text - since the old writings before such re-use have already been relegated as so much "waste paper" and many folia can have been lost. A certain amount of my own research, some of it newly revealed documents, has come from this category both in Greek and also in Georgian but there is no time to go into further detail in this paper.

The manuscripts of the Greek New Testament now number no fewer than 5698. They range in date from the early 2nd century A.D. to as late as the 18th century. The earliest contain one part of the New Testament only, for example a single gospel, the four gospels and Acts, Pauline letters, the Revelation of John.

This category may be illustrated by a plate³ taken from the Chester Beatty papyrus of the Pauline epistles, known in the official list as p46. 86 leaves of it survive, some in Dublin, some in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It is to be dated about A.D. 200. Two points of interest may be mentioned. Firstly that as the photograph shows Romans is followed by Hebrews. The unparalleled order may be derived from an

arrangement of the epistles in order of length. Secondly, after the close of Romans, we may see the "stichometry" of that letter, a measurement of its length in terms of lines. (Scribes were paid at a piece-rate). It reads "900 lines". The compiler unfortunately follows the first editor and repeats the mistaken decipherment "1000 lines".

From the years of the Peace of the Church in the early fourth century there are some complete Bibles but this format never became common. In contrast, the whole of the New Testament or parts of it are often to be found in all succeeding centuries. The Book of Revelation however is more often missing from such volumes than included in them. That book is in fact frequently transmitted with non-canonical material, at least in the Greek church. The most usual types of collection are manuscripts containing either the four gospels (called Tetraeuangelion) or Acts and epistles (called Praxapostolos). These all give the scriptural books as continuous texts.

The category of complete Bibles may be illustrated by a plate⁴ taken from the famous manuscript in majuscule script of the fourth century called Codex Vaticanus. "Codex" means a book bound as we know it, not a scroll. "Vaticanus" indicates that it lies in one of the collections of the Vatican Library, where it bears the shelf number "Greek 1209". The leaf photographed shows the end of the second letter to the Thessalonians and the beginning of Hebrews to ch.2, verse 2. An interesting feature is to be seen in the second column shown. This is a correction of a variant reading in the text. At chapter 1 verse 3, the codex gives *φανερων*, "revealing", instead of the usual wording *φερων*, "bearing". This wording has been restored by the erasure of a syllable in the tenth century. With reference to this erasure a thirteenth century note⁵ in the margin reads, apostrophizing the corrector, "Most ignorant, wicked man. Leave the old (writing). Don't change it!" and the erased syllable has been inked in again!

Another category of Greek manuscripts separately catalogued gives the text in the sections allocated for reading publicly throughout the church year in the Divine Liturgy and other services of the Orthodox Church. This type of manuscript is called a lectionary. The order of the continuous text is not always followed in these. There was a long evolution in the selection and order. The definitive form of these sections or pericopae was not settled before the tenth century although it had begun much earlier. An example of a leaf of such a manuscript is taken from a plate⁶ of the manuscript Vatican Library Greek 2138. The script and form of illumination of the capital letters of this indicate its origin in South Italy. It was written by the monk Kyriakos in Capua in the year AD 991. The two readings shown are for Holy Week. In these lections some readings have been corrected both by erasure and by marginal supplement. The reason for this has not been elucidated as this section of the lectionary has not been examined for its

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textual affiliations. The feature is not found on the several other leaves of the manuscript which have been reproduced in other collections.

Also many manuscripts with text in continuous order indicate the passages selected as lections and their place in the church year by marginal notes. Linked to lectionary use is the frequent presence of musical notation; as those will know who have shared in the worship of the Orthodox churches, scripture is cantillated⁷. There are several different successive systems of this musical form from the tenth century onwards, with related systems of special signs indicating the pitch and duration of the notes. These differentia of organization and annotation of text and page show scripture as a vital and central part of the church's life and worship.

Other kinds of additions reveal another aspect of the New Testament as the book of the church. These are additions related to the study of its meaning. We find manuscripts to which are prefaced summaries of the books contained and indications of the identity of the authors. Manuscripts are also found in which, in addition, commentary is given along with the text, either intercalated section by section after the text to be commented upon, or given in the margins with points of reference marked in the text. The comments have been excerpted from writers of the preceding periods. The growth of these collections dates from about the sixth century. Such commentaries of excerpts linked in series are known in Greek as *Seirai*, that is, "chains". French and German scholars therefore term them *chaînes* or *Ketten*, but we continue to show an English peculiarity in using not a native but a learned word, the Latin *catenae*. The term in whichever language is metaphorical: the various comments are linked together like the links of a "chain". We may also, though less often, find manuscripts in which marginal notes give variant readings known from other manuscripts or glosses by which rare words are provided with a later synonym. Similarly, characters from the Old Testament alluded to in the text anonymously are named or a reference given for an unidentified quotation.

