Number 16, December 2005

**Stromata**

- Things Happening
  Professor Wes Morriston continues the discussion of Pascal in the Theology Forum Seminar. Spring semester: “Prayer,” taught by Professor Claudia Mills. The usual pizza talks will be continued. An evening lecture on Intelligent Design is planned.

- More on the Prayer Seminar
  The topic for the spring Theology Forum Seminar is “Puzzles about Prayer” (Phil. 4600, Hellems 196, Wed. 3:00). Professor Claudia Mills provides a synopsis: “Prayer lies at the heart of most of the world’s great religious traditions; certainly it is a crucial practice of Christianity. This course will explore various philosophical problems and puzzles about prayer, including: what is the point of petitionary prayer addressed to an all-knowing God who has already foreseen, or even ordained, all that is to come? What should we make of recent scientific studies allegedly establishing the medical efficacy of prayer? Are there ethical constraints on what it is appropriate to pray for (e.g., are we entitled to pray for victory over our enemies? or other narrowly self-interested aims and objectives? Is it disrespectful to pray for nonbelievers?). We will draw on literature from philosophy, theology, science, and personal memoir to try to come to some understanding of the meaning and significance of prayer in the life of religious faith.

”What is the point of petitionary prayer addressed to an all knowing God who has already foreseen, or even ordained, all that is to come?”
**Facts and Figures**

1,028 teenagers (ages 13 to 17) were asked their views on the origin of humans.

- **43 percent** believe God guided a process where people developed over millions of years from less advanced life forms.
- **18 percent** believe people developed over millions of years from less advanced life forms, but God had no part in the process.
- **38 percent** believe God created humans pretty much in their present form within the last 10,000 years or so.
- **37 percent** say evidence supports Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution.
- **30 percent** say it’s one of many theories and isn’t well-supported by evidence.
- **33 percent** don’t know enough about the theory to give an opinion.

*Source: The Gallup Organization, 2005*

**Briefly quoted**

“...you are one of those who have an eye for faults and failures... you take a pleasure to find and publish them; and... having found them, you make haste to forget the overvailing virtues and the real success which had alone introduced them to your knowledge. It is a dangerous frame of mind.”


**À Kempis for the Day**


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A scene from the “Camino de Santiago” – Spain’s famous spiritual pilgrimage.
Textual Criticism Can Be Fun!
Prof. Bruce M. Metzger on the Discovery of Sinaiticus


Primacy of position in the list of New Testament manuscripts is customarily given to the fourth-century codex of the Greek Bible which was discovered about the middle of the nineteenth century by Dr. Constantin von Tischendorf at the monastery of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai. Hence this manuscript is known as codex Sinaiticus. It once contained the entire Bible written in a carefully executed uncial hand (see Fig. 1) and arranged with four columns per page, measuring about 15 by 13½ inches. Today parts of the Old Testament have perished, but fortunately the entire New Testament has survived. In fact, codex Sinaiticus is the only known complete copy of the Greek New Testament in uncial script.

The story of its discovery makes a fascinating tale, and deserves to be told in some detail. In 1844, when he was not yet thirty years of age, Tischendorf, a Privatdozent in the University of Leipzig, began an extensive journey through the Near East in search of Biblical manuscripts. While visiting the monastery of St. Catharine at Mount Sinai, he chanced to see some leaves of parchment in a waste-basket full of papers destined to light the oven of the monastery. On examination these proved to be part of a copy of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, written in an early Greek uncial script. He retrieved from the basket no fewer than forty-three such leaves, and the monk casually remarked that two basket loads of similarly discarded leaves had already been burned up! Later, when Tischendorf was shown other portions of the same codex (containing all of Isaiah and 1 and 4 Maccabees), he warned the monks that such things were too valuable to be used to stoke their fires. The forty-three leaves which he was permitted to keep contained portions of 1 Chronicles, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and Esther, and upon returning to Europe he deposited them in the university library at Leipzig, where they still remain. In 1846 he published their contents, naming them the codex Frederico-Augustanus (in honour of the King of Saxony, Frederick Augustus, the discoverer's sovereign and patron).

