

The Use of Hermeneia and Johannine Papyrus Manuscripts

An issue of continuing discussion regarding several Johannine papyri and parchments is the presence of the word ἑρμηνεία, apparently centred after the New Testament text and before what appears to be some Greek words or statements. The opinion of many scholars, perhaps best represented by K. Aland and B. Aland, is that this usage designates a manuscript that contains both biblical text and commentary¹. This opinion has been directly disputed, with a number of scholars observing the oracular character of the words following ἑρμηνεία, the most extensive recent discussions being those of B. M. Metzger, who re-introduces the purported parallel of oracular sayings used for divination purposes being added to the Markan text of Codex Bezae (D; Cambridge University Library Nn. 2.41) and to the Johannine text of Codex St. Germain (G; Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Lat. 11553)².

Before we can come to a better understanding of the function of these ἑρμηνεῖαι, and the statements that follow them, a number of issues must be discussed. These will provide the evidence for my further analysis of this phenomenon. The first issue to discuss regarding these papyri and parchments is which manuscripts exactly are to be included in this discussion. In his most recent treatment, Metzger lists eight papyri or parchments of John with the pattern noted above, an increase from his previous list of five³. Those he includes are as follows: P.Vindob. G 26214 with John 1. 31–33, 35–38 (P55) from the sixth to seventh centuries⁴; P.Ness. (P.Colt) 2. 3 with portions of John 1, 2, 11, 12, 17, 18 and 21 (P59) from the seventh to eighth centuries⁵; P.Berlin inv. 11914 with John 3.14–18 and 4. 9–10 (P63) from around 500 to the sixth century⁶; P.Vindob. G 36102 with John 4. 9, 11–12 (P76) from the sixth century⁷; P.Barç. inv. 83 with John 3. 34 (P80) from the third to fourth centuries⁸; a parchment from Damascus, Kubbet el Chazne, now lost, with John 6. 26–31 (0145) from the seventh century⁹; P.Berlin 3607 and 3623 a parchment with John 5. 44 and 6. 1–2, 41–42 (0210) from the seventh century¹⁰; and P.Vindob. G 26084 with John 6. 32–33, 35–37

¹ K. Aland and B. Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (trans. E. F. Rhodes), Grand Rapids 1988², 85.

² B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, New York, 1992³, 266–267; and *Greek Manuscripts of John's Gospel with "Hermeneiai"*, in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn* (ed. T. Baarda et al.), Kampen 1988, 162–169, esp. 162, where he says „such apparatus provides the means of telling fortunes”.

³ Metzger, *Text* (n. 2), 266. In *Greek Manuscripts*, Metzger only treats four papyri and one parchment, leaving out P.Vindob. G 36104, the parchment from Damascus, and P.Vindob. G 26084.

⁴ P. Sanz, *Griechische literarische Papyri christliche Inhalte I. (Biblica, Väterschriften und Verwandtes)*, Baden bei Wien 1946 (MPER N. S. IV), 58–59, no. 35; and now S. E. Porter and W. J. Porter, *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments: New Editions*, Vienna forthcoming (MPER N. S. XXVIII), no. 5. Cf. W. J. Elliott and D. C. Parker, *The New Testament in Greek IV: The Gospel according to St. John. I. The Papyri*, Leiden 1995 (NTTS XX), 74–75.

⁵ L. Casson and E. L. Hettich, *Excavations at Nessana. II. Literary Papyri*, Princeton 1950, 79–93. Cf. Elliott and Parker, *New Testament in Greek*, 76–88.

⁶ O. Stegmüller, *Zu den Bibelurakeln im Codex Bezae*, *Biblica* 34 (1953) 13–22, esp. 15–17, although edited only from a photograph (p. 15 n. 1). Cf. Elliott and Parker, *New Testament in Greek*, 110–112.

⁷ H. Hunger, *Zwei unbekannte neutestamentliche Papyrusfragmente der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, *Biblos* 8 (1959) 7–12, esp. 8–11; H. Hunger, *Ergänzungen zu zwei neutestamentlichen Papyrusfragmenten der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, *Biblos* 19 (1970) 71–75, esp. 71; Porter and Porter, *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments*, no. 6. Cf. Elliott and Parker, *New Testament in Greek*, 113.

