

INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUE: LE CODEX DE BEZE* 27-30 June 1994, in Lunel, France

This international conference on a major New Testament manuscript was inspired by Franco-British collaboration between Dr D. C. Parker, lecturer in the New Testament at the University of Birmingham, England, and Monsieur C. B. Amphoux, director of the Centre Jean Duplacy pour l'Étude des Manuscrits du Nouveau Testament (Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique) in Montpellier, France. With the backing of the British Academy and of the CNRS in France, and valuable support from the host town of Lunel, it brought together around 50 students and scholars from various countries in Europe, from America and from Israel, many of whom have devoted a considerable proportion of their work to the study of Codex Bezae. Papers were given on an extensive range of topics, all of which contributed new insights and prompted lively discussion and, as a lasting benefit, gave a new impetus and sense of direction to what promises to develop as an increasingly significant area of research in New Testament studies.

Codex Bezae is a bilingual Greek-Latin uncial manuscript containing the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles with some lacunae. The two languages are set out in corresponding sense-lines on facing pages, rather than in columns as in Scrivener's familiar and excellent transcript¹. The Greek is represented by the letter D(05) and the Latin by d. (Codex Bezae should not be confused with D(06), which represents Codex Claromontanus for the Pauline Epistles, a confusion which occasionally arises in textual and exegetical studies.) Nothing certain has been established concerning the origins of the codex. It is commonly accepted that the date of its being made, as a copy of one or probably more earlier exemplars, was around 400 AD but the circumstances and place of its manufacture are a matter of an ongoing debate to which further contribution was made at Lunel. The manuscript was known in Lyons, in southern France, in the 9th century and it was rediscovered there in the 16th century by Theodore de Beze who gave it its name and presented it to the University of Cambridge in England where it is still held to this day. There is an excellent facsimile reproduction dating from the end of the last century which was made available for consultation at the Colloque.

Codex Bezae is of great interest both as a manuscript, for paleographical and codicological studies, and for the text which it transmits, for exegetical, linguistic and historical studies. The papers at the conference were loosely grouped according to their

* References to papers given at the Lunel Colloque are designated by the mention 'Lunel' after the entry.

1. *Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis*, ed. F. H. SCRIVENER, reprint Pittsburgh: Pickwick 1978; now out of print.

main focus but it was apparent at numerous points that the two areas are closely inter-related and that the answers to questions which emerge in one field can sometimes throw light on problems in another. It is nevertheless a principle of general importance in referring to the text of Codex Bezae (as indeed of any New Testament manuscript) that the date of the manuscript is not an indication of the date of its text, nor, of itself, does it in any way preclude the possibility of its text being the original writing.

It is the nature of its text which has doubtless caused Codex Bezae to be one of the most studied manuscripts of the New Testament, a point underlined by the opening paper². It owes its importance, on the one hand, to its reputation as the chief representative of what is usually called, in a now inaccurate term, the «Western» text. On the other hand, it is its own unique text which has caused Codex Bezae to be the object of so much scrutiny. Traditionally, the Bezan text is regarded as a wayward text, the work of a fanciful and careless scribe, who was more concerned with making his copy conform to contemporary ecclesiastical practices than to faithfully transcribe the exemplar before him. The same scribe would, as the usual account goes, have also been motivated by a desire to make his text more interesting by adding colourful details, some of which happened to convey a fortunate impression of realism and familiarity with first century Palestine. This disparaging attitude towards Codex Bezae has been propagated by a number of scholars over the last two centuries and has been given popular weight by the Commentary which accompanies UBS (despite one dissenting voice, at times at least, among the Committee)³. It has acquired a particular strength and definition from the publication of work over the last thirty years maintaining that Codex Bezae transmits the theological intentions of an editor who, representing the increasingly Gentile Church, wished to assert the superiority of Christianity over and against Judaism⁴.

There have, at the same time, always been those who have defended the Bezan text against charges of being a late, careless revision and indeed, there has even been a persistent voice going so far as to claim that it represents the original text. This has been especially the case with regards to the book of Acts in Codex Bezae. Attention has been drawn to the similarities of its style with that of Luke in his Gospel⁵; it has been pointed out that the apparent theological tendency of its variant readings is in line with the thrust of Luke's work in general⁶.

