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The New Testament at the Time of the Egyptian Papyri. Reflections Based on P12, P75 and P126 (P. Amh. 3b, P. Bod. XIV-XV and PSI 1497)

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I.

PAPYROLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE NEW TESTAMENT AT THE TIME OF THE EGYPTIAN POPYRI

REFLECTIONS BASED ON P¹², P⁷⁵ AND P¹²⁶
(P.AMH. 3B, P.BOD. XIV-XV AND PSI 1497)¹

“Si vous ne dédaignez point de parcourir ce
papyrus égyptien sur lequel s’est promenée
la pointe d’un roseau du Nil...”

Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* I.1,1

The time has come for manuscripts to play a greater part in New Testament exegesis. It is time to navigate these *fontes*², alongside others. This article argues that the papyri constitute today a particularly promising gateway into the domain of NT studies, and lead to avenues of investigation in line with contemporary cultural challenges. Indeed, the papyri present an opportunity to reconsider the question of the “origin” of the text, in association with the epistemological issues raised by the digital medium of writing (section II); they offer the possibility of removing the barriers between disciplines and classifications of manuscripts, which currently restrict research into Christian origins as well as New Testament interpretation (part 3); and finally, they open the way for a theological reconsideration of the status of the Scriptures, now that the printed book and the printed culture, which were partly responsible for the strength of the Protestant position of *sola scriptura*, are losing their former importance (part 4). This article begins by sketching the present state of research, then discusses these three points, taking as examples P⁷⁵ (part 2), then P¹² and P¹²⁶ (section III) – or, depending on one’s academic background,

1. My thanks are due to Jenny Read-Heimerdinger for revising the English of this article.

2. The term is used according to sense given to it in the title by T.J. KRAUS, *Ad fontes: Original Manuscripts and Their Significance for Studying Early Christianity. Selected Essays* (TENTS, 3), Leiden – Boston, Brill, 2007. For me, *ad fontes* does not mean a return to the origin, but a journey through the *fontes* that keep an entire field of study alive. I use here the terminology of “navigation” as an echo of the new vocabulary currently used in cyber-culture: navigation, surfing, browsing, hunting, grazing (see C. VANDENDORPE, *From Papyrus to Hypertext: Toward the Universal Digital Library*, trans. P. ARONOFF – H. SCOTT [Topics in the Digital Humanities], Urbana, IL – Champaign, IL, University of Illinois Press, 2009, pp. 117-118; this is an expanded and revised version of the French edition: C. VANDENDORPE, *Du papyrus à l’hypertexte: Essai sur les mutations du texte et de la lecture* [Sciences et société], Paris, La Découverte, 1999).

respectively *P. Bod.* XIV-XV, *P. Amh.* 3b and *PSI* 1497; or again, 2895, 3475 and 10009, to use the digital numbering of the *Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB)*³; or 10075, 10012 and 10126, following the new digital numbering of the *Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF)* alongside the usual Gregory-Aland numbering (*GA*)⁴.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE REBIRTH OF THE PHOENIX

Textual criticism has usually been regarded as a subsidiary task⁵ in the study and the exegesis of the New Testament, reserved for researchers patient enough to devote themselves to the study of thousands of manuscripts. Commenting on the content of the articles published during the hundred years' existence of the *Harvard Theological Review*, Helmut Koester describes textual criticism as separate from the New Testament field, and shows that NT textual criticism almost disappeared as a topic from articles between 1969 and 2006⁶. The isolation of textual criticism from the tasks perceived as properly belonging to NT exegesis could well have caused this field of research to become extinct, as Eldon Epp feared in 1979⁷. Today, we are witnessing the rebirth of the phoenix from its ashes⁸, as various factors demonstrate. First, seminal works have been published in the two last decades, notably by Bart Ehrman, Eldon Epp and David Parker⁹: they highlight the importance of the variants as an

3. <http://www.trismegistos.org/LDAB/>, last accessed 04/08/2010.

4. This variety of labelling will be discussed in section III. For the digital numbering used by the *INTF* in Münster alongside the *GA* numbering, see <http://intf.uni-muenster.de/vmr/NTVMR/ListeHandschriften.php>, last accessed 04/08/2010.

5. See, for example, Tobias Nicklas, who expresses his regret that NT textual criticism is generally considered only as a “Hilfsmittel auf der Suche nach dem ‘Urtext’” (T. NICKLAS, *Zur historischen und theologischen Bedeutung der Erforschung neutestamentlicher Textgeschichte*, in *NTS* 48 [2002] 145-158, p. 145).

6. H. KOESTER, *New Testament Scholarship through One Hundred Years of the Harvard Theological Review*, in *HTR* 101 (2008) 311-322, p. 312. 51 articles were published in NT textual criticism between 1908 and 1937 in *HTR*, but only 7 between 1969 and 2006.

7. See E.J. EPP, *New Testament Textual Criticism in America: Requiem for a Discipline*, in *JBL* 98 (1979) 94-98.

8. Eldon Epp speaks about a “new era”, David Parker about a “dramatic change”, Dan Wallace about resurrection (“a cadaver [that] has come back to life”). See E.J. EPP, *It's All about Variants: A Variant-Conscious Approach to New Testament Textual Criticism*, in *HTR* 100 (2007) 275-308, p. 281; D.C. PARKER, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 1; D.B. WALLACE, *Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52 (2009) 79-100, p. 79.

9. See as points of reference B.D. EHRMAN, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, New

invitation to carry out “narrative textual criticism”¹⁰ instead of focusing exclusively on the search for the original text¹¹, so producing what Werner Kelber calls a “Copernician revolution”¹². Such a shift in the perception of the main purpose of NT textual criticism has, of course, not failed to spark debates among scholars¹³. Secondly, there has been a fair “explosion” in the number of new manuscripts of the NT discovered or published, particularly thanks especially to the *Center for the Study of the New Testament Manuscripts*¹⁴, or the latest volumes of the Oxyrhynchus papyri¹⁵. Last but not least, anyone who has an internet connection is now able to view and to work on a considerable number of digitalized NT manuscripts – such as Codex Sinaiticus, available free online¹⁶ – and

York, Oxford University Press, 1993; E.J. EPP, *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays, 1962-2004* (SupplNT, 116), Leiden – Boston, Brill, 2005; D.C. PARKER, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

10. The expression was first used by David Parker in reviewing Ehrman’s *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (D.C. PARKER, *Reviews*, in *JTS* 45 [1994] 704-708, p. 704). It was then popularized by Eldon Epp (E.J. EPP, *Anti-Judaic Tendencies in the D-Text of Acts: Forty Years of Conversation*, in T. NICKLAS – M. TILLY [eds.], *The Book of Acts as Church History: Apostelgeschichte als Kirchengeschichte* [BZNW, 120], Berlin – New York, de Gruyter, 2003, 111-146, pp. 114-115). For Epp, early examples of “narrative textual criticism” can be found in Origen (EPP, *It’s All about Variants* [n. 8], p. 288). I have argued that my book *L’ange et la sueur de sang* probably belongs to this approach (C. CLIVAZ, *L’ange et la sueur de sang (Lc 22,43-44) ou comment on pourrait bien encore écrire l’histoire* [BiTS, 7], Leuven, Peeters, 2009, p. 142, n. 447). Thomas Shepherd also used the expression (T.R. SHEPHERD, *Narrative Analysis as a Text Critical Tool: Mark 16 in Codex W as a Test Case*, in *JSNT* 32 [2009] 77-98, p. 77).

11. See EPP, *It’s All about Variants* (n. 8), p. 279: “It became clear that the very notion of ‘the original text’ is elusive and that ‘original’ must be recognized as multilayered and multivalent”. He mentions as a visible demonstration of this debate a session held at SBL in 1998, “What Do We Mean By ‘Original Text’?”.

12. W.H. KELBER, *The Generative Force of Memory: Early Christian Traditions as Processes of Remembering*, in *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 36 (2006) 15-22, p. 19; cited by EPP, *It’s All about Variants* (n. 8), p. 292.

13. See notably WALLACE, *Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism* (n. 8), pp. 80, 85: “the quest for the wording of the autographa is still worth fighting for”. Eldon Epp explains that, “like most new epochs, this one will be unsettling for some, will open new vistas for many, but must be recognized as a reality by all” (EPP, *It’s All about Variants* [n. 8], p. 281).

14. See <http://www.csntm.org/Manuscripts.aspx>: 30 as yet non-catalogued NT manuscripts were available on this website on 04/08/2010. The majority of them come from the Albanian National Archives in Tirana, but also from the Benaki Museum in Athens, the INTF in Münster, the Monastery of St. John the Theologian in Patmos, and so on.

15. P¹⁰⁰ to P¹¹⁵, P¹¹⁹ to P¹²⁵ and P¹²⁷ are papyri from Oxyrhynchus. Keith Elliott mentioned in 2000 that a “substantial papyrus of Acts still awaits complete editing” (J.K. ELLIOTT, *Seven Recently Published New Testament Fragments from Oxyrhynchus*, in *NT* 42 [2000] 209-213, p. 209). It was published in 2009 by D.C. PARKER – S. PICKERING in vol. 74 as P¹²⁷ (P.Oxy. 74.4968) and contains Acts 10–12 and 15–17 in a fragmentary state.

16. See <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/>, last accessed 04/08/2010.

can use various other online tools, such as the *LDAB* and *papyri.info*¹⁷. David Parker has already drawn attention to the significance of computers and the new tools they provide for the present “dramatic change” in textual criticism and the editing of the NT¹⁸, but the conceptual and ideological interaction between these elements still needs to be worked out. This article will show that there is an interplay between the emergence of the digital medium of writing and the shift that has taken place in NT textual criticism, with regard to the “original text” and the blurring of categories in NT and early Christian studies. The *papyri*, serving as they do as a gateway into NT studies, have a special involvement in this interplay. While the first point – the notion of “original text” – has often been made, there remains fierce debate over it¹⁹, which this article hopes to take the heat out of (part 2). As for the second point – the blurring of categories –, the present article and, indeed, the present book, put it in the spotlight and show it to be a potentially positive point, one that is waiting to be explored further (part 3)²⁰. The third and final point made in this article is a conclusive consideration of the theological consequences of these two phenomena (part 4).

II. THE QUESTION OF “ORIGIN” AND THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION: ANTIQUITY AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

1. *Papyri and Hypertexts: New Testament Debates in Present-Day Western Culture*

A positive view of variants, the publication of several new NT manuscripts, the digitalization of manuscripts and the multiplication of online tools all contribute to the growth of a scholarly interest in this field, as

17. See <http://www.trismegistos.org/LDAB/> and <http://papyri.info/>, last accessed 04/08/2010.

18. PARKER, *An Introduction* (n. 8), p. 1. See also D.C. PARKER, *Through a Screen Darkly: Digital Texts and the New Testament*, in *JSNT* 25 (2003/4), 395-411. My thanks go to David Parker for this reference and his useful remarks on the present article. Thanks are also due to Ulrich Schmid for the text of his forthcoming article: U. SCHMID, *Transmitting the New Testament Online*, in A. VAN DER WEEL – E. THOUTENHOOFD (eds.), *Text Comparison and Digital Creativity* (Scholarly Communication, 1), Leiden, Brill, 2010, forthcoming.

19. See nn. 11 and 13 above.

20. But see also a previous study by S.E. PORTER, *New Testament Studies and Papyrology: What Can We Learn from Each Other?*, in B. PALME (ed.), *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses. Wien, 22.-28. Juli 2001* (Papyrologica Vindobonensia, 1), Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2007, 559-572.

seen in introductory works written from a range of perspectives²¹, and also in a number of recent articles²². International meetings on NT manuscripts, as well as SBL seminars on the topic, are increasingly better attended and lively debates are being carried out on internet blogs and online forums²³. Within the wider Western cultural framework, it is obvious that this growing interest corresponds to a common cultural trend and a fascination for the topos of the “lost manuscript”, noticeably popular in contemporary novels and films. As old as ancient religious books²⁴, the image of the lost manuscript became a major literary topos in the work of Miguel de Cervantes, which illustrates the nostalgia for manuscripts at the Classical Age²⁵. Four centuries later, *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco focused on the quest for Aristotle’s lost work on comedy. It is a novel that has been described as a paradigm of the hermeneutical condition at the end of the 20th century, foreshadowing the end of the book²⁶. In other words, if the topos of the “lost manuscript” has risen today to the top of the bill, it is because we are once more at a turning point in the complex history of the interplay between ideas, concepts and the medium of writing.

21. See P.J. COMFORT, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography and Textual Criticism*, Nashville, TN, Broadman & Holman Press, 2005; P.D. WEGNER, *A Student’s Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible*, Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity Press, 2006; PARKER, *Introduction* (n. 8); J.H. GREENLEE, *The Text of the New Testament: From Manuscript to Modern Editions*, Peabody, MA, Hendrickson, 2008 (reviewed by Z.A. CROOK, in *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39 [2009] 98-99); a bilingual team of researchers, under the direction of Christian Amphoux, Gilles Dorival and Keith Elliott, is preparing a new introductory manual in French, to be subsequently translated into English.

22. Eight articles on NT manuscripts have been published in the 2009 issues of *NTS*, by Caulley, Elliott, Horell, two by Myllykoski, Quek, Schmidt, and the latest one by D.G. HORELL, *The Themes of 1 Peter: Insights from the Earliest Manuscripts (the Crosby-Schøyen Codex ms 193 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex containing P⁷²)*, in *NTS* 55 (2009) 502-522.

23. See, for example, the semi-open blog “Evangelical Textual Criticism” (members are required to sign a declaration of faith; <http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/>, last accessed 04/08/2010). Or the open Yahoo forum “Textual Criticism of the Bible”, moderated by Wieland Wilker (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/textualcriticism/>, last accessed 04/08/2010).

24. See J. HERMAN, *Manuscrits trouvés à Saragosse, c’est-à-dire nulle part*, in J. HERMAN – F. HALLYN with K. PEETERS (eds.), *Le topos du manuscrit trouvé. Actes du colloque international Louvain-Gand, 22-23-24 mai 1997 [hommage à Christian Angelet]* (Bibliothèque de l’information Grammaticale, 40), Leuven, Peeters, 1999, ix-xxx, pp. xvii-xviii.

