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New Testament in a Digital Culture: A *Biblaridion* (Little Book) Lost in the Web?

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Abstract

The digital revolution makes one attentive to a “blind spot” of modernity, the influence of the material support of writing on ideas and concepts. Modernity has led us to “believe” in the existence of “works” and “ideas” independently of their concrete expressions in the supports of writing. Such beliefs have deeply influenced modern methodologies, and among them the biblical methodological approaches. The digital revolution reminds one to take a humble attitude to our ideas, and also to our attachment to literary “works”, paying attention to the texts as *documents* and *objects*. Starting from this general idea, this article considers first the impact of some modern beliefs on Classical studies. The second part of this article argues that digital culture can particularly help us to rediscover a culture with plural literacies. Finally, this article asks if the New Testament is becoming a *biblaridion* (Revelation 10:2, 9-10), a “very small booklet”, lost in the World Wide Web, losing more and more of its covers and becoming potentially a “liquid book”, as described by Jacques Derrida (Adema, 2012). To go beyond such a perception, I will consider other ways to deal with a Scripture that is going out of the Book.

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1. Introduction: when is it possible to claim that something has deeply changed in a cultural framework?

When is it possible to claim that something has deeply changed in a cultural framework? What are the sure signals to affirming that we live not only in a time of evolution or adaptation, but at a real turning-point? The question is difficult, but if we consider the field of education, we could claim that we have already arrived at a turning-point in the emergence of digital culture: on Tuesday the 4th of June 2013, Swiss radio announced that a high school decided to migrate their students' reading and writing from paper to computer screens and iPads¹.

If we look at the history of the material support of writing, we can see that the introduction of mass education in the middle of the 19th century (Furet and Ozouf, 1977) accompanied and stimulated the period of the absolute reign of printed culture. At that time the notion of “literacy” (Barnton, 2007, p. 19) was born: it was devised as a unique concept creating an opposition between the technologies of written culture and other types of culture characterized by the key role of orality (for a definition of orality, see Privat, 2007, p.10, footnote 2). At that time the modern belief in the existence of a completely stabilized text was born. It has its roots in the final steps that made concrete the legal status of the author and the text around 1850 – a legal status chosen and promoted by booksellers for economic reasons, and not by the authors themselves (Chartier, 1996, p. 51; see also Neeman, 2012). Even the Christian expression “the religion of the book” was born in the second part of the 19th century (Clivaz, 2013b, p. 4). We can say that “mass education” accelerated the arrival of the maximal stage of printed culture. Based on this historical example, one can guess that the arrival of the iPad at school, as a replacement for paper, could mean an important turn in the emerging digital culture.

As further evidence of a cultural turning-point in education, one can also look at an open debate in the US, published in a recent *New York Times* article (Polikoff, 2013): is it still mandatory to teach cursive hand-writing at school? Such a debate adds weight to the arguments of Roger Chartier and Christian Vandendorpe. For them, the digital revolution

represents the most important turn since the passage from the scroll to the codex (Vandendorpe, 2009, p. 127), whereas Robert Darnton gives greater importance to the invention of print and the “Gutenberg Galaxy” (Darnton, 2009, p.vii). I side with Chartier and Vandendorpe (Clivaz, 2011, p. 20-21): the Swiss and American examples presented above regarding the progressive digitization of mass education underline the importance of this revolution in the history of the support of writing. So what does such a turn mean for New Testament Studies?

Since 2010, I have developed my research to focus on the impact of this digital revolution on the field of biblical studies, and in particular on textual criticism of the New Testament (NT) (see Clivaz, 2013b). Indeed, all humanities scholars working on critical editions are at the forefront of the digital transformation of Western culture. Collaborative networking also transforms our usually solitary academic work, as I have tried to describe in my previous work (see Clivaz, 2013a). In this article, I will present and develop a general hypothesis that I have started to argue for elsewhere: the digital revolution makes us attentive to a “blind spot” of modernity, the influence of the material support and culture of writing on ideas and concepts (Clivaz, 2012a, p. 29-35, particularly p. 35).

