

# PAPYRUS MAGDALEN GREEK 17 (GREGORY-ALAND $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ ): A REAPPRAISAL<sup>1</sup>

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## Summary

*More than forty years after C.H. Roberts' first edition of  $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ , this new edition provides the first complete reconstruction of all six sides of the three fragments kept at Magdalen College, Oxford. It corrects a number of errors, adds an improved reading of several verses, in particular of Matthew 26:22, which contribute to a better understanding of early Christian scribal habits; it furthermore discusses the question of nomina sacra for which  $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$  provides the three earliest known examples, and it reopens the question of the dating. With the first-century date suggested as a result of a comparative analysis using newly available manuscripts,  $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$  and, along with it,  $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$  are the earliest known codex fragments of the New Testament.*

## I. Introduction

It would be a very brave man who would deny that such a text, or any text, might be susceptible to further improvement.  
(H.C. Youtie<sup>2</sup>)

The oldest extant papyrus fragment of the Gospel according to Matthew consists of five small fragments, three of which are kept at Magdalen College, Oxford, the other two at the Fundación San Lucas Evangelista, Barcelona. It was dated, by

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<sup>1</sup>This is reprinted with minor corrections from *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 105 (1995) 13-20 with the permission of the editor.

<sup>2</sup>H.C. Youtie, *The Textual Criticism of Documentary Papyri, Prolegomena* (2nd ed; London, 1974) 66.

Colin Roberts, to the later second century.<sup>3</sup> Roberts himself was the first scholar to recognise the relationship between the three Magdalen fragments and the two remnants in Barcelona (P.Barç. inv. 1, P<sup>67</sup>) as parts of one and the same original codex.<sup>4</sup> Further attempts to link this codex to fragments of Luke's gospel preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Suppl. Gr. 1120 = Gregory-Aland P<sup>4</sup>), had to be abandoned;<sup>5</sup> although the fragmentary codex at the Bibliothèque Nationale had, at one stage, contained Matthew—as seems to be obvious from a fragment with the title Εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Μαθθαῖον—the Paris codex is written on much darker, brownish papyrus and is considerably later (by up to one hundred years). As yet, there is no candidate among extant papyri to supplement P<sup>64</sup> and P<sup>67</sup>. However, after more than forty years since Roberts first published the Magdalen fragment, some additions and corrections appear to be called for.

## II. The Catalogue Number

Whereas the earliest publications of and about the fragments do not give them a college library number, van Haelst's *Catalogue*,<sup>6</sup> faithfully copied by all later publications including the latest (27th) edition of Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, calls them 'Gr. 18'. There are, however, no such

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<sup>3</sup>C. Roberts, 'An Early Papyrus of the First Gospel', *Harvard Theological Review* 46 (1953) 233-7, here 237, referring to the corroborative verdicts of H. Bell, T.C. Skeat and E.G. Turner.

<sup>4</sup>C. Roberts, 'Complementary Note', in R. Roca-Puig, *Un Papiro Griego del Evangelio de San Mateo* (2nd ed; Barcelona, 1962) 59-60.

<sup>5</sup>K. Aland's suggestion, based on an observation by P. Weigandt, in his 'Neue Neutestamentliche Papyri II', *NTS* 12 (1965/66), here 193-5; repeated, as probable ('probablement') by J. van Haelst, *Catalogue des Papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens* (Paris, 1976) 146 (no. 403), and by C.H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London, 1983) 40-41, 65-66, but discontinued by Aland himself in his and his wife's *Der Text des Neuen Testaments* (2nd ed; Stuttgart, 1989) 105, where P<sup>4</sup> is categorised as 'Normaltext', but P<sup>64/67</sup> as 'fester Text', and 106/110, where the dates are given as 'III' and 'um 200' respectively.

<sup>6</sup>J. van Haelst, *Catalogue des Papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens* (Paris, 1976) 125 (no. 336).

fragments at Magdalen College, Oxford. The College handlist had indeed numbered the papyrus 'Magdalen Greek 18', but this was an obvious mistake due to a tiny fragment of papyrus found in an envelope among the correspondence relating to the Matthean fragment,<sup>7</sup> a mere 1.8 x 1.9 centimeters, with two fragmentary lines containing just two complete letters (iota/nu) and five incomplete ones on one side (the other side is blank), in a later, larger script unrelated to the three fragments of Matthew. The College Library now correctly numbers the three Matthean fragments 'Gr. 17', and this should henceforth be the number used in all lists and catalogues of New Testament papyri.

