

A reused roll or a ‘curious Christian codex’? Reconsidering British Library Papyrus 2053 (P.Oxy. 8.1075 + P.Oxy. 8.1079)

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Abstract: Recently, Brent Nongbri has proposed that British Library Papyrus 2053 came from a codex and not a roll. His primary concern is codicology and he pays no attention to scribal tendencies, including the implications of the palaeographical characteristics of the hand. In a careful reassessment that takes into consideration codicology, palaeography, scribal tendencies, and the physical condition of the papyrus itself, Nongbri’s argument is found to be flawed in a number of ways which speak directly to the possible origins of BL Pap. 2053. All indications are that a third-century Christian used the back of a roll containing Exodus to produce a copy of Revelation for ‘private’ use.

Introduction

In a recent article, Brent Nongbri (2013) argues against Arthur S. Hunt (1911: 5-6, 13-4) that British Library Papyrus 2053 (BL Pap. 2053)¹ is from a codex and not a reused roll. The papyrus preserves the end of Exodus (P.Oxy. 8.1075 [Rahlfs 909])² on its ‘recto’ (→) and the beginning of Revelation (P.Oxy. 8.1079 [P¹⁸])³ on its ‘verso’ (↓) (Figures 1 & 2). Because confusion can result from the different traditional and papyrological meanings of recto and verso, the symbols → and ↓ respectively are used in what follows as indicators of the direction of the fibres on each side of the papyrus (cf. Turner 1978: 8–25, 54–60, 63–5).

Scholars are divided on the merits of Nongbri’s proposal: van Minnen (2013: 245), Blumell and Wayment (2015: 91), and Mugridge (2016: 175-76 [no. 36], 278-79 [no. 255]) have or appear to have rejected it, while Bazzana (2016: 16-7) and Cate (2016: 42 n. 36) are more positive. Nongbri’s argument has several strands. (1) The amount of and format of the text are not inappropriate for a codex leaf. (2) There is now evidence for Christian codices containing an eclectic combination of texts copied by different scribes. One such codex, the Bodmer ‘Miscellaneous’ or ‘Composite’ codex, contains a comparable page because, like BL Pap. 1053, the new text that begins overleaf encroaches on the inner margin of the codex page. (3) When the backs of rolls were reused, the roll was often rotated so that the text on the ↓ was upside down relative to the first text written on the →, but this is not the case with BL Pap. 2053. This essay challenges these claims, as well as the overarching contention that ‘there is nothing about the physical characteristics of Pap. 2053 that would definitely oppose its identification as a leaf of a codex’ (Nongbri 2013: 78).

1. The ‘Codicology’ of the leaf

The place to begin is the size of the hypothetical codex leaf (Figures 1 and 2). Reconstruction of the text block is best done by using the text of P.Oxy. 8.1079 (Rev. 1:4-7c) because, after leaving aside possible but unlikely

variants, the number of letters missing from the beginning of Revelation (1:1-3) can be quantified. The reconstructed text block has an average of 23.82 letters per line. Based on the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* text (Aland et al. 2012) and allowing for *nomina sacra*,⁴ there are 282 letters missing, which means that there were *c.* 12 lines (the exact figure is 11.84) on the top part of the papyrus. Thus, there was a total of *c.* 29 lines, or *c.* 30 lines, if there was a title on the ↓.⁵ Working from high quality digital images of the papyrus, the height of the text block would thus have been about 23 cm for 29/30 lines. Likewise, based on *ll.* 5-10 where the text is almost fully preserved, the width of the text block was *c.* 9.3 cm.⁶

The extant bottom margin is 1.6 cm at its longest point. However, because no part of the bottom edge of P.Oxy. 8.1079 is horizontal, it cannot be assumed, as Nongbri does, that 1.6 cm was the full extent of the bottom margin. The location of the title of Exodus at the bottom of P.Oxy. 8.1075, the letters of which sit on a notional line 1 cm below the notional line on which the last line (*l.* 17) of P.Oxy. 8.1079 sits, supports this inference. It is likely that the margin extended another 1-2 cm below the εἰσοδος colophon. Using Eric Turner’s (1977: 25) rule of thumb that the proportion of upper to lower margins is generally 2:3 respectively, a 1 cm upper margin should have a 1.5 cm lower margin (total 2.5 cm), and a 1.6 cm upper margin should have a 2.4 cm lower margin (total 4 cm). Therefore, in the absence of physical evidence 2.5 cm, the hypothetical lower limit, and 4 cm, the hypothetical upper limit, should be added to the above estimate of column height. Thus, the page height was about 25.5-27 cm (cf. 26.38-27.16 cm, Nongbri 2013: 80).

No side margins are preserved on the ↓, so Nongbri turns to P.Oxy. 8.1075 to reconstruct the width of the hypothetical codex page (2013: 80). His justification for this approach is that ‘a left margin is preserved’ on that side of the papyrus. But the dimensions of the hypothetical codex page might just as easily be estimated by adding 3 cm (as another general rule of thumb) to the reconstructed size

of the text block of P.Oxy. 8.1079, so there is no warrant for assuming that P.Oxy. 8.1075 should determine the dimensions of the codex page. The more likely reason for this approach is that the claim that the papyrus came from a codex necessitates a presupposition, for which there is no basis, that P.Oxy. 8.1075 was the correctly formatted side of the codex leaf, in terms of text block and margins, and P.Oxy. 8.1079 was not.

