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Comparison of Scribal Variants between New Testament Manuscripts and
Apocryphal Manuscripts

Seth Kohrman

ANES 495 – Dr. Thomas Wayment

Today biblical scholars, theologians, and lay Christians recognize the difference between the canonical and apocryphal literature that have come down through the centuries to modern times. The purpose of the discussion here is to demonstrate by means of textual criticism that early scribes who copied Christian texts may have also differentiated between what are termed modernly as canonical and apocryphal literature respectively. The extensive research of prominent biblical scholars will be drawn upon in order to establish and support this thesis. However, the greatest difficulty and challenge of this topic is that there is an abundance of information, but currently no definitive secondary sources exist. No scholar to date has actually posed the question as to whether or not early Christians understood a difference between canonical and apocryphal literature.

This is a case study and is not meant to be comprehensive. The parameters of the discussion will include intensive reference to Greek New Testament and apocryphal manuscripts and fragments from the 1st to 5th centuries AD. The texts which will be analyzed are the three Greek New Testament manuscripts P. 46, P. 66, and P. 75. Because of the ongoing project of retrieving high quality images of all surviving apocryphal writings, this discussion will only include P. Dura 10 which is Tatian's Diatessaron. Reference to *early Christians* will denote Christians who lived in the first five centuries AD. Reference to *canonical* texts will represent what Western Christianity generally considers to be the canon, i.e. the New Testament. Likewise, reference to *apocryphal* texts refers to what Western Christianity would deem to be apocrypha.

Three devices will be key in the examination of Greek New Testament and apocryphal texts. First, the codex majority of Christian texts as compared to scrolls; and the most common

form (scroll or codex) of apocryphal texts. Larry Hurtado has already compiled excellent work on these subjects and his work will be critical.¹ The early Christian preference for the codex over the scroll may shed light as to how the early Christians viewed apocryphal writings as compared to how they viewed canonical writings. Christians may have preferred the codex form for their scriptures because they considered them to be sacred and desired to have a format which would distinguish them from others. In contrast to this, new research suggests that the early Christians did not use the codex form as frequently for apocryphal writings which they did not consider to be canon.

The second area of discussion is the frequency individual apocryphal writing found together in codex form with canonical texts. Hurtado has addressed this topic albeit not as in depth as the issue of codex verses scroll.² If the early Christians placed certain apocryphal writings in codex form with canonical writings, then they logically viewed those apocryphal writings as canon as well.

Lastly, the main point and focus of the discussion are the reasons for scribal variances in texts, specifically between Christian canonical and apocryphal texts. Intentional and accidental reasons for variances in texts occur and the examination thereof is vital. Equally important are the topics of stichometry, *nomina sacra*, penmanship, ornamentation, and other scribal markings of the texts. Special concentration upon the scribal markings will illustrate scribal tendencies in copying canonical texts as compared to apocryphal texts. Early Christians, and/or their scribes,

¹ Larry H. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 43-93.

² Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 92-93. Hurtado does give excellent graphs, numbers, and percentages of known New Testament and apocryphal texts. While he does not focus on the apocryphal texts found together in codex form with New Testament texts, he does in fact mention it in passing as a portion of the overall study.

seem to have been more precise and clear when copying what they considered to be canon. On the other hand, they seem to have been much less painstaking in their work when it came to copying texts which they did not consider to be canon.

Codex or Scroll

Hurtado explains that most biblical scholars are familiar with and generally accept the theory that early Christians preferred the codex to the scroll.³ The codex was typically formed of papyrus.⁴ Among early Christians, it typically consisted of sheets of papyrus paper folded down the middle in order to create two faces on each side of each papyrus piece which then amounted to four writing faces on each papyrus piece (front and back).⁵

Hurtado provides statistics from the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB) for his conclusions of the early Christian preference for the codex over the scroll.⁶ He reports that at the time of his investigations, LDAB held over ten thousand manuscripts (not including items deemed to be sheets or fragments).⁷ He lists 7,244 of these being from the 1st century AD

³ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 43. Hurtado gathered this information from the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB). An important side note here is that the creators of LDAB are continuously updating the collection, thus rendering Hurtado's numbers somewhat incorrect now. Nevertheless, I have seen from my own research on the subject in use of LDAB that these percentages have stayed rather steady and accurate to what Hurtado reports.

⁴ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 43.

⁵ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 43.

⁶ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 44.

