

Alan Taylor Farnes, *Simply Come Copying: Direct Copies as Test Cases in the Quest for Scribal Habits*, WUNT 2/481, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019. Pp. xv + 253. ISBN: 978-3-16-156980-7. Paperback, \$118.00.

- [1] Alan Taylor Farnes joins the discussion of scribal habits in the published form of his PhD thesis completed at the University of Birmingham under David Parker and Deryn Guest. As the subtitle suggests, Farnes studies manuscripts that are known to be copies of extant manuscripts. He uses this method, the *Abschrift* method, to attempt to answer the question implied by the title, if scribes “simply come copying.”
- [2] In the first chapter, Farnes sets the stage for his research by discussing the current state of the study of scribal habits. Farnes begins by addressing the question of whether scribes “intentionally altered the text” or “simply copied their texts as best as humanly possible” (1). He cites several scholars, most prominently Garrick V. Allen and Kim Haines-Eitzen, as supporting the view that scribes intentionally altered their texts, while citing other scholars, especially Ulrich Schmid, as supporting the view that scribes were simply copyists. Farnes places himself in this second camp.
- [3] Next, Farnes discusses methods that have been used in an effort to determine scribal habits. First, he focuses on James R. Royse and his use of Colwell’s method of studying singular readings to overturn Johann J. Griesbach’s first canon, *lectio brevior potior*. Farnes also addresses Barbara Aland’s method of studying “all readings which depart from the Nestle-Aland text” (21) and Peter Malik’s method of looking beyond the text to the entire manuscript, including para-textual features. Farnes concludes the chapter by saying that the *Abschrift* method is the best method for determining scribal habits.
- [4] In chapter 2, Farnes introduces the *Abschrift* method. He defines an *Abschrift* as “a manuscript that has been shown to have an extant and identified *Vorlage*” (24). He first lists proposed *Abschriften*, with footnotes referencing prior research on many of these manuscripts and their relationship to their *Vorlage*. He cites several scholars to demonstrate that studying the copy of a known manuscript is the best method for determining scribal habits. Despite this, Farnes mentions two limitations. The first is that *Abschriften* are rare and often late. Because of this, they do not necessarily provide insight on the habits of scribes in early Christianity. Second, it is difficult to identify that a manuscript is a copy of another, especially if there are substantial differences between them. Farnes does not consider either limitation fatal to the method, because his conclusions primarily concern only the manuscripts that he studied.
- [5] Farnes then discusses previous work on *Abschriften*. This includes both Greek New Testament *Abschriften* and other *Abschriften*, including many Septuagint manuscripts. Next, Farnes addresses the attitude of scholars toward *Abschriften*. According to Farnes, most scholars view these manuscripts as unworthy of further study, since a copy is considered to have no value when the original is extant. Farnes agrees that *Abschriften* are unnecessary in a critical edition but contends that they are invaluable for the study of scribal habits.
- [6] In the next section, Farnes presents a series of questions that could be used to determine whether a manuscript is a copy of another. These questions concern the percentage of textual agreement between the manuscripts, peculiar dual agreements, historical considerations, paleographical concerns, corrections, and codicological concerns. Farnes identifies helpful tools for determining textual affinity. He also acknowledges that while his first two questions would lead someone to examine the relationship between manuscripts, “the last three steps provide irrefutable evidence that one manuscript is the copy

- of another” (47). Farnes recognizes that an area for further research is identifying an *Abschrift* that may not have a high degree of textual affinity with its *Vorlage*. Farnes concludes chapter 2 with a discussion of his methodology in this project.
- [7] In chapter 3, Farnes studies the scribal habits in P127 using Roysse’s method as closely as possible. He concludes that P127 has a much higher error rate than the manuscripts studied by Roysse, though the ratio of types of changes was similar; this finding supports Roysse’s overturning of Griesbach’s first canon. While this is an insightful study of this manuscript and the use of singular readings to determine scribal habits, Farnes does not directly tie this study to the rest of his project. A study that uses Roysse’s method to analyze a manuscript does not seem to fit between an introduction to the *Abschrift* method and a series of chapters that study *Abschriften*. While this study is related to the discussion of Griesbach’s first canon in chapter 1 and expresses how this method cannot determine whether the singular readings were produced by the scribe or present in a lost exemplar, a problem which the *Abschrift* method does not have, it is up to the reader to connect the dots.
- [8] In chapter 4, Farnes presents a great deal of information about MSS 06, 0319, and 0320, including the provenance of each manuscript. He demonstrates without a doubt the relationship between these manuscripts through several means, but most notably by discussing how the scribes of 0319 and 0320 handled the corrections in 06. The best explanation for the texts of 0319 and 0320 is confusion about how to interpret the corrections in 06. Farnes points out that the Latin texts of 0319 and 0320 are more similar to each other than to the Latin text of 06, which could lead someone to think that one of the later manuscripts was a copy of the other. Farnes concludes, “This highlights the need for paleographical and codicological analysis in order to determine *Abschriften* and not textual analysis alone” (123). Farnes also notes the fidelity of the scribes of these manuscripts, with neither codex adding or omitting any Greek text. While it has long been recognized that 0319 and 0320 are *Abschriften* of 06 (so while this is not new information), it is a beneficial first demonstration of the *Abschrift* method.
- [9] In the fifth chapter, Farnes discusses MSS 205 and 2886 and their relationship. This chapter raises more questions than it answers. Farnes begins by discussing the provenance of these manuscripts and tells the story of the commissioner of these manuscripts, Cardinal Bessarion. Farnes spends the next ten pages discussing whom the scribe of 205 might have been, and while providing a detail history of the scribes John Rhusus and John Plusiadenos, he ultimately concludes that neither is the scribe of MS 205. Next, he reviews past theories and evidence for the relationship between MSS 205 and 2886. Farnes runs through the six questions he outlined in chapter 2 for determining whether a manuscript is an *Abschrift*. The results of these question were inconclusive, leaving open the possibility that these are sister manuscripts. He discusses the unusual order of the books in these manuscripts, with the Pauline epistles after the Apocalypse, and suggests that Bessarion’s desire to unite the Greek and Latin churches was the likely cause of this unusual order. While this affirms the close relationship between these manuscripts, it does not determine the direction of dependency. Finally, after analyzing his study of these manuscripts in his test passages, Farnes is still in doubt as to whether 205 is actually a copy of 2886 in the New Testament. While Farnes is unable to uncover the scribe of 205 or the nature of the relationship between MSS 205 and 2886, he demonstrates well the methods to be adopted in trying to answer these questions.
- [10] In chapter 6, Farnes discusses the relationship between MSS 0141 and 821. Farnes notes that “821 has never been called an *Abschrift* in the *Liste*” (167). The high level of

