

The Papyrologist : Artificer of Fact

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THE QUESTION that is perhaps most frequently put to me by people who have no contact with papyrus studies is one that does them credit because it is so thoroughly basic: "What do papyrologists do?" But equally often this question is followed by a statement that is intended to warn me that the question does not proceed from total ignorance: "You do of course translate the papyri." Since I now always expect the question and the statement in that order, I am prepared to accept the statement before attempting an answer to the question. I explain that we do of course translate the texts that we derive from papyri but that we must first obtain the texts.

It might be thought a little discouraging that this question is still being asked and this statement made at the University of Michigan in 1962, some forty years after papyri began coming into our possession in fair numbers and thirty years since Michigan scholars produced the first of some dozen sizable editions of papyri. It is doubly discouraging for a Russel lecturer who is also a papyrologist, because he may well wonder what useful purpose his lecture can serve.¹ In undertaking to answer the question again, and particularly in my capacity as Russel lecturer, I may seem only to be renewing from a different point of view the answer given by one of my predecessors in papyrology who delivered the Russel lecture on May 14, 1936.

Nevertheless, the question ought to be answered again because the perspective in which it must be viewed has changed radically from then to now. The question has always heretofore taken a static form: What is papyrology? and the reply has always followed a fixed pattern as illustrated in the title used by Professor Winter in 1936: "Papyrology: Its Contributions and Problems." It will be useful to analyze his lecture briefly because it is an excellent example of the traditional answer to the traditional question.

¹ This paper was delivered as the Henry Russel Lecture at the University of Michigan on May 3, 1962.

As published in the *Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review*, Professor Winter's lecture occupies fifteen pages. Of these the first six provide a rapid survey of what we know about the papyrus plant; the manufacture of papyrus paper from the papyrus plant; the modern finds of ancient papyri, primarily in Egypt; the qualifications of a papyrologist, his obvious need to know Greek and Latin and to have experience in the reading of ancient handwriting in these languages; and finally the kinds of texts that are found written on papyrus: Biblical and religious, literary, legal, commercial, epistolary. To these he might have added mathematical, scientific and pseudo-scientific, magical, musical, stenographic, and cryptographic texts. Even these may not exhaust the list. Since papyrus was the favorite writing material of the eastern Mediterranean area, all the kinds of things that people wrote are likely to be found written on papyrus.

These six pages of Professor Winter's lecture have somewhat the air of an introduction. They are followed by nine pages which exhibit the contributions made by the papyri to the various fields of study known in their totality as Classical Philology. Papyrology is itself part of this complex of studies, but its special pride is that it nourishes all the others with a ceaseless flow of source materials. It thus maintains relations with Biblical studies, religious history, literary studies, economic, social, and legal history, linguistics, lexicography, and others. It provides them all with new texts, hence with the possibility of fresh points of view and unexpected lines of investigation. To give some notion of the significance of papyrology for ancient studies, it will suffice to repeat Professor Winter's own list of the kinds of non-literary documents found on papyrus: "They are . . . concerned with registrations of birth and death, marriage and divorce, property holdings and census lists, tax regulations and tax returns, agriculture and industry, banks and banking, contracts and leases of every sort, provisions for the maintenance of canals and dykes, public control, law suits and judicial decisions, the army and its organization, the decrees of the prefect (of Egypt), the edicts of the (Roman) emperor. . . . The papyri have contributed as nothing else has done to a better understanding of the private and public law, economics, sociology, and history (of the ancient world)."²

All the general accounts of papyrology that are now available treat it in the same way, detailing the new and significant texts that the

² *Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review* (Summer 1936) 234-248.

stream of papyri pours year by year into the surrounding fields. And it is right that papyrology should be described in this way because it does in fact exist for the purpose of rejuvenating the aging substance of classical literature, ancient history, historical linguistics, and the rest. Each of these has a corpus of texts to which papyri add another from time to time. But while we learn a great deal from the surveys of papyrology about the studies to which it makes its contribution, we search them in vain for some indication of what papyrology itself may be. We soon find what seems to be a paradoxical situation. The general accounts, the surveys, the reports, whatever they are called, tell us nothing about the work done by the papyrologist. They all take up where he leaves off. They talk about papyri as they are after the papyrologist has finished with them, when he has already completed his transcriptions, added his philological and sometimes historical commentaries, and made them available in learned journals or volumes of papyri to any specialists who have a use for them.