⁷ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 44, 46.

through the 4th century AD.⁸ 1.9% of the 2nd century AD manuscripts are identified as Christian⁹, while that rises to 10.3% of the total manuscripts in the 3rd century AD¹⁰. Then it takes a large leap to 38% in the 4th century AD.¹¹ However, LDAB lists 3,188 manuscripts identified as codices.¹² 2,328 (73%) of these 3,188 codices are identified as Christian.¹³ One hundred four of these codices are dated to the 2nd century AD and twenty nine (27.9%) have been identified as Christian.¹⁴ In the 3rd century AD, there are three hundred ninety-seven codices of which one hundred thirty-four (33.8%) are identified as Christian.¹⁵

On the other hand, Hurtado explains that the scroll was much more frequently used in this period by non-Christians.¹⁶ The scroll was made by connecting one papyrus sheet to the end of another which created an ongoing flow of writing material; this was then rolled up to keep safe.¹⁷ Although LDAB only lists 3,033 (One hundred fifty-five less than the 3,188 identified as codices) manuscripts as identified scrolls, Hurtado suggests that an overwhelming majority of the items

⁸ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 45. Hurtado reminds us here that it is important to remember that all of the data found at LDAB is according to what individual scholars and editors have decided in regards to each manuscript.

⁹ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 46.

¹⁰ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 46.

¹¹ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 46-47.

¹² Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 47.

¹³ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 47.

¹⁴ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 47.

¹⁵ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 47.

¹⁶ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 43. Hurtado gathered this information from Colin H. Roberts and T. C. Skeats' *The Birth of the Codex* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983). Again Hurtado's percentages and numbers in this chapter may be somewhat outdated now; they nevertheless seem to still project a similar percentage today.

¹⁷ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 43.

identified as sheets and fragments belonged to scrolls originally based on the clear scholarly acceptance of the scroll as the preference in antiquity as a whole.¹⁸

Christians may have preferred the codex over the scroll because the codex was so rarely used at the time and thus was a perfect way by which they could distinguish their canon from other prominent works of importance. Consequently, the question must arise as to whether or not one may find a difference in numbers and percentages of canonical texts in codex and/or scrolls as compared to apocryphal texts in codex and/or scroll form. Alongside this question, one must wonder what the overall number of surviving canonical texts is as compared to the surviving apocryphal texts. Finally, one should ask as well as to which, if any, of the canonical and apocryphal writings are found together. Data for these questions is available for the New Testament and apocryphal texts.

The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece contains a comprehensive list of Greek New Testament manuscripts.¹⁹ Currently the list consists of about six hundred Greek New Testament manuscripts.²⁰ These consist of codices, scrolls, and fragments.²¹ One hundred fifty-eight (26%) of these six hundred Greek New Testament manuscripts are dated from the 2nd

¹⁸ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 46. Unfortunately, Hurtado does not seem to go into depth as regards his explanation on the supposed scholarly consensus regarding the scroll as the dominate and favored choice of the peoples of the ancient Mediterranean world. This, admittedly, is a weak spot in my argument.

¹⁹ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece* (ed. Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book.

²⁰ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

²¹ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

century AD to the 5th century AD.²² None actually survive from the 1st century AD.²³ However, four are listed as from the 2nd century AD while three more are listed as from the 2nd/3rd centuries AD.²⁴ Then the number jumps to forty-two in the 3rd century AD and twelve more in the 3rd/4th centuries AD.²⁵ Novum Testamentum Graece lists twenty-nine for 4th century AD and fourteen for the 4th/5th centuries AD.²⁶ Finally, it lists another forty-two Greek New Testament manuscripts for the 5th century AD along with twelve for the 5th/6th centuries AD.²⁷

Thirty-four of the one hundred fifty-eight Greek New Testament manuscripts which Novum Testamentum Graece lists are papyrus fragments that have not been identified as codices (22%).²⁸ Keeping to Hurtado's thesis, this means that these thirty-four fragments should be counted as scrolls.²⁹ Happily, the other hundred twenty-four manuscripts have been identified

²² Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

²³ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

²⁴ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

²⁵ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

²⁶ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

²⁷ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

²⁸ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

²⁹ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

clearly as codices.³⁰ This equals an overwhelming majority of Greek New Testament manuscripts in codex form – 78%.³¹ This information unmistakably demonstrates that the early Christians did, indeed, prefer the codex for their canonical writings.

The number of each of the twenty-seven books which now make up the New Testament is listed below from greatest to smallest in order to demonstrate the obvious frequency and use of these among early Christians:

Matthew – 33
John – 30
Acts – 26
Luke – 19
Romans – 16
Mark, Hebrews – 15
Galatians – 13
Ephesians, Revelation – 12
1 st Corinthians, James – 11
1 st Thessalonians, 1 st Peter – 10
2 nd Corinthians, Philippians, 1 st Timothy, Titus – 8
Colossians, Philemon, 2 nd Peter, 1 st John, 2 nd John – 7
2 nd Thessalonians, 2 nd Timothy, 3 rd John, Jude – 6 ³²

³⁰ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

³¹ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

³² Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

The canonical text which has the most surviving attestations is the Gospel of Matthew at thirty-three while the lowest is still six attestations.³³

Research in the *Novum Testamentum Graece* reports that each of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament appears with each of the other books in the New Testament at least three times, but typically more than this.³⁴ That means that each of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament is found along with at least one other of the twenty-six New Testament books three or more times in the form of a manuscript dating between the 2nd century AD and the 5th century AD.