agreement between these manuscripts in John 18 as determined by Bruce Morrill's dissertation led Farnes to investigate the relationship between these manuscripts. First, Farnes gives a substantial description of the provenance of 821, its scribe, Camillus Venetus, and its patron, Cardinal Francisco de Mendoza. Farnes then notes the many peculiar readings shared by 0141 and 821, especially highlighting their agreement in John 6:49, 6:69, and 21:1 as indicative of their direct copy relationship, with 0141 as the exemplar and 821 as the copy. Finally, Farnes concludes that, even though MS 821 was "copied in Rome at a time when the Catholic Church faced extreme challenges" (183), Venetus faithfully copied the text with no evidence of intentional changes for dogmatic purposes.

- [11] Farnes begins the final chapter, chapter 7, by noting the frequent warnings against changing the biblical text both within the Bible and from later sources such as Irenaeus and Theodore the Studite. In the conclusion, Farnes raises another question he cannot answer: if scribes omit more than they add, how does the overall text increase in size over time? He offers some possibilities but determines that the limited sample size and conflicting data in his research are unable to answer this question. Regarding the question of the stability of the text, Farnes concludes that error rates appear to decrease over time, with the result that the text becomes more. He cautions that "final conclusions must not be made with such small sample sizes" (200). With regard to Roysse's singular readings method, he concludes that the *Abschriften* method is preferable when an exemplar is known, but Roysse's method "approaches an accurate understanding of scribal habits" (201). Farnes also notes that Roysse's method leads to a lower estimation of the rate of error than a scribe's actual copying practice. With regard to *lectio brevior potior*, Farnes concludes that "length should not play a role in determining transcriptional probability" (203). He affirms once again that general scribal habits cannot be determined by the habits of particular scribes at particular times.
- [12] With regard to the opening question of the book of whether scribes intentionally alter the text or if they copy it faithfully, Farnes concludes that scribes can copy the text very carefully regardless of their Greek proficiency, but that a scribe, like the scribe of P127, can purposefully choose to be careless. This is far different from concluding that scribes always or most often copy carefully, which seems to what Farnes asserts in his title and on the back cover of the book. Though scribes can "Simply Come Copying," this is not demonstrated necessarily to be the case. While the scribes Farnes studied "did their best to copy with strict fidelity" (back cover), whether this is the case for scribes in general cannot be determined based on such a small and late sample. The nonnative scribes of 0319 and 0320 further skew this study, with Farnes acknowledging that these scribes "had a weak grasp of Greek and would have had a difficult time making substantial theological changes in Greek" (206). Farnes notes evidence of a patron affecting the transmission of the manuscripts he studied, with Bessarion changing the order of the New Testament books, though the patron did not influence the text itself. With regard to P127, Farnes suggests the possibility that the unique readings are the result of alterations by a patron or a reader rather than the scribe. While this is possible, it cannot be demonstrated conclusively in the absence of an exemplar.
- [13] In terms of future research, Farnes suggests that all of the supposed *Abschriften* be transcribed and collated in their entirety rather than in test passages. He also suggests further research be done to answer the question of why a disproportional amount of supposed *Abschriften* are catenae. Finally, he observes that once every manuscript has been transcribed in its entirety, we will be "better equipped to identify *Abschriften* and determine other relationships" (210).

- [14] The greatest contribution of Farnes's work is his method for determining whether one manuscript is a copy of another. The six questions he asks in chapter 2 are sure to help other scholars identify further *Abschriften*. Farnes also demonstrates the use of this method well in chapters 4–6, even though the method does not prove conclusive for MSS 205 and 2886.
- [15] Farnes says at the end of the book that “I have as many unanswered questions as I do conclusions” (209). One may argue that this book leaves more unanswered questions than conclusions. One of the disappointments of this book is that it contributes little to answering the question that gave the book its title, whether or not scribes “Simply Come Copying.” While Farnes argues that scribes are capable of copying faithfully, he fails to demonstrate that they in fact do so generally. Admittedly, this is a very difficult question to answer conclusively, especially with such late data. Farnes, however, leads us to expect a definitive answer with the framing of the book and the discussion in chapter 1. Despite this disappointment, his description and demonstration of the *Abschrift* method is a valuable contribution to the study of scribal habits, and many scholars will find it useful when trying to determine the relationship between manuscripts with high levels of textual affinity.

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