Modernity has lead us to “believe” in the existence of literary and artistic “works” and “ideas” independently from their concrete expressions in the supports of writing. Such beliefs have deeply influenced all our methodological approaches. The digital revolution leads us to take a humble attitude to our ideas and attachment to “works”, by paying attention to the materiality of texts as *documents* and *objects*. We need a philosophical concern for *Philosophy in the Flesh*, according to Lakoff and Johnson’s terminology (1999): the materiality of the “texts”, now considered first of all as documents, impacts their reading.

Starting from this general idea, in the first part of this article I will discuss why it matters to study Antiquity in order to move beyond modern beliefs about texts and authors. The second part will examine how digital culture can particularly help us to rediscover a culture with plural literacies. Finally, I will ask if the New Testament is becoming just a corpus of texts among others, a rather small booklet, according the triple diminutive implied by the word βιβλαρίδιον (Revelation 10:2, 9-10), quite lost in the World Wide Web. Is the New Testament becoming a “liquid book”, as described by Jacques Derrida? To go beyond that perception, I will consider other ways to deal with a Scripture going everyday more “out of the Book”.

2. Antiquity “Unbound”: Beyond the Modern Beliefs About Works and

Authorship

A lot of effort is now required to revise affirmations transmitted by modernity that we have believed and received as “truths”, including the idea that a printed book is always the same as another example of the same printed book. This modern belief is contradicted by books edited before the final steps of the establishment of the legal status of the author and the text (see above).

A good illustration of this is Elias Hutter’s *Polyglot Bible*, printed in 1599 in Nuremberg, which offers the New Testament in twelve different languages (Hutter, 1599). Several textbooks or commentaries assert that this version has the particularity of presenting the apocryphal Pauline *Epistle to the Laodiceans* (Bedouelle and Roussel, 1989, p. 149) with a number of pages missing from between the texts printed on pages 526 and 527 of the *Polyglot*. Adam Clarke (1823, p. 483) refers to this fact in his New Testament commentary of 1823. Recently, this example was used by François Bovon (2012, p. 137) to demonstrate the pertinence of a third category between canonical and apocryphal texts in early modernity. I personally heard about it for the first time in 2003 at Harvard, where François Bovon presented an exemplar of this venerable old book to our group of PhD students. At that time, I believed – as did Adam Clarke and others – that the *Epistle to the Laodiceans* was always in the *Polyglot Bible*, because I had seen it in the Harvard exemplar. However, comparing later diverse editions of the *Polyglot*, I realized that the *Epistle to the Laodiceans* was not always present in all exemplars (Clivaz, 2012a, p. 30). Until the end of the 18th century the printer made the folios “dry”, and could assemble them in parts (“cahiers”), but this task could also be done by the booksellers (Martin and Chartier, 1983, p. 294; see Clivaz 2012a). The client could take a package from the bookseller and choose a cover by the bookbinder, as well as the parts he/she wished to get in his/her own exemplar. A printed book could be an object of negotiation between different actors: we have forgotten this fact.

Another modern belief engraved in our minds is “intentionality” – the meaning intended by the author of the work, *intentio auctoris*, or the meaning inherent in the work, *intentio operis*. Intentionality has led us to forget that the concrete conditions of production and circulation of written texts have always had the last word over all kind of wishes and desires of the person or group that produced a text. Quite obviously, one can observe through the centuries that even if an author is attached to his or her own ideas, it does not mean that he/she will be able to keep control of them. This fact is clearly illustrated by the famous anecdote of Galen, wandering around the market and discovering, shocked and powerless, a

book under his name but not written by him (Galen, *On My Own Books*, prol. 2-3, in Boudon-Millot, 2007). Galen wrote two treatises on his own books, *On the Order of My Own Books*, and *On My Own Books*, to try to keep control of his work and his readers – the only author in Antiquity, as far as we know, to write about his own authorship (Boudon-Millot, 2007, p. 4).