Leaving that aside and working from *ll.* 12-16 of the extant text of P.Oxy. 8.1075, the width of its text block was 8.4 cm.⁷ At its widest point the left margin of P.Oxy. 8.1075 is 1.5 cm, so the proposed codex page containing P.Oxy. 8.1075 would have been about 11.5 cm wide (cf. 11.6 cm, Nongbri 2013: 83). Significantly, as mentioned above, similar calculations based on *ll.* 6-11 of P.Oxy. 8.1079 produce a text block width of *c.* 9.3 cm⁸ and a page width of about 12.5 cm, which is approximately 1 cm wider than the width of both the text block and the page of P.Oxy. 8.1075. In a normal codex, calculations of page size based on the text blocks on each side of a codex leaf should be about the same. Text blocks on opposite sides of a leaf usually exhibit such variance in width only when the scribe's hand was hindered by writing into the centre fold of a pre-assembled codex.⁹ There is no sign of that here, a point that will be revisited when the relative 'footprints' of the two text blocks are compared.

In summary, if BL Pap. 2053 came from a codex, its page would have measured 11.5 × 25.5-27 cm (allowing, for the sake of argument, that P.Oxy. 8.1075 was the correctly formatted side and, hence, that the text of P.Oxy. 8.1079 extended into the margin).¹⁰ But a codex of this size would not fit into Turner's Group 8 proper, a size category in which breadth is half height, as Nongbri asserts (2013: 83). It would either fit into a sub-category of Turner's Group 8 in which the codices are less than 12 cm broad, or into his Group 8 Aberrant 1 category in which the codices are much higher than broad (Turner 1977: 20-1). Although the codices in the less than 12 cm broad category of Turner's Group 8 are variously dated (AD II, II/III, IV-V, V?, VII [2]), most of those in the Group 8 Aberrant 1 category are dated AD III or IV (III [5], IV [2], IV-V). If the hypothetical codex was from the latter category, then there is some support for the contention that a codex of this size is consistent with the dates assigned by Hunt to P.Oxy. 8.1075 (III) and P.Oxy. 8.1079 (late III or IV). (Note: When listing dates as given by editors, centuries are abbreviated as: I = first century; II = second century; III = third century; and so on. MSS can also be dated to the turn of century: e.g., III/IV = end of the third or beginning of the fourth century (meaning, approximately, the last and first decades of those centuries); or across a number of centuries: e.g., II-III = second or third century.)

But it should also be noted that 25.5-27 cm falls within the normal height range for book rolls in the Roman period, 25-33 cm (Johnson 2004: 141-43). Nongbri (2013: 83 n. 12) acknowledges this, but discounts the possibility because 'a column breadth of over 8 cm, while attested

in prose papyrus rolls from Oxyrhynchus, sits outside the normative range for such rolls (4.3 to 7.5 cm)'. However, he overlooks the fact that a sizable proportion of canonical gospel codices have text blocks wider than the normative column size of literary book rolls (Charlesworth 2016: 34 n. 32). When copying a canonical gospel,

scribes were not copying a classical text into a literary book roll, but something like a sub-literary or para-literary text into a non-literary codex (i.e., a book format not preferred for classical literature). Yet [canonical] gospels, like literary book rolls, were meant to be (or, at least, were usually) read aloud [...] The priority, apparently, was not narrow columns that would assist reading, but the functional use of writing space (Charlesworth 2016: 34).

The same can be said of the codex or roll from which BL Pap. 2053 came.

Comparison of the scripts and scribal tendencies in P.Oxy. 8.1075 and P.Oxy. 8.1079 also raises questions. In contrast to the slightly forward sloping, bilinear, semi-literary hand of P.Oxy. 8.1075, P.Oxy. 8.1079 is written in an uneven, heavy, upright, informal hand. The hand has been described as untrained (Aland 1976: 238), which is true when compared to literary and semi-literary book hands; but, in terms of other semi-cursive documentary hands, it is not unpractised. Irregularity in the formation and placement of letters and lines are indicative of a copy made for 'private' use rather than public reading. Three other factors point to production for 'private' use.

(1) The singular transposition (το κρατος και η δοξα, *l.* 13), almost certainly a harmonisation to Matthew 6:13 (η δυναμις και η δόξα, which is part of a later addition to the verse: ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας· ἀμήν K L W Δ Θ f¹³ 33 288^c 565 579 700 892 1241 1424 1844 ℳ f q sy^h bo^{pl} [g¹ k sy^{c-p} sa] | om. ✠ B D Z 0170 f¹ 12211 lat mae bo^{pl}; Or), was very probably the work of the scribe, who was, consequently, a Christian. The same four words (βασιλεία, κράτος/δύναμις, δόξα, αἰῶνας) occur in Revelation 1:6 and Matthew 6:13.

(2) After writing του θυ (*l.* 12), the scribe crossed out the second υ, wrote ω beside it, overstroked all three letters, and then added a small ω above του without crossing out ου. The resulting Greek, και εποιησεν ημ[ι] | [[βα]σ[ι]λ-] ειαν ἱρεῖς τῷ θῶ¹¹ και π[α]τρι | [αυτο]υ (and he made a kingdom for us, priests to God and his Father), is awkward enough to have invited the use of the genitive, 'priests of God and his Father'. But the scribe must have had second thoughts and reverted to the dative by means of rough corrections commensurate with the semi-cursive hand.

