Abstract: Remarkable uniformity in the size of early gospel codices provides evidence for conventional approaches to manuscript production in the second and third centuries. Christians favoured a size approximating the Turner Group 9.1 format in the second century, and the Group 8.2 format in the third century. When combined with other conventional approaches to MS production – semi-literary to literary hands and the use of readers’ aids to facilitate public reading – there is much support for the idea that most codices dated up to the early third century were produced in controlled settings (i.e., in small copy centres or scriptoria comprised of at least two trained scribes) for public or liturgical use. In contrast, many third-century gospel manuscripts (e.g., ∏45) bear the hallmarks of uncontrolled production for private use.

Early gospel manuscripts (MSS) were used in two general settings—publicly in corporate worship, and privately by individuals. It will be shown that the majority of second-century gospel MSS can be designated ‘public’, in the sense that they were intentionally produced to be read aloud by lectors in Christian meetings. Rightly dividing the continuous lines of letters in ancient texts (scriptio continua) in order to break through to the underlying meaning was not easy.1 In a public setting where immediacy was called for, text division, punctuation and lectional aids could greatly assist the task of the lector (ajagnwvycythe). That is why these kinds of readers’ aids are found in most second-century gospel MSS. In the third century, the number of ‘private’ gospel MSS increased. In private settings (involving individual use or small ‘public’ readings for family or friends) where there was leisurely interaction with the text, the need for reader’s aids was less pressing. Consequently, text division, punctuation and lectional aids are not present in many third-century gospel MSS.

It will be argued that a correlation can often be discerned between use and production. Again in general terms, early gospel MSS intended for public use were produced in controlled settings (scriptoria), while MSS intended for private use were copied in casual settings where production controls were lacking. That is to say, it is often possible to make a distinction between controlled production for public use and uncontrolled production for private use when it comes to the second- and third-century gospel MSS. But the categories of ‘public/controlled’ and ‘private/uncontrolled’ should not be seen as inflexible classifications to be imposed on the evidence. A MS could potentially be used in both public and private settings, or an individual might make or obtain a copy of a ‘public’ MS for ‘private’ use or vice versa. Nonetheless, the documentary evidence clearly sustains the notion that gospel MSS were used and produced in broad ‘public/controlled’ and ‘private/uncontrolled’ settings.

Scribal Method

Text Division and Lectional Aids

One of the features of Christian MSS in comparison with Ptolemaic and Roman literary texts is the frequent use of text division. The enlargement of the first letter of the first word in a text, new section or clause, the (sometimes unconscious) practice of ‘leaving spaces between words or more often groups of words’, and the projection into the margin (ekthesis) of the first and sometimes second letter of a line following a break in sense or meaning, were all scribal practices borrowed from documentary texts (see Figure 1).2 Spaces were not used in Ptolemaic and

Figure 1: Vacant line ends and ekthesis in ∏66 (P.Bodmer 2)  
John 2.20-3.  
Reproduced by permission of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Geneva.
Roman literary papyri, and ekthesis is generally limited to commentaries and lists of the Roman period. Not of documentary origin are the punctuation and lectional aids (diacriticals, apostrophes, breathings) found in early Christian papyri. These also occur in literary papyri, but less commonly or at least not in the same proportions as in some Christian texts. It should also be noted that punctuation, in the form of the medial or high point (\textasciitilde{}), dicolon (\textasciicircumflex{}), diastole (\textasciitilde{}), and dash (\textdash{}), can be seen as both lectional aid and text division marker.

Early Christian scribes also seem to have been influenced by Jewish practices. In the Qumran scrolls the Hebrew text was divided into sections (paragraphs) by spaces in general accordance with a system called parashiyot, which was later used in the Masoretic Text (MT). A vacant line end corresponds to a major sub-division (‘open section’ in MT) and a space in the middle of a line to a minor sub-division (‘closed section’ in MT) within the paragraph. Space division into smaller sense (verse) units occurs in only a few Hebrew biblical MSS because these sense breaks were part of the oral tradition of Torah reading in the synagogues (perhaps dating from the second century BC). But verse divisions are marked in the early Aramaic and Greek translations where they were supplemented according to the syntax and conventions of the translation language itself. On the Greek side, the use of spaces for verse division is attested in a number of Jewish Septuagint (LXX) MSS dated to the first century BC, and in many cases smaller groups of words are also indicated.