25. See *ibid.*, p. xxiii. Herman also says that “autour du manuscrit trouvé va s’organiser un espace où le texte cherchera et trouvera sa spécificité littéraire. Ce sera, j’en suis convaincu, la grande affaire du XVIII^e siècle”.

26. See G. ALLEN, *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom*, London – New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 206.

The rebirth of NT textual criticism belongs to this cultural framework, within which the papyri play a leading role²⁷. Indeed, papyrus is consistently appealed to as a metaphorical expression of the change through which we are living. When Microsoft produced the first CR-Rom in 1985, it organized a meeting called “CD-Rom: the New Papyrus”²⁸. When, in 1999, Christian Vandendorpe wrote one of the first essays devoted to the cultural and conceptual changes brought about by electronic writing, he entitled it *From Papyrus to Hypertext*²⁹. The interchange papyrus/electronic media is also in evidence in the sphere of the Classics: the Egyptian research team of the Guadeloupe University has been publishing for the past year an electronic journal in French called *i-Medjat, Papyrus électronique des Ankhou* (“e-Medjat, Electronic Papyrus of the Ankhou”)³⁰. The first issue explains that it is “the fastest and most accessible means of sharing knowledge, produced by the most destitute of researchers – the most instant of medias”³¹. There is a threefold wordplay in the French title of the journal, because the Egyptian word “medijat” means a “roll (of papyrus)”, and “i-Medjat” means in French both “e-media” and “very fast” (*immédiat*). The association of papyrus with a roll or scroll exemplifies why papyrus is so useful a model in thinking about the new electronic media. Indeed, “papyrus” refers at one and the same time to a scroll and a codex, which matches the features of e-texts, as researchers in the history of reading have pointed out. One such is Roger Chartier, professor at the College de France where he holds the chair of “Writings and Cultures in Modern Europe”:

When reading on a screen, modern readers adopt something of the posture of readers in Antiquity but with the big difference that they read a scroll that usually unrolls vertically and with all the features that have characterized books since the first centuries of the Christian era: pagination, lists of contents, tables, etc. The cross between the two systems that governed

27. See the new series *Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament*: P. ARZT-GRABNER, *Philemon* (PKNT, 1), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003; ID. – R.-E. KRITZER – A. PAPATHOMAS – F. WINTER, *1. Korinther* (PKNT, 2), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006; C. KREINECKER, *2. Thessalonicher* (PKNT, 3), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010.

28. See S. LAMBERT – S. ROPIEQUET (eds.), *CD-Rom: The New Papyrus*, Redmond, OR, Microsoft Press, 1986.

29. See n. 2 above.

30. *i-Medjat, Papyrus électronique des Ankhou: Revue caribéenne pluridisciplinaire éditée par l'Unité de Recherche-Action Guadeloupe* at <http://www.culturediff.org/iMedjat.htm>, last accessed 04/08/2010.

31. *i-Medjat, Papyrus électronique des Ankhou* 1 (2008), p. 2. IDDN.GP.010.011036 8.000.R.X.2008.035.21235.

previous reading material (the *volumen* and then the *codex*) thus produces, in fact, an entirely new relationship with the text. Thanks to these mutations, the electronic text is able to allow the realization of the never-ending dreams of conquering all knowledge that preceded it[,] such as the library of Alexandria³².

In the age-old history of reading, we are currently at a turning point, the most important one to have occurred since the change from scroll to codex, with more consequences than the invention of printing, as Vandendorpe and Chartier in particular already noted a decade ago³³. Vandendorpe points out that the culture of hypertext and electronic writing has brought about a perception of the text that “no longer exists as a whole or in a single flow but is parcelled out in segments or fragments”³⁴; hypertext is “ordered to disperse attention as broadly as possible”³⁵. Noting the same fact, Chartier adds two further consequences arising from the digitalization of writing and reading: the blurring of the distinctions between textual genres and of their identifying markers, and the reversal of the process of authority – readers are now creating their own pathways in the text and among texts, constructing their own coherence³⁶. As he comments:

The world of digital texts is a world where texts are displayed, modified, rewritten, where writing takes place within an already existing piece of writing, a world where the reader is involved not outside the text but within the texts themselves, a world where, as Foucault sometimes imagined, texts would not be assigned to an author’s name, where the “author’s function” would lose its importance in a kind of textuality formed by layers of discourses that are continually being rewritten and in a permanent

32. R. CHARTIER, *Lecteurs et lectures à l’âge de la textualité électronique*, in G. ORIGGI – N. ARIKHA (eds.), *Texte-e: Le texte à l’heure de l’Internet*, Paris, Bibliothèque Publique d’Information, 2003, 18-31, p. 23. In French: “En lisant sur écran, le lecteur contemporain retrouve quelque chose de la posture du lecteur de l’Antiquité, mais – et la différence est grande – il lit un rouleau qui se déroule en général verticalement et qui se trouve doté de tous les repérages propres à la forme qui est celle du livre depuis les premiers siècles de l’ère chrétienne: pagination, index, tables, etc. Le croisement des deux logiques qui ont réglé les usages des supports précédents de l’écrit (le *volumen* puis le *codex*) définit donc, en fait, un rapport au texte tout à fait original. Grâce à ces mutations, le texte électronique peut donner réalité aux rêves, toujours inachevés, de totalisation du savoir qui l’ont précédé[,] comme la bibliothèque d’Alexandrie”.

33. See VANDENDORPE, *From Papyrus to Hypertext* (n. 2), p. 127; R. CHARTIER, *Les métamorphoses du livre: Les rendez-vous de l’édition. Le livre et le numérique*, Paris, Bibliothèque du Centre Pompidou, 2001, p. 8.

34. VANDENDORPE, *From Papyrus to Hypertext* (n. 2), p. 143.

35. J. MCGANN, *Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web*, New York, Palgrave, 2001, p. 71; quoted by VANDENDORPE, *From Papyrus to Hypertext* (n. 2), p. 143.

36. See CHARTIER, *Les métamorphoses du livre* (n. 33), pp. 12-14.

exchange between writers and readers – but readers who in their turn are also authors³⁷.

As concordant yet distinct points of view, mention can also be made of the ideas of Vandendorpe and Umberto Eco. Vandendorpe is of the firm belief that authors could develop new means of authority over readers by making use of the full potential of a hypertext³⁸. This step remains at the moment in the future, because there are not many authors – at least in the academic field – who are trying out such paths. As for Eco, he shares Chartier’s point of view, though not without a certain fear and nostalgia, which is not surprising: he did, after all, write *The Name of the Rose*. Eco announces the end of the variant³⁹ and invites academic institutions to be the “guardians of philology”, which runs the risk of getting lost in the midst of a digital culture⁴⁰. Noting that the notion of the “original” of the text “certainly disappears” in the digital culture, he points out that the main resulting problem is not really the loss of the “original” production of an author – unless one wishes to reconstruct the psychology of an author⁴¹. For him, the resulting problems are

the alterations that I can make myself to the texts of other people. Let’s assume that I download onto my computer *La Critique de la raison pure*, and that I start to study it, writing my comments between the lines; either I possess a very philological turn of mind and I can recognize my comments, or else, three years later, I could no longer say what is mine and what is Kant’s. We would be like the copyists in the Middle Ages who automatically made corrections to the text that they copied because it felt natural to do so – in which case, any philological concern is likely to go down the drain.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17. In French: “Le monde du texte numérique est un monde où les textes sont déployés, repris, réécrits, où une écriture s’écrit dans une écriture déjà là, un monde où le lecteur intervient non pas sur les marges du texte, mais dans les textes eux-mêmes, un monde où comme l’avait rêvé parfois Foucault, s’effacerait l’assignation au nom propre, où s’effacerait la ‘fonction auteur’ dans une sorte de textualité formée de nappes de discours toujours repris et liés à l’échange permanent entre producteurs et lecteurs – mais des lecteurs à leur tour auteurs”.

38. See VANDENDORPE, *From Papyrus to Hypertext* (n. 2), p. 126.

39. U. ECO, *On Literature*, trans. M. McLAUGHLIN, Orlando, FL, Harvest Books, 2004, p. 333: “I really do believe that the existence of electronic means of writing will profoundly alter criticism of variants, with all due respect to the spirit of Contini. I once worked on the variants in Manzoni’s *Inni sacri* (*Sacred Hymns*). At that time the substitution of a word was crucial. Nowadays it is not: tomorrow you can go back to the word you rejected yesterday. At most what will count is the difference between the first handwritten draft and the last one out of the printer. The rest is all coming and going, often dictated by the amount of potassium in your blood”.

40. See U. ECO – G. ORIGGI, *Auteurs et autorité: Un entretien avec Umberto Eco*, in ORIGGI – ARIKHA (eds.), *Texte-e* (n. 32), 215-230, p. 227.

41. *Ibid.*

And then again, the danger the young student faces is that he or she fails to notice that they have altered the text. It is scholarly circles and university institutions that should act as the guardians of philology⁴².

Reading Eco's thoughts, it is helpful to bear in mind that the gradual disappearance of the notion of the "original text" and the undermining of the philological approach are tinged with nostalgia for all scholars whose roots are in classical, philosophical or linguistic studies. It would be a mistake to consign the new emphasis on variants in NT textual criticism to an ideological debate on "postmodern skepticism" versus "the quest for the genuine autographa"⁴³. While Eco observes a progressive cultural weakening and even a "disappearance" of the notion of the "original text", he does so in a context that has nothing to do with the Bible: the phenomenon is indeed very much wider than a polemic internal to NT studies, and can carry an element of nostalgia for a variety of fields in the Arts and Humanities, not least for Eco himself⁴⁴.

Going beyond nostalgia, it is time now to look ahead at future questions about papyrology in the NT field. The features of the digital revolution mean that papyrologists are particularly well prepared to face this change, even if "sacred notions" such as the original text and the philology are questioned. Indeed, the world of papyri is a world of fragments, just as is the world of hypertext. To open a box full of papyri fragments is for papyrologists a daily exercise that trains them to deal with texts without the familiar markers of literary genres, like surfing the internet. Finally, as already pointed out, a papyrus simultaneously involves the techniques of reading both a scroll and a codex, two systems that are combined in the e-text. These characteristics have prepared papyrologists for the new medium of writing.

42. *Ibid.* In French: "les altérations que je peux faire, moi, sur les textes des autres. Supposons que je décharge sur mon ordinateur *La Critique de la raison pure*, que je commence à l'étudier, et que j'écrive tous mes commentaires entre les lignes, ou bien je suis doué d'un fort esprit philologique et je peux reconnaître mes commentaires, ou bien, trois années plus tard, je ne saurai plus ce qui est de moi et ce qui est de Kant. Nous serions comme ces copistes du Moyen Âge qui corrigeaient automatiquement le texte qu'ils copiaient parce que cela leur semblait normal, d'où le risque que l'esprit philologique s'en aille en eau de boudin. Mais, là aussi, le risque pour le jeune étudiant est qu'il ne s'aperçoive plus qu'il a manipulé le texte. Les milieux scientifiques et universitaires resteraient les garants de cette vigilance philologique".

43. This is the position of Dan Wallace (see WALLACE, *Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism* [n. 8], p. 80).

44. It is only because David Parker works and thinks inside the framework of the "digital culture" that he is able to say: "textual critics, under the guise of reconstructing original texts, are really creating new ones" (PARKER, *Through a Screen Darkly* [n. 18], p. 401).

In the NT field, the fragmentary and independent papyri have little by little been transforming textual criticism over the past century. Their effect is today maximized with the advent of cyber-culture, which makes many of them accessible to all. Every published papyrus raises one question more concerning the classification in texts-types⁴⁵. Stanley E. Porter warned about the excesses of the Aland's classifications, which establish the "twenty-sixth edition of the Nestle-Aland [as] the 'original text'", and avoid dealing with the complexity of the papyri⁴⁶. Eldon Epp – and Stanley Porter following him – pointed out that NA²⁶ and NA²⁷ do not take sufficient account of the information derived from the papyri⁴⁷: only 176 variants have been considered, whereas 980 possible modifications in the most ancient papyri, notably in P⁴⁵, P⁴⁶ and P⁶⁶, have been rejected. The status of P⁷⁵ is another controversial issue, at times almost regarded as the original text⁴⁸, at others as one "papyrus among others" that was influenced by an ecclesiastical framework and scribal modifications⁴⁹.

45. Eldon Epp recently reaffirmed the early date of the texts-types (see E.J. EPP, *Are Early New Testament Manuscripts Truly Abundant?*, in D.B. CAPES, et al. [eds.], *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal*, Waco, TX, Baylor University Press, 2008, 77-107, p. 105). He argues from the example of P⁶⁹, but I have demonstrated that P⁶⁹ is not related to a text-type (see C. CLIVAZ, *The Angel and the Sweat Like "Drops of Blood" (Lk 22:43-44): P⁶⁹ and P³*, in *HTR* 98 [2005] 419-440, pp. 423, 432). See also EAD., *Some Remarks on Thomas A. Wayment, 'A New Transcription of P. Oxy. 2383 (P⁶⁹)'*, in *NT* 52 (2010) 83-87.

46. S.E. PORTER, *Why So Many Holes in the Papyrological Evidence for the Greek New Testament?*, in S. MCKENDRICK – O.A. O'SULLIVAN (eds.), *The Bible as Book: The Transmission of the Greek Text*, London, British Library Press – New Castle, DE, Oak Knoll Press, 2003, 167-186, p. 174.

47. See S.E. PORTER, *Textual Criticism in the Light of Diverse Textual Evidence for the Greek New Testament: An Expanded Proposal*, in T.J. KRAUS – T. NICKLAS (eds.), *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World* (TENTS, 2), Leiden, Brill, 2006, 305-337, p. 309.