(3) The unusual *nomina sacra*, ιη χρ (*l.* 6), suspensions¹² rather than corrections, are probably also the work of the scribe. Ψ⁴⁵ (P.Beatty 1 and P.Vindob.G. 31974) is the only codex containing one or more of the canonical gospels to use the suspensions ιη and χρ. Instead of changing the

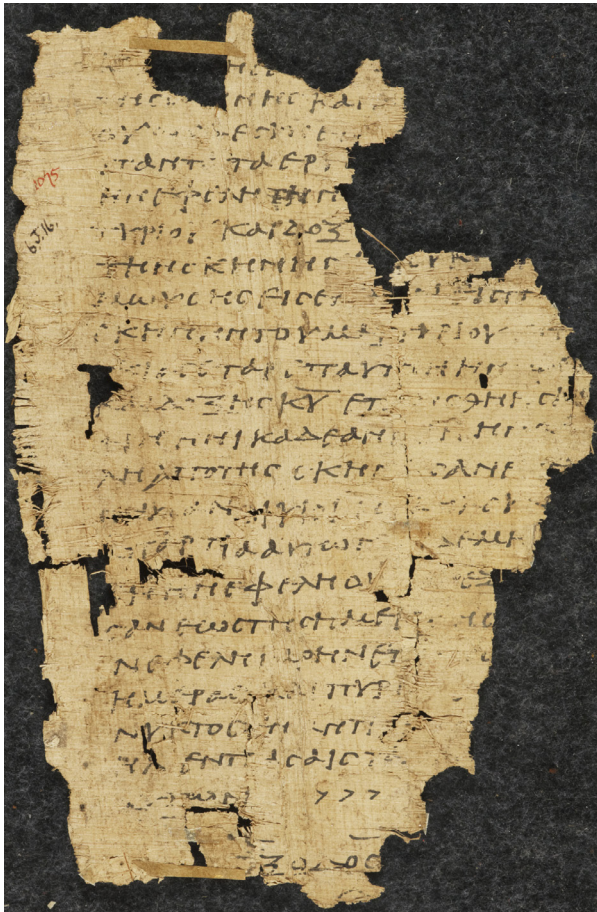


Figure 1: P.Oxy. 8.1075, end of Exodus (→ BL Pap. 2053). Image: by permission of The British Library © British Library Board.

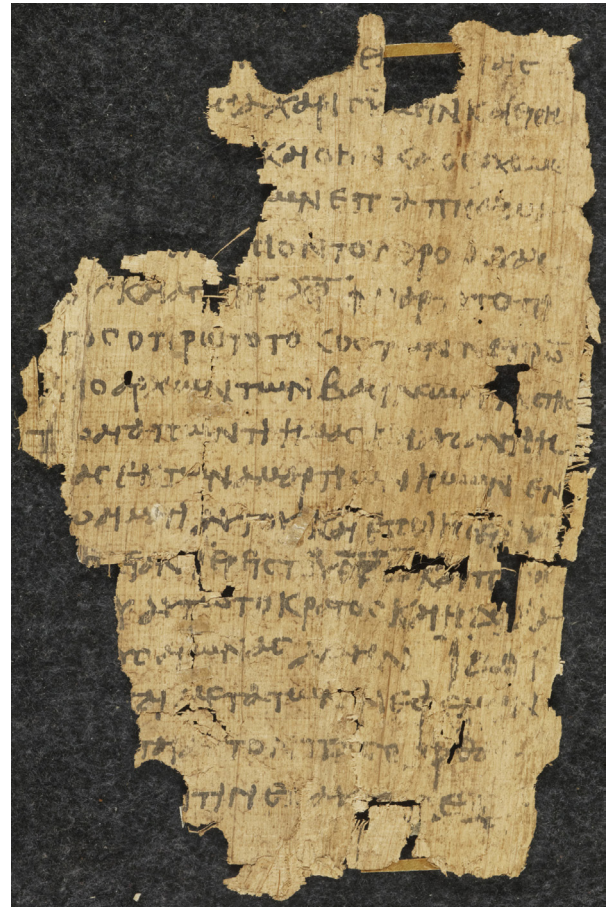


Figure 2: P.Oxy. 8.1079, beginning of Revelation (↓ BL Pap. 2053). Image: by permission of The British Library © British Library Board.

long contractions ($\overline{\eta\varsigma}$, $\overline{\eta\nu}$, $\overline{\eta\upsilon}$, etc.) in his exemplar to short contractions ($\overline{\iota\varsigma}$, $\overline{\iota\nu}$, etc.), the scribe changed all but two long contractions to suspensions at a time (c. 250) when short contraction was becoming standard in canonical gospel manuscripts produced for public reading. In contrast, the scribe of \mathfrak{P}^{75} (P.Bodmer 14-15), which is dated to the beginning of III, changes all but two of the long contractions in his *Vorlage* to short contractions.¹³ Indeed, the suspension $\overline{\eta}$ is a particular feature of early Christian gospel-like texts that were produced for ‘private’ use.¹⁴ Thus, regardless of whether the two suspensions were created or retained, they are another sign of copying for personal or ‘private’ use.

