

SOME RECENTLY PUBLISHED NT PAPYRI FROM OXYRHYNCHUS:

AN OVERVIEW AND PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

Peter M. Head

Summary

Seventeen newly published manuscripts of the Greek New Testament (comprising a new portion of \mathfrak{P}^{77} as well as \mathfrak{P}^{100} - \mathfrak{P}^{115}) are introduced and then discussed individually, with special attention to two groups of manuscripts: seven of Matthew and four of John. The material offers important new evidence on a range of text-critical issues and three passages are discussed (Mt. 23:38; Jn. 1:34; Rev. 13:18).

I. Introduction

Within the last three years seventeen previously unknown papyrus manuscripts of portions of the New Testament have been published in volumes 64, 65 and 66 of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*.¹ The seventeen manuscripts, mostly fairly small fragments, comprise seven early manuscripts of Matthew, four of John's Gospel, and one each of Luke, Acts, Romans, Hebrews, James and Revelation. Only the last two (James and Revelation) could be described as anything other than fragmentary. Nevertheless, as I hope we shall see, taken together they form an important new (although not revolutionary)

¹ *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (London: British Academy for The Egypt Exploration Society). Vol. LXIV (ed. E.W. Handley *et al.*, 1997) contains *P. Oxy* 4401-4406 on pp. 1-13 [with Plates I and II] (ed. J. David Thomas); vol. LXV (ed. M.W. Haslam *et al.*, 1998) contains *P. Oxy* 4445-4448 on pp. 10-20 (ed. W.E.H. Cockle) and *P. Oxy* 4449 on pp. 20-25 (ed. R. Hübner) [Plates II-V]; vol. LXVI (ed. N. Gonis *et al.*, 1999) contains *P. Oxy* 4494-4495 on pp. 1-5 and *P. Oxy* 4497-4498 on pp. 7-10 (ed. W.E.H. Cockle); *P. Oxy* 4496 on pp. 7-10 (ed. T. Finney); *P. Oxy* 4499 on pp. 10-35 (ed. J. Chapa) [Plates I-VIII & XI-XII]. High resolution images of all these manuscripts can be found in the Oxyrhynchus web site at www.csad.ox.ac.uk [accessed January 2000]. Thanks are due to Dr Revel Coles for allowing me to study the manuscripts themselves in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford on numerous occasions.

resource for NT textual criticism. The purpose of this article is to offer an overview of the content of this newly published material, to discuss three examples where this material impacts upon debated text-critical issues, and to offer some preliminary discussion concerning what light these fragments might shed on the early history of the New Testament text, and the texts of Matthew and John in particular.²

It is noteworthy that the supply of early New Testament papyrus manuscripts has been steadily but quietly increasing over recent decades. Although no substantial individual manuscript finds have been published since the sixties, the steady progress is apparent in developments between, for example, the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh editions of the Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*. When the twenty-sixth edition was published in 1979 it listed the papyri whose evidence was cited as extending to \mathfrak{P}^{88} . The twenty-seventh edition, published in 1993, took the list up to \mathfrak{P}^{98} .³ This increase of eleven manuscripts in something over a decade was already notable, with additional second-century finds and a range of other material adding to our knowledge of the transmission of the NT text in the early period. With the seventeen newly published fragments under review here, the situation has changed once more, with the official list of NT papyri now extending through to \mathfrak{P}^{115} .

It is impossible to predict how long this process of accumulation will continue, but there is no reason to think that the flow will stop with the turn of the millennium. Excavations continue and finds in the field are still being made. A recent example would be the Dakle Oasis finds at Kellis, which consist of over 2,000 texts on a variety of material, mainly from fourth century. In this case, despite the presence of numerous Christian texts (including an LXX Psalms text and portions of the NT in Coptic), no portions of the Greek NT have been identified.⁴ Another likely source for more NT manuscripts is the pool of papyrus manuscripts which remain unidentified, or possibly forgotten, in European libraries. For example it was recently

² A version of this paper was presented to the NT Seminar at Aberdeen University on 23.3.2000. Thanks are due to Prof. Francis Watson for his welcome, and especially to Dr Andrew Clarke for his chairmanship, organisation, and hospitality during my stay in Aberdeen as the Principal's Visiting Scholar.

³ A similar, if even more notable increase can be noted between the third and fourth editions of *The Greek New Testament* published by the United Bible Societies. The third edition (1975) listed the papyri to \mathfrak{P}^{76} ; the fourth edition (1993) took the list up to \mathfrak{P}^{97} .

⁴ P. Kell. Copt. 6 contains Rom. 2:6-29; P. Kell. Copt. 9 contains Heb. 12:4-13 (both in Coptic) see I. Gardner (ed.), *Kellis Literary Texts, Volume 1* (Dakhleh Oasis Project Monograph 4; Oxford: Oxbow, 1997).

reported in some newspapers and subsequently on the internet, that a manuscript of Hebrews, a small fragment from the sixth century containing 2:9-11 and 3:3-6, had been identified among the Greek papyri in the National Library in Vienna (P.Vindob. G 42417).⁵ There seems to be a distinct possibility that more NT material might emerge from the Oxyrhynchus archives. Another possible resource consists of previously published material which can turn out to be more interesting than was once suspected. For example, quite recently a text that was published as an unidentified list of objects turned out, with the help of computer analysis, to be a fragment of Revelation 1:13-20 (now identified as \wp^{98}).⁶

