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The Limits of Palaeographic Dating of Literary Papyri: Some Observations on the Date and Provenance of P.Bodmer II (P66)

By Brent Nongbri, Sydney

Abstract: Palaeographic estimates of the date of P.Bodmer II, the well-preserved Greek papyrus codex of the Gospel of John, have ranged from the early second century to the first half of the third century. There are, however, equally convincing palaeographic parallels among papyri securely dated to as late as the fourth century. This article surveys the palaeographic evidence and argues that the range of possible dates assigned to P.Bodmer II on the basis of palaeography needs to be broadened to include the fourth century. Furthermore, a serious consideration of a date at the later end of that broadened spectrum of palaeographic possibilities helps to explain both the place of P.Bodmer II in relation to other Bodmer papyri and several aspects of the codicology of P.Bodmer II.

Introduction

P.Bodmer II, better known to most scholars of the New Testament as P66, is a much-studied papyrus codex of the gospel of John.[1] Both its relative completeness and the early date often associated with this codex have brought P.Bod-

* This article had its origins in remarks prepared for a panel reviewing Roger Bagnall's *Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton 2009) at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta in 2010. I wish to thank Professor Bagnall, the organizers of the panel (Malcolm Choat and AnneMarie Luijendijk), the other panelists, and the audience members for helpful conversation on some of the points raised in this essay. Subsequent presentations at Macquarie University and the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature yielded further insights from fellow panelists and audience members. I wish to record my gratitude to them. Larry Hurtado, AnneMarie Luijendijk, David C. Parker, Albert Pietersma, and Gregg Schwendner were also kind enough to read an earlier version of this paper and offered a good deal of helpful feedback (I hasten to add that all conclusions are my own and do not necessarily reflect their views). Thanks also to the journal's anonymous reviewers, who saved me from a number of slips.

1 The bulk of the text was published in two parts by V. Martin, *Papyrus Bodmer II: Evangile de Jean chap. 1–14* (Cologny-Geneva 1956), and *Papyrus Bodmer II Supplément: Evangile de Jean chap. 14–21* (Cologny-Geneva 1958). A second edition of the *Supplément* prepared with the assistance of J.W.B. Barns appeared in 1962 and contained black and white photographic plates of the codex pages. The editors left several small fragments unplaced, and subsequently a number of scholars have suggested placements; see most recently P.M. Head, D.M. Wheeler, and W. Willker, "P.Bodmer II (P66): Three Fragments Identified. A Correction", *NovT* 50 (2008) 78–80. Small fragments of the manuscript have also been identified in the papyrus collections of the Universität zu Köln and the Chester Beatty Library. On the former, see P.Köln 5.214, edited by M. Gronewald. The fragment in the Beatty library was identified by T.C. Skeat in 1956 and a reproduction of it appears in its proper place on pages 139-40 in the

mer II a good deal of attention in the years since its publication.[2] It probably originally consisted of 156 pages, of which 104 are fully or nearly fully preserved. Substantial remains of most of the rest of the pages have also survived. Most palaeographic estimates of the date of the codex have ranged from the early second century to the early third century. In what follows, I argue that the range of possible dates assigned to P.Bodmer II on the basis of palaeography needs to be broadened to include the fourth century. Furthermore, a serious consideration of a date at the later end of that broadened spectrum of palaeographic possibilities would help to explain 1) the place of P.Bodmer II among the other Bodmer papyri and 2) several aspects of the codicology of P.Bodmer II.

The Original Publication and Subsequent Proposals for Dating P.Bodmer II

The original editor of P.Bodmer II, Victor Martin, assigned the codex to the early third century or, as he is more usually cited in English literature, "ca. 200".[3] Martin's statement of the date of P.Bodmer II is as follows:

> Tous les spécialistes sont d'accord pour reconnaître l'extrême difficulté qu'il y a à dater des manuscrits en capitales d'après la seule écriture. Les évaluations restent donc toujours très approximatives. Les experts auxquels des photographies de notre codex ont été soumises se sont accordés, avec les réserves d'usage, pour l'attribuer d'après les critères paléographiques au début du III^e^ siècle ou si l'on préfère à environ l'an 200 de notre ère. L'évaluation paraît prudente, et les indices qu'on peut tirer de l'orthographe, de la grammaire et de la ponctuation du manuscrit s'accordent parfaitement avec une date de ce genre.[4]

plates published in 1962. A colored version of the photographic plates was recently published in Jean Zumstein, *L'évangile selon Jean* (Paris 2008). P.Bodmer II is inventoried in the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (hereafter LDAB) as number 2777.

2 See, for example, M.-E. Boismard, "Le papyrus Bodmer II", *Revue Biblique* 64 (1957) 363-98; G.D. Fee, *Papyrus Bodmer II (P66): Its Textual Relationships and Scribal Characteristics* (Salt Lake City 1968); E.F. Rhodes, "The Corrections of Papyrus Bodmer II", *NTS* 14 (1968) 271–281; and more recently, J.R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (Leiden 2008) 399–544.

3 *Papyrus Bodmer II* 17. In his first announcement of the codex, Martin's estimate of the date allowed for a wider range: "Le manuscrit appartient indubitablement à l'époque romaine et le règne de Dioclétien peut être pris comme limite inférieure. On sait quelle difficulté il y a à dater exactement d'après l'écriture un manuscrit en capitales. Celui dont nous parlons n'est certainement pas antérieur à 150 env. (...) mais on hésitera à lui assigner une date précise dans le siècle qui commence avec cette année" ("Un nouveau codex de papyrus du IV^e^ Évangile", *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 32 [1956] 547–548). Popular media outlets led the public to believe the manuscript was earlier and more precisely dated, as indicated by the headline of an article in *The New York Times* of 30 December 1956: "Older Gospel Ms. Of St. John Found, Scholar Reports Discovery in Egypt of 14 of the 21 Chapters, Dated 150 A.D."

4 *Papyrus Bodmer II* 17. The specialists that Martin consulted included at least H.I. Bell, C.H. Roberts, and E.G. Turner (letter from V. Martin to H.I. Bell, 3 November 1955, Box 2, Eric G. Turner Papers, Special Collections, University of Western Australia).

Martin mentioned several individual papyri in his paleographical discussion of P.Bodmer II. The papyrus that Martin found most relevant for the dating of P.Bodmer II was P.Oxy. 8.1074, a 2.7 × 5.1 cm fragment of a codex of Exodus. To facilitate comparison, a leaf from P.Bodmer II (Figure 1) is reproduced below along with images of the two sides of P.Oxy. 8.1074 (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 1: P.Bodmer II, page 44. By permission of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

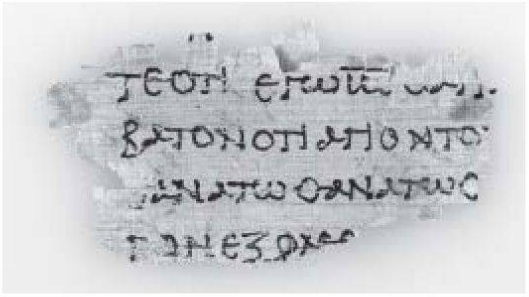

Figure 2: P.Oxy. 8.1074 recto. Courtesy of The Spurlock Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

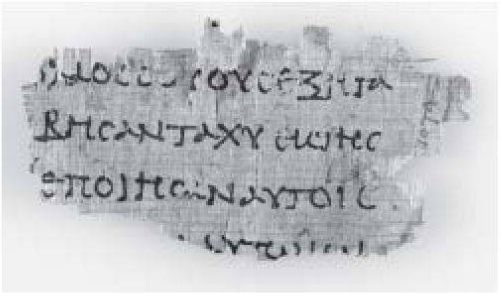

Figure 3: P.Oxy. 8.1074 verso. Courtesy of The Spurlock Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

P.Oxy. 8.1074 was assigned by its editor (Arthur S. Hunt) to the third century or possibly earlier.[5] Martin thought that such a judgement "est exactement celui qu'on peut raisonnablement porter sur l'écriture de notre Evangile".[6] Martin was clearly correct to detect similarities between the hands of these two papyri, but since P.Oxy 8.1074 was itself dated strictly on palaeographic grounds it is actually of no help in assigning a date to P.Bodmer II. Using one palaeographically dated papyrus to assign a palaeographic date to another undated papyrus results in, to borrow a phrase from Peter Parsons, "only jelly propped up with jelly".[7] Thus, P.Oxy. 8.1074 and a number of Martin's other proposed parallels should from the outset be set aside as unhelpful in establishing a date for P.Bodmer II.[8] Fortunately, Martin did gather some parallels for the handwriting of P.Bodmer II that come from more securely dated papyri. These pieces are worth examining more closely.

The following papyri that Martin mentioned have features that provide, with various degrees of certainty, a *terminus ante quem* and thus offer at least the possibility of helpful palaeographic comparisons:

P.Oxy. 1.20 (LDAB 1630; Figure 4), twelve fragments from a roll of Homer assigned to the second century since the reverse contains what Grenfell and Hunt describe as "some accounts in a cursive hand of the late second or early third century". While the judgement is still ultimately palaeographic, examples of securely dated cursive hands are much more plentiful and hence more reliable guides.

5 The piece is LDAB 3096. Hunt's palaeographic description is as follows: "This hand could not be referred to a time later than the reign of Diocletian, and might well be placed quite at the beginning of the third century or even earlier" (see Hunt's discussion of the piece in the introduction to P.Oxy. 8.1074).

6 Martin, *Papyrus Bodmer II* 18.

7 P.J. Parsons, review of G. Cavallo, *Libri Scritture Scribi a Ercolano* in *CR* n.s. 39 (1989) 358–360, quotation from p. 360.

8 The non-securely dated papyri mentioned by Martin are P.Oxy. 11.1361 (LDAB 436), fragments of a roll of Bacchylides that according to Grenfell and Hunt were "likely to fall well within the first century [CE]"; P.Oxy. 11.1362 (LDAB 466), fragments of a roll of Callimachus that Grenfell and Hunt thought "attributable to the first century [CE]"; Pap. Gr. Berol. 19c (P.Berol. 6845; LDAB 1532), a fragment of a roll of Homer assigned by Schubart to the early second century; the "Hawara Homer" (Bodl. MS. Gr. Class. A. 1; LDAB 1695), assigned by Turner to the middle of the second century; P.Tebt. 2.265 (LDAB 1558), fragments of a roll of Homer "probably dating from the second century" according to Grenfell and Hunt; and PSI 11.1211 (LDAB 104), a fragment of a roll of Aeschylus generally assigned to the first or the beginning of the second century. Martin also mentioned P.Ryl. 3.457 (P52; LDAB 2774) and the Egerton gospel (LDAB 4736), assigned by their original editors to the first half of the second century, as showing some affinity with the hand of P.Bodmer II, but he stressed that he did not believe P.Bodmer II was as early as these papyri, "seulement qu'il existe entre eux une parenté graphique indéniable" (Martin, *Papyrus Bodmer II* 17).

Figure 4: P.Oxy. 1.20. By permission of The British Library © British Library Board.

P.Oxy. 4.661 (LDAB 474; Figure 5), a fragment of a roll of lyric poetry assigned to "the latter half of the second century" because its reverse contains writing in a cursive hand that is, according to Grenfell and Hunt, "not later than the beginning of the third century".

Figure 5: P.Oxy. 4.661. Courtesy of the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, the Cairo Museum, the Association Internationale de Papyrologues, and Dr. Adam Bülow-Jacobsen.

P.Oxy. 13.1622 (LDAB 4052; Figure 6), a fragment from a roll of Thucydides, assigned by Grenfell and Hunt to the "early second century" because the reverse was reused for a contract with a date of 148 CE (published separately as P.Oxy. 14.1710).