⁸ R. Roca-Puig, *Papiro del Evangelio de San Juan con "Hermeneia"*, *Atti dell'XI Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia Milano 2–8 Sett. 1965*, Milan 1966, 225–236. Cf. Elliott and Parker, *New Testament in Greek*, 114.

⁹ Described by H. von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1.1, Berlin 1902, xi.

¹⁰ Stegmüller, *Zu den Bibelurakeln*, 17–19.

(0256)¹¹. Metzger also claims¹² that P.Ness. (P.Colt.) 2. 4 (P60) with portions of John 16, 17, 18 and 19 from the seventh to eighth centuries¹³ also probably had ἐρμηνεῖαι, but that its fragmentary condition has meant none is preserved, and that there are twelve fragments of a Coptic (Sahidic) manuscript of John with ἐρμηνεῖα¹⁴. There is also to be noted one often overlooked manuscript, PSI XIII 1364 from the fourth to fifth centuries, which consists of two instances of ἐρμηνεῖα, each followed by a statement, though without any biblical text¹⁵. Whether one begins with this complete list of eleven manuscripts or the eight manuscripts that constitute Metzger's major list, three of them are in the Vienna collection, the largest single holding by number.

What one includes in any list for examination requires further critical examination, however. Although it is possible that some of the above manuscripts had the word ἐρμηνεῖα on them at one time, it is probably methodologically wiser only to proceed with those manuscripts that actually have such wording with a biblical text, since we are trying to understand the use of ἐρμηνεῖα and its accompanying statements in relation to the New Testament text. Without direct visual evidence on the manuscript itself, it is dubious to argue for conclusions regarding the nature of a manuscript. This being the case, P.Ness. (P.Colt.) 2. 4 and P.Vindob. G 26084 can be readily eliminated from the list. The first is eliminated because, as Metzger admits, there is no such ἐρμηνεῖα wording on the manuscript. The second should be eliminated on this basis as well. In his later discussion, Metzger includes P.Vindob. G 26084 as one of the manuscripts that has the formulaic pattern noted above, but this is clearly not the case, as our soon-to-appear fresh edition of this manuscript confirms¹⁶. The Coptic manuscript is not a Greek manuscript of John, so it too can be eliminated at least from this state of discussion, whatever other relevance it may have. Similarly, PSI XIII 1364 can be excluded, since it does not have any biblical text (although I will return to this manuscript below). The result, therefore, is seven confirmed manuscripts with such wording, each of them a portion of John's Gospel, with five papyri and two parchments.

The second major issue in this discussion concerns how the debate over the understanding of ἐρμηνεῖα has been characterized to date. Metzger categorically states that "On the basis of the title, the *opinio communis* has been that the sentences [that follow ἐρμηνεῖα] are a kind of rudimentary commentary on Scripture"¹⁷. The situation is perhaps not as straightforward and one-sided as Metzger tries to depict it, however. It is true that Aland and Aland in their introduction to New Testament textual criticism have characterized the manuscripts as 'text and commentary', and that this opinion may have become the common opinion in New Testament text-critical studies, but it can hardly be said to have been the opinion of those who have worked directly with these manuscripts in editing them, as a brief survey illustrates. The first of these manuscripts to be edited, in 1946, was P.Vindob. G 26214 (P55), where the editor Sanz states that it is "das Fragment eines Kommentars oder einer exegetischen Homilie zum Johannesevangelium. Da es aber nur reinen Bibeltext bietet, habe ich es hier unter die Biblica eingeordnet"¹⁸. As will be noted below, this

¹¹ K. Niederwimmer, *Bisher unedierte Fragmente biblischen Inhalts aus der Sammlung Erzherzog Rainer*, Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft, Graz, Cologne 1965 (Sonderdruck XIV), 7–11, esp. 10–11; Porter and Porter, *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments*, no. 38.

¹² Metzger, *Text*, 266. He does not cite this manuscript in *Greek Manuscripts*.

¹³ L. Casson and E. L. Hettich, *Excavations at Nessana. II. Literary Papyri*, Princeton 1950, 94–111. Cf. Elliott and Parker, *New Testament in Greek*, 89–119.