II. The Manuscripts

All of the manuscripts under consideration here come from a single, known location in Egypt, Oxyrhynchus, capital of the local region or nome (modern Behnasa, around 120 miles south of Cairo). They were recovered by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt in a series of expeditions from 1896/97 and 1903 through to 1907. These two young Oxford men formed, in the words of Eric Turner, 'a partnership more lasting and at least as productive as that of Gilbert and Sullivan'.⁷ At times they were recovering up to thirty baskets of manuscripts each day from the rubbish pits into which old and no longer useful manuscripts had been thrown. They excavated at times to a depth of 8 metres and at the end of the first season sent 280 boxes of manuscripts back to Oxford. Alongside a wealth of documentary and classical literary texts, these excavations (which were followed by a series of Italian excavations in 1910-1913, under E. Pistelli and G. Farina and later in 1927-34 under E. Breccia) recovered a wide range of early Christian literature (including other early Christian material from the Apostolic Fathers, non-canonical gospels, etc.). Indeed, Grenfell recorded that it was Oxyrhynchus' renown as an important Christian site, with a number of churches and thousands of monks in the fourth and fifth centuries, that in part

⁵ See <http://www.onb.ac.at/sammlgn/pa/news1.htm> [accessed 18.3.2000]. The official publication is now available: A. Papatthomas, 'A New Testimony to the Letter to the Hebrews', *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1 (2000), 18-24 (<http://www.jgrchj.com/page18> [accessed 30.3.2000]).

⁶ D. Hagedorn, 'P.IFAO II 31: Johannesapokalypse 1,13-20' *ZPE* 92 (1992), 243-47.

⁷ E.G. Turner, 'The Graeco-Roman Branch' in T.G.H. James (ed.), *Excavating in Egypt: The Egypt Exploration Society 1882-1982* (London: British Museum Pub., 1982), 161-78, from p. 162.

at least, motivated the original search.⁸ The manuscripts themselves provide evidence of a growing number of churches (from two in the third century, up to around forty in the sixth centuries) and, in a later period, thousands of monks.⁹

As regards the New Testament we should note that Oxyrhynchus is *the* principal supplier of NT papyri. If we limit ourselves to those manuscripts definitely from Oxyrhynchus (that is, all those published in the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* volumes and a number published in the Italian series, *Papiri greci e latini*, whose provenance is specifically identified),¹⁰ we note, in addition to those listed above, that the following would be included:

ⲡ ¹ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 2),	ⲡ ⁵ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 208, 1781),	ⲡ ⁹ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 402),
ⲡ ¹⁰ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 209),	ⲡ ¹³ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 657 & PSI 1292),	ⲡ ¹⁵ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1008),
ⲡ ¹⁶ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1009),	ⲡ ¹⁷ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1078),	ⲡ ¹⁸ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1079),
ⲡ ¹⁹ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1170),	ⲡ ²⁰ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1171),	ⲡ ²¹ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1227),
ⲡ ²² (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1228),	ⲡ ²³ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1229),	ⲡ ²⁴ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1230),
ⲡ ²⁶ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1354),	ⲡ ²⁷ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1355),	ⲡ ²⁸ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1596),
ⲡ ²⁹ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1597),	ⲡ ³⁰ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1598),	ⲡ ³⁵ (PSI 1),
ⲡ ³⁶ (PSI 3),	ⲡ ³⁹ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 1780),	ⲡ ⁴⁸ (PSI 1165),
ⲡ ⁵¹ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 2157),	ⲡ ⁶⁹ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 2383),	
ⲡ ⁷⁰ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 2384 & PSI inv. CNR 419f.),		ⲡ ⁷¹ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 2385),
ⲡ ⁷⁷ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 2683),	ⲡ ⁷⁸ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 2684),	ⲡ ⁹⁰ (<i>P. Oxy</i> 3523).

To these manuscripts we can now add the following:

⁸ Grenfell reflected on the reasons which led them to Oxyrhynchus: 'Being the capital of the nome, it must have been the abode of many rich persons who could afford to possess a library of literary texts....Above all, Oxyrhynchus seemed to be a site where fragments of Christian literature might be expected of an earlier date than the fourth century, to which our oldest manuscripts of the New Testament belong; for the place was renowned in the fourth and fifth centuries on account of the number of its churches and monasteries' from the *Egypt Exploration Fund Archaeological Report*, 1896-7 cited in E.G. Turner, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), pp. 27-28.

⁹ See e.g. *P. Oxy* 43 for two churches (AD 295); *P. Oxy* 1357 for forty churches (AD 535-536); cf. E.J. Epp, 'The New Testament Papyri at Oxyrhynchus in Their Social and Intellectual Context' in *Sayings of Jesus: Canonical and Non-Canonical. Essays in Honour of Tjitze Baarda* (eds. W.L. Petersen, J.S. Vos & H.J. de Jonge; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 47-68. General information was drawn from Turner, 'The Graeco-Roman Branch', and R. Coles, 'Oxyrhynchus: A City and Its Texts' (introductory lecture to centenary Symposium of same title, July 1998), the proceedings are to be published. We are lacking a detailed study of the history of Christianity in Oxyrhynchus.

¹⁰ PSI = *Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana*; ed. G. Vitelli, M. Norsa *et al.* (Florence, 1912-). Information (unfortunately not including provenance) on the manuscripts up to ⲡ⁹⁹ can be found in K. Aland (ed.), *Kurzgefasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* (2nd ed.; ANTTF 1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994). It is likely that some (many?) of the unprovenanced fragments in the Gregory-Aland list may have come from Oxyrhynchus (even, as is sometimes suggested, ⲡ⁵² the earliest of all NT papyri).

