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A Recent Discovery in Byzantine-Era Galilee and the Problem of 'Regularized' Spelling of Koine and Byzantine Greek

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In an archaeological excavation currently underway near the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, archaeologist Mordechai Aviam and historian Jacob Ashkenazi, both of the Kinneret Institute for Galilean Archaeology at Kinneret Academic College, have uncovered an early fifth-century Byzantine church.[1] Of special interest are the several Greek inscriptions that have been exposed. These inscriptions have relevance for church history and politics in the early Byzantine period, the role of women in the early church and phonology and spelling, particularly as they relate to Scripture. The last topic has relevance for contemporary scholarly discussions about new editions of the Greek New Testament (and perhaps also the Septuagint) that attempt to reflect phonologically-based spelling conventions in late antiquity rather than the later standardized spelling conventions that arose in the late medieval period in Europe.

1. The dig site is at el-Araj, which some think may be Bethsaida Julias of the first century. The precise location of the church is being withheld from the public as a precaution against looting and vandalism. The discovery has been reported in the *Times of Israel* (7 November 2017). The report can be accessed at https://www.timesofisrael.com/who-run-the-world-sometimes-women-1600-year-old-church-mosaic-shows. For a brief published report, see J. Randall Price and H. Wayne House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), p. 281.

Church Politics and Women

On the floor of the recently discovered church in Galilee is a mosaic dedication inscription that provides a completion date of 445 CE. The mosaic runs some five meters from left to right and about one meter from top to bottom. Most of the inscription is on the left-hand side of the mosaic, within a non-ornate border. Additional lettering, comprising names mostly, along with a peacock, is on the right-hand side of the mosaic. Most of the tiles that make up the mosaic are dark brown (for the lettering) and beige (for background). However, there are some blues, yellows and light greens in the peacock itself. The craftsmanship is workmanlike but not of high quality. See Figure 1.

Fig. 1. Floor mosaic from Galilee. 445 CE.

Of great interest in this inscription is a reference to Irenaeus, bishop of Tyre, who flourished in the first half of the fifth century.[2] It had been surmised by historians that Irenaeus (not to be confused with the better known second-century Christian apologist in Lyons, France) had been ordained as bishop as early as 444 CE and then around 449 CE was deposed for supporting Nestorius, who was denounced for rejecting the teaching that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was Theotokos, or 'God-bearer'. The inscription's reference to Irenaeus and the date that is given provide confirmation regarding Irenaeus.[3]

2. Reference to Irenaeus appears, in the genitive, in the left-hand side of the mosaic, in the first line of the inscription at the right end of the line: ἐπισκόπου Ἰρηνεῦ. Note the spelling of Ἰρηνεῦς, in contrast to the better-known form Εἰρηναῖος. The phonetic variations found are described below. Note also what Claude Brixhe calls 'confusion of flectional paradigms' (Claude Brixhe, 'Linguistic Diversity in Asia Minor during the Empire: *Koine* and Non-Greek Languages', in Egbert J. Bakker [ed.], *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language* [Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014], pp. 228-52 [236]).

3. Another Byzantine-era church has been recently excavated in Israel, this one at Ashdod-Yam, on the Mediterranean coast (see Fig. 2). A Greek inscription within a floor mosaic has been unearthed. It reads '[By the grace of God / or Christ], this

Fig. 2. Floor inscription from Ashdod-Yam.

The second item of interest is an inscription in honor of a woman who apparently was a major contributor to the building of this early Byzantine church. In a curved border of a tile mosaic, featuring circular patterns, appear the words στήθει τῆς δούλης σου Σωσάνν 'Set up by your servant Sosann' (see Fig. 3). Σωσάνν probably should be pronounced as *Shōshann(ah)*. In European languages it is pronounced *Susan* and *Susanna*. Jews and Christians alike referenced themselves, either in dedications or epitaphs, as 'servants' of the Lord.

One will recall the inscribed prayer in one of the fourth-century tombs at Beth She'arim, Galilee: 'Lord, remember your servant [τῆς δούλης σου] Primosa.'[4] The inscription is found in the upper margin of a lintel. Within the frame of the lintel, in slightly larger letters and figuring more prominently, is a prayer in memory of Primosa's husband: 'Lord, remember your servant [τοῦ δούλου σου] Sakerdus.'[5]

work was done from the foundation under Procopius, our most saintly and most holy bishop, in the month Dios of the 3rd indiction, year 292.' The year 292 corresponds to 539 CE, or about 90 years after the church near Bethsaida. The Ashdod-Yam church inscription has been deciphered by Leah Di Segni of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. For a brief report, see http://www.foxnews.com/science/2017/11/24/incredible-1500-year-old-christian-mosaic-uncovered-in-israel.html.