I want therefore now to discuss all that part of the papyrologist's job that the recurrent surveys of the subject leave unexplored. It is this obscure area that I must illuminate in order to say what papyrology is in itself, in order to distinguish the papyrologist from the literary scholar or the historian. The general accounts can afford not to tell us what the papyrologist does, because what he does is used up in producing texts that are absorbed into literature or history. It is self-consuming labor and leaves little or no trace of itself in the editions. It is an activity thoroughly real only to the papyrologist whose experience it is. If we grant that the surveys give a truthful report of what papyrology is for the world at large, a kind of public papyrology, then a description of its primary task, we might almost say its hidden task, should tell us what papyrology is for the papyrologist, what a papyrologist does privately, in the solitary confines of the library, in order to make public papyrology possible.

Since I shall be concerned throughout this lecture with papyrologists, we shall do well to keep in mind that they are a very small group of scholars, about half a dozen in the United States and Canada, another half dozen in Great Britain, two or three in the Scandinavian countries, a dozen or more dispersed over the continent of Europe, one or perhaps two in the Near East—shall we say a maximum of thirty? In view of these numbers it may be a surprise to hear that the International Association of Papyrologists has about 300 members.

If the number of professional papyrologists stands at approximately thirty, some 270 of the members are persons of other interests—students of literature, ancient historians, jurists, grammarians, palaeographers, theologians, Egyptologists, Coptacists, Arabists, archaeologists—all of whom find papyrus texts useful, sometimes indispensable, in the pursuit of their disciplines. It is this approach to papyri that I have called “public” papyrology. If one inspects the transactions of the society, one sees that they are given over almost entirely to this phase of the subject. Rarely is anything said that reveals the substructure of the edifice, the “hidden” devices that give it durability, what I have called “private” papyrology.

The typical product of the hours spent by the papyrologist with his papyri is the edition of one or more texts. So much is this the case that we are ready to call a scholar a papyrologist if he publishes a papyrus text now and again, no matter what else he may do. On the other hand, he will not be called a papyrologist if he does not publish papyrus texts, no matter how impressive his knowledge of papyri may be. And of what does an edition consist? Its *pièce de résistance* is of course the Greek or Latin text that has been transcribed from a papyrus. Whereas in a historical or legal study based on papyri the individual text is secondary, simply material used as one of the pegs on which to string a historical or legal idea, in the edition it is primary. The edition has been made to present the text.

Immediately after the text the papyrologist puts a critical apparatus in which he gives conventional equivalents for vulgar or mistaken spellings, as well as the variant readings of copies if there are any. Then he enters a series of comments and explanations which follow the text line by line and have the purpose of clarifying the literal meaning of the text and exposing difficulties encountered in his attempt to produce a complete transcription. These notes are followed by a translation, which again has the sole purpose of illuminating the Greek or Latin text. It is added to the commentary so that the reader may know at any moment what meaning the editor attributed to any and every passage of the text. For this reason the translation is kept as literal as it possibly can be without violating English idiom. The translation is not there to be read for its own sake; it is there as additional and almost certainly more effective commentary.

To all this the editor adds an introduction, in which he writes still another kind of commentary, in order to show the relation of his text

to other texts of the same kind, eliciting its significance, if he can and if it has any, for historical, legal, theological, or other problems. But he holds in mind throughout a programmatic obligation to the text. He knows that if he could guarantee the perfection of his transcriptions, he could hope to be forgiven even the total omission of all the rest. This primary concern for the text is so much a part of the mental equipment of papyrologists that they have agreed on an elaborate system of signs—square brackets, curved brackets, angular brackets, double square brackets, braces, dots—all to be used by the editor to provide as graphic a picture as he can produce of what he sees or thinks he sees on the papyrus.

It is this preoccupation with individual texts that distinguishes the papyrologist from his colleagues who use papyri in their studies but do not act as editors. And the preoccupation with texts is neither accidental nor voluntary; it is imposed by the conditions of the undertaking. I have never met a papyrologist for whom transcription was not admittedly the tough part of his job, calling for insight, ingenuity, and imagination to a degree no one man could possibly possess. The physical state of the papyri, the nature of the handwriting on them, the “dead” languages represented by the writing, all conspire to hinder successful transcription.