48. Aland states that "with the discovery of P⁷⁵ we have at last found the key to understanding the early history of the text" (K. ALAND – B. ALAND, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. E.F. Rhodes, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans; Leiden, Brill, 2^e 1989, p. 57). Interestingly, in the sixties, scholars were universally more cautious in their statements about our papyri. For example, according to Carlo Martini (1966), this papyrus shows, on the one hand, that the idea of a Hesychian recension in Alexandria is wrong; but furthermore, Martini also says in his monograph that several questions are not solved by P⁷⁵, they are merely "pushed back" into the 2nd century, for instance the variants of Lk 22,43-44 or 23,34a (see C.M. MARTINI, *Il problema del Codice B alla luce del papiro Bodmer XIV [Analecta Biblica, 26]*, Rome, Pontifical Institute, 1966, pp. XIII and 135).

49. See K. HAINES-EITZEN, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, notably p. 66; CLIVAZ, *The Angel and the Sweat* (n. 45), pp. 423-424; EAD., *L'ange et la sueur de sang* (n. 10), pp. 469-481. The stability the P⁷⁵ text in the later decades should nevertheless not to be undermined (see EPP, *Are Early New Testament Manuscripts Truly Abundant?* [n. 45],

Papyri are today a “sensitive case” in NT textual criticism, one into which research forms a natural link with the current challenges of the electronic media.

Following on from this theoretical section of II.1, part II.2 will now indicate some forward-looking questions concerning the topic of “origin” and “original text” in the culture of digital writing: are ideas influencing a change of writing medium or the reverse? What has become of the notion of “author” and “original” in the digital revolution? What could the next edition of the New Testament look like? On the theological level, one has also to consider the gradual digital transformation of the notion of the “original text” (see part 4).

2. *Some Forward-Looking Questions*

a) Are Ideas Causing a Change of Writing Medium, or the Reverse? The Example of the “Author”

Are new ideas and concepts able to bring about a change in the means of writing, or is it the change in the writing medium that produces new ideas and concepts? All papyrologists and scholars of Antiquity will at this point think of the well-known issue of the “invention” of the codex and its links to emerging Christianity. Roger Bagnall raises doubts in his recent book about common ideas concerning early Christian books in Egypt – such as their real number⁵⁰ – but reaffirms the early adoption of the codex by Christians, suggesting that it would have been caused by “a culturally determining role for the Church of Rome” as played since the middle of the 2nd century⁵¹. In the conclusion to his book, Bagnall is just putting out some ideas for reflection, but it is nevertheless somewhat startling to imagine the Church of Rome around 150 CE with enough institutional and political power to oblige the various churches and Christians of Egypt to use the codex. That sounds particularly strange in view of what Kim Haines-Eitzen has shown about the *Shepherd of Hermas* at that time: Hermas is in touch with the leaders of the Church in Rome but

pp. 104-105). The matter of the earlier period remains open to question, as Martini pointed out already in 1966.

50. See R.S. BAGNALL, *Early Christian Books in Egypt*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2009, esp. p. 23.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90: “If we were to accept the dating of P. Ryl. 457 for the late second century and see P.Iand. 4 as a case for archaism or incompetence, would the codex really need to have been adopted sooner than the middle of the second century? And at that point, would such a culturally determining role for the church of Rome really be unthinkable?”.

he is free to copy the texts that he wishes⁵². Even in Rome itself, there does not exist in the middle of the 2nd century an institutional dominant hold over the production of Christian manuscripts. Moreover, we have some NT opisthographs on scrolls⁵³, among which P¹³ shows that the owner/scribe tried in the 3rd century to conserve both texts⁵⁴, Livy on the recto and Heb 2–5 and 10–12 on the verso. Mention should also be made of the exception of P²² (*P.Oxy.* 10.1228) – but can one speak about a real “exception” in a field where the preservation of objects has been so dependent on chance? – written on the recto of a scroll, without any text on the verso, in the middle 3rd century⁵⁵. Consequently, I would prefer to suggest that some thoughts about the history of reading and the medium of writing could be helpful in developing further the analysis of the link between the early Christian texts and the codex – a link that has been stated but not proven.

Roger Chartier assumes that there is as “a correspondence between Christianity’s relationship with its holy writings and the form of the codex”⁵⁶. Indeed, the codex is perfect for a “religion based on the comparison between Scriptures – Old and New Testaments”, because thanks to the folios, there exists the possibility to construct indexes and to have references⁵⁷. It is also a form of reading that favours the combined reading of different genres of texts, like the gospels with the Pauline letters⁵⁸; it is suitable for private reading⁵⁹, as witnessed by the existence of miniature Christian *codices*⁶⁰. Given the significance of such elements, it

52. See HAINES-EITZEN, *Guardians of Letters* (n. 49), pp. 36-37 and 53-54, with reference to *Pastor Hermae, Visiones* 2.1.4 and 2.4.3.

53. The Alands and Comfort do not give the same list: P¹², P¹³, P¹⁸, P²² (ALAND – ALAND, *The Text of the New Testament* [n. 48], p. 102); or P¹³, P¹⁸, P²², P⁹⁸ (COMFORT, *Encountering Manuscripts* [n. 21], p. 27).

54. See NICKLAS, *Zur historischen und theologischen Bedeutung* (n. 5), p. 154.

55. P²² (*P.Oxy.* 10.1228) warrants more attention than the term “oddy” that Philip Comfort uses (see COMFORT, *Encountering Manuscripts* [n. 21], p. 27).

56. CHARTIER, *Les métamorphoses du livre* (n. 33), p. 22.

57. *Ibid.*

58. See PARKER, *Through a Screen Darkly* (n. 18), p. 411.

59. CHARTIER, *Les métamorphoses du livre* (n. 33), p. 22: “Il y a toutes ces raisons que j’ai évoquées, c’est-à-dire que la pratique de lecture du codex est, pour le corps, une pratique plus libre, plus à distance du livre – il peut être posé, être porté, on peut avoir les mains libres –, et d’autre part c’est une pratique qui, intellectuellement, permet les repérages, puisque si vous avez un foliotage ou une pagination vous pouvez établir un index des citations, des références, des noms propres, etc. Donc le codex présente intellectuellement et corporellement des avantages par rapport ce qu’était le rouleau, ce qui assure son succès”.

60. See for example K. HAINES-EITZEN, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles on Papyrus: Revisiting the Question of Readership and Audience*, in KRAUS – NICKLAS (eds.), *New Testament Manuscripts* (n. 47), 293-304.

seems that we have to imagine a pattern *in synergia* between the ideas and the medium of writing representing the process that linked Christianity and the codex. The codex existed before Christianity, and Christians also wrote on scrolls, but a special synergy established links between both of them. A comparison with the emergence of digital writing favours the existence of a “pattern of synergy”, as illustrated by the example of the notion of “author”. First, it is common knowledge that Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault spoke about the disappearance or the death of the author in 1967 and 1969, at a time where the hypertext and the cyber-world did not exist⁶¹. Such ideas seem to prefigure the authority given to the readers by cyber-textuality, as indicated by Chartier⁶²; but at the same time, the birth of a new kind of authorship was able to take place, a hope expressed by Vandendorpe⁶³. The appearance of the “wiki” domain may well signal the emergence of a new notion of authorship, born in and of dialogue. Furthermore, who can tell what influence on “authorship” blogs, born in 1997, will have exactly – those unedited voices, the *anecodota vox*⁶⁴? This is a process of synergy: ideas meet a new means of writing, and new ideas come from the encounter between the ideas and the medium. In the same way, it is probably more appropriate for the question of the enigmatic link between Christianity and the codex that we should stop looking for a fictitious origin and, instead, envision a synergy of concomitant elements, mutually influencing and transforming one another. As we know from Plato in *Timaeus* 48b, what we call “the beginning” stands in the middle of things: it is time to consider the notion of “origin” always as a process.

b) What Will the Next Critical Edition of the New Testament Look Like in the Digital Age?

i) *Apparatus Criticus and Readers*

As we seen, the notion of authorship has started to be a blurred one. Consequently, if NT scholars – such as David Horrell – are no longer looking for the “mind of the author”, or for what was “consciously intended by its author”⁶⁵, will they become like the monks denounced by

61. R. BARTHES, *La mort de l'Auteur*, in ID., *Le bruissement de la langue*, Paris, Seuil, 1984, 61-68 (first publication: *The Death of the Author*, in *Aspen Magazine* 5-6 (1967), n. p., www.ubu.com/asp/asp5and6/threeEssays.html#barthes; first publication in French: *La mort de l'auteur*, in *Mantéa* 5 [1968] 12-17); M. FOUCAULT, *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?*, in *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 63 (1969) 73-104.

62. See CHARTIER, *Les métamorphoses du livre* (n. 33), pp. 12-17; cited above, see n. 37.

63. See VANDENDORPE, *From Papyrus to Hypertext* (n. 2), p. 126.

64. See *ibid.*, p. 152.

65. See HORELL, *The Themes of 1 Peter* (n. 22), p. 522.

Eco in the quotation give above, these “copyists in the Middle Ages who automatically made corrections to the texts that they copied because it felt natural to do so”⁶⁶? As I have recently argued, in NT exegesis and textual criticism we now have to work with a triad of cultures, those of author, scribes and readers⁶⁷. At the centre stands the manuscript, an object produced by the scribe, who is the last author and a particularly influential reader⁶⁸. There are clear similarities between this view of the scribe and the figure of the cyber-reader, who also acts out the joint parts of the author, scribe and reader of the texts (see II.1). The same was also true up to the end of the Middle Ages: the medievalist Jean-Claude Mühlethaler recently drew attention to this “scribal culture”, which often prevailed over the authorial culture until as late as the 15th century⁶⁹. He wisely stressed that “a text that does not lend itself to a constantly renewed reading will quickly become of no interest and will not last from one century to the next”⁷⁰.

The authorial culture/scribal culture interface is also a pertinent concern for anyone working in the fields of the NT and the Hellenistic culture of the first centuries of the common era, and that for three principal reasons that I have developed elsewhere⁷¹: first, Egyptian Christian scribes should probably be viewed more as copyists (see Parsons), working in networks (see Haines-Eitzen)⁷²; secondly, the over-romantic notion of the author that has all too often been applied to Antiquity needs to be

66. See ECO – ORIGGI, *Auteurs et autorité: Un entretien avec Umberto Eco* (n. 40), p. 227, cited above, see n. 42.

67. See C. CLIVAZ, *Luke, Acts and the Ancient Readership: The Cultures of Author, Scribes and Readers in New Testament Exegesis*, in A. GREGORY – K.C. ROWE (eds.), *Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts* (Religious Studies), Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina Press, 2010, 153-171.

68. See *ibid.*, p. 154.

69. See J.-C. MÜHLETHALER, *Éloge de la variante: La clôture du Testament de Villon*, in T. van HEMELERYCK – M. COLOMBO TIMELLI (eds.), *Quant l'ung amy pour l'autre veille. Mélanges de moyen français offerts à Claude Thiry* (Texte, Codex & Contexte, 5), Turnhout, Brepols, 2008, 425-437, p. 437.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 432: “Pourquoi ne ferions-nous pas nôtre [un] éloge de la variante? Si le point de vue du lecteur n'est pas aussi valorisé, dans notre culture, que celui de l'auteur, il a pourtant sa raison d'être. Un texte qui ne se prête pas à une lecture chaque fois renouvelée perdra vite tout intérêt et ne traversera pas les siècles. Dans le domaine musical, pour une pièce de théâtre, personne ne met en question la légitimité des différentes réalisations d'une œuvre”.

71. See C. CLIVAZ, *The Prose Writer (συγγραφεύς) and the Cultures of Author and Scribes: The Examples of Galen and the Anonymous Author of Luke-Acts*, in P. DAVIES – T. RÔMER (eds.), *Writing and Scribalism: Comment écrit-on dans l'Antiquité?*, Sheffield, Equinox Press, forthcoming.

72. See P. PARSONS, *Copyists of Oxyrhynchus*, in A.K. BOWMAN, *et al.* (eds.), *Oxyrhynchus: A City and Its Texts* (GRM, 93), London, Egypt Exploration Society, 2007, 262-270; HAINES-EITZEN, *Guardians of Letters* (n. 49), p. 16.

re-evaluated⁷³; thirdly, at the beginning of the common era, the interaction between author, scribes and readers is helpful for understanding the work of such writers as the Lukan author and Galen⁷⁴. But are we, then, powerful scribes, with the ability to change the text at will, and who create the “texts we need”⁷⁵? Is Eco right to be afraid that every student would be able to get his/her own glossed version of classical texts? First, as the above remarks show, it is only since the Enlightenment that the importance of the scribal culture has been forgotten. As Charles S. Peirce so acutely observed, the concept of “reality” has always been produced by a slow and collective process:

The very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of an indefinite increase of knowledge. And so those two series of cognitions – the real and the unreal – consist of those which, at a time sufficiently future, the community will always continue to reaffirm; and of those which, under the same conditions, will ever after be denied⁷⁶.

At the present time, we are simply seeing this process more explicitly at work, with changes taking place in the way authority is recognized. Gradually, a shared validation of ideas and texts is occurring, which it is still difficult to evaluate but can be readily observed, as the *Wikipedia* experiment illustrates⁷⁷. Secondly, present-day “cyber-scribes” on the

73. See for example W. BLANTON, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity, and the New Testament*, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp. 112-122.

74. See especially the new edition with new manuscripts by V. BOUDON-MILLOT (ed.), *Galien: Introduction générale. Sur l'ordre de ses propres livres. Sur ses propres livres. Que l'excellent médecin est aussi philosophe* (vol. 1), Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2007. I comment on it in my article cited above: CLIVAZ, *The Prose Writer* (n. 71).

75. See PARKER, *Through a Screen Darkly* (n. 18), p. 402: “The forms in which the text is found are only approximations to what we are looking for. I do not mean that the texts we are creating are necessarily superior to earlier creations. It is more significant that they are the texts that we need to create”.

76. C.S. PEIRCE, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, vol. 1, ed. N. HOUSER, et al., Bloomington, IN – Indianapolis, IN, Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 52.