¹⁴ W. E. Crum, *Two Coptic Papyri from Antinoe*, Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology 26 (1904) 174–178, cited in Metzger, *Text*, 266–267, and J. van Haelst, *Catalogue des Papyrus Littéraires Juifs et Chrétiens*, Paris 1976 (Université de Paris IV Paris-Sorbonne Série "Papyrologie" I), no. 1124. Cf. H. Quecke, P.Rainer Cent. 10–11: *Zwei Blätter aus koptischen Hermeneia-Typika in der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek (P.Vindob. K 90275 und 9734)*, Vienna 1983, 194–200.

¹⁵ *Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto. Papiri greci e latini*, XIII (ed. M. Norsa and V. Bartoletti), Florence 1953, 227. Reference is made there to PSI I, p. vi, where the editor, Vitelli, cites a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus with ἐρμηνεῖα and the statement μόχθον καὶ κόπον πολὺ(ν) | ἄκερδῆ[ν] δηλοῖ.

¹⁶ Porter and Porter, *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments*, no. 38, even though the original editor, Niederwimmer (*Bisher unedierte Fragmente*, 10), speculated on what he saw as the possible oracular nature of the manuscript.

¹⁷ Metzger, *Text*, 266. Cf. Metzger, *Greek Manuscripts*, 162, where he states: „Although not much attention has been given heretofore to this special feature, the *opinio communis* seems to be that such ἐρμηνεῖαι are a kind of rudimentary commentary on the sacred text”.

¹⁸ Sanz, *Griechische Literarische Papyri*, 59.

manuscript on the verso offers the word ἔρμηνεία only, with no other wording except biblical text, although as a result of this situation Sanz also suggested that the recto may have contained a lengthy quotation of John 1. 31–33 as part of the commentary on John 1. 35–38 that fell under the rubric of ἔρμηνεία¹⁹. This tentative categorization by Sanz of this manuscript as biblical, in which he felt constrained in his alternatives on the basis of the composition of the manuscript, is perhaps responsible for its originally being categorized as a biblical manuscript, and hence being given a Gregory-Aland number. This perhaps also set the pattern for categorization of subsequently published similar manuscripts, and is also reflected in treatment of the phenomenon in P.Ness. (P.Colt) 2. 3 in 1950²⁰ and P.Bar. inv. 83 in 1966. Some editions of later manuscripts, however, apparently recognized the less commentary- or biblical-like and more oracular nature of these portions of the manuscripts. For example, Stegmüller, who published P.Berlin inv. 11914 in 1953, recognized what he saw as the oracular character of the ἔρμηνεία material, similar to the oracles in the Markan section of Codex Bezae and Johannine section of Codex St.Germain (see below for discussion), and even thought that the numbers at the top of each page were either pagination or “Orakelzahlen”²¹. Hunger, who first edited P.Vindob. G 36102 in 1959, recognized Sanz’s position that the ἔρμηνεία convention might have indicated a commentary, but, noting that it was not strictly speaking a Gospel commentary, followed Stegmüller and decided that it was a biblical oracle²². This opinion was later followed by Quecke, who also drew attention to Codex Bezae in discussing P.Vindob. G 36102, and van Haelst, who labeled all of the texts with ἔρμηνεία as biblical oracular texts²³. Thus, whereas some biblical text-critical scholars may have come to the opinion that these manuscripts are commentaries, this is hardly the universal opinion of many of those who have edited these manuscripts. The clear majority of those who have dealt with them consider them to be biblical oracles, possibly influenced by the parallel oracular statements found in Codex Bezae.