P.Oxy. 18.2169 (LDAB 490; Figure 7), a fragment of a roll of Callimachus, "attributable to the later part of the second century", reused for an account on the reverse.[9]

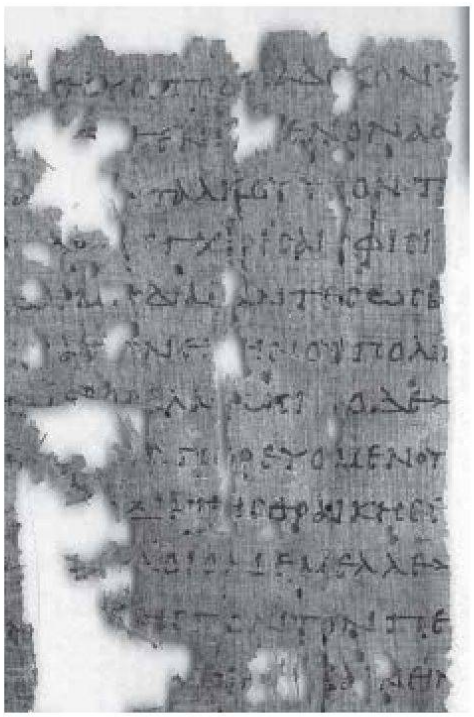

Figure 6: P.Oxy. 13.1622. Courtesy of the SAXO Institute, the University of Copenhagen, and Dr. Adam Bülow-Jacobsen.

Figure 7: P.Oxy. 18.2169. Image courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society and Imaging Papyri Project, Oxford.

9 Although Lobel provided the text of the account as a footnote to his edition of P.Oxy. 18.2169, he made no remark about the date of the account, and it is unclear how (or whether) it factored in to his dating of the Callimachus fragment.

P.Ryl. 1.16 (LDAB 2661; Figure 8), a fragment of a roll of comedy assigned by Arthur S. Hunt to the "latter part of the second century", since its reverse was reused for a letter (published separately as P.Ryl. 2.236) dated to January of either 253 or 256 CE.[10]

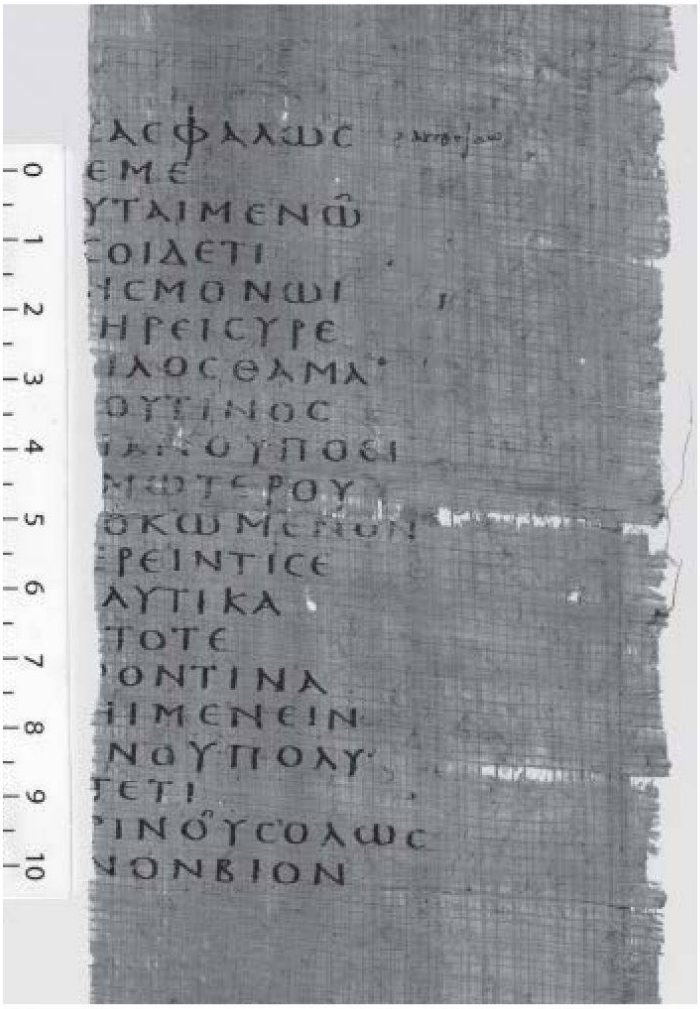

Figure 8: P.Ryl. 1.16. Reproduced by courtesy of the University Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

10 Other palaeographers have disagreed with Hunt's assessment of P.Ryl. 1.16. G. Cavallo assigned the piece with alarming precision to 220–225 CE (*Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica* [Florence 1967] 46). E.G. Turner, however, has stated that P.Ryl. 1.16 could be "confidently assigned to about 150" CE ("Recto and Verso", *JEA* 40 [1954] 102–106 at 106 n. 3). This range of opinions, even on such a relatively "datable" piece as P.Ryl. 1.16, highlights the difficulties of palaeographic dating.

PSI 1.8 (LDAB 1443; Figure 9), a fragment of a roll of Homer assigned to the late first or early second century. It was reused for documentary purposes both on the recto in the margins and on the reverse. The documentary texts have been assigned to the third century or possibly early fourth century.[11]

Figure 9: P.S.I. 1.8. Image appears courtesy of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence. Reproduction prohibited.

As the images indicate, the resemblances between these hands and the hand of P.Bodmer II are not especially impressive. The dated hands Martin has assembled are for the most part of a more formal and less rounded type than the hand of P.Bodmer II. Of Martin's dated comparanda, P.Oxy. 13.1622 would probably be the most legitimate match in terms of overall appearance, and even here the resemblances are not overwhelming. Nevertheless, for this second-century piece, the suggestion of a parallel with P.Bodmer II is not wholly unreasonable.

11 See G. Cavallo et al. (ed.), *Scrivere libri e documenti nel mondo antico* (Florence 1998) 102. See also D. Hagedorn and K.A. Worp, "P.Cair.inv. 10560: Monatsabrechnung einer Steuerbehörde (Rekto) und Aufstellung (Verso)", *ZPE* 121 (1998) 185–191, at 188 and G. Cavallo, "Osservazioni paleografiche sul canone e la cronologia della cosiddetta «onciale romana»", *Annali della Scuola normale superiore di Pisa. Lettere, storia e filosofia*, ser. II 36 (1967) 209–220; reprinted in G. Cavallo, *Il calamo e il papiro* (Florence 2005) 151–161, at 156.

In 1960, Herbert Hunger critiqued Martin's palaeographic work and argued for a rather earlier date for P.Bodmer II – the middle or even early second century.[12] Hunger latched on to Martin's passing remark suggesting that P.Bodmer II bore some superficial similarity to P.Ryl. 3.457 (P52; LDAB 2774) and the Egerton Gospel (Egerton Papyrus 2; LDAB 4736), manuscripts which at that time were regarded as dating from the first half of the second century.[13] Hunger then criticized Martin for not assigning P.Bodmer II to the same period. To make his case, he named over twenty-five papyri that he deemed worthy of comparison with the hand of P.Bodmer II. As was the case with Martin's palaeographic assemblage, a number of Hunger's proposed parallels are themselves palaeographically dated and thus are in fact of no independent value for assigning a date to P.Bodmer II.[14] Hunger did, however, offer several examples of firmly dated papyri that he claimed showed good similarity to the hand of P.Bodmer II or were immediate precursors to the style of P.Bodmer II. The securely dated documentary papyri written in hands that Hunger regarded as similar to that of P.Bodmer II were: P.Oxy. 1.37 (49 CE), P.Oxy. 2.275 (66 CE),

12 H. Hunger, "Zur Datierung des Papyrus Bodmer II (P66)" *Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften philosophisch-historische Klasse* 97 (1961) 12–23. Hunger concludes his article with the following: "Ich halte es daher auf Grund des vorgelegten Vergleichsmaterials nicht nur für gerechtfertigt, sondern sogar für erforderlich, P^{66} – wenn schon nicht in die 1. Hälfte – so zumindest in die Mitte des 2. Jahrhunderts zu setzen" (23). Before this point, there had been little debate about Martin's date. The only critical opinions known to me are associated with Jean Duplacy who speculated that Martin may have dated the codex a bit too early; he offhandedly described a date of "vers 200" as "un peu haute" ("Où en est la critique textuelle du nouveau testament? II", *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 46 [1958] 270–313, quotation at 294; reprinted in Duplacy, *Où en est la critique textuelle du nouveau testament?* [Paris 1959] 49). Elsewhere, Duplacy cited an anonymous papyrologist ("très compétent") as assigning P.Bodmer II to the fourth century ("Bulletin de critique textuelle du nouveau testament. 1", *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 50 [1962] 242–263, at 251, n. 16).

13 On problematic aspects of the palaeographic dates assigned to these manuscripts (and for images of the manuscripts), see B. Nongbri, "The Use and Abuse of P52: Papyrological Pitfalls in the Dating of the Fourth Gospel", *HTR* 98 (2005) 23–48.

14 In addition to P.Ryl. 3.457 and the Egerton gospel, Hunger's non-securely dated papyri included: the Chester Beatty Numbers-Deuteronomy codex (LDAB 3091) assigned by Kenyon to the early second century but by Hunt to the late second or early third century; P.Oxy. 17.2080 (LDAB 487), a roll of Callimachus described by Hunt as "likely to fall within the second century"; P.Oxy. 19.2213 (LDAB 491), another portion of Callimachus assigned to the "first part of the second century"; a group of papyrus rolls from Oxyrhynchus, P.Oxy. 18.2161–2162 (LDAB 103 and 117) and PSI 11.1208–1210 (LDAB 100, 103, and 102), now all attributed to the same scribe and assigned a date in the second or early third century; see W.A. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus* (Toronto 2004) 18–20 and 61. Hunger also cites PSI 11.1211 and P.Oxy. 13.1622, which were both noted by Martin and discussed above; P.Berol. 9782 (LDAB 3764), a papyrus roll with a commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus* generally assigned to the second century; P.Oxy. 22.2310 (LDAB 320), portions of a roll of Archilochus assigned to "about the middle of the second century"; and P.Oxy. 25.2436 (LDAB 4808), a papyrus with musical notation assigned to the "end of the first century or the early second century".

P.Oxy. 2.286 (82 CE), P.Oxy. 1.94 (83 CE), P.Oxy. 10.1282 (83 CE), P.Oxy. 2.270 (94 CE), P.Oxy. 4.713 (97 CE), P.Vind. Gr. 19812 (= P.Vind.Bosw. 1; not long after 87 CE), P.Lond. 2.141 (88 CE), P.Oxy. 12.1434 (107/108 CE), P.Vind. Gr. 12247 (= CPR 1.28; 110 CE), P.Mich. 3.202 (105 CE), and P.Vind. Gr. 2004 (= CPR 1.18; 124 CE). Hunger also noted P.Oxy. 5.841 (LDAB 3713) a collection of fragments of a roll of Pindar that can be dated with a reasonable degree of certainty to the early second century since the text of Pindar was written on the reverse of a documentary roll of the late first century, and the roll contains cursive scholia that Grenfell and Hunt considered "not later than the middle of the second century".