77. The free and self-managed encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* was started by Jimmy Wales and published by Larry Sanger (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_wikipedia). 15th January 2001 also saw the birth of *Nupedia*, an online encyclopaedia controlled by experts (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nupedia>). *Nupedia* ceased in 2003, because its *wiki* version, *Wikipedia*, was more successful. The term *wiki* designates a kind of website that allows visitors to add, delete, edit the content (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>). Individuals as well as professors, all users accept to be the collective guarantors of this knowledge. Even though disagreements have regularly occurred since *Wikipedia*'s launch, this self-managed encyclopaedia does not seem to have been the victim of anarchy in knowledge, but functions reasonably well (see Jim GILES, *Internet Encyclopaedias Go Head to Head*, in *Nature* 438 [2005] 900-901). The same is true of biblical studies (see T.D. HALVERSON, <http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=602>, last accessed 07/08/2010).

Internet are not monks sitting alone in front of a sheet of parchment or of paper. We are becoming a writing “wikicomunity”⁷⁸, as it is becoming evident even in NT textual criticism with projects for a new kind of online interactive *apparatus criticus*. One can look, for example, at the online “Textual Criticism Chart Timesaver”, managed by Dan Wallace. After paying a few dollars’ subscription, it is possible to add details that have been gleaned from manuscripts to a shared apparatus. The purpose of the website is “to eliminate the guesswork and correct the inaccuracies, enabling you to have a chart of accurate data from which you can begin to make your text-critical decisions”⁷⁹. Such an idea corresponds to the concept of reader-author described by Chartier in 2001⁸⁰. The “Virtual Manuscript Room”, produced by Birmingham and Münster, would like also to integrate a kind of interactive apparatus⁸¹. These projects of interactive *apparatus criticus* raise questions concerning the form of the next edition of the Greek New Testament⁸², in other words, the online NA²⁸ accompanying the printed NA²⁸: the *INTF* website describes it as “completing” the printed edition⁸³. In 2003, David Parker announced that it will offer an interactive *apparatus criticus* in which the kind of information visible will be partly controlled by the user. ... In the digital edition, the transcription of the verse will be available, and the user will be able to scrutinize the editorial decisions”⁸⁴.

At the moment, the prototype of the online NA²⁸ does not offer a “wiki” apparatus or a “wiki” dimension, even if this is envisaged for the future, as Ulrich Schmid says in a forthcoming article: “We should [...] conceive of the fully integrated digital edition as an interactive platform encompassing additional modules and specific applications that allow the integration of usergenerated content, making for the fully interactive

78. See previous note for an explanation of the “wiki” concept.

79. <http://www.nttextualcriticism.com/About.aspx>, last accessed 07/08/2010. It is difficult to evaluate this enterprise yet since it is in its infancy.

80. See CHARTIER, *Les métamorphoses du livre* (n. 33), pp. 16-17, cited above, see n. 37.

81. Thanks are due to David Parker for this information. Website: <http://vnr.bham.ac.uk/>, last accessed 07/08/2010.

82. As Epp points out, the International Greek New Testament Project “did not intend to produce a critical text but only a comprehensive apparatus of variants that would facilitate the subsequent construction of a critical text” (EPP, *It's All about Variants* [n. 8], p. 276).

83. See <http://www.uni-muenster.de/INTF/Projects.html> (last accessed 07/08/2010): “Currently the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland is being prepared. Its traditional publication in print will be complemented by a digital part. [...] The Nestle-Aland [28th edition] is being digitised and prepared for publication on CD-ROM. It is planned to link the text and apparatus of the digitised Nestle-Aland on the CD to the additional transcripts and their apparatus published on the Internet”.

84. PARKER, *Through a Screen Darkly* (n. 18), p. 404.

digital edition”⁸⁵. Research surely needs some time here in order for a “fully interactive digital edition” to be taken on board. As David Parker has rightly pointed out, among the changes being effected in the online NT edition, “perhaps the most important point is that the era of a critically reconstructed text with an *apparatus criticus* as it has been known is over. Editions will pay greater attention to individual witnesses, providing transcriptions and images of them”⁸⁶. As in the other fields in Art and Humanities, NT scholars are faced here with the emerging and maturing role of Internet readers, taking over the culture of printing which empowered the author. To adapt ourselves to such a change, we need to undertake some joint thinking about what kind of NT critical text will arise in the years to come⁸⁷.

ii) *Other Possibilities and Issues in a “Wiki-culture”*

Let’s start our thinking with the analysis and proposal made by Epp in 2007. His analysis suggests a double purpose for NT textual criticism: “1) searching for the earliest attainable text (not the autographa) and 2) disclosing, through narrative textual criticism, the theological, liturgical, and ethical contexts of textual variants in the life of the church”⁸⁸. In terms of a critical edition, he does not suggest something that would replace the NA but another kind of edition, “a variant-conscious edition”, “in which significant variants directly confront the reader. [...] Simply stated, the baseline text (at the top of the page) also would carry, below each line, the major, meaningful variants in each variation-unit. An apparatus, in the customary form, would provide the attestation for the variants displayed and also would include minor variants”⁸⁹. This time, the baseline would be the D-text, whose existence in the 2nd century is assumed by Epp⁹⁰. He thus hopes “1) to move scholars away from thinking of the text as a single line of ‘correct’ or assured text, or (worse) as the complete or exclusive text of the New Testament, and 2) to allow readers to grasp visually the several possibilities in a variation unit so as to gain an insight into the underlying narratives”⁹¹. Epp offers some helpful

85. See SCHMID, *Transmitting the New Testament Online* (n. 18).

86. PARKER, *Through a Screen Darkly* (n. 18), p. 402.

87. A conference with a seminar on the digital online New Testament will take place at the University of Lausanne in August 2011: “Readings and Literacies: From Ancient Manuscripts to the Digital Era”; www.unil.ch/digitalera2011.

88. EPP, *It’s All about Variants* (n. 8), p. 287.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

ideas, but in my opinion they need to be pushed a little further in order to take account of an important omission in Epp's article: the digital and hyper-textual dimensions.

One thing seems clear to me: in the next decade, the only complete critical edition of the Greek New Testament will be an online one, as the *INTF* website already announces⁹². Paper versions will continue to exist, but without all the possibilities and information offered by an online version. Indeed, researchers will cease to be satisfied with an apparatus restricted by the limits of the printed page. Only "the electronic papyrus", or the hypertext, will provide the means to put all the available information in an infinite apparatus, constructed by means of hyperlinks. With an online critical edition, I hope that it could also be possible to have a main baseline, reconstructed text (for example, the Alexandrian-type), that could be changed in a click for another baseline, reconstructed text (another text-type, and so on). With just a few more clicks, it should be possible to compare the baseline text with real manuscript versions (papyri, Codex Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Bezae⁹³, and so forth), as well as NT manuscripts in different ancient languages, as Ulrich Schmid proposes⁹⁴. The online NA²⁸ prototype already offers now the possibility to see at a click the transcript of the NT papyri and of some other important NT manuscripts⁹⁵: it should also be possible to get access to a digital photograph of the manuscripts, as the example of Jn 1,34 and P⁷⁵ will show below. Such links to photographs of manuscripts could be made quite easily, since the *INTF* offers a "Virtual Manuscript Room" for viewing and searching for digital manuscripts⁹⁶, and which includes a

92. See n. 83 above.

93. Research now requires access to manuscripts as such, as shown for example by the edition of Luke's writings in Codex Bezae (the Greek text with a parallel Catalan translation): J. RIUS-CAMPS – J. READ-HEIMERDINGER (eds.), *Lluc: Demonstració a Teòfil (Evangeli i Fets dels Apòstols segons el Còdex Beza)*, Barcelona, Fragmenta Editorial, 2009 (English translation to be published by Brepols, forthcoming).

94. See SCHMID, *Transmitting the New Testament Online* (n. 18): "For a digital edition of the New Testament it is entirely conceivable to assign the Latin or Syriac versions to different groups of specialists. As long as each group follows the same data scheme we can work simultaneously in Germany on the Greek manuscripts, in the United Kingdom on the Latin material and in the Netherlands on the Syriac and still exchange our data and feed them into a larger structure that encompasses them all". Schmid reminds us that this was already attempted by Walton in his *Polyglot* (London, 1655): "In Walton's Polyglot one could compare the Syriac as an integral consecutive text. In the IGNTP's edition, however, a Syriac witness has been dissolved into a series of Greek virtualisations of the actual Syriac text. This is a one-way ticket".

95. See <http://nttranscripts.uni-muenster.de/AnaServer?NTtranscripts+0+start.anv>, last accessed 07/08/2010.

96. <http://intf.uni-muenster.de/vmr/NTVMR/IndexNTVMR.php>, last accessed 07/08/2010.

digital numbering of the manuscripts alongside the usual GA numbering⁹⁷. If it becomes possible to compare the baseline text with real manuscript photographs, this will highlight what has only too often been forgotten: a critical edition is a reconstructed text⁹⁸, according to some point of view or other. This reference text always belongs to a period of history, as has long been recognized: Codex Sinaiticus represents the New Testament *according to the Sinaiticus community*, those who also read also the *Shepherd* and the *Epistle to Barnabas* as Scripture; the *textus receptus* represents the New Testament *according to the textus receptus community*, those who followed the majority texts; and the NA²⁷ represents the New Testament *according to Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland*, in discussion with some other scholars and in a modern context. There has never existed an edition of the New Testament without an “according to”, or, in other words, without a cover – the symbol of institutionalisation and power – to hold the folios or pages together.

What will be the “cover” – that is, metaphorically speaking the judging authority – that will moderate an online version of the Greek New Testament, with its different baseline texts, various manuscripts and an infinite apparatus that can always be added to? We already know that there are various institutions involved in the field of textual NT criticism nowadays: in Münster, Birmingham, Frisco (Texas) and elsewhere. We also know that, every day, variants are discussed online in blogs and forums⁹⁹. In consequence, it could be possible that in the end researchers would create a wide-ranging wiki-apparatus, one that could be modified by users and controlled by moderators. As Parker asserts, “the result, I suggest, will be a weakening of the status of standard editions, and with that a change in the way in which users of texts perceive their tasks”¹⁰⁰. In an online critical edition of the New Testament, main variants could lead, by a click of the mouse, to a discussion forum, with digital images of the main manuscripts. If anyone is skeptical or fearful of such a possibility, I would point out that there are already signs that a “wiki-culture” in NT textual criticism has arrived, as shown by the “Textual Criticism Chart Timesaver” project, and also the two next examples.

97. <http://intf.uni-muenster.de/vmr/NTVMR/ListeHandschriften.php>, last accessed 07/08/2010.

98. In the same sense, see PARKER, *Through a Screen Darkly* (n. 18), p. 402 and his criticism of Q that follows (p. 405).

99. See n. 23 above.

100. PARKER, *Through a Screen Darkly* (n. 18), p. 404.

First, P¹²⁵ was initially available on the *Wikipedia* page of NT papyri several months before it appeared in the list of references of the *INTF*: the wiki-culture was faster than the institutional academic culture in the spread of this information¹⁰¹. Secondly, the online NA²⁸ prototype¹⁰² recently changed a variant of P^{75*} at Jn 1,34, which could be an example of an online change brought about by scholarly debate, as a trace of indirect “wiki” interaction. At least until 31st October 2008, the online NA²⁸ prototype proposed to read with certainty (in bold font) ὁ υἱὸς ὁ ἐκλεκτός at Jn 1,34 in P^{75*}, a reading indicated by Timo Flink to have been given to him by Marie-Luise Lakmann¹⁰³. In his article of 2005¹⁰⁴, Flink gives the link to this reading in the online NA²⁸ prototype, but the content of this website page on Jn 1,34 has since changed¹⁰⁵. What happened? In a presentation that I gave at the annual SBL 2008, I noted that the online NA had incorporated the variant ὁ υἱὸς ὁ ἐκλεκτός without any wider scholarly discussion¹⁰⁶. I have no idea what discussions or procedures took place afterwards, but since at least 1st October 2009 the website page proposes to read at Jn 1,34 ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ [4-5] in P^{75*}, with [4-5] in red [here grey] meaning “uncertain letters”. This change is a significant one, because in place of a “sure” ὁ after υἱός, there is now a “sure” τοῦ after υἱός, while ἐκλεκτός has disappeared.

As a reader, I feel uncomfortable about a “sure” that can so easily change. The previous webpage with ὁ υἱὸς ὁ ἐκλεκτός at Jn 1,34 in P^{75*}

101. See “Die Handschriftenliste” on the *INTF* website. Since I pointed out to Münster in August 2009 the absence of P¹²⁵ from this list, and the existence of the new P¹²⁶, the website has been totally transformed, and the list offers also a new numbering for manuscripts (see below, section III).

102. <http://nttranscripts.uni-muenster.de/>, last accessed 07/08/2010. The homepage specifies that “the New Testament Transcripts Prototype currently features the writings of the complete New Testament with transcripts of between 2 and 26 manuscripts and an apparatus based on them, collated against the standard scholarly edition of the Greek New Testament (Nestle-Aland, 27th edition). As with any prototype, you should use it with caution”.