4. Moshe Schwabe and Baruch Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*. II. *The Greek Inscriptions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1974), no. 184/1.

5. Schwabe and Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*, no. 184/2.

Another epitaph should be mentioned; it is Christian and was found on the Mount of Olives in 1903, close to the so-called Tomb of the Prophets.[6] The inscription provides us with a fourth-century date.[7] The first seven or so letters of line 7 are not included in our transcription,

Fig. 3. Inscription honouring Σωσάνν.

even though parts of four letters are visible, because we cannot determine the wording (the beginning of the line reads: ...].ιτ.) as the first three or so letters are fully broken away, and the next three or four are fragmentary (probably including an iota and tau). Line 8 is also not determinable. The first nine letters are broken away and the line ends with what appears to be the lettering ισωνπρεσ).[8] The decipherable inscription, which continues after line 8, reads as follows:

6. A brief notice of 'l'inscription de Sophie' was announced in Léon Cré, 'Épitaphe de la Diaconesse Sophie', *RB* 13 (1904), pp. 260-62, with plate on p. 261. The inscription is housed in the Musée Biblique de Ste. Anne in Jerusalem (we express our gratitude to Father Pol Vonck, who in 2013 permitted Craig A. Evans to examine it; the photograph is by Evans). For additional bibliography and discussion, see Greg H.R. Horsley (ed.), *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. IV (North Ryde, NSW, Australia: Macquarie University, 1987), pp. 239-44 (henceforth *NewDocs* 4), no. 122; and Hannah M. Cotton *et al.* (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae.* I. *Jerusalem, Part 2: 705–1120* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 387-88 (henceforth *CIIP*), no. 1004.

7. The date is established by means of the Roman indiction system, referring to divisions of time into fifteen-year intervals. See Elias J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2nd edn, 1980), pp. 78-79.

8. *NewDocs* 4 no. 11 reads the fragmentary letters at the beginning of line 7 as θίτω, while *CIIP* no. 1004 reads οιτο, but with dots under the first and last letters

† ἔνθαδε κῖται ἡ δούλη
καὶ νύμφη τοῦ Χριστοῦ
Σοφία ἡ διάκονος ἡ δευ
τέρα Φοίβη κοιμηθῖσα
5 ἐν ἰρήνη τῆ ΚΑ τοῦ Μαρ
τίου μηνὸς ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) ΙΑ
...].... Κύριος ὁ Θεός
[9±]...

† Here lies the servant
and bride of Christ
Sophia, the deacon, the sec-
ond Phoebe, having gone to sleep
5 in peace, the 21st of the month
of March, of the 11th ind(iction) [319 CE],
... the Lord God ...

The inscription is on a limestone slab, roughly square. See Figure 4. In the inscription we observe three spelling variations, all instances of the most common itacism of the ι replacing the digraph (or diphthong) ει (diphthongs became monophthongs during the Koine period; see further instances below).[9] The first is in line 1, with κῖται rather than κεῖται; the second in line 4, with κοιμηθῖσα rather than κοιμηθεῖσα; and the third in line 5, with ἰρήνη rather than εἰρήνη.[10] We also do not include iota subscript (see two possible instances in line 5), as there is no iota ad- or subscript in the inscription, a feature not unexpected in an inscription of this time.

indicating uncertainty. We are not even as certain as they are. We are tempted to see wording in line 8 indicating that Sophia was an 'elder' or presbyter with authority within the church, but there is not sufficient wording to establish a reading here. For possible readings of line 8, including]ισων πρεσ- and]σων πρεσ-, see *NewDocs* 4 no. 122 and *CIIP* no. 1004. The latter offers a possible restoration of the lettering as πα]σῶν πρεσ[βυτερῶν, 'of all the elders' (indicating either Sophia, in which case it is a feminine noun, or other elders, in which case it is masculine). The indication, according to *CIIP*, is that Sophia was a nun with authority (as deacon), possibly the head of a nunnery (they translate as 'all the nuns').

9. See Francis T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (2 vols.; Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1975–81), I, pp. 89-90.

10. In line 6, the inscription has ινδς. This is an abbreviation of the Greek word ἰνδικτίων (a calque from Latin *indictio*), here abbreviated by use of the stigma abbreviation mark (*CIIP* no. 1004; cf. also *CIIP* nos. 2492, 2943, 2494, 2496, 2530, 2542, 2543). See also Kathleen McNamee, *Abbreviations in Greek Literary Papyri and Ostraca* (BASPSup, 3; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), p. 43.