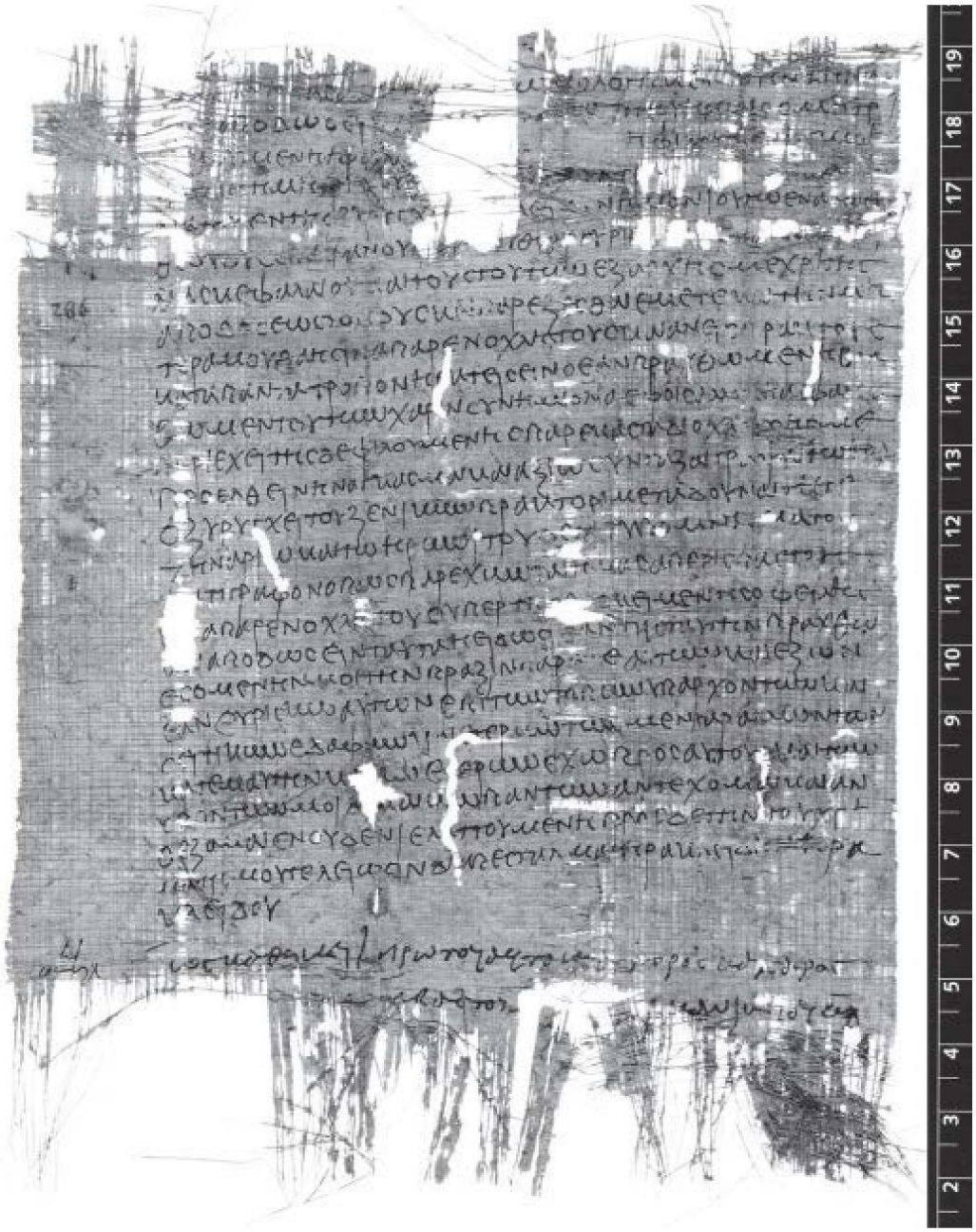

Figure 10: P.Oxy. 2.286. By permission of The British Library © British Library Board.

Hunger did not offer detailed comparisons with all of these papyri, and nor will I. Instead, I will focus on what is perhaps Hunger's most comparable securely dated papyrus, P.Oxy. 2.286, a piece that Hunger himself singled out for more extensive discussion.[15] P.Oxy. 2.286 is a petition from the first year of the reign of Domitian (May of 82 CE). An image is reproduced here as Figure 10.

Hunger described the similarities he perceived between P.Oxy. 2.286 and P.Bodmer II as follows:

> P. Oxy. 286 (= P. Lond. 797) lässt sich mit seinen runden Buchstabenformen, wenn man von dem anders gestalteten Xi und kursiven Elementen wie dem Alpha und der Ligatur Epsilon-Iota absieht, mit P66 gut vergleichen. So finden wir die Dreiergruppen in Z. 11 ἐκτείσειν, 12 τούτων, 15 μεταδοῦναι, 23 αὐτοὺς; u. [ä]. Tau wird in Iuxtaposition manchmal gedrückt, z. B. 13 τῆς, 20 τὴν, 25 δὲ τὴν.

I have enlarged some of the particular elements Hunger described and placed them next to samples from P.Bodmer II below (see Figure 11):

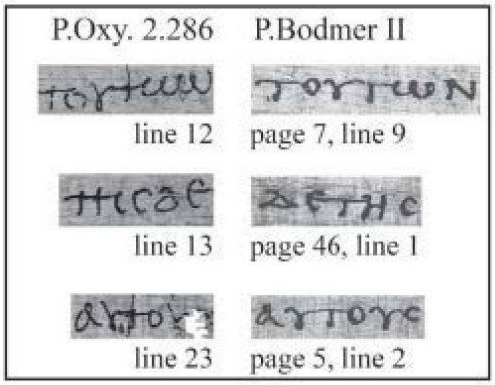

Figure 11: P.Oxy. 2.286 and P.Bodmer II. By permission of The British Library © British Library Board and the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

The hands might be described as comparable insofar as both are rounded with occasional ligatures, but the similarities are not at all impressive. P.Bodmer II is generally more bilinear (the vertical line extending down into two of the examples from P.Oxy. 2.286 is the tail of a rho, which regularly descends into the following line in that piece) and shows fewer tendencies toward cursive styles (note the *omega-nu* combination in P.Oxy. 2.286). Nevertheless, Hunger's assignment of P.Bodmer II to the early of middle part of the second century has been taken

15 A case could be made that P.Oxy. 5.841 is in fact Hunger's closest relatively securely dated parallel. Plates are available for consultation in the original publication.

up by many scholars and has even made its way into a standard palaeographic handbook.[16]

Eleven years later, Eric G. Turner described Hunger's proposed dated documentary parallels as "not cogent" and argued instead that P.Bodmer II should be dated in the "earlier iii A.D".[17] Turner described the writing of P.Bodmer II both as "Medium-sized, rounded, 'decorated' capital, slowly written. Slightly flattened in appearance, letters being given horizontal extension" and as "a rudimentary form of 'Coptic Uncial'".[18] The basis for his dating of the codex consisted of several attributes of the hand of P.Bodmer II that Turner regarded as more generally characteristic of the third century: "the broad forms of θ ... and δ, the ε with finial at end of cross-bar, the narrow α in a single sequence are hardly of ii A.D.; apostrophe between double nasals (αγ'γελους) is not normally written in documents till iii A.D".[19] The combination of these various features thus led Turner to a third century date for P.Bodmer II.[20] Many scholars have found Turner's arguments persuasive.[21] Nevertheless, Hunger's dating is preferred in

16 Hunger's proposed dating of P.Bodmer II was applauded by J. B. Bauer, "Zur Datierung des Papyrus Bodmer II (P66)", *Biblische Zeitschrift* 12 (1968) 121–122. It gained prominence by its inclusion in the handbook of R. Seider, *Paläographie der griechischen Papyri* (Stuttgart 1970), in which P.Bodmer II is described as "2. Jh. n. Chr. (Mitte)" (2.121, item number 44).

17 Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (Oxford 1971), 108, item number 63. In 1968, Turner had previously placed P.Bodmer II at "perhaps A.D. 200"; see Turner, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* (Oxford 1968) 13–14. In *The Typology of the Early Codex* (1977), Turner wrote, "Bodmer Papyrus II (P 66), a codex of St. John in relatively small square format dated by its first editor to about A.D. 200 has been placed in the middle of the second century A.D. by Professor H. Hunger. I have elsewhere [*Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*, cited above] given palaeographical reasons for thinking this redating wrong, and that the better placing is c. A.D. 200–250" (4). In the tables in *Typology*, Turner describes P.Bodmer II simply as "iii" (p. 21 and p. 149).

18 For the former characterization, see Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* 108, item 63. For the latter, see Turner's review of the second volume of R. Seider's *Paläographie der griechischen Papyri* in *Gnomon* 43 (1971) 710–712, at 712. G. Cavallo classifies P.Bodmer II as a third century example of the "Alexandrian majuscule". See most recently Cavallo, "Greek and Latin Writing in the Papyri", in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (ed. R.S. Bagnall, Oxford 2009) 101–148, at 129.

19 Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* 108. This assessment is unchanged in the updated 1987 edition.

20 Turner's dating has been contested by P.W. Comfort and D.P. Barrett in their handbook, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts* (Wheaton 2001) 376–379. Comfort and Barrett simply reassert the validity of some of Hunger's proposed parallels and offer some (non-securely dated) parallels of their own. They also attempt to refute Turner's analysis, but this discussion is somewhat muddled and misleading. For instance, Comfort and Barrett present three papyri that display an apostrophe between consonants as though Turner was unaware of these exceptions to his generalization (377). In fact, however, these three examples are the very papyri that Turner himself listed as exceptional when establishing that "in the first decade of iii A.D. this practice suddenly becomes extremely common"; see Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* 11, n. 50 (in the first edition, the quotation appears at 13, n. 3).

21 In the chart of Greek and Latin codices in the 28th edition of Nestle-Aland, the date of P66 is described as "circa 200". The Münster Handschriftenliste places the date at "III (A)". The

some circles, and it is not uncommon to see P.Bodmer II described as dating to "the middle of the second century".[22] A variety of historical conclusions (about second century Christian scribal habits and about the early popularity of the gospel of John, for example) have followed based on that mid-second century date.[23]

Palaeographic Assessment and a Proposal

Don Barker has recently made a strong case that the ranges of dates assigned on the basis of palaeography to Christian literary papyri have generally been too narrow.[24] P.Bodmer II can serve as an especially informative example of this phenomenon. It is not that some of the more securely dated parallels of the second and third centuries do not show some similarities to the hand of P.Bodmer II. Rather, it is that other potential comparanda (especially potential comparanda with later dates) have not been fully explored. In the case of P.Bodmer II, one does not even have to look very far to find a reasonably close palaeographic match with a firm date. Within the Bodmer collection itself, indeed within the same cache of manuscripts purchased with P.Bodmer II, there is a more firmly datable papyrus that bears many striking resemblances to P.Bodmer II, namely P.Bodmer XX (LDAB 220465), a copy of *The Apology of Phileas*

Leuven Database of Ancient Books describes the date of P.Bodmer II as "AD 200–249". The noted Italian palaeographer G. Cavallo seems to have been persuaded at one point by Hunger but has since changed his mind. In 1967, Cavallo described P.Bodmer II as "databile alla metà del II secolo" (*Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica* 23). By 1975, however, Cavallo had endorsed Turner's revised dating; See Cavallo, "ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΙΝΑ", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 24 (1975) 23–54, at 35–36, reprinted in Cavallo, *Il calamo e il papiro*, 185. In Cavallo's chart on p. 50 (198 in the reprint), P.Bodmer II is placed in the middle of the third century. In a 1994 republication of P.Oxy. 1.179, D. Montserrat, G. Fantoni, and P. Robinson endorsed Turner's dating of P.Bodmer II and assigned P.Oxy. 1.179 to the same range ("between 200 and 250"). See Montserrat, Fantoni, and Robinson, "Varia Descripta Oxyrhynchita", *BASP* 31 (1994) 11-80, esp. 42–43 and plate 8. Most recently, P. Orsini and W. Clarysse have assigned P.Bodmer II a date of "200–250". See Orsini and Clarysse, "Early New Testament Manuscripts and Their Dates: A Critique of Theological Palaeography", *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 88 (2012) 443–474, at 470.

22 In fact, a recent treatment of the question of the development and spread of the codex presents as the paradigmatic example of "a second century codex" none other than P.Bodmer II. See E.A. Meyer, "Roman Tabulae, Egyptian Christians, and the Adoption of the Codex", *Chiron* 37 (2007) 295–347.

23 For example, Fee's study of the scribal characteristics and textual relationships of P66 began with the assumption that a "date circa 200 A.D. seems to be valid. As yet the only question raised as to the dating is that perhaps it is earlier"; see his *Papyrus Bodmer II (P66)* iii. A similar assumption seems to guide the more recently published work of James Royse. After stating that P.Bodmer II "is usually dated to about 200", Royse leaves the impression that he prefers a date in the middle of the second century and that his detailed analysis applies to that time period (*Scribal Habits* 399–400).

24 Barker, "The Dating of New Testament Papyri", *NTS* 57 (2011) 571–582. See also R.S. Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton 2009).

that describes a trial held before the prefect Culcianus.[25] The dates of Culcianus are reasonably secure, and the events narrated in the text cannot have taken place earlier than the first years of the fourth century.[26] Assuming P.Bodmer XX is not an autograph, the papyrus most likely dates to some point in the middle of the fourth century (though a date later in the fourth century cannot entirely be ruled out).[27] P.Bodmer II and P.Bodmer XX show a number of what I would suggest are compelling similarities in spacing, letter forms, and overall appearance.[28] For convenience, I provide images of a leaf from each codex placed side-by-side (see Figures 12 and 13) and enlarged images of several examples below (see Figure 14).

