

BOOK REVIEW

T.J. Kraus, *Ad fontes: Original Manuscripts and their Significance for Studying Early Christianity—Selected Essays* (Texts and Editions for New Testament Study, 3; Leiden: Brill, 2007); xxiv + 272 pp. Hbk. US\$169.00.

Kraus has the technical skill lacked by many New Testament scholars and his work reflects this level of expertise. The critical essays that make up the chapters—which were mostly previously published in German and/or in relatively obscure places—can now be conveniently located for English language scholarship within a single volume. Each of the main chapters is followed by a helpful addendum bringing the article up to date with contemporary discussion. Kraus gives a careful first-hand evaluation of the relevant manuscripts under consideration.

The book has a broad, although not explicitly stated, structure (Kraus does provide a helpful orientation to the volume in the introduction). After the introductory chapter, the first five essays primarily involve paleographical analysis of individual texts whereas the remaining essays are more topical in orientation, allowing Kraus the opportunity to bring his papyrological skills to bear on specific issues of context and exegesis.

The first chapter provides a warm and helpful narrative of how the author came to be interested in studying ancient manuscripts. It gives insight into the author and brings a sense of life and experience to the essays in the book.

In the second chapter Kraus offers a healthy corrective to the unfortunate methodological tendency of New Testament textual critics to place disproportionate emphasis on writing materials. He asks, for example, why ‘P⁷⁴’ (*P.Bodm.* XVII) from the 7th century should gain more attention and attain more significance, as it was [*sic*] done in the course of its reception, than the parchment leaf from the fifth century just because the first is written on papyrus and thus is placed in the first category of manuscripts which leads to a more prominent position

rather than the latter, placed somewhat later in the list in a rather inconspicuous position' (p. 16). Instead of writing material, emphasis in discussions of dating and significance should be placed upon paleography.

The third chapter deals with P⁴⁵, noting its importance for assessing early Christianity. It includes a detailed description of the editing process for the manuscript, its style of hand, differences with NA²⁷, a comparative analysis of its page layout with other papyri and an analysis of the level of scribal competence. Overall, this is a significant chapter for introducing the manuscript and pushing the discussion forward by raising important critical questions. The addendum provides a helpful survey of studies published since the original publication of the article.

P.Oxy. 840 is discussed in Chapter 4, directly considering its function—whether it was an amulet or a miniature codex. Kraus takes his cue from Michael Kruger's recently published dissertation on this non-canonical Gospel, but he faults Kruger for not giving appropriate attention to paleographical details in his consideration of the document's function within its community. Kraus supplements Kruger's weakness at this point by providing precisely such an analysis and concludes that it is not likely that P.Oxy. 840 served the purposes of an amulet. 'Other usages come into view, such as the use as a toy book for children, more probably as a miniature notebook, or most probably as a privately used miniature codex' (p. 57).

Chapter 5 reconsiders the so-called Fayum Gospel (P.Vindob.G 2325). Kraus supplies us with a helpful reconstruction of the fragmentary papyrus through a careful study of the paleographical features of the text. This concentration, according to Kraus, also 'brings forth many significant aspects that have to be considered for the discussion of other biblical papyri, the *nomina sacra*, the use of the codex as an early Christian form of book, and the evaluation of the texts of the non-canonical Gospels among early Christians, to mention only a few issues' (p. 83). Especially interesting is the suggestion that, based on the use of a *nominum sacrum* for Peter's name, this previously unknown Gospel could 'promote a potential attribute [*sic*] of the fragment to the *Gospel of Peter*' (p. 83). The addendum includes further discussion of recent research on paleographical issues related to apocryphal Gospels, especially scribal markings and *nomina sacra*.

A line-by-line paleographic commentary on the verso of P.Vindob.G 35835, including photographs, occupies the majority of attention in Chapter 6. The study disconfirms Kraus's initial assumption that the fragment preserves an excerpt from one of John Chrysostom's homilies or a homily written in his name. The addendum supplements the study with a line-by-line paleographic commentary on the recto of the papyrus. Kraus's final assessment is that the document probably preserves either parts of an early Christian treatise on jurisdiction or, more likely, a homily.