Gregory /Aland Number	P. Oxy	NT Passage	Date (acc. to editor)	Size (cm)	Lines per Page	Nomina Sacra	Other Features
ⲑ ⁷⁷ (new portion)	4405	Mt. 23:30-34; 35-39	II/III	8 x 8.2	c. 20	None extant	Rough breathings Medial points Paragraph divisions Correction
ⲑ ¹⁰⁰	4449	Jas. 3:13-4:4; 4:9-5:1	III/IV	7.5 x 19	c. 36	ΚΥ, ΚΣ	Pagination Diaresis Final nu = bar Punctuation by extended space
ⲑ ¹⁰¹	4401	Mt. 3:10-12; 3:16-4:3	III	4.7 x 8.6	c. 32-33	ΠΝΙ, ΠΝ[Σ], ΙΣ NB. οὐρανός	μ = forty (Mt. 4:2)
ⲑ ¹⁰²	4402	Mt. 4:11-12, 22-23	III/IV	5 x 3.3	c. 35	None extant	Punctuation by medial point
ⲑ ¹⁰³	4403	Mt. 13:55-56; 14:3-5	II/III	5.8 x 4	c. 19-20	None extant	Medial points correction
ⲑ ¹⁰⁴	4404	Mt. 21:34-37; 43 & 45 (?)	II (late)	7 x 5.2	c. 31	None extant	Rough breathings
ⲑ ¹⁰⁵	4406	Mt. 27:62-64; 28:1-5	V/VI	3.2 x 5.5	c. 25	None extant	amulet
ⲑ ¹⁰⁶	4445	Jn. 1:29-35, 40-46	III	8.8 x 13	c. 36	ΠΙΝΑ, ΠΙΝΙ, ΧΡΣ, ΙΗΣ, ΙΗΝ NB. ἰσρα]ηλ οὐρανοῦ αἰῶν	Pagination Apostrophe
ⲑ ¹⁰⁷	4446	Jn. 17:1-2, 11	III	4.4 x 4.4	c. 33	None extant	Rough breathing (?)
ⲑ ¹⁰⁸	4447	Jn. 17:23-24; 18:1-5	III	6.2 x 10.5	c. 23	ΙΗΣ, ΙΗΝ	
ⲑ ¹⁰⁹	4448	Jn. 21:18-20, 23-25	III	4.1 x 7.9	c. 26	None extant	
ⲑ ¹¹⁰	4494	Mt. 10:13f., 25-27	IV	7 x 3.8	c. 40-43	ΚΣ	Rough breathings Punctuation by low points Apostrophes Final nu = bar
ⲑ ¹¹¹	4495	Lk. 17:11-13, 22f.	III	2.9 x 4.8	c. 21-22	ΙΗΥ	
ⲑ ¹¹²	4496	Acts 26:31f.; 27:6f	V	5.2 x 5.2	c. 34	ΑΝΟΣ	stop
ⲑ ¹¹³	4497	Rom. 2:12f., 29	III	2.7 x 2.4	c. 35 two col.s	ΠΙΝΙ	Rough breathings High stops
ⲑ ¹¹⁴	4498	Heb. 1:7-12	III	3.8 x 7.1	c. 27	ΘΣ	verso blank
ⲑ ¹¹⁵	4499	Rev. 2-15 ¹¹	III/IV	26 frags from nine leaves	c. 33-36	ΙΗΛ, ΘΥ, ΘΝ, ΑΝΩΝ, ΑΝΟΥ, ΠΙΝΑ, ΚΥ, ΟΥΝΟΥ, ΟΥΝΩ	Punctuation by high point or blank space Final nu = bar

¹¹ Rev. 2:1-3, 13-15, 27-29; 3:10-12; 5:8f.; 6:5f.; 8:3-8, 11-9:5, 7-16, 18-10:4, 8-11:5, 8-15, 18-12:5, 8-10, 12-17; 13:1-3, 6-16, 18-14:3, 5-7, 10f., 14f., 18-15:1, 4-7.

The total number of NT manuscripts on papyrus found at Oxyrhynchus is therefore forty-seven. This is a significant proportion of the total of perhaps 111 separate manuscripts, most of which are completely without provenance. The proportion is even more telling for those manuscripts dated to the early part of the fourth century or earlier (i.e. those given as III/IV or earlier in our list), in which Oxyrhynchus accounts for thirty-four out of a total of fifty-eight. The down-side is that all the material from Oxyrhynchus is very fragmentary. Only a few provide substantial material (e.g. \mathfrak{P}^{13} covers several chapters of Hebrews in a fairly well preserved state; \mathfrak{P}^{115} covers a lot of the Apocalypse in a fragmentary state). Epp refers to only three others which provide more than two dozen verses (\mathfrak{P}^5 , \mathfrak{P}^{15} , \mathfrak{P}^{27}) and the longest of the new fragments is \mathfrak{P}^{100} (James), which attests around 20 verses.¹² Doubtless this explains the relative lack of attention given to Oxyrhynchus in particular among textual critics. Nevertheless the breadth of material, our growing knowledge of the town itself, and its church life, make this material a vital resource. As regards scope we simply note that the Oxyrhynchus collection comprises portions of Matthew (13 copies), Luke (2 copies), John (10 copies), Acts (3 copies), Romans (4 copies), 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1-2 Thessalonians, Hebrews (3 copies), James (3 copies), 1 John, Jude, and Revelation (3 copies).¹³

III. The Matthew Fragments

The seven new manuscripts of Matthew from Oxyrhynchus provide an important collection of early fragments of the Gospel. They take to 24 the number of papyrus manuscripts of Matthew which are extant,¹⁴ seven of which (four from Oxyrhynchus) are distinctly early—‘not later than the mid third century’— $\mathfrak{P}^{1, 45, 53, 64+67, 77, 103, 104, 115}$

¹² Epp, ‘The New Testament Papyri at Oxyrhynchus’, 52.

