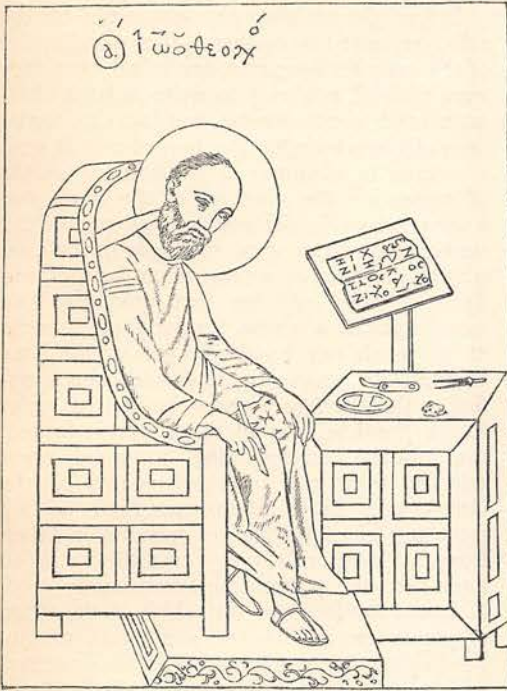


ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.



ST. JOHN AS A SCRIBE. (FROM A TENTH CENTURY MS.)

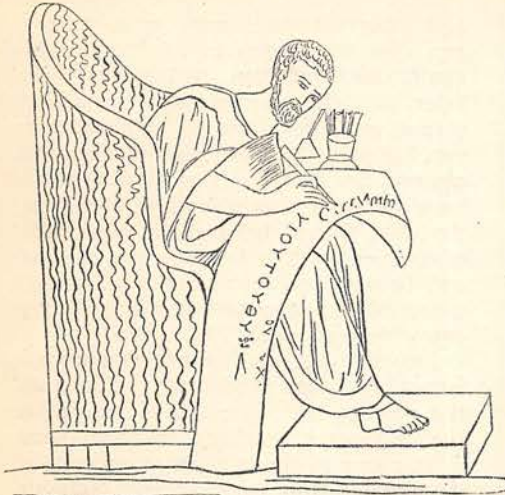
and later witnesses, very grave (not to say violent) objections are periodically made. Mr. McLellan, for instance, maintains that the characteristic of modern textual criticism is servile submission to two Egyptian (!) manuscripts of the fourth century, and that the New Testament has been forced into the bondage of Egypt! And Mr. Burgon believes the very citadel of revealed truth to be undergoing assault and battery, and that it is the business of every faithful man to bestir himself, "*ne quid detrimenti civitas Dei capiat.*"

Into the dust and heat of this arena it is no part of ours to venture; but the question presents itself here, as in so many other similar disputes, whether there be not some shorter way to obtain a correct estimate of the worth of these early manuscripts, without coming between the spears of the specialists. May it not be possible, by a purely paleographical argument, with no theological conscience at all, to determine for ourselves whether the manuscripts in question do really diverge from a point near the autographs? Is there no way of putting into the witness-box the very scribes who wrote the manuscripts, and of making them tell what it

IT is well known to those who have, in any degree, busied themselves with the investigation of the fountains of the text of the New Testament, as presented to us by modern scholars, that, in the vast majority of doubtful passages, the multitudinous authorities in the shape of manuscripts, versions, and fathers are reduced to two, viz.: the Sinaitic manuscript discovered by Tischendorf in the Convent of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai, and the Vatican manuscript preserved in the great Roman library. Without entering into the romantic history of the discovery of the first, or the almost equally romantic attempts to collate the jealously guarded text of the second, it is sufficient to remark that the most recent results of criticism, as given in the New Testament of Westcott and Hort, lead us to the conclusion that no readings of B (the Vatican manuscript) can safely be rejected; and that the text of the two manuscripts is much older than the vellum on which they are written, and cannot be far removed from the autographs themselves. Against these results, by means of which such preëminence is given to these documents as to make them outweigh a crowd of lesser