In other respects, Codex Bezae has aroused interest because of its frequently occurring similarities with a range of early versions, a closeness which is highlighted by the contrasting distance which exists between the text of Codex Bezae and that of any

2. J. N. BIRDSALL, *Trois siècles d'étude du Codex de Bèze* (Luncl).

3. B. M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, London/New York: UBS, 1975.

4. E. J. EPP, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts*, Cambridge: CUP, 1966; J. T. SANDERS, *The Jews in Luke-Acts*, London: SCM, 1987; *Schismatics, Sectarians, Dissidents, Deviants. The First One Hundred Years of Jewish-Christian Relations*, London: SCM, 1993.

5. M. WILCOX, *Luke and the Bezan Text of Acts*, in J. KREMER (ed.), *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie*, Louvain: Gembloux, 1979; É. DELEBECQUE, *Les deux Actes des Apôtres*, Paris: Gabalda, 1986; J. RIUS-CAMPS, *Comentari als Fets dels Apòstols*, Barcelona: Herder, 1991-1995; W. A. STRANGE, *The Problem of the Text of Acts*, Cambridge: CUP, 1992.

6. C. K. BARRETT, *Is there a Theological Tendency in Codex Bezae?*, in E. BEST - R. McL. WILSON, *Text and Interpretation*, Cambridge: CUP, 1979, pp.15-27; Strange, *ibid*.

other Greek manuscript. The Old Latin and the Old Syriac versions are well-known for their support; rather more striking is the support among the more recently discovered manuscripts, such as the Middle Egyptian text G⁶⁷ (mae) or the Syro-Palestinian fragments Sy^{pal} for Acts, of Bezan readings hitherto regarded as idiosyncratic⁷.

As papers were given at the Lunel Colloque and discussion developed, both formally and informally, there were indications of specific themes emerging out of, and often in addition to, the varied array of ideas communicated by individual speakers. The nature of these themes demonstrates that the traditional view of Codex Bezae is seriously open to challenge and that there are questions surrounding the manuscript which are far from settled. Three areas of recurring interest were 1) the appropriateness of identifying Codex Bezae as part of the «Western» text; 2) the possibility that Codex Bezae represents the original text; 3) the place of origin of the codex. In presenting those areas here my intention is not to provide an exhaustive summary of the contents of the Colloque, nor to make reference to all the papers, but to highlight some of the points which make clearer the way along which future research could progress.

1. *Codex Bezae and the «Western» Text*

A great deal of confusion and conflicting opinion concerning Codex Bezae appears to be caused by assimilating the manuscript with the «Western» text. The «Western» text, unlike the other main text-types, does not share a large collection of distinctive readings⁸. The chief characteristic of the manuscripts which are assigned to the type is their non-conformity to any other text-type, and among themselves there may not be any systematic agreement. A high proportion of Bezan readings in the Gospels as well as in Acts are singular readings⁹ and this factor alone creates a case for considering it as distinct from any particular tradition. It is an approach which has already been adopted in the preparation of the new critical edition of Mark's Gospel¹⁰.

Some previously published textual studies have been rather more careful than the popular view allows to stress the singularity of Codex Bezae. Both Aland and Boismard¹¹, for example, have noted that it often stands apart from every other textual

7. J. PARAMELLE, *Actes 2, 47-3, 1: Une articulation du texte des Actes* (Lunel); cf. T. PETERSEN, *An Early Coptic Manuscript of Acts: an unrevised version of the so-called Western text*, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 26 (1964) 225-241; C. PERROT, *Un fragment christo-paléstinien découvert à Khirbet-Mird*, in *Revue Biblique* 70 (1963) 506-555.

8. C.-B. AMPHOUX, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, Eng. trans., Cambridge: CUP, 1991, pp. 101-110; B. D. EHRMAN, *The Text of the Gospels at the End of the Second Century* (Lunel).