In 1853 Tischendorf revisited the monastery of St. Catharine, hoping to acquire other portions of the same manuscript. The excitement which he had displayed on the occasion of his discovery during his first visit had made the monks cautious, and he could learn nothing further about the manuscript. In 1859
his travels took him back once more to Mount Sinai, this time under the patronage of the Czar of Russia, Alexander II. The day before he was scheduled to leave he presented to the steward of the monastery a copy of the edition of the Septuagint which he had recently published in Leipzig. Thereupon the steward remarked that he too had a copy of the Septuagint, and produced from a closet in his cell a manuscript wrapped in a red cloth. There before the astonished scholar’s eyes lay the treasure which he had been longing to see. Concealing his feelings, Tischendorf casually asked permission to look at it further that evening. Permission was granted, and upon retiring to his room Tischendorf stayed up all night in the joy of studying the manuscript—for, as he declared in his diary (which as a scholar he kept in Latin), *quippe dormire nefas videbatur* (‘it really seemed a sacrilege to sleep’)! He soon found that the document contained much more than he had even hoped; for not only was most of the Old Testament there, but also the New Testament was intact and in excellent condition, with the addition of two early Christian works of the second century, the Epistle of Barnabas (previously known only through a very poor Latin translation) and a large portion of the Shepherd of Hermas, hitherto known only by title. The next morning Tischendorf tried to buy the manuscript, but without success. Then he asked to be allowed to take it to Cairo to study; but the monk in charge of the altar plate objected, and so he had to leave without it.

Later, while in Cairo, where the monks of Sinai have also a small monastery, Tischendorf importuned the abbot of the monastery of St. Catharine, who happened to be in Cairo at the time, to send for the document. Thereupon swift Bedouin messengers were sent to fetch the manuscript to Cairo, and it was agreed that Tischendorf would be allowed to have it quire by quire (i.e. eight leaves at a time) to copy it. Two Germans who happened to be in Cairo and who knew some Greek, an apothecary and a bookseller, helped him transcribe the manuscript, and Tischendorf revised carefully what they copied. In two months they transcribed 110,000 lines of text.

The next stage of the negotiations involved what may be called euphemistically ‘ecclesiastical diplomacy’. At that time the highest place of authority among the monks of Sinai was vacant. Tischendorf suggested that it would be to their advantage if they would make a gift to the Czar of Russia, whose influence, as protector of the Greek Church, they desired in connexion with the election of the new abbot—and what could be more appropriate as a gift than this ancient Greek manuscript! After prolonged negotiations the precious codex was delivered to Tischendorf for publication at Leipzig and for presentation to the Czar in the name of the monks. In the East a gift demands a return (compare Genesis xxiii, where Ephron ‘gives’ Abraham a field for a burying plot, but nevertheless Abraham pays him 400 shekels of silver for it). In return for the manuscript the
Czar presented to the monastery a silver shrine for St. Catharine, sent a gift of 7,000 roubles for the library at Sinai and a gift of 2,000 roubles for the monks in Cairo, and conferred several Russian decorations (similar to honorary degrees) on the authorities of the monastery. In 1862, on the one-thousandth anniversary of the founding of the Russian Empire, the text of the manuscript was published in magnificent style at the expense of the Czar in four folio volumes, being printed at Leipzig with type cast for the purpose so as to resemble the characters of the manuscript, which it represents line for line with the greatest attainable accuracy.


Conclusion of the Gospel of John.
The definitive publication of the codex was made in the twentieth century when the Oxford University Press issued a facsimile from photographs taken by Professor Kirsopp Lake (New Testament, 1911; Old Testament, 1922). After the revolutions in Russia, the U.S.S.R., not being interested in the Bible and being in need of money, negotiated with the Trustees of the British Museum for the sale of the codex for £100,000 (then slightly more than $500,000). The British Government guaranteed one-half the sum, while the other half was raised by popular subscription, contributions being made by interested Americans as well as individuals and congregations throughout Britain. Just before Christmas Day, 1933, the manuscript was carried under guard into the British Museum.

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**Taizé: The Service and the Servant**

Candlelight flickers over the icons and the faces of those gathered together in the name of God to worship in a unique way. The songs sung have been specially written, and the order of service suggested by examples of how such a service should be conducted. The emphasis of the service is on prayer, peace and meditation, and around the world in more than 25 countries and in a multitude of languages, services similar to this one are being conducted every day. It is not as one might think a new cult, but a unique and mature melding of Protestantism and Catholicism which is called Taizé—from the name of the small town in Burgundy France where it had its humble origins in 1940.

A trained minister, Roger Schutz, himself the son of a Swiss Reformed minister, moved to Taizé in the beginning years of the war. He was instrumental during those years in hiding refugees—most of whom were Jews. Then, on Easter day in 1949 Brother Roger and a group of companions founded a monastic community in Taizé. During World War II, the confessional boundaries had become more obscure, and with the founding of the World Council of Churches, Protestants and Catholics became more interactive. These factors along with Brother
Roger’s passion for the cause birthed this unique movement.

Thrice daily prayer meetings, of which music, singing and contemplation are the cornerstones, are the outward manifestations of lives of celibacy, community of possessions and simplicity. Some Brothers even go to live amongst and share the lives of the poor.