Finally, while the high and medial points (ll. 6, 13) and the diaereses over initial υ (l. 2) and ι (ll. 12, 14) may have been in the scribe’s exemplar, the enlarged initial letter of the first word of v. 7 ($\overline{\iota}\Delta\text{ΟΥ}$, l. 14) and the preceding space were probably supplied *in scribendo* (as with the three changes discussed above) to mark the sense break. However, this apparent incongruity need not detract from the ‘private’ designation given to P.Oxy. 8.1079. The enlargement of the first letter of the first word in a clause, new section, or text and the practice of ‘leaving spaces between words or more often groups of words’

were scribal practices used in documentary texts (Roberts 1979: 14-8). Enlargement of initial letters also accentuates lines in some school texts written by teachers (Criboire 1996: 99). Rather than showing that the text was copied to be read publicly, the vacant space and enlarged letter may be additional evidence that P.Oxy. 8.1079 was made for ‘private’ use.

The point is that if a ‘private’ text like P.Oxy. 8.1079 came from a reused roll, then it is in good company. Gamble observes that ‘not many early Christian texts were transcribed on rolls rather than in codices, but of those that were, most are opisthographs’, that is reused rolls. He goes on to provide three ‘[g]ood examples’ – P.Oxy. 8.1079; P.Oxy. 4.657 + PSI 12.1292 (\mathfrak{P}^{13}), portions of several chapters of Hebrews (2:14-5:5; 10:8-22; 10:29-11:13; 11:28-12:17) written on the ↓ of an epitome of Livy;¹⁵ and P.Mich. 2/2.130, parts of two Mandates (2.6-3.1; 3.2) of the *Shepherd* of Hermas written on the ↓ of a land register¹⁶ – and concludes by saying that ‘[s]uch texts were probably private copies made for personal use’ (Gamble 1995: 236). Several other early Christian texts written on the back of reused rolls can be added to this list: P.Oxy. 4.654, the beginning of the *Gospel of Thomas* (Incipit and Sayings 1-7) written on the ↓ of

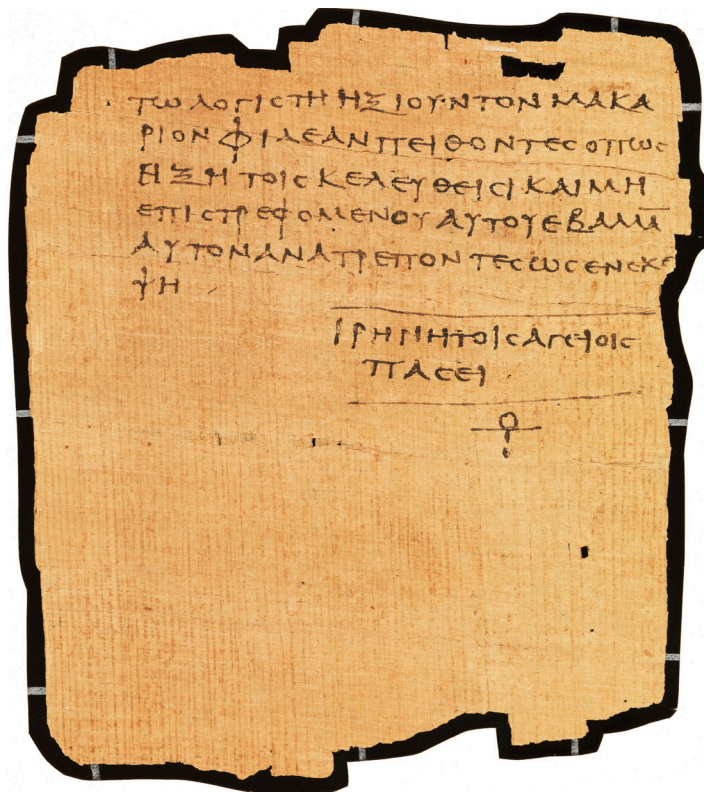


Figure 3: P. Bodmer 20, *Apology of Phileas* (→ 17).
Image: courtesy of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Genève)

a survey list of parcels of land;¹⁷ P.Oxy. 10.1228 (P²²), two fragments from adjacent columns of the Gospel of John (15:25-16:2; 16:21-32) written on the ↓ of a ‘blank’ roll;¹⁸ and P.Amh. Gr. 1.3c (Rahlfs 912), Genesis 1:1-5 written on the ↓ of a Christian letter from Rome (P.Amh. Gr. 1.3a), which has P.Amh. Gr. 1.3b (P¹²), Hebrews 1:1 from both the Septuagint (LXX) and Aquila, written on top of its second column.¹⁹