Offering valuable information on book production in Antiquity (Boudon-Millot, 2007, p. 33-34), Galen sets out the order in which his works should be read in his first volume; in the second, he explains the circumstances that led him, against his inclination, to have his unpublished works published (Boudon-Millot, 2007, p. 18). He complains about the uncontrolled distribution of his writings and asks that they should be read “in order” (Galen, *On My Own Books*, I. 11, in Boudon-Millot, 2007). In other words, Galen seeks to describe what he considers to be the way in to his thought and the explanation of it *par excellence* (Galen, *On My Own Books*, I. 6, in Boudon-Millot, 2007). Ironically, in Alexandria Galen was taught according to a later “canon” of carefully arranged works, but a canon totally different from the “order” of his books that he tried to propose (Boudon-Millot, 2007, p. CXV-CXVI and CXVIII-CXX; see also Clivaz, 2013d).

Such facts lead us to a modest textual perception of the author’s *intentio*: the author’s wishes and historical readings/receptions can strongly differ. At this point, one can consider the preface of the Gospel according to Luke, which I have thoroughly studied, mostly according to Loveday Alexander’s point of view (see Clivaz, 2010, chap. 10). This preface has been studied extensively, but more attention could be still given to the two canonical books written by the same author, the Gospel and the book of Acts. Luke’s preface states that he/she received the support of a certain Theophilus, but this preface clearly attests to resistance to what he/she tried to say, as has been so often underlined. We probably underestimate the effects of these oppositions, and the enormous efforts made by the author to try to tell what “seemed good to me also” (Luke 1:3). Quite some time later, this pretension was still suspicious to the Latin tradition, as Loveday Alexander (2000, p. 167) underlines by pointing the addition to Lk. 1:3: *et spiritui sancto*, “because it seemed good to me *and the Holy Spirit*”, in the Latin codices b, q and vg^{mss}. Moreover, Luke tried to write two volumes together, but the readers considered them as separate books: we have no manuscript offering the Gospel then Acts following it, and the reception of Acts differs largely from that of the Lukan Gospel (see Clivaz, 2013c). As Tiziano Dorandi (2000, p. 115-116) reminds us, as soon as a work was read by its author to his/her friends, it was “on the market” and could be rewritten and transformed.

Working with our minds formatted to such an extent by printed culture, we have largely

forgotten the ways in which authors were forced in the previous centuries to “let go” of their works, and had to fight sometimes to get them read at all. To attempt to overcome this amnesia, scholars working on Antiquity should pay closer attention to the 17th century and the conditions of production of a printed text during that period. The example of *Dreams and Discourses* by the Spanish author Quevedo is illustrative (Quevedo, 2003 [1627]). Born in a family used to working for the Spanish court, in 1639 this satirist and poet was put under arrest for four years and died in 1645 as a consequence of this hard prison period. His work was censured in 1634, but the interesting period was before this censure. *Dreams and Discourses*, written between 1605 and 1622, was first published in 1627 in Barcelona *without* the consent of the author! It was a librarian, Joan Saperá, who took the initiative to publish the text (Quevedo, 2003 [1627], p. 20). Quevedo was only involved in the 1631 edition, making several changes. Even in this edition, one has twelve different prefaces before the text, written by ten different people (with two prefaces by the author himself). These prefaces are various: *imprimatur* by a bishop, praise by some admirers, response to attacks, etc. The voice of the author seems quite lost in this group of opinions. Nevertheless, it was Quevedo who was arrested in 1634, not the librarian or the bishop or the admirers. From Luke and Galen to Quevedo, the gap between the *intentio auctoris* and the concrete afterlife of a text could often be enormous, and strongly influenced by the concrete conditions of the writing production.

Looking to the past from our digital age, we are just beginning to consider the real impact of the printed culture on all we have thought and said about authorship. Now that we are facing the transition from printed text to digital text, we see how these thoughts about authorship were bound to the format of printed text and need to be reconsidered and reformulated when text is transmitted through the digital medium. In an interesting manner, Stanley Fish recognizes a type of defeat or limitation of his own authorial power in the face of a new digital form of expression, the “blog”. In a 2012 *New York Times* article, “*The Digital Humanities and the Transcending of Mortality*”, he writes: “This is a blog. There, I’ve said it. I have been resisting saying it [...] because blogs are provisional, ephemeral, interactive, communal, available to challenge, interruption and interpolation, and not meant to last; whereas in a professional life now going into its 50th year I have been building arguments that are intended to be decisive, comprehensive, monumental, definitive and, most important, all mine” (Fish, 2012). Fish’s lucid opinion confirms the criticism I addressed to his seminal 1981 book *Is There a Text in this Class?*, underlining that the material support of writing was the blind spot of Fish’s theory (Clivaz, 2012a, p. 32). Therefore it came as no surprise to see him puzzled by the genre of the blog, but he was unable to resist the trend.