The third issue to examine, however, is what exactly the wording is in these statements that the manuscripts themselves provide after the word ἔρμηνεία. Here we will concentrate on the two manuscripts with ἔρμηνεία in the Vienna collection. A summary of what is found on the other manuscripts is as follows²⁴. P.Ness. (P.Colt) 2. 3 has seven full or partial instances of ἔρμηνεία with several readable sets of statements: ἀπιστία και δολος εν τω πρα[γμ]ατι (John 11. 47–48), σ[ω]τηρι[α] καλη (John 11. 49–52), ο νοσων ε[λ] (John 11. 40–43), and γινεται (John 11. 44–46). P.Berlin inv. 11914 has four pages, each with ἔρμηνεία, followed by a Greek and a Coptic statement (I give the Greek): δοξα μεγαλη | γινεται (John 3. 14–15), περι ελεγχεως παυσει μη παυση (John 3. 16–18), τ[ο] εχεις καμνε[λ] (John 4. 9), and εα[ν πι]στευσης χα[ρι]α [σοι γ]ινεται (John 4. 10). P.Bar. inv. 83 has one instance of ἔρμηνεία and parts of two statements: ἀληθη εστιν τα λ[ο]γα | παρ αυτου εαν σ[ω]φεληθηση (John 3. 34), and]ρωπε μη και |²⁵. The now lost fragment from Damascus (0145), according to von Soden, had two statements: εαν πιστευσης καλωσ, επιτυχανεις (John 6. 26–27) and περιεχωμεν [sic] σωτηριας (John 6. 28–29). P.Berlin inv. 3607 has the statements: μαρτυρια καλη (John 5. 44) and διαλυσις γινε[ται] (John 6. 1–2), and 3623 with the fragmentary]ξομενου | . . .]ατοξ (John 6. 41–42).

The two manuscripts in the Vienna collection are as follows.

P.Vindob. G 26214, on the verso, written against the grain (John 1. 35–38)²⁶:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | τ[ῆ] ἐπαύριον πάλιν εἰστήκει |
| 2 | ὁ Ἰωάννης καὶ ἐκ τῶν μα- |

¹⁹ Sanz, *Griechische Literarische Papyri*, 59; cf. Hunger, *Zwei unbekannte neutestamentliche Papyrusfragmente*, 10 and n. 7; Casson and Hettich, *Excavations at Nessana*, 11.

²⁰ Casson and Hettich, *Excavations at Nessana*, 11; Roca-Puig, *Papiro del Evangelio*, 229–231.

²¹ Stegmüller, *Zu den Bibelorakeln*, 20–21.

²² Hunger, *Zwei unbekannte neutestamentliche Papyrusfragmente*, 10.

²³ H. Quecke, *Zu den Joh-Fragmenten mit “Hermeneiai”*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 40 (1974) 407–414; *Zu den Joh-Fragmenten mit “Hermeneiai” (Nachtrag)*, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 43 (1977) 179–181; and van Haelst, *Catalogue*, esp. no. 429.

²⁴ These are, for the most part, based upon the editions, but can be found in various forms in van Haelst, *Catalogue*, and Metzger, *Greek Manuscripts*.

²⁵ Roca-Puig, *Papiro del Evangelio*, 234–236, offers further reconstructions.

²⁶ This follows Porter and Porter, *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments*, no. 5, where fuller commentary may be found in the light of previous editions.

3 θητῶ[ν α]ὐ[τοῦ δύο καὶ ἐμβλέ-
 4 ψας τῶ Ἰ(ησο)ῦ περιπατοῦντι λέ-
 5 γει εἶδε ὁ ἀ[μνὸς τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ καὶ
 6 ἤκουσαν οἱ δύο μαθηταὶ αὐ-
 7 τοῦ λαλοῦν[τος καὶ ἠκολού-
 8 θησαν τῶ Ἰ(ησο)ῦ [στραφεῖς δὲ
 9 ὁ Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς καὶ θεασ[άμενος αὐτοῦς
 10 ἀκολουθοῦν[τας λέγει αὐ-
 11 τοῖς τί ζητ[εῖτε
 12 ἐρμηνεία

The recto (written with the grain) has fifteen lines of text with John 1. 31–33, but no use of ἐρμηνεία showing. This recto is the side that Sanz speculated might be entirely part of the commentary on the verso. The verso (written against the grain) has eleven lines of biblical text set off with paragraphoi, before lines are drawn both above and below and at the beginning and the end of ἐρμηνεία. Then the manuscript breaks away, so that no ‘interpretation’ can be read.

P.Vindob. G 36102. This manuscript is discussed in Metzger’s *Greek Manuscripts*, even though it had been published, in two parts, in 1959 and 1970.