### III. Contents

There are some discrepancies between the editions of and references to Magdalen Gr. 17.<sup>8</sup> In his first edition of 1953, Roberts had transcribed the contents as Matthew 26:7, 10, 14-15, 22-23, 31, 32-33.<sup>9</sup> On two pages preceding his supplement to Roca-Puig's second edition of the Barcelona fragments, he offered a new 'Transcripción del P. Magd. de Oxford', translated into Spanish by Roca-Puig.<sup>10</sup>

Dated '9.6.60', this new transcription offers several alterations: Col II, recto (a) line 1 (Mt. 26:31) now recognises the *nomen sacrum* for Jesus as IC rather than IH; in line 2, the visible part of the line is now extended to σκανδαλισθη... rather than σκανδα...; and in Col. II, recto (b), he tentatively adds a new first line for verse 32, προαξι[ω], and changes, in line 2, γαλεγλαιαν to γαλιγλαιαν. Furthermore, he now corrects the contents; Matthew 26:7-8, 10, 14-15, 22-23, 31, 32-33.<sup>11</sup> There is a very good reason for Roberts' insistence on the separation of verse 31 from verses 32-33: verse 31 is on a separate fragment

<sup>7</sup>I owe this information to K.S. Speirs, Assistant Librarian, Magdalen College, Oxford, in a letter dated 23rd February, 1994.

<sup>8</sup>Conversely, they all agree as to P.Barcl.1 (P<sup>67</sup>), Mt. 3:9, 15; 5:20-22, 25-28.

<sup>9</sup>Roberts, 'An Early Papyrus', 236.

<sup>10</sup>Roberts, 'Complementary Note', 57-59.

<sup>11</sup>The 'standard' Greek New Testament, Nestle-Aland<sup>27</sup> 1993, has 26:7-8, 10, 14-15, 22-23, 31-33.

of papyrus. The three fragments of Magdalen Gr. 17, all of them with text on *recto* and *verso*, offer six 'units', Matthew 26:7-8 (fragment 1, *verso*), 10 (fragment 2, *verso*), 14-15 (fragment 3, *verso*), 22-23 (fragment 3, *recto*), 31 (fragment 1, *recto*), 32-33 (fragment 2, *recto*). Thus, Roberts' system with a separate verse 31 is to be preferred for reasons of clarity and should be copied by Nestle-Aland *et al.*

#### IV. A Scribal Error and Three Variants

The peculiar variants of Gr. 17 were duly noted by Roberts; in three instances, however he himself seemed uncertain and mistaken, and one further variant has so far remained unnoticed.

##### i) fragment 3, *verso*, line 2 (26:14)

Roberts had seen that δώδεκα is written in the numerical symbol ιβ—the lower half of the beta is clearly visible. It is, however, equally obvious that there is no space for an omicron between beta and the lambda of λεγόμενος. Thus, we have a rare example of λεγόμενος without the article, a construction paralleled by, e.g. Matthew 2:23 (εἰς πόλιν λεγομένου Ναζαρέτ) and John 4:5 (εἰς πόλιν τῆς Σαμαρείας λεγομένην Συχάρ). In Magdalen Gr. 17/ϕ<sup>64</sup>, the omission may of course merely be a scribal error.

##### ii) fragment 3, *recto*, line 1 (26:22)

Roberts had stated, in his 1953 edition,<sup>12</sup> that 'the papyrus must have read λεγειν εις εκαστος αυτω, an order which is unique...' However, this unique variant is far from evident. The three severely damaged letters in line 1 which Roberts had identified as tau/omega/mu are in fact tau/omega/nu. The nu is the final letter of αυτων, and thus our papyrus would have read... ἑκαστος αυτων μητι ἐγώ εἰμι... : the text of ϕ<sup>45</sup>, ϕ<sup>37</sup>, Bezae Cantab. (D), and many others. There is only one standard edition of the Greek New Testament which has this as the best

<sup>12</sup>Roberts, 'An Early Papyrus', 236.

reading;<sup>13</sup>  $\Phi^{64}$  now confirms the papyrological evidence for it against the text preferred by other editions.<sup>14</sup>