The late Sophia is called a διάκονος (with the sense of 'servant'), from which we derive 'deacon', and which is often translated in Christian theological contexts as 'minister'. She is also called ἡ δευτέρα Φοίβη ('the second Phoebe'), which alludes to the woman mentioned in Rom. 16.1: συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὖσαν καὶ διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς ('I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is also a minister of the church which is in Cenchrea').[11] One may speculate that if Sophia was 'the second Phoebe', who served the Church, perhaps Susanna in our Galilee inscription was a 'second Susanna', who, after her namesake in Lk. 8.2-3, provided financial assistance to the Church (see further discussion below).

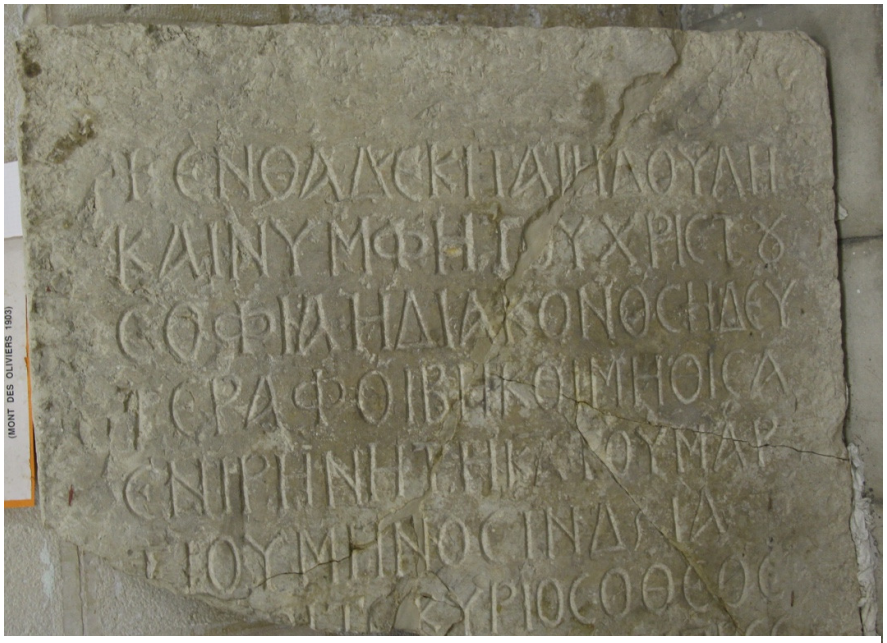

Fig. 4. Fourth-century Christian epitaph from the Mount of Olives.

The name Susanna was not especially popular in Jewish late antiquity; its attestation is rare. The Hebrew name derives from שׁוֹשָׁן (*shōshān*), 'lily' (1 Kgs 7.26; 2 Chron. 4.5; Song 2.1-2; Hos. 14.5). The masculine form שֵׁשָׁן (*shēshān*), though vocalized Σωσάν in the LXX, appears in 1 Chron. 2.31, 34, 35. The feminine form שושן (*shūshan*, or

11. See Stanley E. Porter, *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary* (NTM, 37; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), pp. 289-91.

Susan) occurs on at least two ossuaries.[12] The name שושנה (*shōshanah* or *shūshanah*) also appears in Nabatean sources.[13]

The Greek form Σουσάννα appears in the apocryphal addition to Daniel of that name. It also occurs in Lk. 8.2-3, where Susanna is mentioned alongside Mary Magdalene and Joanna. The name also appears in papyri from Egypt.[14] The form Σούσων is found in *Sib. Or.* 4.95-96 ('the people of Bactria and Sousōn[15] will all flee to the land of Greece'), indicating that Susa, the name of the Persian capital, might be related to the name Susan or Susanna. In Hebrew (e.g. Neh. 1.1; Est. 1.2) Susa appears as שׁוּשַׁן (*shūshan*) and in Greek as Σουσά (though usually in the plural ἐν Σούσοις, as also in Josephus, e.g. *Ant.* 10.269). The form Σωσάνν in the recently discovered mosaics of the fifth-century church in Galilee better vocalizes the underlying Hebrew pronunciation of the name (so also in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.31.1, where we find Σωσάννα).

The appearance of a woman's name in an inscription of this nature may also shed light on the sociology and ecclesiastical polity of early Christianity. A number of prominent women are mentioned in the New Testament. Besides the aforementioned Mary Magdalene, Joanna (the

12. Hannah M. Cotton *et al.* (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*. I. *Jerusalem, Part 1: 1–704* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), nos. 61 and 235. See also Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity. Part I: Palestine 330 BCE–200 CE* (TSAJ, 91; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), pp. 462, 451; *idem*, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity. Part III: The Western Diaspora, 330 BCE–650 CE* (TSAJ, 126; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 687-88.

13. Avraham Negev, *Personal Names in the Nabatean Realm* (Qedem, 32; Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991), nos. 1118 and 1119.

