

# PAIDEIA

Or, looking into the beauty of Homer and Old Greek literature

*Werner Jaeger popularized the term Paideia when he published his three volume opus, "Paideia: The ideals of Greek Culture". Not explicitly defining the meaning of the word 'paideia', he uses it as a shade in which most of Greek society-- and its operations, can safely find rest. I intend only to use it specifically as it relates to how various cultures have viewed the educational procedures functioning among their own population groups, and more importantly, to show why the continued study of Hellenistic prose and poetry is essential to one's preparation for the study of biblical writings.*

*Enkyklios Paideia*, in one sense, means 'a complete education:' a transmission and reception of a body of knowledge formally presented in a teacher/pupil relationship. Every generation has involved itself in the formation of the minds of up and coming youth. Our historical investigations of papyri and other ancient documents reveal certain disciplines of old, which may yet, now, be beneficial to our present day educational efforts.

Greece and its literature have always held preeminence in Western nations. Western civilization, as a rule, has always studied its way through the materials of Greece in order to discover and shape its own character. It is not that we adhere to the dusty old theses which isolated Greece and Rome from other cultures in order to perpetuate a system dominated by dead white males supposedly believed to have been empowered to rule the known world. This bubble burst many decades ago, and in recent times has been ably handled in a number of reference books. M.L. West's volume on *The East Face of Helicon* is a technical and scholarly look at Greece's connections to Asiatic materials. Then on a layman's level Walter Burkert's book, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Concepts of Greek Cultures*, introduces the reader to some inescapable historical facts.

Yet and still, Homeric images and the heroic outlook created the lens through which all children raised in the West now view the world. The concept of a Greek love for the *beautiful*, the *true* and *good* was popularized over the last three centuries but now has fallen on some hard times. However, this is good. Scholars have demonstrated over and over again that the simple ancient life envisioned by 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars was not quite so simple. And we must do our best to continue to maintain Karl Lehr's Ten Commandments for Classical Philologists: the first of which is 'thou shalt not parrot, the third, 'thou shalt not bow down before manuscripts, and then there is the fifth, 'thou shalt learn to read.

Thus today the re-reading of old Greek literature has given rise to many new and exciting discoveries. For our purposes it is best to quickly get to the point and relate this fact (although it will be sometime below in this paper before I actually explain it): In the bible, there is a book (among the many) with a deep and abiding tie to Greek literature. It is Luke's narrative. The Gospel of Luke is an ingenious piece of research based, I posit, on the Greek model of *historia, or research*. A Greek education which begins in Luke's treatises could (possibly?) produce a well trained mind for engaging the study of the other Greek historians like Herodotus, Thucydides or even Polybius.

This might strike one as out of the ordinary but it really should be a normative practice in pastor-scholar fields of study. Not only do many universities exclude New Testament texts from their curriculum<sup>1</sup>, seminaries and departments of religions rarely even bother with Classical Greek texts at all. Somehow an impression was made upon faculties that if one masters NT Greek and a few nuances in the Septuagint then, one is qualified to transmit information on the Greek language. It seems a bit presumptuous if not precarious that our professors have adopted methods like these.<sup>2</sup>

A similar comparison could be made if we were to train students in historical English philology but imposing one stricture: the student must take the Australian English language as their point of entry and focus. It may seem silly but this is occurring daily in classical fields and in the seminary and the gaping holes in their knowledge are gaps not easily filled thru strict rigors of specialization. Broad reading is needed. Especially reading that commences with the earliest Greek literature and follows down to at least the Renaissance.

Sir Cecil Maurice Bowra (1898-1971) claimed to have read all the extant Greek literature by the time he was thirty-five. Naturally, a proficiency

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<sup>1</sup> In an utterly amazing statement, Kenneth Dover, attempting to demarcate the time frames of ancient Greek literature, avers "In the case of Greek, the advent of Christianity, with the profound cultural changes which this entailed, is a helpful marker, and by common convention (especially in the English speaking world) 'ancient Greek Literature' means the literature which was written in Greek in the pre-Christian centuries, and by non-Christians in the first six centuries of the Christian era. On this criterion the New Testament, although written in Greek in ancient times, is not ancient Greek literature", *Ancient Greek Literature*, 1997 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Editor, Kenneth Dover, Oxford University Press, pg 1 of introduction. It is hoped that such a silly statement will be quickly discarded in scholarly circles. For the New Testament texts are ancient documents and are to be read, appreciated and honored as such. No wonder so few academics are acquainted with them.

<sup>2</sup> An exception (among many) to this perception is F.W. Danker, whose labors in classical fields are noted. His article from the early sixties, *Menander and the Greek New Testament* published in vol. 61 of *New Testament Tools and Studies* series, is a model of scholarly research, wit and brevity. Of the use of the *Dyscolos* for New Testament studies he writes: "... we are grateful for even the little indirect light Menander's long-lost drama throws on the New Testament".

of this magnitude has its drawbacks, the main being the lobbed accusations that one is a popularist rather than a specialist. To write works which in turn are loved by many and purchased in great volumes is held to be bad. But to produce essays and books that will be read by only a few scholarly dead-heads is perceived to be genuinely critical work. It may seem that I have not painted a pretty picture but this is far from the real issue at hand. What is needed is a desire to again approach the Greek corpus of literature as a whole rather than piecemeal. Reorienting ourselves may take time so why not now? Still, let us not race along to fast. Of what exactly does old Grecian literature consist and why should we study it in the first place?