was that they really copied from in preparing those magnificent vellum books of the fourth century which are so much loved by one school of critics and reviled by the other? In order to do this, we begin with a few simple preliminary considerations, and ask ourselves what we know about the ways of that important race of men whom the printing-press abolished,—the copyists or scribes. Above is a picture from a tenth century manuscript of the Gospels, described in Montfaucon's *Bibliotheca Coisliniana*. It represents St. John at work, writing or copying his own Gospel. His writing-desk is fitted with a double inkstand for red and black inks, a pen-cutter, a sponge for erasing a passage wrongly written, etc. The pages, open on the desk, contain the words with which the Gospel begins, and are evidently meant to represent leaves of a vellum book; a new leaf lies on the writer's knee; moreover, the writing is uncial (or in the great character), and is ornamented with breathings and accents. Observe, also, that the writing is abbreviated in an unusual manner. The artist, then, has represented St. John using writing materials of his own time, and is apparently unaware that the original

manuscript of the Gospel must have been written upon paper rather than vellum, and without breathings or accents, and certainly without any such abbreviation of the word Logos as the scribe suggests. He imagines



ST. MARK AS A SCRIBE. (FROM A SIXTH CENTURY MS.)

St. John to be a scribe of an order not very different from himself.

If, on the other hand, we examine the accompanying sketch of St. Mark as a scribe, taken from the recently discovered sixth century manuscript of the Gospels, the Codex Rossanensis, we shall see that there is a distinct consciousness in the mind of the artist that the Gospels were not always nor originally written upon vellum. Instead of a sheet of vellum, we have a long strip of writing material, which can hardly be anything else than a roll of papyrus. It is to this material that our minds must revert also if we would form an idea of the appearance of an original MS. of the Gospels. Such paper is prepared from thin layers of the stem of an Egyptian reed, pressed and smoothed and polished, and trimmed into the single sheets which, when glued together, form the roll or book. The appearance presented by such a roll, when opened, would be that of a great many narrow columns of writing standing side by side. Now, if any one were to open the pages of the Vatican or the Sinaitic manuscript, he would be struck with a precisely similar appearance: in the first he would see six narrow columns facing him, and in the second eight columns of writing; and almost the first thought that would occur to the mind would be that each of these manuscripts was closely related to a papyrus roll of the New Testament, since they still bear traces of the arrangement of text peculiar to such rolls. And

this discovery at once provokes our closer scrutiny, since we know for certain that in some of the Epistles paper, and not parchment, was employed, and have good reason for believing it to have been the more usual material.

Before determining the character of the rolls, we note two or three other peculiarities of the early scribes; and, first of all, that they were trained, not only to write in large character and continuously, but also to write lines of given length. The importance of such a custom is obvious: it furnished a means of measuring the contents of the book, was a convenience in determining the pay of the scribe, and was an important help in the citation of passages at a time when the uniformity of printed editions was unknown. To have engaged a scribe, for instance, to write at so much per hundred lines would have been absurd, unless the lines had been specified within certain narrow limits. In order to fix the line, two methods were adopted, the models corresponding to which were selected from the principal poems of the Greek and Latin literature. First of all, there was the long line, or hexameter, taken from the Iliad or Odyssey; and this seems to have been the pattern most commonly used. If it was too long for the width of the strips of paper upon which the scribe was writing, he divided the number of syllables or letters which such a line ought to contain into two or three parts, and wrote his hexameter as two or three lines. The effect would be just as if one were to print an edition of "Evangeline" as follows:

This is the forest primeval the
murmuring pines and the hemlocks
bearded with moss and in garments
green indistinct in the twilight.

A little examination shows that this mode of writing survives in the Vatican Codex. The average length of such a line is about sixteen syllables, and the half lines as we find them in the manuscript in question are found to contain seven or eight syllables, with occasional exceptions. If, for instance, we were to represent the opening of the Gospel of John in English, after the fashion in which it is arranged in the Vatican Codex, we should have—

In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God and the
Word was God the same was in the
beginning with God all things were

And better evidence still may be found in the case where St. James has fallen into an accidental hexameter, which is found to

occupy exactly two lines of the manuscript, and may be represented by

Every gift that is
good and every boon that
is matchless.

The second pattern was the meter used by the Greek tragedians and known as the iambic trimeter, a verse of twelve syllables, which may be divided in the same way as the previous pattern. Precisely similar inquiry shows that this divided line is the base of the Sinaitic manuscript: if, for instance, we take the iambic verse which St. Paul quotes from Menander, to the effect that "Evil communications corrupt good manners," we should find that the passage occupied two lines exactly in the manuscript. Although this type of writing is not so common as the other, yet I believe it can be shown that it was the very line employed by Josephus in writing his Antiquities, to say nothing of other early writers.