Verso, written against the grain (John 4. 9)²⁷:

1 πεῖν αἰτε]ίς γ[υναικὸς
 2 Cαμαρί]τιδος ο[ἴψης
 3 οὐ γὰ]ρ συνχρῶ[ν-
 4 ται Ἰου]δαῖοι Cα[μαρί-
 5 ἐρμηνεία
 6] . . πιστευση[
 7]ρ γίνεται . [

The word ἐρμηνεία appears with a line drawn above and below it, to separate it from the biblical text and the ‘interpretation’ that follows. Hunger reconstructs line 6 as ἐὰν π[ε]ιστεῦση[ς]²⁸. This may be the protasis of a second person singular conditional clause, for which Hunger has apparent support from recto line 11, as well as similar language in P.Bar. inv. 83, P.Berlin inv. 11914, and 0145. Hunger reconstructs line 7 as ἀν[η]ρ γίνεται²⁹. This is possible phrasing, since it reflects other Johannine ἐρμηνεία manuscripts, such as P.Ness. (P.Colt) 2. 3, P.Berlin inv. 11914 and 3607 and 3623, but it also reflects Johannine language (John 1. 6). It is difficult to be precise, but the statement appears to be a minimum of two and perhaps more lines long, and most closely resembles the similar statement in P.Berlin inv. 11914 with which this manuscript is roughly contemporary. One must also note the similarity of line 6 with one of the oracular statements in Codex Bezae, no. 46, with εαν πιστευσησ χαρα συ εσθω, and in St.Germain Codex, no. xliii, with *si credideris gloria tibi*³⁰.

²⁷ This follows Porter and Porter, *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments*, no. 6, where fuller commentary may be found in the light of previous editions.

²⁸ Hunger, *Zwei unbekannte neutestamentliche Papyrusfragmente*, 8. See Porter and Porter, *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments*, no. 6, for discussion of differences in transcription.

²⁹ Hunger, *Zwei unbekannte neutestamentliche Papyrusfragmente*, 8.

³⁰ I follow the text of J. R. Harris, *The Annotators of the Codex Bezae (With Some Notes on Sortes Sanctorum)*, London 1901, 62 (I note that I have a former personal copy of T. C. Skeat of this volume, in which he includes corrections of Harris’s list of oracles), who uses arabic numerals for the oracles in Codex Bezae and roman numerals for those in the St.Germain Codex.

Recto, written with the grain (John 4. 11–12):

1 τὸ ὑδ[ωρ τὸ ζῶν
 2 μὴ σὺ] μίζω[ν εἶ τοῦ
 3 πατρὸς] ἡμῶν [Ἰακώβ
 4 ὅς]τις ἔδω[κεν ἡμῖν
 5 τ]ὸ φρέαρ καὶ ἀν[τὸς
 6 ἐ]ξ αὐτοῦ ἐπιε[ν καὶ
 7 τ]ὰ θρέμματα [αὐτοῦ

 8 ἐρμηνε[ία
 9]πολλὰς τ . [
 10]ας ποιῆσαι κα[
 11]δύνηθης

The word ἐρμηνεῖα has a line drawn above it to separate it from the biblical text, but no line below it as on the other side. The reconstruction above is highly tentative, and does not differ from Hunger's. Quecke reconstructs with πολλὰς τὸ [ἠθέλησ]ας ποιῆσαι κα[ὶ οὐκ ἐδ]ύνηθης, which is very similar in language and sense to oracle no. 47 in Codex Bezae: πολαστον ηθελίσα επησε και ουκ εδυνηθη³¹. The wording here may also reflect the language of John 5 where δύναμαι and ποιέω are used in conjunction, with the difference that here it is apparently phrased in second person singular exhortative style. The interpretative comment is probably two and a half lines long.

The fourth major issue of clarification is to examine Metzger's argument regarding the parallel with Codex Bezae and St. Germain Codex. Although mentioned previously by Stegmüller, Metzger emphasizes that parallels in the use of aphoristic statements in the Markan sections of Codex Bezae clinch the argument for the purely oracular nature of these Johannine manuscripts. Metzger states against the commentary hypothesis that its falsity is demonstrated by the fact that "the 'comments' are totally irrelevant to the passage with which they share the page"³². He goes on to observe that "the so-called comments are similar in form and, in some cases, in substance to the series of short apophthegms standing one per page in the lower margin of the pages which contain the text of Mark i. 1–x. 22 (folios 285b to 321a) in the fifth-century manuscript, codex Bezae". More specifically, he notes that, "Written in a wretched, scrawling Greek hand of perhaps the ninth or tenth century, each of these 69 short statements in Bezae is preceded by the word ἐρμηνεῖα [sic] or its abbreviation"³³. Metzger develops this thought further by drawing these ἐρμηνεῖα texts into a discussion of ancient and mediaeval manuals for fortune-telling, in which he contends that the ἐρμηνεῖα apparatus in Codex Bezae and the Johannine manuscripts was used for divination (*sortes sanctorum*)³⁴.