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#### Excursus #1 Judaism

From a purely biblical perspective, education is the purest form of personal sanctification. What better way to transform human conditions than through knowledge? The keeping of the law has routinely been considered a matter of grave importance. So much so that in many Jewish communities the prevailing thought has always been that without the ‘yeshiva—a place where Talmudic learning is carried out—the Jewish nation would never stand. Tracing yeshivan origins back to Abraham, Jewry has attempted to recreate places and locales where the study of the Torah would be primary and foremost. It is normative to assume from Ezekiel 11:16 that the yeshiva is the little sanctuary, which the Lord promised to Jewry during the prophesied Diaspora. So it is incumbent upon all who participate in Jewish life to help support Talmudic studies.

In fact, it says in *Talmud Yerushalmi, Yoma 1*, “Every generation in whose time the sanctuary is not rebuilt is considered {as guilty} as though it demolished it {the holy temple}. Children are born and bred to be carriers of torah; learning the first five books of Moses at an early age, then, getting grounded in the oral law, or Mishna—traditions of the elders, and, if desirable, following on to the study of the Gemara, the commentary on the Mishna. The discipline of sitting and learning texts in the original language is how communities perpetuate their cultures. In this regard, the Rabbis and Rosh Yeshivas have done remarkably well.

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Taking the question of “why should we read Greek literature” as our starting point, let me begin by stating that we have happily received from Greece the concepts of democracy, individual freedoms, civic structures, and critical thinking. These are notions being confronted today in print, no less, by scholars who would like to play down the uniqueness of Greece. This subtly levels the playing field for the philosophy of cultural relativism so prominent these days. To all of the above I would add that Hellenistic distinctness also handed down to us the ‘heroic outlook” which leads citizens to desire to be the best, both physically and mentally. You will look long and hard for ancient cultures that placed any emphasis on these matters.

As to the advantages to reading Old Greek literature let me insert these personal opinions that have benefited me greatly:

1. You may become familiar with popular figures of the past. Pericles' voice needs to be heard again. And his tone and inspiration would be profitable in these war times in which we live. Also Greek myth, although wholly fabulous and legendary, stands behind much of our cultural perceptions. Children know of the strong man 'Hercules' but little of 'Herecles' actual history. W.H.D. Rouse believed Homer's *Odyssey* to be the 'best story ever told'.

It is a story of wonder. Odysseus labors to make his way back to his wife, who is surrounded by grumbling men who desire her hand in marriage. Believing Odysseus to be dead they take full advantage of his absence. None know for sure what has happened; certainly not that Poseidon has placed one snare after another in the pathway of mighty Odysseus. Yet in the end, a son grows up and later a husband and wife are reunited. Too bad for the men who later on wished they had never remained so long. These old tales of Greek legend were used to mold character and develop opinions. The Greeks were good at developing self-perceptions that strengthened critical thought.

2. You may examine ancient customs and cultures. All should read book two of Herodotus' histories to gain insight into what was thought of Egypt long ago. The book's features are very similar to the trail taken as a reader goes walking through Germany with Tacitus in Latin. Old languages do allow access to ways of life hitherto unknown. So why not enjoy portions of what is available. Still too, Pausanias' travels are exciting, if you like tedious facts, figures and events.

For a good fireside read, you could reach for Apollonius of Tyana. He was a wonderworker who supposedly did miracles around the era of Christ. I once listened to a lecture where the instructor generously described a man of so-called supernatural birth miraculous life et cetera, he left all with the impression that he was in process of unfolding various features of Jesus; only to snatch the rug out from under everyone's feet by stating that his remarks referred to Apollonius. It requires diligence in studies to see that the two display no linkage at all, but the skeptic lives to question the major assumptions of Western Civilization.

3. Most importantly, you may broaden your mind and learn to interpret events in a diachronic way. The old Solomonic proverb "there is nothing new under the sun" has never made more sense until you study some of the biased, blood-thirsty, even romantic ways of the ancient Greeks. The comedies of Aristophanes turn

Greek lenses on themselves and scrutinize many of the ways in which Greek characters lived and performed in daily life.

Certainly there is a lot more to say but here is not the place to continue the monologue. My point is simple. If you learn to appreciate a culture, which I came to love in my youth, your mental acumen and your judgments can improve. A similar case could be made in another direction too: Being a Semitist I could also demonstrate the manner in which a good immersion in Hebrew, Arabic or Aramaic thought could add new and improved frames of thinking to your person. So there is no privilege on the table, only a recognition of those historic contributions to our Founding Father's developed thinking and the need to recover all therein. An afternoon's perusal of the American curriculum from two hundred years ago would lead the inquisitive to inquire into the nature of Greek literature and its influence.