The paragraphos (a horizontal stroke drawn between lines projecting slightly into the margin) marks divisions in four early Jewish LXX MSS, and is also found in other Greek and Aramaic texts and in biblical and non-biblical texts written according to Qumran scribal practice. Paragraphoi mark text divisions in the Christian MSS P.Beatty 10 (Daniel and Esther), P.Bodmer 24 (Psalms), P.W (Freer) of the Minor Prophets, and occasionally in tandem with vacant line ends in P.Beatty 6 (Numbers and Deuteronomy). Although the paragraphos was also used to mark the change of persons in a dialogue or the parts of the chorus in Greek literary texts, whether it is of Greek origin is unclear. At any rate, the degree of Jewish influence on text division in Christian MSS should not be underestimated. It would be remarkable if Jewish scribal conventions used in the production of LXX MSS were wholly ignored by Christian scribes, particularly if gospels were being copied in settings where LXX MSS were also being produced.

Should a lack or paucity of text division, punctuation and lectional aids be attributed to the scribe or his exemplar? Turner reached the general conclusion ‘that if punctuation was present in the exemplar it was the first scribe’s duty to copy it’. In his important work on the literary roll Johnson found reason to agree with this assessment: ‘Substantial portions of details like adscript and punctuation seem to be part of what was traditionally copied, part of the paradosis’. The scribe attempted to copy the “original” punctuation, that is, the sort of bare-bones punctuation existing before reader intervention, but also incorporated ‘corrections or additions as he saw fit’. Lectional aids may also have been part of the paradosis, and were copied ‘when they appeared to be part of the original copy’.

As regards scribal tendencies in the production of literary rolls, the evidence demonstrates the ‘dominance, indeed near uniformity, of professionalism’. But when copying a gospel exemplar, Christian scribes were not copying a literary text into a roll, but something like a ‘paraliterary’ text into a codex. Nevertheless, a professional scribe trained in copying texts of various kinds and working in a Christian scriptorium, should understand his task involved copying the text division, punctuation and lectional aids in his exemplar. Therefore, paucity or irregularity of text division, punctuation and lectional aids will be taken as an indication that a MS was produced for private rather than public (i.e., liturgical) use, especially when coupled with a documentary or scholarly rather than a literary or semi-literary hand. (We can visualize broad but non-exclusive categories of second- and third-century hands ranging from literary and semi-literary through informal to documentary and scholarly.) Furthermore, rather than just being illustrative of the intent of the scribe, the lack of such features will often be traceable to an uncontrolled production setting.

The Earliest Gospels: Representative and Conventional

It was previously assumed that New Testament (NT) MSS found in Egypt had originated there. But the papyri

Figure 2: Formative biblical majuscule on a fragmentary leaf of Ψ* (Suppl. Gr. 1120 [2]), Lk. 1:74-2:7. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale, France.
in general indicate there was a regular two-way flow of people, letters and literature between Alexandria and the Graeco-Roman world in the early centuries of our era. Non-Christian written material was carried into Egypt from all over the empire.29 The state postal service in the Hellenistic and Roman periods was reserved for official and military purposes.30 But the Hellenistic evidence shows that despite potential difficulties (delivery times might increase exponentially if a letter carrier was unreliable or a boat unavailable), private senders were able to find carriers and letters frequently moved with relative ease.31 In the same way, gospel MSS might easily have found their way to Egypt from elsewhere, the inference being that the early gospel papyri could well be representative of early gospels in general.32

It is self-evident that the ‘coherence of the early Church must have depended’ to some extent on the efficient movement of communications and literature.33 When pervasive use of the nomina sacra convention34 and the remarkable Christian preference for the codex as against the roll (particularly for writings regarded as scripture)35 are added to the equation, there is a strong case for there having been ‘a degree of organization, of conscious planning, and uniformity of practice’ in the early church.36 This is further verified by codicological features common to gospel MSS.