An example of this type is given in a plate made from a manuscript of the fourteenth century containing a catena in the margin giving explanations of the letters of Paul⁸. We see represented a leaf containing Hebrews chapter 11, verses 33 - 38. In this case, the marginal comments are mainly identifications of the saints of the Old Covenant mentioned anonymously, but we find also one explanation of a difficult word and one passage of exhortation.

Rarely, notes and even prefaces will give us a glimpse of scholarly research in Christian antiquity or the later Byzantine period. These show us something of scholarly methods of those days. Such is the so-called Euthalian apparatus found in many praxapostoloi⁹ or the almost unique contents of ms. 1739, known as

the Codex von der Goltz from its discoverer and first editor¹⁰. The latter, a miniscule of the tenth century preserved in a monastery of Mount Athos is represented in a plate showing its final leaf¹¹. This is the epistle to Philemon verses 10 to 25.

Two notes visible in the right hand margin and a supra-linear addition over the top line are notes relating to the textual witness of the third century Christian scholar Origen in whom the earlier compiler whose work is here transmitted was particularly interested. A note lower in the same margin is a later explanation of the archaic word and tense rendered "I want some benefit" by RSV, "I am asking this favour of you" in REB. The epistle is followed by a note of its place of composition and its amanuenses. As this is the end of the body of Pauline letters, a guarantee is given of its careful copying and checking from an exemplar utilized for other parts of scripture contained, (i.e. Acts and Catholic Epistles, still extant, and probably the gospels). That exemplar was characterized by the final inscription "Glory to the God of mercy. Amen".

The colophon of the present manuscript follows, requesting the prayers of the reader for the scribe Ephraim, who himself concludes with the evangelical prayer "God be merciful to me a sinner". Since the discovery of this manuscript one hundred years ago a number of other copies of various works written by Ephraim have been identified. It has been concluded that he headed a scriptorium in Constantinople in which manuscripts were commercially produced. A body of letters preserved in London have been tentatively identified as addressed to him¹².

Combining instruction with devotion is the feature of the illumination of manuscripts. More people seem drawn to study manuscripts of scripture through an interest in art history than those to whose interests the meaning and significance of the text are central. Textual critics have erred by generally neglecting this field. I for one know less of this area in the detail I could claim for some other of the data surveyed. Art historians often display the opposite fault. There are hopeful signs that the rising generation will combine the study of both aspects of one or more manuscripts.

The illustration of the book has a long history in the story of literature¹³, especially of Greek and Latin literature which is part of the cultural background of early Christianity. Scenes from scripture are depicted in the catacombs of the earliest centuries while there are some early instances of illustration in Christian manuscripts after Constantine. There was some curtailment of the practice during the Iconoclast controversy, between 711 and 843 AD. The main flowering came after that period. The term "illumination" describes not only illustration of the text but also the decoration of titles and postscripts and the elaboration of initial letters¹⁴.

In gospel manuscripts there may also be portraits of the evangelists, their figures conventionally adapted from types representing philosophers. Connected with these are often cartouches containing the "symbols of the evangelists". These derive from exegesis of the four creatures seen by Ezekiel and John in their visions of the cherubim bearing the divine throne. Irenaeus in the second century expounded these by analogy: as God in heaven is carried on the four Cherubim and breathes upon his world from four quarters, so Incarnated God is carried throughout that world in a fourfold vehicle, the one gospel in four accounts through which the Spirit breathes upon the world. The four creatures are identified by Irenaeus as symbols of the four evangelists, the Man as the symbol of Matthew, the Eagle of Mark, the Ox of Luke and the Lion of John. Not all later exegetes followed the same scheme, Epiphanius and Jerome each proposing different identifications. So we find the symbols used according to these varying schemes in different manuscripts.¹⁵

Another auxiliary text linked with the study of the gospels is a set of lists or tables organized by the fourth century scholar Eusebius of Caesarea, showing the passages where common language or themes are found in two or more of the gospels and also the passages unique to each. This provides a synoptic index to the four gospels. It is still of great utility to the researcher. These tables stand at the beginning of the gospel-book, a series of four, three or two lists of gospel passages which are considered parallels, and four lists of passages from single gospels which have no parallel. A system of cross reference to these lists placed in the margins enables any place to be found easily. They may alternatively be found at the foot of each page, listing the passages contained above¹⁶. These lists are also often artistically bounded by an arch or separated by columns with linking arches. Where the four gospels are in harmony we find five columns with linking over-arches bounding the four lists. These can be richly decorated. The symbolism intended is much debated. There may indeed originally have been none, but a latent significance may have been developed to the effect that, entering through these gates, we may come into a full knowledge of the one gospel story given in the work of the four evangelists.