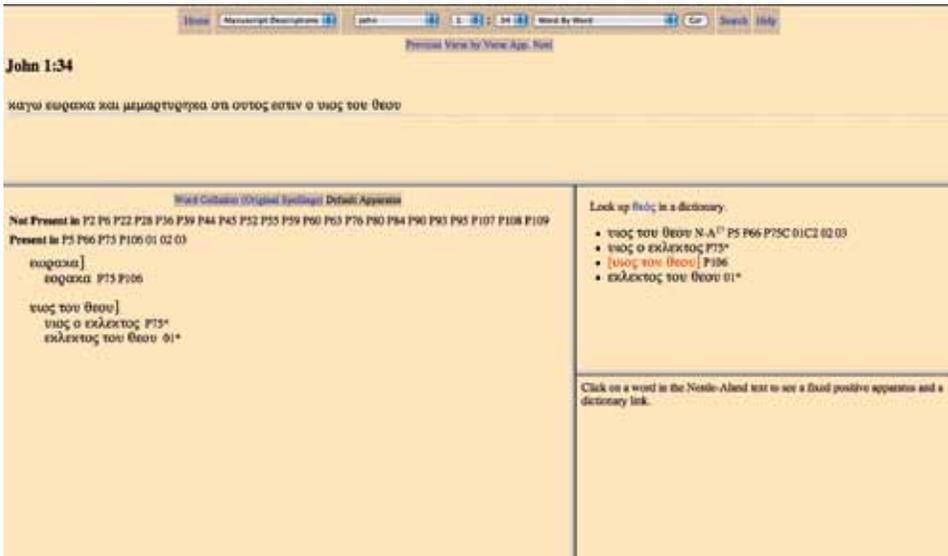
103. See T. FLINK, *Son and Chosen: A Text-critical Study of John 1,34*, in *FilNeo* 18 (2005) 85-109, p. 98, n. 32. There is no trace of such a reading in M.-L. LAKMANN, *Papyrus Bodmer XIV-XV (P⁷⁵): Neue Fragmente*, in *Museum Helveticum* 64 (2007) 22-41. See also T. FLINK, *New Variant Reading of John 1:34*, in *Andrews University Seminary Series* 45 (2007) 191-193.

104. See FLINK, *Son and Chosen* (n. 103), p. 86, n. 4.

105. [http://nttranscripts.uni-muenster.de/AnaServer?NTtranscripts+0+start anv](http://nttranscripts.uni-muenster.de/AnaServer?NTtranscripts+0+start anv;); then look for Jn 1,34 (last accessed 07/08/2010).

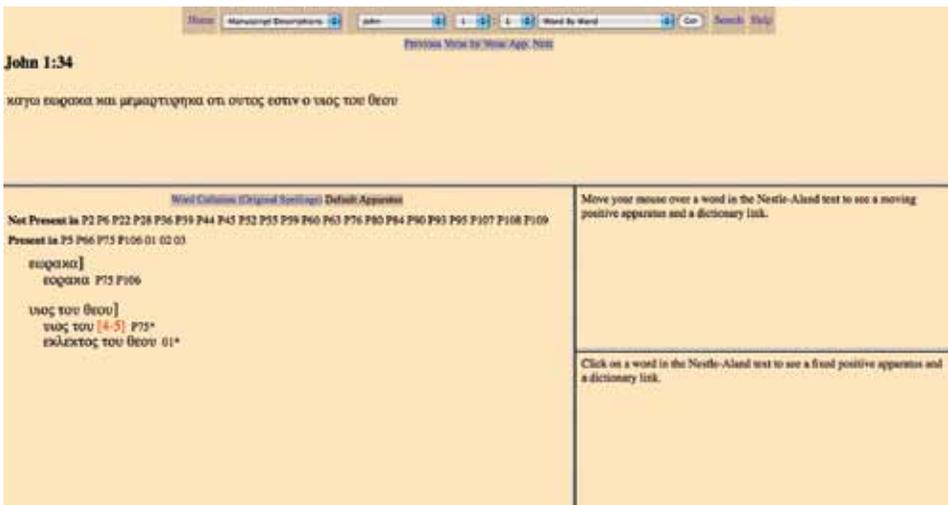
106. C. CLIVAZ, *Reconsidering P⁷⁵ in the Context of a Varied Egyptian tradition* (unpublished paper, SBL Annual Meeting, Boston 2008). The content of this paper has been incorporated in various publications.

is unfortunately no longer accessible, but I kept a screenshot on my computer:



Nestle-Aland²⁸ Online Prototype: 18th November 2008

In October 2009, the website page looked like this:



Nestle-Aland²⁸ Online Prototype: 1st October 2009

This example illustrates what Eco said: the “original” (or previous) text has a tendency to disappear in the digital world¹⁰⁷. NT research needs digital archives of the previous website pages of the online NA²⁸, in order to be able to write the history of a variant in the digital culture, as it did it in the printed culture. Regarding the specific case of Jn 1,34, since P⁷⁵ is unavailable as long as the Vatican library is closed¹⁰⁸, more details will have to be awaited for the case to be decided. It is clear from the photographs included in the original edition¹⁰⁹ that something stands in Jn 1,34 before ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ in P^{75C}: we need now new photographs available online of P⁷⁵ – and maybe also the help of *multispectral imaging*¹¹⁰; the transcript of P⁷⁵ given in the online NA²⁸ prototype is not sufficient here.

Last but not least, one can note that neither of the website pages of Jn 1,34 in the online NA²⁸ prototype (November 2008 and October 2009) mention P¹²⁰, which presents Jn 1,34 with an uncertain reading¹¹¹. In an article of 2009¹¹², Tze-Min Quek mentioned P¹²⁰ but not the variant of P^{75*}. In other words, in October 2009 no written or online support presented a complete view of the variants of Jn 1,34, as was pointed out at the papyri conference in Lausanne in October 2009. Since at least February 2010, the online NA²⁸ prototype mentions P¹²⁰ in Jn 1,34 with υἱος ο του Θεου in black font:

107. See ECO – ORIGGI, *Auteurs et autorité* (n. 40), p. 227.

108. According to Scott Charlesworth, P⁷⁵ will be inaccessible until 2011 (see <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/textualcriticism/message/3133>, last accessed 07/08/2010). For a recent publication on P⁷⁵, see J.M. ROBINSON, *Fragments from the Cartonage of P⁷⁵*, in *HTR* 101 (2008) 231-252.

109. See V. MARTIN – R. KASSER (eds.), *Papyrus Bodmer XV: Évangile de Jean, chap. 1-15*, Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1961 (2000), plate 63.

110. See in this volume the article by M. THEOPHILOS, *Multispectral Imaging of Greek Papyrus Fragments from Oxyrhynchus*.

111. See J.K. ELLIOTT, *Four New Papyri Containing the Fourth Gospel and Their Relevance for the Apparatus Criticus*, in *JTS* 59 (2008) 674-678, p. 676: “P¹²⁰ reads ο υἱος ο [...]. The final omicron, however, is not very clear”.

112. See T.-M. QUEK, *A Text-Critical Study of John 1,34*, in *NTS* 55 (2009) 22-34. While Quek wisely avoids rushing into adducing theological intentions to explain the history of this variant, she is nevertheless quick to state that P¹⁰⁶ supports ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ Θεοῦ, and P¹²⁰ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ (p. 23). But we have seen in n. 113 above that Elliott reads instead ο υἱος ο – but without certainty – in P¹²⁰; regarding P¹⁰⁶, he prudently says that it “probably” supports ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ Θεοῦ (see J.K. ELLIOTT, *Five New Papyri of the New Testament*, in *NT* 41 [1999] 209-213, p. 210), whereas the online NA reads as uncertain in P¹⁰⁶ υἱος του Θεου (in red font). All these elements, together with the absence of the existing but unclear variant in P^{75*}, prevent Quek’s study from being truly “updated” (QUEK, *A Text-Critical Study*, p. 22).

Nestle-Aland²⁸ Online Prototype: 10th February 2010

Regarding Elliott's remark¹¹³, pointing the omicron in P¹²⁰ is probably not sufficient here; this omicron should be indicated in red ink [here grey]. Such an example underlines that a scholarly "wiki-approach" could usefully be adopted here in an online NA, with a hyperlink to *a forum of discussion* about Jn 1,34, as well as an "archive" rubric, keeping track of the evolution of the online *apparatus criticus*. It will be difficult for scholarly work to be continued accurately if there is no possibility of maintaining an accessible record of the various steps taken by research, or of the individual contributions to the debate.

To summarize this part of the article, first in section a) it was pointed out that the notion of the "original text" or a "unique text" of the Greek New Testament is changing through digital and internet approaches, and that there is no need to engage in a unilateral attack on "postmodern skepticism" here. Such an evolution belongs to a general modification of the perception of an "original text" in the digital era¹¹⁴. In section b), it was shown how a hypertext culture makes a multivalent critical edition

113. See n. 113??? above.

114. I suggested in another article that Western history should be seen as having entered a new era, the digital era (see C. CLIVAZ, "Je laisse de côté la question de savoir si l'historiographie relève ou non de cette intelligence narrative" [Ricaeur 1992]: Ricaeur, White et le retour de la question du réel, in *A Contrario*, forthcoming).

of the New Testament feasible, with some baseline texts and the possibility of reading the text manuscript by manuscript, with photographs and transcripts and with a wiki-apparatus. An “archive” rubric and a forum of discussion should allow the memory of the history of a variant to be preserved. The online “critical edition of the New Testament” could thus begin to be a live, developing text, which would be fed into by the cooperation of scholars around the world and controlled by the moderation of some recognized academic institution.

III. POPYRI, THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND THE BLURRING OF CATEGORIES

1. *New Testament Papyri among Others: Classification and Numbering*

As the first paragraph of this article shows, a single papyrus can be seen from different points of view. For papyrologists, P⁷⁵ is called “*P. Bod. XIV-XV*” and belongs to the famous collection of Martin Bodmer, even though it has been sold and is now in the Vatican library¹¹⁵. Both labels arise from the diversity of fields of study, and the separation between them seems to be reproduced in digital terms: in the *LDAB*, P⁷⁵ is numbered 2895 and 10075 in the new digital numbering by the *INTF*. Neither numbering makes any mention of the term “papyrus”¹¹⁶, or of its location in a collection such as “Bodmer”: in the online world, everybody can see that a manuscript is a papyrus when it is accompanied by a digital photograph; in the same way, its physical location and its belonging to a collection matter less, since it is available online. It is also clear that P⁷⁵ becomes quite anonymous in the *LDAB* with the number 2895, a denomination that scholars are beginning to use¹¹⁷, whereas the number “10075” keeps the memory of the history of P⁷⁵ in NT research alive¹¹⁸. The *LDAB* itself belongs to “Trismegistos”, an online platform of text and inscription databases, dedicated to “Hermes-Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom and writing”, that aims “to surmount barriers of

115. P⁷⁵ joined his younger brother, Codex B, on 22nd November 2006, according to the Italian newspaper *The Roman Observer* (see S.J. VOICU, *Bodmer Papyrus: History Becomes Reality*, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 7th February 2007, p. 8).

116. In the digital numbering of the *INTF*, the series “10000” is reserved for papyri (“20000” for majuscules, etc). So the number indicates the information that the manuscript is a papyrus, but only for readers in the know.

117. See, for example, D. STOEKL BEN EZRA, *Weighing the Parts: A Papyrological Perspective on the Parting of the Ways*, in *NT 51* (2009) 168-186, p. 175, n. 28.

118. In the digital numbering of the *INTF*, P¹ becomes “10001”, etc.

language and discipline in the study of late period Egypt and the Nile valley”, crossing the frontiers “between languages, writing surfaces and types” of texts¹¹⁹.

We have here a good example of the way in which the means of writing and ideas are developing in synergy (see II.2.a). On the one hand, the digital revolution causes anyway the blurring of the distinctions between textual genres and their identifying markers, as Roger Chartier has commented¹²⁰. On the other hand, the *Trismegistos* project reinforces this effect in corresponding to Umberto Eco’s analysis concerning the common features shared by the Second Sophistic and our contemporary age. For Eco, a Hermetic or Gnostic tendency reaches its peak during both periods: the long history of Western thought could be seen as the history “of ideas of ‘secret’ meanings, encoded in language in ways which escape the attention of all but the initiated few”¹²¹. This tendency can be symbolically represented by the “ambiguous and volatile” figure of Hermes – “father of all the arts but also God of robbers”:

In the myth of Hermes we find the negation of the principle of identity, of non-contradiction, and of the excluded middle, and the causal chains wind back on themselves in spirals: the ‘after’ precedes the ‘before’, the god knows no spatial limits and may, in different shapes, be in different places at the same time. Hermes is triumphant in the second century after Christ. The second century is a period of political order and peace, and all the peoples of the empire are apparently united by a common language and culture¹²².

The *Trismegistos* project, in its desire “to surmount barriers of language and discipline [...] between writing surfaces and types of texts”, confirms the effect of the digital revolution as well as Eco’s epistemological analysis: a synergy is taking place between ideas and the support of writing. But what are the potential effects of such a phenomenon with regard to NT manuscripts? Will it be possible and useful to maintain in a digital world the hermetic distinction existing between P⁷⁵ and *P. Bod. XIV-XV*, reproduced by the digital numbers 2895 (*LDAB*) and 10075 (*INTF*)? The situation could become particularly confusing, for example in the case of P¹²⁶, which is numbered 10126 according to the digital

119. See <http://www.trismegistos.org/about.php>, last accessed 07/08/2010.

120. See CHARTIER, *Les métamorphoses du livre* (n. 33), pp. 12-14.

121. S. COLLINI, *Introduction: Interpretation terminable and interminable*, in ID. (ed.), *Interpretation and Overinterpretation: Umberto Eco with Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler, Christine Brooke-Rose* (Tanner Lectures in Human Values), Cambridge – New York, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 1-21, p. 9.

122. U. ECO, *Interpretation and History*, in COLLINI (ed.), *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (n. 121), 23-43, p. 29.

numbering of the *INTF*, and 10009 according to the *LDAB*. In my opinion, it is a matter of urgency for NT textual critics to reconsider classification and categories, now when the boundaries between fields are shifting, with the attendant promises and risks, as I will go on to discuss.

Reflection on the categories and classifications used in NT textual criticism was profitably initiated by Stanley Porter in 2006¹²³. He suggested keeping the GA numbering, which offers many advantages¹²⁴, while establishing a second classification into two categories, the first with the “continuous-text NT manuscripts, whether they be papyri, majuscules, or minuscules”, and the second with “manuscripts for which there is a doubt as to their continuous nature but that are manuscripts of varying degrees of relevance to establishing the NT text”¹²⁵. This second category would allow for the inclusion of the apocryphal gospel papyri assigned to early dates, such as *P.Egerton 2*, or NT texts on amulets, magical/talisman documents, excerpts in liturgical texts, or disputed texts such as 7Q5¹²⁶. A very important door is opened with this suggestion: Porter demonstrates clearly the limitations created by the otherwise useful GA classification. Nevertheless, I will make two comments, to take things a step further.