There are to be sure papyri perfectly preserved, but as the exploitation of a collection progresses the perfect pieces are soon exhausted and there remains a great fund of damaged papyri. Damage takes many forms. The entire right half or left half may be lost, the upper half or the lower half, worn away by the natural action of water or shifting ground through the centuries that have gone by since the papyrus was discarded. Or the damage may consist of large and small holes scattered over the surface of the papyrus, or pieces of the upper layer of papyrus on which the writing was done may have peeled off carrying the ink with them, or the ink itself may have washed away or be abraded or faded almost to the point of invisibility. Papyrus has a tendency to crack along ancient folds when it has lost its moisture and much of it, by the time it reaches us, is as dry as a mummy. Such cracks leave long vertical or horizontal tears in the fabric of the papyrus. Whatever the cause of the injury, the destruction of the material brings with it partial or complete loss of letters, words, phrases, sometimes whole lines. It is the duty of the papyrologist to supply these accurately, while his execution of this duty is

constantly frustrated by the profusion of personal and gravely different hands that turn up on papyri and an unavoidable inadequacy in his knowledge of the language.

Handwriting evolves and changes with the passing of time. Since our papyri continue without a break from the late fourth century B.C. into the eighth century A.D., roughly a millennium, there was time for many and sometimes severe modifications. As today, apart from styles that lasted shorter and longer periods, there was a competition of styles within any one period, and there was always less and more experienced writing as well as slow and fast writing. And the more experienced and faster a writer's hand became, the larger the problem that he was preparing for the modern transcriber. There were places and times and persons, for example in the city of Oxyrhynchus in the late first century of our era, so accustomed to the rapid production of documents that the surface of their papyri seems to be covered with line after line, not of scribbling, but of skilled and purposeful loops and half-loops. Even a papyrologist of long experience, when he encounters one of these texts, is grateful if he can find a parallel text in the editions which someone was able to read because it was more carefully written. With its help he proceeds to perform with the new text what must appear to an outsider to be a miracle of transcription.

When I was a student of Collart in Paris, I often protested that I could not see what he said I ought to see. Through the following years I learned that we have more than one way of seeing, and certainly seeing with the eyes alone is the least effective of all ways. The Italian scholar Giorgio Pasquali has given us some sound advice on this point. The papyri, he says, "are for the most part so poorly preserved, torn, mutilated . . . that one is not sure of having read a letter correctly unless he has first guessed the word, of having read the word correctly unless he has a general idea of the meaning of the sentence. It is this truth that is ignored by the reader who is partial to mechanical transcription."³ These are wise words, and they may be supplemented with other equally wise words drawn from a sensitive and subtle analysis made by Claire Préaux of rapid writing on ostraca from Thebes in Upper Egypt. She writes as follows: "A Theban receipt is not written to be deciphered letter by letter; it presupposes a reader who has sufficient information to read intuitively [*i.e.* to supply

³ *In Memoria di Girolamo Vitelli* (Pubb. R. Univ. Firenze, 1936) 44-45.

what he does not see]. With the twofold intention of achieving both rapidity and clarity, the scribe takes advantage of every factor in the situation which can convey meaning: the position given to words in the sentence as well as the letters that compose the words. If a word is sufficiently identified by its place in a formulaic context, it will be written with extreme brevity. If it has one highly characteristic letter, this alone will emerge from the sketchy indication of the rest of the word.”

The Theban scribe wrote tax receipts, not for the eye of the generally illiterate peasant taxpayer, but for eventual scrutiny by some official in case questions were raised about the payment, very much in the spirit of a physician who writes seemingly illegible prescriptions, not to be read by his patients, but reserved for the eye of a pharmacist, perhaps a man unknown to the physician but still, one may say, in the same line of business. “Anyone who undertakes today to decipher Theban ostraca of the Roman period is necessarily drawn into the attitude of mind of the ancient reader. As he moves with increasing ease in search of the clues that the scribe of long ago so judiciously scattered through the text, the modern reader is bound to recreate in himself a mode of perception, a quality of attention, to match those that the scribe was expecting (from his contemporaries).”⁴

