

# A HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON CODEX BEZÆ<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Considering the amount of material written on Codex Bezae down through the centuries, a detailed history of research into the codex has long been overdue. Such a history is important not only to give future researchers an understanding of what has gone on before, but also to facilitate an understanding of the development of ideas and their outcome. As Codex Bezae is the principal witness of the so-called Western text, much of what has been written focuses on its text. From the end of the last century, however, there has been a growing awareness among scholars of the need to give the other details contained within the codex far more attention than hitherto.

Inasmuch as the D text is the main rival to the Alexandrian text as the best representative of the original exemplar, it is of no surprise that Codex Bezae and its text have been of interest to the textual critics. Over the last century and a half there have always been those advocating the supremacy of the D text, and such claims have attracted much attention. For this reason, Codex Bezae has never been far from the focus of scholarly debate. This debate would be greatly helped if Codex Bezae could be accurately located historically, for this is the nub of the problem—where and when was it written? Any avenue of inquiry ever pursued, any investigation ever embarked upon, has the answer to this question as its prime objective. Hence the importance of this history, for we need to know how

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth E. Panten, *A History of research on Codex Bezae, with special reference to the Acts of the Apostles: evaluation and future directions* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis; Murdoch University, Western Australia, 1995); supervisor: Dr. Richard Moore.

the debate has progressed if we are to avoid repeating previous fruitless enterprises and build upon fruitful endeavours.

Consequently this thesis provides: a detailed history of the research on Codex Bezaë; an analysis of the existing evidence; a detailed catalogue of scholars who have contributed to the debate; details of my own investigations into the historical use of unusually spelled words in the Bezan text; and suggested avenues for future research.

### **The History of Codex Bezaë**

The main history, which is contained in the first part of the thesis, begins with the codex's arrival in Cambridge in 1582 and surveys the writings of virtually all the scholars known to have made comment on it, finishing with D.C. Parker's recent *Codex Bezaë* (1992). It is a history that focuses on Codex Bezaë itself and avoids where possible textual matters. Nevertheless, in order to keep the main developments regarding the D text (deliberately avoiding the misnomer *Western Text*) in historical context, a summary of the main theories of how the Benzan text came into being have been included in this study under their respective authors.

A reconstruction of the codex's deduced history prior to its acquisition by Beza appears in Appendix A. Various references are cited which suggest where Codex Bezaë (and if not Codex Bezaë a manuscript containing the same text) was located at various points in history. We can conclude with some confidence that the codex was in France as early as the ninth century, and possibly as early as the eighth. The marginalia in the *Harklensis* point to Codex Bezaë or a similar document being in Alexandria in 616 when Thomas of Harkel wrote his revision of the Philoxenian.

### **Analysis of the Evidence**

We provide a detailed discussion of the evidence and of the opinions expressed by the various scholars, especially those of David Parker, whose study of Codex Bezaë is arguably the most comprehensive since Scrivener's facsimile of 1864. This review helps to determine what details of Code Bezaë might be taken

as substantially true, if not proven fact, and to suggest a direction for future research.

Appendix C contains the most comprehensive inventory and analysis of existing work on Codex Bezae at present available. In this appendix every issue known to have been discussed is listed under each respective theme, along with the names of the scholars who entered the debate and their references.

Contained within Appendix D is a list of all the words in the Bezan Acts that are spelled contrary to the Greek found in Nestle-Aland. Many of these are one off spellings and suggest errors in pronunciation, e.g. itacisms. There are, however, some words which appear more than once and are constantly spelled the same throughout the text. Such consistency in spelling goes beyond error and portrays a standard. If this is true, an analysis of the use of these words might disclose a pattern of their use in location and time.

## Conclusions

Concerning the date of the codex, we suggest a date not later than the middle of the fifth century and perhaps as early as the second half of the fourth century. Its providence lies somewhere in the East, possibly Egypt, but Syria or Jerusalem cannot be discounted; Beirut (Parker's suggestion) is ruled out. It originates from a mixed provincial community where the number of Latins necessitated the use of a Latin text, but where Greek was the liturgical language and, as the *lingua franca* of the Empire, was no doubt spoken to some degree by the community.