There are seventy-five different texts which have been discovered thus far that are considered to be New Testament apocryphal texts.³⁵ However, in comparison to the canonical

³³ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

³⁴ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix.

³⁵ Through my research I have gathered a list of New Testament Apocrypha texts. At the present time my list consists of the following texts: Arabic Infancy Gospel, History of Joseph the Carpenter, Life of John the Baptist, Gospel of the Hebrews, Gospel of the Nazarenes, Gospel of the Ebionites, Gospel of Marcion, Gospel of Mani, Gospel of Appeltes, Gospel of Bardesanes, Gospel of Basilides, Gospel of Cerinthus, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Nicodemus/Acts of Pilate, Gospel of Bartholomew, Questions of Bartholomew, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ according to Bartholomew, Diatessaron, Apocrypha of James/Secret Book of James, Book of Thomas the Contender, Dialogue of the Savior, Gospel of Judas, Gospel of Mary, Gospel of Philip, Greek Gospel of the Egyptians, Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians, Sophia of Jesus Christ, Gospel of Truth, Apocalypse of Peter, Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter, Pistis Sophia, Second Treatise of the Great Seth, Apocrypha of John, Apocalypse of Paul, Coptic Apocalypse of Paul, Trimorphic Protennoia, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Barnabas, Acts of John, Acts of the Martyrs, Acts of Paul, Acts of Paul and Thecla, Acts of Peter, Acts of Peter and Andrew, Acts of Peter and Paul, Acts of Peter and the Twelve, Acts of Philip, Acts of Thomas, Acts of Xanthippe, Polyxena, and Rebecca, Epistle of Barnabas, Epistle of the Corinthians to Paul, Epistle to the Laodiceans, Epistle to Seneca the Younger, Third Epistle to the Corinthians, Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, Apocalypse of Thomas, Apocalypse of Stephen, First Apocalypse of James, Shepherd of Hermas, Home Going of Mary, Falling Asleep of the Mother of God, Descent of Mary, Book of Nepos, Didache, Liturgy of James, Prayer of the Apostle Paul, Secret Gospel of Mark, Gospel of Eve, Gospel of the Four Heavenly Realms, Gospel of Matthias, Gospel of Perfection, Gospel of the Seventy, Gospel of Thaddeus, Gospel of the Twelve, Memoria Apostolorum.

texts,³⁶ only fifty-seven Greek New Testament apocryphal texts fall under the parameters of this discussion, namely that they are from the 5th century AD or earlier.³⁷ The other apocryphal texts are disqualified for a number of reasons including that the fact that many are not attested as early as the 5th century AD, some are attested in the first five centuries AD but not in Greek, and so on.

Moving forward from there, thirty-five of the fifty-seven texts are listed as codices while the rest are listed as scrolls, sheets, and fragments. However, there are only sixteen different texts within this corpus of fifty-seven manuscripts. The only apocryphal text, which was found with any of the New Testament manuscripts listed earlier, is the Diatessaron.³⁸

The sixteen texts are the following: Shepherd of Hermas, Protoevangelium of James, Acts of John, Acts of Paul and Thecla, Gospel of Thomas, Letter of Abgar, Acts of Paul, Apocalypse of Peter, Gospel of the Savior, Didache, Gospel of Mary, Gospel of Peter, Diatessaron, Letter of Barnabas, Sophia of Jesus Christ, unknown/unidentified apocryphal gospels and/or fragments.

The Letter of Abgar, Acts of Paul, Apocalypse of Peter, Gospel of the Savior, Didache, Gospel of Mary, Gospel of Peter, Letter of Barnabas, and the Sophia of Jesus Christ are only

³⁶ I work as a research assistant along with Justin Soderquist and Dave Nielsen to Dr. Thomas Wayment, New Testament professor at BYU's Ancient Scripture Department. As a portion of a project for Dr. Wayment, we have compiled the whereabouts and background information of as many Greek New Testament apocryphal texts up to the 5th Century AD as possible with the hopes of one day making the list comprehensive.

³⁷ I gathered this information for this paper in March, 2008 from the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB). It is important to remember that the Leuven Database of Ancient Books continues to be updated on a regular basis and so even now this information may be incomplete and outdated.

