

INTRODUCTION

The textual tradition of the Greek New Testament is itself a fragment. Only a portion of the evidence for the biblical text has been preserved, with losses from the early centuries posing a particular challenge for the recovery of the oldest form of text and our understanding of its development in antiquity. Most of the surviving manuscripts are also fragmentary in some way, from the small scraps of papyrus which provide some of the earliest evidence for a few verses to more substantial witnesses such as the fourth-century Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus which are missing pages at the beginning and end. Even complete documents may also transmit fragments of earlier ones reused as guard leaves or elsewhere in the binding, or in the form of palimpsest leaves dismembered from another manuscript in order to economise on parchment. The incompleteness of the archaeological record is compounded by the ongoing dangers posed to artefacts which have already survived for many centuries, whether through damage as a result of violence, negligence or malicious activity, or simply degradation through age.

The scarcity of early evidence also increases the value of textual fragments preserved in some other way. The most obvious of these are New Testament quotations in early Christian authors. Even though many of these are no longer than one or two phrases, they may still contain important information about the nature of the text in circulation at a particular time and place. Other types of reworking can also be of textual significance, whether in shorter forms such as lists of chapter titles, lectionary incipits or glosses, or longer forms such as gospel harmonies and pseudonymous writings or apocrypha. One might even argue that the separation of the

biblical text into self-contained passages in numerous lectionary or catena manuscripts is a form of fragmentation which has in some way affected the textual tradition.

Faced with such an abundance of incomplete material, New Testament textual scholars are inheritors of the dominical commandment to the apostles after the feeding of the five thousand: συναγάγετε τὰ περισσεύσαντα κλάσματα, ἵνα μή τι ἀπόληται ('Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost', John 6:12 [NA28; NRSV]). Such a gathering of fragments is not mere antiquarianism, nor an indiscriminate mounting up of material deemed to be significant for its quantity rather than its quality. Rather, in a scientific context where it is necessary to develop hypotheses in order to account for the discontinuities in the surviving evidence (the numerous gaps in the documentary record), academic integrity demands that the explanations which are advanced are based on as full an account as possible of the material which has been preserved. This is a task which requires a range of specialist expertise, according to the nature of each piece of evidence. Embracing papyrology, codicology, palaeography, philology, linguistics, translation studies, detailed comparative textual analysis—and theology too, as well as the insights which can be provided by chemical or physical investigations and the heuristic possibilities of digital transformation, modern textual scholarship involves collaboration between disciplines in order to develop a consistent and comprehensive account of the evidence which provide its *raison d'être*.

The level of understanding required for such research is not only beyond the capacity of a single individual, but also exceeds what it is possible for any one generation to accomplish. Analytical techniques continue to be developed, building on previous advances in knowledge, and even the body of primary material itself changes, with new discoveries and identifications. For this reason, it is promising that almost all contributors to the present volume (and the editors themselves) are at an early stage in their academic career. Each brings an approach to the fragments under consideration which contributes to the broader collaborative endeavour of assembling the many pieces of this vast jigsaw. While the gospel account is not explicit as to the use

to which the gathered fragments will be put, the study of these witnesses not only sheds light on the history of the New Testament text, but also the contexts and communities in which it has been transmitted, used, studied and even fragmented. In short, fragments can be approached on many levels, and it is to be hoped that the chapters in this collection will themselves contribute to a broader understanding of this fascinating material and the story which it has to tell.

CONTENTS OF THE PRESENT VOLUME

Some of the most famous New Testament fragments are those of the early papyri, and it is fitting that the volume begins with an analysis of Papyrus 50 by **Elijah Hixson**. Despite the damage to the writing material, this unusual document with two passages from the Acts of the Apostles appears to be complete. Multiple incongruities lead him to suggest that this manuscript might be a forgery produced in the early twentieth century, and he even identifies a possible culprit. Further material analysis is required to substantiate the observations which Hixson is able to make from a distance. Fragmentation is taken to new levels in **Andrew J. Patton**'s investigation of Lectionary 2434. This has a claim to be the most fragmented manuscript of the New Testament, with the identification of forty-five leaves in twenty-four different locations (and others still to be discovered). In this instance, the dispersal is due to the biblioclast Otto Ege, who created portfolios featuring sample pages from multiple manuscripts. **Duane G. McCrory** considers the Arabic text of the two pages of Romans extant from a bilingual document copied in the ninth century (GA 0278). He shows that, although based on the Syriac Peshitta, a variety of influences can be seen in this Arabic translation. Full account must be taken of these before using Arabic as a source for the earlier history of the biblical text.

