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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION¹

In the following introduction, each essay is briefly summarized. The volume is divided into four parts: 1. *Papyrology and the New Testament*; 2. *Egypt, Papyri and Christians*; 3. *Every Papyrus Tells a Story*; 4. *Some Further Considerations*. The first part opens with two articles that set the scene (C. Clivaz and T.J. Kraus) by presenting the main thesis of the book overall, namely, that it is time for New Testament exegesis to catch up with what is happening in papyrology; and it is time for papyrologists to decompartmentalize their research into the various textual and religious corpus of ancient documents. This first part concludes with the contribution of J.K. Elliott who synthesizes the history of New Testament papyrology and presents the 27 most recent New Testament papyri.

The second part discusses the variety of Egyptian papyri at the beginning of our era (P. Schubert), and Jewish and Christian papyrology (S. Honigman, D. Stoekl, R. Burnet), closing with some thoughts on the links between Christianity and a “bookish” culture in Alexandria (K. Haines-Eitzen).

The third part brings together essays that show how detailed examination of even just one papyrus can lead to a reconsideration of the history of Christian origins and New Testament theology. This is seen in a fresh study of P⁶⁶ for the Gospel of John (J. Zumstein) or the Greek fragments of the *Gospel of Thomas* (A. Luijendijk), or in the technique of *multi-spectral imaging* for the Epistle to the Romans and Jas 3,15 (M. Theophilos). It is not for nothing that the papyri are appealed to in looking at Mark 6 and 9 in P⁴⁵ with the *Clustering Method* (D. Pastorelli), or in re-evaluating Codex Bezae (J. Read-Heimerdinger and J. Rius-Camps), or again in reading afresh Heb 9,4 (C.-J. Gruber).

The fourth part turns to some further considerations in presenting a theological consideration of manuscript fragments and Scripture (X. Gravend-Tirole), and by encouraging historical research to pay greater attention to the documentary literature (T.J. Kraus).

1. This *Introduction* has been translated from the French original by Jenny Read-Heimerdinger.

PRESENTATION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS

1. *Papyrology and the New Testament*

In her opening paper, Claire Clivaz (*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]*) underlines the urgency for New Testament exegesis to catch up with the papyri, for these are particularly useful as a bridge to link exegesis with contemporary cultural and theological challenges. The claim is supported by three main points; first, the papyri enable scholars to “reconsider the question of the ‘origin’ of the text, in association with the epistemological issues raised by the digital medium of writing”; secondly, papyri “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”; and thirdly, “they open the way for a theological reconsideration of the status of the Scriptures”², in the age of digital culture. The examples of P¹², P⁷⁵ et P¹²⁶ serve to illustrate the points made, papyri otherwise known as *P. Amherst 3b*, *P. Bodmer XIV-XV* and *PSI 1497*; or 3475, 2895 and 10009 on the *Leuven Database for Ancient Books (LADB)*; or else 10012, 10075 and 10126, to use the new digital numbering advocated by the *Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF)*.

It falls to Thomas J. Kraus (*Christliche Papyri aus Ägypten: Kleine Facetten des großen Ganzen. Exemplarische Wechselbeziehungen*) to show how and in what way papyrology has been responsible for establishing a new approach to New Testament textual criticism. After pointing out that the 20th century was precisely the century of papyrology, he goes on to explore the common ground between papyrology and New Testament textual criticism, identifying where the two disciplines overlap. He establishes that not only have the Christian papyri been acknowledged and taken into consideration by papyrologists but also that exegetes have learnt from papyrology to think of their work differently. Textual criticism can no longer sustain as its illusory goal the reconstruction of the original text; furthermore, research must cease to focus on the study of isolated variants. On the contrary, it is essential to view the papyri in their context, without reducing them simply to a likely source of new variants for establishing the New Testament text. They also need to be set in their historical context. To that end, the study of documentary

2. See p. 000.

papyri is crucial (letters, amulets, contracts, homilies, prayers, etc.) for it enables the socio-cultural milieu in which the Christian documents were written and transmitted to be reconstructed, and the reason for the appearance of the variants to be explained. The author uses three examples to support his case: a letter of the 4th century (*P.Oxy.* LXIII 4365); the mention of illiteracy in Acts 4,13 and Jn 7,15; and the Christian amulets.