We have now advanced in our investigation by an important step; for in establishing the existence of pattern lines, we have quantities which are capable of very little variation, and must have remained very nearly the same since they first appeared in the written text. Every scribe who copies such a line has a tendency to preserve the line intact, because he recognizes it as the literary model. If he diverges from it at all, it will probably soon become a wide variation, such as we find in many irregularly written manuscripts of later times. The next peculiarity lies in the fact that, the sheets and rolls of paper being prepared and sold in given sizes, a special number of lines comes to be allotted to each page, so that a scribe has not only a tendency to write pattern lines, but, if he is in the habit of employing paper of a given size, his tendency is to write pages of given size, containing a given number of lines. In fact, before writing a page, he generally rules the paper with the number of lines which he considers proper. The last peculiarity is this: that the early scribes were far more careful than we are in the point of finishing the sheet of paper on which they were writing: if, for instance, a letter was written on a roll of five columns, the fifth column would be generally found to be almost as completely filled as the preceding four. Whether this was a feature of polite education, or whether it was simply due in many cases to the economy of paper, it is impossible to say; but I think we shall be able to establish the statement with a good degree of certainty. St. John, for instance, in his Second and Third Epistles, complains in most definite language of having many things to say for which paper and ink did

not suffice; and it would be very unlikely that a person should make such a statement and then leave the last sheet of paper blank. Curiously, too, as may easily be noticed even in the English translation, the two Epistles are precisely of the same length, and must therefore have been written upon the same space of paper. We shall show presently that each of them was a roll of five columns.

It must now be clear that, if the habits of the scribes (and this term is not limited to professional writers) be as we have intimated, it ought to be possible to restore approximately the original pages of the New Testament writers, and of the Epistles in particular, as soon as we can determine the original size of the pages which they wrote; and this possibility may be realized in the following manner:

The writer of the Vatican Codex arranged his text so as to place on each page three columns of forty-two lines each. If we divide each of these triple columns into three equal parts, and place these parts in succession so as to form a roll, it will be found that the greater part of the Epistles in the New Testament at once divide into fully written rolls, after the manner previously indicated. For instance, each of the two shorter Epistles of John occupies in the Vatican manuscript a column of forty-two lines, and twenty-seven lines; so that each of them is within a single line of five pages, such as would be formed by dividing the columns into sections of fourteen lines: for $3 \times 14 = 42$, and $2 \times 14 = 28$. If, then, we represent the subdivided page, consisting of fourteen lines, each of which is a half hexameter or near it, by the letter V, we should represent a complete page of the manuscript by

v v v
v v v
v v v

or, in other words, the manuscript was reduced from a papyrus roll by arranging the pages of the roll, nine in a square. And by the same method of representation, each of the shorter Epistles of St. John is represented by

v v .
v v .
v . .

The appearance of such a roll in its original form may be gathered from the accompanying figure (page 308).

Without making any of the previous assumptions as to model lines and pattern-pages, an observation of the manuscript itself will

show that there is a curious persistence in the way the separate Epistles have of ending two-thirds down the Vatican column; and this at once invites the subdivision which we made; and without going unduly into detail, we simply remark that every one of the Epistles of John, the Epistles of Jude and James, and the Epistles to the Galatians and II. Corinthians end at the place in the column which we have indicated,—a very remarkable peculiarity, and one for which the scribe who copied the manuscripts is certainly not responsible. He might, perhaps, have schemed to end his separate documents with the end of the columns, but no possible inducement existed for ending them two-thirds down the page. The peculiarity is, therefore, antecedent to the period of production of the manuscript.

When we turn to the Sinaitic manuscript, we shall find, in a similar manner, that the four columns, each of forty-eight lines, which go to make up a page of the document immediately suggest a subdivision of each column into four equal parts; and when this is done, we at once find that a number of the remaining books divide into fully written paper rolls.

In each of these subdivisions there are, as previously explained, twelve half-iambic lines; and if each subdivision be denoted by the sign S, the whole page is represented by

S S S S
 S S S S
 S S S S
 S S S S

or, in other words, the scribe reduced his papyrus document to the vellum by placing sixteen of the papyrus pages in a square. In this case also the subdivision was suggested by the persistent way in which the several books ended at the twelfth, twenty-fourth, and thirty-sixth lines of the columns.