14. Friedrich Preisigke, *Namenbuch: Enthaltend alle griechischen, lateinischen, ägyptischen, hebräischen, arabischen und sonstigen semitischen und nicht semitischen Menschenname, soweit sie in griechischen Urkunden (Papyri, Ostraka, Inschriften, Mumienschildern usw.) Ägyptens sich vorfinden* (Heidelberg: No publisher given, 1922), p. 392; Daniele Foraboschi, *Onomasticon Altertum Papyrologicum (Supplemento al Namenbuch di F. Preisigke)* (Milan: Cisalpino, 1967), p. 297.

15. In his English translation John Collins transliterates 'Susa'. See John J. Collins, 'Sibylline Oracles', in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1983–85), I, p. 386. It is also possible that in an epitaph at Beth She'arim the prepositional phrase παρὰ Σουσία (with Σουσία as the genitive of Σουσίας) means 'from Susa'. See Schwabe and Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*, no. 219.

wife of Chuza, Herod's steward) and Susanna, women appear in some of Paul's letters in contexts that suggest that they were leaders in the early Church (e.g. Rom. 16.1, 3, 6, 7,[16] 12, 15; Phil. 4.2-3). It is surmised that while many of the Roman and Byzantine female elite embraced the Christian faith, their husbands, though sympathetic, did not become Christians (at least not openly), not wishing to lose power and position. As a result, membership, including leadership, in the first few centuries of the Church very much tilted in favour of women.[17] The newly discovered inscription from Galilee apparently bears witness to this reality.

Quotations of Scripture and Spelling

Another feature of interest arising from the newly discovered church mosaics in Galilee concerns the quotation of Ps. 118.19a. In the top line of a text on a third mosaic, whose design and style closely match the other mosaics, we find the first part of Ps. 118.19 (see Fig. 5). The text reads: καὶ ἀνύξετή μοι πύλας δικεοσύνης 'And open to me the gates of righteousness'. Apart from the addition of καί, the text matches the Septuagint word for word. What is noticeably different, however, are the numerous vowel interchanges. In the imperative ἀνοίξατε we find three vowel variations: υ replacing the diphthong οι (a very common interchange), ε replacing α and η replacing ε (also very common). To have spelling variants in three of the four syllables of a single word is remarkable. In the noun δικαιοσύνης we find ε for the diphthong αι (the second most common vowel interchange, reflecting monophthongization).[18] We notice the tendency to raise the vowels in these instances. The 'regularized' spelling version of Ps. 118.19a reads as follows: ἀνοίξατέ μοι πύλας δικαιοσύνης.

We place the word 'regularized' in quotation marks because in antiquity spelling was often phonetically motivated and hence differed for

16. In Rom. 16.7 Ἰουνία (Junia) is described as 'well-known/notable among the apostles' (see Porter, *Letter to the Romans*, p. 296). See Eldon J. Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). The usage of this name in the New Testament era strongly argues that it is feminine, not masculine.

17. Catherine Kroeger, 'The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church', *Christian History* 17 (2017), pp. 6-11.

18. On all of these sound changes, see Gignac, *Grammar*, I, pp. 197-98, 278-82, 242-44, 192-93.

various reasons such as region, dialect, bilingual interference, sound environment (accented/unaccented syllables, before particular letters, etc.) and idiolect, besides there being simple errors. This phonological variation occurred even with respect to the biblical text, where one might think there would be greater consistency. Interchanges involving all of the vowels and consonants are common, though consonants less so.

Fig. 5. Quotation of Ps. 118.19a.

We also find phonological variation in the well-known quotations of Rom. 13.3 found at Caesarea Maritima, a prosperous harbor city on the central Mediterranean coast of Israel.[19] Both quotations were found in a revenue office dating to the sixth or seventh century. Both are tile mosaics and both are presented within a framed circle. They are as follows:

†
θέλεις
μὴ φοβεῖσθαι
τὴν ἐξουσίαν τὸ
ἀγαθὸν ποίει
5 καὶ ἕξεις ἔπαινον
ἐξ αὐτῆς

θέλεις
μὴ φοβῖσθαι
τὴν ἐξουσίαν
10 τὸ ἀγαθὸν
ποίει

19. Caesarea Maritima, greatly expanded and enhanced during the administration of Herod the Great, became the seat of the Roman prefects and procurators during the New Testament period (Acts 8.40; 9.30; 10.1; 12.19; Josephus, *War* 2.171).