Finally, J. Keith Elliott (*Recently Discovered New Testament Papyri and Their Significance for Textual Criticism*) presents the history of papyri in New Testament textual criticism and the use made of them, together with a synthesis of 27 New Testament papyri published since 1997. On the first point, Elliott aptly points out that too often undue weight has been placed on the date of the papyri, while at the same time underlining the delay in taking the papyri into account in the critical editions of the New Testament. It should be noted that NA²⁷ only takes account of the papyri up to P¹¹⁶. As the author summarizes the situation: “here oligarchy, not democracy or meritocracy, seems to have been determinative. Both groups of editors require and demand that the papyri are prominently and hastily included in the *apparatus criticus*”³. He concludes that the digitalization of manuscripts will allow the critical apparatus to be approached in a new way. In the second part of his article, Elliott presents the most striking variants of the 27 papyri of the New Testament published since 1997.

2. *Egypt, Papyri and Christians*

The purpose of the study by Paul Schubert (*Les papyrus d'Égypte aux trois premiers siècles de notre ère*) is to “couvrir, de manière synthétique, le paysage formé par les papyrus égyptiens sous le Haut Empire romain, au moment où commencent à apparaître les premiers papyrus du Nouveau Testament”⁴. In fact, the papyrological documentation from Egypt of the Roman period includes an enormous mass of documentary papyri alongside a corpus of literary papyri. Schubert uses the following categories to present them: chronology, place of discovery, economic and social conditions, genre, and writing medium. The papyri of a Christian nature (including especially the New Testament ones) appear mainly at the junction of the second and third periods, in other words at the turn of the 3rd to 4th centuries. Schubert follows this general presentation with a study of some specific examples. After giving a description of the

3. See p. 000.

4. See p. 000.

Bodmer Foundation, he underlines the fact that among the texts published by the Bibliothèque de Genève the Old Testament heads the field. Volume IV of the Geneva papyri nevertheless contains 50 or so Christian texts from the 4th to the 8th centuries, including *P.Gen. inv.* 382, which has a quotation from Lk 2,34-35 and is given a first preview here in the final section of the essay.

The question of the papyri is approached from quite a different angle in the contribution of Sylvie Honigman (*Les Juifs dans la société de l'Égypte romaine au croisement des sources documentaires et littéraires*). What she does is to investigate how reading the documentary sources in conjunction with the literary ones sheds light on the social situation of the Jews in Egypt of the Roman period and especially the various ways in which their group identity is expressed. One inroad that depends on the use of the papyri involves the study of the proper names used for ethnicity, which are particularly valuable markers. Taking the proper names, the link between the name and the ethnic identity of the bearer is explored, as is also the source of inspiration for the names, their usefulness as clues to determine a date of immigration and finally, the particular names of Sambathiôn and Sambahas as denoting the magical power of the Jewish god. The references to *ethnika* constitute a second useful indication of sources (cf. the racial designation “Ioudaios” in connection with the military colonies, the civil “Ioudaioi”, the pair “Ioudaioi” and “Samaritai”), although determining the social implications of this information is somewhat difficult. A second field of investigation involves the religious aspects. Honigman examines the meaning of *proseuchè* (= a place of worship) in a Jewish Egyptian context and then goes on to explore the possible use of *proseuchai* by non-Jews before focussing on the *proseuchè* of Leontopolis (*JIGRE* 125) in connection with the Temple of Jerusalem. In looking at the distinctive Jewish sense of identity, she finds it figures within the cultic domain in the practice of non-native rites, a feature shared by other immigrant groups from the near East. Is it possible to identify the causes of the revolt of the Jews from Egypt and Cyrenaica in 115-117? The answer lies in their economical situation – it probably was sparked by a wave of brutal taxation of the Jews. As can be seen, taking account of the papyri allows a fresh examination of a range of important questions to be made and causes the traditional picture of the Jewish communities in 1st century Egypt to be revised.

Daniel Stoekl (*De l'arbre à la forêt: Quelques pensées quantitatives sur les papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens de l'Égypte ancienne*) provides a detailed synthesis in French of his quantitative analysis of the