¹³ Based on the calculations of Epp, ‘The New Testament Papyri at Oxyrhynchus’, 52, but updated in view of the new material.

¹⁴ $\mathfrak{P}^{1, 19, 21, 25, 35, 37, 44, 45, 53, 62, 64 (=67), 70, 71, 73, 77, 83, 86, 96, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 110}$.

¹⁵ The quotation is from Thomas’ introduction in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* vol. LXIV, p. 1 (see above, note 1). C.P. Thiede’s thesis that \mathfrak{P}^{64+67} should be dated to the first century (‘Papyrus Magdalen Greek 17 (Gregory-Aland \mathfrak{P}^{64}): A Reappraisal’, *ZPE* 105 (1995), 13-20 = *TynB* 46 (1995), 29-42) is unpersuasive see P.M. Head, ‘The Date of the Magdalen Papyrus of Matthew (*P. Magd. Gr.* 17 = \mathfrak{P}^{64}): A Response to C.P. Thiede’, *TynB* 46 (1995), 251-85; K. Wachtel, ‘ $\mathfrak{P}^{64/67}$: Fragmente des Matthäusevangeliums aus dem 1. Jahrhundert?’ *ZPE* 107 (1995), 73-80.

P. Oxy 4405 is a small piece which fits neatly into the previously published *P. Oxy 2683* and which together now comprise \mathfrak{P}^{77} (Mt. 23:30-34, 35-39). This papyrus codex would have had around 20 lines of text per page (perhaps 10 x 15 cm including margins). The manuscript has been dated to the later part of the second century (or possibly early third). The scribe used a number of middle points for punctuation, more notably he twice used paragraphus, a horizontal line between lines of writing (these relate to verse divisions at the beginning of v. 32 and v. 34), and signalled a paragraph division (between v. 36 and v. 37) by leaving the end of the line blank.¹⁶ Other features include the use of rough breathings, and the use of double dots (trema, indicating initial vowels). He twice made corrections to his text (once over-writing an $\epsilon\iota$ into an *eta* in $\eta\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\kappa\alpha$, and at another point, realising that he has missed a word, writes a superscript $\kappa\alpha\iota$ (end of v. 37). In text the manuscript is close to Sinaiticus, and therefore to our modern critical editions, variations reflect idiosyncratic spellings (e.g. in v. 37: $\alpha\pi\omicron\kappa\tau\iota\nu[\nu\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha$, $\eta\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\kappa\alpha$) and/or the influence of the parallel passage in Luke 13:34, evident in $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha[\xi]\alpha\iota$ and $\omicron\rho\nu\iota\xi$, both in 23:37.

An interesting variant which is illustrative of the complexities of some text-critical problems, and in which this manuscript plays an important role, is found in Matthew 23:38. In NA27 $\mathfrak{P}^{77\text{vid}}$ is cited in support of $\epsilon\rho\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma$. Since this is the earliest Greek evidence its presence in \mathfrak{P}^{77} has been important in discussions of this problem.¹⁷ Since Luke most probably lacks $\epsilon\rho\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma$, it has been felt that the omission of this word in texts of Matthew might be due to harmonisation with Luke, while its presence, with its OT echoes (e.g. Je. 22:5) would be characteristic of Matthew. In fact \mathfrak{P}^{77} does not read $\epsilon\rho\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma$ at all, except for what the original editors thought was a part of a sigma at the edge of the old fragment. The announcement of a new piece of the same page held out the prospect of further clarity on this subject, but unfortunately it remains lost between the two fragments. Close examination of the papyrus casts doubt on whether the extant ink is really part of a sigma at all (as to read it as a sigma creates another problem that requires a unique variant to be postulated in the intervening space). It seems more likely that \mathfrak{P}^{77} should be read as a witness for the shorter reading here, which while

¹⁶ This paragraph division corresponds to the Eusebian section 241.

¹⁷ E.g. D.E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23* (NovT SS; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), pp. 200f., n. 120, which has a full discussion.

not itself decisive, is an important contribution to an interesting, although comparatively minor problem.

ⲡ¹⁰¹ (*P. Oxy* 4401) is a third century fragment of a papyrus codex (containing Mt. 3:10-12; 3:16-4.3) which would have had around 32-33 lines per page. Although no margins are extant the codex would appear to have had pages of around 10 x 25 cm. Nomina sacra are extant here for πνεῦμα and υἱος (ΠΙΝΙ, ΠΙΝ[Σ], ΥΣ), and ‘forty’ (τεσσαράκοντα) is represented by the letter μ (with bar). The only other feature is the use of tremata (only with initial upsilon), no punctuation is present.

The fragmentary state of the text makes reconstruction difficult, but it does seem to have some interesting individual features. There seems to be a singular preposition change from εἰς to πρὸς πυρ (3:10); ὡς is read instead of ὥσει at 3:16 (without apparently supporting the longer reading of D); ἡδοκ[ησα in 3:17; unusual word order for νηστευσα]ς (τεσσαράκοντα) ημερας in 4:2. This manuscript also provides an early Greek witness to a variant previously attested only in the versions and Fathers. The omission at 3:11 of ὁπίσω μου (with a d sa^{mss} and Cyprian), results in John the Baptist affirming that ‘the coming one (rather than ‘the one who is coming after me’) is stronger than me’. This is interesting, and could be regarded as a smoother (non-harmonised) reading. On the other hand it may reflect a feeling that ὁ ἐρχόμενος should be a technical title.