What we commonly call Greek Literature is a mixture of various strands of writings-prose and poetry-passed along through time by people who considered particular works of literature to be works of art. To be more exact, they deemed certain authors and their productions to be what we now refer to as 'classics', standard works which are worthy of reading in every generation. First and foremost among them was Homer, or someone whose writings came to be identified with one so-called Homer. Tradition says he was a blind oracle whose songs are unrivaled. In fact, no matter where one starts in Greek historical studies it is Homer who serves as the cornerstone for all Greek achievement.

He was read, revered, venerated and preserved from as early as six centuries before Christ clear through the Middle Ages and into the period of the Italian Renaissance where rediscoveries of ancient Greek writings dominated. As an example of what Homer's writings meant years ago, let us consider the classic poem by John Keats (1795-1821) properly entitled:

### **On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer<sup>3</sup>**

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;

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<sup>3</sup> John Keats was given Chapman's edition by a friend named C.C. Clarke. The two stayed up all night reading the treatise and sometime after daybreak Keats composed this sonnet, because at ten am Mr. Clarke found it on the breakfast table. Keats has history wrong, since Cortez was the discoverer he supposed him to be.

Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He star'd at the Pacific--and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise--  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

George Chapman (1559-1634) issued his edition of the *Iliad* in the year 1611. It was the Jacobean era. And Chapman had already proven his skills as a poet, critic and playwright. Some two centuries later, this volume comes into the hands of Keats and transforms him for a night into a soul all aflame for Homer. The fourteen line poem above captures the ecstasy of the long night's adventure at Troy. Undoubtedly reading it aloud he was captured from the first lines:

"Achilles' baneful wrath resound, O Goddesses, that impose  
Infinite Sorrows on the Greekes and many brave soules losd"

Keats describes his journey with Homer as an adventure to realms of gold, most lovely places. Even so, these bookish worlds were far away and distant yet close enough to be held in hand. The baneful wrath of Achilles hovered over him through the night as he followed each character's ritual and sense of honor. What is it about this translation that would grab a 19<sup>th</sup> century poet and possess him so? Chapman was able to do what so many other versions fail to do. He runs the reader over the terrain in a rough but vibrant way. So Keats feels as though he is in the thick of battle as swords clash, blood spills to the ground, and love commences and concludes.

My friend, here is how a classic is made. It has nothing to do with whether it sells well or receives rave reviews. However, it is based upon what a reader's opinion is of the book. For Keats, Chapman's Homer became an Iliadic Bible. The esteem given to the King James Bible by millions today reflects the same emotional attachment exhibited above in Keat's verse. It reads as though 'Deep Browed' Homer spoke to him—through Chapman's lips-- that night and it sounded to him like the 'voice of god' and so human inspiration ran out of his fingers into the verse generations still comment upon today.

These are the joys of reading good books and great literature. To never want to put a book aside is the hard to imagine desire that sends currents

of excitement throughout one's body. Keats goes so far as to compare his evening in ancient times to the astronomer's gaiety at discovering new galactic nebulae. Something strange and new has come into his purview and he does not want to lose sight of it—it is Homer's tales! Like the explorer who has crossed on foot worlds unknown and has oft times loosened alien dust from his sandals, so John Keats now stares at an ocean of ideas and wonders what to do with it all.

On the philological side, poets know that proper wording makes all the difference in the world. In line six, Keats uses the word “demesne”, from ME. *Demaine*; OFr. *Demaine* (Fr. *domaine*). It also has relation to Lat. *dominium*, property, right of ownership. Keats imagines that he hears the bards/singers who are faithful to Apollo, the God of Music and poetry, singing of the renown of Homer. Homer's supremacy is felt far and wide in the reading of the Chapman text. His “demesne” will not and cannot be conquered. So envisioned the might world of Homer, where words ride along smoothly and bear the reader abroad to majestic ‘goodly states and Western Isles.’ Keats has been taken captive and has no fancy for deliverance of any type. He is pleased with his temporal master and seeks to join him in song, hence the sonnet. Keats looks upon Homer as if he was heir to an ancient tradition that has become his own ‘heritable property’. The Iliad and Odyssey are masterpieces that will never be duplicated. Virgil affirmed as much too!

Maybe the poem above is enough to spur you on to Homeric exploration. To find an author who can occupy you all night is hard enough. Indeed the king in “*one thousand and one tales of the Arabian nights*” sought an attraction for his Muhammadan mind from dusk to dawn.

#### Excursus #2 Islam

Within Islamistan—Islamic nations worldwide, it is common practice to participate in what is popularly known as a *halaqa*, or a learning circle. In these forums, learners are giving and receiving information under the direction of a skilled leader of the subject under discussion. Culturally, children are nurtured along different lines than in other areas of the world. Steeped in the precepts of the religion of Islam from early youth, the average teenager had memorized the entire Qur'an by the age of ten. When a Muslim child is born into this world the first voice he hears is that of a father reciting the *shahada*—“there is no god but god and Muhammad is his messenger”—in his or her ears.

Bearing witness to what they believe to be a central truth to all life, one's youth is molded by mullahs, clerics and other imams of repute and note. Arabic, considered to be the language of Allah, is taught in all of its many facets. Classical Arabic, which is in reality is little more than Quranic Arabic popularized, is taught as a living language. It is never deemed out of date, incomprehensible, or useless for today's modern Arabic speaker. From the simple halaqa of the home, under a father's supervision unto the more professional halaqa in the Hawza—Muslim seminary—multitudes of young and old give themselves to being educated in the best possible ways in their respective cultural communities.