The first quotation, adorned with a cross at the top and a floral design at the bottom, presents a complete and phonetically regularized quotation of Rom. 3.13 ('Do you wish not to fear authority? Do the good and you will have praise from it'). The second quotation omits the last part of the verse ('and you will have praise from it') and interchanges the ει diphthong in φοβεῖσθαι in line 2 with ι in φοβῖσθαι in line 8.[20] This is the most common vowel interchange and indicates that the diphthong was being produced as the high front vowel /i/.[21]

We encounter a more interesting example in a mosaic on the floor of a decorated room in a villa that dates to the late fifth century. The text, within a circle adorned with floral designs at top and bottom, reads:

† Κ(ύριο)ς ὁ Θ(εὸ)ς εὐλο
γήσει τὸν σῖτόν
σου καὶ τὸν οἶνόν
σου καὶ τὸ ἔλεόν
5 σου καὶ πληθυ
νεῖ ἀμήν †

'† The L(or)d G(o)d will bless your grain and your wine and your oil and he will multiply (them). Amen. †'

The text is an obvious paraphrase of portions of Deut. 7.12-13 ... κύριος ὁ θεός ... εὐλογήσει σε καὶ πληθυνεῖ σε καὶ εὐλογήσει τὰ ἔκγονα τῆς κοιλίας σου καὶ τὸν καρπὸν τῆς γῆς σου, τὸν σῖτόν σου καὶ τὸν οἶνόν σου καὶ τὸ ἔλαιόν σου ('... the Lord God ... will bless you and multiply you and will bless the offspring of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil').[22] The subject, κύριος ὁ θεός,

20. For text, discussion, and plates, see Clayton M. Lehmann and Kenneth G. Holum, *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima* (The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima, Excavation Reports, 5; Atlanta: The American Schools of Oriental Research, 2000), nos. 88 and 89 and plates lxiv.88 and lxiv.89.

21. Gignac, *Grammar*, I, p. 189.

22. For text, discussion, and plates, see A. Siegelmann, 'A Mosaic Floor at Caesarea Maritima', *IEJ* 24 (1974), pp. 216-21 and pl. 47 Fig. A; Yiannis E. Meimaris, *Sacred Names, Saints, Martyrs and Church Officials in the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri pertaining to the Christian Church of Palestine* (Athens: Research Center for Greek and Roman Antiquity; The National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1986), no. 145; Lehmann and Holum, *Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima*, no. 129 and pl. lxxxviii.129. Siegelmann is especially helpful for description and details of the find. See also Walter Ameling *et al.* (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae.* II. *Caesarea and the Middle Coast. 1121–2160* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), p. 96 (*CIIP* no. 1172).

whose two components are written as *nomina sacra* (here expanded), is drawn from v. 12. The rest of the quotation is an abridgement and rearrangement of v. 13. The most notable omission in the floor mosaic is the dropping of 'the offspring of your womb' (τὰ ἔκγονα τῆς κοιλίας σου). It is not the offspring that will be multiplied (πληθυνεῖ); it is the grain, wine and oil. The paraphrase of Deut. 7.12-13 is very much oriented to hopes of bountiful harvest. We again find a phonetic spelling variation. The diphthong αι in ἔλαιον becomes ε (reflecting monophthongization), the same variation we observed above in the mosaic quotation of Ps. 118.19.

Two more Old Testament quotations should be mentioned; both are from the Psalter. The first is within a floor mosaic medallion, probably dating to the fifth century. It reads:

† ἀπὸ καρ
ποῦ σίτου
καὶ οἴνου καὶ
ἐλέου αὐτῶν
5 ἐπληθύν
θησαν †

'† From the fruit of their grain and wine and oil they were multiplied †'

The quotation is derived from Ps. 4.7 (LXX): ἔδωκας εὐφροσύνην εἰς τὴν καρδίαν μου· ἀπὸ καιροῦ σίτου καὶ οἴνου καὶ ἐλαίου αὐτῶν ἐπληθύνθησαν 'You have put gladness in my heart; from the time of their grain and wine and oil they were multiplied.'[23] The text of the mosaic is limited to the second half of the verse. Again, in line 4 in the word ἐλαίου the mosaic has ε instead of αι. More significantly, the text of the mosaic reads ἀπὸ καρποῦ ('from the fruit') instead of ἀπὸ καιροῦ ('from the time'). It is hard to determine if this is a deliberate variant; it could result from any number of different reasons, including confusion of ρ and π, confusion of the vertical strokes of successive letters (ιρ with ρπ), or an intentional word change, among others. Both readings are well suited for the agrarian setting and context of the mosaic.

The second quotation from the Psalter is found on a marble plaque. The plaque is adorned at the top left and top right with birds (turtle

23. Siegelmann, 'A Mosaic Floor at Caesarea Maritima', pl. 47, Fig. B; Lehmann and Holum, *Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima*, no. 130 and pl. lxxxix.130; *CIIP* no. 1173.

doves?). There are small birds in the bottom corners; between them are two fish.[24] The inscription reads:

† φωνὴ Κ(υρίο)υ
ἐπὶ τῶν
ὑδάτων
ὁ Θ(εὸ)ς τὴς δό
5 ξης ἐβρόντη
σεν

† 'The voice of the L(or)d upon the waters, the G(o)d of glory thundered!'