Jewish and Christian papyri, treating both the material from Qumran and that from Egypt as “libraries”. Applying the quantitative method, he exposes the difficulties and dangers inherent in this approach, while defusing in turn any concerns that may be felt over using this method for the Jewish and Christian papyri, for example by referring to the *Leuven Data Base of Ancient Books*. He divides the writings into “core” (the Hebrew Bible) and ones “specific” to a movement, and between these two categories he classifies texts that were shared by several groups of Jews such as Jubilees, Enoch or Ecclesiasticus. By applying this approach with a maximum degree of caution, Stoekl “espère avoir démontré” that “les rouleaux de Qumrân ne peuvent pas refléter *une* seule bibliothèque précipitamment cachée dans ces grottes, car les datations paléographiques varient trop entre les collections dans chaque grotte”⁵ and that “le christianisme égyptien constitue bel et bien une religion avec une identité indépendante du judaïsme ancien au troisième siècle au plus”⁶. He is aware that in this he is at odds with Daniel Boyarin in particular – though he acknowledges that he is “intellectuellement d’accord” with him. He brings his analysis to a conclusion saying: “qu’au moins en Égypte, – peut-être aussi dans le reste de l’empire mais nous ne pouvons pas le savoir – ce n’est pas la liaison entre État et Église au quatrième siècle qui a défini le christianisme comme religion avec une identité séparée du judaïsme”⁷.

In his essay *Des textes comme les autres: Réinscrire le Nouveau Testament dans les écrits du monde méditerranéen*, Régis Burnet sets out to show that the New Testament texts are seen in a new light and are better understood if they are viewed among the mass of the non-literary papyri found in Egypt. Drawing on the cult book by Adolf Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten* (1908), he takes up the three central hypotheses, which he modifies in the light of recent research. The first concerns the language. Without in any way denying the presence of some Semitisms or Aramaisms, it is clear that the New Testament authors wrote not in a literary Greek or a “Jewish dialect” but in the ordinary language as it was spoken at the time and as it is attested by the papyri, in other words, *Koine*. Secondly – and this primarily concerns the epistolary genre – an attentive reader cannot fail to notice the stylistic similarities that exist between the papyri and certain New Testament writings. Paul’s writings are not “epistles” (a literary work) but genuine letters that make use of the epistolary

5. See p. 000.

6. See p. 000.

7. See p. 000.

form widely attested among the records of private correspondence. Not only that, but the purpose of the letters – to ensure the presence of the absent recipients and sustain a relationship with them – is also the purpose seen in the papyri. Lastly, the political and religious worlds reflected in the New Testament language is likewise found among the papyri. Ample proof is provided by a comparison of the setting of some of the parables with the papyri (cf. the parables of the Prodigal Son or the Wicked Tenants of the Vineyard). By way of conclusion, Burnet encourages his readers to take fuller account of the reading and writing patterns of the ancient world where the practice was limited to minority groups, and to consider the symbolical significance the “written papyrus” would have had for a given social group.

In her research, *Imagining the Alexandrian Library and a “Bookish” Christianity*, Kim Haines-Eitzen examines the question of the existence of a “bookish Alexandrian Christianity”, seeking to go behind the picture of the *Didaskaleion* of Alexandria painted by Eusebius of Caesarea. She highlights the imaginary nature of the role played by the library of Alexandria in creating the notion of a Christian catechetical school in Alexandria. In point of fact, there is no precise description whatsoever of this library or of its operation, which has nevertheless nourished the Western imagination of even such people as Jorge Borges and Umberto Eco. In her own words, “a bookish Alexandria, a cosmopolitan and extensive library collection, and Eusebius’ pious and apologetic account of Christian education in Alexandria combine to produce an image of an intellectual and scholarly paradise”⁸. She urges a revision of this perception, citing Bardy to draw attention to the fact that the Alexandrian teachers were organized in societies rather than “schools”: she stresses that neither Clement nor Origen set out a Christian programme of education for progressing through different stages. Besides, archaeology furnishes no evidence of a “bookish Christianity”. As a final point – and this last point is by no means the least – she puts forward the idea that there is nothing academic about *P. Bodmer XIV-XV*, which rather reflect local tradition: in actual fact, they stand as counter-arguments to the picture provided by Eusebius.

3. *Every Papyrus Tells a Story*

The research carried out by Jean Zumstein (*Quand l’exégète rencontre le manuscrit: Le P⁶⁶*) makes no claim to present new knowledge or hypotheses

8. See p. 000.

in the field of papyrology or textual criticism, but rather seeks to show by means of chosen examples the importance for exegesis of accurately reading a manuscript. Defending his choice of P⁶⁶ from the list of papyri of John's Gospel and after dealing with the matters of the content and dating, Zumstein shows the importance and the hermeneutical relevance of its *inscriptio*. Moving on to the material composition of the manuscript, (the pagination and the content of the leaves and quires) he considers the classic problem of the order of chaps 5–7 in the canonical Fourth Gospel and demonstrates the lack of foundation for the theories of literary criticism that see the order of the folios as mixed up. As for the omission of Jn 7,53–8,11 in P⁶⁶, it makes way for a coherent reading of chaps 7–8. Certain specific examples of exegetical significance are examined in detail: the problem of a negative in 7,8, the later correction to 7,37, the verb tenses in 7,39 or the surprising omission in the same verse, and finally the significance of the article before “prophet” in 7,52. There is also the issue of the punctuation of 7,37b–38. Working on the material object of P⁶⁶ serves to warn the exegete against falling for the illusion of a standard, stable text. The variety that characterized Christian origins has left an indelible mark on the textual witnesses to these origins.

