

**T. C. Skeat. *The Collected Biblical Writings of T. C. Skeat*. Introduced and edited by J. K. Elliott. Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*, no. 113. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004. Pp. xxxiv+299. ISBN: 9004139206. \$174.00 USD, cloth.**

1. On June 25, 2003, a very long and influential academic career finally ended: Theodore Cressy Skeat died at the age of 96. Needless to say, the name T.C. Skeat stands for high-quality and innovative publications in the fields of papyrology and palaeography, classical and biblical literature, and textual criticism, to mention only the most prominent areas of his research. At the age of twenty-four he took up work at the British Museum in London and became Keeper of Manuscripts until his retirement in 1972. It is sufficient to mention just two of his early and one of his later landmark works here in order to stress his significance for research in the disciplines he published in and, being of major interest here, for the study of biblical literature. In 1935 he co-authored *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Early Christian Papyri* (together with H. Idris Bell), which attracted attention because of the edition of *P.Lond.Christ.* 1, now better known as *P.Egerton* 2, containing hitherto unknown sayings of Jesus. Three years later, together with H. J. M. Milne, he wrote about the famous Greek Codex Sinaiticus *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus* and *The Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Alexandrinus*. In 1999 he addressed this fascinating manuscript again in the *Journal of Theological Studies* (50 [1999] 583-625) and one final time in *Novum Testamentum* one year later (42 [2000] 313-315, reprinted in the present volume on pages 238-240). Not less influentially, he and Colin H. Roberts put forward their ideas about the development of the codex in their epoch-making *The Birth of the Codex* in 1983.

2. Thus and to avoid redundancy, as Skeat's work is well-known among scholars and students of papyrology and palaeography, of biblical literature and textual criticism, more details about Theodore Cressy Skeat should be left to J. K. Elliott's eloquent introduction (ix-xxvi) to this very much welcome collection of specific writings of a man who, although he never attained an official academic position, became such a distinguished and highly-reputed scholar. Furthermore, Elliott is to be thanked for integrating some of his private correspondence with Skeat and, above all, for his work as an editor of twenty-three studies spanning the period of time between 1938 and 2001.

3. Basically, the book is divided into three main parts: eight studies are about 'Ancient Book Production' (3-105) that deal with topics like dictation, the length of papyrus rolls, the roll versus codex debate, the origin of the Christian codex, and the costs of papyrus as writing material in antiquity. The next eight studies are about 'New Testament Manuscripts' (107-240) and, of course and mainly, are about the most famous codices—Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and Vaticanus—but there are two about P<sup>45</sup>, the *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyrus Codex of the Gospels and Acts*, too. In addition, Skeat discusses the question if P<sup>4</sup>, P<sup>64</sup>, and P<sup>67</sup> actually belong to one and the same manuscript and if they form the 'oldest manuscript of the four Gospels' (158-192). The third part comprises seven brief notes on 'Textual Variants' (241-266), among which 'The Lilies of the Field' (243-246 and *ZNW* 37 [1938] 211-214) meant a ground-breaking step for the reconstruction of this saying for the sayings source 'Q'.

4. The book comes with a 'Bibliography of T.C. Skeat's Publications' (xxvii-xxxiv); indices of biblical citations, names, and subjects (295-299); and three appealing appendices: 'The Formation of the Four-Gospel Codex: A Dramatized Account of How It May Have Come About'

(269-278), actually a fictitious one-act play starring the Bishops of Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome; 'The Arrival of the Fifty Bibles in Constantinople' (279-280) by Skeat himself; and 'T. C. Skeat on the Dating and Origin of Codex Vaticanus' (281-294), with a sound argumentation by the editor of the volume, J. K. Elliott. The book contains the tables, graphs, illustrations, and images of the original publications.

**5.** Without doubt, it was a magnificent idea to reprint Skeat's biblical writings in one volume. This way some of his major publications relevant for biblical scholars are more comfortably available. There is nothing more to be added than J. K. Elliott's own words at the very end of his introduction: "The present collection of articles demonstrates his [Skeat's] skills and expertise in conveying those enthusiasms, and is published now to perpetuate his memory and his scholarship."

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