

D.C. Parker, *Manuscripts, Texts, Theology: Collected Papers 1977-2007*, ANTF 40, Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. Pp. XII + 319. ISBN 978-3-11-021194-8. Hardcover, €112.00.

- [1] Arguably David Parker has had a larger impact on the study of New Testament manuscripts than any other contemporary writer. Thus a collection of his essays is extremely welcome not only because it makes the essays more accessible, but also because it allows us to plot developments in the discipline and in Parker's own thinking over three decades. The indices of manuscripts, of biblical citations, and of names and subjects greatly facilitate such analysis.
- [2] The collection is divided into three sections: I. manuscripts (12 essays, 144 pages, 1982–2006); II. textual criticism (6 essays, 112 pages, 1977–2003); III. textual criticism and theology (7 essays, 89 pages, 1991–2007). '... nothing of substance has been changed' (p. 1), though Parker has added brief comments to some of the essays.
- [3] The contents are given below:
- I. Manuscripts
1. A Dictation Theory of Codex Bezae
 2. A Copy of the Codex Mediolanensis
 3. Unequally Yoked: the Present State of the Codex Bobbiensis
 4. The Majuscule Manuscripts of the New Testament
 5. Was Matthew Written before 50 CE? The Magdalen Papyrus of Matthew
 6. Codex Bezae and Other Greek New Testament Manuscripts in Cambridge University Library
 7. A New Oxyrhynchus Papyrus of Revelation: P115 (P. Oxy. 4499)
 8. Some New Manuscripts of the Greek New Testament in Boston and Cambridge (with M.B. Morrill)
 9. Codex Bezae: The Manuscript as Past, Present and Future
 10. The Date of Codex Zacynthius (Ξ): A New Proposal
 11. Manuscripts of John's Gospel with *Hermeneiai*
 12. Greek Gospel Manuscripts in Bucharest and Sofia
- II. Textual Criticism
13. The Development of Textual Criticism since B.H. Streeter
 14. The Translation of OYN in the Old Latin Gospels
 15. *The Principles and Practice of New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays of G.D. Kilpatrick. A Review*
 16. The Development of the Critical Text of the Epistle of James. From Lachmann to the *Editio Critica Maior*
 17. A Comparison between the *Text und Textwert* and the Claremont Profile Method Analyses of Manuscripts in the Gospel of Luke
 18. The Quest of the Critical Edition
- III. Textual Criticism and Theology
19. Scripture is Tradition
 20. The Early Tradition of Jesus' Sayings on Divorce
 21. Through a Screen Darkly: Digital Texts and the New Testament
 22. Jesus in Textual Criticism
 23. *Et Incarnatus Est*
 24. Textual Criticism and Theology
 25. Calvin's Biblical Text

- [4] The essays in section I., which constitute the largest collection, are examples of thorough descriptive work alongside insightful detective work as the story behind manuscripts is laid bare through careful observation. These contain too much information to summarize, but are strewn with remarks based on long familiarity with the material, such as about the witness Wettstein knew as F for Acts (p. 38), which is no longer listed, or throwaway comments which those looking for a research topic would be well advised to consider, such as the lack of study on manuscript 08 (p. 51).
- [5] Some of the most forthright statements of text-critical philosophy come in ‘The Development of Textual Criticism since B.H. Streeter’, which Parker notes in a more extended Afterword was his first piece of extended research, written in 1975.
- [6] It is interesting to consider the terminology used. Even as late as the year 2000 Parker was using the term ‘original text’. Thus he says of P115 ‘We therefore find several variants where the new witness seems to have the original text: 13.7; 14.2, and 14.6’ (p. 88). Holmes has traced scholarly disquiet about this term to considerably earlier, and Epp’s well-known essay arguing against use of the term had appeared the year before, probably while this essay was in press.¹ Already in 1991 Parker was saying that the aim of the discipline ‘is not to establish the original wording of the New Testament, but to assess our materials and to give a history’ (here p. 267).
- [7] Scattered throughout the essays are references to the ongoing work of the International Greek New Testament Project of which Parker has been Co-editor for 25 years including 20 of the 30 years represented by this volume.
- [8] The essay ‘The Date of Codex Zacynthius (Ξ): A New Proposal’ is printed in rather an odd way. The original article was authored with J.N. Birdsall. Parker wrote part 1. and Birdsall part 2. and here we have part 1. and just the heading of part 2. with no mention of Birdsall at the beginning of the article or in the list of contents and thus as one reads through the volume the first hint one notices of joint authorship is the use of ‘we’, explicated as Professor Parker and Professor Birdsall (p. 114). The ‘Conclusions’ of the whole article then refer back to arguments on the catena which were in the part of the article by Birdsall which is not printed.
- [9] Perhaps one of the most interesting points to raise from Parker’s work is what one might call the tension between materialist and idealist (i.e. mind-body dualist) approaches to textual criticism. Such labels can be invidious, and I would welcome other suggestions of labels, but it does seem to me that this tension requires further discussion. Parker has an evident affection for and expertise in manuscripts as physical objects. This is why he labels his formidable text-critical survey *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), rather than *The Text of the New Testament* as the Alands and Metzger named their introductions. For Parker it is the manuscripts which possess texts. All this is excellent and in fact a healthy antidote to the way much previous textual criticism paid scant attention to the manuscripts as individual and historical artefacts.