We shall verify the accuracy of this supposition, as to the mode of composition of the manuscript, by referring to some curious blunders of the scribe; but before passing to these, we stop and examine the point which the argument has reached. By a very simple process of section, we have reproduced a series of papyrus rolls of the books of the New Testament of two distinct types, and in either case not infrequently fully written on the last sheet of the roll. Now we need scarcely say that, if a series of documents were written or printed in any regular form so as to occupy complete pages, this fullness of the pages will disappear as soon as ever the pattern of the original writing is deserted; and further, if the original writings were not written on full rolls, no

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 ΛΗΘΗΝΔΙΑΥΡΤΟΥΚΑΙ
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 ΓΕΝΕΣΒΑΙΠΡΟΣΥΜΑΣ
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ΓΑΣΑΜΕΘΑΛΛΑΜΙΣΒΓ
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ΙΩΑΝΟΥ Β

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 ΚΑΠΤΑΡΑΥΧΥΤΟΥΥΙ

PROBABLE FORM OF THE AUTOGRAPH OF THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

amount of change of style or size of page would ever bring them into a series of fully written pages. It follows, therefore, that the papyrus rolls which we have artificially constructed must be extremely close imitations, both as to lines and pages, of the actual autograph rolls. The truth of the theory will, however, be most apparent in the smaller documents, where various readings exercise less disturbance.

The two great manuscripts are, therefore, closely related to the very autographs of the New Testament, which was the point which we started to establish.

But now we return to the actual subdivision of the pages of the Sinaitic manuscript, and verify the method by the consideration of some indubitable errors into which the copyist has fallen: the errors shall be represented as nearly as possible by their English equivalents.

In the twelfth verse of the Epistle of Jude the scribe of the Sinaitic Codex ought to have written the words, "*These are spots in your love feasts,*" etc.; but by mistake he wandered to a passage some verses lower down, and began to write "*These are murmurers, complainers,*" etc., continuing for some lines, until he found out his mistake and proceeded to transcribe the passage correctly, leaving the erroneous words in the text, where they may still be seen. When we restore the document by the process of subdivision, the error explains itself; both of the passages confounded together are the first lines of pages, and the scribe has simply mistaken his page, or wandered from it in search of the words "*These are,*" which begin the two paragraphs.

The next instance is a still more eccentric mistake. In copying the First Epistle of Peter, at chap. ii. v. 12, the scribe seems to have finished a page, and was to resume with the words "*glory to God in the day of visitation*"; but upon returning to his work, he opened at the Second Epistle of Peter by mistake, and began to look along the pages for his catch-word "*glory*"; having found it in the sentence "*glory they do not tremble to blaspheme,*" or, as in the ordinary version, "*they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities,*" he proceeded to copy, waking up after awhile to the sense of his error, which still disfigures the Sinaitic manuscript. But the second passage would not have misled him, if the pages had not been subdivided as shown in the previous investigation, for it is only on such a hypothesis that the words in question are found at the top of a page at all.

One other instance shall be given, as it is an interesting example of a place where the critics and revisers, by extreme adherence

to the letter of the oldest authorities, have perpetuated the blunder of a scribe. The margin of the revised version in II. Peter iii. 11 directs us to read, "The earth and the works that are therein shall be discovered." "Discovered" is more elegant English for "found," and makes very doubtful sense. In the fifteenth verse of the same chapter the sentence reads, "That ye may be FOUND of him in peace." As soon as the pages are arranged in our hypothetical papyrus roll, it is at once seen that this is an exactly similar error to the preceding, and arises from the wandering of a scribe's eye from the top of a column to the top of an almost adjacent column. The error is more unfortunate, because it happens to disfigure first-class manuscripts.

It is needless to say that, if the theory implied in the foregoing pages be a correct one, it must have a very important weight in the criticism of the text; and the more so, as it is derived from considerations of a distinctly non-subjective character. We shall illustrate its use in the criticism of a very important passage in the Gospel of John, at the close of the seventh chapter, which the critics and revisers mark with brackets as being, probably, not authentic.

The passage describes an occasion on which, to quote Professor Seeley's fine judgment in "*Eccē Homo,*"

"He (Jesus) exhibited a profound delicacy, of which there is no other example in the ancient world, and which anticipates and excels all that is noblest in chivalrous and finest in modern manners."