What Pasquali and Préaux have written gives us a clue also to the relative importance of palaeography and language in the papyrologist’s equipment. The handwriting on papyri, because it is material and visible, looms large in the papyrologist’s estimate of his difficulties, but it is of course in greater measure our relatively slow comprehension of the language and our total inability to use it as if it were our own which prevents rapid and accurate reading of the script. In a strict linguistic sense, ancient Greek and Latin are “dead” languages, silenced by time, once spoken continuously by numerous unbroken generations but not now spoken. The only genuine testimony to ancient Greek and Latin is in the mute signs confided in antiquity to papyrus, parchment, and stone. What we learn of these languages in school we learn from books, attaching to the signs certain sounds which we hope conform in a rough sort of way to the sounds spoken centuries ago when the languages were alive. The inescapable consequence is that the forms and idioms of Greek or Latin are not projected automatically when needed from a well-stocked brain over

⁴ *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*. 40 (1954) 83–87.

tongues and through lips practiced in their use. For this reason we have at hand lexicons, grammars, concordances, indexes of authors, inscriptions, and papyri. These we use to multiply our own small store of parallels. But unfortunately our command of the language is so limited that when a papyrus is damaged we often don't know what to look for.

The problems presented by the writing and the language may be envisaged separately as I have done, but they are in reality aspects of a single problem. Continuing experience with a diversity of hands and expanding knowledge of the language complement each other. Both are indispensable to anyone who wants to develop skill in transcription. It is perhaps for this reason that distinguished scholars like Victor Martin of Geneva and André Bataille of Paris have thought of papyrology as a branch of palaeography.⁵ The link between palaeography and papyrology has been so obvious from the beginning of papyrus study in the latter part of the nineteenth century that before papyrology acquired a fixed name, it was proposed that the subject be called *papyrography*.⁶ Papyrology is as much a branch of palaeography as it is of history or law, but no more. Palaeography is a substantive field of study which uses papyri as it does other manuscripts to construct a history of handwriting and the materials on which writing is done. Papyrology is, if you wish, practical palaeography: the papyrologist as palaeographer is not writing the history of Greek or Latin script, he is copying or transcribing ancient hands not universally legible into modern hands legible for all who now know the ancient languages. He will note facts of interest to theoretical palaeography, as he will note facts of interest to history or law, but these are by-products of his preoccupation with the text. The papyrologist's necessary but secondary rôle as a general practitioner of classical philology, a contributor to its various branches has been repeatedly emphasized. It is fitting therefore at this juncture to point out that no contribution to history, law, theology, or palaeography will bring him consideration if he has meanwhile misled the specialists in these fields with a defective reading of his papyri. They will say that he has neglected his job.

I have already noted that the papyrologist finds transcription to be

⁵ *Museum Helveticum* 10 (1953) 135; *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade* XI: *L'histoire et ses méthodes*, 510-511.

⁶ C. Haeberlin, *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 14 (1897) 5.

the tough part of his undertaking. So much is this the truth that when he has done all that he can for the transcription of a text, he turns to what remains to be done—commentary, translation, introduction—with relief. He thinks of these as ordinary research requiring time and thought, but not imposing, as he might say, the agony of creation. Over and over again, as he attempts to resurrect and revivify the marks that an ancient man put on papyrus, he feels himself to be creating a language out of refractory material, to be putting order into a world that is “without form and void.” When he does succeed in extracting a text and looks at it to find it coherent and falling into an irreproachably ancient pattern, the memory of all the effort that it has cost, the doubts, the hesitations, the numerous false starts and new beginnings; the guesses sometimes confirmed, sometimes rejected by the script; the continual recourse to books for information of every sort—lexical, grammatical, palaeographic, historical, legal; the ever-threatening awareness of his own visual and intellectual inadequacy; the interludes of exhaustion and depression—they all come crowding back in memory to increase the sweetness of present triumph. He sees everything that he has made and finds it very good. He can now transmit it with confidence to the historian as a new and reliable piece of evidence, a skilfully elaborated structure of fact.

He might call himself a fortunate man if he could feel that a well-made text would always be the reward of his pains. But this is not what happens. Rarely is there a text that he is not forced to leave in some way incomplete, even if it is only one out of hundreds of words that he cannot read although it stands plainly visible on the papyrus or cannot supply when it is lost because his text has a complete sense without it. More often than not his final text lacks a good deal more than one word. In consequence, frustration is a recurring feature of his life as a papyrologist, and he is quickly cured of the illusion that he is a kind of minor creator when he faces a line or two for which no amount of information, linguistic or historical, provides a clue.