First, Porter does not explain how to combine and apply the two categories in practical terms in research: with a double numbering for every manuscript, would not the labelling of the papyri, which already have at least four different numbering systems, be complicated even further? The best way forward seems here to make use of the facility of digital databases. In an online database, it will be possible to encode manuscripts with the GA number and according to Porter’s category 1 or 2 at the same time, as well as including other parameters (support, location, and so on); it could then be possible to search online NT papyri belonging to 1 or 2, etc. At this point, a decision needs to be taken by NT research to my mind: the *INTF* is just now in the process of adopting digital numbers for the NT manuscripts, which is an indispensable step, but why not choose the *LDAB* numbers? It is clear that with “10009”, there is no explicit link with the number 126 of P¹²⁶, whereas this link is explicitly maintained with the “10126” ID indicated by the *INTF* website for P¹²⁶. But if NT

123. S.E. PORTER, *Textual Criticism in the Light of Diverse Textual Evidence for the Greek New Testament: An Expanded Proposal*, in KRAUS – NICKLAS (eds.), *New Testament Manuscripts* (n. 47), 305-337. The suggestion was already made by PORTER, *Why So Many Holes* (2003).

124. See PORTER, *Textual Criticism* (n. 123), pp. 307-308.

125. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 314, and pp. 315-336 for various examples.

research misses this opportunity to adopt finally a language in common with Classical Studies, we will also lose many new heuristic possibilities, such as searching across more than one database at a time.

What is at stake here, at a more fundamental level, is the question of the barriers between disciplines and the option in the end to think in terms of “NT papyri/manuscripts among others”. My second comment in response to Porter is, indeed, that he continues to think exclusively within the limits of NT manuscripts, or inside the limits of the materials offering NT texts/ fragments/quotations. But NT research also needs tools that allow one to know, for example, not only that P⁷⁸ could have been an amulet¹²⁷ and is a non-continuous NT manuscript, but also to know that amulets with Iliad’s verses existed¹²⁸. This element could modify the historical evaluation that a scholar may make concerning NT amulets, as well as concerning the links between “magic” and specific texts in late Antiquity. Here again, we need collaboration between the *LDAB* and the emerging ID numbers for NT manuscripts. Exchange of knowledge would go, of course, in both directions, as the next part will underline.

2. Reflections Based on P¹²⁶ and P¹²

The examples of P¹² and P¹²⁶ also show that we need to overcome too rigid a separation between Christian and non-Christian texts, and between literary, semi-literary and private documents, by choosing to link the GA numbering with the *LDAB* digital numbering. If NT research does not dare to “cross the Rubicon”, in the end it will even miss NT papyri themselves, as the case of P¹²⁶ illustrates.

a) P¹²⁶ and the Question of Classification

In 2003, the Papyrological Institute in Florence¹²⁹ announced the identification of a fragment of papyrus containing Heb 13,12-13.19-20. It was edited in 2008¹³⁰ with the label *PSI 1497 (LDAB 10009)* by Guido

127. See NICKLAS, *Zur historischen und theologischen Bedeutung* (n. 5), p. 149.

128. See *BGU 1026 and P. Amh. 26*, translated and presented by R. BURNET, *L'Égypte ancienne à travers les papyrus: Vie quotidienne*, Paris, Flammarion, 2003, pp. 182-183.

129. See C. PERNIGOTTI, *Notizie relative allo stato attuale del XV volume dei Papiri della Società Italiana: I papiri letterari*, in *Comunicazioni dell'Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli"* 5 (2003) 61-72, p. 69.

130. See G. BASTIANINI (ed.), *1497. NT Hebr. 13:12-13; 19-20 (PSI Papiri Greci e Latini, XV)*, Florence, Istituto papirologico “G. Vitelli”, 2008, 171-72; see Table XXXIV for photographs.

Bastianini¹³¹. In 2009, it was given the Gregory-Aland number P¹²⁶, after I informed the *INTF* at Münster about its existence. I have presented it in a short note, with its two main peculiarities (the order of Hebrews in this codex and a unique variant in Heb 13,12)¹³². It was while looking at a papyrus about Sappho in the *PSI* 15th volume that by chance I came across *PSI* 1497. P¹²⁶ could have easily continued to be ignored by NT scholars because it was submerged in the 15th *PSI* volume, in a list of “literary and para-literary texts”, between astrological or magic texts (*PSI* 1494-1496) and fragments of Hesiod and Homer (*PSI* 1498-1499)¹³³. The preceding *PSI* volume was published 52 years earlier, and up to that point in this series biblical texts were always published at the beginning of the literary texts¹³⁴. Eldon Epp points out that the Oxyrhynchus series is in the habit of presenting the theological or NT texts first, a custom that could be questioned today¹³⁵. As AnneMarie Luijendijk showed, when Grenfell and Hunt started their adventure, they were guided by the desire to find “Christian texts” among the ruins of Oxyrhynchus¹³⁶.

Over the last half-century, the status of the New Testament has changed drastically in Europe, as the example of the place of a biblical text in the latest *PSI* volume illustrates. It would seem that “New Testament” means “Early Christianity” for many people today: in the eyes of European contemporary culture, P¹²⁶ is just one “Christian papyrus”¹³⁷ among others,

131. *PSI Papiri Greci e Latini*, XV, p. VI.

132. See C. CLIVAZ, *A New NT Papyrus: P¹²⁶ (PSI 1497)*, in *Early Christianity* 1, 158-162.

133. *PSI Papiri Greci e Latini*, XV, pp. IX-X.

134. The intermediary fascicules published in 1966 and 1979 do not contain any biblical texts.

135. See E.J. EPP, *New Testament Papyri and the Transmission of the New Testament*, in BOWMAN, *et al.* (eds.), *Oxyrhynchus* (n. 72), 315-331, p. 316: the position of theological papyri “as the first published papyri from Oxyrhynchus, accompanied by a parchment fragment of the Gospel of Mark as I 3, set the pattern for the entire Oxyrhynchus series in placing first in each volume any theological texts, followed by classical texts, and then by documentary material. Today, classicists and scholars of religion may wonder about the appropriateness of this order for the theological and the classical literary texts, though convention would have it that the documentary papyri properly occupy third place”.

136. A.M. LUIJENDIJK, *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (HTS, 60), Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2008, pp. 6-8, esp. p. 8, n. 18. See also F.G. KENYON, *The Story of the Bible*, London, John Murray, ²1964, p. 113: “It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all these discoveries and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God”. Quoted by WEGNER, *Introduction (reference?)*, p. 25.

137. This is the name given to the sole Christian papyrus present in the three volumes of the Geneva papyri (*P.Gen.* III 125). The fourth volume will contain several Christian papyri.

even though it is of special significance for NT scholars. Seduced by the number of Christian papyri at Oxyrhynchus, NT research could easily forget that it is entirely possible to describe a city in Egypt in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE without finding any Christian traces, whereas evidence of pagan cults and Homer is present¹³⁸. Bagnall is surely right to encourage a more realistic assessment of the possible number of early Christian documents to be found in Egypt¹³⁹. In consequence, it is probably time to recognize that it was pride that caused NT papyri to be designated simply “papyri” (P¹², P⁷⁵, P¹²⁶, etc.), as if they were the only existing papyri. Adopting the *LDAB* numbering in the field of NT studies requires the prior acknowledgement that they are “papyri in context”, and the need for a common language with Classical scholars has to be acknowledged: at the moment, P¹²⁶ is not indicated as such in the *LDAB*; it is present, but only as 10009 or *PSI* 1497. This example shows clearly what NT research could gradually lose if it fails to collaborate with the Classical digital world. In an online database, the GA numbering could perfectly well be kept alongside a digital number identification. When Guido Bastianini presents *PSI* 1497, he also adds the *LDAB* number (10009)¹⁴⁰: I hope that NT textual criticism will not miss this opportunity to affirm its solidarity with Classical Studies, while keeping its GA numbering.

As the example of P¹²⁶ illustrates, categories are currently shifting in the Western academic world and it has to be noted that this shift is not specific to “Christian” parameters. Just as the gradual weakening of the notion of the “original text” affects not only biblical culture, but also the entire Classical culture, the blurring of barriers between genre classifications also affects the wider field of Antiquity. One of the more important displacements of categories is evidenced in the recognition of the boundary between literary and documentary papyri. As Eldon Epp wisely recognized, “while most of us quite legitimately place a high value on literary materials, during recent years have we not witnessed the demise of interpreting literary texts in splendid isolation, as if these texts originated, existed, and still stand on their own as largely self-sufficient and self-explanatory entities?”¹⁴¹. AnneMarie Lujendijk broke down this isolation by presenting the first monograph devoted to the Christian documentary literature at Oxyrhynchus, and skilfully demonstrated that “doing history

138. See P. SCHUBERT, *Philadelphie: Un village égyptien en mutation entre le II^e et le III^e siècle ap. J.-C.* (SBA, 34), Basel, Schwabe Verlag, 2007. For pagan cults, see p. 155, and for the reference to the *Iliad*, pp. 136, 138-142, 170.

139. See BAGNALL, *Early Christian Books* (n. 50), esp. p. 23.

140. See BASTIANINI (ed.), *1497. NT Hebr. 13:12-13; 19-20* (n. 130), p. 171.

141. EPP, *New Testament Papyri* (n. 135), p. 316.

from ‘the underside’ provides potential narratives from a variety of perspectives and creates a nuanced historiography through everyday situation”¹⁴². But so trained are we as scholars to think in “categories” that Luijendijk did not include a chapter about the literary Christian papyri at Oxyrhynchus in her first book, although about 40% of the New Testament papyri come from this city. Interaction – or its absence – between literary and documentary Christian papyri at Oxyrhynchus is nonetheless a topic explored by Luijendijk in her article in the present volume¹⁴³.

The same kind of comment could be addressed to Daniel Stoeckl who seeks to bring a balance to the recent perception of the “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity in Egypt¹⁴⁴ by exploring the Christian literary papyri from Egypt in the *LDAB*¹⁴⁵. Stoeckl prudently offers several *caveat*, and is especially aware that “these papyri are not, obviously, the remains of *one* library”¹⁴⁶, even if the *LDAB* creates this impression: having given this *caveat*, he does not hesitate to speak about a “virtual library”¹⁴⁷. His effort naturally remains dependent on the material available in the *LDAB*: lost manuscripts are lost. But documentary papyri should also be considered in such an inquiry, as shown by the highly interesting *P.Oxy.* 63.4365, a Christian¹⁴⁸ letter from the 4th century written to a woman about books. The books mentioned are Jewish apocrypha (*Jubilees* and *4 Ezra*), as stated by AnneMarie Luijendijk¹⁴⁹. This short note is not included at the moment in the *LDAB*, but it opens an incredible window onto the readings circulating among Christians as late as the 4th century. A document like this should not be omitted in an enquiry about the “parting of the ways”, for it compensates for the lost material and for the quantitative impression given by the *LDAB*: a qualitative view of the situation is also necessary in order to obtain a historical representation that is as thoroughly evaluated as possible¹⁵⁰.

142. LUIJENDIJK, *Greetings in the Lord* (n. 136), p. 234.

143. See A.M. LUIJENDIJK, *Reading the Gospel of Thomas at Oxyrhynchus: Book Rolls, Codices, and the New Testament Canon*, **reference**.

144. For my part, I would rather speak about “Judaisms and Christianities” for the first centuries in Egypt, at least for the 1st and 2nd centuries CE.

145. See STOECKL BEN EZRA, *Weighing the Parts* (n. 117), pp. 168-171, 171-172: “My central thesis is that it makes little or no sense to speak of Christianity as a *Jewish* group or as a form of *Judaism* from the late second century onward at the latest, at least in Egypt”.

146. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

147. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

148. LUIJENDIJK, *Greetings in the Lord* (n. 136), p. 72.

149. *Ibid.*

150. See also above (n. 55) the example of P²² considered as an “oddy” by Comfort: in papyrology, a unique testimony is never an abnormality. It is only a survivor.

The weakening of the boundary between the categories of documentary and literary papyri has just begun, and is very promising, as demonstrated by the private letter *BGU* 3.884: in my research on Lk 22,43-44, I read the work of a certain number of scholars who maintained that, in the “original text”, the Lukan Jesus could not have been sad or in anguish on the Mount of Olives. The reading of this private letter from the 1st century, where a real man expresses his sadness and anxiety (l. 5-7), thus represented a very important step in my research by helping me to destroy the fixed idea that every man in the 1st century dreamed of being a little Socrates, facing death or adversity without emotion¹⁵¹. To conclude this section III. 2, the Christian/NT papyrus *P.Amh.* 3abc (or P¹² for 3b) will serve as a perfect example for evaluating the digital blurring of categories.

b) P¹² in *LDAB*, or *P.Amh.* 3b with *P.Amh.* 3a and c

In the NA²⁷, it appears that P¹² only contains Heb 1,1, which leads Clare Rothschild, for example, not to take it into account as a document relevant to her enquiry about the circulation of Hebrews in Antiquity¹⁵². But if one considers that P¹² is only a part of *P.Amh.* 3, and if one tries to understand this papyrus as it is – a documentary and literary writing at one and the same time – it begins to “speak”, to offer information about the reading of Hebrews in its time. *P.Amh.* 3 was divided into three parts by the editors, Grenfell and Hunt¹⁵³: *P.Amh.* 3a is a private Christian letter written from Rome to the inhabitants of the Arsinoite nome, “who are asked to send money to Alexandria”¹⁵⁴, and dates from between

151. See CLIVAZ, *L'ange et la sueur de sang* (n. 10), p. 354.

152. See C.K. ROTHSCHILD, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon* (WUNT, 235), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2009, p. 146.