9. M. W. HOLMES, *Codex Bezae as a Recension of the Gospels* (Lunel), gave figures for Matthew's Gospel which show that almost one-third of variants between D05 and B03 (excluding readings known only to B03) are singular in D05.

10. J. K. ELLIOTT, *Codex Bezae and the Earliest Greek Papyri* (Lunel), referring to C.-B. Amphoux and J. K. Elliott (eds.), in preparation.

11. K. ALAND and B. ALAND, *The Text of the New Testament. An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, Eng. trans., Leiden: Brill 1989²; M.-É. BOISMARD and A. LAMOUILLE, *Le Texte Occidental des Actes des Apôtres: reconstruction et réhabilitation*, Paris: Editions Recherches sur les Civilisations, 1984; Elliott (Lunel).

type, including the «Western» type. The conclusion which has been drawn on the basis of such studies¹², that it is therefore a later, unreliable corruption of the earliest «Western» witnesses, is not as certain as it may appear, but the recognition of the distinctiveness of Codex Bezae and of its separateness from the rest of the «Western» tradition is sound and needs to be made. That need emerged time and again, during the course of the Lunel conference, as it was seen that things which could be, or have been, said of the «Western» text in general, could not be maintained as true of Codex Bezae once that manuscript was examined in detail.

In terms of text-types, an analysis of the Gospel of Matthew in Codex Bezae¹³ led to the claim being made that the manuscript stands apart from the «Western» text-type, because it looks to be more of a deliberate gathering together of previously existing readings than an accidental occurrence or the end product of a string of copyists' alterations. With respect to the book of Acts, the text was shown by one paper to depart on numerous occasions from all the other «Western» witnesses, leading to the conclusion that Codex Bezae is a corruption of a type of text already established¹⁴; another argued that the text of Codex Bezae has more affinity with the Antiochian text than with what is usually considered to be the «Western» text of Acts¹⁵.

In a detailed comparison of a portion of the Bezan text of Mark's Gospel (chaps. 1-7) with the Syriac palimpsest (sy^s)¹⁶, the suggestion was made that, despite some shared «Western» readings, Codex Bezae had made its own use of sources common to the Old Syriac, the Old Latin and the Diatessaron. It was apparent from an analysis of Acts 12¹⁷ that much of the Bezan Greek text in that chapter has no known support, not even from the Latin pages. The disparity between the Greek and the Latin texts in Acts was the subject of a paper of its own¹⁸ which, in showing how the Latin side differed from the Greek side in sample chapters (1-4), demonstrated in passing the more frequent singularity of readings in the Greek compared with the Latin which tended more towards the Alexandrian text.

The value of the Bezan readings was not unanimously agreed. Whereas some felt that singularity rendered a reading unlikely to be original or even of interest¹⁹, others were prepared to consider singular readings, or ones with little support, objectively and examine each one on its own merits in comparing it with the readings of other manuscripts (the eclectic approach)²⁰. Against both of these approaches, there was a call reiterated by several participants for individual Bezan readings to be evaluated as part of the text to which they belong and not simply as separate examples of variant

12. Mentioned by Elliott in his paper.

13. Holmes (Lunel).

14. M.-É. BOISMARD, *Le Codex de Bèze et le texte occidental des Actes* (Lunel).

15. V. SPOTTORNO, *Le Codex de Bèze et le texte antiochien dans les Actes des Apôtres* (Lunel).

16. A. G. MARTIN, *Codex de Bèze et palimpseste syriaque du Sinai* (Lunel).

17. J. HEIMERDINGER, *Les sept marches dans le Codex de Bèze: une interprétation prophétique de Actes 12* (Lunel).

18. J. RIUS-CAMPS, *d-Ac du Codex de Bèze présuppose un substrat grec divers de D-Ac et montre de tendances d'harmonisation avec le TA* (Lunel).

19. Holmes (Lunel); D. C. PARKER, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and its Text*, Cambridge: CUP, 1992, cited by W. HENDRIKS, *Leçons pré-alexandrines dans le Codex de Bèze* (Lunel).