In the table below, listed by column for each gospel MS are the size (W × H cm),37 lines per column,38 Turner grouping (related to codex size),39 gospels held (M = Mt., m = Mk., L = Lk., etc.), type of hand (with arrows indicating whether it is closer to a literary/book [bk] or documentary/cursive [doc.] hand; an informal [inf.] hand is in between [↔] these hands), presence of text division, and intended use (public/liturgical or private) and kind of production (c = controlled; u = uncontrolled). The following abbreviations are used: pg. = paragraphos; vac. = vacant line ends; ek. = ekthesis; sp. = space; · = medial/high point; : = dicolon; ’ = apostrophe or line filler; > = diple line filler; and / = text division marker or miscellaneous stroke.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ms.</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>T.Gr.</th>
<th>Gospel</th>
<th>Hand</th>
<th>Text Division</th>
<th>Use/Prod.</th>
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<td>· ek. en. sp.?</td>
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<tr>
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<td>c. 30</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>formal round</td>
<td>· sp.?</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>5Ab</td>
<td>J</td>
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<td>· sp.?</td>
<td>private/?</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9.1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>14/25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>decorated round</td>
<td>· : &gt; - , vac. ek. sp.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>24/25</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>en.</td>
<td>private/u</td>
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<td>23/24</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>· &gt; : sp. ek. pg.</td>
<td>public/c</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>J</td>
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<td>· sp.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>32/33</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td>inf., bk←doc.</td>
<td>·</td>
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<td>private?/u?</td>
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<td>33/34</td>
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<td>J</td>
<td>semi-cursive, doc.</td>
<td>·</td>
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<tr>
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<td>35/36</td>
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<td>· nil</td>
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<td>·</td>
<td>private?/u</td>
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<tr>
<td>p109</td>
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<td>25/26</td>
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<td>J</td>
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<td>37/38</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>inf., bk←doc.</td>
<td>·</td>
<td>private?/u</td>
</tr>
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<td>27</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>semi-literary, →doc.</td>
<td>· sp.</td>
<td>public/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p28</td>
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<td>25/26</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>→doc./cursive</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>private/u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p111</td>
<td>15.5 × 22.5-24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>semi-doc.</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>private?/u?</td>
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<td>39/40</td>
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<td>M-J</td>
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<td>· /</td>
<td>private/u</td>
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<td>11-12 × 15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>A6f-12</td>
<td>ML</td>
<td>careful majuscule</td>
<td>/ sp.? vac.?</td>
<td>private/u</td>
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<tr>
<td>p22</td>
<td>ROLL c. 30 H</td>
<td>47/48</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>→doc./cursive</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>·</td>
<td>private/u</td>
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<tr>
<td>p37</td>
<td>16 × 25.5-27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>doc./cursive</td>
<td>· sp.? /</td>
<td>private/u</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12 × 26.5-27</td>
<td>34/35</td>
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<td>p?</td>
<td>15 × 22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>·</td>
<td>private/ u</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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If we focus for a moment on the first dozen or so papyri, the first thing to be noted is the small size of second-century gospels. This appears to support the proposition that portability and hence transportability played a significant part in earliest (i.e., first and second century) Christian preference for the codex. Second, if the Turner Group 10 is considered a sub-group of Group 9, there is very remarkable uniformity in the sizes of gospel codices in each century. Based on the extant evidence, there is no question that Christians favoured a size approximating the Group 9.1 format (B13-15 × H at least 3 cm higher than B) in the second century, and the 8.2 Group format (B12-14 × H not quite twice B) in the third century. Third, conventional Christian approaches to MS production — uniformity in size, hands in the semi-literary to (formative) biblical majuscule range (see Figure 2), and the use of text division to facilitate easy public reading — support the idea that most of the first dozen or so codices were produced in controlled settings, i.e., in small copy centres or scriptoria comprised of at least two scribes. Where these factors are present as a group (as in Æ7, Æ60, Æ64-67, Æ4, Æ66 and Æ75) controlled production is certainly taking place. There is every reason to believe such scriptoria existed in the second century in important Christian centres such as Antioch, Alexandria, Caesarea, Jerusalem and Rome, especially in those cities with libraries. Fourth, although certainty is difficult, the aberrant sizes of Æ52 and Æ63 (the latter is discussed below) suggest production in private/uncontrolled settings. The remaining third-century gospel codices also seem to fall into the same category. Paradoxically, standard sizes were still preferred suggesting that in most cases Christian fashion was strong enough to dictate size even as the number of private copies of the gospels proliferated. This in turn supports the argument that there were conventional textual practices at an early time, at least in the East.77

Scribal Milieu

A Public/Liturgical MS: Æ78 (P.Bodmer 14-15)

Turner argues that some Christian MSS were written with larger characters to make public reading easier. Comparable codices of Greek prose literature contain significantly more letters per line than both Æ60 and Æ75. Such MSS, he says, are ‘the work of practiced scribes writing an ordinary type of hand, but writing it larger than usual’. Thus, the spacious script of Æ60 appears to be stretched horizontally (see Figure 1). As well, no traces of any kollesis (the join of two pages) are visible in the Bodmer photographs of the MS, suggesting that the final physical form or appearance of the codex was an important consideration. So in Æ66 we have a codex designed to take a central place in public worship.