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## SOME HISTORICAL THOUGHTS ON LUKE'S GOSPEL

### I

If Bede's *History of the English Church and People* is foundational to the study of English history this too must be said of the gospels as foundational documents for any historical studies of Christianity. As it relates to the authorship of Luke in particular, discussions are as nauseating as those dry and drab theoretical dissertations on the Homeric question. After all is said and done, Luke will remain the name of the book in which we conduct our critiques, read, and reverence the personage who is magnified therein.

The old riddle of which gospel came first is tired in too many ways to describe. One man's opinion is as good as the other, especially if he can back it up with hard facts and evidences. In this regard, I aver that all four gospels contain fragments of material written down while Jesus was still here-practicing his ministry, only later, after his ascension did the individual author/editors feel inspired to piece it all together for reader consumption. The mandatory spread of the message of Jesus necessitated the need for translatable texts which could be converted to other tongues as each traveling gospel representative saw fit. There are many notable and critical things which could be said of the other three books on Jesus' life and career. However, I am restricting my comments specifically to the Gospel of Luke.

Primarily this is because its whole design and layout is good ground for historical Greek study; also back of many Greek phrases are Hebrew locutions and other historically Romanic material. Reading through the Greek text of Luke, reading it in light of Greek historical writings and other literature of the day—ie. Mishnaic materials—turns up and over a number of ideas from its textual soil. Tilling the ground is difficult work. There are rocks, roots, and other things to tangle with. So the discarded matter amassed, although useless for sowing and reaping, may be put to use in other areas. Here is where critical research—if based upon the ancient notion of *historia*—can be of positive aid in our labors in the traditional texts of scripture.

If you have ever stood on edge of the shore before and looked out into the mass of water in front of you, just because you cannot see the flotsam drifting about with the natural eye is no reason to deny its existence. The old can floating about may be too far at sea to be recognized by you, and various particles, bacterial et cetera in the waters are there too, though unnoticed. This is how we have read scripture for ages. There is little

regard for surrounding elements in common usage of the day in which are texts were composed.

And the thought of a Greek phrase with pagan parallels frightens many. But as far as I know, God-fearers as well as the Godless speak English and utilize similar phrasing and wording in everything from the composition of letters to inscriptions in books. The difference is in how one uses a word and ‘what one means to say’ through its usage. Here is where Luke, a competent and capable writer excels. He composed his text as one would if he or she were under duress to present Jesus as an exceptional figure in an exceptional way. His tireless research into the early origins of Christianity’s founder, his desire to construct his text as a first reader for Theophilus is to be noted throughout. This should be superimposed on the fixtures of your mind as you read all of Luke—hopefully Greek text in hand--because he had a goal in mind when he began his treatise, later Acts too, and he did achieve his aim. As an example of some historic parallel usage read the following line from the Gospel of Mark 1:1.

Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ {του} θεοῦ. {Mark 1:1}<sup>4</sup>

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God

*The following are notes on an ancient inscription with a word usage corresponding to the Greek word above for “good news”.*

Inscr. Priene, 105, 40, a calendar inscription, 9 BC, Priene, Asia Minor:

It seemed good to the Greeks of Asia, in the opinion of the high priest Apollonius of Menophilus Azanitus: “Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus [τὸν Σεβαστόν], whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior [σωτήρα], both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance [ἐπιφανείῃς] (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout this essay I use the Traditional Greek text. The so-called critical text (Westcott & Hort, Nestle/Aland or United Bible Society text) is no longer critical in any shape or form. It is now firmly established as a neo-textus receptus and no one dares do any real textual work on the wording of the texts as they now stand. It is for this reason that the Traditional Texts of Scripture are better for collation and study. They are accurate, possess antiquity, lineage and are popular among professionals of all disciplines. For some, the (Gr. *nostos*) return to the traditional text has been long but worth it. Like Odysseus there have been a number of obstacles to confront but so what!

since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the **good tidings** for the world that came by reason of him [ἤρξεν δὲ τῷ κόσμῳ τῶν δι' αὐτὸν εὐαγγελίων ἡ γενέθλιος ἡμέρα τοῦ θεοῦ],” which Asia resolved in Smyrna.

The above inscription can be found in an article by Craig Evans, “Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 1 (2000): pp. 68–69. He gives an indication of his source as: M. E. Boring, K. Berger, and C. Colpe, *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995). If you would like to see the whole of the Greek text of the inscription, cf. W. Dittenberger (ed.), *Orientalis Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae* (2 vols., Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1903-5; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1960) 2.48-60 = OGIS 458. Still too, you may find it easier to obtain a copy of G. Adolph Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East*. The text is located on pp. 366–67, and there is an image of the inscription, fig. 71, in a faintly legible state.