20. E. GÜTING, *Weakly Attested Original Readings of the Manuscript D05 in Mark* (Lunel); Elliott (Lunel), Hendriks (Lunel).

readings. It was argued, as part of that call, that the Greek text at least has its own inner linguistic and theological coherence which justifies the demand that it should be regarded as a homogeneous whole standing in its own right²¹.

2. *Codex Bezae and the Original Text*

Even when recognition is given to the uniqueness of the text of Codex Bezae, there remains the question of its «raison d'être» —in what circumstances and at what time did it arise? These are questions which were addressed from varying angles and which inevitably recurred during discussion following papers. Essentially, two opposing positions could be detected with some advocating that Codex Bezae stands apart from other manuscripts as a revision, or corruption, of previously existing textual traditions, and others that it predates those texts which display its readings.

A date around the middle of the third century, proposed by K. Aland and B. Aland among others, found favour with some²². Such a date tends to coincide with the opinion that Codex Bezae stands at the end, or at least as the «high-point» —to adopt the Alands' expression— of a developing process of revision. On that view, the similarities between the Diatessaron and Codex Bezae, for example, are indicative of the priority of the Diatessaron²³; the same could be said of other writings of the second and third centuries which were discussed (notably Celsius, Porphyry)²⁴.

Alternatively, the wide-spread existence of Bezan readings in early writers and versions was taken as evidence of the prior writing of Codex Bezae, backed up by the presentation of a collection of Bezan readings in Mark's Gospel as earlier than the Byzantine or the Alexandrian readings²⁵. This is well-known to be the position of Amphoux²⁶ who situates the writing of the Bezan text, as the first writing as such of the New Testament Gospels and Acts, early in the second century. That a second century date can likewise be proposed in papers on the Gospels claiming that the Bezan text reflects the gathering together of earlier traditions is an indication of how similar conclusions can have the effect of sustaining opposing views.

It is very possible that the disagreement in part arises out of the failure to distinguish between different types of variant readings which co-exist in the manuscript. There is a collection of recurring scribal slips, typical mis-spellings, obvious errors of copying, which may have arisen at any time in the transmission of the text. It is imperative, in discussing the nature of the Bezan text, not to confuse these variants with

21. In public discussion: Amphoux, Heimerdinger, Rius-Camps. The apparatus of the critical editions is insufficiently complete for a reconstruction of the Bezan text in which its coherence is apparent. For example, details of word order, connectives and other particles, which are particularly telling in terms of coherence, are by no means systematically cited.

22. It was advocated by Elliott (Lunel), referring to Aland and Aland, *Text* (see n. 11). Cf. Boismard (Lunel).

23. T. BAARDA, *Jean 19,30. Le Diatessaron de Tatien et son influence sur les versions vernaculaires* (Lunel).

24. D. ROUGER, *Celse et la tradition évangélique du Codex de Bèze* (Lunel); P. F. BEATRICE, *Traces du texte occidental dans les objections du païen de Macaire de Magnésie* (Lunel), though neither speakers necessarily adopted the point of view that these writings precede the text of Codex Bezae

25. Hendriks (Lunel).

26. See n. 8; also in his closing paper at Lunel.

the rest of the characteristic Bezan Greek text. That remaining body of text does not, as many concurred, look so much like the work of a careless scribe as that of a meticulous and highly conscientious editor. The high degree of inner consistency which can be shown to bind the text together sustains such an evaluation and, to repeat what was said earlier, is good reason for treating Codex Bezae (even if in its individual books in the first instance) as a homogeneous work, complete in itself.