153. See B.P. GRENFELL – A.S. HUNT (eds.), *The Amherst Papyri. Part 1, The Ascension of Isaiah, and Other Theological Fragments*, London, Oxford University Press, 1900, pp. 28-31. Several editions appeared in subsequent years, notably the one by Ulrich WILCKEN (ed.), *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyruskunde. Band 1: Historischer Teil: Zweite Hälfte. Chrestomathie*, Leipzig – Berlin, Druck und Verlag von B.G. Teubner, 1912, pp. 152-154. For the private letter (3a), the latest edition, with an English translation, is by Musurillo (see H. MUSURILLO, *Early Christian Economy: A Reconsideration of P. Amherst 3a [= Wilken, Chrest. 126]*, in *Chronique d'Égypte* 31 [1956] 124-134); the only French translation is by Wessely (see C. WESSELY [ed.], *Les plus anciens monuments du Christianisme écrits sur papyrus*, vol. 2 (PO, XVIII/3), Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1924, pp. 124-126); the latest German translation is by P. GUYOT – R. KLEIN (eds.), *Das frühe Christentum bis zum Ende der Verfolgungen: Eine Dokumentation. Vol. 2, Die Christen in der heidnischen Gesellschaft* (Texte zur Forschung, 62), Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994, pp. 44-47; the latest Italian translation – from Musurillo's edition – is that by Naldini (see M. NALDINI, *Il cristianesimo in Egitto; Lettere private nei papyri dei secoli II-IV*, Fiesole, Nardini Editore, 1998, pp. 79-85).

154. K.W. CLARKE, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Greek New Testament Manuscripts in America*, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, p. 170.

264 and 282¹⁵⁵; *P. Amh.* 3b is P¹², Heb 1,1 written in the upper margin of the letter, but “in a later blacker ink and a more cursive hand than of the MS itself” (4th century)¹⁵⁶; *P. Amh.* 3c, “the verso, originally blank, was also used – probably by the writer of Heb 1:1. It contains a half-column (8 × 7.5), 16 lines, Gen 1:1-5 (versions of LXX and Aquila), and is still the oldest authority for these five verses”, according to Clarke¹⁵⁷. The evaluation of the hand of Heb 1,1 and Gen 1,1-5 varies considerably, depending on the scholars: Grenfell and Hunt consider that 3c is from a later hand than 3b, as Musurillo and Aland will later agree¹⁵⁸; Harnack thinks that 3b is from a hand contemporary with 3a, but does not comment on the hand of 3c¹⁵⁹. On the basis of their evaluation of the hands, Grenfell and Hunt separated *P. Amh.* 3 into three parts, a choice that still today affects its reading. Indeed, scholars often choose to present or comment on either the biblical texts or the private letter¹⁶⁰.

The “melting-pot” character of the document, heightened by its publication in three parts, so much surprised scholars that only Musurillo proposed a literary genre for Gen 1,1-5 on the verso and the marginal note of Heb 1,1: a “kind of amulet”, judging from the cut sides of the document¹⁶¹. There followed a counter-suggestion by Kurt Aland, who

155. The matter of the dating was clarified by Adolf von Harnack, who recognized the name of the bishop Maximus of Alexandria (see A. VON HARNACK, *Zu den Amherst-Papyri*: Berlin 1900, in *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Philos.-hist. Kl.* [1900/2] 984-995, p. 991).

156. CLARKE, *A Descriptive Catalogue* (n. 154), p. 170.

157. *Ibid.*

158. See GRENFELL – HUNT (eds.), *The Amherst Papyri* (n. 153), p. 30; K. ALAND, in *Studien zur Überlieferung des Neuen Testaments und seines Textes* (ANTF, 2), Berlin – New York, de Gruyter, 1967, p. 111; MUSURILLO, *Early Christian Economy* (n. 153), p. 125.

159. HARNACK, *Zu den Amherst-Papyri* (n. 155), p. 993.

160. For Heb 1,1 or the biblical texts only (*P. Amh.* 3b or 3bc), see for example the GA numbering (P¹²); K. ALAND, *Repertorium der griechischen christlichen papyri. I, Biblische papyri* (PTS, 18), Berlin – New York, de Gruyter, 1976, p. 360; ROTHSCCHILD, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon* (n. 152), p. 146. For the letter only (*P. Amh.* 3a), see G. GHEDINI (ed.), *Lettere cristiane dai papiri greci del III e IV secolo* (Vita e pensiero), Milan, Presso l'amministrazione di Aegyptus, 1923, pp. 65-77; GUYOT – KLEIN (eds.), *Das frühe Christentum* (n. 153), pp. 44-47; E. KIESSLING (ed.), N° 9556, in *Sammelbuch Griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten*, vol. 6, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrasowitz, 1963, pp. 372-374; NALDINI, *Il cristianesimo in Egitto* (n. 153), pp. 79-85; WILCKEN (ed.), *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie* (n. 153), pp. 152-154. Jellicoe mentions the private letter and the text of Gen 1,1-5 (*P. Amh.* 3ac), but not Heb 1,1 (*P. Amh.* 3b); see S. JELlicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, p. 80). Other authors refer to the entire *P. Amh.* 3abc, including K. Aland in 1967 (see ALAND, *Studien zur Überlieferung* [n. 158], p. 111).

161. MUSURILLO, *Early Christian Economy* (n. 153), pp. 125-126: “The actual physical condition of the papyrus poses an interesting problem. Top and bottom margins are fairly well preserved; but the right and left sides show signs of having been cut from a

labelled it “a school exercise”, but without supporting discussion¹⁶². In the *LDAB*, *P.Amh.* 3 is represented with all its parts, but the description of its literary genre is quite confusing: “prose, bible, letter, amulet, phylacterion, magic”¹⁶³. It is, of course, not to be expected that an online database should offer more clarity than research has been able to provide, but such an inventory is not satisfactory. At this point, it becomes clear that collaboration between papyrologists of Classical and biblical fields is needed in order to try to answer the questions posed by Tobias Nicklas about this papyrus¹⁶⁴. In other (numerical) words, the common object “3475” in the *LDAB* could draw people from the culture of *P.Amh.* 3a and those from that of P¹² to undertake a joint enquiry concerning “3475”. Meanwhile, what I present here are just some elements from a New Testament and early Christianity point of view.

Both Harnack and Musurillo offered particularly insightful observations on this papyrus: Harnack found a way to date the private letter, and Musurillo is the only one to have considered the “object” as such, with its strange cut sides suggesting that it was possibly an amulet with Gen 1,1-5, and Heb 1,1 placed in the middle of the top side¹⁶⁵: I will come back below to this suggestion. Harnack also noted the variant of Heb 1,1 in P¹², τοῖς πατράσιν ἡμῶν, which is also known today in P⁴⁶ with the ἡμῶν as an addition to the text¹⁶⁶. In Harnack’s time, P⁴⁶ was not available and the German scholar was tempted to imagine that somebody in

longer strip with a sharp tool (thus mutilating cols. i and iii of our text). The resultant scrap is nearly square in shape, about 23.5x20.9 cm. [...]. The spacing of the Genesis text and its wide margins might be taken to suggest that the papyrus was kept folded and used as a kind of amulet”.

162. ALAND, *Repertorium* (n. 160), p. 360: “es handelt sich vielleicht um eine Schreibübung”.

163. See <http://www.trismegistos.org/LDAB/text.php?quick=3475>; last accessed 07/08/2010.

164. NICKLAS, *Zur historischen und theologischen Bedeutung* (n. 5), pp. 154-155: “Welchen Grund könnte es haben, sich Hebr 1.1 zu notieren? Ist der bereits vorhandene Text hier als ‘gebrauchtes’ Papier für neue Zwecke wiederverwertet? Was bedeutet dies dann aber für die ‘Qualität’ des Textzeugen? Andererseits: Worin könnte der Zweck der Zusammenstellung zweier griechischer Versionen von Gen 1.1-5 bestanden haben? Bilden textgeschichtliche Studien den Hintergrund eines derartigen Zueinander? Worin bestand ihr eigentlicher Hintergrund?”.

165. MUSURILLO, *Early Christian Economy* (n. 153), p. 126: “In fact, if the outer margins were folded over the center (that is, over the Genesis text), the verse from Hebrews on the recto would be visible on the top fold – and this may account for its peculiar position”.

166. Later, see also *pc a t v g^{ms} sy^p*. Harold Attridge considers that “it is an unnecessary correction disturbing the balance of the first two clauses and the alliterative effect of this clause” (H. ATTRIDGE, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Hermeneia], Philadelphia, PA, Fortress, 1989, p. 35).

Rome added the marginal note with ἡμῶν, attesting thus to an early Roman interpretation of Hebrews, a hypothesis that he finally rejected¹⁶⁷. The evidence of P⁴⁶ in Heb 1,1 together with P¹² allows the question to be reconsidered afresh. Indeed, P⁴⁶ attests to the fact that in Egypt somebody added ἡμῶν in Heb 1,1, at the very beginning of the 3rd century. The marginal note of *P.Amh.* 3b (P¹²) was written by another hand than *P.Amh.* 3a and consequently probably in Egypt, after the letter was received sometime at the end of the 3rd century¹⁶⁸. In my opinion, P¹² shows that the reading with ἡμῶν in Heb 1,1 had been received at least by some communities in Egypt since 200 CE. The appearance of ἡμῶν in P⁴⁶ and its presence in P¹² attests to the fact that the verse served as a “projective plane” for some early Christians in Egypt.

This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that one can observe an emphasis on Heb 1,1 in early Egyptian Christianity by Clement of Alexandria. Clement has two important pieces of information, as I will demonstrate: first, the opening expression πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως in Heb 1,1 suggests inspiration, and even Homeric inspiration, in the 2nd century; secondly, the link between Heb 1,1 and Genesis 1 is very ancient in early Christian exegesis. Starting with the point of the divine and/or Homeric inspiration; Clement alludes to Heb 1,1 by taking up its opening expression, πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως, five times in the *Stromateis*¹⁶⁹. This expression seems to have had a special impact on Hellenistic culture in the 2nd century CE. Attridge pointed out that we have the same terms in Philo¹⁷⁰; however, Philo uses only similar but not identical terms and he gives them a negative sense – for example, about the instability of our perceptions¹⁷¹. But the Sophist Maximus of Tyra (2nd century CE) also links the two terms in two passages of his *Dissertations*. For him, the senses function πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως: “The human soul has two instruments of perception, the one simple, which we call intellect, the

167. HARNACK, *Zu den Amherst-Papyri* (n. 155), p. 993: “Dürften wir annehmen, die Worte seien bereits in Rom dem Briefe beigeschrieben worden, so wäre das für die Gesichte des Briefes nicht unwichtig; allein diese Annahme ist unwahrscheinlich”.

168. No scholar proposes a later dating – see the summary of the opinions above.

169. See CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Strom.* 1.4.27.1; 5.6.35.1; 6.7.58.2; 6.13.106.4; 7.16.95.3.

170. ATTRIDGE, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (n. 166), p. 37.

171. PHILO, *De Ebrietate* XLI,170, in *The Works on Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C.D. YONGE, vol. 1, London, Henry G. Bohn, 1854, p. 488: “But since we are found to be influenced in different manners by the same things at different times, we should have nothing positive to assert about anything, inasmuch as what appears has no settled or stationary existence, but is subject to various, and multiform (πολυτρόποις καὶ πολυμόρφους), and ever-recurring changes”. See also the same adjectives in a negative sense in *De posteritate Caini* 47 and *De somniis* I.202.

other various, manifold, and mutable (ποικίλου καὶ πολυμεροῦς καὶ πολυτρόπου), which we call the senses”¹⁷². Clement uses the same triad of terms in *Strom.* 1.4.27.1 in a positive sense to qualify divine wisdom according to the “apostle”. A second passage by Maximus demonstrates that, in the 2nd century, such terminology also refers to the question of inspiration and describes “this manifold and mutable muse and harmony” (τῆς πολυμεροῦς ταύτης καὶ πολυτρόπου μούσης τὲ καὶ ἁρμονίας)¹⁷³, a description concluded by the quotation of *Odyssey* 18.135. Thus, thank to Maximus of Tyra and Clement of Alexandria, one has proof that readers of the 2nd century CE could have heard a Greek cultural note in Heb 1,1, pointing to divine and Homeric inspiration, beyond the unique semantic link between *Od.* 1.1 and Heb 1,1 – πολύτροπον/πολυτρόπως¹⁷⁴. This cultural link focuses on the topic of the inspiration, at a time – the Second Sophistic – when Dio Chryostom could compare Homer to the prophet of the gods¹⁷⁵.

Secondly, the oldest connection that can be found between Heb 1,1 and Gen 1,1 exists as early as *Epistula Apostolorum* 3 (first part of the 2nd century CE¹⁷⁶). This connection is also illustrated by Clement in *Strom.* 6,7,58,2: “ ‘In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth’ (Gen 1,1). And he is called Wisdom by all the prophets. This is he who is the Teacher of all created beings, the Fellow-counsellor of God, who foreknew all things; and he from above, from the first foundation of the world, ‘in many ways and many times’, (Heb 1,1) trains and perfects”¹⁷⁷. Our Alexandrian author again links Heb 1,1 to creation in *Strom.* 5.6.35.1. Such an exegetical link is consequently ancient. We have here an argument confirming the possible link proposed by Musurillo between Heb 1,1 and Gen 1,1-5 in *P. Amh.* 3bc¹⁷⁸, but this link does not demand the amulet

172. Maximus of Tyra, *Dissertation* I.2, (*Maximus of Tyra: The Dissertations*, trans. T. TAYLOR, vol. 1, London, C. Whittingham, 1804, p. 9). For the Greek text, see Maximus of Tyra, *Dialexeis* 11.7a (H. Hobein ed., *Maximi Tyrii philosophumena*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1910).

173. Maximus of Tyra, *Dialexeis* 1.2b, ed. HOBEIN; for the English translation, see Maximus of Tyra, *Dissertation* XXXVII.2, trans. TAYLOR, vol. 2, pp. 165-166).

174. For a reference to *Od.* 1,1, see, for example, ATTRIDGE, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (n. 166), p. 37, n. 21.

175. See Dio Chryostom, *Orationes, Peri Omerou* 53.9-10. For some thoughts on that point, see CLIVAZ, *L’ange et la sueur de sang* (n. 10), pp. 29-31.