Digital tools come to the fore in the next two chapters. **David Flood** examines GA 1506, a manuscript which is only partially preserved in the Pauline Epistles. The use of red ink for the biblical lemmata of this catena manuscript means that the text can be hard to make out on digitisations of monochrome microfilm. Through the application of image enhancement software to

a new set of files, he is able to offer multiple corrections to the citation of this manuscript in current hand editions. **G. P. Farthing** introduces Probability Structure Analysis as a means of reconstructing manuscript relationships, using Family 13 in Mark as a test case. The presence of shared readings outside the main direction of the stemma requires the fragmentation and connection of different groups in order to reach a statistically plausible model.

Biblical quotations in commentaries and other early Christian writings offer another form of fragment, as observed above. **Marie Frey Rébeillé-Borgella** discusses the New Testament references in a little-known work of the late fourth or fifth century, Philippus Presbyter's commentary on Job. Her conclusion is that, while there are some resemblances to surviving Old Latin sources and other possible evidence for translations which have not otherwise been preserved, the quotations are likely to have been made from memory. **Jacopo Marcon** describes a catena manuscript which has recently been added to the Liste as GA 2962. His analysis of its fragmentary text of Romans identifies it as a rare witness to an early stage of the Pseudo-Oecumenian catena, found in only one other manuscript. Also in the realm of catenae, **Emanuele Scieri** provides an assessment of an incomplete copy of Acts which transmits two different catenae (GA 886). He shows how their compilation practice exemplifies the challenge of identifying sources in commentaries which have been heavily reworked, as well as the difficulty of determining whether a shorter text is original or an abbreviation. Finally, **Valentin Andronache** explores quotations of the Johannine passages which mention the Paraclete in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea and Cyril of Jerusalem. Although the text of these verses is largely identical, the two exegetes put these verses to different uses which makes it difficult to compare the relationship between the form of the text and the way in which it is understood.

THE TWELFTH BIRMINGHAM COLLOQUIUM

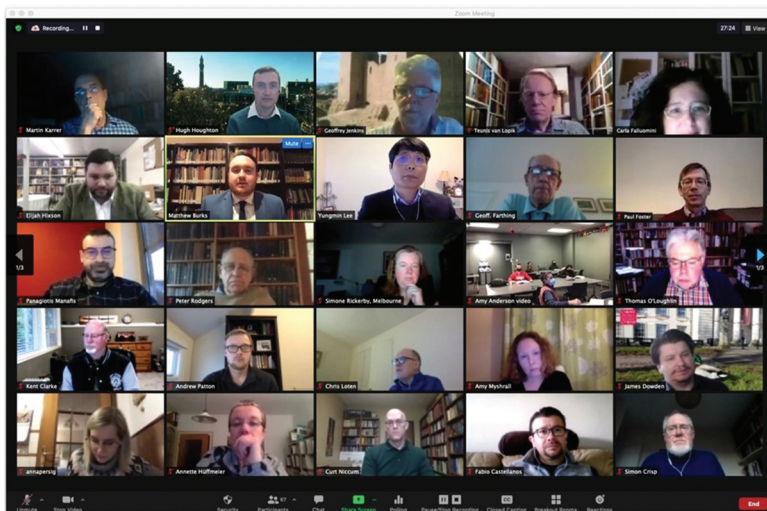
The chapters in this volume were originally delivered as papers during the Twelfth Birmingham Colloquium on the Textual

Criticism of the New Testament, with one exception.¹ Its theme of 'Fragments' reflected the breakdown of academic normality and the disorder and isolation to which many were subject as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The experience earlier in this global crisis of arranging the 'Text-Critical Thursdays' seminars, at which papers scheduled to be delivered at conferences during the summer of 2020 were instead given to an online audience, had shown the viability of an online event in place of the biennial meeting in Birmingham. Furthermore, a regular session held over a number of weeks appeared preferable to two or three intense days of video-conferencing, providing a chance for conversations to develop on either side of the presentations in the manner of the Birmingham Colloquium. In the face of uncertainty and ongoing travel restrictions, a ten-week series of online presentations was organised which, as it then turned out, coincided with the third national lockdown in England.

On Thursday afternoons from 21 January to 25 March 2021, an international audience gathered on an institutional Zoom link provided by the University of Birmingham to listen to a total of twenty-three presentations on the theme of Fragments. Details of each session were sent out in advance to a dedicated email list which comprised almost two hundred members at the beginning of the colloquium. A late afternoon time in the United Kingdom was chosen to facilitate participation from the Colloquium's regular attenders based in Europe and North America, but it did not deter others from elsewhere. Between forty and seventy people signed in to the live presentations each week from across the world, which were even beamed into a university classroom in Minnesota. Presenters delivered their papers from eight different countries, ranging from western Canada to two participants in the south of Australia. Despite the technological challenges, the whole series ran smoothly and provided a showcase for a variety of research and presentation styles. One 'fragmentary' session enabled five participants to give shorter summaries of ongoing work rather than a full paper. Each

¹ Marcon's paper was delivered during the 'Text Critical Thursdays' series in 2020.

presentation was followed by live questions, and informal conversations were then facilitated in online breakout rooms or an extension of the plenary session for those who were able to remain. Although the social programme characteristic of the Birmingham Colloquium could not be replicated online, feelings of sadness at the end of the series were all the more poignant for a group which, instead of the customary three days, had met regularly over the course of ten weeks during a period in which many were in isolation.