2. The text blocks, and the ‘miscellaneous’ or ‘composite’ codex hypothesis

If the fibres of the sheets in the quire(s) of the hypothetical codex were ordered in the ‘normal’ manner ↓→ to the middle of the quire, and then →↓ to the end of the quire (Turner 1977: 65), then BL Pap. 2053 was a right-hand leaf in the quire (→ P.Oxy. 8.1075, ↓ P.Oxy. 8.1079). If the quire(s) began →↓, then BL Pap. 2053 was a left-hand leaf in the quire (→ P.Oxy. 8.1075, ↓ P.Oxy. 8.1079). The same is true if single sheet quires ordered in these two respective ways were used. Finally, if the quire was arranged with ‘like’ fibres facing ‘like’ (↓→→↓↓→→↓ or →↓↓→→↓↓→), BL Pap. 2053 was a right-hand leaf in the quire. In all of these hypothetical quires, because the end of Exodus must precede the beginning of Revelation, the margin of P.Oxy. 8.1075 (Exodus) was an inner margin close to the centre fold of the codex. This means that the written text on the first page of P.Oxy. 8.1079 extended into the inner margin of the hypothetical codex with the result that the two text blocks do not have a complementary ‘footprint’ (Figures 1 and 2). Ordinarily,

a scribe copying a codex, even a second scribe as here, would want to maintain the uniform appearance of the codex by producing a leaf with text blocks that were as complementary as possible.

Nongbri addresses this problem as part of his argument that BL Pap. 2053 is another example of a Christian codex with an ‘eclectic combination of contents’ and with different ‘scribes working on the same codex, indeed on opposite sides of the very same page’. He points to the Bodmer ‘Miscellaneous’ or ‘Composite’ codex as a parallel and one leaf as ‘especially informative’ (Figures 3 and 4). The final page of P. Bodmer 20 (*Apology of Phileas*, → 17) and the first page of P. Bodmer 9 (Psalms 33 and 34, ↓ 33:2-10)²⁰ were copied by different hands, and the ‘scribe of the Psalms wrote lines extending to the very edge of the inner margin, a somewhat unexpected feature that would also be true of the scribe of P.Oxy. 8.1079, if it is indeed a leaf from a codex’ (Nongbri 2013: 83-4).

However, a significant difference between this leaf and BL Pap. 2053 is overlooked. The script of the first page of P. Bodmer 9 (↓ Ps. 33:2-10) gets smaller and more cramped towards the end of ll. 5, 8-9, 12-14 and the last word of each of ll. 12-14 is written in small letters above the ends of those lines. Although the scribe’s hand does not appear to have been hampered by the centre fold, this is indisputable proof that he was writing into the fold of a codex (either before binding or, more likely, after the binding had been loosened deliberately or through use). The same cannot be said of BL Pap. 2053. Of the lines

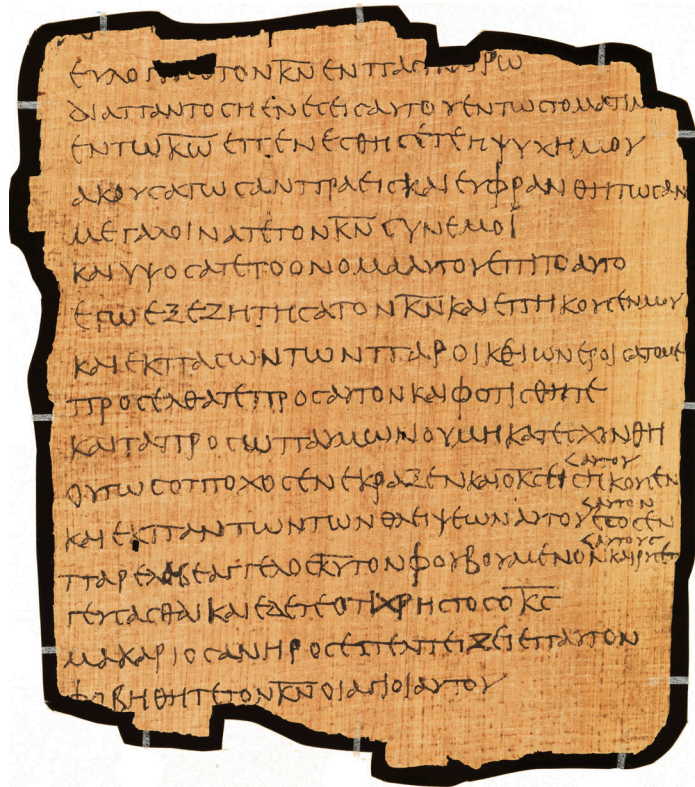


Figure 4: P.Bodmer 9, Psalms 33 and 34 (↓ 33:2-10).
Image: courtesy of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Genève)

that encroach on the hypothetical margin (ll. 8-14), only the end of l. 8 (της γης) – which coincides with the first lacuna on the right-hand side of P.Oxy. 8.1079 – is written in what might be a smaller and more cramped script. But that possibility is ruled out by the similarly formed end of l. 2 (ειρη) where there was space to write in larger letters. Therefore, the size of the script at the end of l. 8 is within normal range in terms of variation in the size of the semi-cursive letters. It very probably results from the lack of care with which the documentary hand was written, and not from the proximity of a centre fold. Consequently, it is unlikely that the ends of the lines of P.Oxy. 8.1079 were written in the margin of a codex.²¹

Moreover, Nongbri’s comparative argument loses its force entirely in view of the fact that the scribe did the same thing on every page of Psalms 33 and 34.²² The Hebrew counterpart of Psalm 33 (LXX) is Psalm 34, a poem with an acrostic structure in which each section (comprised of two clauses) begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The LXX reflects this structure by translating each section as two clauses. In order to maintain the same structure, the scribe of P.Bodmer 9 makes each clause fit on a single line, even at the expense of writing into the margins and above the ends of lines, and then does the same with Psalm 34. The latter poem is not acrostic but has the same one-section-in-two-clauses structure (cf. also Psalm 35 in the Hebrew). Thus, there is a reason why the scribe of P.Bodmer 9 wrote into the margins of all of the pages of Psalms 33 and 34; and so the leaf singled out for comparison is unrepresentative in this regard.²³

3. The fibres on the ↓ of the papyrus

In a response to Nongbri’s article, Peter van Minnen asks whether BL Pap. 2053 is a ‘fragment of a reused roll (so the editor) or of a codex (so Brent Nongbri)?’