³⁸ Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 684-720. This list is the first appendix at the back of the book. This comes from my own personal research of the appendix. The Diatessaron is a part of P.212 along with Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This papyrus dates to the 3rd century AD.

attested by LDAB once each. LDAB also holds eight unknown Christian texts. LDAB lists these either as apocryphal gospels or apocryphal fragments, but scholarship currently has not reached a general consensus as to what these texts are specifically.³⁹

The Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Acts of John are listed three times. The Protoevangelium of James is listed five times. It is important to note that all five manuscripts of the Protoevangelium of James are codices. This may suggest that the early Christians viewed it as canon.

Although the Diatessaron is only attested once, it was found as part of a codex, P.212, along with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This would certainly give the Diatessaron a significant importance and place among apocryphal writings; it may even suggest that the early Christians did view it as canon.

However, the only apocryphal text that shows up consistently in the first five centuries AD is the Shepherd of Hermas. There are thus far twenty-eight attestations of Hermas which have been identified for this study. No other of the apocryphal texts even has as many attestations as the lowest of those included in the New Testament. One could certainly make a case that the early Christians did, in fact, consider the Shepherd of Hermas to be canon. To further support this theory, LDAB lists twenty-two of the twenty-eight Hermas texts as codices. Five are listed as scrolls and one is listed as a sheet.

In summary, according to the data thus far discovered, the only apocryphal texts that have a valid argument for being canon for the early Christians are the Shepherd of Hermas, the

³⁹ It is important to remember here that LDAB simply lists these manuscripts and their information according to what the original editors and scholars who worked with them recorded them as.

Protoevangelium of James, the Diatessaron, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Acts of John because of their number of attestations, the high percentage of codex forms as compared to scroll forms, and with which other texts they were found.

Intentional/Unintentional Variances

The following examples of intentional and unintentional reasons for textual variances are precisely that: examples. It is not the intention here to present a comprehensive list of reasons, but rather a sampling in order to demonstrate how easily variances and corruptions crept into the texts. A sample study of textual alterations is important to the overall study because one may see, at least in the case of the intentional changes of text, that the scribes considered the canonical to be important enough to change to their own liking and theological support. To compare this to apocryphal text may demonstrate whether or not early Christians considered apocryphal texts to be worthwhile enough to change and form so as to match up with their own theologies. In the case of unintentional modifications, this sample study is significant because it will show how precise and exact the scribes were in their transmission of the texts. Sloppier transmission may suggest that the scribe did not view the text as significant while more careful transmission may suggest the opposite.

As stated briefly in the introduction, there are numberless reasons for variances in texts. Bart Ehrman has highlighted several of these reasons.⁴⁰ His thesis, however, is that the so-called Orthodox Christians altered New Testament texts to more fully agree with their own orthodox

⁴⁰ Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

views and thereby to also refute the beliefs of other Christian groups.⁴¹ Ehrman separates these Christian groups, against whom the Orthodox Christians waged a theological war, into four.⁴² The first group is the adoptionists.⁴³ Adoptionists were Christians who held a low Christology; that is to say, that they viewed Christ as a normal man whom God adopted as His Son and gave him power unto the salvation of humankind.⁴⁴ Ehrman places the Ebionites and Theodotus in this group, albeit still with their theological differences from one another.⁴⁵ He explains that the orthodox view of Christ was that he was human, but also divine being the literal Son of God.⁴⁶ Ehrman presents several New Testament examples as orthodox alterations against adoptionist views.⁴⁷ However, this study will only address the first example he provides. Luke 3:22 gives an account of God speaking to Christ at his baptism.⁴⁸ In the Codex Bezae it reads as, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.”⁴⁹ Ehrman takes this as the original version of the text.⁵⁰ It is quite clear that such a scriptural passage would support the views of Adoptionist Christians that Christ was a flesh and blood man whom God adopted as his own. Ehrman goes on to say that

⁴¹ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, xi.

⁴² Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. See the Content page at the beginning of the book. Chapters 2 through 5 address the four Christian groups which Ehrman uses.

⁴³ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 47.

⁴⁴ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 47.

⁴⁵ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 50-52.

⁴⁶ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 54.

⁴⁷ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 62-99.

⁴⁸ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 62.

⁴⁹ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 62.

⁵⁰ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 62-67.