ⲡ¹⁰² (*P. Oxy* 4402) is a tiny fragment (containing portions of Mt. 4:11f., 22f.) from the bottom corner of a papyrus codex which would have had around 35 lines to the page and leaves around 14 x 27 cm. The hand has been dated to the third or early fourth century. There is a punctuation point at the break between 3:11 and 3:12 (which also corresponds to a new Eusebian section [from 18 to 19]). There are no notable variations from any standard comparative texts.

ⲡ¹⁰³ (*P. Oxy* 4403) preserves the top corner of a leaf (with a top margin of more than 1 cm and a side margin of more than 1.5 cm) of a papyrus codex of around 19-20 lines per page (giving a page size of around 11 x 16 cm). The text contains portions of Matthew 13:55f. and 14:3-5 and is dated to the late second or early third century. The size, date, style and content match ⲡ⁷⁷ and it has been suggested that this is from the same manuscript, although some distinctive features prevent this from being at all certain. The scribe has used punctuation points (only one of the four corresponds to a modern verse division). A supralinear correction has been made, probably by

a second hand, at one point (probably, as Thomas suggests, this corrected the omission of εἰσιν). This manuscript offers the earliest witness in support of the interesting variant which gives the name of one of Jesus' brothers as Ἰωσῆς (rather than Ἰωσηφ) (Mt. 13:55).

ᔪ¹⁰⁴ (*P. Oxy* 4404) is probably the earliest text of all those covered in this article, assigned by Thomas 'with some confidence to the second half of the second century, while not wishing to exclude altogether a slightly earlier or a slightly later date'. The text contains the top of a page of a papyrus codex of around 31 lines per page, and therefore a page size of around 14 x 25 cm (attesting Mt. 21:34-37 and v. 43 & v. 45). The scribe uses rough breathings, but no other lectional feature or punctuation is found. The text on the back of the fragment (writing across the fibres) has been severely damaged (with only one letter identifiable beyond doubt). As reconstructed by the editor this side attests a text lacking Matthew 21:44 (with D 33 and versional and patristic support).¹⁸

ᔪ¹⁰⁵ (*P. Oxy* 4406) is the latest of the Matthew texts here under review, dated to the fifth or sixth century by the editor (and containing portions of Mt. 27:62-64; 27:2-5).¹⁹ Originally part of a papyrus codex with around 25 lines per page (around 12 x 22 cm), this piece has apparently been used as an amulet (in the edition a piece of string is said to be 'still attached'; although this is no longer the case, as is apparent from the plates). The text contains some itacistic spellings: χεῖω[ν (28.3); εἰσισθ[ῆσαν (28.4); and a singularly additional definite article: τον πεῖ[λατον (27.62).

ᔪ¹¹⁰ (*P. Oxy* 4494) is a small piece of a papyrus codex upon which evidence for seven lines of text and a side margin survive (Mt. 10:13-14, 25-27). Calculations by the editor suggest that the codex would have had a page size of around 12 x 22 cm. The fragment is dated to the fourth century, comparative material and the discussion by Cockle strongly suggest the first half of the fourth century.

This text manages to combine indications of literary care with apparent textual freedom. It is characterised by a fairly full repertoire of literary features: rough breathings, apostrophes (between

¹⁸ Thomas is cautious here: 'The reading throughout, however, is very tentative indeed, thus making it hazardous to use this papyrus as evidence in support of the omission of the verse.' My own investigation of the manuscript, including several attempts to find alternative identifications of the verses, supports Thomas' reconstruction as the best possible fit.

¹⁹ The transcription could perhaps be improved at one point. Line 13 (across fibres): the final three letters of ἀποκριθεις do seem to be visible on the manuscript, and are reflected in the published plate.

consonants and after ουκ), dots to indicate punctuation (four out of five correspond to modern verse divisions), double dots (tremata, here indicating initial vowels). Three different corrections have also been made to the text, all of which correct what would have been singular readings.²⁰ This manuscript is also a good example of the alternating of dark and then fainter lettering which suggests places where the pen has been re-inked. A number of readings suggest either a careless scribe, or an idiosyncratic exemplar, since this short text contains six further singular readings.²¹

These seven texts illustrate the popularity of Matthew at Oxyrhynchus (in this respect cohering with the extant manuscripts but also from patristic citations and the traditional ordering of the gospels). They also illustrate various points along the spectrum from the apparently controlled texts (with corrections, literary features etc.) to apparently more free or careless copying.

IV. The John Fragments

℘¹⁰⁶ (*P. Oxy* 4445) is the top portion of a single leaf from a codex of John from the first half of the third century containing the text of Jn. 1:29-35, 40-46. The text has an average of around 25 letters per line and calculations suggest 36 lines to the page; since this leaf is the second of the gospel (page numbers 3 and 4 are given in the upper margin) it can be deduced that John's Gospel would have taken up around seventy pages, and would most likely have been alone. The fragment is both stained and damaged in various places, making it rather difficult to read.

Several interesting readings, for which ℘¹⁰⁶ now offers the earliest extant witness, are shared with important later Alexandrian witnesses: at 1:31 the word order εγω ηλθον (shared with C* and some others); at 1:32 the omission of the participle λεγων (shared with N*) and at 1:34 the reading ο εκλεκτός (which we shall discuss in a moment). A number of singular readings are also evident: at 1:33

²⁰ These corrections all appear within two lines (lines 3 & 4 across fibres): a supralinear alpha corrects the second epsilon of επεκα]λεσεν; an addition to sigma creates the zeta in βεελ'ζεβουλ; a beta is deleted before φ[οβηθητε. These should probably all be attributed to the original scribe.