### iii) fragment 1, *recto*, line 2 (Mt. 26:31)

For reasons of stichometry, the ὑμεῖς after πάντες should be omitted. With it, line 1 would have 20 rather than the average 16 letters. This omission, in the oldest manuscript of Matthew's gospel, confirms, once again, the tendency of all early papyri to keep the Greek simple, to pare it to the bones, free from rhetorical embellishments.<sup>15</sup>

### iv) fragment 2, *recto*, line 2 (26:32)

One has to read γαλεγλαιαν α... , as Roberts had transcribed it in his 1953 edition, not γαλιγλαιαν α... as in the printing error of the second transcription dated 1960. This variation of the common Γαλιλαίαν for Galilee is of course odd, and Roberts adds a note to his 1960 edition which reads 'v. 33, *vel* γαλειλαιαν'.<sup>16</sup> But apart from the fact that it is verse 32, not 33, the gamma is as unmistakable as the epsilon which precedes it. epsilon + iota for iota is common enough to be unremarkable; as for gamma instead of iota, this is nothing but a scribal error not quite inexplicable in view of the identity of the vertical strokes of iota and gamma in this papyrus. The scribe of Magdalen Gk.17 was not averse to original decisions; even this mistake is, in a way, original.

## V. The Date

The date commonly given to Magdalen Gr. 17 (and P.Barcl.1), c. 200,<sup>17</sup> may look like a safe 'dumping ground', but this might

<sup>13</sup>Bover-O'Callaghan, *Nuevo Testamento Trilingüe* (3rd ed; Madrid, 1994) 152. αὐτῶν before μητι is also favoured, albeit in brackets, by A. Merk, *Novum Testamentum Graeco et Latine* (11th ed; Rome, 1992) 94.

<sup>14</sup>E.g., Nestle-Aland<sup>27</sup> 1993: λέγειν αὐτῷ εἰς ἕκαστος μῆτι ἐγὼ εἰμι. . .

<sup>15</sup>Cf. for John Rylands Gr.P.457 ( $\Phi^{52}$ , Jn. 18:31-33, 37-38). See C.P. Thiede, 'The textual peculiarities of  $\Phi^{52}$ ', in *idem*, *The Earliest Gospel Manuscript?* (Exeter, 1992) 13-19.

<sup>16</sup>Roberts, 'Complementary Note', 58.

<sup>17</sup>Latest example: Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*<sup>27</sup> (1993) 687.

be too late. One has to keep in mind, of course, that Roberts revolutionised the dating of the papyrus in his first edition of 1953, when he suggested 'a date in the later second century'.<sup>18</sup> At that time, he was confronted with the estimate provided by the Rev. Charles B. Huleatt, a former *demy* (foundation scholar) of Magdalen College, who had acquired the fragments at Luxor in 1901 and had given them to his old college in the same year.<sup>19</sup> Huleatt had suggested a date in the third century, and a note in the display cabinet with Gr. 17 in the Old Library of Magdalen College still reads: '2nd half of 3rd century (probable date)'. In the librarian's report of 1901, H.A. Wilson quoted an oral assessment from no less an authority than A.S. Hunt who even thought that 'they may be assigned with more probability to the fourth century'. As Roberts pointed out in his commentary,<sup>20</sup> Hunt and his colleague B.P. Grenfell had assumed, on principle, that manuscripts written in a codex could not be earlier than the third, preferably the fourth century. He quotes the amusing example of P.Oxy. I.35, a Latin codex fragment of an otherwise unknown History of the Macedonian Wars now at the British Library,<sup>21</sup> which they analysed as belonging to the second century, perhaps even before A.D. 79—for palaeographical reasons—but which they nonetheless assigned to the late third or fourth century *because it is a vellum codex*.<sup>22</sup> As mentioned above, Roberts then proceeded to argue, comparatively, for a late second-century date of Magdalen Gr. 17, backed in this by Bell, Skeat and Turner. One of the decisive arguments he adduced is the fact that 'in the Magdalen fragments the minute omikron and the flat omega, common in third-century hands, are absent'.<sup>23</sup>

Since the publication of Roberts' paper, new papyri have become available, and they appear to favour an even

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<sup>18</sup>Roberts, 'An Early Papyrus', 237.