If the former, the text on the back of the roll would not have been written immediately following but long after the text on the front, and one should be able to tell this from the writing on the back: the back of reused rolls is damaged from use, and writing on it is a struggle. If the latter, the writing on the back should not show signs of struggle. What Nongbri raises as an alternative possibility can be definitely settled with the papyrus in hand, and I have no doubt that the editor was right (van Minnen 2013: 245).

Subsequent autopsy confirmed van Minnen’s initial appraisal of images of the papyrus,

The ink on the back is occasionally in ‘crevices’ where the strips of papyrus do not join. This may have been very bad papyrus to begin with, but it is far more likely that the ink was applied only after the front had been used for quite a while, that is, after the papyrus had been unrolled and rolled up hundreds of times. The strips on the back then start to crack, leaving crevices. What I saw is typical of rolls that are reused on the back after some time of use. On the back, the strips run vertically and the ‘rolling’ pulls them apart. On the front, the strips run horizontally and the ‘rolling’ presses

them closer together but does not break them. In codices, front and back are put in place at the same time and, after the quires are put together, the strain on either side of the papyrus is the same, actually minimal (another advantage of the codex form). (van Minnen, *per litt.*, 15 August 2017)

While autopsy reveals more than examination of high resolution digital images of the papyrus, several vertical crevices are visible in the digital image, one of which runs down the length of P.Oxy. 8.1079. In addition, it is clear that the ink was applied after the crevices had formed. The question then is: how much time might have elapsed before the roll was reused? Of P.Oxy. 8.1075, Hunt said that the script did ‘not seem to be later than the third century’, but dated the writing of P.Oxy. 8.1079 ‘to the fourth rather than the third century, though the latter is not at all impossible’ (Hunt 1911: 5, 13). Recently, Orsini and Clarysse (2012: 459) have placed P.Oxy. 8.1079 in the third century on the basis of its resemblance to PSI 3.199, a documentary text dated to AD 203. While there are similarities, the hand of P.Oxy. 8.1079 is not as even or accomplished (cf. PSIonline n.d.: PSI III 199). In any event, if both sides of the papyrus were written in the third century, their writing might have been separated by a number of decades.

4. Rotation of reused rolls: Is BL Pap. 2053 an exception?

The final strand in Nongbri’s argument is the tentative proposal that when rolls were reused, they were often rotated 180 degrees so that the text on the ↓ was upside down relative to the first text written on the →. Of the reused (privately produced for personal use) rolls listed at the end of § 1 above, P.Oxy. 4.657 + PSI 12.1292 (P¹³) and P.Mich. 2/2.130 are mentioned as examples of this phenomenon, along with a number of Christian texts written on the back of papyrus rolls: PSI 8.921 (Rahlfs 2054), parts of two columns containing verses from Psalm 77 (vv. 1, 5-9, 18) written on the ↓ of a register of bank loans and payments;²⁴ P.Lips. 1.97 + P.Bonn. inv. 147 (Rahlfs 2013), Psalm 35:3-55:14 written on the ↓ of an agricultural produce account;²⁵ P.IFAO 2.31 (P⁹⁸), Revelation 1:13-20 written on the ↓ of a declaration of livestock;²⁶ and P.Oxy. 69.4705, a portion of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Vision 1.1.8-9) written on the ↓ of an unidentified literary text.²⁷ Another of the ‘private’ reused rolls mentioned at the end of § 1 above – P.Amh. Gr. 1.3c (Rahlfs 912; Gen. 1:1-5) written on the ↓ of a Christian letter from Rome (P.Amh. Gr. 1.3a), which has P.Amh. Gr. 1.3b (P¹²; Heb. 1:1) written on top of its second column – should be added to this list.²⁸ Interestingly, two of the inverted opisthographs listed by Nongbri, P.IFAO 2.31 and P.Oxy. 69.4705, have also been described as copies made for personal or ‘private’ use because texts written on the back of reused rolls ‘can be associated with a set of socio-cultural practices that scholars often designate as “private” in opposition to the “public” functions of the literary book-roll’ (Bazzana 2016: 16; cf. 23). While this

rationale will often be right, particularly when supported by an informal or documentary script, it should be remembered that on occasion a text for personal or ‘private’ use might have been copied in a hand that is closer to semi-literary than documentary, and that intended ‘private’ use may only be signalled by scribal tendencies like those found in P.Oxy. 8.1079.²⁹