176. According to Pearson, the *Epistula Apostolorum* does not come from Egypt (see B.A. PEARSON, *Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Further Observations*, in J.E. GOEHRING – J.A. TIMBIE [eds.], *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity: Language, Literature and Social Context. Essays in Honor of David W. Johnson*, Washington, DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 2007, 97-112, pp. 111-112).

177. See Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6,7,58,2.

178. See MUSURILLO, *Early Christian Economy* (n. 153), p. 126.

hypothesis of Musurillo. According to the four criteria of the amulets established by Theodore de Bruyn¹⁷⁹, only the second one seems present in *P.Amh.* 3bc, and de Bruyn classifies *P.Amh.* 3bc as two “amulets” only with a degree 3 of probability, on a decreasing scale from 1 to 4¹⁸⁰. Indeed, *P.Amh.* 3bc presents no adjurations, petitions, esoteric or specific words (criteria 1); it does not have a specific format and is too big to be considered as a potential amulet (criteria 3): its cut sides could indicate simply the reemployment of the papyrus; finally, it does not have signs of having been worn, for example as a nickel (criteria 4). *P.Amh.* 3bc offers two specific biblical passages, Heb 1,1 and Gen 1,1-5: this is criteria 2 according to de Bruyn, but no other papyrus amulet indicated by de Bruyn presents these biblical passages; no other papyrus amulet shows a passage written twice, such as Gen 1,1-5 in *P.Amh.* 3c. As we can see, the probability of having here an amulet is quite weak. Other paths of interpretation have to be explored here, particularly taking into account the fact that the history of interpretation confirms an early interpretative link between Heb 1,1 and Gen 1,1-5 in Egypt. This traditional link probably explains why Heb 1,1 was kept in the middle of the top side at the back of Gen 1,1-5¹⁸¹, without indicating clearly of itself a specific use for *P.Amh.* 3c. I add a final piece of information, before sketching a possible draft for the history of *P.Amh.* 3: the book of Genesis served as a basis for training the catechumens in Egypt, as AnneMarie Luijendijk pointed out with reference to *P.Oxy.* 36.2785, which mentions a certain “Anos, a catechumen in Genesis” in Heracleopolis in the last quarter of the 3rd century¹⁸².

To summarize all the elements arising from this inquiry, we have: 1) an exegesis linking Heb 1,1 and Gen 1,1 in Egypt at least from the end of the 2nd century; this exegesis was formed within a Hellenistic cultural framework conferring on the expression πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως the sense of divine/poetic inspiration; 2) the Egyptian addition of ἡμῶν in Heb 1,1 by at least around 200 (P⁴⁶), confirmed by P¹² as a variant in the second half of the 3rd century in the Arsinoite nome (*P.Amh.* 3b); 3) a letter showing a Christian network in Egypt and the confidence of a

179. See T. DE BRUYN, *Papyri, Parchments, Ostraca, and Tablets Written with Biblical Texts in Greek and Used as Amulets: A Preliminary List*, in T.J. KRAUS – T. NICKLAS (eds.), *Early Christian Manuscripts. Examples of Applied Methods and Approach* (TENTS, 5), Leiden, Brill, 2010, forthcoming [pp. 7-10]. Kraus summarizes this list of criteria in the présent volume (see T.J. KRAUS, *Christliche Papyri aus Ägypten: Kleine Facetten des großen Ganzen. Exemplarische Wechselbeziehungen*, p. à compléter [p. 30]).

180. See DE BRUYN, *Papyri, Parchments*, Table III, forthcoming [p. 42].

181. See MUSURILLO, *Early Christian Economy* (n. 153), p. 126.

182. See LUIJENDIJK, *Greetings in the Lord* (n. 136), pp. 115, 113.

Christian traveller in a church leader of Alexandria, “Papa Maximus” (*P. Amh.* 3a); 4) a “catechumen in Genesis” at Heracleopolis at the end of the 3rd century; 5) two versions of Gen 1,1-5 (*P. Amh.* 3c), on the verso of a cut papyrus, showing no interest in the private letter but attentive to the presence of Heb 1,1 on the recto (see Musurillo). With these elements, a sketch of a context(s) for understanding the entire *P. Amh.* 3 can be attempted.

Sent from Rome between 264 and 285, a letter reaches a Christian community in the Arsinoite nome. Some months/years later, somebody copies Heb 1,1 at the top of this letter containing a story about members of the community, with the mention of ἡμῶν, according to the usual version in this country: it is a well-known verse, which a lot of people feel concerned by because of its Old Testament and Homeric echoes; it is impossible to specify if there was some link between this added verse and the content of the letter for the person who copied it. There is evidence that this verse could be understood in association with Gen 1,1-5 at that time in Egypt, and that catechumens in the region could be trained in the book of Genesis. Quite some time later, in the time of Constantine according to Grenfell and Hunt¹⁸³, somebody cut the papyrus to inscribe on the verso two different versions of Gen 1,1-5, seeking to give to Heb 1,1 a special place, with apparently no more concern for the private letter. Time had moved on, people mentioned in the letter had probably been dead for some decades but Heb 1,1 was still there, and the writer linked it to Gen 1,1-5.

As stated above, the evidence in favour of an amulet is weak, but do the two mentions of Gen 1,1-5 necessarily mean an intellectual quest or a scholarly exercise rather than devotion or a pious concern? The anonymous copyist could be a catechumen interested in keeping Heb 1,1 with the “beginning of the beginning”, according to his/her training in the book of Genesis. Without other clues emerging from oblivion, it is impossible for modern scholars to choose here between intellectual, scholarly or pious motivations. Categorization is probably particularly hard to establish with such a document: indeed, if *P. Amh.* 3c does not offer sufficient clues to qualify as an “amulet”, it could nevertheless represent the fuzzy space between “intense piety” and “magical aspirations”. One has no reason to imagine that the writers of scholarly exercises, liturgical texts and amulets were always different people. Who could say that piety never has anything to do with magical aspirations?

183. GRENFELL – HUNT (eds.), *The Amherst Papyri* (n. 153), p. 30.

IV. THEOLOGICAL IMPACT: TOWARD A TRANSFORMATION OF *SOLA SCRIPTURA* IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

This article hopes to have thrown light on the profound epistemological and ideological transformations that have been caused by the new medium of writing, digital writing. From papyrus to hypertext, from origin to network, from categories to intertextuality, it is now time for manuscripts and papyri in New Testament exegesis. The notion of the “original text” is moving from a linear origin-perception to an associative perception of texts, situated within a diversity of networks. The emergence of narrative textual criticism must be accompanied by the new concept of an online critical edition of the Greek New Testament, with an apparatus open to the “wiki” mode involving interaction between scholars, and most importantly with specific forums of discussion regarding the main variants as well as archives to preserve a record of the evolution of the emerging online NA²⁸. As a final question, this article considers in this “theological opening” the possible consequences of such an evolution for Christian theology, and particularly the Protestant statement of *sola scriptura*¹⁸⁴.

Departing from the usual printed form of the Bible, which was responsible for the success of Protestantism, may have profound influences on Christian – or at least Protestant – theology. Even now, the cover of the book, a cover in existence ever since the first codex, is being lost. Pages of the New Testament will now be kept together essentially by the hands and actions of web-navigators. Should Protestant Christians be afraid of such an evolution? Are Christians at risk of losing key constitutive elements of their theology, which would mean in a more or less near future the death of Christianity? The answer depends on whether one considers Christianity as a “religion of the book” or not. From the point of view of comparative religious studies, it is clear that Protestantism especially is a “religion of the book”. Just such a statement was made several times on a theological level by the Protestant theologian Pierre Gisel: “A book

184. It is clear that the status of theological discourse is evolving greatly within the European academic framework of the present decade. I believe that theological inquiry has to be treated as a specific topic in NT and early Christianity research, explicitly labelled as such, as I have argued elsewhere (see C. CLIVAZ, *Why Have the Stories of the Resurrection Been Read and Believed*, in G. VAN OYEN – T. SHEPHERD [eds.], *Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue* [BETL], Leuven, Peeters, forthcoming). Consequently, these present comments on the theological impact of the digital revolution are written to “whom it may concern”, whether researchers interested in learning what contemporary Christian theologians think, or theologians interested in developing reflection on the notion of *sola scriptura*.

of Scripture stands at the place of origin. [...] Christianity is a religion of the book. Not primarily, or directly, of an event be it past or future, nor of a prophetic or existential effusion (a “faith”). Nor, strictly speaking, of a founder”¹⁸⁵. On a larger scale, as Jean-Claude Carrière reminds us, modern history of the book begins with the history of “the” book, the Bible¹⁸⁶: “With the religions of the Book, the book has served not just as a container, as a receptacle, but also as a ‘wide angle’ from which it has been possible for everything to be observed, everything related, maybe even for everything to be decided”¹⁸⁷. If we are now facing a period when the book could potentially disappear¹⁸⁸, Christian theology – and particularly Protestant theology – has to ask itself what it would mean to be “a religion of the book” in a world where books are no longer made. The same question should also, of course, be considered by Jewish and Muslim theologies.

As a theologian, I have never thought of Christianity as a “religion of the book”. When working in the field of NT manuscripts, it is difficult to see all these various texts as “the book” of one religion. They are rather the expressions of a variety of people and communities, gathered around the name of a person, Jesus. Every manuscript of the New Testament is in a sense like P¹²: a biblical verse superimposed over a life situation, then transformed into something else. Moreover, a religion that is focused on an absent body, disappearing not only from the tomb but also in the sharing of bread at Emmaus, cannot be focused on a manuscript. As Emmanuèle Baumgartner points out, there is a correspondence between the topos of the manuscript and the body¹⁸⁹. If a faith is focused on a disappeared body – at the Ascension as well as in the empty tomb – its most central point can hardly be a manuscript or a book. Just as Christians can live without Christ’s body, so they can live without a closed,

185. P. GISEL, *Résonances et mise en perspective: La théologie en condition post-moderne*, in P. GISEL – P. EVRARD (eds.), *La théologie en postmodernité* (Lieux théologiques, 29), Geneva, Labor et Fides, 1996, 405-427, p. 416. In his earlier work, Gisel was more cautious with this statement, see for example: “La constitution d’un canon suppose là aussi une distance d’avec l’origine. Le christianisme ne devient religion du livre qu’au II^e siècle” (P. GISEL, *Croyance incarnée* [Lieux théologiques, 9], Geneva, Labor et Fides, 1986, p. 94).

186. See J.-C. CARRIÈRE – U. ECO, *N’espérez pas vous débarrasser des livres*, Paris, Seuil, 2009, p. 294.

187. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

188. The American market could represent in five years 50% of e-books and 50% of paper books (see *LivresHebdo* 4 juin 2010, p. 15). But it could evolve even faster than that.

189. See E. BAUMGARTNER, *Du manuscrit retrouvé au corps retrouvé*, in HERMAN – HALLYN with PEETERS (eds.) *Le topos du manuscrit trouvé* (n. 24), 1-14.

printed version of the New Testament; even the sharing of the bread is each time the reminder of a disappearance, or the sign “of an immense Absence” accompanied by nostalgia, as Rubem Alves put it¹⁹⁰.

Consequently, I believe that the digital revolution will be an opportunity to confirm that Christianity is not a “religion of the book”, but of the Spirit and of communities. These communities recognize, interpret and remember in the Spirit the events related to the name of Jesus: they *re-enact* constantly the triune God. The doctrine of *sola scriptura* had its importance within the Western printed culture by shedding light on the role of the Scripture in the Christian faith, but it also prompted the forgetting of the importance of communities and the Spirit. The digital era, promoting a new medium of writing and thinking, represents the opportunity to reformulate this doctrine as a *Webscripture*, *une Ecriture en réseaux*¹⁹¹. To consider the Christian Bible as a *Webscripture* means first to recognize it as a *scriptura* among others, in a religious and cultural network of “scriptures”. On the academic level, a *Webscripture* means to interpret Christian texts beyond the boundaries of literary genres and modern categories; it encourages the development of a Greek New Testament online critical edition with a “wiki-forum” and a “wiki-apparatus”. For Christian churches, a *Webscripture* represents a great challenge, because it means to move from a hierarchy that has responsibility for the “cover of the book” to a common wiki-authority that has the task of keeping the folios – the papyri – together. Nevertheless, such a challenge has very ancient roots: when Eusebius made a list of the “received” books in the New Testament, he called them not the “canonized”, “edited”,

190. See R. ALVES, *I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body*, Augsburg, MN, Fortress, 1986, pp. 13-14: “And wherever [his disciples] went they would find the signs of an immense Absence. And the heart would become troubled, without rest. And each of their words would be transformed into a prayer, because prayer is the word stammering with desire. [...] The meal is eaten, the magic appears, the invisible threads of longing remembrance and of hopeful waiting are cast forth, and, beginning from there, men and women who have in their eyes that sad-happy mark of longing remembrance and of hope clasp each others’ hands. Just as it should be with anyone who loves and is far away and has nothing to hold except the dried flower, the poem, the memories, a word. That’s how it is with the community of Christians, this thing that is called church; together, conspiring, hands joined, they eat the bread, drink the wine, and feel a longing remembrance/hope [*saudade*] that has no end”.

191. 12 years ago, I suggested that thought should be given to a *scriptura in koinonia*, before the pages of the book became disjointed (C. CLIVAZ, *La troisième quête du Jésus historique et le canon: Le défi de la réception communautaire. Un essai de relecture historique*, in D. MARGUERAT – E. NORELLI – J.-M. POFFET [eds.], *Jésus de Nazareth: Nouvelles approches d’une énigme* [Le Monde de la Bible, 38], Geneva, Labor et Fides, 1998, 541-558, p. 558). What I present here is the next step, a hermeneutical process where cyberculture accentuates the “parting of the pages”.

or “published” books, but the *homologoumenoi* texts¹⁹². A *Webscripture* foregoes established boundaries and recognizes that it is constantly maintained by the common confession of the Christian communities. The *Webscripture* is a body appearing and disappearing, when communities are gathered in sharing the bread and the Word. Whether they be really or virtually gathered.

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192. EUSEBIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.25.4.