The question of methodology is one which requires considerable attention in the study of the Bezan text²⁷. The inner consistency is most apparent when, obvious accidental slips having been put to one side, every other variant reading is regarded as potentially significant—from definite articles and word order to the presence or absence of chunks of material—though this is not generally recognized. From an analysis of the text of chapter 12 of Acts carried out on those terms²⁸, I sought to demonstrate that the writer of the Bezan text thoroughly understood the intention and meaning of the text overall. His version, compared with the traditionally accepted Alexandrian text, displays a more accentuated concern to account for the growth of the Christian faith out of Judaism. The preoccupation with things Jewish, rightly detected by Epp and J. T. Sanders (see note 4), is so detailed and exact that it can only occur from an insider Jewish point of view rather than from the stance of an outsider; even more specifically, it reflects Judaism in the Diaspora rather than in Jerusalem. Christianity is seen as the continuation, and not the abrogation, of the faith of Israel, a perspective which is increasingly being acknowledged among New Testament exegetes as attributable to the adherents of the earliest Christian Church²⁹. It is this more than any other single factor which persuades me personally that Codex Bezae represents the original text, in at least the book of Acts.

One matter which requires more thorough investigation is that of whether it is possible or, more importantly, accurate to treat the Gospels and Acts as one unit. Observations were made independently and with varying intentions that the nature of the text in the Gospels is different from that in the book of Acts—different in external support, in exemplar and in tendency. This is a conclusion already reached, with reference to the exemplars used, in Parker's exhaustive study of Codex Bezae as a manuscript³⁰ which was published some two years ago and which often came to be used as a point of reference for speakers at Lunel. It was backed up by a paper on the comparison of Codex Bezae and the early papyri³¹ which indicated that the support among the papyri is greater for Acts than for the Gospels. In open discussion, the view was more than once expressed that what was being said about the tendentious nature of the readings in Acts could not easily be detected in the Gospels.

It may even be necessary to treat the four Gospels as separate entities. Detailed analysis of the Latin text was presented³², for example, which points to the use of different exemplars for each book.

That said, other work was cited³³ which suggests that similarities in the types of variant readings exist between the texts of the three Synoptic Gospels and maybe

27. Amphoux, in summing up.

28. Heimerdinger (Lunel). The exegesis of Acts 12 presented in that paper is supported by that proposed by RIUS-CAMPS, *Comentari als Fets dels Apòstols*, vol. II, pp. 367-387 (cf. n. 5).

29. See J. D. DUNN, *The Partings of the Ways*, London: SCM, 1992.

30. Parker 1992, see n. 19.

31. Elliott (Lunel).

32. J. M. AUWERS, *Le texte latin des évangiles dans le Codex de Bèze* (Lunel).

33. By Holmes (Lunel).

John aswell. Concerning Acts, some research has already demonstrated similarities between the Bezan text of Acts and that of Luke's Gospel³⁴.

Many of the papers which discussed the text of Codex Bezae necessarily focussed on a selection of text from one or more of the Gospels or from Acts. There is a danger in attempting to apply the conclusions which can be drawn from the study of one portion to another portion of the manuscript. There is a corresponding need for conclusions to be carefully tested out on other portions of text before making any firm deductions. For an accurate comparison, it will be important to have reference at some point to the full Bezan text of each book: restricting the study to the use of only certain classes of variants (for example, singular or «Western» or compared with the Alexandrian text) is liable to be misleading in its overall results.

Attention was drawn on a number of occasions to a factor influencing the formation of the New Testament text, little considered among textual critics, and that is the acceptable fluidity and flexibility of the text according, not only to Greco-Roman practices, but also to the Jewish concept of Scripture. The variety of text forms of the Gospels and Acts may well be evidence of this very flexibility. One hypothesis which was put out at Lunel from surprisingly different standpoints³⁵ was that the text of Codex Bezae represents a form of the text before it was fixed in the written form, that latter written form being the one which was finally transmitted and which corresponds more closely to the Alexandrian text known today.

3. *The place of origin of Codex Bezae*

The identification of the place where Codex Bezae as a manuscript was made is more closely connected to the question of the origin of its text than it might otherwise be by reason of the uniqueness of its text. Wherever the manuscript was copied, and however the text was made in the first place, an important matter to address is why so much of the text has not been preserved in any other manuscript, and is almost without trace in the Greek tradition preceding the copying of the manuscript in 400 AD. To some extent, the solution to the problem of the origin of the codex may well have a bearing on the correct understanding of the origin of the text it transmits; the converse is also true.