Contrary to expectations, when Brother Roger issued an appeal to the youth of the churches in connection with the Vatican II Council, the response was overwhelming and Taizé has become a haven for young believers. Visits by himself and many others of the movement to communist Eastern Europe were instrumental in keeping the flame of faith alive—especially amongst the youth. Still today the work amongst the young people flourishes.

Sadly, during a service conducted by himself on August 16, 2005 in his home town of Taizé, the 90-year old Brother Roger was stabbed several times by a woman thought to be mentally ill, and died shortly thereafter. He leaves behind a wonderful legacy of proof that boundaries created over centuries between God’s people can be spanned.

(For more information see http://taize.fr/en)

Lyle Mahon
Boulder, Colorado

St. Simeon: Exultations of Light

St. Simeon (949-1022) is the towering figure of the Byzantine mystics. He was called “the New Theologian,” presumably drawing a contrast with St. Gregory Nazianzus (329-89) who was called “The Theologian.”

In his own time, St. Simeon ran afoul of the “official” theology because of his disdain for rational speculation on divine mysteries in favor of an inner, charismatic, and direct revelatory experience. As with other “classical” mystics of the Christian tradition, both East and West, Simeon teaches an inward turning and emptying of the soul of all distractions—including intellectual—which impede a divine awareness, ecstasy, and union with God (as in “I became a Light”) not, of course, as literal union with the divine substance but rather something like a transparency of the soul to the
divine light and love, and a consequent transfiguration of the soul.

The following lines, from “Hymn XXV,” are instructive in many ways most obvious here is the mystical theme and symbol of Divine Light, and its interplay with Night and Darkness, all of which is so central in Simeon’s mystical imagery. More specifically, his imagery is marked by a striking vividness, as in the two lines of the second extract, by which he depicts the mystic’s personal pursuit of, struggle for, and ecstatic experience of this Light. That the mystic is nonetheless said, recurrently, to be “in the midst of darkness,” “in darkness bound,” and the like, exemplifies a characteristically mystical penchant for paradoxical expression. Another example of provocative imagery is “visible darkness.” The word “energized,” in the third line, reflects, ultimately, Aristotle’s *energeia*, and thus reminds us of the metaphysical roots of the Byzantine interest in the “divine energies,” and similar ideas. The lines are also interesting for their allusions to, and mystical applications of, Sacred Scripture, as with (in order) Isa. 9:2, Matt. 4:16, Micah 7:8, Ps. 4:6, 1 Tim. 6:16, and John 1:5. Such is some of the richness and suggestiveness of these mystical lines. These three brief extracts occur near the beginning of Simeon’s long Hymn XXV. In this hymn, Simeon is recounting a mystical revelation that occurred on the occasion of a meditative moment.

**Exultations of Light**

…suddenly You appeared from above, much greater than the sun, and You shone from heaven to my heart. All the rest I saw as deep darkness, But in the midst a shining, cutting through the air, And it passed from heaven to me, the woeful.

...What exultations of Light! What dancings of fire! What swirlings of flame! in me the tested, Energized from you and your glory.

...Prostrate, I give thanks: You granted me to know this much of the power of your deity. I give thanks: You’re revealed to me, To one who sits in darkness, you illumined me, you granted me to see the Light of Your Face, unapproachable. I remained, sitting amidst the darkness, I know, and amidst this, to me, in darkness bound, You appeared as Light—full light, lighting fully.
And I became a Light in the night,  
I, in the midst of darkness.  
The darkness did not quench your Light entirely,  
Nor did the Light expel the visible darkness.  
But they were there together, unconfused, separate,  
Distant from each other, certainly, unmingled to be sure,  
except, I deem, where they filled all things at once.  
Thus I’m in Light, being amidst the darkness;  
thus I’m in darkness, living amidst the Light.  
Amidst the Light! Amidst the darkness!  
I ask: Who’ll give me, amidst the darkness,  
to find the Light it can’t admit?  
Or how will the darkness admit the Light,  
and not be put to flight there,  
but remain in the midst of Light?  
O awesome marvel! Doubly perceived  
by the double eyes of body and of soul!

Forward and Translation by Ed Miller  
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(Under) The Table Talk

“There are many imperfections in the female sex–as the proverb puts it, ‘If all girls are good, where do wicked women come from?’ Then he [Luther] sang:
‘A red apple may look good and inviting,  
And yet worminess hide;  
So a girl with the worst disposition  
May be pretty outside.’”

Martin Luther  
Table-Talk, No. 3523, tr. Theodore G. Tappert.

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