In some cases we find a lectionary or other gospel-book in an elaborate external binding. This is linked to the central place of the readings of scripture in the Liturgy and the ceremonial entry of the copy of the scriptures into the main body of the church while the catechumens are still present. Thence it is carried through the eikonastasis into the sanctuary to repose upon the altar, where it indicates the presence of the Lord.

The manuscripts of the New Testament introduce us implicitly in these various ways to the life and history of the church, but are also indirectly witnesses to the secular history of the period. The production of manuscripts is closely related to

the condition of society at a particular time, wars and internal strife, economic rise or decline, the consequent fluctuations of education and literacy, the standards of intellectual life. Social history can both contribute to the study of those who had manuscripts written for their use or were eager to collect them and of those who wrote them, and can itself be illuminated by these data.

These are the main features of the territory which Greek manuscripts of the New Testament open up to us. They may all be seen too when we turn to the second genus in the wood, the versions in the languages of Christian antiquity. We must assume as the basis of all our study knowledge of Greek. In this second case, there is the additional dimension of knowing not only Greek but also the receptor language thoroughly. This is a deterrent to some, as I fear, but a challenge and a joy to others. In several of the languages in question, the Biblical version is the earliest monument of the language which we possess. Gothic, Armenian and Georgian have this distinction, the creation of their distinctive alphabets being for the purpose of writing down the version. At a later period scripture, side by side with fragments of early poetry (preserved by Christian chroniclers) give us the first intimations of the languages of some of our ancestors in Western Europe and amongst the Slavic nations.

For each version we meet interaction with the secular and ecclesiastical history of the region and the people speaking the language in question. Each linguistic area has its own special aspects. In both Syriac and Armenian there was a period when an artificial rendering of Greek into the receptor language was used in a version. This devised literal representation for each and every grammatical aspect of the Greek however foreign to the other language. This was partly a teaching and reference tool linked to doctrinal debates when the precise understanding of Greek was important.

Akin to such helps for understanding the original Greek is the further phenomenon of bilingual manuscripts. These were sometimes produced for study, sometimes for public lection to multilingual congregations. We find this illustrated by a plate taken from a manuscript of the Pauline epistles¹⁷ in which the main text is the Greek, but between the lines there is a rendering in Latin. The Greek text of this manuscript and of two others related to it takes the place in the textual criticism of the Paulines which the codex Bezae plays in the study of the Gospels and Acts. It was produced in the West, possibly at the monastery of St. Gall. A number of the monks in that house were from Ireland and from this this manuscript derives a rare distinction. In the lower margin of the folium illustrated are three lines of Old Irish verse, some of the earliest written Irish known.

The compiler has taken the translation from the nineteenth century scholar Frederick Scrivener in the fourth edition of his Plain Introduction to the Criticism

of the New Testament.. Unfortunately, while the translation was given correctly in the first edition, error had crept in by the date of the fourth edition. Accordingly, in line 3 of the first quatrain as given by Metzger, we should read "The King thou seekest here" (not "thing").¹⁸

The third genus in the "wood", is quotations in Christian writings from the first to the fifteenth century. The researcher reads a text seeking signs of quotation ranging from the literal to the remotely allusive. Each such reference must be carefully transcribed for comparison with a standard text. We sometimes need to transpose the grammatical form to bring our source's words into line with what lay before the author. We must be alert to all the tricks of minds steeped in the words of scripture and to the capacity of human memory and style of composition to create new links between passages. I was directed as my first research to such a task, an analysis of the New Testament quotations of the ninth century scholar and patriarch, Photius. There was so much fresh to be learned in this that the task was akin to taking a second degree in a subject almost completely different to one's first!