²¹ These are: i) the omission of the first υμων in 10:13; ii) the wording of εξερχομενων υμων in 10:14; iii) the inclusion of η κωμης combined with the omission of εκεινης in 10:14; iv) the word εκ'μαξατε in 10:14; v) the preposition απο in 10:14 (possibly influenced by Lk. 9:5); vi) the word οικιους in 10:25.

this manuscript reads εαν in place of αν (a singular substitution); at 1:40 the most likely reconstruction suggests that ηκολουθησαν was read rather than the participle ηκολουθησαντων; in 1:41 ουτος is omitted (this omission of a potentially redundant term is paralleled in a single Old Latin text); and in 1:42 the article τον is also omitted.

The most interesting of these variants is the support that \mathfrak{P}^{106} clearly gives to the reading $\acute{\omicron}$ ἐκλεκτός at John 1:34 (the witness of John the Baptist).²² The vast majority of the manuscripts, as well as the early papyri \mathfrak{P}^{66} and \mathfrak{P}^{75} , read $\acute{\omicron}$ υἱός.²³ \mathfrak{P}^{106} offers early support for a reading found later in the original of Sinaiticus, later minuscules (77 218), Old Latin manuscripts (b e ff^{2*}), and the Old Syriac (syr^{s&c}), alongside further versional witnesses supporting a conflate version *electus filius*. This early support in Greek, Latin and Syriac indicates a geographical diversity behind this reading.²⁴

If we consider the transcriptional probabilities it seems far easier to envisage a scribal tendency from $\acute{\omicron}$ ἐκλεκτός to $\acute{\omicron}$ υἱός (in conformity to the style and theology of the Fourth Gospel) than vice versa. $\acute{\omicron}$ ἐκλεκτός is a perfectly acceptable reading, incidentally quite coherent for John the Baptist, pointing to the messianic status of Jesus (cf. Lk. 23:35; Is. 42:1LXX, etc.);²⁵ and one that might well be smoothed over and filled out theologically be a scribe concerned that John the Baptist, the ideal witness in the Fourth Gospel, should also confess Jesus as Son of God (cf. Jn. 20:30f.).²⁶

²² The reading is established, though not all the letters are visible (the edition has: ο [ε]κλεκ[τος, with dots under all of the visible letters except epsilon).

²³ The UBS Fourth Edition also cites \mathfrak{P}^{5vid} as support for $\acute{\omicron}$ ἐκλεκτός (as reconstructed by Grenfell & Hunt in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* Vol. II [1899], p. 4 re *P. Oxy* 208). It is impossible to be certain about this reading as only the final sigma is visible, and although a *nomen sacrum* would result in a very short line, the manuscript may have had υἱός in full (as reconstructed in W.J. Elliott & D.C. Parker, *The Gospel According to St. John: Volume One: The Papyri* [NTTS XX; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995], p. 29).

²⁴ Cf. A. von Harnack who argued, from the material then available (which did not include \mathfrak{P}^{66} and \mathfrak{P}^{75}) that the textual tradition in the three languages of the ancient church, Greek, Syriac and Latin, begin with ἐκλεκτός and then gave way from the fourth century onwards to υἱός ('Zur Textkritik und Christologie der Schriften des Johannes' in *Studien zur Geschichte des Neuen Testaments und der Alten Kirche* [AzKG 19; Berlin & Leipzig: W. de Gruyter, 1931 (orig. 1915)], vol. 1, pp. 105-152, here p. 128).

²⁵ For further evidence we could note the 'Elect One' messianic tradition in 1 Enoch, esp. 49; 61f. (drawing on Is. 42 in various ways), and elsewhere (e.g. Tg Is. 42:1; 4Q534; Asc. Is. 8:7; 4Q174 [Flor] 19 - this could be corporate).

²⁶ See further Harnack, 'Zur Textkritik und Christologie der Schriften des Johannes', pp. 127-32; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John* (ET; HTCNT; Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1968, 4th imp. 1990), vol. 1, pp. 305-306 (who refers to numerous other scholars); B.D. Ehrman, *The*

℘¹⁰⁷ (*P. Oxy 4446*) is a small fragment from a codex page, containing John 17:1f., 11; it has been ascribed to the third century. The text has an average of around 23 letters per line and would probably have had 33 lines to the page. This manuscript also contains a number of noteworthy readings which provide an early witness to support minority readings in the uncials. At 17:1 ℘¹⁰⁷ reads δως αυτω (with W L); at 17:11 it appears to parallel the longer reading of D (ουκετι ειμι εν τω κοσμω και εν τω κοσμω ειμι); and in the final clause at 17:11 it reads και ημεις (with B and others).²⁷

℘¹⁰⁸ (*P. Oxy 4447*) consists of two adjoining fragments providing evidence for the bottom half of a codex page. The text, dated to the third century, contains John 17:23f., 18:1-5 and was written at around 24 letters to the line and 23 lines to the page. This manuscript also provides early support for a number of variant readings, e.g. at 17:24: εδ[ωκας with B K N; 18:3: και φαρισαιων with ™* A C W; 18:4: δε with 01 D W F1; ειπε]ν with ™ A C.²⁸

℘¹⁰⁹ (*P. Oxy 4448*) is a small fragment from a codex page of around 19 letters per line and 26 lines per page, containing John 21:18-20, 23-25. The hand is said to resemble that of ℘⁶⁶ and has been assigned to the third century, making this manuscript the earliest manuscript witness to John 21.

These early fragments help to confirm the popularity of John at Oxyrhynchus. Although fragmentary, they expand our knowledge of the text of John in this early period. In general the text they exhibit stands in agreement with the Alexandrian (or proto-Alexandrian) text of the papyri and major Uncials, without agreeing in detail with any particular manuscript.