Orthodox Christians changed this account such as in later texts of Mark 1:11 which reads, “You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased.”⁵¹

The second Christian group Ehrman lists is the separatists.⁵² He tells of Cerinthus who believed, as did the adoptionists, that Jesus was a normal man.⁵³ However, a portion of the Godhead entered into him upon his baptism.⁵⁴ This divine portion, the Christ, then departed to Heaven from Jesus at the time of his passion.⁵⁵ It is easy to see why the Orthodox Christians did not support the beliefs of the separatists simply based on their (separatists’) overlapping theological beliefs with the adoptionists. Once more, only the first New Testament example which Ehrman gives will be provided. Most attestations of 1 John 4:3 read “every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.”⁵⁶ However, other manuscripts as early as the second century read “every spirit that separates Jesus is not from God.”⁵⁷ Ehrman suggests that this second reading is an orthodox modification to dissemble separatist ideas.⁵⁸

Docetists make up the third group.⁵⁹ They believed that Christ only appeared to be on earth in corporal form.⁶⁰ Ehrman lists Marcion as a docetist.⁶¹ Luke 22:43-44 gives an account of

⁵¹ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 62.

⁵² Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 119.

⁵³ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 119.

⁵⁴ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 119.

⁵⁵ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 119.

⁵⁶ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 119.

⁵⁷ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 119.

⁵⁸ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 119.

⁵⁹ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 181.

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.⁶² Ehrman challenges that despite not mention of it in the other Gospels, the following somehow appears in numerous manuscripts: “and an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him. And being in agony he began to pray yet more fervently, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.”⁶³ Regarding the bloody sweat, Ehrman contends that this was a later orthodox addition to demonstrate that Christ did, in fact, have a corporal body; the bloody sweat was their proof for it.⁶⁴

Finally, Ehrman lists the patripassianists as the fourth group.⁶⁵ The patripassianists believed the Christ was actually God the Father who came down in the flesh to suffer the passion for his children.⁶⁶ Although Ehrman seems somewhat doubtful of the claim, he lists Sabellius as the main figure among the patripassianists early on.⁶⁷ Ehrman argues that Orthodox Christians tampered with Acts 20:28 to destroy support of patripassianist theology in the New Testament.⁶⁸ In some manuscripts it did read “the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.”⁶⁹ Other manuscripts read “the church of the Lord, which he purchased with his own blood.”⁷⁰

⁶⁰ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 181.

⁶¹ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 185-87.

⁶² Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 187-88.

⁶³ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 188. This is a portion of Luke 22:43-44.

⁶⁴ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 187-88.

⁶⁵ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 262.

⁶⁶ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 262.

⁶⁷ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 263.

⁶⁸ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 264.

⁶⁹ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 264.

Changing the word “God” (which may refer to God the Father) to “Lord” leaves out the possibility that God the Father suffered for his children; the use of the word “Lord” demands that one understand that as Christ.⁷¹

Unintentional textual variances occur because humans are human. They grow weary and tired. Peter Head addresses one such example.⁷² Head demonstrates through P. Oxy. 657 that the scribe’s re-inking of the pen contributes to textual errors.⁷³ He explains that the action of re-inking the pen would have required the scribe to focus solely on that very action (of re-inking).⁷⁴ He continues to expound that this would have obviously required the scribe to take his eyes and concentration off of the text for a moment; sufficient time to lose one’s place.⁷⁵ Head lists several different possibilities as to how this may have caused errors to creep into the text: duplication of letters, words, phrases, and entire sentences; skipping of lines to copy in incorrect place of the text.⁷⁶ Congruent weariness from copying may have also contributed to mistakes in texts, especially while the scribe focuses on re-inking instead of copying.⁷⁷ Head’s representation of one reason for unintentional errors in a text is a good quality one.

⁷⁰ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 264.

⁷¹ Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 264.

⁷² Peter M. Head and M. Warren, “Re-inking the Pen: Evidence from P. Oxy. 657 (P13) concerning unintentional scribal errors,” *NTS* 43 (1997): 466-73.

⁷³ Head, “Re-inking the Pen,” 466-76.

⁷⁴ Head, “Re-inking the Pen,” 466-76.

⁷⁵ Head, “Re-inking the Pen,” 466-76.

⁷⁶ Head, “Re-inking the Pen,” 466-76.

⁷⁷ Head, “Re-inking the Pen,” 466-76.

Stichometry

Stichometry in Christian texts was the way by which the scribes tallied the amount of lines which they had copied.⁷⁸ They did this in order to count how much they should be paid because they were paid according to how many lines of text they transcribed.⁷⁹ The stichometric marks were simple ink dots or pin pricks on the edges of the paper separate from the text itself.⁸⁰ The presence of stichometry in a text certainly suggests that someone considered the text to be of value. This meant that the person deemed the texts worthwhile enough to have a professional scribe actually copy the text. On the other hand, the absence of stichometry may imply that the text was not seen as worthwhile to be copied for money.