We are just at the beginning of a time in which we have to evaluate the impact of printed culture on modern methodologies in New Testament research. The linearity of the printed book and the alleged stability of the printed text have led to the development of methodologies all based on the assumption of the *intentio auctoris* or *operis*, as if it were Ariadne's thread, to be discovered embodied by texts and carefully followed through the maze. The meanings of texts were always perceived as something already present in the texts, ready to be discovered. The digital support of writing is open-ended, flexible, dynamic, always evolving, allowing for the haphazard grasping of an infinite amount of data and metadata. All of this leads us a long way away from the linear perception and the quest for the origin, so constitutive of Modernity.

The term "serendipity" is used more and more frequently to describe what digital writing on the Web produces. In his book *Reinventing Discovery*, Michael Nielsen (2012)² uses it as an intermediate notion between chance and will, coincidence and design. He considers that all the micro-collaborations provoked by the Internet achieve a kind of "designed serendipity" (Nielsen, 2012, p. 30): "instead of being an occasional fortuitous coincidence, serendipity becomes commonplace" (Nielsen, 2012, p.27; the concept of "designed serendipity" is borrowed from Jon Udell, 2002).

The notion of "serendipity", in all the different ways in which it is applied to digital culture, remains to be fully evaluated. Marie-Anne Paveau (2011) has recently argued that the appropriateness and success of this concept would mean "the victory of oriental wisdom over Judeo-Christian culture", rediscovering ideas found in Buddhism and Hinduism. Such a claim is of course too simplistic, but it should provoke theologians to enter into the debate. Coined in the 18th century by Horace Walpole from a Sri Lankan tale, *The Princes of Serendip*, "serendipity means an occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way" (according to *Oxford Dictionaries Online*). It fits quite well with the everyday experience we have online³.

Between the quest for a linear origin of textual meaning and serendipity, a breakdown of our perception of the world is happening: we feel that "something really changes", that we could be "lost in the Web". Considering these observations on the digital culture, we are here facing two fundamental alternatives: we can complain, taking refuge in nostalgia like Umberto Eco (van Eersel, 2011, p. 52) deploring our assistance in the "fall of the Roman Empire"⁴; or we can become actors in this new world. I definitely choose the latter, while at the same time also attempting to avoid all kinds of over-enthusiasm: for example, a respectable old French philosopher, Michel Serres, recently claimed that we assist in "a

rebirth of Humanity” (Serres, 2013). Avoiding desperate nostalgia and over-enthusiasm, in the second part of this article I will present a point in this digital revolution, to demonstrate what it could bring to us in our study of Antiquity, and to our academic production, in constant evolution.

3. Plural Literacies in Antiquity and in a Digital Age

When William Harris defined literacy in his leading work *Ancient Literacy* (1989; for a summary, see also Clivaz, 2013b), he translated anachronistically τῆς τῶν γραμμάτων μαθήσεως (“the learning of the letters”) as “literacy” in a passage by Diodorus (*Bib.* XII,13, transl. Harris, 1989, p. 26). Thanks to Johnson and Parker (2009), since 2009 Classicists speak about plural *literacies* for Antiquity, where the culture was expressed in multimodal ways, through orality, visuality and sometimes writing. We are just beginning to really reconsider a “culture” where a maximum of 10% of people were able to read. We need to speak in the plural of “literacies” for Antiquity; indeed, writing cultures are never monolithic. As Thomas Kraus (2000, p. 332) cleverly underlines, our notion of “illiteracy” itself in Greco-Roman Egypt is constantly measured in terms of the Greek language, but Egyptian people were able to live without using this language, since they were even allowed to defend themselves in court in Demotic with interpreters. For example, P. Oxy VI 896 tells us that Artemidoros, a painter of portraits, was “illiterate”, if we think in terms of a written Greco-Roman culture. Yet surely here we have to reconsider all our “literate” patterns of thinking to appreciate what “culture” could mean in a hybrid Greco-Roman Egypt, where cultural activity implied also orality and visual arts.