In another passage, he refers to it as follows:

"A remarkable story which appears in St. John's biography, though it is apparently an interpolation in that place, may serve this purpose, and will at the same time illustrate the difference between scholastic and living or instinctive virtue. Some of the leading religious men of Jerusalem had detected a woman in adultery. It occurred to them that the case afforded a good opportunity of making an experiment upon Christ. They might use it to discover how he regarded the Mosaic law. That he was heterodox on the subject of that law they had reason to believe, for he had openly quoted some Mosaic maxims and declared them at least incomplete, substituting for them new rules of his own, which, at least in some cases, appeared to abrogate the old. It might be possible, by means of this woman, to satisfy at once themselves and the people of his heterodoxy. They asked for his judgment. A judgment he gave them; but quite different, both in matter and manner from what they had expected. In thinking of the case they had forgotten the woman, they had forgotten even the deed. What became of the criminal appeared to them wholly unimportant; toward her crime or her character they had no feeling whatever, not even hatred, much less pity or sympathetic shame. If they had been asked about her, they might probably have answered, with Mephistopheles, 'She is not the first,' nor would they have thought their answer fiendish, but only

practical and business-like. But the judgment of Christ was upon them, making all things new, and shining like the lightning from one end of the heaven to the other."

When we come to examine the passage in question, the very simple process of counting the letters, or, if we like, of writing the passage out in lines of the same length as those in the Vatican Codex, establishes that there are fifty-six lines of this size in the passage whose authenticity is questioned. And since we have already determined that the model of writing adopted by St. John is a page containing fourteen lines of the same kind that are found in the Vatican manuscript, it is clear that the doubtful passage is, in reality, four pages of the papyrus roll of St. John; as far, at least, as its size is concerned.

We have further to remark, that the passage, as found in ordinary Bibles, breaks the thread of the narrative; indeed, this is one of the main reasons which made the critics decree its non-authenticity. A little examination will show that the four pages really belong to the close of the fifth chapter, where they form a continuous narrative with the preceding account. This may be seen by comparing the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees in chap. v., in which he challenged them with their non-belief in Moses, with the opening words of the Pharisees on the next morning, to wit, that "Moses, in the law, said * * * but what sayest thou?" And a little study of the text will show that, when the passage is restored in this way, not only does the objection of discontinuity disappear, but the pages are found to fall into line with the preceding pages, as ought to be the case if they were really a portion of the original roll lost or wantonly excised.

It will have been observed that, in the passage quoted from "Ecce Homo," the critical judgment of the writer admits that the passage in question is an interpolation *in its present position*; and this perception that the section is out of its right place, but that it is an integral part of the Gospel, is shared by

another writer of great insight, Mr. George MacDonald: a man who might well have been one of the prophets of this generation if he had spoken more in his own voice, and less through the mouth-pieces of imaginary curates. In concluding with a quotation from his "Thomas Wingfold," we must premise that the writer has fallen into the error of supposing that the earliest authority for the disputed passage is the Codex Alexandrinus of the British Museum. Now, the leaves of this manuscript are lost at the point in question, and a very simple reckoning will show that they cannot possibly have contained the section. The missing matter would be far too much for the lost leaves. With this exception, we may hear what MacDonald has to say upon the point:

"I don't know quite what to think about that story of the woman they brought to Jesus in the Temple, I mean how it got into that nook of the Gospel of St. John, where it has no right place. They didn't bring her for healing, or for the rebuke of the demon, but for condemnation; only they came to the wrong man for that. They dared not carry out the law of stoning, as they would have liked, I suppose, even if Jesus had condemned her; but perhaps they hoped rather to entrap him who was the friend of the sinners into saying something against the law. But what I want is to know how it got there; just there, I mean, between the seventh and eighth chapters of St. John's Gospel. There is no doubt of its being an interpolation—that the twelfth verse, I think it is, ought to join on to the fifty-second. The Alexandrinus manuscript is the only one of the three oldest that has it, and it is the latest of the three. I did think once, but hastily, that it was our Lord's text for saying *I am the light of the world*, but it follows quite as well on his offer of living water. One can easily see how the place would appear a very suitable one to any presumptuous scribe who wished to settle the question of where it should stand. * * * The tale must be a true one, only—to think of just this one story, of the tenderest righteousness, floating about like a holy waif through the world of letters! a sweet, gray dove of promise that can find no rest for the sole of its foot! Just this one story, of all stories, a kind of outcast."

It will easily be seen that the method of restoration of an ancient document which we have employed is not limited to the Greek New Testament, but might be illustrated, if space permitted, by examples drawn from all parts of the field of classical literature.

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