The quotation is derived from Ps. 28.3 (LXX): φωνὴ κυρίου ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων, ὁ θεὸς τὴς δόξης ἐβρόντησεν, κύριος ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν 'The voice of the Lord upon the waters, the God of glory thundered, the Lord upon many waters.' The marble inscription matches the text of the Septuagint, with the exceptions of the omission of the third line of the verse ('the Lord upon many waters').[25] There are no phonetic spelling variations.

These few examples of quotations and paraphrases of New Testament and Old Testament Scripture from the early Byzantine period attest to textual stability on the one hand and a range of spelling variations on the other. Of course, these variations are not limited to quotations of Scripture; they are readily found among the inscriptions, graffiti and papyri of this period. There is no need to provide further examples beyond those already reviewed; several studies have identified and discussed many examples.[26]

24. Meimaris, *Sacred Names*, nos. 56 and 144; Lehmann and Holum, *Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima*, no. 133 and pl. xci.133; *CIIP* no. 1174.

25. We note that Ps. 28.3 in both Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus uses the *nomina sacra* in these two places.

26. See Schwabe and Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*, pp. 201-202 (vowels), 202-203 (consonants), 203 (declension), 204 (syntax); Lehmann and Holum, *Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima*, pp. 27-28; Pieter W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE–700 CE)* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991), pp. 24-32. For a comprehensive survey of spelling and morphological anomalies, mostly in papyri, see Gignac, *Grammar*, I, pp. 71-72, 75, 111-18, 124-29, 134-38, 154-65, 189-93, 226-28, 230-31, 235-49, 267-88; II, pp. 25-29, 46-47, 62-64, 85, 190-92, 223-25, 335-45.

The Manuscripts of the Greek Bible

The observation of spelling variations in quotations of Scripture leads one to consider the phenomena of the biblical manuscripts themselves. In recent years there have been calls to use texts that were actually in circulation in antiquity, texts that were read, studied and copied in the early Church, rather than confine exegesis and critical studies to the use of modern synthetic texts.[27] Stanley Porter's commentary series on the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), based on extant ancient texts (such as Codex Sinaiticus or Codex Vaticanus), constitutes a welcome response to this call.[28] So also is the new edition of the Greek New Testament that is sponsored by Tyndale House in Cambridge.

The Greek New Testament produced by Tyndale House attempts to present the Greek text as closely as possible to what the text is believed to have looked like in the early centuries of the Christian Church. Of course, that is the goal of every critical Greek New Testament and that is the goal of textual criticism as a discipline.[29] What makes the Tyndale Greek New Testament (TGNT) distinctive is that its goal is to bring the text closer into alignment with the spelling and other aspects of morphology of the time when the New Testament writings were produced and the first copies were made.[30]

The TGNT relies on manuscripts that date to the fifth century or earlier. These include major papyri, as well as the great codices of the

27. This proposal has been made in Stanley E. Porter, 'Why so Many Holes in the Papyrological Evidence for the Greek New Testament?', in Scot McKendrick and Orlaith O'Sullivan (eds.), *The Bible as Book: The Transmission of the Greek Text* (London: British Library, 2003), pp. 167-86, esp. pp. 176-77, expanded in *idem*, *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), pp. 72-75.

28. The Brill Septuagint Commentary Series, edited by Stanley E. Porter, Richard S. Hess and John Jarick (Leiden: Brill). Thirteen volumes have been published to date in this series.

29. We frame the goal of textual criticism in this way in light of the dispute over whether the goal of textual criticism is an authorial text or an originating text. For discussion, see Porter, *How We Got the New Testament*, pp. 12-36; and Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), pp. 1-6.

30. Dirk Jongkind (ed.), *The Greek New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2017). Peter J. Williams is cited as Associate Editor, while Peter M. Head and Patrick James are cited as Assistant Editors.

fourth and fifth centuries. It also uses some of the spellings of the New Testament era (similar to some of the variations we noted above), as best as these can be determined. And finally, the TGNT paragraphs the text according to the ancient manuscripts, including, among other things, the use of *ekthesis*, as opposed to indentation, to indicate paragraphing.