P.Oxy. I 1, IV 654 and 655 represent three Greek fragments of the *Gospel of Thomas*: the contribution of AnneMarie Luijendijk (*Reading the Gospel of Thomas in the Third Century: Three Oxyrhynchus Papyri and Origen's Homilies*) analyses the clues they offer as to the textual transmission, circulation, uses and reception of this apocryphal gospel. In an innovative essay, she successfully reshapes the perception of this text, at least in 3rd century Oxyrhynchus, by paying attention to the contingent information of these fragments: whereas the patristic writers usually state that this gospel was rejected by most Christian, the Oxyrhynchus fragments suggest another picture. Indeed, *P.Oxy. I 1* appears to have been written in the format of a codex while the other two earlier fragments belonged to scrolls, indicating to Luijendijk that an evolution took place in the use of the *Gospel of Thomas*, from the status of Scripture to that of a document for private study. In looking at the homilies of Origen, she sees the same ambiguous status of this text. In other words, the analysis of local reading practices allows AnneMarie Luijendijk to better evaluate the opinions expressed by the Church writers.

Michael Theophilus (*Multispectral Imaging of Greek Papyrus Fragments from Oxyrhynchus*) presents the application of *multispectral imaging* to unpublished fragments from Oxyrhynchus, namely, 123/102(a) and 51.4B.18/c (1-4)b. The technique, derived from the work of NASA, consists in analysing the spectral differences of colours, which each emits its

own light frequency. It thus reveals the “traces of any extant text which lies beneath the visible surface layer of the manuscript”⁹. The method has already been used at Duke University and the British Library for the papyri from Herculaneum, the scrolls from Petra and the Dead Sea, and in the analysis of paintings in Maya caves. It offers “a controlled and potentially fruitful measure in detecting secondary hands, corrections or marginal glosses”¹⁰. Theophilus sets out the results for a parchment fragment from the Epistle to the Romans (123/102[a]), the analysis of which could lead to a re-evaluation of the dating of parchments in general; and for a papyrus fragment of Jas 3,15 (51.4B.18/c [1-4]b), where the new reading of a single letter brings about a significant change. Theophilus gives a balanced assessment of the impact of these new insights on New Testament interpretation, while underlining the enthusiasm generated by contact with these manuscripts. He concludes by encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration between the humanities and the sciences in the use of *multispectral imaging*, which offers such an exciting prospect for papyrology.

David Pastorelli (*The Chester Beatty I Papyrus (P⁴⁵) and the Main Greek Manuscripts of Mark 6 and 9: A Classification Based on a New Quantitative Method*) starts from the recognition that the Caesarean text-type tends to be no longer accepted by scholars although they do acknowledge a type of text “identified with the group P⁴⁵-W.032 in Mk 5,31–16,20, free of all reference to any witness called ‘Caesarean’”¹¹. In his essay, he tests this observation by applying a new quantitative method known as the “Clustering Method” to Mark 6 and 9 in P⁴⁵ and the related manuscripts. The method uses PHYLIP (Phylogeny Inference Package) software that “offers several algorithms developed for phylogeneticists or biologists”¹²; it has notably already been used in patristic studies. Compared with other quantitative methods it allows the calculation of the distance between manuscripts to be honed by using a scale from 0 to 9, it avoids the arbitrary selection of variation units and it takes into account singular readings. According to Pastorelli, the *clusters* obtained from algorithms clearly demonstrate that the reality of “text-types” exists. The analysis, supported by several charts, shows that P⁴⁵ and the Freer Codex do indeed form a textual group for Mark 9 but not Mark 6; so it is not possible to conclude the existence of a textual group P⁴⁵ – W.032 for

9. See p. 000.

10. See p. 000.

11. See p. 000.

12. See p. 000.

the whole of Mk 5,31–16,20. Pastorelli thus argues that “indiscriminate analysis of the whole text of P⁴⁵ in the Gospel of Mark is a methodological error”¹³, while calling for an exhaustive analysis to be carried out.