Moreover, one cannot forget that Plato considered speech “which is written with intelligence in the mind of the learner” (*Phaedr.* 276a) as superior to the written text. We cannot forget that in Antiquity, writing is a “danger” as the Swiss scholar Eric Junod (2009) reminded us in his farewell lecture. Even if the old Clement of Alexandria wrote seven volumes of his *Stromata*, he clearly explained in the introduction of the first volume that he prefers to keep elements unwritten: “The writing of these memoranda of mine, I well know, is weak when compared with that spirit, full of grace, which I was privileged to hear. [...] Some things I purposely omit, in the exercise of a wise selection, afraid to write what I guarded against speaking: not grudging— for that were wrong— but fearing for my readers, lest they should stumble by taking them in a wrong sense” (*Stromata* I, 1). If we look at the book of Revelation, which ends with so strong a command to keep the words of the book (Revelation

21: 18-19), chapter 10 claims that the most important words are better unwritten: “And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down’.” (Revelation 10: 4). The destiny of the *biblaridion* is to be eaten (Revelation 10: 9-10).

When at least 90% of people are unable to read, the “culture” is transmitted in various other ways. We have forgotten – in the deepest sense of the term – that ancient culture was mainly based on orality (words, music, sounds), on images, and only to a lesser extent on texts. This is notably clear for the majority of Christian apocryphal traditions. For example, to get a sense of the real impact of the cult and the figure of the women apostle Thecla in ancient Christianity, we have to seriously consider the iconographic material, as Kim Haines-Eitzen demonstrated (2011, p. 95-112). Printed culture has even provoked mistranslation and cultural forgetting (according to Jan Assman’s terminology (1997)), as shown by Dio Chrysostomus in his discourse on Homer: “For example, it is said that Homer's poetry is sung even in India, where they have translated it into their own speech and tongue [...]: so remarkable has been the spell of one man's poetry (μουσική)!” (*Discourse* 53: 7). In that passage, Lamar Crosby (1946, p. 362-363) translated μουσική (*mousike*) as “poetry”: today, “Homer” means *texts* for us, but “Homer” meant “music” for the majority of people in Antiquity.

This forgetting of the Homeric μουσική can be called a “cultural incapacity”, provoked by the *habitus* of a singular literacy. Ancient texts are nevertheless full of musical clues, indicating their importance and presence, as it is illustrated by Socrates’s ironic remark on public singers (the “rhapsodes”) and actors: “but you rhapsodes and actors, and the poets whose verses you sing, are wise; whereas I am a common man, who only speak the truth” (*Ion* 532d). The recurrent Platonic attacks on poetry and the arts in general underline in fact their importance: exemplified by the philosopher denouncing “πάντες οἱ τε μιμηταί”, “a multitude of imitators which are not required by any natural want, such as the whole tribe of hunters and actors, of whom one large class have to do with forms and colors; another will be the votaries of music—poets and their attendant train of rhapsodists, players, dancers” (*The Republic* VI.373b-c). As Paolo Garuti mentioned (2013, p. 64), when Plato and other ancient authors speak about music, they do it using assonance games, and *rythmus* with long *sillabi* (see for example Plato, *Laws* 764de). Such a phenomenon can be observed even in Revelation 18.22a or Rev 14.2, where Garuti (2013, p.66) considers the etymological word games an attempt to reproduce something of the sound of the cithara, a contemporary stringed instrument⁵. He concludes that such phenomena belong to the cultural encyclopedia of that time: music was there, in words and minds (2013, p. 69).

Our present cultural framework has all the means to rediscover the impact of such plural literacies on the ancient cultures, as the new Brill journal *Greek and Roman Musical Studies* shows. Digital philology has begun to blend images and word, such as in the John Hopkins University Press journal *Digital Philology* (for Medieval studies), or in Mark Cartwright's article that proposes 'A Visual Glossary of Greek Pottery' (2013). After the maximal reign of printed culture (1850-1980), digital tools allow us to thoroughly explore what plural literacies could and can mean. The academic world itself is now invited to produce multimedia objects, for example by using the "Scalar" publishing platform (<http://scalar.usc.edu/>). In 1998, Ilana Synder (1998, p. XXV) pointed already to "emerging literacies" in the "electronic era": "the use of these technologies produces new literacies which we are only beginning to identify and describe". Students in our classrooms have now begun to include *YouTube* videos in their bibliographies. Does this announcement mean that the academic world collapses? In my opinion, if we decide to be efficient actors in this new world, it could mean rather a transformation in knowledge. There is no reason not to strive for excellence in this new material of cultural expression.