One example after another could be stacked up in defense of the common word currency in use in the formative days of early Christianity. My copies of Deissman (cited above) have illustrations in abundance,<sup>5</sup> so no need to continue this line of thought. More recently, Dr. Hans Dieter Betz, of the University of Chicago, has displayed a fair hand in philology. Some years ago he issued a nice article, *The Mithras Inscriptions of Santa Prisca and the New Testament*, in which he lays before readers the historic concept of Mithraic salvation as it was understood from 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD epigraphic fragments backwards to the time before Christ. The strands he handles do not touch Christian affect how a Christian reads his or her texts but they shine an adjacent light upon words that could have easily been understood, at that time, in multiple ways. It is forgotten that Greco-Roman myth permeated, more or less, the Roman provinces in all directions.

#### Excursus #3 The Romans

The first century Greco-Roman arena moves along different lines. Certainly interested in the progress of ancient culture, they centered a youth’s study on those historic and noteworthy texts that loomed large in days gone by. From poets, satirists and historians unto the tragedians whose dramas shaped whole societies, the educator was working to develop a student’s mental apparatus. Lucian, the satirist, presents education as a steep hill; at the foot, which is a large group of youth who, as they ascend, encounter one difficulty after another. Eventually many of the group turn back gasping for air and dripping with sweat.

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<sup>5</sup> See particularly *Bible Studies: Contributions chiefly from papyri and inscription to the history of the language, the literature, and the religion of Hellenistic Judaism and primitive Christianity* by G. Adolph Deissmann, translated by Alexander Grieve, 1901.

This word picture does show the intensity attached to a real process of learning. It is not easy but it is necessary. Alongside the work of educating the young arose the theory that training is best achieved by learning Greek and Latin texts in their original languages. Typically, schools were called *didaskaleia*, or teaching places. Children began with literacy and numeracy, progressing onward to studies of various poets, and where possible, graduating to rhetoric—prose works and the art of speech; when contrasting individual communities with the habits of others, amazing similarities and differences may be inferred.

## II

In ancient times books were made and read in much different ways than we are presently accustomed to read. Papyri and Parchment<sup>6</sup> was more common and virtually the only material used for the manufacturing of books. Papyri, being abundant in Egypt's Nile Valley, was harvest professionally. The stalks were hollowed out and stretched along hard surfaces. The pithy portion of the papyrus plant was removed, the stalk was cut so that layers could be laid one upon the other and a pumice stone of some type or other was then utilized to pound them. The juices would form a sort of bond which melded the pieces into one whole piece. Upon drying the pieces could be cut for the scribe to do his business and/or placed upon a roller for the reader to read at his or her leisure. The routine length was about 35 feet or so, which would be perfect for the two longest books of the New Testament—Luke and Acts, both which were composed by Luke.

Parchment was a skin, particularly one from a young animal, usually soaked in a lime substance for an extended period. Afterwards it was placed upon a curved shield made of wood, "*beam*"—where a parchmenter would de-hair the *Lat. vellum*, skin. It would then be turned to its reverse side where the process would be repeated. And after soaking for a few days in fresh water to remove the lime substance it would then be pegged so that it could dry. Since it was common for skins to shrink as they dried out pins were placed in various corners in order to form its final shape where the skins later would each be farmed out to the professional scribes. There are many extant manuscript copies using both of the above materials.

The Christians by and large placed their papyri in codices. These were the closest the ancients ever came to what we know now as books. Inscribed papyri came to be stitched together, hand-sewn into a volume in which a reader could turn page after page and read what was contained on individual pages. This was cheaper and it saved vast amounts of time. Yet although this was popularized by Christians it did not come to be the

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<sup>6</sup> Much of what we know of manuscript preparation derives from Pliny the elder. His works, *Natural history*, Book XIII. xxiii-74-77 contain what any avid bibliophile will need to know of early publications and their making.

norm until the late first century or early second century—well, this is what many scholars tend to believe.

However, supposing someone had acquired a roll or scrolls of the Gospel of Luke in the formative years of the early Apostolic Church what would he or she have encountered as they began to read through the document? The first noticeable feature would be the two to three inch columns on each page. If a page leaf was opened in a codex a very strange phenomena would incur. Each column would contain tightly compressed letters lacking either punctuation or spacing between words. This format gives the twenty-first century reader a congested feel at first. For the ancient literary person this was the norm and provided little obstacle to his or her comprehension. The majuscule<sup>7</sup> (capital letters) print more than likely would have captured Luke's earliest thoughts in print.

The reader's eye would not have immediately recognized that the treatise was one about a Holy Man. Its overall plan and production resembled the way other classical documents were discovered, prepared and preserved. In fact, as a literary preserve Luke's Gospel has all the salient points that could be noted in a small memorial draft of the life of Socrates. But before I outline those let me say that there are many able Hebraists whom I have read who, specializing in Hebrew writings, aver that Luke's narrative contains Hebraisms throughout and that by reconstructing its language in Modern Hebrew Jesus' earlier speeches in Hebrew can be recovered.

My thoughts on this are these: (1) Hebrew documents are primarily liturgical. They are written for religious use and, aside from a few Bar Kokhba letters, there is relatively little material with which to do real comparative linguistic work. (2) Even if you could reconstruct what you "think" Jesus might have said in Hebrew it is still pure supposition and you can't do genuine critical work without evidence. Building a house of cards on a stormy day is of no value to anyone. (3) All we presently have of Luke is the Greek text and it is with the Greek text we must work and study. The specialist student will engage the extant material or work up his opinions from his investigations. Otherwise, why take him or her seriously?