<sup>19</sup>Letter to the college librarian, H.A. Wilson, dated Messina, Dec. 5, 1901.

<sup>20</sup>Roberts, 'An Early Papyrus', 234-5.

<sup>21</sup>British Library P.745.

<sup>22</sup>*The Oxyrhynchus Papyri Part I* (London, 1898) 59-60, here 59.

<sup>23</sup>Roberts, 'An Early Papyrus', 237.

earlier date. This may not come as a surprise, since one tendency of the re-evaluation of New Testament papyri at least since the 60s has been a redating with, occasionally, somewhat drastic and not undisputed consequences.<sup>24</sup> It may be argued that the result of this continuing process is a mounting degree of uncertainty, rather than certainty, as to the reliability of palaeographical datings of literary hands; but even so, one should not eschew the challenge. For Magdalen Gr. 17/P.Barcl.1., one such unexpected example is a leather scroll discovered in the Nahal Hever, near the Dead Sea, the so called Greek Minor Prophets Scroll 8HevXIIgr.<sup>25</sup> With minor variations, D. Barthélemy (who first published parts of the scroll in 1963), C.H. Roberts, W. Schubart, E. Würthwein and R. Hanhart all opt for *ca.* A.D. 50/mid first century A.D.<sup>26</sup> Tov, in his new and complete edition, leaves the task of dating the scroll to P.J. Parsons who does not rule out a mid to late first-century date by referring to P.Oxy. 2555, but prefers a date in the later first century B.C. 'as possible, though not of course necessary'.<sup>27</sup>

Obviously then, there seems to be some scope for differing assessments, between the late first century B.C. and the middle, or, at the latest, the second half, of the first century A.D., with a clear preference for the mid first century A.D. Without entering the debate about the date of Matthew's

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<sup>24</sup>E.g. H. Hunger, 'Zur Datierung des Bodmer II', *Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse der Österr. Akad. der Wissenschaften* 4 (1960) 12-23, arguing for a date in the first quarter of the second century, against the traditional consensus which dates Bodmer II (P<sup>46</sup>) to 'c. 200'; or Y.K. Kim, 'Palaeographical Dating of P<sup>46</sup> to the Later First Century', *Biblica* 69 (1988) 248-57, taking away some one hundred years from the usual dating of P. Chester Beatty II/University of Michigan Inv. 6238, 'c. 200'. See also note 32 below.

<sup>25</sup>E. Tov (ed.), *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll 8HevXIIgr* (Oxford, 1990).

<sup>26</sup>For Barthélemy, Roberts, Schubart and Würthwein see the summary in E. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments* (5th ed; Stuttgart, 1988) 194, with plate; for Hanhart, see W.H. Schmidt, W. Thiel, and R. Hanhart, *Altes Testament* (Stuttgart et al., 1989) 194-5, with plate.

<sup>27</sup>P.J. Parsons, 'The Scripts and Their Date', in Tov, *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll 8HevXIIgr*, 19-26, here 24 and 26.

gospel,<sup>28</sup> we may note that the historical *terminus post quem* for any of the gospels obviously is the year of the last events reported about the crucified and risen Jesus, A.D. 30, and we may also note that this would give us enough space to accommodate a comparison between the Nahal Hever Scroll and Magdalen Gr. 17.

Even at first glance and using, as a point of reference, the plate in Schmidt/Thiel/Hanhart, the identity and near-identity of several letters is striking: alpha, epsilon (a letter fluctuating in both scripts), iota, omicron, rho and nu are particularly close. An equally obvious difference, on the other hand, may be seen in the etas and mus; but the second scribe of the Nahal Hever scroll provides the comparable eta and mu more than once.<sup>29</sup> The Nahal Hever scroll of the Minor Prophets may be at the extreme end of the spectrum, but is not the only first-century analogy. Further material is provided by papyri in the script of Herculaneum, for which A.D. 79 is the natural focal point.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, there is a small, unidentified Greek fragment from Qumran Cave 7, 7Q6<sub>1</sub>, for which the archaeological *terminus ante quem* is A.D. 68, which has the characteristic Eta with the horizontal stroke above the median, evident in Magdalen Gr. 17.<sup>31</sup> There also is a Greek papyrus from Qumran Cave 4 which shows several letters resembling Papyrus Magdalen Gr. 17, such as the alpha, the beta, etc.: pap4QLXXLeviticus<sup>b</sup>. As Parsons points out, the script is far from uniform, but this papyrus from Cave 4 could be dated to the mid first century A.D.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup>For a survey, see D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (4th ed; Leicester, 1990) 43-57.