The above marshalling of evidence now merits further analysis. Metzger is certainly to be commended for again drawing attention to the oracular statements in Codex Bezae and St. Germain Codex. Not noted in the critical apparatus of the Nestle-Aland or *UBSGNT*, they can easily be overlooked³⁵. However, although there are a number of distinct similarities between the oracular statements of Codex Bezae and the Johannine manuscripts — e. g. the use of ἐρμηνεῖα at the foot of the page, followed by a short statement

³¹ Quecke, *Nachtrag*, 180–181; Harris, *Annotators*, 62. However, Skeat has reasonably corrected this to ηθελίσασ πυησε and εδυνηθησ. Quecke questions Harris's interpretation of πολαστον as equivalent to πολλάκις, and thinks it is more likely equivalent to πολλὰς.

³² Metzger, *Text*, 266.

³³ Metzger, *Text*, 266; cf. Metzger, *Greek Manuscripts*, 165–166. The date of the hand has been questioned. D. C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and its Text*, Cambridge 1992, 43, dates the *sortes* hand to the second half of the sixth century.

³⁴ Metzger, *Text*, 266; *Greek Manuscripts*, 167–168. This has been further developed by P. van der Horst, *Sortes: Sacred Books as Instant Oracles in Late Antiquity*, in: *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (ed. L. V. Rutgers et al.), Leuven 1998, 143–173.

³⁵ Plates of folios 288v and 289r are found in H. J. Vogels, *Codicum Novi Testamenti Specimina*, Bonn 1929, pls. 18 and 19. The oracles themselves are printed in Harris, *Annotators*, 59–64, as part of a larger discussion of *sortes sanctorum* on 45–74, and in F. H. Scrivener, *Bezae Codex Cantabrigiensis*, Cambridge 1864, 451–452.

(or statements), to which we will return — there are also a number of significant differences that have been overlooked by Metzger and others, but which may cast a slightly different light on the relation between these Johannine manuscripts and the oracles in Codex Bezae. The following differences are worth noting, among others. One is that the oracular statements in Codex Bezae are only written in the first ten chapters of Mark's Gospel, not the Gospel of John, where all of the other ἐρμηνεία statements are found in the papyri and parchments noted above. Furthermore, as noted above, Harris and now Metzger and a few others have noted that the eighth or ninth century Latin St. Germain Codex does have oracular statements written in the margins of its Gospel of John³⁶. More than that, there is a very close relation to be found between the statements found in Codex Bezae and in the St. Germain Codex, with semantic and translational verbal equivalence and ordering to be found in a good number of the oracles. Following on from this, in both of these manuscripts it is clear that the oracles are written as marginalia in a later hand. In Bezae, forms of the word ἐρμηνεία and the oracles are written in the bottom margin of the page. Regardless of whether one opts for a late sixth-century or ninth- or tenth-century date for this hand, the oracles were written later and separately from the biblical text of Codex Bezae. A similar situation holds for the St. Germain Codex, in which the oracles were written later on the margins of a copy of the Gospel of John. The ἐρμηνείαι and following statement(s) in the Johannine papyri and parchments noted above, however, were apparently written at the same time, by the same scribe, as part of the original scribal activity to create the manuscript. This fact should not be neglected³⁷.