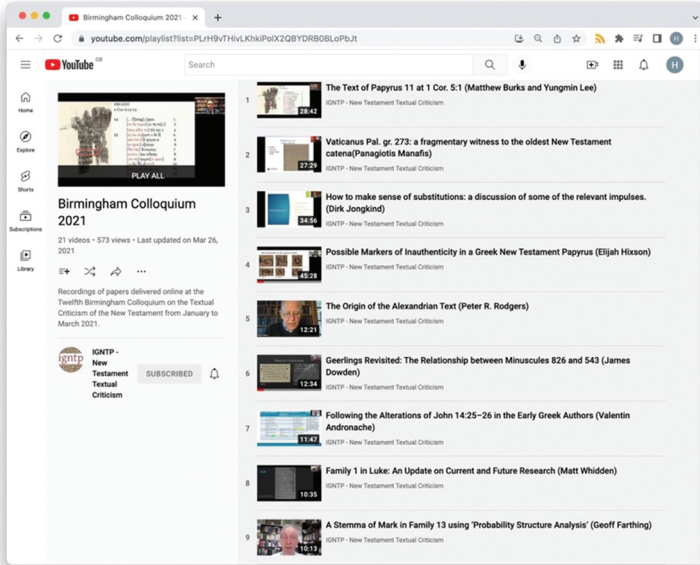


A selection of participants in the first session of the Twelfth Birmingham Colloquium

Each session was recorded, and most presenters gave permission for their video to be uploaded to a playlist on the International Greek New Testament Project's YouTube channel.² This provided an opportunity for those unable to watch live to catch up, and for further dissemination of the presentations. Although Elijah Hixson's paper on Papyrus 50 was a runaway favourite, reaching a total of one thousand views within three months of its being made available online, the entire corpus of videos has, at the time of writing, amassed over five thousand views. This figure

² <https://www.youtube.com/igntp>

continues to rise each month, along with those of the other recordings on this channel. Whatever form is taken by future colloquia, the benefits of this relatively simple way of widening participation in the academic element of the programme are evident.



The IGNTP YouTube Channel Playlist from the Twelfth Colloquium

Notwithstanding the online record of the colloquium, the publication of selected papers in the form of a book allows them to be presented in a lasting and recognised academic format. I am very grateful to my students Clark Bates, Jacopo Marcon, Andrew Patton and Emanuele Scieri for taking on the responsibility of editing this volume, and to all the contributors who have revised their papers for inclusion.³ As two of the chapters are outputs

³ Several papers were delivered as part of the Colloquium but have already been published elsewhere, including Clark R. Bates, 'Stoudios: The Convergence of History, Palaeography, and Textual Criticism on the Greek Minuscule Hand', *Diogenes* 11 (June 2021): 18–36; Dirk Jongkind, 'The Various Scribal Habits Behind Substitutions', in *Ancient Texts*,

from the CATENA project, which has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no. 770816), I am pleased to acknowledge support from this funder to enable the publication of this volume in Open Access. I would also like to express my thanks to Brice Jones, Tuomas Rasimus, Gemma Tully and Joan Shields of Gorgias Press, along with colleagues on the Editorial Board, for its appearance in the Texts and Studies series alongside similar volumes from previous colloquia.

H. A. G. Houghton
Birmingham, July 2022



Papyri, and Manuscripts: Studies in Honor of James R. Royse, eds. Alan Taylor Farnes, Scott D. Mackie, and David Runia, NTTSD 64 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 141–159; Peter Montoro and Robert Turnbull, ‘Revising the Repetitions: The Relative Textual Stability of Repeated Patristic Citations as a Window into the Transmission History of Patristic Exegesis—Chrysostom’s Homilies on Romans as an Initial Test Case’, *Sacris Erudiri* 60 (2021): 69–99; Panagiotis Manafis, ‘A New Witness to the Catena of Codex Zacynthius’, *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 26.3 (2022); Peter R. Rodgers, ‘The Origins of the Alexandrian Text of the New Testament,’ *Filología Neotestamentaria* 35 (2022): 61–5.