Nomina Sacra

Nomina sacra is a Latin term which means “sacred names.” Hurtado explains that the *nomina sacra* are abbreviations of Greek words in Christian texts.⁸¹ They are typically abbreviations of words comprised by the first and last letters of the word, although sometimes other letters are added as well.⁸² Most *nomina sacra* refer to Christ or another member of the Godhead.⁸³ One may find *nomina sacra* for other words as well though; examples of these may

⁷⁸ Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Paleography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 38-39.

⁷⁹ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 38-39.

⁸⁰ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 38-39.

⁸¹ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 95.

⁸² Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 95.

⁸³ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 97-98.

be Israel or Jerusalem.⁸⁴ There are various *nomina sacra* for the same words such as Christ or Lord.⁸⁵ Barrett and Comfort give us the fifteen most common *nomina sacra* found in Greek New Testament manuscripts:

Abbreviation	Stands for	Meaning
$\overline{\alpha\nu\omicron\varsigma}$	ανθρωπος	human being
$\overline{\delta\alpha\delta}$	δαυ(ε)ιδ	David
$\overline{\theta\varsigma}$	θεος	God
$\overline{\iota\eta\lambda}$	ισραηλ	Israel
$\overline{\iota\eta\eta\mu}$	ιερουσαλημ	Jerusalem
$\overline{\iota\varsigma}$	ιησους	Jesus
$\overline{\kappa\varsigma}$	κυριος	[the] Lord
$\overline{\mu\eta\rho}$	μητηρ	mother
$\overline{\sigma\upsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma}$	ουρανος	heaven(s)
$\overline{\pi\eta\rho}$	πατηρ	father
$\overline{\pi\nu\alpha}$	πνευμα	spirit
$\overline{\sigma\tau\varsigma}$	σταυρος	cross
$\overline{\sigma\eta\rho}$	σωτηρ	savior
$\overline{\upsilon\varsigma}$	υιος	son
$\overline{\chi\varsigma}$	χριστος	Christ

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Nomina sacra are another evidence to examine the differences and similarities between Christian canonical and apocryphal texts. Christians and their scribes used the *nomina sacra* for texts which they considered to be sacred. This idea would surely match up nicely with that of the *nomina sacra* themselves, namely that they are sacred names. The absence of *nomina sacra* in

⁸⁴ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 97-98.

⁸⁵ Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 97-98.

⁸⁶ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 36. David P. Barrett and Philip W. Comfort, *The Text of the Earliest Greek New Testament Manuscripts* (New York: Tyndale House Publishing, 2001). This is a chart with the fifteen most prominent *nomina sacra* in the earliest Greek New Testament manuscripts. I found the chart, however, through a Google image search among the public domain images. Nevertheless, the chart does correspond with what Barrett and Comfort report in their book.

apocryphal works may suggest again that the scribes were not paid for their work. It may also be the case that these words, as contained in the list above, are not to be found in apocryphal texts as frequently or at all. Without doubt, the Christians would have preferred their canonical texts to contain these sacred names of their god and their savior.

Penmanship, Ornamentation, and Grammar

Penmanship is a further demonstration as to the differing views early Christians took between canonical texts and apocryphal texts. Fluid, well-formed letters that are spaced equally from one another will suggest that the scribe and the scribe's patron viewed the text to be of importance. In contrast, poorly-formed, smeared, uneven letters suggest a text for which the scribe was not being paid and therefore was of less importance.

Ornamentation is the decoration of the papyrus. It comes in a variety of forms. Several of the more common types include symbols and drawings to the sides of the text itself, the first letter of the text large and beautiful, and all letters of the text immaculately done. Ornamentation follows the same argument presented before for stichometry, *nomina sacra*, and penmanship. Decorating the text to make it more appealing and pleasing to the eye suggests that someone finds the text to be important and thus desires to have it be as beautiful as possible. Early Christians would have wanted such a thing for their canonical texts. However, as before, texts without ornamentation may have been seen by the early Christians as less important, if significant at all.

Grammar may be a further demonstration of the difference through which early Christians viewed canonical and apocryphal texts. The presence of punctuation, paragraph

markers, and breathing marks would infer a conscience effort to make the text presentable and more beautiful. The absence of such finer grammatical implementations would infer a lack of importance for the text.

Lastly, orthography also plays an important role in identification of what is canon and what is not to the early Christians. As a portion of the grammatical analysis of texts, the three following orthographical subjects are addressed: dittography, haplography, and homoioteleuton.⁸⁷ Each of these typically occurs when two consecutive lines of text are similar in letter and/or words, thus possibly rendering the two lines to seem to be the same.⁸⁸ Consequently, the first, dittography, occurs when the scribe copies one line two times instead of just the one time that it appears.⁸⁹ Haplography is essentially the opposite of dittography. It occurs when the scribe misses a line and a line that was originally present two times, now only appears one time.⁹⁰ Homoioteleuton is similar to haplography. This occurs when the scribe copies the first of two similar lines, but then misses much of the second line.⁹¹ These orthographical errors are all omissions; that is, they leave out letters, words, phrases, and even entire sentences. Omissions are the most recurrent grammatical errors in ancient texts.⁹² They are a manifestation of how careful the scribe was in copying the text. A text which is paid for and/or is considered to be sacred will probably contain fewer omissions and grammatical errors overall.