The two hands are noticeably similar in a number of ways. The individual letters are formed in much the same manner, and there appears to be an effort to maintain an equal height and width for the individual letters in both pieces. Groups of letters are in nearly identical positions relative to one another (especially evident in the first enlarged example, the word ἐποίησεν). This likeness in both the horizontal and vertical spacing between the letters is really quite remarkable. The ligatures are also very similar (note how the middle bar of the *epsilon* meets *iota* and *rho* and the way the horizontal stroke of the *tau* moves into the *eta*).

25 This work was also edited by V. Martin, *P. Bodmer XX: Apologie de Philéas* (Cologny-Geneva 1964).

26 Culcianus is known both from Eusebius and numerous dated documentary papyri. See the discussion in Martin's introduction to *Papyrus Bodmer XX* 15–20 and the literature cited in the introductory notes to P.Oxy. 54.3728.

27 P.Oxy. 17.2070 shows what we might expect to see in an author's own "autograph" of a literary piece, frequent corrections in the author's own hand and changes of a sort more substantial than simple copyist's errors. Indeed, the number and type of differences between the Bodmer *Apology of Phileas* and the version preserved in the Chester Beatty Libary (LDAB 3530) suggest that both are derivative from an older version produced in the early fourth century. See A.Pietersma, *The Acts of Phileas Bishop of Thmuis (Including Fragments of the Greek Psalter)* (Geneva 1984) 13–23.

28 In fact, E.G. Turner at least twice gestured in the direction of this comparison, but he did not, to my knowledge, follow through with any detailed argumentation. First, in a review of Martin's edition of P.Bodmer XX, Turner wrote, "The appearance of the hand [of P.Bodmer XX] is such that several experienced palaeographers of my acquaintance tell me they would have assigned it without hesitation to the middle of the third century A.D., and it is easy to see why: the mode of forming individual letters (e.g. the broadly based β; ε is well-rounded and has its crossbar high) and the layout and general appearance could be readily paralleled from third century documents or from codices, such as the Bodmer St. John (P. Bodmer II) which have been assigned to the third century. It is salutary to be reminded of the precarious nature of palaeographical judgements" (*JEA* 52 [1966] 199). Then, in 1977, Turner wrote, "Some firmly dated examples of calligraphic handwriting of this later period have recently turned up, and they seem to me to justify my view of the later dating of the manuscripts just discussed [i.e. P.Bodmer II]. These examples … include … a rounded book-hand of similar size and care, and of great beauty, which cannot be earlier than A.D. 306 since the manuscript is an account of the appearance of Phileas, Bishop of Thmuis, before the prefect of Egypt Culcianus, whose dates are known" (*The Typology of the Early Codex* 4).

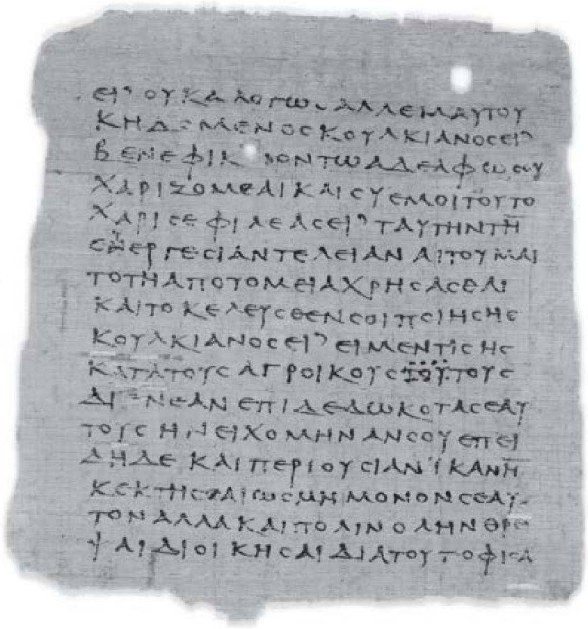

Figure 12: P.Bodmer XX, page 15, *Apology of Phileas* (dimensions: 14.2 cm w × 15.5 cm h). By permission of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

Figure 13: P.Bodmer II, page 84 (dimensions: 14.2 cm w × 16.2 cm h). By permission of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

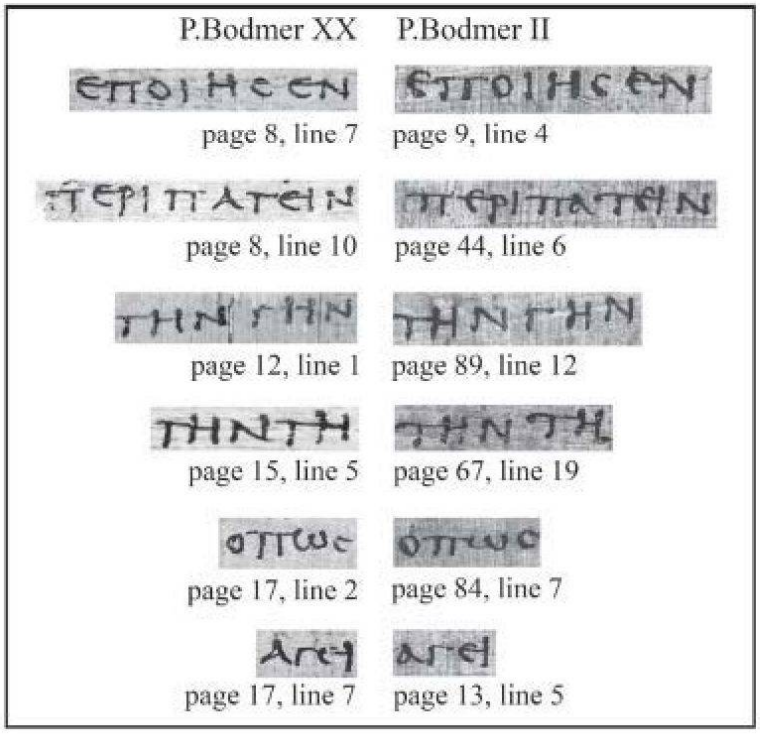

Figure 14: P.Bodmer XX and P.Bodmer II. By permission of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

The chief difference between these two samples is the presence of serifs, or blobs, at the end of certain strokes, in P.Bodmer II. These serifs have been considered a characteristic feature of what Wilhelm Schubart called the "decorated style". Schubart assigned this style a date range from the last century of the Ptolemies to about 100 CE.[29] It is always good to recall, however, that such designations of "styles" are modern scholarly conventions, and we should probably not think of these "styles" as fixed classification systems existing in antiquity.[30]

29 Given the evidence that was available to him in 1925, Schubart's cautious approach was quite appropriate: "Die Sitte, den Fuss des Buchstabens, wo er es zulässt, mit einem Strich zu zieren, ist uns aus einer ganzen Anzahl besonders gut geschriebener Handschriften bekannt; ihre Anfänge haben wir bereits beobachtet. Wann sie sich voll entfaltet hat, ist ebenso schwer zu sagen wie ihre Dauer; nur sehr vorsichtig darf man ihr Leben auf mehr als ein Jahrhundert, etwa vom letzten Jahrhundert der Ptolemäer bis gegen 100 n.Chr. ansetzen. Innerhalb dieses Stiles ältere und jüngere zu unterscheiden, ist immer noch gewagt"; see W. Schubart, *Griechische Palaeographie* (Munich 1925) 112.

30 As far as I know, the best evidence for something resembling an ancient classification system for types of writing is the distinction among "best writing" (*sc⟨ri⟩ptura optima*, γραφὴν κα[λλίστην]), "second rate writing" (*sequ[enti]s scripturae*, δευτέρας γραφῆς), and "notary" writing (*tabellanioni scriptura libelli vel tabularum*, ἀγοραίοις γράφουσι λιβέλλα ἢ τάβλας)

Moreover, in a detailed and compelling study, Giovanna Menci has demonstrated that these "decorations" in fact appear on papyri with a much wider range of dates than Schubart had allowed.[31] Her study has brought about a recognition among palaeographers that the "decorated style" should not really be considered as a unified "style" at all, "but a single feature of several styles, spread over a period of at least four centuries from ii B.C".[32] Indeed, it seems writers were capable of simply adding these "decorations" on demand.[33] Thus, the presence of serifs in P.Bodmer II or their absence in P.Bodmer XX should not distract us from appreciating the overall similarity between these two hands.[34]

Other papyri with secure dates in the same general time period tend to confirm the appropriateness of this comparison. As an example, we can consider a letter from the archive of Aurelius Isidorus written in 298 CE that bears a strong overall resemblance to P.Bodmer II. Below, I place the two pieces side-by-side (see Figures 15 and 16) and offer more detailed comparisons (see Figure 17).

While there are differences in the formation of individual letters (note especially the *alpha* and the *mu*) between these two pieces, the spacing, ligatures, letter shapes, and relationships among letters all combine to yield a very similar overall impression.[35]

found in Diocletian's edict on prices of the year 301 CE. See the edition of S. Lauffer, *Diokletians Preisedikt* (Berlin 1971) 121.

31 G. Menci, "Scritture greche librarie con apici ornamentali (III a.C.–II d.C.)", *Scrittura e Civiltà* 3 (1979) 23–53.

32 The quotation is from P. J. Parsons' discussion of the Greek documents from Naḥal Ḥever in E. Tov, *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Naḥal Ḥever (8ḤevXIIgr)*, DJD 8 (Oxford 1990) 22.

33 See, for example, P.Cair.Zen. 59535, a school exercise with hexameter lines in an undecorated literary hand followed by a phrase in a formal hand with ornamental serifs. For a palaeographic discussion of the piece, see C. H. Roberts, *Greek Literary Hands 350 B.C. – A.D. 400* (Oxford 1956) 4, item 4c.

34 The other noticeable difference in the sample I have provided is the more sharply angular *alpha* and *upsilon* of P.Bodmer XX as opposed to the curved and looping *alpha* and *upsilon* of P.Bodmer II. But the variation between an angular looping letter form occurs even within the same papyrus. One finds, for example, a looping alpha near the end of line 8 of page 6 of P.Bodmer XX.

35 Another documentary papyrus of the fourth century worth comparing to P.Bodmer II is P.Lond. 6.1920, a letter from a Greco-Coptic milieu (the dossier of the monastery of Phathor dating to the mid-330s). While its letter forms are not as rounded as those of P.Bodmer II, its overall appearance is reminiscent of P.Bodmer II. A plate is available for consultation in G. Cavallo and H. Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period A.D. 300–800*, BICS Supplement 47 (London 1987) plate 8a.