The first step is to recognize that, even for scholars, *YouTube* offers incredible and useful material. For New Testament textual criticism, just think of all the debates present online, or of Kurt Aland's archive in the 1970s⁶, or the recent tutorial put online to aid people in becoming familiar with the new *New Testament Virtual Manuscripts Room*. That tutorial was created by an anonymous "scribe 7777"⁷, and is very useful for discovering this great NTVRM. *Nolens volens*, like it or not, the digital culture involves plural literacies, and the images are at the forefront of all kinds of communication. In two 2012 blog articles (Clivaz, 2012c, 2012d), I analyzed the polemic surrounding the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* by pointing to the evolution of academic expression: the brief *YouTube* video by Karen King (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlmoILJmH4M>), posted on the Harvard University YouTube channel, illustrates a complete shift from a modern historical communication, based on the Rankean encouragement to adopt a *farblos, unschön* (without colors, ugly) and boring style (von Ranke, 2000 [1824], p. 4). We were surely not ready for such a transformation in academic communication, and it is still hard to evaluate the rhetorical turn, but nevertheless, it is happening.

So what will the study and transmission of the New Testament of tomorrow look like? If knowledge is becoming "unbound" or "out of the book", if images are occupying an ever-increasing space in all kinds of communication, what does it mean for the text of the New Testament? First, we have to reconsider the weight that notably Protestant ideas have given to

textuality in the transmission of Christianity. Not only in Antiquity but in all centuries, what we consider “New Testament content” has been transmitted by images, words and music just as much as – or even more than – by texts, as an anecdote by the writer Jean-Philippe Toussaint shows. Toussaint (2012, p. 106-107) refers to Paul's conversion, but describes it by borrowing the features of a Caravaggio painting, rather than using the description of the Book of Acts. Images often matter more than written words.

We could evidently multiply such examples. Images, music, orality: if these parameters are at the core of the emerging digital culture and Scripture is going “out of the Book”, is the New Testament not taking the risk of becoming a little booklet, a βιβλαρίδιον (*biblaridion*), lost in the Web?

4. The New Testament: A *Biblaridion* Lost In the Web?

It is evident that the conditions and the concept itself of the critical edition of the New Testament are deeply transforming. I make here three new remarks, keeping in mind the question of this third concluding part. First, the new edition by Nestle-Aland, the critical edition of reference for the Greek New Testament, is now available as a great online tool⁸. However, it is not in open access. Russell Hobson (2013) demonstrated that if one is interested in studying Assyriology online, one can do it for free, using open source study tools, whereas the use of many of the online biblical tools is not free. In consequence, Hobson advocates for biblical studies to become an “open source discipline, something we should seriously consider” – although, of course, this important difference between Assyriology and Biblical Studies is explained in part by economic reasons, not just by a lack of initiative.

Second, the fact of *seeing* an ever-expanding number of NT manuscripts online has consequences that we discover everyday. For example, finding the Codex Sinaiticus online⁹ makes us accustomed to seeing the complete Greek Bible, and it is not surprising that the German Bible Society published a *Biblia Graeca – Septuagint and NA28* in fall 2013, a complete “Greek Bible” on the model of the Codex Sinaiticus.

Third, the New Testament Virtual Manuscripts Room¹⁰, prepared by the INFT (*Institute for New Testament Textual Research*, Münster) and ITSEE (*Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing*, Birmingham), shows that collaborative scholarly work could be at the service of a constantly updated NT edition, and I am personally enthusiastic to see the emergence of this project that is in congruence with other digital humanities projects. Of course, this tool could lead us in the direction of an open-ended edition of the New Testament:

the Scripture is going materially “out of the Book”. The question matters all the more if we look at the European project SAWS (Sharing Ancient Wisdoms)¹¹, under the lead of Charlotte Roueché. This project wishes to interrelate, on a RDF (Resource Description Framework) relationship basis, a number of ancient wisdom texts in Greek, Arabic, etc. Should the NT not be considered in relation to such a project?