Total success and total failure are the extreme points of his experience. Between them lies a vast number of partial successes and partial failures, resting always on his inability to maintain the flow of meaning through a document, or put in another way, to grasp the intention of the ancient writer. And issuing from his incapacity to do

so comes a constant succession of errors large and small. Fortunately for all concerned, we are not without rules for the detection of error, and their application by the editor himself before publication, as well as by others who use his texts after publication, has cleared away and continues to clear away great masses of confusion. These critical processes go on endlessly, and the corrections that they produce, both those that have been proved on the papyri and those proposed without final proof, ultimately find their way into a handbook known as the *Berichtigungsliste*, list of corrections. This now extends to three volumes, embracing a total of 1100 pages. It happens in this way that many facts made available to specialists through papyri lack stability. They are made and remade, molded and remolded, fashioned and refashioned as the papyri are viewed in changing perspective.

We may form some notion of what this means in practice by looking briefly at one or two examples in which formulations of fact may be seen undergoing change. A papyrus roll published in 1952 contains eighteen census returns compiled in the second century in the Egyptian Delta. In one of these the head of the household declares in the usual way himself, his wife, three sons, two daughters, and a daughter-in-law. The woman entered as his wife is the mother of all his children except one son, whose age is given as 16, thus falling midway between the ages of two older children and two who are younger. This alignment of ages suggested to the editors the interesting possibility that the family was polygamous, interesting because we have contradictory reports on Egyptian marriage customs from two Greek historians. Herodotus states that monogamy was the regular Egyptian practice, whereas Diodorus Siculus has ordinary Egyptians engaging in polygamy if they wish to do so, with monogamy obligatory for priests only. The papyrus therefore appeared to confirm the information transmitted by Diodorus. However, it was reexamined in 1954, and the age on which this conclusion would depend proved to be a misreading of partially abraded writing. Instead of 16, the numeral was seen to be 36, and this son became the eldest of the children by eight years. The natural inference is that he was the child of a first marriage and that his mother was removed from the household either by death or divorce before his father's second marriage. At any rate, the text can no longer be used in any discussion of plural marriage in Egypt. It is firmly on the side of monogamy, or if not that, it is at least firmly neutral. It may fairly be said that like all

earlier attempts to find evidence of polygamy in the papyri, this one also has failed.⁷

To go on to a second example. A papyrus at Heidelberg was published in 1929 with a text which its editor took to be a list of religious festivals, each followed by the number of days devoted to it. He therefore suggested that the list was used for calculating the compensation to which a priest was entitled for participating in sacred processions on those days. The text thus illustrated and confirmed the use by temples of a government subsidy to support the priests in their service. The papyrus was not seriously studied again until 1951, when its text was minutely examined on a photograph. Two out of the six festivals were found to be not festivals at all but ordinary Greek phrases which the editor had not recognized. The days were found to be described not as days to be compensated in money, but rather as days on which no work was done. A fresh reading of the first six lines of the text which the editor had not been able to make intelligible, gave a new turn altogether to thought about its purpose. In its new dress, it is a list of days on which an apprentice to a goldsmith or perhaps a silversmith was occupied in his master's shop and days on which he was idle, sometimes for the pleasure of a festival, at others because of illness or travel. The text is now an enlightening contribution to the literature on apprenticeship.⁸

Since these examples could be extended indefinitely, I shall content myself with the two that I have given. They are relatively simple illustrations of a process altogether usual in papyrus work—the laborious production of a transcript, the discovery of error, and repeated revision until all error is eliminated. This is a cycle of intellectual events which depends for its final success on the assurance that a true reading will be visible on a papyrus to all skilled practitioners. If two readers disagree about a transcription, the possible explanations are not numerous. They may both be wrong, and the correct reading may be waiting for a third transcriber. Or one may be right and the other wrong. If the one who is wrong persists in not seeing the correct reading that has been put before him by the other, he falls short of the level of competence expected of him. Disagreement about a correct reading is not possible where a scholar's equip-

⁷ *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 40 (1954) 114–116.

⁸ *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History*, ed. P. R. Coleman-Norton (Princeton 1951) 178–208.

ment is adequate to deal with it. This doctrine is the cornerstone of the papyrological structure, and it rests solidly on the massive evidence for substantial likeness in vision from person to person.