With respect to paragraphing, it is interesting to compare the TGNT with the *UBSGNT*[5], NA[28] and SBLGNT.[31] We will look at a few examples from the Gospel of Mark. In *UBSGNT*[5] Mark 1 is presented as nine paragraphs: vv. 1-8, 9-11, 12-13, 14-15, 16-20, 21-28, 29-34, 35-39 and 40-45. In NA[28] Mark 1 is presented as eleven paragraphs: vv. 1-6, 7-8, 9-11, 12-13, 14-15, 16-20, 21-22, 23-28, 29-31, 32-38 and 39-45. In SBLGNT Mark 1 is presented as ten paragraphs, with v. 1 marked off as an incipit: vv. 2-8, 9-11, 12-13, 14-15, 16-20, 21-28, 29-31, 32-34, 35-39 and 40-45. In sum, we have three modern eclectic texts and three differing sets of paragraphs. In the TGNT Mark 1 is presented as sixteen paragraphs, with each paragraph indicated by *ekthesis*: vv. 1-3, 4-8, 9-11, 12-13, 14-15, 16-18, 19-20, 21-22, 23-27, 28, 29-31, 32-34, 35-37, 38, 39 and 40-45.

The variation among these critical editions of the Greek text is quite remarkable; from as few as nine paragraphs in the *UBSGNT*[5], to as many as sixteen in the TGNT. In a few cases the paragraphing involves single verses (as seen in vv. 28, 38 and 39). What is apparent is that ancient copyists did not equate paragraphs with pericopes or narrative units, as we moderns sometimes do.[32] The ancient copyists seem to

31. Barbara Aland *et al.* (eds.), *The Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 5th rev. edn, 2014); Barbara Aland *et al.* (eds.), *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 28th edn, 2012); Michael W. Holmes (ed.), *The Greek New Testament SBL Edition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

32. On paragraphing in ancient manuscripts, see Stanley E. Porter, 'Pericope Markers in Some Early Greek New Testament Manuscripts', in Marjo C.A. Korpel and Josef M. Oesch (eds.), *Layout Markers in Biblical Manuscripts and Ugaritic Tablets* (Pericope, 5; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2005), pp. 161-76; *idem*, 'The Influence of Unit Delimitation on Reading and Use of Greek Manuscripts', in Marjo C.A. Korpel, Josef M. Oesch, and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Method in Unit Delimitation* (Pericope, 6; Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 44-60; and *idem*, 'Pericope Markers and the Paragraph: Textual and Linguistic Implications', in Raymond de Hoop, Marjo C.A. Korpel, and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *The Impact of Unit Delimitation on Exegesis* (Pericope, 7; Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 175-95.

have focused more on units of thought, even if it meant breaking up a given pericope into several small parts. If we look at Codex Sinaiticus we find, usually but not always indicated by *ekthesis*, the paragraphing of Mark 1 as follows: vv. 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7, 8, 9-10, 11-13, 14-15, 16-18, 19-20, 21-22, 23-27, 28, 29-31, 32-34, 35-37, 38-39, 40-44 and 45; some nineteen paragraphs in all. In this instance Codex Sinaiticus does not exactly match the paragraphing of TGNT, but there is a fairly close correspondence. In contrast to Sinaiticus, in Codex Vaticanus an ancient scribe marked off only seven paragraphs for Mark 1: vv. 1-8, 9-11, 12-13, 14-20, 21-34, 35-37 and 38-45.

We should also look at a few examples of spelling. At Mk 2.15, 21; 4.11, 19, 32, 37; and 11.23 the TGNT reads γείνεται, instead of γίνεται, the former representing what the editors are calling a 'conventional spelling' of the time.[33] Similarly, at Mk 6.2 the TGNT reads γεινόμεναι, instead of γινόμεναι, and at 13.29 it reads γεινόμενα, instead of γινόμενα. Most of the time, but not always, the great uncials[34] reflect the Koine form that the TGNT has adopted. At Mk 2.15 B and W read γείνεται; but א reads γίνεται; while A and D read ἐγένετο (the reading in A and D is not simply a matter of phonetic variation but the use of the aorist rather than present tense-form). At Mk 2.21 א, A, B, D and W read γείνεται. At 4.11 א, A and W read γείνεται; B reads γίνεται; while D reads a different lexeme altogether, λέγεται. At 4.19 א, A and B read γείνεται, while D reads γείνονται, and W reads γίγνονται (W retains the Attic form and the ι). At 4.32 א, A, D and W read γείνεται, while B reads γίνεται. At 4.37 א, A, B and W read γείνεται, with D reading ἐγένετο (the reading in D uses the aorist rather than present tense-form). At 11.23 A and B read γείνεται, D reads γενήσεται (the future form, rather than the present tense-form in A, B and W), while W reads γίνεται.[35] With reference to the final verb in Mk 6.2, B reads the present tense-form participle γεινόμεναι, א reads the present participle γινόμεναι, A and W read the present indicative γείνονται, and D reads

33. TGNT, p. 509. Other such spellings they include are: γεινώσκω, κλειν, μεισέω, κειν and χειλ. This interchange probably reflects the fact that diphthongs had become monophthongs, and so were interchangeable.