Another difference concerns the process of creation of these various manuscripts. Harris has suggested a number of logical conclusions on the basis of his study of Codex Bezae and the St. Germain Codex regarding their relationship. He believes that “The two systems are identical as to origin, but neither is derived from the other: it would not be possible, for example to obtain the Bezan system by retranslation from the St. Germain system on account of lacunae in the latter. The converse statement is also obviously true. They therefore come from a previous system”³⁸. He believes that this dependence upon a previous archetype is indicated by a number of considerations, including the apparent fact that not only are the oracles the answers to questions, but the nature or subject of the question has even in places been included³⁹, as in no. 37 with *περι δικης* = no. xxxvi with *de iudicio*, no. 42 with *περι ερισμου* = no. xli with *de contentatione*, no. 44 with *περι αναπανευος κ(αι) κερδους*, no. 60 with *περι σωτηρησας σωζεται*, and no. 63 with *περι σοτεριασ και κερδου* (and in nos. lxxx, cxxxiii, xcxi). In attempting to locate the archetypal system, however, since neither these oracles attached to Mark's Gospel nor even those in the Latin Gospel of John are original, Harris thinks that the original is derived from an earlier series of oracles written on a copy of John's Gospel. He makes this claim on the basis of finding in oracle no. 65 what he contends is not a *sortes*, but a direct quotation from John 5. 14: *ιδε υγησ γεγονασ μικετι αμαρτανε* and *ινα μι τι χιρον συ γινετε*, which is also found in the St. Germain Codex at no. lxii. The other *sortes* are not biblical quotations, such as these are. Thus, Harris concludes that the archetype of the series of oracles was written in a copy of John's Gospel, in which John 5. 14 was meant for inclusion in the text itself. Instead, this biblical passage was transferred into the marginalia, and was part of the archetype of the St. Germain Codex, from which type of Latin text Codex Bezae has taken the oracles in its Gospel of Mark, as a translation from Latin into Greek. It is important to observe further, however, that Harris notes that “this does not mean that there may not be a Greek system underlying the Latin archetype of D and [St. Germain]”, since, as Harris illustrates in his book, *sortes* were used in various Greek forms, and “nothing prohibits the belief, if it should be thought otherwise reasonable, that an ancient Greek system is behind all that we have tabulated”⁴⁰. We must not forget that when Harris wrote this prescient comment, the first of the Johannine manuscripts noted above (even 0145) had not yet been published. It is plausible to believe, therefore, that the Johannine papyri and parchments that I am considering here constitute at least one stage earlier in the transmission process, and are closer to the archetype of which Harris spoke than that found in Codex Bezae or the St. Germain Codex. The dating of the Johannine documents — which have been placed from as early as the third down to the

³⁶ These are to be found in Harris, *Annotators*, 59–69.

³⁷ The editors of P.Ness. (P.Colt) 2. 3 note (Casson and Hettich, *Excavations at Nessana*, 80) that smaller letters are used for the ἐρμηνεία statements than the main text, though in the same hand. This is not the case for other manuscripts, where the same sized lettering is used.

³⁸ Harris, *Annotators*, 70.

³⁹ Harris, *Annotators*, 70–71.

⁴⁰ Harris, *Annotators*, 70.

eighth centuries — supports the notion that an earlier Greek-language tradition may well be reflected in at least the earliest of these documents, even if the tradition was later expanded and continued in a variety of contexts⁴¹, for instance those influenced by other languages, such as Coptic (see P.Berlin inv. 3607 and 3623, P.Vindob. G 26084, which may reflect the Alexandrian majuscule style, influenced by Coptic, and the Coptic manuscript of John from Antinoe) or Latin. This is perhaps further substantiated by the observation that in many instances the Greek Johannine ἐρμηνεία statements match the Latin text of the St.Germain Codex as often as they do those in the Greek Bezae. For example, as Metzger notes, σωτηρια καλη in P.Ness. (P.Colt) 2. 3 is closer to St.Germain Codex no. clxxiii *salus bona* than περι σωτηρησας σωζεται in Codex Bezae no. 60, and δοξα μεγαλη γινεται in P.Berlin inv. 11914 is closer to *gloria magna* (no. xxxiv), with no Greek equivalent in Bezae, while the Greek το εχεις καμνε in P.Berlin inv. 11914 is closer to το εχις καμην καμε in no. 45. Furthermore, there are several places where it appears that the St.Germain Codex and Codex Bezae versions have expanded the Johannine text, as in διαλυσις γινεται in P.Berlin inv. 3607 becoming δηαλυσις μετα τρις ημερα γινετε in no. 28 and *absolueris post tres dies* in no. xxvii, or μαρτυρια καλη in P.Berlin inv. 3607 becoming *si credis testimonium bonum* in no. lxx. In other words, the evidence indicates that the line of influence would have moved from this type of early Johannine document, in which the statements are a part of the original Greek manuscript, to those that later incorporated such statements into other documents (such as the St.Germain Codex), expanding their use beyond John's Gospel, to other Gospels, such as Mark's (such as in Codex Bezae).