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<sup>7</sup> The Codex Sinaiticus is supposedly the earliest text of biblical codex extant. I have a facsimile edition which is very clear for reading purposes. This text has never thoroughly been studied in a truly critical way and it is for this reason that the so-called critical text of today is little more than a popular stabilized text. I take the method of classicist T.P. Wiseman to be correct when he states that a true historian will approach any popularly held convention with a curious note of skepticism. Asking why something was/is held to be fact or truth should launch our queries. This philosophy has never gained ground within biblical scholarship and because a faulty methodology reigns supreme Christendom is stuck with the textual mediocrity so ably publicized of late.

Returning to how an ancient person would have regarded Luke's text we need only compare the strata from Socrates historic remains.

1. First of all, for a classicist or a student in the field of humanities, everyone knows that Jesus and Socrates are the two central figures in Western Civilization, albeit for wholly different reasons. People unfamiliar with classical Latin and Greek would never stumble upon this fact in other genres or fields.
2. Neither of them (Jesus nor Socrates) ever wrote anything that has been stored up for future generations—that we know of.
3. What we know of the two stems from the writings of others. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John gives us our pictures of Jesus, and Plato, Xenophon, Aristophanes—and indirectly Cicero in Latin—give us some of the extant images of Socrates.
4. Socrates and Jesus had no desire to exercise any official duties as politicians.
5. Socrates spoke of being guided by his “*daimon*”<sup>8</sup>, a genius spirit he believed spoke to him. On the other hand Jesus is guided by the Holy Spirit and Jesus' demonstrations are multifarious.
6. Both were recognized as wise teachers, sages with a following of disciples given to cling to every word, and from them arose distinct methods of instruction—the Socratic and then the parabolic.<sup>9</sup>
7. Jesus and Socrates were both accused of impiety and of sowing corruption among masses of people.
8. From the portraits extant, the two of them were essentially silent at their trials. By that I meant that there was little rebuttal from either of them.
9. Jesus' death was certainly viewed sacrificially. Multiple scriptures are used from the Old Testament to prove the point of his death. Socrates was caricatured as dying, in some sense, in a self-sacrificial way for a bruised Athenian state in the wake of its loss to Sparta in war.
10. The memories of both were carried on through the pages of literature—in Greek, and later, multiple tongues and dialects.

*\*Here it would be good to note that Socrates died for no one's sins and his circle of students is threadbare today, except for in academia where he is still studied but mostly for philosophical reasons, few of which would stem from any religious fervor. Jesus, on the other*

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<sup>8</sup> This word at the time of writing did not carry the demonic overtones so readily seen in its etymological kin “demon”. For the Greek, in mythological circles the daimon was believed to give sound counsel and advice.

<sup>9</sup> Some might offer the view that the rabbis of the Mishnaic period also used parables and many prior to the time of Jesus. Possibly, but as of now, there are no dates or timeframes that can validate the many theories of reception current in rabbinical scholarship to date.

*hand, is known in no other way other than a profoundly religious sense: he is redeemer, savior and King of an eternal kingdom unknown to those outside of its domain.*

### III

The ancient reader could have easily seen these simple parallel points if he or she had taken the time to collate these materials from Greco-Roman literature. The reading of the Lukan treatise would have made sense and it would have given him or her pause for reflection on the importance of the person under study. Another literary convention worthy of at least an honorable mention is the closely aligned letters comprising the first four verses would have caught his or her attention. **Luke's Proem**-{Lk 1:1-4}, if we might refer to it in this manner, is an erudite specimen of classical literary Greek production. I really am surprised by how little attention has been given to its analysis.

It is very different in its structure from the rest of the treatise. This is no sign of differing hands but a indicator of the Luke's ability to use good Greek as a lead in to a curriculum of ideas about Jesus. I took the time to collate Scholz's Greek text alongside my Scrivener's Annotated Greek New Testament (1908), and made a number of discoveries. I am not going to unload all these items below but will list a few things worthy of further research from my investigation of Luke chapter one.

1. Luke's use of "kai" or "and" as we often translate it, I have found that it has extended definitions of meaning: such as, *as well as* or *indeed*. It has been remarked by Robert Lindsay is his work for the Jerusalem school of synoptic research that Luke's extensive use of the Kai form was out of step with the Greek of the day and showed that he was more than likely working from a Hebrew source where the "vav-connective" was popular.

Whether or not he was utilizing a Hebrew vorlage is a discussion for another time. However, his use of "kai" was in sync with his day. A quick perusal of Epicidetus, which is Koine—although I do not like the term Koine—or of Polybius' *histories* book one, which predates the Gospels by two centuries or so, proves the Kai use was as natural in his writings as in the papyri of others literature. Throughout Luke we find the conjunctive "kai" at the head of too many sentences. Although this is one of the best signposts for my theory of its widened general meaning, its does look to me that Luke is writing his document as a first text rather than as a receptor document slavishly following semiticisms inscribed by other hands.