<sup>29</sup>For a single plate, see Würthwein, *Das Text des Alten Testaments*, 195; for the two scribes, see Parsons, 'The Scripts', 20.

<sup>30</sup>See W. Schubart, *Griechische Paläographie* (2nd ed; München, 1966) 111; J. O'Callaghan, 'Paleografia Herculaneense en algunos papiros griegos de Qumrân', in *Homenaje a Juan Prado* (Madrid, 1975) 529-32.

<sup>31</sup>M. Baillet, J.T. Milik, R. de Vaux (eds.), *Les 'Petites Grottes' de Qumrân* (DJD III; Oxford, 1962), companion vol. 'Planches', plate XXX.

<sup>32</sup>P.J. Parsons, 'The Palaeography and Date of the Greek Manuscripts', in P.W. Skehan, E. Ulrich, J.E. Sanderson (eds.), *Qumran Cave 4, IV* (DJD IX; Oxford, 1992) 7-13, here 8. Such references to Greek manuscripts from Qumran are all the more legitimate as they did not



Unwittingly, he then proceeds to offer an interesting case study: In his drawings of letters of the preceding fragment 4QLXXLev<sup>a</sup> (parts of a leather scroll which he dates to the first century B.C.), the alpha, beta, delta, epsilon, eta, iota, kappa, eta *etc.* are identical or near-identical to what we find in Magdalen Gr. 17. In fact, the letters he draws could have been taken straight out of Gr. 17. Looking at the fragments themselves, there would seem to be at least two differences, however: the Qumran Leviticus<sup>a</sup> is sloping slightly to the right, and the letters are very close to each other, occasionally even connected (*ligatures*). Even so, archaeology alone cannot have influenced Parsons' very early dates—there is scope until A.D. 68, after all, when the caves were abandoned, and one might well prefer a date in the mid-first century A.D. for both 4QLXXLev<sup>a</sup> and pap4QLXXLev<sup>b</sup>. But, and this is the point, the prevailing tendency to date material of a nature comparable to Magdalen Gr. 17 to a period even preceding the earliest possible date of Matthew's gospel suggests, with all due caution, the possibility of redating the fragments from Oxford and Barcelona—which are, after all, definitely Matthean—to a period somewhat earlier than the late second century previously assigned to them. Certainty will remain elusive, of course.

To sum up, even though Herculaneum and Qumran (with its Greek fragments in two caves, 4 and 7) are still under survey, they both have their archaeological *termini*; all comparative scripts taken directly from their finds suggest dates prior to A.D. 79 and 68 respectively. It goes without saying that scribal characteristics found in those places may well have continued to be in use afterwards, towards the end of the first century, and occasionally even later. For our present purposes, we may proffer a tentative suggestion: the material from Nahal Hever, Herculaneum and Qumran could point towards a first-century date for Magdalen Gr. 17/P.Barcl.1.

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originate at Qumran and could represent a wide variety of Jewish diaspora hands. Cf. E. Tov, 'Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts from the Judean Desert: Their Contribution to Textual Criticism', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 39/1 (1988) 5-37, here 19.

