Bruce M. Metzger: Two manuscripts of the Greek gospels in Cape Town.

Prior to visiting South Africa in August – October 1985 on a lecture tour that took me to twelve universities, it was natural that I would read a variety of books and magazines about the life, culture, and geography of that country. In the April 1985 issue of the South African Panorama magazine, I happened upon an interesting article entitled "Medieval Treasures" by Berna Maree. This article described a valuable collection of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts bequeathed by the former British Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, Sir George Grey, to the South African Library in Cape Town. In the account of these treasures, chiefly Latin manuscripts, was a brief mention of "a Greek Gospel book ... written in the year 1269" (p. 43). This attracted my interest, and while spending several days in Cape Town I sought permission of Mrs. Barbara Churms, senior librarian in charge of special collections in the South African Library, to examine the Greek gospel book mentioned in the article. She not only gave me permission, but also informed me that the Library likewise owns a second Greek gospel manuscript. I am deeply grateful for her courtesy in putting both manuscripts at my disposal in the rare book room, and am happy to present the following details of information about them.

The manuscript identified with the shelf-mark 4c1 has 291 folios and measures 31.4 x 23.7 cm. Each folio, of rather coarse parchment, contains two columns of 20 lines each. The style of the minuscule Greek hand suggests that it was written in the twelfth century. In the upper right-hand corner of the first folio is a neatly written signature, "G Grey." There is also a notice reading: "I place this as the first volume deposited in the Public Library at Cape Town. Alfred. 18th Sept. 1860." The manuscript is bound in brown morocco leather, apparently of the nineteenth century. A tiny gold stamp states that the binding was done by J. Clarke. The text of the gospels is arranged in accord with the typical Byzantine Greek lectionary, with the menologion1 beginning on fol. 193. Headings as well as neumes are in red.

The manuscript with the shelf-mark 4c6 originally had 223 folios (numbered in Greek), but today lacks the first 32 folios; the parchment is of finer quality than that of manuscript 4c1. Each folio measures 30.9 x 22.9 cm. and is written in two columns of 24 lines each. According to a colophon on the last folio the scribe was a priest in Crete named Nikolaos, who finished his work 12 August A.D. 1269. The colophon also pronounces an anathema upon any who would purloin the manuscript. The text of the gospels is arranged in accord with the typical Byzantine Greek lectionary; the missing folios presumably contained lections from John. The menologion begins on folio 151. The manuscript was bound by J. Clarke in brown morocco leather, similar to that of manuscript 4c1.

A brief paleographical notice of these two manuscripts has been communicated to Professor Kurt Aland of Münster, who assigns sigla to newly discovered manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. Among the more than 5,000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament currently included in the official listing kept at the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung, these two (according to a letter from Aland, dated 11 February 1986) are the first that have been reported in Africa outside Egypt. He has now (letter dated 13 June 1986) assigned to manuscript 4c1 the siglum i 2279, and to manuscript 4c6 the siglum i 2280.

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