The question at hand, however, is whether BL Pap. 2053 came from a codex because it does not conform to this general ‘rule’ of inverting rolls for reuse. Nongbri (2013: 87) can find only one exception, P.Oxy. 4.654 (*Gospel of Thomas*, Incipit and Sayings 1-7), another of the ‘private’ opisthographs discussed above. But P.Oxy. 10.1228 (P²²; John 15:25-16:2; 16:21-32) must be another because nothing is written on its →. Grenfell and Hunt (1914: 14) were of the opinion that ‘no doubt in other parts the roll included sheets which had previously been inscribed’, and Aland (1976: 242-43; 1967:167) speculates that the fragments may have come from the guard at the front or end of the roll or that the scribe reused a roll that was not long enough and so had to attach additional sheets. Finally, there is compelling evidence that BL Pap. 2053 also comes from a reused roll and is yet another ‘exception’. Given the concession that this argument proceeds ‘from an admittedly non-comprehensive sample’ (Nongbri 2013: 84), it might have been better avoided.

Conclusion

The wider column of P.Oxy. 8.1079, the incompatible ‘footprints’ of the two text blocks, and the absence of any signs that the scribe was writing into a margin tell against the argument that BL Pap. 2053 came from a codex. The ‘parallel’ leaf from the Bodmer ‘Miscellaneous’ codex serves only to demonstrate what is lacking in P.Oxy. 8.1079. Similarly, instead of BL Pap. 2053 being the exception that proves the rule, it is one of several ‘exceptions’ that put paid to the idea that almost all rolls were inverted for reuse. Why did the scribe not rotate the roll containing Exodus 180 degrees before writing? Simply because he started at the end of the roll and not the beginning.³⁰ When early Christian texts were copied into a roll rather than a codex, they were often transcribed on the back of used rolls for personal or ‘private’ use. Thus, the pointers to copying for ‘private’ use – the irregular semi-cursive hand, the singular transposition, the rough correction, and the two suspensions – support the conclusion that BL Pap. 2053 did not come from a codex. All of this is confirmed by the pulling apart of some of the ↓ fibres on the back of BL Pap. 2053 and the fact that the text of P.Oxy. 8.1079 was written after that had occurred.