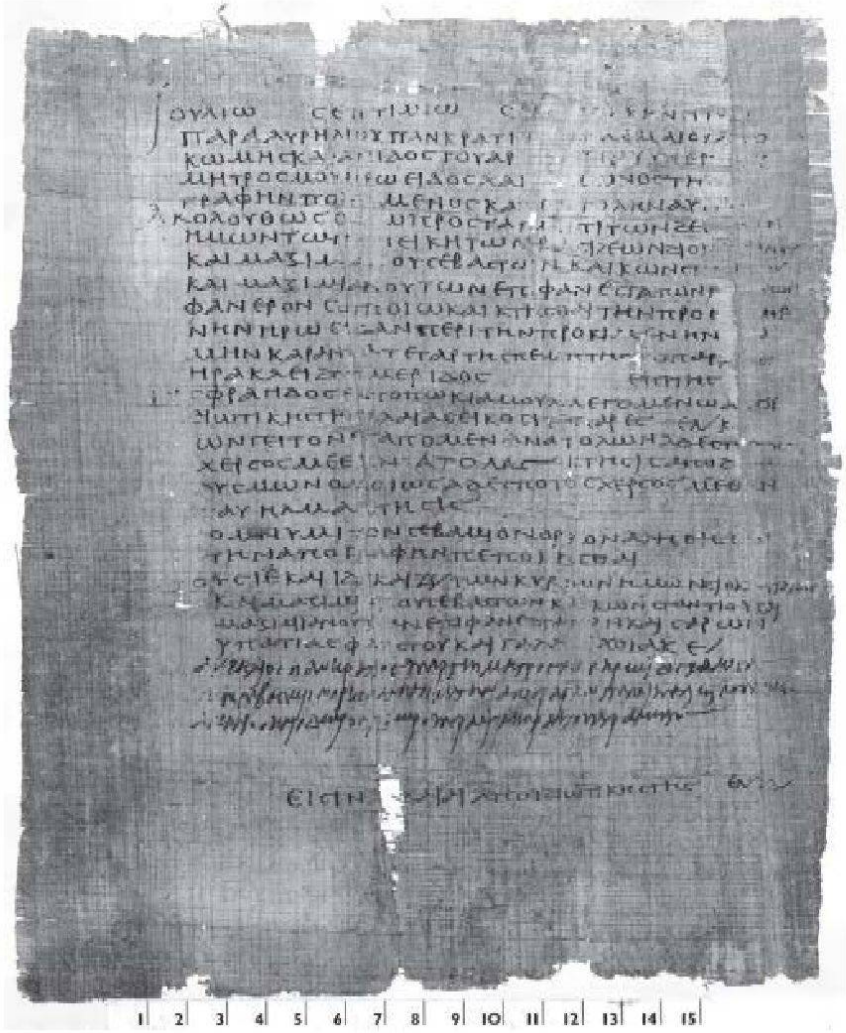

Figure 15: P.Cair.Isid. 2, declaration of olive trees (dimensions: 21 cm w × 25 cm h). Courtesy of the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, the Cairo Museum, l'Association Internationale de Papyrologues, and Dr. Adam Bülow-Jacobsen.

Figure 16: P.Bodmer II, page 9 (dimensions: 14.2 cm w × 16.2 cm h). By permission of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

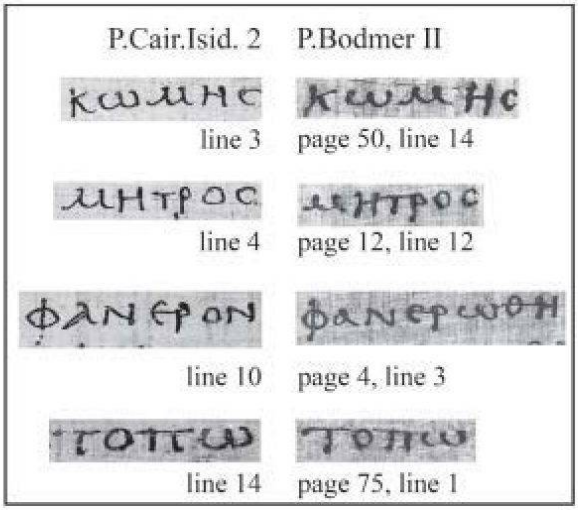

Figure 17: P.Cair.Isid. 2 and P.Bodmer II. Courtesy of the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, the Cairo Museum, l'Association Internationale de Papyrologues, and Dr. Adam Bülow-Jacobsen; the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

These examples indicate that the range of possible palaeographic dates for P.Bodmer II ought to be extended to include dates in the very late third century and into the fourth century. If one also accepts as compelling some of the proposed parallels securely dated to the second century, then the range of possible palaeographic dates for P.Bodmer II is pushing two centuries. Such a wide span is perfectly reasonable, and this point needs to be emphasized. We should not be assigning narrow dates to literary papyri strictly on the basis of palaeography. Four kinds of evidence support this contention:

1. The first type of evidence comes in the form of papyri that demonstrate at least some scribes were capable of writing in multiple different styles generally assigned to different time periods. P.Oxy. 31.2604 provides an example, in which a scribe puts on a show of skills by copying the same poetic line in different styles, twice in a narrowly spaced hand at home in the third century and once in a spacious uncial typical of the first century.
2. The second type of evidence is the phenomenon sometimes called "archaism".[36] The classic case is P.Oxy. 50.3529, a papyrus scrap written in a textbook example of a first century Roman hand. The editor of P.Oxy. 50.3529 noted its palaeographic affinities with the hand of P.Oxy. 2.246, a registration of livestock dated to the year 66 CE. P.Oxy. 50.3529 is, however, a copy of the Martyrdom of Dioscorus, so this writing can be no earlier than the year 307 CE. The span for this hand is therefore at least two and a half centuries.

36 This designation is somewhat unfortunate, since it presumes that the securely dated *later* examples are the outliers.

3. Third, the active working life of a scribe could be remarkably long. Revel Coles has suggested that the same scribe could be responsible for copying parts of P.Oxy. 64.4441 (315 CE) and P.Oxy. 67.4611 (363 CE), which "would result in a working life not less than 49 years".[37]
4. Finally, similarities in hands were passed from teachers to students, so that a given hand could last through multiple generations.[38]

All of these factors suggest that we should be very wary of assigning palaeographic dates within narrow margins (and we should certainly end the highly dubious practice of palaeographically dating pieces "circa" a particular year).[39] A reasonable palaeographic date range for P.Bodmer II would be mid-second to mid-fourth century.[40]

Contextualizing P.Bodmer II among the Other Bodmer Papyri

The type of argument I have just made can be quite disconcerting. It is frustrating to point out that we do not know with certainty something that we formerly thought we knew quite well. If palaeography thus leaves us with this wide range of dates, is there any way to establish a date for P.Bodmer II with more precision? I believe that we can. In the case of P.Bodmer II, we are fortunate to have at least a few clues that point toward a somewhat firmer conclusion regarding the date of the codex.

The fact that P.Bodmer XX, perhaps the closest piece of securely datable comparative palaeographic evidence for the script of P.Bodmer II, may well come from the same find is a good place to start exploring. The provenance and

37 See Coles' introduction to P.Oxy. 67.4608 and 67.4611. Even if one would disagree with Coles' attribution of these pieces to the same scribe, the strikingly close similarity between the hands in papyri separated by half a century is noteworthy in itself.

38 Thus, R. Cribiore draws attention to the fourth-century archive of Aurelia Charite, a landowner in Hermopolis, among whose papers survive samples of both her own handwriting and that of her mother. Cribiore notes the similarities in the hands and suggests that the mother taught the daughter to write. See R. Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta 1996) 15.

39 The word "circa" does an enormous amount of work. Or rather, it keeps palaeographers from having to do a great deal of work. How many years does "circa" cover? Is it more or less than the 50 years that Turner described as "the least acceptable spread of time" in which to try to date a book hand (*Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World 20*)? The use of "circa" in these contexts is a misleading practice that generates confidence where none is warranted. And it is symptomatic of this larger problem of offering date ranges that are too narrow.

40 While Turner preferred to date P.Bodmer II in the first half of the third century, he did acknowledge a rather long span for the "style" of hand used in P.Bodmer II, noting that both P.Bodmer II and P.Oxy. 27.2471 (a document dated to not long after 47 CE) could be described as "upright rounded decorated capitals". He continued, "If such descriptions are adequate to define a style, these examples illustrate its long life and the importance for dating of individual variations inside it" (*Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*, 106).

extent of the find that included P.Bodmer II is a matter of dispute. In a series of publications over the last thirty years, James M. Robinson has argued that the vast majority of the Bodmer papyri (along with other papyri now dispersed in the Chester Beatty Library and several other institutions) are to be equated with the Dishnā papers, a group of Greek and Coptic papyrus codices, rolls, and letters allegedly discovered in upper Egypt late in 1952.[41] Further, he has made the case that these Dishnā papers are the remains of the library of the Pachomian monastic order, which was founded in the fourth century. An alternative theory posits a more limited corpus (consisting of many of the Bodmer papyri and some of the papyri in the Chester Beatty collection) that is supposed to have originated in what is variously described as "a Christian school at Panopolis, which also provided elementary training in rhetoric", or "perhaps … a school [in Panopolis] where both classical and Christian authors were read".[42] For the purposes of my own investigation, I do not need to resolve this dispute. In what follows, I will refer chiefly to the texts that (as far as I can tell) everyone agrees were part of the find that included P.Bodmer II. Even this pared down corpus is a somewhat motley assemblage.[43] Included are Greek and Coptic papyri and parchments

41 The most recent and thorough discussion is J.M. Robinson, *The Story of the Bodmer Papyri: From the Monastery's Library in Upper Egypt to Geneva and Dublin* (Eugene, Or. 2011). Robinson had treated some of the same material in earlier publications including "The First Christian Monastic Library", in *Coptic Studies: Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies* (ed. W. Godlewski, Warsaw 1990) 371–378; "The Pachomian Monastic Library at the Chester Beatty Library and the Bibliothèque Bodmer", *Occasional papers of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity* 19 (1990) 1–27; "The Pachomian Monastic Library at the Chester Beatty Library and the Bibliothèque Bodmer", *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 5 (1990–1991) 26–40; "The Manuscript's History and Codicology", in *The Crosby-Schøyen Codex MS 193 in the Schøyen Collection* (ed. J.E. Goehring, Leuven 1990) xix–xlvii; "Introduction: AC. 1390", in *The Chester Beatty Codex AC. 1390* (ed. W. Brashear et al., Leuven 1990) 2–32; and "The Discovery and Marketing of Coptic Manuscripts: The Nag Hammadi Codices and the Bodmer Papyri", in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (ed. B.A. Pearson and J. E. Goehring, Philadelphia 1986) 2–25.

42 The first description is that of R. Cribiore, "Higher Education in Early Byzantine Egypt: Rhetoric, Latin, and the Law", in *Egypt in the Byzantine World 300–700* (ed. R.S. Bagnall, New York 2007) 47–66; quotation from p. 51. The second is that of R.S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton 1993) 103–104. For more extended arguments in favor of an educational rather than a monastic setting, see J.-L. Fournet, "Une éthopée de Caïn dans le Codex des Visions de la Fondation Bodmer", *ZPE* 92 (1992) 253–266 and A. Blanchard, "Sur le milieu d'origine du papyrus Bodmer de Ménandre", *Chronique d'Egypte* 66 (1991) 211–220.

43 For different inventories, see A. Pietersma's entry for "Bodmer Papyri", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. D.N. Freedman, New York 1992) 1.766–767, which lists 25 items, not including P.Bodmer XVII and the Matthew fragment now designated P73; R. Kasser's entry for "Bodmer Papyri" in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (ed. A.S. Atiya, New York 1991), 8.48–53, which lists 19 items, all codices. Robinson has produced several different inventories (see note 41 above), ranging from 35 items to 40 items. The most recent version (in *The Story of the Bodmer Papyri* 169–172) is somewhat garbled. It contains 35 items, but the tabulations after the inventory repeatedly refer to inventory items numbered 36 and 37. It seems that the various lists have become confused, and I am unsure which one is to be considered authoritative.

along with some bilingual specimens. There is classical and Christian material (on occasion bound in the same codex). The majority of the pieces are codices, although there is some material in roll form.[44] The bulk of the pieces have been assigned dates in the fourth and fifth centuries, although there are outliers ranging in date from the second century CE to perhaps the sixth century.[45] We can begin to contextualize P.Bodmer II within this collection by first limiting the field of view to the Greek Christian materials. There are seven codices with identifiably Christian material in Greek. The chart below outlines the codices and the dates assigned to them in Rodolphe Kasser's inventory:

Designation(s)	Contents	Date
P.Bodmer II	Gospel of John	2nd–3rd cent.
P.Bodmer V, X, XI, VII, XIII, XII, XX, IX, VIII (the Bodmer "Composite" or "Miscellaneous" Codex)	Genesis of Mary, Corr. of Paul and the Corinthians, 11th Ode of Solomon, Jude, Melito *On the Passover*, liturgical hymn, Apology of Phileas, Psalms 33–34, 1–2 Peter	3rd–4th cent.[46]
P.Bodmer XIV–XV	Gospels of Luke and John	3rd cent.[47]
P.Bodmer XXIV	Psalms 17–118	3rd–4th cent.
P.Bodmer XLV, XLVI, XLVII, XXVII	Susanna, Daniel, Moral exhortations, Thucydides	3rd–4th cent.
P.Bodmer XXIX–XXXVIII ("Codex Visionem")	Visions of Hermas, Vision of Dorotheos, hexameters	4th–5th cent.
P.Monts.Roca. inv. 126–178, 292, 338 (the Barcelona / Montserrat Greek-Latin "Miscellaneous" Codex)	Cicero *In Catilinam* 6–8, 13–30, acrostic hymn, drawing, euchologium, Latin hexameters on Alcestis, story about Hadrian, list of words	4th cent.