⁸⁷ I first learned of these terms through my research work for Dr. Thomas Wayment.

⁸⁸ I first learned of these terms through my research work for Dr. Thomas Wayment.

⁸⁹ I first learned of these terms through my research work for Dr. Thomas Wayment.

⁹⁰ I first learned of these terms through my research work for Dr. Thomas Wayment.

⁹¹ I first learned of these terms through my research work for Dr. Thomas Wayment.

⁹² Head, "Re-inking the Pen," 466-76.

New Testament Texts Case Study – P. 46, P. 66, and P. 75

Ernest Colwell and James Royse are renowned for their text critical work on P. 46, P. 66, and P. 75.⁹³ Colwell was the first of the two to address these manuscripts;⁹⁴ Royse followed up and built up off of Colwell's work.⁹⁵ Royse's work is cutting-edge and greater in breath, and so it will receive preference. The research of other prominent biblical scholars in the field of textual criticism will also be addressed.

Royse furthered his case study of early New Testament manuscripts by adding P. 45, P. 47, and P. 72.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, this discussion will address solely the original three manuscripts of P. 46, P. 66, and P. 75. The following reiterations of their work will follow the order of topics as they were provided earlier: codex or scroll, intentional and unintentional scribal variances, stichometry, *nomina sacra*, penmanship, ornamentation, and grammar. Colwell coined the term "singular reading."⁹⁷ Royse records the explanation and parameters of what this term entails, but for the interest of this discussion suffice it to say that singular readings are attestations of specific words, terms, phrases, sentences, or otherwise which occur in one manuscript, but are not attested in any other surviving text.⁹⁸ The topics of intentional and unintentional scribal variances,

⁹³ Ernest C. Colwell, *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill Publishers, 1969) and James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, (Boston: E.J. Brill Publishers, 2008).

⁹⁴ Colwell, *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 106-124.

⁹⁵ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*.

⁹⁶ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, vii-xi.

⁹⁷ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 39.

⁹⁸ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 39.

stichometry, *nomina sacra*, and grammar all fall under the umbrella term “singular reading” because each of these addresses in some way how and or why singular readings occur.

P. 46

Each of these three papyri demonstrates the attributes of Christian canon which have been established throughout this discussion. Royse dates P. 46 to the beginning of the 3rd century AD and lists it as a codex.⁹⁹ It contains Pauline epistles.¹⁰⁰ More precisely, it contains portions of Romans, Hebrews, 1st Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1st Thessalonians.¹⁰¹ P. 46’s format as a codex is the first demonstration that the early Christians viewed it as canon.

Royse records four hundred fifty-two significant singular readings in P. 46.¹⁰² However, he reports that one hundred eighty-three of these are corrections by the scribe or by a later scribe.¹⁰³ That leaves two hundred sixty-nine singulars. The vast majority of these are listed as orthographic singulars, specifically one hundred twenty-four.¹⁰⁴ These include nonsense (words that are not attested in any other Greek manuscript), additions, and omissions.¹⁰⁵ He also

⁹⁹ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 199. He does report that Y.K. Kim argues for an earlier dating of this manuscript, but the 3rd century AD dating is sufficient for this study.

¹⁰⁰ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 199.

¹⁰¹ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 202. This is the order of the epistles as they appear in P. 46.

¹⁰² Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 267.

¹⁰³ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 211.

¹⁰⁴ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 244.

¹⁰⁵ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 254, 267, 270.

provides an extensive list of what he considers to be harmonization for various reasons including for theology.¹⁰⁶

Royse reports that there is a frequent use of *nomina sacra* throughout the text.¹⁰⁷ However, breathing marks and punctuation both seem to be more sporadic.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Frederic Kenyon reports that the penmanship of P. 46 is good. He writes, “It is far more calligraphic in character, a rather large, free, and flowing hand with some pretensions to style and elegance.”¹⁰⁹ Kenyon further reports that the scribe of P. 46 left slightly larger than normal breaks between sentences when there was a break in the topic of the text; he suggests that this is evidence for the scribe’s comprehension of what he was writing.¹¹⁰ In other words, the scribe seems to have understood that what he was writing/copying was scripture, or at least important. These are all further attestations that this text was considered to be canonical in nature. In conclusion, the scribe of P. 46 was careful overall to make copy the text in a beautiful manner, despite the many singular readings.