2. Luke's uses of Gr. "*eyeneto*/Eng. *and it came to pass*"---verses 5,8,23,41,44,59,65---relate to transitions to new settings or new thoughts. It is not a Greek term that always signifies the entrance of a new time-frame. Not unlike its pervasive usage in classical Greek this word too conveys something of the magic involved in composing a good story. The classical language based romance novels of antiquity are suffused with these subtle reminders we translate as *so it happened, and it came to pass, thus it was, then at that time* and so on ad infinitum.
3. Then Luke's terminology is equipped to instruct: of the many words to which we might refer, notice the writing tablet of verse 63, *pinakidion*. This is a diminutive of the *pikaks* form of Old Greek. Judges wrote their verdicts and judgments on small tablets like this. Zachariah's request shows more than we often see staring at this in English. Who would possess small tablets like this but learned folks? Also Luke is pushing us to believe in the authoritative nature of the entire dialogue before us. John's name becomes a verdict of law handed down to the family, and is to be regarded as such.

This is a slight peep into the world of Jewish family law and tradition. The father is the key patriarchal figure who announces a name unrelated to the whole of their known relative clan. Rarely are we given inside glimpses of this type but here you have it all before you in the Greek text of Luke's writing. Should I assume that Luke is subtly framing his story in ways out of step with current literary composition in the twenty-first century but natural to the period between Augustan and Hadrian? Yes!

There is great need to examine Luke in light of the old Greek 'heroic perspective'. Little work has been done in this area so my comments are only preliminary material for a more exhaustive reference guide hopefully to come sometime in the future.

- a. Note the use of the word "fame" (AV 1611) in Luke 4:14; 37 and 5:15. Three distinct Greek words are used to convey what is given in English in the New English Bible as "reports, news and talk".<sup>10</sup> The Greek words are "*pheimei, eixos, and logos*" respectively. Each of which have their own defined meanings, all of which are used in Classical Greek literature to signal more

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<sup>10</sup> The New English Bible operated more or less far and away from a formal equivalent or word substitution theory of translation. George B. Caird believed the NEB to be "incomparably the best" version because the translators did not seek to transmit original forms but they asked to themselves the question, "If I were saying this in English, how would I put it?.." This extract is found in James Barr's *memoir of George B. Caird*, in the Proceedings of the British Academy, 1986.

than a vast amount of scuttlebutt generated. Luke culled data from a number of resources.

He had Herodotus, Thucydides, Pindar and Aeschylus at his disposal. These words are all found in their literature. Naturally you would ask, so what? The answer is not too hard to give out. Luke is painting a picture for the first century reader who is poring over these words knowing that the pursuit of honor was ideal among men of his or her day. And fame so described by Him, unlike any other Gospel writer, is one which could easily be included among the old styles heroes of the Greek past. This lead in— concerning fame— is part of the bait he will use to early on to bring the reader forward to a sacrificial death unknown to any person fluent in Greek literature.

- b. Luke was well aware of his reader's cultural immersion in Greco-Roman myth well. His own awareness of it is recorded--inter alia--in Acts 14:11, which is volume two of his Gospel. There the folks at Lystra claim that "the gods have come down {to them} in the likeness of men." This is why Luke leans in so heavily with the birth story of Jesus. He has a point to prove and he does it very well. The reader needs to know up front that Jesus is being offered to the reader as a genuine HERO.

When we hear this word in English we refer to comic book figures like superman and such, but no, heroes in Greek Literature were believed to be born of both god and man. They were people capable of doing great feats. Immediately in this book the reader is confronted with a structure familiar to the learned and unlearned. Even in oral settings the introductory portions of heroic material is the same. Obviously the untrained eye or ear could never discern these disparate strands at all.

- c. Unlike John's Gospel which introduces us to characters in a very personal way—cf. John 3/Nicodemus, John 4/woman at well, John5/ man at pool of Bethedsa, John 8/woman in adultery, John 9/man born blind from birth—Luke does not use much space for that kind of material. His tendency is to stage each scene in such manner that causes Jesus is solely looked upon as heroic: everything and everyone else is peripheral, they are necessary for His magnification but still they are only secondary sources.
- d. The fame, men so often times sought in olden days, was connected to the pursuit of honor. Being accomplished through noble deeds and self-sacrificial example it is no wonder that

Aristotle said, “.after all, {it is} what we pay to the gods.”<sup>11</sup> Any death could be looked upon as noble if one’s life was laid down in the right circumstances. Little things like these pointers may seem weak and useless for the twenty-first century reader but they meant ‘a world of understanding’ for the ancient reader who knew nothing of blue jeans and the computer internet.

When Jesus died it was a truly significant event. Aside from the cry of the centurion in Luke 23:47, the changes in the sky were always portents of one’s status. The fact that Luke 23:44 presents a darkened earth was an ominous sign to all onlookers: ‘this Jesus was who He said he was and since this is all confirmed now by external evidences, we are all in the wrong’. The way Jesus died was honorable, noble and achieved things unheard of to Greeks and Romans alike: he gave himself a ransom, he atoned for man’s sin, then shortly thereafter arose again completely justified in the Spirit. Oh my, what a story!