V. The Other Fragments

The manuscript of James (℘¹⁰⁰ = *P. Oxy 4449*) consists of the upper two-thirds of a single codex leaf including the upper margin, with pagination, and 25 extant lines of text. The portion covered is James 3:13 (...] καλης) - 4:4 (...φιλο[ς) and 4:9 (...] εις πενθος) - 5:1 (...αγε νυν]] ο[ι). The editor, R. Hübner, suggests a third or fourth century

Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament (New York & Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 69-70.

²⁷ The agreements between ℘¹⁰⁷ and W are noteworthy, see J.K. Elliott, 'Five New Papyri of the New Testament', *NovT* 41 (1999), 209-213, on p. 211.

²⁸ Elliott, 'Five New Papyri of the New Testament', 212.

date. Some peculiarities suggest a somewhat careless scribe, for example, writing the unattested nonsense word ακαστασια for ακαταστασια at 3:16, vov for νομον at 4:11, and the combination of itacism and etacism evident in the spelling of numerous words.²⁹ A longer space signals a basic form of punctuation (of the ten obvious examples only four correspond to the modern verse divisions in NA27, four of the others are readily explicable, two others are harder to fathom).³⁰

The text has an average of around 30 letters per line, and 36 lines per page. Of considerable interest are the page numbers in the upper margin: ς (*digamma*) = 6 and ζ = 7. Clearly this caters for a codex manuscript which began with James. But was it a small codex of James alone or did James head up a collection of the Catholic epistles? The epistle alone would have gone onto the ninth page and made a small quire. If it was felt that pagination would hardly be required for a single letter volume we might be led to speculate that this could have been a larger codex.³¹ A codex on this scale containing all seven letters would have extended to approximately forty pages.³²

The text of P¹⁰⁰ was utilised in the first fascicle of the new *Editio Critica Maior* produced by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster.³³ No clear picture emerges about the text-type represented by this manuscript: at 3:17 it reads και (before

²⁹ E.g., ερειθειαν (Jas. 3:14); επιγι[ος (3:15); υμειν (4:1); κατηφιαν (4:9); κ[ρ]εινων (4:11); note also the spelling ψευδευ[σθε at 3:14 which needed an attempted correction by the scribe.

³⁰ The first of these unusual long spaces (marked here with an asterisk added to NA27 with its punctuation) is the second one in Jas. 3:17 (underlined words are P¹⁰⁰ not NA27):

ἡ δὲ ἀνῶθεν σοφία πρῶτον μὲν ἀγνή ἐστιν, * ἔπειτα εἰρηνική, ἐπιεικής, εὐπειθής, μεστή ἐλέους * καὶ καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν, ἀδιάκριτος, καὶ ἀνυπόκριτος.

The other is in 4:10:

ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου * καὶ ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς.

³¹ The designation of James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John and Jude as ‘Catholic Epistles’ was extant in the fourth century, and regarded as traditional in both Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist.* II.23.24f.) and Athanasius (Festal letter 39). This suggests it would not be implausible to imagine a collection of them in a single codex of this date. See further R.L. Webb, ‘Epistles, Catholic’, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. D.N. Freedman; Doubleday, 1992), vol. II, pp. 569f.

³² We could note that P²³ (P. Oxy 1229) is a similar codex: fourth century, containing text from Jas. 1:10-12 on p. 2, and from Jas. 1:15-18 on p. 3.

³³ B. Aland, K. Aland, G. Mink & K. Wachtel (eds.), *Der Jakobusbrief*, Section IV Part 1 of *Novum Testamentum Graecum Editio Critica Maior* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997).

ανυποκριτος) with predominantly Byzantine texts (K L 049 69 322 323 Maj.); similarly at 4:10 it reads του κυριου with a range of Byzantine texts (NA 27: Maj.); while at other points it stands with 'Alexandrian' witnesses against the variant that became the standard Byzantine reading (e.g. 4:9: μετατραπη[τω with B P 614 1241 1739 etc.; 4:13: ποιησομεν with B P 323 1739 etc.).³⁴

Perhaps the most important and substantial of the manuscripts under discussion here are the twenty-six fragments which make up *P. Oxy* 4499 (P¹¹⁵). Although fragmentary, they provide evidence for substantial portions of the book of Revelation (a portion of the NT which is otherwise comparatively poorly attested). The fragments come from nine different leaves and allow a general impression of the whole to be gained. The lines contain between 29/30 and 43/44 letters, each page would require around 33-36 lines, and the size of each page would be c. 15.5 x 23.5 cm. Punctuation is by high point (most of which correspond to modern verse divisions), and the text has been corrected by the scribe and by a later corrector (who may have corrected the text against another manuscript).

The textual history of the Apocalypse is unique among New Testament documents and is comparatively well understood because of the relative paucity of manuscripts, and the very full studies of H.C. Hoskier and J. Schmid.³⁵ Four main text-types have been discerned; and first impressions suggest that this manuscript belongs to one of the most important of these, the Alexandrinus (A) and Ephraimi Rescriptus (C) group.³⁶

Of some interest is the early support given by this manuscript to the number of the beast (Rev. 13:18) being 616 (here given in alpha-numeric form as χις [with bar], the other early witness C has it written in full: εξακοσαι δεκα εξ).³⁷ Manuscripts bearing this reading were known to Irenaeus. He affirmed that 666 stood 'in all the most approved and ancient copies' (ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς σπουδαίοις καὶ ἀρχαίοις ἀντιγράφοις, *Against Heresies* V.30.1), and argued that

³⁴ At Jas. 4:3 P¹⁰⁰ reads αἰτεῖτε (cf. NA27: αἰτεῖσθε) with 69 and 631; at 4:13 P¹⁰⁰ reads (uniquely): γὰρ ζῶν ὑμῶν.

