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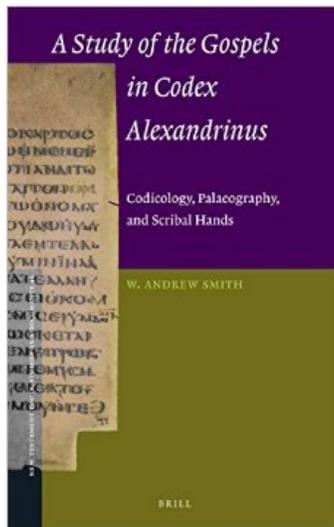
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W. Andrew Smith

A Study of the Gospels in Codex Alexandrinus: Codicology, Palaeography, and Scribal Hands (New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 48)

Leiden: Brill, 2014

Pp. x + 384. ISBN: 978-90-04-26783-1. \$163.00 [Hardback]. Purchase

Elijah Hixson
University of Edinburgh

This book is a revised version of W. Andrew Smith's PhD thesis completed at the University of Edinburgh under Larry Hurtado. Smith gives a fresh analysis of Codex Alexandrinus with an eye to two questions: how many scribes were at work in the Gospels, and is there evidence in the manuscript to suggest it originated in Egypt? The book breaks from the pattern among recent monograph-length manuscript studies in that it does not address the content or quality of the text of Codex Alexandrinus. Instead, this book shows how much usually goes *unwritten* in manuscript studies, namely, information about non-textual features, palaeography and orthography.

In his meticulous analysis, Smith overturns two long-held positions about Codex Alexandrinus. Skeat and Milne (see Appendix II, "Scribes of the Codex Alexandrinus," in *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus* [London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1938], pp. 91–

4) were incorrect in assigning all four Gospels—and consequently, all of the New Testament except Revelation—to a single scribe. Smith demonstrates by the non-textual features and palaeography that two scribes, each of whom had similar but distinct characteristics, were responsible for the production of the Gospels in Codex Alexandrinus. Moreover, the orthography of the codex is not consistent with the orthography of contemporary Egyptian Greek, so it must have been produced elsewhere. The book is organized into four chapters, each covering a distinct aspect of Codex Alexandrinus.

In the first chapter, Smith presents a well-argued reconstruction of the timeline of Codex Alexandrinus as it passed from place to place before arriving at its current location in the British Library. Smith is appropriately cautious when the facts do not allow confident judgments, but when they do, the book can seem to an interested reader more like the forensic report of an exciting detective case than a dry academic monograph. Using notes written into the text and margins of Codex Alexandrinus throughout the centuries, Smith weaves together the history of the manuscript—what can be known with certainty, what can be reasonably suggested, and what must remain uncertain.

In the second chapter, Smith discusses quires, margins, page wear and titles, as well as writing area and even how the edges of Codex Alexandrinus have been trimmed. By studying these aspects of the manuscript, Smith is able to reconstruct even more of its history. Although it is presently bound in four volumes in the British Library, Smith shows that it was not always so bound. Additionally, Smith has identified two additional leaves unnoticed by previous scholars. Foreshadowing what he argues more fully in the following chapter, Smith shows how the layout of the New Testament leaves is better explained by its being the work of multiple scribes, not one.

Smith solidifies his conclusions of multiple scribes at work in the Gospels and a non-Egyptian provenance of Codex Alexandrinus in his final two chapters. Milne and Skeat's "single-scribe theory" of Codex Alexandrinus has largely gone unchallenged. However, the differences in individual letterforms found in Codex Alexandrinus are better explained as the work of two scribes than of one, as Smith demonstrates with copious pictures accompanying discussion. Minor differences in the tailpiece designs and the frequency of error observed in the Eusebian apparatus in the margins of the manuscript also support this conclusion. Smith also gives an analysis of the unit delimitation and orthography (paragraphing and spelling) patterns in the Gospels in Codex Alexandrinus. By comparing orthographic changes in Codex Alexandrinus with what one would expect to find in typical Egyptian Greek of the same period, Smith dispels the position that Codex Alexandrinus has an Egyptian provenance.

There are some features of the book that might deter a reader who is more familiar with general New Testament studies than with manuscript studies and textual criticism. Smith does not discuss the text of Codex Alexandrinus—its content, its quality or where it sits within the stream of transmission of the New Testament. This book is concerned with other features of the manuscript. Smith does occasionally use undefined technical language with which the non-specialist might not be familiar—*ductus* or *hastas*, for example. Undefined terminology is concentrated in the palaeography chapter; where there is scholarly debate about the precise meaning of a term, Smith does define it. These features should not be seen as weaknesses of the book. Non-specialist readers should be aware of those features before diving in, but to those interested in the study of biblical manuscripts, Smith's content and terminology are exactly what should be expected from a work of such excellent caliber.

Smith has also done his readers an immense favour by including numerous images of Codex Alexandrinus, many of which are even in colour. This aspect of the book is especially useful in the palaeography chapter. As Smith discusses the differences in letterforms from one scribe to the next, he places writing samples of each scribe side-by-side so that his readers can see the differences with their own eyes. The same holds true with Smith's treatment of tailpiece designs.

Likewise, the appendices to the work are very helpful references. Smith has indexed not only the Gospels, but also the entire codex and created a chart to help one locate a text in any part of the manuscript. His orthographic and Eusebian apparatus data are reproduced in full in the appendices. For those interested in how early manuscripts can aid in exegesis, Appendix E lists every occurrence of a paragraph division in the Gospels in Codex Alexandrinus. The way a scribe divided the text can shed light on how he or she interpreted it, and Smith has given his readers an excellent resource for determining how the scribes of this important fifth-century manuscript placed paragraph divisions in the Gospels.

In conclusion, W. Andrew Smith is to be commended for his excellent and meticulous study. Smith has shown how much a manuscript's non-textual and paratextual features can reveal about its scribes and its history. This book is to be recommended to anyone who studies New Testament manuscripts. Those who study Codex Alexandrinus will find this work to be essential.

Elijah Hixson, Th.M.
University of Edinburgh