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#### IV

These are only a few insights into the text of Luke. More could be added, indeed there is much more to say. But the point of all the discussions above is to note the help that can be derived from reading Greek literature and its usefulness in making sensible citizens useful citizens in the world in which we dwell. In order to accomplish this goal, Homer is of necessity, a must, for appreciating history. The people of the so-called Middle Ages knew this to be true too.

There are many fragments preserved right along with the Beowulf epic and for the most part Latin writers and speakers converted Greek sources into their tongue in much the same way that Arabs brought ancient Greek writings into the Arabic tongue. The scholastic texts on philosophy, medicine, and poetics are well represented in museums around Europe today. Greece has impacted the world. So the biblical adage—when applied to Greek authors--is true, “being dead they yet speak”.

We must find a way to reconnect with our past, the inhabitants of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries so why can’t we? Hans-Joseph Klauck, of the university of Chicago Divinity School says that about “eighty percent of our knowledge of antiquity has come to us only through this

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Nic. Eth. 1123a 20ff.

channel.”<sup>12</sup> He was referring to Byzantine monks and scribes who carefully copied old Greek copies for their use and for the use of posterity.

The Italian Renaissance recovered from antiquity the value of classical literature. Using it in a way that differed greatly from its usage in the scholastic period, an attempt was made to completely educate people with the purpose of individual betterment in mind. This included using ancient texts didactically: teaching moral precepts and truths. Boys and girls, as fragile as they are in their youth, were looked upon as persons in need of particular structures for their moral edification. So this led to a liberal education worthy of naturally free persons. Stripped of today’s political baggage, the phrase ‘liberal education’ was a wholesome thought at the time. But how are we to view the education of the populace today in light of modern conceptions?

Today, education is thought of as an exact science, when in point of fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Scripted systems of instruction have not produced the enlightened civilians that we so desperately need. To be honest, the main reason for the failure is the undermining of the role of the teacher as a moralist. Values are vague, right and wrong are combustible terms and everyone is doing what ‘seems to be right in their own eyes.’ *Paideia*, at least in Greek thought, was to supplant irrational notions of liberty and help one to interpret the world through the events of the past. We could learn a few things here. Once again, education is not science. It is more akin to an art that should be deftly handled.

Each child being a repository of treasures, they must be handled delicately. In Hebrew there is a term which may assist us in understanding this matter: Geniza, this is a place where discarded manuscripts and books are deposited. Since they are no longer seen as suitable for public usage or view they are hidden away in the geniza-storehouse, safely away from people. These genizas have now been examined by many and they have yielded up some profound treasures. But look at how long they sat there mired in dust and darkness. In like manner consider the cemetery and all of the treasures it houses: the craftsman, mothers, doctors, and others who died long before they could ever transmit their knowledge to another generation. Education is needed to guard against this type of consistent lost.

Using the material above as a backdrop, we can now suggest a few ways for carrying on the transmission of the material elements of the Gospels to each generation. Even the unbeliever is able to see the value of the

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<sup>12</sup> Emerging Christianity and Greco-Roman Culture: Tentative Answers to an Old Question by Hans-Josef Klauck in *RCatT XXIX/2 (2004)* pp. 243-254.

biblical documents as documentary texts. If utilized properly, all that is contained on each page will be revealed to the human heart. A method of this type ensures continuity and hinders breakage in patterns of transmission. People often wonder how suicide bombers can be so naïve as to take their own lives and those of others. What people fail to realize is that the ones who strap the bomb vests upon themselves do not consider themselves to be naïve. They believe that they are acting according to a dynamic religious purpose. It all comes down to instruction and its content. The average Christian does not know the passage in Matthew 11:29 where Jesus says “*take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*”

### **One final Christian educational thought**

Taking note of Matthew’s rhetoric, he is saying that education begins with a person and that this person’s name is Jesus. True discipleship entails discipline. The Greek word *mathetes* defines not only a learner, but one who engages himself in all of the obstacles and problems which may beset him in his journey to acquire knowledge. Today, few find discipleship interesting. Most are fascinated by the Walmart type parish which makes available to the consumer everything needed to attend to their private desires and needs. The idea of taking up a cross or yoke in order to follow is the least likely path that shallow believers will take. But let us remember that a yoke is to be a constraint. It is formed for purposes that appear to be fraught with hardships.

True education is a matter of life and death, and it is Christ’s life, which must increase and your life that should decrease. In local churches I’m advocating the start of new methods of reeducation. Our children should learn the bible in Hebrew, Aramaic and in Greek. Rather than leaving these tongues to the professors of bible colleges and Seminaries, they should be transmitted to a generation of kids who desire truth in their inward parts. In teaching youth Semitic languages it has always been thrilling to watch their faces glow as new words fall from their lips. For one to realize he or she is pronouncing a word in Arabic or Hebrew or articulating a thought in Syriac is forceful. If pastors would gather and read the bible in-text, then the abundance of revelation pouring from each sentence would then spill from the pulpit into the hearts and lives of the parishioners listening.

Only then will education be complete and circular. Until it happens in this manner, it will always be a dull repetition of one man’s thinking against another’s. And since so few Christians are able to verify a

meaning or chase down a truth historically, ignorance will reign as it does now in so many quarters.

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