This principle, without which papyrology and indeed palaeography have no validity, is occasionally disregarded in a fervent effort to support one or another point of view about a disputed reading. The author of a recent article comes perilously close to contending that competent papyrologists may not in a given case be able to verify an accurate reading when they see it on the papyrus. He is concerned with two divergent readings of a consular date in a papyrus at Cairo. One of these would assign the papyrus to 307 A.D., the other to 310. He sets up the astonishing syllogism: Papyrologist *A* has been unable to see the date as read by Papyrologist *B*; *B* in turn cannot see it as read by *A*. The date is therefore illegible, not only for *A* and *B*, but for all papyrologists. Since this is so, we shall never be able to read the date that is written on the papyrus, and in lieu of a reading we shall have to look to historical sources of another kind, specifically for this papyrus to the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius.⁹

Need I say that there is no value in the assumption that continued disagreement about a reading rests necessarily on writing which is illegible? The assumption is false both in theory and in practice. Any marks that can be called writing were set down for the purpose of communicating with a reader. If they prove to be illegible for all possible readers, they do not communicate and so cannot properly be said to be writing. They depart in some way from all the known canons of writing. Whether this comes about as a result of accident or purpose, it cannot be a frequent phenomenon. In more than thirty years of papyrus reading, I have failed to decipher a great many passages, but I never had the impression that they were illegible. At any rate, disagreement about a reading implies nothing about the legibility of the writing. When a papyrologist remarks that a word or line is illegible, he can mean only that it is illegible for him. In an edict of Germanicus published as long ago as 1911 a short stretch of writing, perhaps two or three words, has never been satisfactorily transcribed, but no one discounts them as illegible even though they have been waiting for a transcriber for somewhat over fifty years.¹⁰

Our author's second assumption, that a historian can be substituted

⁹ *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 13 (1961) 109–122.

¹⁰ *Select Papyri* 2 (1934), No. 211.

for the writing on the papyrus, is equally fallacious. He despairs of the papyrus and accordingly has recourse to Eusebius. And from his study of the ancient historian emerges a notable example of irony as practiced by a modern historian. The date 307 is found to be ineluctably supported by Eusebius. Somehow, then, although the names of the consuls of 307 cannot be satisfactorily discerned on the papyrus, they must be there since historical inferences from the text of Eusebius have shown that 307 ought to be the date of the papyrus. The consular date said to be universally illegible is thus mysteriously endowed with legibility without being read.

Only one consequence could justify the reliance that our author has placed on his study of Eusebius. If he is right, he should have no trouble in seeing the consuls of 307 on the papyrus, but he makes no such claim. What he has done would be legitimate only if the papyrus had no date in its text and an approximate date were needed to increase its historical value. But the papyrus does have a date, and any historical investigation concerning it is conclusive only if the date can be deciphered in the light of the results obtained. If there were general acceptance of our author's assumption that disagreement about a reading justifies abandonment of the papyrus and recourse to a convenient historian, papyrology would soon become a favorite refuge for scholars with a taste for uncontrolled speculation.

Because the papyrologist is an artisan working often with intractable material, because his texts and the inferences he draws from them are presented to the substantive disciplines as dependable facts, he cannot afford to remain unaware of the basic assumptions that he uses. He is necessarily concerned also with such rules as have been devised for the detection of error. Unless he operates within this framework, however flexible, of principles and rules, he can give no guarantee of his competence as a maker of facts.

The common way of talking about facts has nothing to do with the work of a papyrologist, or any other scholar for that matter. When we hear a man say, as we often do, "This argument of yours doesn't jibe with the facts," or "Let's look at the facts," or "These are the facts," we can be sure that for him the facts are like nothing that man has ever known—eternal, unchanging, unchangeable. His approach to mental entities so complex as facts is oversimplified and unsophisticated. By endowing them with a solidity and permanence foreign to their history and nature as constructions made by minds so fallible

as our own, he prolongs their life for countless years after they have lost the truth that was once in them. He thus faces a world in constant process of reformation with logical instruments long since abandoned by those who work with facts rather than worship them.

The scholar does not recognize solidity and permanence as characteristic of the facts with which he earns his daily bread. These are of a different order. He has seen them made and remade. He has himself made them and remade them. He has seen worn-out and dilapidated facts discarded and replaced by new, freshly turned facts. He has seen them changing their shapes, their sizes, their complexions as scholars grow in knowledge, skill, and subtlety. He knows them, to be sure, as the pivotal points round which sweeps the whole intellectual life of man, but nevertheless shifting position and changing contour under its impact. These are facts as the papyrologist knows them to be.

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