Jenny Read-Heimerdinger and Josep Rius-Camps (*Tracing the Readings of Codex Bezae in the Papyri of Acts*) present for the first time an exhaustive comparison of all the papyri of Acts that we possess (except for P¹²⁷, which they propose to examine in detail in a later publication) with Codex Vaticanus and Codex Bezae. They view these two codices as “the two extremes of a period of development, a period in which changes were introduced progressively, and to some extent freely”¹⁴. The authors begin by setting out their reasons for considering the tradition represented by Codex Bezae to be earlier than that of Codex Vaticanus, and underline the relevance of the papyri of Acts for the debate on the dating: they all come from Egypt and some of them contain passages that are missing in Codex Bezae. A detailed comparison of P^{8.29.33/58.38.41.45.48.50.53.56.57.74.91.112} with the two uncial manuscripts leads to the conclusion that some passages in the papyri may contain occasional traces of D05 readings that are no longer extant, more especially certain variants in P^{29.38.48.112} and some minor agreements between P^{45.74}.

Another aspect of the importance of the papyri for the study of the New Testament comes out in the analysis undertaken by Christian-Jürgen Gruber (*Ein ungewöhnlicher Terminus? Thymiatērion in Heb 9,4*): the precise identification of the vocabulary used in the early Christian writings. Taking the example of the lexeme *thymiatērion*, Gruber seeks not to retrieve the meaning of the term that the author of Heb 9,4 could have given to it but instead he sets out to use the papyrological and archaeological documentation in order to show how a potential reader or hearer from the ancient Mediterranean world understood the term, both on a semantic as well as on a referential level. The result of the analysis is that *thymiatērion* (incense-burner) does not first and foremost refer to the shape of an object but rather to the purpose for which it was devised.

4. *Some Further Considerations*

In this final section, the essay by Xavier Gravend-Tirole (*From Sola Scriptura to Pluralibus Scripturis*) is written from the perspective of systematic theology and explores the impact of the material reality of

13. See p. 000.

14. See p. 000.

the papyri on the notion of the canon. First, the notion of Scripture is considered with regard to its historical development. After noting some of the main stages in the history of the formation of the canon, Gravend-Tirole identifies the two series of criteria – theological and ecclesiastical – that guided its constitution and looks at its purpose as a means of control. However – and this is the crucial point – this very concept, which was established over time, is tested against the increasingly numerous archaeological and papyrological discoveries of the last two centuries. The idea of the original text thus collapses: the text can only be read by looking at its many variants. The text available to the reader is a multiform text, one that has lost its univocity with the result that *scriptura* is less a norm than an invitation to dialogue and reflection.

How, then, is the matter of the exclusivity of Scripture to be approached, that is, the question of *sola scriptura* (it should be noted that Gravend-Tirole treats *sola scriptura* and canon as synonymous)? He demonstrates the problematic nature of this notion, showing how Scripture must be seen as always referring to something beyond itself in order for sense to be made of it. This being so, it is necessary to abandon the idea of a closed canon and to encourage an open, even permeable, view of the canonical list. Aligning himself with the classical Catholic position, the author sees tradition as being of primary importance rather than Scripture: tradition precedes Scripture, surrounds it and moves it forward as it becomes in turn the heart of tradition. It is precisely because of this that there is much benefit in reading the Egyptian papyri of the New Testament, especially in the context of the non-biblical papyri. By abandoning a closed canon, the idea of a closed revelation also disappears. Only porous and progressive boundaries for the canon can ensure life and freedom.

Taking a selection of examples from ancient historiography, Thomas J. Kraus (*Lacunae in History: How and in What Respect Documentary Papyri Contribute to Remedy “Defective History”*) tackles the problem of “Defective History” or, to use another term, “lacunose history” by which is meant the periods for which there is supposedly no historiographical account or archaeological trace. At this point, papyrological documentation can be of great value as an alternative to replace works of historiography. Thus, as the first example demonstrates, the *damnatio memoriae* that seeks to remove all trace of a person from historical records can be effectively foiled by the mass of papyri (illustrated by the case of Publius Septimius Geta, the brother of Caracalla). In the second example, the Oxyrhynchus papyri have doubtless given us the manuscripts of the great classical and religious works but, in fact, the majority of the documents

provide information about daily life of the time – social, economic, etc. – and enable significant gaps in our knowledge of this period of Egyptian history to be filled. A third example looks at the request for the registration of a guardian (*P.Oxy.* I 56) and reveals different aspects of life in a small town of Greco-Roman Egypt and again completes the gaps that may be left by historical research.

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