At this stage we must turn to the *nomina sacra* and their influence on the date: Magdalen Gr. 17 has two, probably three, abbreviations of holy names and words:  $\overline{\tau}\varsigma$  for  $\text{Ἰησοῦς}$  (fragment 2, *verso*, 1.1, probable because of the stichometry of the line; fragment 1, *recto*, 1.2, definitely) and  $\overline{\kappa}\epsilon$  for  $\text{κύριε}$  (fragment 3, *recto*, 1.2). For historical reasons, Roberts had suggested that the use of these and other *nomina sacra* had become established practice among Christians in Jerusalem even before the year A.D.70.<sup>33</sup> He did lack the palaeographical evidence, though, and even for John Rylands Gr. 457 (P<sup>52</sup>), which he himself had edited,<sup>34</sup> he did not suggest *nomina sacra* in the reconstructed, missing parts of the extant lines, although this would have been possible within the given stichometry.<sup>35</sup> Magdalen Gr. 17 might offer the missing link: a Christian codex fragment of the first century, perhaps (though not necessarily) predating A.D. 70, with the *nomina sacra* postulated by Roberts.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>C.H. Roberts, 'Nomina sacra: Origins and Significance', in *idem*, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London, 1979) 26-48, here 46. Cf. also J. O'Callaghan, 'Nomina sacra' in *papyris graecis sacculi III neotestamentariis* (Rome, 1970) for an analysis of *nomina sacra* in P<sup>46</sup> which may, according to Kim, be late first century. B.M. Metzger (*The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* [3rd, enlarged, ed; Oxford, 1992] 265-66) thinks that it is precisely the occurrence of *nomina sacra* in P<sup>46</sup> which counts against Kim's advocacy of such an early date. But whatever the quality of Kim's arguments as such, this could well be a circular argument on Metzger's side. If, for other palaeographical reasons, certain papyri with *nomina sacra* turn out to be first century, then this would favour Roberts' theory of the early origins of *nomina sacra* rather than Metzger's preference for later dates.

<sup>34</sup>See C.H. Roberts, *An Unpublished Fragment of the Fourth Gospel in the John Rylands Library* (Manchester, 1935); enlarged and amended in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 20 (1936) 45-55.

<sup>35</sup>See Thiede, 'The textual peculiarities of P<sup>52</sup>', n. 9, 17-18.

<sup>36</sup>It seems to me that the 'watershed' is the Christian change from scroll to codex, most likely some time after the destruction of the temple in the year A.D. 70 which contributed to the end of Jewish-Christian missionary activities among their fellow Jews and terminated the strategical reasons for using the scroll format and for resisting the temptation to put Jesus on a par with God (Jahwe) palaeographically by means of *nomina sacra* which had, until then,

Some time ago, such a date would have been ruled out for the simple reason that a copy of a codex of Matthew—and there is no dispute whatsoever about the identification of the Oxford and Barcelona papyri—cannot have reached Egypt at such an early stage of the gospel's germination and transmission. But we have learned from the methodological error of Grenfell and Hunt, described above; and we possess that famous fragment of a *codex* of John's gospel kept at the John Rylands University Library Manchester, P<sup>52</sup> (J. Rylands Libr. Gr. P. 457). Within the range of dated and datable papyri Colin Roberts compared to P<sup>52</sup> for his first edition in 1935, he finally decided in favour of what is arguably the latest possible date, c. A.D. 125. He could, however, have been less cautious by preferring the other end of the spectrum, documented by P.Fayyum 110 of A.D. 94 or P.Lond. 2078, a private letter from the time of Domitian, A.D. 81-96. There also is a good resemblance to P<sup>52</sup> in P.Gr. Berol. 19c, part of a scroll with *Iliad* X, from the end of the first century.<sup>37</sup>

In their monograph, *The Birth of the Codex*, C.H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat argue that the Christians had chosen the codex form for copies of Old Testament texts and their own writings *before* A.D. 100.<sup>38</sup> Near the end of the first century, the Roman poet Martial praises his and his publisher friend Secundus' unheard-of marketing enterprise, the introduction of a library of classical works in the codex format; the Latin codex fragment of a History of the Macedonian Wars mentioned above may be the only surviving example of this possibly short-lived venture.<sup>39</sup> Under the influence of Roberts' cautious dating of P<sup>52</sup> and five years before Kim's paper,<sup>40</sup>

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been the privilege of Jewish scribes using the *tetragrammaton* for the name of God.

<sup>37</sup>See Schubart, *Griechische Paläographie*, 117-8.

<sup>38</sup>*The Birth of the Codex*, 61, 63. Cf. more recently, T.C. Skeat, 'The Origin of the Christian Codex', *ZPE* 102 (1994) 263-268.

<sup>39</sup>See British Library P.745 and Martial, *Epigrams*, I,2; see also Roberts and Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*, 24-29; E.G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Pennsylvania, 1977), and J. van Haelst, 'Les Origines du Codex', in A. Blanchard (ed.), *Les Débuts du Codex* (Turnhout, 1989) 13-35.

<sup>40</sup>Kim, 'Palaeographical Dating'.