The issue of the place of origin of the manuscript formed the subject of one paper³⁶, and it was touched on in other papers to do with the writing and manufacture of the codex. Interestingly, however, it did not feature largely as a subject of open discussion until the final session, when it became clear that it was a topic which was provoking a great deal of thought.

A starting point for reflection had been provided by the case made out by Parker in his recent book³⁷ for Berytus in present-day Lebanon as the place which fitted the best the requirements for the making of a bilingual Greek-Latin codex of the type of Codex Bezae around 400 AD. The claim is presented in much detail and only after

34. In passing: J. HEIMERDINGER, *The Contribution of Discourse Analysis to Textual Criticism: A Study of the Bezan Text of Acts*, unpublished PhD. Thesis, University of Wales, 1994; Rius-Camps 1991-1995, see n. 5; M. WILCOX, *The Semitisms of Acts*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1965.

35. E.g., Amphoux, Ehrman, Hendriks, Holmes.

36. A. D. CALLAHAN, *La Provenance du Codex de Bèze* (Lunel).

37. Parker 1992, see n. 19, pp. 261-278.

thorough examination of all the other possibilities which have been suggested, from general locations in the West to a series of specific cities in the East.

Some dissatisfaction with such a claim was apparent both in the paper which presented a new case for an Egyptian origin³⁸, and among speakers who continued to uphold a Western origin. At the core of the debate are the paleographical characteristics of the first hand as well as the technical fabrication of the codex. It was argued that these indicated a scribe who was trained in the West with places such as Sardinia and Sicily being suggested as strong possibilities³⁹.

It was pointed out⁴⁰ that it is not, in fact, sufficient of itself to identify a likely place for the copying of the manuscript; it is essential to be able to demonstrate that there was in that place a possible Christian community with an interest, the need and the capacity to undertake the work. In that respect, it is relevant to bring into the debate the question of where the text was known before the making of the codex, and what kind of community would have had an interest in it. From the papers presented at Lunel, this means taking into account, on the one hand, the fact that some of it was current in Asia Minor at an early date (second century) and, on the other, that part of it was also known at Rome from the time of the early Fathers. It further involves considering the evidence for a Diaspora Christian community who were keenly conscious of their Jewish heritage as the milieu in which the Bezan text arose. It may have been the very Jewishness of its text which prevented it from being wholly accessible to Christian believers from outside Judaism and which caused it to be superseded by alternative texts, in which many of the Jewish allusions present in Codex Bezae are, in comparison, attenuated. In that case, a location within or near to the borders of Palestine such as Berytus⁴¹, is worth further consideration as a place where the manuscript might have been preserved among churches anxious to maintain Jewish traditions. That such churches did exist is established from what is known about the Quartodeciman controversy in the second century.

4. Conclusions

These, then, are some of the areas which became more clearly defined through the Colloque and in which the debate over Codex Bezae has been given renewed impetus. A full collection of the papers is to be published by E. J. Brill under the title of *Acta Colloquii Lunelii: Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis*, eds. C.-B. Amphoux - D. C. Parker.

However strong disagreement may have been during the Colloque over particular points of contention, a striking factor was the general desire for collaboration at an international level. As the President of the Colloque said in his concluding speech, of those present there were those who like Codex Bezae and those who love it⁴²; but both parties had sufficient in common to favour the continuation of the exchange of ideas and findings in the future. The field of textual criticism is vast and one which

38. Callahan (Lunel).

39. J. L. Charlet, presiding the concluding session; L. HOLTZ, *L'écriture latine du Codex de Bèze* (Lunel); J. IRIGOIN, *Les écritures grecques du Codex de Bèze* (Lunel).

40. Parker, in his concluding paper.

41. B. OUTTIER, in his examination of some of the Bezan marginalia, *Les prosermèneiai ou formules de divination du Codex de Bèze* (Lunel), supported the idea of a Palestinian origin.

42. J. L. CHARLET «les amis, et les amants, du Codex de Bèze.»

involves a complex interplay of specialist disciplines; the more scholars can work together and benefit from each other's knowledge, the more likely is research to yield positive and sure results.

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