From all these sources a thesaurus of variations of text or "readings" (to give the technical term) has been gathered over the centuries. These are found in separate treatises and in the margins of critical editions of the New Testament. The eighth edition of Constantine von Tischendorf (1869 - 94) is still essential. Much advance has been made in many fields but no project has resulted in an edition which could merit the name of "the New Tischendorf" (as was hoped in the mid-twentieth century). I was privileged and happy to give several years of my life to the editing of the critical apparatus to the Gospel of Luke under the auspices of the British and American Committees of the International Greek New Testament Project.¹⁹ J.K. Elliott succeeded me in this rôle when illness removed me. This work contains much new and valuable information, much not previously gathered. It gives however a glimpse of what we hope for but leaves room for advance. A new pattern of editorial cooperation is being put in place for the similar work on the gospel of John. A parallel critical edition, on different lines and dealing with other parts of the New Testament, is in process of production by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research at Münster in Germany founded by the late Kurt Aland. This has the title of *Editio Critica Maior* in which the Epistle of James has appeared, now available in a second edition of 1998. We are thus in an interim situation and we must not take any hand edition, even when marketed with constant pressure, to give us a working basis for textual deliberations. We must go back to older editions as well as the two in progress, supplemented by recent editions of individual manuscripts and versions and must use their evidence with any new information which smaller or more recent publications provide. Under the pronoun "We", I do not subsume only textual critics, but all serious

students of the meaning of scripture from exegetes to systematic theologians, and churchmen and church women privileged to have access to the original languages. It is pertinent, since the numbers in the last group have gravely shrunk, to remind others that careful regard to these important data and those which I go on to survey lies behind the many new translations into English and other languages which have been a characteristic of Christian activity in the twentieth century.

We now pass in our survey to the task of determining the original form of the text and the course of its transformations. The period of the transmission of the text in manuscript ran over one thousand five hundred years and within wide geographical bounds. The many sources from which the data are drawn each has its place in the life of the church as a spiritual organism but one touched also by political, social and cultural history. We should never let either aspect slip from our mind. In assessing this wide-reaching investigation and the conclusions to which it may lead, we should above all keep the fact before us that at every stage the words of the documents were precious to the reader, the copyist, the commissioning patron. The eventual goal was never just the word written, heard or read, but the word "marked, learned and inwardly digested".

There is then a mass of material evidence for the words of scripture. Our access to it has greatly multiplied and facilitated by modern methods, some is published in facsimile, some micro-filmed or computer-stored. But even as soon as printed forms of the New Testament were available for the examination of the manuscripts to hand, it became clear that manuscripts differed in text. Greater control of the data was sought by analysis. Witnesses were classified into groups with significant shared variations of wording.

Three main groups of Greek manuscripts were revealed. The evidence of ancient versions revealed the place in early Christian geography with which any Greek group had contact, whether by place or origin or by transportation of its text. An historical framework appeared through the dates of the those ancient writers who quoted significant variants. The nineteenth century saw great increase of resources and a number of influential editions of the text (Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, Hermann Freiherr von Soden and others). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, as I have intimated, there has been further discovery, debate and investigation but no major change in this original cartography has been achieved. There have indeed been on occasion some interpretations of evidence suggesting the possibility of more narrowly defined regional texts, but this is refinement of distinction not change of basic pattern, and in any case no particular theoretical structure has been generally accepted.

These three main groupings or their sub-divisions present "text-types". In

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determining the ultimately original form of a disputed passage, no regular reliance would be placed on one of these. This is so even though some sub-text-types appear to have been controlled on philological principles, while others have developed in a less guided or ordered way. But it is still moot whether control by the standards of the day in any given case was preservative or transforming. A major part of the determination of the original text and its development will consist in rational criticism²⁰ applied primarily to the earliest data of readings available to us.

My own approach would follow this way, using rational criticism to judge initially between readings and secondarily introducing the historical data of their earliest incidence as a check. One can usually see by rational criticism the direction in which alteration of text has gone. The other data provide guidance whether the first assumption is correct. Of particular significance is the incidence of rare readings in a number of outlying places. Revision, whether motivated by aesthetic or theological concerns would generally show itself in the centre of the Christian world and reach the peripheries slowly. Significant variants would remain at those points, like *Leitfossilien* in older strata. (e.g. at Mk. 1.41, *orgistheis*, "moved with anger", which is beginning to be accepted).

Two types of change may come about as manuscript is succeeded by manuscript over the centuries. These are respectively changes which are accidental, arising from human weakness or mistake, and changes which originate in the desire to clarify or in some cases to improve in style. It is not a hard and fast division however since mistakes can be passed on and if they have not resulted in nonsense tend to remain, setting up accidental sub-variants which cloud the picture. An instance of this will be reviewed later.

For the preparation of this paper I have cursorily examined some evidence, derived from the gospel of St. Matthew aided by a useful edition by Scrivener. In this are highlighted points at which the Received Text was implicitly altered by the Revisers of 1881. These alterations were occasioned by their acceptance of the text edited by Westcott and Hort. It is from the study of the highlighted readings of Scrivener's edition that I have observed the tendency of readings in the later text to which I have referred. That is a text which we see appearing in and about the fifth century and which became dominant in the late medieval period in the Greek Empire. That tendency is frequently to prefer polished variations differing in style from the wording of the other groups but with little distinction in sense. One factor in this would have been to commend the Christian scriptures to the educated classes, a motivation akin to that behind, say, the Good News Bible, but in reverse. Many of these are relatively simple to identify and it is not difficult to perceive their most plausible explanation.