³⁵ H.C. Hoskier, *Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse... A Complete Conspectus of All Authorities* (2 vols.; London: B. Quaritch, Ltd., 1929); J. Schmid, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Textes* (3 vols.; München: Theologische Studien; München: Karl Zink Verlag, 1955-1956).

³⁶ Also located in this group is the text used in Oecumenius' commentary on the Apocalypse, see especially Schmid, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Texte. 2. Teil: Die Alten Stämme* (1955), pp. 85-109. D.C. Parker has announced that a study of P¹¹⁵ will appear in *New Testament Studies*.

³⁷ Hoskier, *Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse*, vol. 2, p. 364.

616 arose as a scribal error. The reading of 𐤔¹¹⁵ does not actually add much to the available evidence, except to confirm one side of Irenaeus' account, and to add some early weight to the 616 reading. Recent studies suggest that there may not be any significant exegetical difference between 616 and 666. The consensus is firmly in favour of viewing this number as an example of *gematria*, in which the number stands for the name of a person ('the number of his name', Rev. 13:17; 15:2), and the person in mind would be Nero. It is likely that 666 arose from a Hebrew transliteration of Neron Caesar from Greek into Hebrew (נררן קסר).³⁸ It is notable that an equivalent transliteration from Latin into Hebrew results in 616 (נרר קסר). We might also note that two possible transliterations of 'beast' into Hebrew could produce either 616 or 666.³⁹

𐤔¹¹¹ (P. Oxy 4495) is a fragment from a papyrus codex of Luke's Gospel (Lk. 17:11-13, 22f.) from the first half of the third century. No breathings or punctuation are evident. Two readings are notable, the singular spelling of πορωθ[εν (17:12); and του επιθυσμηςαι υμας (17:22) which provides the earliest support for a reading shared with D f¹³ 157 OL^{mss}, otherwise the text seems to agree with 𐤔⁷⁵ and the early uncials.

𐤔¹¹² (P. Oxy 4496) is a fragment of a papyrus codex of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 26:31f.; 27:6f.) written in typical Biblical Majuscule of the fifth century. If this was a single column codex it would require 34 lines per page (of around 20 letters per line), 160 pages (of c. 18 x 31 cm) for Acts. This manuscript, although later than most of the others under consideration here, nevertheless also provides the earliest evidence for two variants that were otherwise known only in minuscule witnesses (both a long omission at 26:32 and a subsequent addition).

𐤔¹¹³ (P. Oxy 4497) is a tiny fragment of Romans (2:12f., 29) dated to the third century. It has a narrow column structure which means it probably had two columns with c. 35 lines each. No variants are evident.

𐤔¹¹⁴ (P. Oxy 4498) is a section from the bottom of the first page of a codex of Hebrews (the other side is blank, suggesting it contained the title), containing Hebrews 1:7-12. The only notable variant is at

³⁸ 𐤔=200, 𐤕=60, 𐤐=100; 𐤓=50, 𐤌=6, 𐤔=200, 𐤓=50.

³⁹ θηριον (in genitive, as in Rev. 13:18) is 𐤔𐤓𐤓; while θηριον (nominative) is 𐤔𐤓𐤓𐤓. The mathematics is: 𐤓=50, 𐤌=6, 𐤕=10, 𐤔=200, 𐤓=400. For a full discussion see R. Bauckham, 'Nero and the Beast' in *The Climax of the Covenant: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), pp. 384-452, also D. Aune, *Revelation 6-16* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1998), pp. 722, 769-73.

Hebrews 1:9 where a definite word order variation (σου ὁ θεός) coincides with a line that would otherwise appear too long.

VI. Conclusions

These new fragments serve to confirm the popularity of the codex format in early Christian book production (all seventeen of these fragments come from codices). They contribute to our knowledge of Christian use of the codex, although they do not help us to discern the rationale behind the widespread, almost universal, adoption of this format in early Christian transmission of the scriptures.

These fragments, and the Oxyrhynchus NT manuscripts generally, confirm the outstanding popularity of Matthew, and to a slightly lesser degree John, in the early period. The absence of any manuscripts of Mark and the relative lack of manuscripts of Luke, suggest that, whatever function the four-fold gospel canon may have had (if any), it did not translate into four-gospel manuscripts in general, nor into equal numbers of copies of manuscripts of each of the four gospels.⁴⁰

In general terms these manuscripts confirm the text of the great uncials which forms the basis of the modern critical editions. There is nothing here which requires a radically new understanding of the early transmission of the NT text. We have seen evidence for attempts at control over the transmission process, with careful copying and correcting. We have also seen examples of carelessness and apparent freedom (interestingly the clearest examples of this comes from one of the later manuscripts, the fourth century \mathfrak{P}^{110}).

These manuscripts regularly provide early Greek manuscript evidence for variant readings previously known only in later manuscripts and the versions. This suggests that variant readings could be maintained for long periods in the textual transmission even when evidence is lacking; it further suggests that readings which lack early Greek support, but which are found in the versions and later Greek manuscripts may well be based on ancient traditions.

⁴⁰ I am grateful to Francis Watson for raising this issue, and I hope to address it properly in a future study of the state of the canon at Oxyrhynchus. We should note for the moment both the presence of three copies of (an early form of) the Gospel of Thomas (*P. Oxy* 1, 654, 655), and the apparent popularity of the Shepherd of Hermas (at least six copies).