44 Kasser does not regard the material on rolls as part of the same find as the codices ("Bodmer Papyri" 48).

45 Kasser's entry "Bodmer Papyri" in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* lists P.Bodmer XVI (a Coptic codex of Exodus) as "fifth (sixth) century", though in his own edition of P.Bodmer XVI, he described it as fourth century.

46 The "composite" or "miscellaneous" Bodmer Codex contains texts copied in a number of different hands. See the discussion in Turner, The *Typology of the Early Codex* 79–81. Though some of the hands had initially been assigned to the third century, Turner has assigned all the pieces to the fourth century: "It seems doubtful whether any of the pieces assembled to form the conglomerate codex published as P. Bodmer V, X, XI, VII, XIII, XII, XX, IX and VIII should now be dated in the third century. The reviewer would be inclined to assign them all to the fourth" (review of Martin's *Apologie de Philéas* 199).

47 I should note that, for palaeographic and codicological reasons I will outline in a different forum, I suspect that P.Bodmer XIV-XV is a product of the fourth century.

If we take into account the Coptic codices in the Bodmer publications, the picture does not appreciably change, as nearly all the Coptic literary materials thus far published have been assigned dates in the fourth and fifth centuries:

Designation(s)	Contents	Date
P.Bodmer III	Gospel of John and Genesis	4th cent.
P.Bodmer VI	Proverbs	4th–5th cent.[48]
P.Bodmer XVI	Exodus	5th (–6th) cent.[49]
P.Bodmer XVIII	Deuteronomy	4th cent.
P.Bodmer XIX	Gospel of Matthew and Romans	4th–5th cent.
P.Bodmer XXI (= P.Chester Beatty ac. 1389)	Joshua and Tobit	5th cent.[50]
P.Bodmer XXII (=Mississippi Coptic Codex II)	Lamentations, Epistle of Jeremiah, Baruch	4th cent.
P.Bodmer XXIII	Isaiah	4th cent.
P.Bodmer XL	Song of Songs	5th cent.
P.Bodmer XLI	Acts of Paul	4th cent.
Crosby-Schøyen Codex (=Mississippi Coptic Codex I)[51]	Melito *On the Passover*, 2 Macc. 5:27–7:41, 1 Peter, Jonah, liturgical exhortation	4th cent.[52]

48 This date is taken from Kasser's editio princeps. In the 1990 inventory, he lists this codex as third (-fourth) century ("Bodmer Papyri" 50–51). Pietersma's inventory dates this codex to the fourth or fifth century ("Bodmer Papyri" 766). Malcolm Choat describes P.Bodmer VI as "III/IV" and briefly discusses the possible relationship of the manuscript's dialect and its date. See M. Choat, "Coptic", in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (ed. C. Riggs, Oxford 2012) 581–593, at 585-586.

49 Kasser's opinion on the date of this codex seems to have varied. See note 45 above.

50 A.F. Shore assigned this codex to the fourth century *(Joshua I–VI and Other Passages in Coptic Edited from a Fourth-Century Sahidic Codex in the Chester Beatty Library* [Dublin 1963]).

51 Pietersma's inventory also includes three more Coptic texts: P.Bodmer XLII (2 Corinthians), P.Bodmer XLIII (an apocryphon), and P.Bodmer XLIV (Daniel). Kasser, however, regards these texts as "clearly distinct in origin from the Bodmer papyri proper" ("Bodmer Papyri", 48).

52 The Crosby-Schøyen Codex deserves special comment. From the first reports of this codex, its closeness to P.Bodmer II in handwriting, page size (15.2 cm × 14.6 cm), and quality of papyrus was such that W.H. Willis suggested that "one would surmise that they are products of the same scriptorium" ("The New Collections of Papyri at The University of Mississippi", *Proceedings of the IX International Congress of Papyrology* [1961] 381–392, quotation at 387). Recently, A. Pietersma and S. Comstock have published additional leaves of the fifth tractate in the Crosby-Schøyen Codex and proposed that the text was a Pachomian composition ("Two More Pages of Crosby-Schøyen Codex MS 193: A Pachomian Easter Lectionary?" BASP 48 [2011] 27–46). If they are correct, the production of the codex could be securely dated to a period no earlier than the founding of Pachomius' monastic community – the second quarter of the fourth century.

The only codex among the Bodmer papyri composed of entirely non-Christian literature, the Bodmer Menander (P.Bodmer XXV, IV, and XXVI), has been assigned by Turner to the early fourth century.[53] If one takes into consideration Robinson's expanded corpus, we could add perhaps an additional three codices with Greek Christian materials, all dated to the fourth century.[54] Robinson's expanded corpus would also add at least two Coptic codices with a similar date range.[55] What emerges from this quick survey is that most of the codices are dated to the third to the fifth centuries with a clustering in the fourth century. Thus, P.Bodmer II, as traditionally dated, would sit at the early end of the range of dates assigned to the Christian manuscripts (it would stand out all the more if one were to assume Hunger's mid- or early-second century date). In fact, of all the Bodmer papyri in any language or format, only P.Bodmer XXVIII, fragments of a papyrus roll of a Greek satyr play, has been assigned definitively to a date earlier than the third century, and Turner has quite plausibly suggested (based on physical features of the fragments) that these were torn, folded, and used as material to stiffen the covers of one of the codices.[56] At "ca. 200", then, P.Bodmer II would be the earliest item in the Bodmer hoard that was actually a part of the collection proper.

Robinson, however, has argued that P.Bodmer II was not a product of the library in the way that most of the other codices were. Rather, he has claimed that P.Bodmer II and a few of the other papyri must have "entered the library as gifts from outside". Indeed, he wrote that this sort of explanation must be posited for such "early Greek New Testament texts as P.Bodmer II (P^{66}, the Gospel of John…), and P.Bodmer XIV–XV (P^{75}, the Gospels of Luke and John…), where one might even think of Athanasius living in hiding with the Order while in exile as the source of such gifts".[57] Robinson claimed that these "early" Greek New Testament texts functioned as "venerated relics" at the monastery. He illustrated this claim by reference to the physical properties of P.Bodmer XIV–XV: This "valuable old codex was rebound in late antiquity, by pasting fragmentary leaves of the quire together as cartonnage to thicken the leather cover, and by

53 See Turner, "Emendations to Menander's *Dyskolos*", *BICS* 6 (1959) 61–72, in which he offers dated parallels from the latter part of the third century and Turner's review of the first volume of R. Seider's *Paläographie der griechischen Papyri*, in *Gnomon* 41 (1969) 505–507, in which he offers a fourth century documentary parallel.

54 These are Chester Beatty ac. 1499 (a Greek grammar and Greco-Latin lexicon of Paul's letters), P. Chester Beatty XIII (Psalms), and P.Chester Beatty XIV (Psalms, only a single folio).

55 These are the P.Palau Ribes 181–183 (Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John, assigned by Quecke to the fifth century; see note 68 below); and Chester Beatty ac. 1493 (P.Chester Beatty 2018, Apocalypse of Elijah, described by Pietersma as "more nearly fifth century than fourth" century).

56 The reasons for the second century date and the suggestion of the use of the papyri as binding material appear in E.G. Turner, "Papyrus Bodmer XXVIII: A Satyr-Play on the Confrontation of Heracles and Atlas", *MH* 33 (1976) 1–23. Turner attributes the idea that these papyri were extracted from a binding to W.E.H. Cockle.

57 Robinson, *The Story of the Bodmer Papyri* 155 (compare 156 and 166 as well); see also "The Pachomian Monastic Library" 4–5.

sewing the binding thongs through the inner margin of the quire so near the writing that the codex could not be opened wide enough to be actually read. One is inclined to think that the codex had become a relic".[58] P.Bodmer II has also been repaired in a way that interferes with reading parts of its text (bands of reinforcing papyrus cover parts of the inner margins of some pages). Yet, to describe these codices as "relics" already in the fourth century on this basis seems misleading, because it is unclear at what point these repairs and rebindings took place. It is particularly curious that Robinson should make this argument, since if one were to assume that Robinson's claims about the extent of the library are correct, the latest items in the find (Chester Beatty ac. 1494 and 1495, small papyrus rolls containing copies of Horsiesios' letters 3 and 4 in Sahidic dated to the seventh century) would indicate a deposition date for the hoard in the seventh century *at earliest*.[59] Even if one considered the trimmed down inventory without Robinson's proposed additions, the latest material would suggest a deposition date no earlier than the late fifth or early sixth century. A codex produced in the early fourth century would have period of at least two centuries for wear and tear to take place and repair and rebinding to occur. At what point between the copying of these codices and their deposition in or after the sixth century were these pieces rebound? How often might they have been rebound? Clearly some attention to the construction of P.Bodmer II is in order.

The Codicology of P.Bodmer II

In his original description of the codex, Martin noted a number of features of the make-up of the codex and recognized that P.Bodmer II had been rebound in antiquity. The dimensions of the codex are 14.2 cm (width) × 16.2 cm (height). It falls in Turner's Group 9. In the set of plates published in 1962, a stay, or strip

58 Robinson, *The Story of the Bodmer Papyri* 156; see also "The Pachomian Monastic Library" 5–6. On the fragments in the cover, see M.-L. Lakmann, "Papyrus Bodmer XIV–XV (P75): Neue Fragmente", *MH* 64 (2007) 22–41 and J.M. Robinson, "Fragments from the Cartonnage of P75", *HTR* 101 (2008) 231–252. On the issue of the alleged re-stitching of P.Bodmer XIV–XV through the inner margin, I believe Robinson may have misread the editors' introduction to P.Bodmer XXV (part of the Menander Codex), which pointed out that, like the Menander codex, P.Bodmer XIV–XV showed evidence of rebinding (the fragments in the cover), not that P.Bodmer XIV–XV was treated in exactly the same manner as the Menander codex, which was in fact rebound using the "stabbing" method through the inner margin. See R. Kasser and C. Austin (ed.), *Papyrus Bodmer XXV Ménandre: La Samienne* (Cologny-Geneva 1969) 16–17.

59 Indeed, this is the conclusion Robinson himself reaches (*The Story of the Bodmer Papyri* 151). Some caution is in order for at least two reasons. First, the dates of Chester Beatty ac. 1494 and 1495 are themselves based on palaeography. See T. Orlandi, "Due Rotoli Copti Papiracei da Dublino (Lettere di Horsiesi)", in *Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Congress of Papyrology* (ed. R.S. Bagnall et al., Chico, Ca. 1981) 499–508. Second, the case that these Pachomian materials were part of the same find as the Bodmer materials is not air-tight (for the argument, see Robinson's account in *The Story of the Bodmer Papyri* 130–150).

of protective parchment, is visible along the fold of the central sheet in the first two quires (between pages 8–9 and 26–27). Apparently, some of these parchment stays have been removed, since Martin reported that such strips were present "dans tous nos cahiers".[60] Martin concluded these parchment stays, punctured with two holes for the binding strings to pass through (at B and C in the image below), were part of an ancient rebinding of the codex (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: P.Bodmer II, page 49, showing secondary stay and position of holes along the central fold. By permission of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

60 Martin, *Papyrus Bodmer II* 11. Indeed, the plate of page 49 published in the editio princeps in 1956 shows the stay (see my Figure 18), while in the plates of pages 48 and 49 published in 1962, the stay is not visible (perhaps it was folded over to the facing page when each photo was taken?). In a letter written to E.G. Turner in 1971, R. Kasser reported that the parchment guards had been present between pages 8–9, 26–27, 48–49, 68–69, and 94–95. He reported that three additional stays were missing. See Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* 70 n. 12. That not all of these parchment stays have survived in place has led to disagreement over the arrangement and number of the quires (see the comparison of views in Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* 70 n. 12 and my discussion below).