Chapter 7, which investigates literacy in the non-literary papyri, marks a shift into a series of more topically focused studies. Kraus considers three illiteracy formulas, two indicating the illiteracy of the author and a third 'slow writer' formula. He shows that public officials and even a scribe named Petaus could get by with no or minimal literacy, demonstrating that in numerous circumstances literate and illiterate persons could share equally in social opportunity. My judgment, however, is that such evaluations cannot be generalized too broadly and that evidence must be taken on a case-by-case basis, remembering that education in literacy and beyond were often crucial steps for ancients desiring social status. While it is true that one may have high social standing in certain instances without literacy training, it must still be maintained that literacy and (especially) rhetorical training greatly aided the process of attaining high social standing. Kraus's claim that the papyrological results from Greco-Roman Egypt have little value in assessing the larger Hellenistic world is also questionable (p. 124)—at least it is one that runs against a consensus currently forming among classical scholars.

The next chapter considers more directly the phenomenon of slow writers in the documentary papyri. A distinction is made between a 'slow writer' (βραδέως γράφων) and someone who just wrote slowly and carefully. A 'slow writer' is someone like Petaus who was extremely limited in his literacy—only being able to write his name and a few other formulas. This is different from a person who wrote slowly or wrote with effort. Kraus, therefore, issues an important criticism in the discussion of 7Q5, perhaps containing a piece of Mark's Gospel (see below), where it is often asserted that the text was written by a slow writer.

In Chapter 10 Kraus begins by exploring the meaning and function of ἀγράμματος and ὁ ἰδιώτης. He then plots out the implications that

his study has for the meaning of the terms in Acts 4.13 where they are applied to Peter and John. Given that the New Testament socio-cultural setting does not carry with it the idealistic assumptions of the classical authors, Kraus suggests that the words do not describe social class, rhetorical instruction or training, and since it is without a semantically opposed term, ἰδιώτης just means a non-specialist or layman. Thus Acts 4.13 should be rendered ‘illiterate men and laymen’. The addendum has a helpful discussion covering the omission of ἰδιώτης in Codex Bezae and additional analysis of the view that the two terms form a hendiadys.

An individual verse is also considered in Chapter 10. The meaning of ‘knowing letters’ in Jn 7.15b is taken up here. Since, as Kraus has attempted to show in previous essays in the volume, illiterates were not discriminated against, the Jews’ astonishment that Jesus knew letters without being educated can in no way be taken as derogatory. The contextual emphasis falls on the amazement of the people that Jesus knew letters without having learned them.

The eleventh chapter aims to derive insights into the ancient practice of book lending by observing comments on the lending of texts in P.Oxy. 4365, which, based on the use of *nomina sacra*, undoubtedly emerged from an early Christian context. The letter discusses two books that were being lent, the books of *Jubilees* and *4 Ezra*, with the latter being identified with a female lender. Sender and addressee names are absent, indicating that Christianity was not yet officially recognized and was under persecution. The two people involved in the lending process were educated and belonged to the social elite.

Kraus employs the resources of linguistic study in the documentary papyri in his analysis of the judicial language of Philemon 19 in Chapter 12. He points to the legal practice attested in the papyri of signing with one’s own hand in order to preserve the legal validity of a document and argues that this is the significance of Paul’s remark that he wrote the letter with his own hand. When coupled with the extensive use in Philemon of legal terminology found in the documentary papyri, it becomes clear—at least to Kraus—that Paul was deliberately employing language common in contract law that was suitable to the epistolary situation for the letter.

The final chapter assesses the *status quaestionis* in the study of 7Q5 and attempts to further qualify the discussion. With his usual care, Kraus considers in some detail the paleographical features of the text.

His evaluation of the research in light of his own study suggests that what the dominant three proposals for the text (7Q5 = Mk 6.52-53; 7Q5 = grEnoch 15.9d-10; and 7Q5 = Zech. 7.3c-5) all have in common 'is that the letter remains of the fragment can hardly be reconciled with the letters mandatory for each hypothesis' (p. 248).

Aside from a few typographical errors, which are for the most part corrected in the addenda, and the fact that most of the articles do not contain a well-structured conclusion, I do not have anything negative to say about the book. It is a fine contribution to New Testament textual criticism, apocryphal Gospels studies and the study of early Christianity and the relevance of paleographical and papyrological studies to its social contexts. Scholars will gladly welcome the convenient English publication of these important essays in one volume.

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