On the one hand, it is obvious that we cannot keep our “sacred” text apart from the others. New Testament material, with all its various manuscripts, has to take its place among the international projects that are building the space of tomorrow's knowledge. The New Testament clearly belongs to the “ancient wisdom” that has to be shared.

On the other hand, there are risks for the New Testament when it goes “out of its cover”, notably to be at the end totally separated from the communities that have drawn this cover, the canon. Moreover, there are tight links between the book and the body, perceptible in all Western literary history, and to lose the cover could mean to loosen a strong relationship to the body (see Clivaz, forthcoming, for a development of this idea). Consider Saint Melania the Younger, a Christian author in the 4th century, restlessly writing small books that are designated “small bodies”, *sômatioi* (Gerontius, *The Life of Saint Melania* 23 and 36); or in the Epistle according to the Hebrews 9,19-20, where Moses sprinkles blood not only on the people but also on the scroll of the law; or consider all the traces of animal skin visible in the Codex Sinaiticus online. As Kim Haines-Eitzen (2011, 129) summarizes, “the layering inherent in any writing and rewriting of a text [is similar to] the formation and reformation of the body”. To loose the delimitation of the cover – the wood pieces of the *caudex* – of the New Testament *corpus* will have evidently consequences for Christianity as *corpus*, as body.

However, as I have argued elsewhere (see Clivaz, 2011, p. 53-55), I was never convinced that Christianity was a religion of the book. Thus, Christian practitioners are facing the huge task of reconsidering what really matters in the transmission of Christianity. Some possible ways are presented in the incredibly pertinent science-fiction novel by Ray Bradbury (1959), *Fahrenheit 451*. As the heroes strive to save *knowledge* from the destruction of all the books by fire, to save what matters really to them, they become – literally – chapters of books: they learn texts by heart, they become living books, living culture. At a certain point, we have to become today the cover of our knowledge, catching on the Web what really matters for us. For Christians, this means becoming the cover of their Scripture, by reinventing forms of communities with networked people. The digital culture puts our backs against a wall. What do we really want to keep? Written words or living culture? In biblical terms, Letter or Spirit? A sentence transmitted by Evagrius shows the symbolic impact of this alternative: “Abba

Evagrius tells us: A brother who possessed only a gospel, sold it to feed the poor, by saying these memorable words: “I have sold the same Word that commanded me: 'Sell what you possess and give it to the poor'” (Evagrius, *Practical Treatise* 97)¹².

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¹ RTS, Journal du matin 4 June 2013: <http://www.rts.ch/la-1ere/programmes/le-journal-du-matin/4936767-le-journal-du-matin-du-04-06-2013.html#4936764> [Accessed 29 November 2014].

² Thank you to Olivier Glassey, sociologist, for this reference.

³ Academic serendipity is often tested: by finding a philological testimony on the *TLG*, thanks to “digital serendipity”, I found the main piece of argumentation in my PhD to prove that ἀγωνία could signify “fight” in Lk 22,43 (Clivaz, 2010).

⁴ Thanks to Céline Rozenblatt for this reference.

⁵ Rev 14:2 : καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἦν ἤκουσα ὡς κιθαρῶδῶν κιθαριζόντων ἐν ταῖς κιθάραις αὐτῶν.

⁶ See *Griechisches Neues Testament - Nestle Aland (1977)*, 31 March 2013. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtDBt-clo0I> [Accessed 29 November 2014].

⁷ NTVMR Introduction, 10 June 2013. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0-B4NgKveY> [Accessed 29 November 2014].

⁸ <http://www.nestle-aland.com/en/extra-navigation/digital-editions/> [Accessed 29 November 2014].

⁹ <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org> [Accessed 29 November 2014].

¹⁰ <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de> [Accessed 29 November 2014].

¹¹ <http://www.heranet.info/saws/index> [Accessed 29 November 2014].

¹² Thank you to my brother Matthias Wirz for this reference. My English translation.