P. 66

P. 66 dates to the 3rd century AD and is also a codex.¹¹¹ It contains portions of the Gospel of John.¹¹² According to Royse, there are one hundred twenty-eight significant singular

¹⁰⁶ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 339-357.

¹⁰⁷ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 207.

¹⁰⁸ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 202.

¹⁰⁹ Frederic G. Kenyon, ed., *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri. 3: Pauline Epistles and Revelation, Text* (London: Emery Walker, 1934), xiii.

¹¹⁰ Kenyon, *Pauline Epistles and Revelation, Text*, xiv.

¹¹¹ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 399.

readings.¹¹³ Once more he reports additions and omissions as orthographic reasons for an amount of these singular readings.¹¹⁴ He gives examples of harmonizations and reasons for them.¹¹⁵

Nomina sacra are present in the manuscript.¹¹⁶ Overall, the penmanship of the scribe is, unlike the spelling, fairly consistent and well-formed.¹¹⁷ Generally speaking, the letters are evenly spaced out from one another.¹¹⁸ They are even in size and placed well in the middle of the text.¹¹⁹ One interesting note about P. 66 is that it contains page numbers.¹²⁰ This demonstrates two things – first of all, it confirms that P. 66 is a codex. Secondly, it shows that, like all the other topics being discussed, this text was important enough to receive page numbers.

P. 75

P. 75 also dates to the 3rd century AD and is a codex containing the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John.¹²¹ Royse gives one hundred sixty-six significant singular readings.¹²² These

¹¹² Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 399.

¹¹³ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 505.

¹¹⁴ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 505, 511.

¹¹⁵ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 536-544.

¹¹⁶ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66.

¹¹⁷ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66-67.

¹¹⁸ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66-67.

¹¹⁹ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66-67.

¹²⁰ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66-67.

¹²¹ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 615.

¹²² Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 647.

do include orthographic singular readings (additions, omissions, etc.).¹²³ Harmonizations are listed as well.¹²⁴

Nomina sacra are attested frequently throughout the text.¹²⁵ The penmanship of the scribe is by no means elegant, but the letters are separated from one another well enough to allow for good reading.¹²⁶ The scribe does mark paragraphs by leaving a space of about two letters between the last letter and the next letter (i.e. the first letter of the new paragraph).¹²⁷

The case study of these three Greek New Testament manuscripts does display the scribes to have been careful and precise, albeit flawed, but nonetheless one may see a concentrated effort to copy the texts in a manner that befit the high honor given to them.

P. Dura 10

Tatian's Diatessaron was found with accepted canonical writings (Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke) in another manuscript, P. 212. P. Dura 10, however, seems to be a single piece with no other texts connected to it. While there do seem to be some similarities between it and the three New Testament manuscripts previously analyzed, there are also a variety of differences.

¹²³ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 648.

¹²⁴ Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 690-703.

¹²⁵ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 68-69.

¹²⁶ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 68-69.

¹²⁷ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 68-69.

Metzger describes the penmanship as “good book-hand” with a healthy amount of space between each of the letters.¹²⁸ He suggests that there may be evidence of paragraph markers within the text.¹²⁹ *Nomina sacra* are also present in the text on lines 3, 10, and 13.¹³⁰ These, along with the attestation of another Diatessaron text being found with accepted canonical texts, support the idea that the early Christians accepted it as scripture as well.

However, a larger amount of evidence seems to speak against this. Although the penmanship may be decent, the line of the text swerves up and down almost like the gentle waves of the sea; one does not see this with the three New Testament manuscripts.¹³¹ Instead of papyrus, this text is recorded on parchment which became more popular at a later date.¹³² More importantly, the Diatessaron is recorded on a fragment which has no writing found on the opposite side which would suggest that this was a scroll. Unfortunately, the text is found on a fragment, but that in and of itself may also attest against its having been accepted as scripture by the early Christians.

Conclusion

While it is easily apparent that further and more intensive research is necessary to establish any type of firm confirmation on this topic, there are still conclusions that may be deemed fairly certain. The majority of apocryphal writings can be safely excluded from having

¹²⁸ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66-67.

¹²⁹ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66-67.

¹³⁰ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66-67.

¹³¹ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66-67.

¹³² Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, 66-67. Metzger does not give a date for the manuscript, but he does not seem to suggest either that this manuscript is not as old as the rest of the manuscripts which he presents in his book.

been deemed canon by the early Christians. Only a handful merit further investigation, the Diatessaron certainly being one of them. Through further research, this study may solidly disqualify most apocryphal writings, but may also qualify certain apocryphal writings as early Christian canon.

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