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Alpha provides a venue for studies of growth and interaction in the Biblical and other ancient texts. With our older sister journal, *Warring States Papers*, whose focus is China, we seek to demonstrate the applicability of historical-philological methods to all fields of humanistic inquiry. What are those methods?

As William L Holladay said in his 1986 Jeremiah commentary, “The first question is the integrity of the passage: is it one unit or more?” We recognize interpolations, strata, and any other signs of growth which the evidence of the text itself may suggest. We remember (with Tischendorf) that, of two related passages, the one which is more readily seen as giving rise to the other is likely to be the earlier. With Ranke, we prefer the earlier evidence, while being aware that all texts have their own agendas. We apply the test of coherence to the individual results, and the criterion of historical plausibility to any gradually emerging larger picture.

Proceeding in this way has led us to regard several of the Gospels as stratified, and to see all the Gospels as reflecting stages in the divinization of Jesus. The early strata of the Gospels attest a pre-Pauline form of belief which we have called Alpha: a Christianity based not on the Resurrection, or any other theory about Jesus’ death, but on his teachings during his life. We find in the genuine Pauline Epistles additions made by Paul’s editors to prepare them for wider circulation. So clarified, they reveal a more intelligible Paul, free of later reshaping. We find ourselves in agreement with the moderns who see more authors than Moses in the Pentateuch, and with the ancients who found in the Shield of Achilles reflections of a later ethos than that of the exploits which were the mainstay of the old Ionian bards.

Subject Groups are: (1) Methodology; (2) Comparative, including Indica and Homeric; (3) Hebrew Bible, (4) Mark, Matthew, and Luke; (5) Acts and Paul; and (6) Johannine, Apocryphal, and Rabbinic. All together, our period of concern runs from Hammurabi to the closing of the Mishnah; some twenty centuries of antiquity.

Dates of these papers are those of submission or first presentation in a conference or other public format; most have been revised for their publication here.

Papers of special interest may appear in both *WSP* and in *Alpha*, not necessarily in the same year, or with the same pagination. Duplicated articles are not distinguished by any special mark, in either journal.

This Volume notices some sacrificial and other Indic matters, and takes up the problems of Dolon and Agamemnon in the *Iliad*. There are studies of Isaiah and the Psalms tradition, and two parallel reconstructions of the entire Gospel of Mark. Also included are studies of the Luke/Matthew priority debate, the later Pauline epistles, and the Christianization of what were originally Jewish texts.

Of special long-term interest is the introduction of a measure of stylistic difference which has proved to be sensitive to intertextual relations, not only in Chinese, but also in Biblical and Homeric Greek. We expect that it will join the classical methods of philology as part of the basic toolkit of the historian, in clarifying questions of textual integrity and intertextual affinity, in all the antiquities.

Conventions observed in *Alpha*, its “house style,” include the following.

Dates. As a convention which works well in languages other than English, we use a leading zero in place of BC(E); 65 BC becomes 065, while AD 14 is simply 14. The “03rd century” (which can be abbreviated as 03c) is the 3rd BC; “3rd” is the 3rd AD. The advantages of this leading zero over a minus sign are that it allows unambiguous hyphenation of dates which cross the century line (Horace, 065-08; Augustus, 063-14), and that it avoids a conflict with astronomers, whose – 65 is *not* the – 65 of historians.

Abbreviations for books of the Bible are mostly standard, though we distinguish Phm (Philemon) and Php (Philippians) more clearly than has always been the custom. For the Epistle of James, we use the sign Ja, which suggests both the correct name (Jacob, as in the OT) and its Anglicization (James, as in English Bibles in the NT). Jesus, it is now known, was a Jew, and the same was presumably true of his brother (and, as we suspect in connection with that Epistle, the brother of Levi of Alphaeus). To disambiguate “Eccl,” we substitute Qohelet (Qoh) for Ecclesiastes, and Sirach (Sir) for Ecclesiasticus.

Text. For the NT, we follow the latest edition of the United Bible Societies (UBS) text and the corresponding Nestle-Aland (NA) edition, but are inclined to accept the minority opinion of Bruce Metzger on several points. There has been a drift away from the decisions of Westcott and Hort (1881), including the recent readmission of such stories as “The Woman Taken in Adultery,” a tendency from which we prefer to hold ourselves apart. In citing manuscripts, we resist the temptation to abbreviate Vaticanus as V, but use S for Sinaiticus. Papyri are cited with a capital P. Among translations, we suggest ASV, which carefully preserves Mark’s historical presents. For Hebrew, we largely follow the Masoretic text as reconstructed from Codex Leningradensis, but use the verse numbering of English Bibles, which avoids the anomaly of treating Psalm headings and other labels as though they were part of the text. We encourage regular attention to the differences between the Masoretic text and the earlier Hebrew text which can be inferred as the Vorlage of the Septuagint Greek translation (LXX), made in Alexandria in and after the 03c. Improvements and outright mistakes are easily demonstrated for some LXX translators, but so is an almost pedantic fidelity by others.

References. Short citations (in the form Surname **Keyword**) are expanded at the end of each paper. For abbreviations, see the lists at the end of the volume.

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Envoi. We hope that publication of these studies will bring them to the attention of colleagues in the Biblical and other fields, and in the wider historical community. May they also suggest that, at the methodological level, as in some specific details, humanity, and the study of humanity, are ultimately one.

The Editors