¹ Michael W. Holmes, ‘From “Original Text” to “Initial Text”’: The Traditional Goal of New Testament Textual Criticism in Contemporary Discussion’, in Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (2nd edition; Leiden: Brill, 2013) 638–41; Eldon Jay Epp, ‘The Multivalence of the Term “Original Text” in New Testament Textual Criticism’, *HTR* 92 (1999) 245–81.

- [10] Nevertheless, to this positive physical emphasis of Parker, he adds denials with which some, like myself, would take issue. These can be found in various parts of Parker's work, but especially in his essay '*Et Incarnatus Est*' (here pp. 311–322; originally *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 [2001], 330–43). The principal negation, seen in the following extended quotation (p. 314), is the denial that texts exist outside of manuscripts:
- [11] 'I have observed elsewhere that "the individual text must be taken seriously as a physical object", that "it is necessary to study a text in conjunction with its material representatives". A similar approach is followed in *The Living Text of the Gospels*, where I attempt to show "the importance of the physical characteristics of the copies of a text for the way in which it is understood". In particular in the present argument, is the insistence that texts exist only as manuscripts.
The incarnation provides a precise analogy to the Gospels which exist only as manuscripts, as ink and papyrus. God is not behind or beyond the Word made flesh, but the Word made flesh is God. In the same way, the text of the Gospels is not beyond the manuscripts. It is not the surviving manuscripts that are meant here, though for us perhaps it might as well be, but all those manuscripts, lost or extant, in which the Gospels have ever existed. Text-critical docetism is quite out of order. The Gospels exist, we might say, as *real* ink and papyrus.
The main analogy can be carried further. Just as in the incarnation the Word accepts the contingencies of human history such as growth and change, decay and death, confusion, misunderstanding and conflict, so the Gospels cannot escape the realities of scribal error, orthodox corruption, damage by accident or intent, total destruction, false emendation, and so on. The concept of a perfect original text is false, in that the text only exists as imperfect copies.'
- [12] This is a fascinating and revealing section with which many may wholeheartedly agree. Some theologians might dispute the incarnational analogy because, at least in Chalcedonian theology, it certainly is the case that the Word exists beyond the flesh. Logically it could enjoy the most real form of existence for ever without ever taking on flesh. However, it is not my purpose here to argue that Parker is wrong, only to point out that his is not the only way of looking at things. 'Text' historically referred to wording, and words can be said to exist apart from material entities which carry them. From this perspective manuscripts may bear texts but to say 'the text of the Gospels is not beyond the manuscripts' is an unwarranted denial since much or all of the text has also had an existence in the minds of persons and it is actually in the minds of persons that it achieves cultural significance. If Parker allows that even manuscripts which have not survived may be said to bear the text (though he does not use the verb 'bear'), then a mind-body dualist (which is what most of the tradents of the text probably were) might also insist that any minds which have ever existed may also be said to bear the text. Physical copies obviously have a special place in the transmission of the text across generations and locations, but to speak of them as the total locus in which the text is contained would probably be to take a different opinion from that of their creators.
- [13] When Parker says 'The concept of a perfect original text is false, in that the text only exists as imperfect copies' again it is the denial of the existence of any text outside physical copies which is open to question. He might perhaps show that

there is no way anyone could know what an original said, or question whether there was an original, or show that the concept of an original was used in a confusing way and is best abandoned. However, his statement above is only logical if one has accepted that text only exists in physical copies. For an idealist the fact that the only copies that are extant (or even that have ever existed) are imperfect is not necessarily relevant to whether or not there was a perfect original text (in the mind of a posited human or divine author or of a scribe). In fact, for the idealist even the statement that a copy is imperfect might make most sense when there is an ideal (at least in the scholar's mind) with which it is being compared.

- [14] These are not matters which textual critics often discuss, but arguably the presuppositions of scholars on this matter do often come to the fore. If the approach which is interested in text but not interested in manuscripts might be charged with docetism, an approach which sees no existence for the text outside of manuscripts might be said to be like early Adoptionism, and those who wish to avoid both of these camps might be said to maintain a Chalcedonian interest in the dual natures of our object of study. It is probably fairest to see Parker's denial of idealist concepts of text as in part corrective of a prior imbalance and also as a statement of relative priority. For Parker, as for Hort, knowledge of the physical manuscripts is pedagogically prior to any abstractions which are to be made about forms of wording, and there is much to be said for the wisdom of this approach.

Peter J. Williams
Tyndale House, Cambridge, UK

© Copyright TC: *A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*, 2013