34. By 'great uncials' we refer to א (Sinaiticus) and B (Vaticanus), which date to just before the middle of the fourth century, to D (Bezae), which is dated at about 400 CE, and to A (Alexandrinus) and W (Washingtonianus), which are usually dated to the fifth century.

35. Mk 11.23 is not present in א.

what appears to be the present subjunctive γείνωνται (however, we also recognize that there was variation of ο and ω, with their having similar sounds in the Koine period).[36] At 13.29 A, B, D and W read γεινόμενα; ℵ reads γινόμενα.

In the three occurrences of the present and imperfect forms of γινώσκω (at Mk 13.28, 29; 15.10), the TGNT uses the diphthong ει, rather than ι. Most of the time the great uncials read the same way. At 13.28 A and B read γεινώσκετε, while ℵ reads γινώσκετε, but D reads γεινώσκεται and W reads γινώσκεται (note that the last two examples also have phonetic variation for the second person plural ending, using the monophthongized diphthong αι rather than ε). At 13.29 A and B read γεινώσκετε, while ℵ and W read γινώσκετε and D reads γεινώσκεται. At 15.10 A reads the prefixed form ἐπεγείνωσκεν and B reads ἐγείνωσκε (both imperfect forms), while ℵ reads ἐγνώκει (aorist, but with the diphthong ει rather than ε for the third person singular ending), D reads ᾔδι and W reads ᾔδει (the last two are pluperfect forms of οἶδα, a different verb of knowing than in the other mss; note that D has ι for the third person singular ending, rather than the diphthong ει found in W, the latter reflecting the very common vowel interchange, as already noted above). Although we find a surprising diversity of readings in this last example, the tendency to use the ει diphthong as the stem vowel of the present or imperfect tense is still witnessed.

We close our brief study by taking another look at the curious spellings in the Galilean inscription of Ps. 118.19a, καὶ ἀνύξετή μοι πύλας δικεοσύνης. Do we have New Testament Greek mss where the οι diphthong in an aorist form of the verb ἀνοίγω is replaced with *upsilon*? As it so happens, we do. At Jn 9.14, 17, 26, 30 D reads ἤνυξεν instead of the 'regularized' ἀνέῳξεν (cf. $\mathfrak{P}^{24}$ with ἠνέῳξεν at Rev. 6.7), but at Jn 9.17, 21 $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ reads ἤνοιξεν, at Jn 9.21 $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ reads ἤνοιξεν, and at Jn 9.21 D reads ἤνοιξε; at 9.21, 26 ℵ reads ἤνυξεν. At Jn 10.3 ℵ reads ἀνύγει, instead of ἀνοίγει and at 10.21 ἀνῦξαι, instead of ἀνοῖξαι.

In some of our oldest Greek New Testament mss we find the αι diphthong in δικαιοσύνη replaced with ε. For example, in $\mathfrak{P}^{72}$ at 1 Pet. 2.24 we have τῇ δικεοσύνη. We have the same spelling in the accusative in 1 Pet. 3.14 and 2 Pet. 1.1, and in the genitive at 2 Pet. 2.5. The regularized spelling of δικαιοσύνη occurs in $\mathfrak{P}^{72}$ at 2 Pet. 2.21; 3.13. In ℵ we find δικεοσύνης at Mt. 21.32 and Gal. 3.21, and the accusative in 1

36. See Gignac, *Grammar*, I, pp. 275-77.

Jn 3.10. In W we sometimes find δικαιωσύνη (at Mt. 3.15; 5.10; 6.33), instead of δικαιοσύνη.

The spelling of ἔλεον ('oil'), instead of ἔλαιον, in the Caearea Maritima mosaic inscriptions of Deut. 7.2 and Ps. 4.7 (LXX) is also found in early New Testament mss. $\mathfrak{P}^{24}$ at Rev. 6.6, א at Lk. 10.34 and B at Heb. 1.9 spell ἔλεον. Everywhere else in א and B it is spelled with the αι diphthong. In W at Lk. 7.46 oil is spelled ἐλέω. In B at Mt. 25.8 we have the genitive ἐλέου, at Lk. 7.46 and Mk 6.13 we have ἐλέω and at Lk. 10.34 we have ἔλεον.

The spelling in the Galilean inscription of Ps. 118.19 is clearly under the influence of phonological variation due to a number of possible reasons (e.g. vowel simplification and raising, possible bilingual interference, etc.), but it is not as unusual as we might think, given how accustomed we are to 'regularized' spelling. We welcome the new TGNT. It is not perfect and still retains the eclectic character of the other widely used Greek New Testament editions, even if fewer manuscripts constitute the basis of the edition. Nevertheless, we believe it is an important step forward in constraining the manuscript base to a few of the earliest manuscripts and, as a result, recognizing more fully the philological and morphological realities of scribal practices in late antiquity.