

## Preface 3

*Alpha* provides a venue for studies of growth and interaction in the Indian, Homeric, and Biblical texts. Together with *Warring States Papers*, whose focus is classical 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 may itself 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 the gradually emerging larger picture.

Proceeding thus has led us to regard several Gospels (not only John) as stratified, and to see the genuine Pauline Epistles as having been improved by Paul’s editors to prepare them for wider circulation. So clarified, the Epistles reveal a more intelligible Paul, free of later reshaping. 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 of Jesus’ death, but on his teachings during his life. 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 a reflection of a later ethos than that of the lustier exploits which were the mainstay of the old Ionian bards.

**Subject Groups** in *Alpha* are: (1) Methodology and Comparative, (2) Indica, (3) Homeric, (4) Hebrew Bible, and within the New Testament: (5) Early Witnesses, including John the Baptist, Mark, and Paul; (6) the Deutero-Paulines, Matthew, Luke, and Acts; and (7) the Johannines, Gnostic tendencies, and post-Temple Judaism. Our period of concern runs from Hammurabi to the closing of the Mishnah: the full two thousand years of literate antiquity. A Working Chronology at the end of each volume keeps our conclusions about specific texts and persons up to date.

**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.

Some papers of general methodological interest will appear in both *Alpha* and its Sinological sister journal, *Warring States Papers*; they are distinguished by the rubric

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**This Volume** extends the stylistic test introduced in *Alpha 2* to Biblical Hebrew, and gives examples of its application, with special attention to the Pentateuch texts. We continue to explore aspects of Mark and the other Gospels, but focus also on what Paul actually wrote, approaching some genuine material from a stylistic point of view. There is a study of Paul’s relation to contemporary Roman law. We continue to explore the apocryphal edges of the Jesus tradition, including its Gnostic aspect, and also the Rabbinic tradition, in part as evidence for the not always hostile relationship which existed between Judaism and its unruly offshoot, the Jesus Movement.

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,” authors may 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; this 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, made in Alexandria in and after the 03c. Tinkering by some translators is easily demonstrated, 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