Roberts and Skeat do not name any first-century Christian codex to corroborate their theory with some practical evidence. The present state of affairs, however, suggests that the Oxford fragments Magdalen Gr. 17, with their Spanish counterparts, would be among the prime examples of the birth of the Christian codex prior to the turn of the century.

## VI. Conclusion

The fragments of Matthew's Gospel in the Old Library of Magdalen College, Oxford, henceforth to be listed as Magdalen Greek 17 rather than 18, remain the oldest extant papyrus of that gospel; but it may be argued that it could be redated from the late second to the late first century, some time after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. It appears to be the oldest known codex with *nomina sacra*. Lists of New Testament papyri should reflect the fact that the three fragments of Magdalen Gr. 17 = P<sup>64</sup> preserve text on all six sides, not just on five, as is the impression conveyed at present.

P<sup>64</sup> is a 'new', additional witness to a construction of Matthew 26:22 preferred by the papyri P<sup>37</sup> and P<sup>45</sup> and several later manuscripts, but ruled out by the most widely used editions of the Greek New Testament, Nestle-Aland<sup>27</sup> (1993) and The Greek New Testament UBS<sup>4</sup> (1993). The accumulated evidence now clearly suggests... ἕκαστος αὐτῶν μήτι... as the better text, and this should be acknowledged by future editions of the Greek New Testament, in concurrence with Bover-O'Callaghan<sup>3</sup> (1994). This improved reading and two further variants, λεγόμενος without the article in 26:14 and, in particular, the likely omission of ὑμεῖς after πάντες in 26:31, appear to confirm the impression that the very earliest papyri tend to preserve a simple but clear and effective Greek untouched by the literary ambitions of later scribes.

A response to this article will appear in the next issue of *Tyndale Bulletin* (November, 1995).

## P. Magdalen Greek 17, Transcription

### Fragment 1, *verso* (Mt. 26:7-8)

[κατεχεενεπ]ι[τησ]κε	16
[φαλησ]αντουανακει	16
[μενουι]δοντεσδεοι	16
[μαθηται]ηγανακτη	15

### Fragment 2, *verso* (Mt. 26:10)

[οισειπεναν]τ[ο]ι[στι]	16
[κοπουσπαρ]εχετε[τη]	16
[γυ]ναικιεργονγα[ρ]	15

line 1: *Nomen sacrum* ις for Ἰησοῦς stichometrically plausible,  
cf. fragment 1.1, *recto*, 1.1.

### Fragment 3, *verso* (Mt. 26:14-15)

[τοτ]επορε[υθεισεισ]	16
[τωνι]βλεγομ[ενοσιου]	17
[δασι]σκαριω[τησπροσ]	17
[του]σαρχιερ[εισειπεν]	18
[τιθε]λετεμο[ιδουναι]	17

line 2: Numerical symbol ιβ for δώδεκα. The article ὁ before  
λεγόμενος is omitted; cf. Matthew 2:23; John 4:5.

### Fragment 3, *recto* (Mt. 26: 22-23)

[τοσαν]των[μητιεγω]	15
[ειμι]κεοδ[εαποκρι]	15
[θεισ]ειπενοε[μβαψασ]	17
[με]τεμουτ[ηνχειρα]	15
[εντ]ωτρν[βλιωνουτοσ]	16

line 1: Text as in ϣ<sup>45</sup>, ϣ<sup>37</sup>(vid), D, et al.: ἕκαστος αὐτῶν.

line 2: *Nomen sacrum* κῆ for κύριε.

**Fragment 1, recto (Mt. 26:31)**

αυτοι σοισπαυτ[εσ]	15
σκανδαλισθη[σεσθε]	17
ενεμοιεντ[ηνυκτι]	15
ταυτη γεγ[ραπται γαρ]	17

line 1: The initial α of αὐτοῖς is projected into the left margin; as in  $\wp^{67}$ , 5:21 (τι) and 5:27 (στατε), this signifies the first complete line of a new section which began in the preceding line. *Nomen sacrum* ις for Ἰησοῦς. ὑμεῖς is omitted at the end of the line (stichometry!).

**Fragment 2, recto (Mt. 26:32-33)**

προξ[ωυμασειστην]	16
γελεγλαιανα[ποκρι]	16
θεισδεοπετροσε[ι]	15

line 2: γαλεγλαιαν scribal error for γαλειλαιαν.