Along with these, as intimated, are instances arising from early error but not displacing the original. This may result in a simple choice between two or three variants but sometimes in a tangled complex. These illustrate the simile used by my teacher Robert Casey when he said that where the variants cluster, we have an analogy to the congregation of corpuscles about a lesion in the body in order to heal the interference which has occurred. Those I have identified even while perusing Scrivener's edition are each of such complexity that time has not sufficed to find the answers to the conundrum which each presents. One which I have been able to examine in a short space of time reveals that in all probability we are confronted by the debris of a primitive mistake. At Mt. 13.55, the name *Ioannes* appears in the list of the brothers of Jesus following *Iakobos* (that is, in place of forms of *Ioseph*). This seems to be an error arising from the familiar and frequent collocation of "James and John". It is found in various rather different but related manuscript texts. Amongst these are the Codex Sinaiticus (linked with Caesarea and the scholar and martyr Pamphilus), the Codex Bezae, full of ancient material but still as enigmatic as ever, about nine other manuscripts with the older form of writing and a bevy of later ones with important traces of early text. It is not surprising to find attestation too in Origen, namely in his Commentary on John, and must antedate the earliest of these. This influence of this weighty tradition must have continued as according to von Soden's analyses the earliest form of the Byzantine text has the reading. With this too would harmonize the further fact that the majority of lectionaries read *Ioannes* here. It is a hard decision whether it is an error of an early scribe or a slip of the author (as the conservative scholar Theodor Zahn thought!).

In conclusion, we perceive from surveying the data from these various standpoints that Scripture has not been handed down by bogeymen intent on "corruption" (a technical term much misunderstood and recently intentionally misused). It has been handed down by those who were primarily Christians. They did their best to preserve the text but saw the task in part as ensuring that its message was comprehended. They could also make mistakes and these were not always completely removed. It is the effects of the desire for absolute clarity, and especially for expressions which left no room for erroneous interpretation, considered useful in their day, which are today seen by a majority as hindrances to our perception of the pristine documents. However, many variant readings are early, some being errors but others indicative of early tradition or exegesis. There is probably much valuable data latent in the critical apparatus.

In closing we return to the study of manuscripts. In many of these, we find other details, not yet described. I think especially of the final words of the scribe, known as colophons. In these the date and even time of the conclusion of the work may be given, the name of the scribe, his patron, and other details such as

the names of the ruling emperor, his consort and his co-regent. In some traditions, there may be long accounts of important events or portents such as victories or defeats, comets, eclipses and earthquakes. Our prayers are everywhere requested for the scribe who often describes himself with deprecatory epithets of humility, and for the one who commissioned the execution of the work.

We find also short verses used over the years in many manuscripts with a little variation and addition, with which I think we can close this paper. The two forms we shall look at cover both my experience as lecturer and yours as audience. The verses express the personal emotions of the scribes of many manuscripts, even though in a standard pattern of that expression. Firstly, then, to verses which describe the toil of the scribe and his relief as he sees the end of his toil. An early form is

“As those who have lived abroad rejoice to see their homeland,
so do those who have tired themselves (as scribes) rejoice to see
the end of the book”,

although the less graphic “those who write” is the more common form in the last line. In some, the second member is written in a personal vein, “so do I when I reach the end of the book”.

Further comparisons tend to proliferate. A thirteenth century manuscript in the Library of the Selly Oak Colleges at Birmingham has the following extended form. The composer of the extra similes in lines 3 to 5 has not, alas! been able to produce lines which scan, and literary criticism would reveal other faults of composition.

“As those who have lived abroad rejoice to see their homeland,
And those tossed at sea to see the haven,
And those subjected to insult, finding it has ceased,
And those locked in prison to find it opened.
And as the woman who has given birth is filled with joy,
So are those who write as they anticipate the ending of the book.”

Secondly, in closing, a glance at the sentiments of many scribes which we may keep before us. Its basic form has been studied and a list of its attestation drawn up by the great Belgian scholar paleographer and Orientalist Gérard Garitte²¹ who demonstrated that it is of Egyptian origin, perhaps from pre-Christian times.

The gist of its many small variations is:-

“The hand that wrote this rots and turns to dust,
but the writing lasts for endless years”.