This still does not answer the question of whether the Johannine statements should be viewed as commentary or oracles, however. It seems to be clear that by the time the statements are used in Codex Bezae they have taken on an oracular character. However, that does not mean that they were oracular from the start. Harris notes that there are three types of oracles to be found: “an actual collection of possible answers to enquiries, from which a special oracle is selected by some more or less random method”, “the whole of a sacred book (Bible, Virgil, Koran, etc.) considered as a mine of oracles and a storehouse of possible guidance”, or “both of these methods” as found in Codex Bezae and the St.Germain Codex, with sentences placed in the margins⁴². Although those in the Johannine manuscripts do have some characteristics of the third as noted above, their appearance as integral to the Johannine manuscripts argues against a capricious attachment of apophthegms to the manuscript, which is certainly closer to what is found in Codex Bezae, and more like Harris's second category. As noted above in dealing with P.Vindob. G 36102, although the statements do not appear to be directly biblical, they are certainly Johannine in flavour, especially with language of belief⁴³ (similar statements could be made about many of the other texts, as well as those in Codex Bezae, having a Johannine flavour). In many of the passages cited above, it is easy to see a conceptual, if not a verbal, link between the biblical passage and the ἐρμηνεία statement. Hunger in his discussion of P.Vindob. G 36102 draws attention to the fact that John's Gospel is the one that has the most miraculous elements to it, and perhaps it is that feature that inspired the oracular biblical language, as a form of summarizing in a single verse some meaning related to a portion of the Gospel⁴⁴. In other words, the statements are neither strictly commentary nor simply unattached oracular pronouncements, but biblically motivated and connected reflections on the biblical text, perhaps utilizing similar language.

This conclusion regarding these Johannine manuscripts, if correct, has significant and wideranging implications for the development of the New Testament manuscript tradition. Space here allows mention of only a few of these. The usual conception is of the biblical books having been written in their autographs but then having gained accretions through further transmission. Although it is difficult to state exactly

⁴¹ For example, it is noted by the editors that P.Ness. (P.Colt) 3. 4 (P59) appears to start a new section on each page, rather than have continuous New Testament text, indicating a more „oracular” use of the entire text. Since other texts without ἐρμηνεία also show this feature (e. g. P.Ness. [P.Colt] 3. 4 [P60]), it is difficult to know what to make of this. The statements in PSI. XIII 1364 are very similar to nos. 17 and 18 in Codex Bezae: ἀκολουθησον καὶ καλῶς σοι γίνεταί and μὴ παρακούσης τοῦ λόγου. Unfortunately we know too little about PSI to know what this might mean.

⁴² Harris, *Annotators*, 45.

⁴³ John's Gospel has nearly three times as many instances of use of the verb πιστεύω than all three of the Synoptic Gospels combined (98 to 34).

⁴⁴ Casson and Hettich, *Excavations at Nessana*, 80; Hunger, *Zwei unbekannte neutestamentliche Papyrusfragmente*, 10.

how early the interpretive ἐρμηνεία statements were incorporated into John's Gospel, it appears that they were very early — earlier than the incorporation of such statements onto other documents, so far as can be indicated from the extant evidence. If John's Gospel were written near the end of the first century, by the third or fourth century such statements were seen to be in some meaningful sense a part of the sacred text or its interpretation as it was transmitted — for at least some Christian communities in Egypt and possibly southern Palestine (P.Ness. [P.Colt] 2. 3). The relation of this process to the copying of the major biblical majuscule codexes is also worth exploring⁴⁵. Whereas some manuscript traditions seem to have retained an appreciable distinction between text and commentary, even if they were willing later to add commentary to their biblical text, for others such a distinction was not made in the same way, with text and commentary occupying the same manuscript space from nearly the start. The possible implication is that in some instances the difference between text and commentary was a transparent one. In fact, one wonders further on which side of this fading line between text and commentary some of the manuscripts that are currently used in New Testament textual criticism fall, and whether this kind of distinction was one that some ancients even made.

⁴⁵ Cf. Elliott and Parker, *New Testament in Greek*, 7.