For a discussion of the original binding technique, Martin relied on the expertise of Berthe van Regemorter, whose report on the codex he quoted at length. She observed that while the most recent binding of the codex used holes at B and C, the original binding actually employed two pairs of holes along the central fold in the sheets – an upper set, labeled A and B in Figure 18 and a lower set, C and D.[61] She noted more wear between the pair A and B and the pair C and D, but not so much between B and C. This pattern of holes along the fold, two on the top half of the sheet and two on the bottom half, with little wear along the fold between the upper and the lower pairs (that is, between B and C), indicates that the original binding likely consisted of a link-stitch or chain-stitch at two independent pairs of sewing stations.[62] The technique is illustrated in the drawing below (see Figure 19).

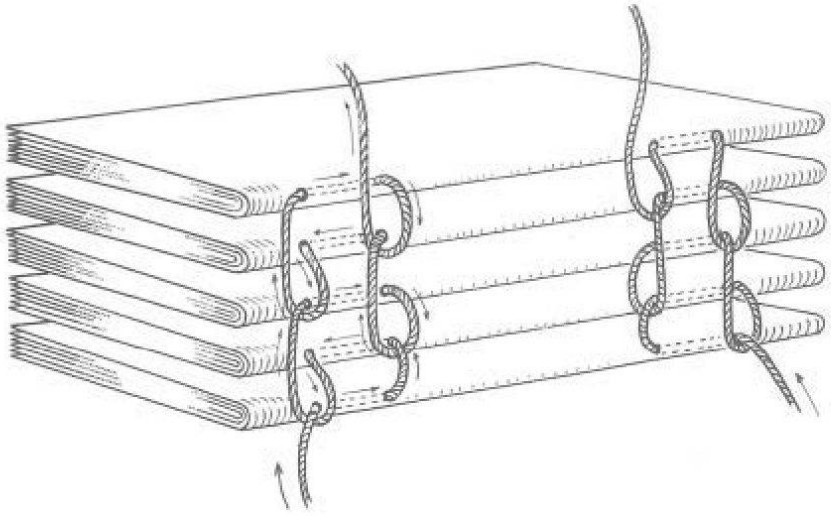

Figure 19: Quires joined by a link-stitch at two independent pairs of sewing stations; drawing adapted from J. Vezin, "La réalisation matérielle des manuscrits latins pendant le haut Moyen Âge", *Codicologica 2: Éléments pour une codicologie comparée* (ed. A. Gruys and J.P. Gumbert, Leiden 1978) 15–51 at 37.

61 In the most recently published set of plates, the upper holes are most easily seen on p. 24, the lower holes on p. 51. Page 88 shows traces of both sets of holes.

62 The clearest discussion of ancient bookbinding, with ample illustration, is J.A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Aldershot 1999). Also helpful, though now dated, are the discreet studies gathered in B. van Regemorter, *Binding Structures in the Middle Ages: A Selection of Studies* (trans. J. Greenfield, Brussels 1992). There is a growing bibliography on book production in Egypt. See the literature cited in C. Kotsifou, "Bookbinding and Manuscript Illumination in Late Antique and Early Medieval Monastic Circles in Egypt", in *Eastern Christians and their Written Heritage: Manuscripts, Scribes and Context* (ed. J. P. Monferrer-Sala et al., Leuven 2012) 213–244.

According to Regemorter, this binding technique was without doubt "la couture primitive des manuscrits les plus anciens" and "probablement celle à laquelle on était habitué au III[e] siècle".[63] But such an assessment raises questions: Primitive relative to *what*? And why typical of the third century? By way of comparison, Regemorter mentioned only two items: In regard to the spacing of the holes through the pages for the binding, Regemorter referred to a waxed wooden tablet (British Library Add. Ms. 33797) that has been described as dating to "perhaps [the] third century A.D.", not exactly a confidence-inspiring designation for comparative dating purposes.[64] In regard to the manner in which the quires were most likely attached to their cover, she referred to the manuscripts now known as Nag Hammadi codices, which are generally assigned to the middle of the fourth century at earliest.[65] Thus, the assignment of the original binding to the third century is open to some question. In fact, the binding technique of using a link-stitch at two independent pairs of sewing stations is employed in a number of the Coptic multi-quire codices from the Bodmer find.[66] The chart below outlines the data:

63 See her report in Martin, *Papyrus Bodmer II* 12–14. An English translation of the report can be found in Regemorter, *Binding Structures in the Middle Ages* 133–137.

64 See K. Painter, "A Roman Writing Tablet from London", *The British Museum Quarterly* 31 (1967) 101–110, quotation at 107.

65 The *terminus post quem* for one of the Nag Hammadi codices (Codex VII) is established by a documentary papyrus with a date of 348 CE, which was used to stiffen the cover of the codex. In general, this datum has been used to positively date the codices to the "mid to late fourth century". Recently, however, specialists have raised the possibility that the codices may have been produced at a later date. Thus, S. Emmel has written, "These dated documents indicate that the cover of Codex VII – and hence presumably (although not necessarily) Codex VII as a whole – was not manufactured until some time after 348. But how much time after 348? A year? Ten years? Fifty years? A century? Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to know with any degree of certainty"; see Emmel, "The Coptic Gnostic Texts as Witnesses to the Production and Transmission of Gnostic (and Other) Traditions", in *Das Thomasevangelium: Entstehung – Rezeption – Theologie* (ed. J. Frey et al., Berlin 2008) 33–49; quotation at 38.

66 The data are gathered from the following publications, all by R. Kasser, *Papyrus Bodmer VI: Livre des Proverbes* (Louvain 1960); *Papyrus Bodmer XVI: Exode I–XV,21 en sahidique* (Geneva 1961); *Papyrus Bodmer XIX: Evangile de Matthieu XIV,28 – XXVIII,20 Epître aux Romains I,1 – II,3 en sahidique* (Geneva 1962); and *Papyrus Bodmer XXII et Mississippi Coptic Codex II: Jérémie XL,3 – LII,34 Lamentations Epître de Jérémie Baruch I,1 – V,5 en sahidique* (Geneva 1964). For P.Bodmer XXI, I rely on personal inspection of the leaves and cover kept at the Chester Beatty Library.

67 See note 45 above.

68 If we consider Robinson's expanded catalog of the Bodmer hoard, we could add another codex with this type of binding now in Barcelona, P.Palau Ribes inv. 181-3, a Sahidic parchment codex of Mark, Luke, and John. It measures 16.5 cm × 20 cm. It is assigned to the fifth century. The codex has been described and published in three parts by H. Quecke, *Das Markusevangelium Saïdisch: Text der Handschrift PPalau Rib. Inv.-Nr. 182 mit den Varianten der Handschrift M 569* (Barcelona 1972); *Das Lukasevangelium Saïdisch: Text der Handschrift PPalau Rib. Inv.-Nr. 181 mit den Varianten der Handschrift M 569* (Barcelona 1977); and *Das Johannes-*

Name	Contents	Page dimensions (width × height)	Date
P.Bodmer III	Gospel of John and Genesis	16.5 cm × 23.25 cm	4th cent.
P.Bodmer VI	Proverbs	12 cm × 14.5 cm	4th–5th cent.
P.Bodmer XVI	Exodus	13.5 cm × 16 cm	5th (–6th) cent.[67]
P.Bodmer XIX	Gospel of Matthew and Romans	12.5 cm × 15.5 cm	4th–5th cent.
P.Bodmer XXI (= P.Chester Beatty ac. 1389)	Joshua and Tobit	12.5 cm × 18.5 cm	5th cent.
P.Bodmer XXII (=Mississippi Coptic Codex II)[68]	Jeremiah, Lamentations, Epistle of Jeremiah, Baruch	12 cm × 14 cm	4th cent.

In addition to the shared binding technique, the similarity of format with P.Bodmer II is also noteworthy. The pages of P.Bodmer II are, like a number of these Coptic codices, relatively small and square-ish at 14.2 cm × 16.2 cm. The closest parallel to P.Bodmer II in terms of both size and format is, however, a papyrus codex of the fourth century, the Bodmer "miscellaneous" or "Composite" codex, which contains P.Bodmer XX along with several other texts. [69] The dimensions of the different sections vary, but the most widely represented page sizes are 14.2 cm × 15.5 cm and 14.2 cm × 16 cm.[70] Thus, in terms of both its size and its original binding, P.Bodmer II fits comfortably in a fourth-century context among other Bodmer papyri.

The original arrangement of the quires of P.Bodmer II is not entirely clear.[71] As I mentioned above, it seems fairly certain that P.Bodmer II was rebound in antiquity at least once.[72] The presence of the parchment stays in the central

evangelium Saïdisch: Text der Handschrift PPalau Rib. Inv.-Nr. 183 mit den Varianten der Handschriften 813 und 814 der Chester Beatty Library und der Handschrift M 569 (Rome 1984).

69 Since this codex seems to have consisted of smaller individual collections gathered together, it is not surprising that the pages show evidence of multiple different binding techniques. Autopsy inspection of the codex's parts in Geneva and the Vatican is needed before making any firm pronouncements on its binding.

70 See the discussion in Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* 79–80.

71 For a comparison Martin's reconstruction of the arrangement of the quires with that of Kasser, see Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* 70.

72 I am unsure why Turner expresses doubt about this point in *The Typology of the Early Codex*: "Moreover, this codex may have been rebound in antiquity" (60). In 1974, Turner had written with more confidence, "Clearly the codex was rebound in antiquity" ("Some Questions about the Typology of the Codex", *Akten des XIII. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses* [1974] 427–438, quotation at p. 436).

quires (as reported by Kasser) provide some help in reconstructing the final binding of the codex. Furthermore, the partial remains of quire signatures on pages 17 and 77 provide evidence of a stage prior to the last binding of the book.[73] I reproduce the very scanty remains below (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: P.Bodmer II, upper right corners of pages 17 and 77 showing remains of quire signatures. By permission of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

Turner quite plausibly reconstructs the first signature as >$\overline{\text{B}}$< on the basis of the quire signatures found in the Tourah codex of Origen's *Dialektos* and *Peri pascha* (Publ.Sorb.Pap. 1.683–684; LDAB 3509), which has been dated on fairly secure grounds to the latter part of the sixth century (see Figure 21 below).[74]

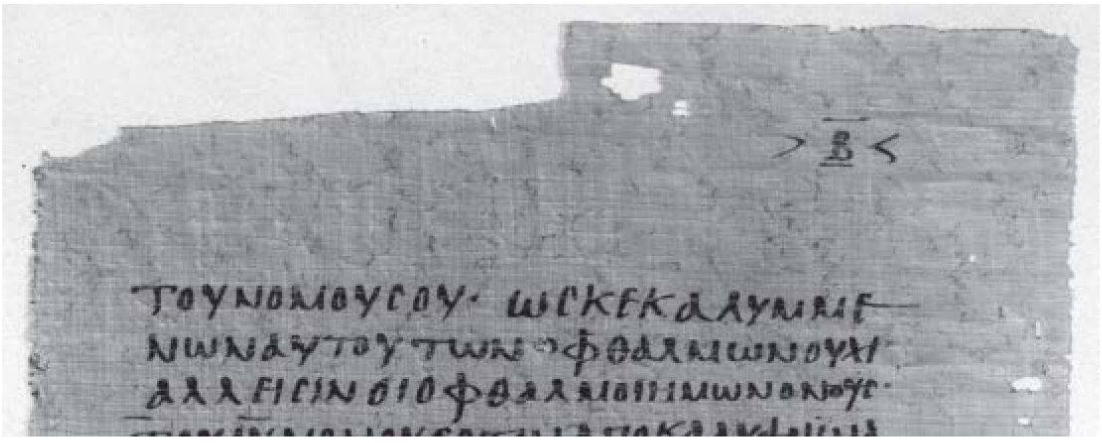

Figure 21: Quire signature of second quire of Publ.Sorb.Pap. 1.683. Courtesy of the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, the Cairo Museum, l'Association Internationale de Papyrologues, and Dr. Adam Bülow-Jacobsen.