This sober reflection with an inner light of hope reminds us of the scriptural declaration that the grass withers but the Word of the Lord stands for ever,

I have gathered over the years of my career at Birmingham the materials for a catalogue of the Greek manuscripts in the city. The majority are in the small collection of the Selly Oak Colleges. There too I discovered a form of this colophon, at the close of a book of hymns. The unique form which this has assumed enabled me to identify this manuscript as formerly part of the collection of the monastery of the Soumela in Trezibond.²² It was written by an eighteenth century scribe but the colophon including this verse was derived from his exemplar, the autograph of the composer some two centuries earlier. It has the form of an address by the book itself.

“A stone covers the hand that wrote me,
As if disdainful of the sweet-sounding book,
(the honoured poet Peter), and of many others.
But earth shall not hide me in the dust.
I shall find a place on the lips of everyone”.

We may, I hope, fittingly end this survey of the transmission of scripture in the manuscript period with the thought of how often on reading scripture we burst out into our own “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”.

References

- 1 *Faith & Thought* no. 18 (October 1995) pp. 3-17
- 2 B.M. Metzger. *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* (New York / Oxford. 1981)
- 3 op.cit. pp. 64f. Plate 6
- 4 op.cit. pp. 74f. Plate 13.
- 5 I take the dates of the series of corrections from H.J. Vogels. *Codicum Novi Testamenti Specimina* (Bonn 1929) pg. 5 (Tab.3)
- 6 Metzger. op.cit. pp. 114f. Plate 33
- 7 Although it was not shown, those interested may be referred to Plate 31 in Metzger's collection.
- 8 Metzger . op. cit. pp. 130f. Plate 41
- 9 see *Cambridge History of the Bible* vol 1 (1970, 1975) pp.362f. (J.N. Birdsall). The New Testament text).
- 10 *ibid.* pp. 323f.
- 11 Metzger. op. cit. pp. 112f. Plate 32.
- 12 R. Browning. *The Correspondence of a Tenth-Century Byzantine Scholar* Byzantion vol. 24 (Brussels, 1955) pp. 397-452.
- 13 There is a vast bibliography. A basic study is Kurt Weitzmann. *Illustration in Roll*

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- and Codex (Princeton) 1970.
- 14 See observance on Plate 333 above and fn. 6.
 - 15 see G. Galvaris. *The Illustrations of the Prefaces in the Byzantine Gospels* (Wien, 1979); Robert S. Nelson. *The Iconography of Preface and Miniature in the Byzantine Gospel Book* (New York 1980).
 - 16 This feathure may be seen in its basic, undecorated, form in Metzger op. cit. pp. 120f. Plate 36.
 - 17 Metzger op. cit. pp. 104f. Plate 28.
 - 18 I am grateful to the Revd, Fr . Martjn McNamara, MSC, of Blackrock, Co. Dublin, and an anonymous scholar of Old Irish for supplementing my slender acquaintance with the language and explaining some additional intriguing features.
 - 19 *The New Testament in Greek*, Oxford, Part 1 1983 Part 2, 1987.
 - 20 B.M. Metzger sought to expound this term in a section of his *The Text of the New Testament* 2nd edition 1968 pp. 175-9. It is a pity that he entitles the section *Eclecticism, or 'Rational Criticism'*, which seems to be derogatory. The works cited by him, of Lagrange and Zuntz (pg. 176 fnn. 1 & 4) and of Schmid (pg. 177 fn. 1), are the great sources of information and instruction in this matter. The greatest fault of Metzger is his general unwillingness or inability to commit himself to a firm opinion.
 - 21 G. Garitte *Sur une formule des colophons de manuscrits grecs (η μεν χειρ η γραψασα)* ST 219 (Vatican 1962) pp. 359-390; reprinted in *id. scripts disiecta 1941 - 1977* (PIOL 21, Louvain 1980) T.1, pp. 394 - 425.
 - 22 J. Neville Birdsall *A manuscript of the monastery of the Soumela, Trebizond, now at Selly Oak, Birmingham* *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* Vol. 40 (1990) pp. 241 - 245.

Correspondence

To the Editor,

As one having benefited from Professor Birdsall's address to the Institute following the A.G.M. on 14th May I believe it appropriate to ask that we place on record the Council members' and the speaker's interest in the *message* as well as in the 'Origin of the Words of the New Testament', our speaker's subject on that occasion.

The Victoria Institute constitution affirms the only object to be pursued by the trustees to be, *To advance the Christian religion as revealed in Holy Scripture*

and it concludes the description of five powers by which this object is to be attained with the phrase, *to co-operate with other philosophical societies at home and abroad, which are now or may hereafter be formed, in the interest of Scriptural truth and of real science.* I for one am grateful to the Council for their endeavours, over many years now, recording and encouraging honest enquiry in an increasingly wide range of disciplines and for their conviction that Truth is one and indivisible.