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Endnotes

- 1 For high resolution images of the papyrus see British Library (n.d.: Papyrus 2053).
- 2 Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB) 3477; Trismegistos (TM) 62314; Rahlfs & Fraenkel (2004: 295).
- 3 LDAB 2786; TM 61636; Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF) n.d.: Doc ID 10018.
- 4 The genitive of the name Jesus Christ is abbreviated by suspension and overstroked with a supralinear line, $\overline{\eta\chi\rho}$, while the dative of the word God is contracted and overstroked, $\overline{\theta\omega}$. The same three words appear twice each in Rev. 1:1-3. Allowance might also be made for numerals. But none occur in vv. 1-3 and, in any case, $\epsilon\pi\tau\acute{\alpha}$ in the first and fourth lines of the papyrus was written in full.
- 5 Nongbri (2013: 80) rounds up the average number of letters per line to 24 and arrives at ‘11 or 12 lines of text and perhaps a short title of some sort’.
- 6 Cf. Aland (1976: 238): ‘rekonstruiertes Kolumnenformat: 22 × 9.3 cm; rekonstruierte Zeilenzahl: 29-30’.
- 7 Nongbri (2013: 83) measures the longest fully preserved line to arrive at the same figure.
- 8 Nongbri (2013: 80) measures the fully preserved ll. 8 and 9 of P.Oxy. 8.1079 to arrive at a figure of 9.4 cm.
- 9 For discussion of this issue see Charlesworth (2016: 43, 64, 78, 78 n. 393, 136-37, 145).
- 10 Cf. ‘about 27 cm high by 11.6 cm wide’ (Nongbri 2013: 83). Aland (1976: NT 18) and van Haelst (1976: no. 559) both estimate the roll to have been 25 cm high.
- 11 $\omega\overline{\theta\omega} : \tau\{\sigma\}\overline{\theta\omega}$ pap.
- 12 Suspensions occur mainly in inscriptions (Avi-Yonah 1974). According to Paap (1959: 107), ‘ $\overline{\eta\chi\rho}$ and $\overline{\chi\rho}$ are parallel forms, suspended after the usual manner of inscription-writing [... which] have their origin in the non-literary branch of tradition’.
- 13 On scribal treatment of *nomina sacra* in \mathfrak{P}^{75} and \mathfrak{P}^{45} see Charlesworth (2016: 106-11, 118-19).
- 14 See the discussions of P.Egerton inv. 2, P.Dura 10, P.Oxy. 2.210, and P.Oxy. 10.1224 in Charlesworth (2016: 135-49). The suspension $\overline{\eta\chi\rho}$ is also found in P.Ryl. 3.464 which Roberts (1938: xvii, 24), after publishing the poorly preserved text with the title ‘Apocryphal Gospel (?)’, concedes (in the Addenda and Corrigenda of the same volume) ‘is more likely to belong to an astrological work than an apocryphal gospel’. He then adds that the ‘ $\overline{\eta\chi\rho}$ may be no more than the numeral 18 (it is not uncommon for lines to be placed over numerals)’. $\overline{\eta\chi\rho}$ also occurs in P.Oxy. 17.2070, a Christian anti-Jewish text (Paap 1959: no. 51). For two other texts with the suspension $\overline{\chi\rho}$ see Paap (1959: nos. 283 and 421).
- 15 Grenfell & Hunt (1904: 36-48); Bartoletti, Terzaghi & Norsa (1951: 209-10); LDAB 3018; TM 61861. Cf. Head & Warren (1997) who conclude that the manuscript was not produced by a professional scribe; and Luijendijk (2010: 252) who thinks that the manuscript ‘was intended for private use’ not public reading.
- 16 Bonner (1927); LDAB 1096; TM 59984; Aland & Rosenbaum (1995: 275-79, no. 34). For an image see Advanced Papyrological Information System, UM (2017: P.Mich.inv. 44; Verso). According to Bonner (1927: 108), the reuse of a ‘discarded roll’ and the semi-cursive hand suggest that the copy was made ‘for the writer’s personal use’. Bazzana (2016: 21) reaches the same conclusion.
- 17 Grenfell and Hunt (1904: 1-22); LDAB 4030; TM 62840.
- 18 Grenfell & Hunt (1914: 14-16); LDAB 2779; TM 61629. After observing that the → of both fragments is blank, Grenfell and Hunt (1914: 14) state that ‘no doubt in other parts the roll included sheets which had previously been inscribed’. On the ‘private’ features of P.Oxy. 10.1228 and P.Oxy. 4.654 see Charlesworth (2016: 74-5, 122-24).
- 19 Grenfell & Hunt (1900: 28-31); LDAB 3475; TM 62312. de Bruyn & Dijkstra (2011) put P.Amh. 1.3c (Gen. 1:1-5) in their list of possible amulets: see no. 155 (p. 208; cf. p. 177). Amulets ‘were commonly used to invoke divine power for healing from sickness, protection against harm, malediction of adversaries, and success in a variety of affairs. These amulets were prepared by specialists who often followed pre-existing models. They were rendered effective by writing, recitation, and other rituals, and were then worn on one’s body or fixed, displayed, or deposited in some place’ (p. 164). See also Horsley (1993: 75-6).
- 20 LDAB/TM 220465. For transcriptions of the two pages from the editions of Martin (1964) and Testuz (1959) see *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* (2000b: 699) and *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* (2000a: 781) respectively. For the photographic plates see *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* (2000d: 699) and *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* (2000c: 297) respectively.
- 21 It is worth considering whether Revelation might have been started on the back page of a codex containing Exodus and then additional quires added to accommodate the rest of the text. This possibility is also ruled out by the dissimilar footprints of the two text blocks. The scribe writes as though he has plenty of room and there is little or no need to maintain a uniform margin.
- 22 *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* (2000a: 781-85) (text); *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* (2010c: 297-301) (plates).
- 23 ‘Another example of this phenomenon’ taken from the Bodmer ‘Miscellaneous’ or ‘Composite’ codex (Nongbri 2013: 84 n. 17), the final page of the *Genesis of Mary* and the first page of apocryphal correspondence between the Corinthians and Paul, is not cogent. For the plates see: *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* (2000c: 270) and *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* (2000c: 302) respectively.
- 24 Norsa (1926); LDAB 3088; TM 61931. See also PSIonline (n.d.: PSI VIII 921). For an image see Thompson et al. (1913-1930: pl. 182).
- 25 Heinrici (1903: col. 7-34); Colomo & Scholl (2005: 163-67); Emmenegger (2007: 328-70); LDAB 3168. The Bonn fragment comes from the top of cols. 1 and 2 of the Leipzig roll. For images of both papyri see the Papyrus und Ostraka Projekt (2003-2017: P.Lips.Inv. 39 + P.Bonn. Inv. 147).
- 26 Málik (2016); Hagerdorn (1992); LDAB 2776; TM 61626. For an image see The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts ([CSNTM] n.d.: P98).
- 27 Gonis (2005); LDAB 10574; TM 69383. For an image see Oxrhynchus Online (n.d.: P.Oxy. LXIX 4705).
- 28 For images of P.Amh. Gr. 1.3a-c see the Morgan Library and Museum (n.d.: Amherst Greek Papyrus 3) and CSNTM (n.d.: P12). The black and white CSNTM images have greater capacity for zoom and the image of the verso has been inverted. The much later British Library inv. no. 2241 (Rev. 2:12-13; 15:8-16:2) might also be added to the list: see Cate (2016: 33-49); Crum & Bell (1922: no. 12); LDAB 2824; TM 61673. For images see CSNTM (n.d.: P43).

- 29 Cf. the descriptions of the scripts of the four additional papyri listed by Nongbri in Mugridge (2016): PSI 8.921 (no. 90); P.Lips 1.97 + P.Bonn. inv. 147 (no. 74); P.IFAO 2.31 (no. 256); and P.Oxy. 69.4705 (no. 313).
- 30 Cf. 'A roll that has *not* been rolled back up after reading will have the end of the recto (→) text as the outermost part of the roll. To begin writing on the verso, one need not rotate the papyrus at all but instead simply begin writing with the result that the beginning of the text of [*sic*] the verso (↓) will be at the same end of the roll as the conclusion of the text on the recto (→), and the two sides will be right-side-up relative to one another': WA Johnson, *per litt.*, 7 September 2011, cited by Nongbri (2013: 87).