73 The quire signatures are reported and briefly discussed in Turner, "Some Questions about the Typology of the Codex" 436 and *The Typology of the Early Codex* 70.

74 See J. Scherer, *Entretien d'Origène avec Héraclide et les évêques ses collègues sur le Père, le Fils et l'Âme* (Cairo 1949) 4–8. Scherer established his date ("approximativement de la fin du VI^{e} siècle") based on three distinct cursive hands present in the manuscript, all of which he

If Turner is correct, then page 17 would be the beginning of the second quire. The reconstruction of the signature on page 77 is unclear. It could mark the beginning of either the fourth *(delta)* or the fifth *(epsilon)* quire. In any event, it seems certain that the quire signatures do not correspond to the latest binding of the codex. As I mentioned earlier, one set of repairs to the codex in antiquity involved attaching strips of papyrus the centers of several sheets to strengthen the area of the central folds. Kasser has drawn attention to the fact that one of these papyrus patches joined page 59–60 to page 77–78 (this observation can be confirmed by the corresponding horizontal fibers and on the papyrus patch near line 7 of page 60 and near line 6 on page 77). Thus, in this stage of the codex's existence, page 77 was no longer the first page of a quire. If the quire signatures, then, do not correspond to this later repair job, the question then arises: Are they to be associated with the original construction of the codex, or were they added during an intermediate rebinding?

Turner believed that "the ink and ductus [of the quire signatures] seem compatible with an allocation to the original scribe, who in this case also added the page numbers". Thus, he associated the quire signatures with the original construction of the codex.[75] Because of the difficulty (presumably) involved in writing in a quire or codex that was already bound, Turner believed the usual scribal practice, and the practice of the scribe of P.Bodmer II, was to inscribe the pages "when the sheets were still detached (before the volume was stitched)".[76] In such a scenario, keeping the pages and quires in proper sequence for binding would be a priority.[77] Thus the presence of page numbers and quire signatures.[78] If Turner is indeed correct that this was the usual practice (he does make excep-

thought could be assigned to the sixth century. Since some of the cursive writing has letter forms nearly identical to the more formal uncial of the manuscript itself, Scherer attributed this cursive hand to the copyist of the manuscript.

75 Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* 77. That the quire signatures appear to have been intentionally trimmed off is noteworthy, but it is impossible to tell at what stage this trimming took place.

76 Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* 74.

77 I am unable to follow Turner's logic in this instance. Not only does this proposed process of copying unbound sheets seem cumbersome, it also complicates Turner's other observation about the copying of P.Bodmer II, namely, the growth in the size of the writing evident in the later pages of the codex: "the scribe begins to realize he has too much room and writes larger", according to Turner (*The Typology of the Early Codex* 74). But if the scribe was copying unbound pages and had this realization, why not then simply maintain the writing size and adjust the number of pages by removing sheets from the final (as yet unbound) quire?

78 There are counter-examples in which it seems fairly clear that the inscribing took place after the binding of the codex. See, for instance, P.Chester Beatty XIII. The editor of that manuscript notes that "one bifolio (folios 4 and 5) still has a hemp binding string in its top holes with part of an overlining stroke on it, indicating that the quire was bound before the text was inscribed"; see A. Pietersma, *Two Manuscripts of the Greek Psalter in the Chester Beatty Library Dublin* (Rome 1978) 1.

tion for single quire codices), it is surprising that he does not speculate on why some codices lack quire signatures (and even page numbers).

As it stands, Turner's proposal raises a number of questions. Given that the quire signatures are so fragmentary, can they reasonably be assigned with any degree of confidence to the scribe of the codex (and here I do note Turner's appropriate caution in the phrase "seem compatible")? If they are indeed the work of the original scribe, the quire signatures on P.Bodmer II would be a remarkable feature on the traditional dating of the codex. Even if the codex were assigned Turner's preferred date (early third century), P.Bodmer II would still predate the next earliest example of a papyrus codex with quire signatures by a century or more.[79] Two other possible explanations of the quire signatures are therefore worth considering. First, if Turner is correct that the signatures are the work of the scribe of the codex, then a date for the production of the codex in fourth century, when we begin to have evidence for the use of quire signatures, would be more sensible. If, however, the quire signatures are to be associated with a later rebinding of the codex, then Turner's comparandum for the format of the quire signatures is suggestive. The Tourah codex likely dates from the sixth century. Could the quire signatures in P.Bodmer II have been added to facilitate a rebinding in the sixth century? Such a scenario seems unlikely, given that another substantial repair job (the reinforcing papyrus strips) would have taken place *after* the insertion of the quire signatures but *before* the deposition of P.Bodmer II. A repair, however, in the late fourth century or in the fifth century (or both) seems more plausible.[80] When this possibility is considered, Robinson's proposal that P.Bodmer was already a "relic" in the fourth century loses its force. Based on the evidence currently available, then, I would posit the construction and initial copying of P.Bodmer II took place at some point in the fourth century, and at least one subsequent rebinding (though more likely two) took place, perhaps as late as the fifth century.[81]

79 Turner reports that the next oldest examples of codices with quire signatures are BM Ms. Or. 7594 (LDAB 107763, a Coptic codex generally assigned to the first half of the fourth century on the basis of cursive papyri reused in its covers and cursive writing on one of its pages) and the Chester Beatty Manichaean codices (generally assigned to the fourth or fifth century) (*The Typology of the Early Codex* 77). I am not aware of any new evidence that has come to light that would change this assessment.

80 In regard to medieval bindings, Szirmai has observed that "even the sturdiest binding when used extensively will inevitably wear out in 25 or 50 years" (*The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* 137).

81 I have not mentioned here the corrections to the codex, which also have the potential to add to the discussion of the usage of the codex (especially the correction at John 13:19 on page 99), but because of the difficulty of assessing the corrections in the published plates, I hesitate to comment on them without autopsy inspection or consultation of high-quality digital images. For an informed discussion of the corrections, see Royse, *Scribal Habits* 409–544.

Before bringing this section to a close, I will briefly mention one other feature of the codex that may also be suggestive of a fourth century date. At several points in the fragmentary final pages of P.Bodmer II, forms of the terms σταυρός and σταυρόω are abbreviated in a manner that involves combining the letters *tau* and *rho* to form a monogram, ⳨, generally referred to as a staurogram.[82] I provide an example below (see Figure 22):

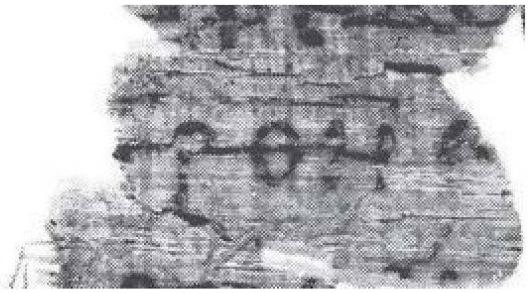

Figure 22: Detail of P.Bodmer II, page 137, line 3: abbreviated form of σταυρωθῆ. By permission of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Geneva).

Larry Hurtado and others have plausibly argued that these examples of the staurogram should be interpreted as visual representation of the crucifixion of Jesus.[83] If this understanding is correct, then this fact would point to a date for the production of this codex in the fourth century, when Christian use of the imagery of crucifixion begins to become more common.[84] Hurtado, assuming a date of "ca.

82 This *tau-rho* ligature is found in a variety of media that predate our earliest surviving Christian manuscripts. It occurs in papyri such as LDAB 3551, a roll of Philodemus from Herculaneum, in which, according to Hermann Diels, it abbreviates forms of τρόπος. It is found on coins, such as certain issues of Herod the Great, in which the meaning of the monogram is disputed; see D.T. Ariel and J.-P. Fontanille, *The Coins of Herod: A Modern Analysis and Die Classification* (Leiden 2012) 124–126. It also occurs in inscriptions , such as IG XII.1.4, a list of names from the Flavian period from Rhodes, in which it abbreviates τριακάς. A free-standing staurogram became a more common feature in Christian documentary papyri in the fourth and fifth centuries. See M. Choat, *Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri* (Turnhout 2006) 116–118.

83 Hurtado's fullest discussion of the phenomenon (with ample bibliography) is to be found in his essay "The Staurogram in Early Christian Manuscripts: The Earliest Visual Reference to the Crucified Jesus?", in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and their World* (ed. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, Leiden 2006), 207–226. While one standard handbook of early Christian iconography seems to take it for granted that the staurogram in these papyri constitutes "a kind of pictogram, the image of a man's head upon a cross" (R.M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* [New York 2000] 138), art historians are by no means in agreement on this point. I am grateful to Felicity Harley-McGowan for alerting me to the complexities of the issue.

84 See G. F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine* (2nd ed., Macon, Ga. 2003) 58–64. For the possibility that a gem engraved with an image of the crucifixion may pre-date the fourth century, see J. Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems* (Wiesbaden 2007) 73–75 and F. Harley, "The Crucifixion" in *Picturing the Bible: The*

200 CE" for P.Bodmer II, argued that the appearance of the staurogram in this manuscript, and in the Chester Beatty Gospels-Acts codex (P45) and P.Bodmer XIV–XV (P75), provided proof of Christian use of the imagery of the crucifixion in the form of the *tau-rho* monogram "at least as early as the final decades of the second century, and quite plausibly somewhat earlier".[85] Yet, in light of the evidence laid out above, it would seem more prudent to interpret this feature as further support for a fourth century date for P.Bodmer II.[86] At the very least, such experimentation with cruciform imagery would appear less out of place in the fourth century than in the late second or early third century.

Conclusion

Palaeography of literary papyri can be an extremely frustrating process for people uncomfortable with ambiguity. In the case of P.Bodmer II, reasonable palaeographic parallels with secure dates can be found from the second century into the fourth century. When, however, one considers that a very close parallel (P.Bodmer XX) can be dated securely on the basis of its contents to the fourth century, and that this piece was very likely part of the same find as P.Bodmer II, a fourth century date for the latter becomes more plausible. When one further takes into account the codicological features of P.Bodmer II, a fourth century

Earliest Christian Art (ed. J. Spier, New Haven 2009) 227–232. Both Spier and Harley assign the gem to the period before Constantine ("typical ... of the second and third centuries", "late 2nd–3rd century"), but both also hesitate to describe the gem as Christian. The well-known Palatine graffito is a likely example of a non-Christian depiction of the crucifixion datable to the third century, but some caution is in order here as well. It should be noted that while the reported archaeological context of the discovery provided a relatively secure terminus post quem (brick stamps attributable to the reign of Hadrian), there was no secure terminus ante quem. The original assignment of the date of the graffito ("agl'inizii del secolo terzo cristiano") was largely based upon the editor's opinion of when such a polemical graffito would have been appropriate ("Perocchè io stimo che questo graffito debba assegnarsi a quel tempo in che la ignominiosa calunnia veniva rinfacciata ai cristiani da per tutto".). See R. Garrucci, *Il crocifisso graffito in casa dei cesari ed il simbolismo cristiano in una corniola del secondo secolo* (Rome 1857) 11–19, quotations at p. 13.

85 Hurtado, "The Staurogram" 214.

86 Indeed, this feature may also suggest that the other two papyri Hurtado mentions might be later than usually supposed. The typical palaeographic assessments of these papyri are open to question. In fact, Cavallo has stated that P45 (LDAB 2980) was a product "probabilmente della fine del III secolo" (*Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica* 119). A.S. Hunt also advocated a date in the second half of the third century for this piece; see F.G. Kenyon, *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, Fasciculus II: The Gospels and Acts* (London 1933) x. With regard to P.Bodmer XIV–XV, I hope to show in a future study that there are good palaeographic and codicological reasons to assign this piece to the fourth century. Nevertheless, Hurtado's thesis about the origins and development of the *tau-rho* abbreviation may still be valid, but the date of that development might best be pushed a bit later in time.

date for the codex becomes even more probable.[87] Certainty in these matters will likely always be elusive, but the combined weight of these considerations points to a date for the production of P.Bodmer II in the early or middle part of the fourth century.[88]

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87 I want to reiterate that this proposed date in the fourth century is *not* palaeographic. Palaeography gives us a wide range of possibilities. It is the *combination* of these multiple factors that points to a fourth century date for P.Bodmer II.

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