The constitution permits election to Council of nominees who are willing to affirm their faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, Lord and God, who seek that their lives shall be ruled by the clear teaching of the Bible and who believe it to be the inspired word of God. However, membership of the Institute is open to all, regardless of persuasion, faith or speciality because interest in truth and honest enquiry is common to all.

Acknowledging that others are better qualified to testify, the writer's understanding of the central message of the scriptures is that Jesus Christ, as son of man, achieved perfect obedience to God during His first advent, was declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead and is now the believers' representative/mediator before the throne of Almighty God. He is able to save to the uttermost all who call upon His Name, indwell them by His Holy Spirit, impart a new quality of life and progressively transform them into His image. That Jesus Christ has promised to return to sweep away all that is an offence to God, to fulfil all God's promises in the Old Testament to Jacob's children, as well as all God's promises in the New Testament to those who put their trust in Him. That mankind's basic problem is Self pleasing instead of God pleasing, but Christ's promised righteous reign on earth will be the final demonstration to all nations, tongues and peoples of His goodness and patience until He exercises His divine right and power to create a new heaven and a new earth.

As Christians we make no distinctions between races, creeds, skin colours or languages, we are all in trouble, dead in trespasses and sins, because in our own strength and by our own efforts we all fail to attain to God's standard, but by the gift of faith in Christ shall all be made eternally alive. That is the testimony of the scriptures.

Brian H.T. Weller,
Secretary to the Trustees.

Book Reviews

Huston Smith

Why Religion Matters. The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief. Harper, San Francisco, 2001. 288 pp., hb, ISBN 0-06-067099-1.

Reviewed by Caroline Berry.

This is a wide-ranging book by a North American guru which very much follows the theme of its title. The early chapters make the case that currently we are totally dominated by worldviews which deny the existence or relevance of the supernatural. Each chapter is hinged round a 'flagship book' which is used to illustrate and highlight the points to be made. This is somewhat frustrating as Smith assumes that his readers are as well read as he is and one should really read the flagship books as well.

Scientism is tackled first. Smith has no quarrel with science *per se* and in fact gives science as the major positive contribution of the modern worldview. It is scientism which he inveighs against, with its insistence that the only reality is that which can be weighed or measured, which so impoverishes life today. A chapter is devoted to the media who are portrayed as constantly distorting the truth in order to improve their story. Whatever actually occurred, in the public mind the happening remains as shown in the film or TV programme. How different this might be if it were possible to capture the Holy Spirit on film! Higher Education and The Law are also claimed to be taken over by a post-modern worldview. He argues that Higher Education has lost much by becoming depersonalized. The social sciences with their capitulation to positivism, reductionism, relativism and determinism have infiltrated the entire education system and religious studies have been heavily influenced. Theological study now focuses on finding rational explanations for supernatural phenomena rather than in exploring their depth. As for the processes of the Law, Smith, writing from an American perspective, sees the religious freedom enshrined in the American constitution being persistently undermined and the voice of the church being less and less regarded.

Having painted this sombre picture Smith uses the second half of the book to show the inadequacies of such worldviews. He believes that both East and West are beginning to see that ideologies that take no account of the supernatural are doomed to failure. Chinese and Russian marxism, and Western worship of Progress are all in disarray. He believes that 'modernity's coming to see the gods it worshipped for what they were - idols that failed - was the most important religious event of the twentieth century'. For him, development in physics, biology and cognitive psychology all point towards a reality beyond the physical world, factors such as values, existential meaning and final causes that can never

be unravelled by scientific study. Unexpectedly he raises also the limitations of too liberal an attitude in Christianity. His argument is that too great an emphasis on compassion (which he represents by the horizontal arm of the cross) causes problems if given priority over its God-ward aspect (the vertical arm).

Smith has previously written a book titled *The World's Religions*. In *Why Religion Matters* he extends his survey beyond Christianity. He frequently refers to other major world religions and in the later parts of the book, tends to mix and match insights from each in an attempt to show how acceptance and enjoyment of the supernatural is essential to our understanding of both our humanity and our place in the universe. He believes that it is only when this is acknowledged that we can move forward as society.

The book is clearly and engagingly written, the text being liberally seasoned with lively anecdotes and good quotations from a wide range of authors. There is a comprehensive index but only brief references for the many quotations. Although I am not convinced that the author is putting forward new ideas these are valuable soundings of a theme which seems to need constant re-iteration.

Caroline Berry is a former Consultant in Genetics and presently Secretary of Christians in Science.

Dr. Leoncio A. Garza-Valdes

The DNA of God?

London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998. 208 pp. pb, £9.99.
ISBN 0-340-721-9.

Reviewed by the Revd. Dr. Ernest Lucas.

When, in 1988, the radiocarbon dating of the Turin Shroud by three different laboratories gave a date in the range AD 1260 - 1390 that seemed to most people to rule out the possibility that it might be the burial cloth of Jesus of Nazareth. That is not so says Dr. Garza-Valdes. He is a paediatrician who has held the post of Professor of Microbiology at the Health Sciences Center of the University of Texas. It was his microbiological knowledge plus an interest since childhood in Mayan jade carvings that suggested to him a possible flaw in the radiocarbon dating of the Shroud.

An anomalous radiocarbon date for dried blood taken from a Mayan jade carving used for ritual purposes led Dr. Garza-Valdes to the discovery that the blood encrustation was covered with what he calls a bioplastic coat made of a polyester similar to acrylic. This was produced by bacteria. It was translucent but clearly visible under a scanning electron microscope. Because this coat was formed gradually over the centuries and is organic the carbon in it skews the radiocarbon

dating unless it is removed from the sample before it is dated. It will result in a date that is too recent.

This book tells, in a very personal style, the story of how Dr. Garza-Valdes obtained some samples of the Shroud which were left over from the earlier dating method. He was also given samples of the blood and pollen grains from the Shroud. He provides what he says are photographs taken by a scanning electron microscope, which show the bioplastic coating on fibres from the Shroud. Unfortunately, a mistake in preparing the samples for radiocarbon dating contaminated them and led to a much too early date. This upset his relationship with the Cardinals responsible for the care of the Shroud. He also upset them by what he did with the blood samples. He was able to extract small segments of DNA from it and then multiply them by a cloning technique. This enabled him to get sufficient material to analyse and show that it contained genes which are only found in males. Although this method of cloning small segments of DNA is a very different thing from the cloning of animals like Dolly the sheep, the very use of the term 'cloning' caused a strong negative reaction by the Roman Catholic authorities and devotees of the Shroud. This ended any possibility of Dr. Garza-Valdes getting any further Shroud samples for redating.

Dr. Garza-Valdes believes that the image on the shroud has been produced by pigments deposited by the fungi and bacteria growing on the blood and sweat that impregnated it when it was used as a burial cloth. This, too, does not endear him to ardent 'shroudies' who believe that the image was produced by some process associated with the resurrection of Jesus. They think he is 'explaining away' a miracle. However, Dr. Garza-Valdes is himself a believer in the authenticity of the Shroud as Jesus' burial cloth and sees both its preservation and the production of the image made by the fungi and bacteria as a kind of miracle.

The book presents a case that seems plausible to someone who is not an expert in either microbiology or ancient artefacts. It will remain no more than a plausible hypothesis until other scientists are able and willing to repeat Dr. Garza-Valdes' work and verify it. However, as he himself accepts, the most scientific investigation could achieve would be to show that this is a piece of 1st century AD material with some stains of male blood from a crucified man. It could never prove that that man was Jesus of Nazareth, that the DNA is 'the DNA of God', or that Jesus rose from the dead.

The Reud. Dr. Ernest Lucas, a former biochemist, is Vice-Principal and Tutor in Biblical Studies, Bristol Baptist College.

Cumulative Index Part 3

The first part of this index was published in Bulletin 27 (April 2000) and covers volumes 1 to 43 (1866 to 19121); Part 2 (Bulletin 28) volumes 44 to 70 (1912 to 1938); Part 3 which follows (now much fuller than the previous indices) covers volumes 71 to 100 (1939 to 1973).

Abbreviations

Asterisk (*) - the first page of an article; **c** - correspondence; **d** - contribution to a discussion; **f** - and pages following (used sparingly; **frw** indicates that a further review by the same writer in the pages ahead); **n** - note; **ob** - obituary; **r** - review; **rw** - writer of a review.

Volume numbers are in **bold type**. In volumes 95 to 98 the paging in each separate issue starts again at page 1. In these volumes the issue numbers are indicated by parentheses. Thus **95 (2) 16** indicates page 16 of volume 95 part 2. Where a paper is followed by discussion and the discussion does not immediately follow after the paper, the page at which it starts is given by the number which immediately follows. Thus **85 35* 107d** indicates that the article referred to starts on page 35 of volume 85 and that the discussion starts on page 107 with other matter intervening. If the discussion is in the following volume this is stated.

To save space titles of papers and headings are indexed under key words and (with a few exceptions) not given in full.

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