Although they are not as pronounced, the same features can be seen in Æ75 which preserves in good condition significant parts of Luke and John. The page measures 13 × 26 cm, so the open codex had a square shape. According to Turner, a Group 8 book of these dimensions was intentionally manufactured (B = ½ H). The hand of Æ75 is an elegant, careful, upright majuscule. Some letters, such as α and ο, are much smaller than average. There are 38-45 lines to the page (only 3 pages have under 40 lines and the average is 42) and 25-36 letters to the line. Since this is a single-quire codex, as he proceeded the scribe wrote progressively smaller apparently in an effort to fit everything in. Martin and Kasser note that the number of lines is considerably more in the second half of the codex. Nonetheless, Turner still regards Æ75 as another example of a Christian MS written in a larger script for reading aloud. The margins are quite generous and the occasional kollesis can be seen on the photographs, but their relative paucity is another indication that this codex was for use in public worship.

Punctuation takes the form of high, medial and low points, but if any rationale governs the different heights it is difficult to discern. The diaeresis or trema over initial ι and υ is used frequently but not systematically, and heavy breathings are often used over pronouns to differentiate them from homonyms. Semitic names are marked with an apostrophe or point, and the former is also used after ωι and between double consonants, again probably ‘in the interests of clarity of pronunciation’ in public reading.

The point followed by one or more vacant spaces and one-letter ekthesis on the following line is the usual method of chapter and paragraph division. However, the dicolon and paragraphos are used very occasionally in lieu of or with other markers. In comparison with the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (NA27), about two-thirds of chapter breaks and one-third of paragraph breaks are marked in the non-fragmentary pages of the MS. More noteworthy is the consistently high rate of verse division corresponding to NA27. The rounded percentages of marked as against unmarked verse breaks per chapter are as follows: (Lk. 10) 82 : 18; (11) 93 : 7; (12) 98 : 2; (13) 94 : 6; (14) 94 : 6; (15) 72 : 28; (16) 71 : 29; (22) 72 : 28; (23) 82 : 18; (Jn. 1) 70 : 30; (2) 72 : 28; (3) 75 : 25; (4) 81 : 19; (5) 64 : 36; (8) 86.5 : 13.5; (9) 77.5 : 22.5; (10) 86 : 14.6. On average, therefore, the verse breaks in Æ75 agree with those in NA27 about 80 percent of the time. We are therefore more than justified in seeing the text divisions in Æ75 as ancestors of those found in the great codices Vaticanus (B 03; Rome, Vatican Library, Gr. 1209) and Sinaiticus (B 01; London, British Library, Add. 43725).

A Private/Non-Liturgical MS: Æ77 (P.Mich. 3.137)

If we were to imagine a range of hands starting at the literary end with the formative biblical majuscule of Æ, at the opposite extreme we would find the documentary hand of Æ7 (see Figure 3). The papyrus is comprised of two fragments which ‘have been joined to make a single leaf written on both sides’ which measures 13.5 × 22.4 cm and preserves Mt. 26:19-37 (↓) and 26:37-52 (→). There were originally 33 lines per page and based on the extant text the column measured about 13 × 23 cm and the page 16 × 25.5-27 cm (Turner’s Group 7).
The hand is a very informal cursive, and according to Sanders ‘every letter seems to present most of its conceivable forms’. He concluded that the writer was educated but ‘not a practised scribe’ and found parallel hands in documentary papyri. There is only one rough breathing (↓l8), but the trema is used regularly over initial i (and once over a medial i, ↓l11). There is a correction at ↓l12 where ekalaçen was written, then the whole word except for the augment was crudely crossed out and klaçen written by the same hand above the crossed out letters (see Figure 4). This gives an impression of haste, as though the whole document was written very quickly for personal use.

The writer used no punctuation, but at times seems to have left spaces between words or letters that coincide with NA verse breaks (vv. 21, 23, 27, 30, 31, 42, 44, 46, 50, 51), or that appear to introduce speech (↓l 25, →l 5) or function like commas (→ll 12, 20). However, other verse breaks are not so marked (vv. 22, 24, 25, 26, 29, 32, 33, 36, 38, 40, 41, 43, 45, 49), and two vacant spaces in the text appear not to serve any function (↓ll 6, 8). So while some vacant spaces appear to function as punctuation, that may often be more by accident than design, the chance result of a rapidly written hand.

Sanders thought a second hand added the short raised strokes where spaces had been left at the end of phrases. Certainly, a space and stroke sometimes occur together where the text corresponds to a paragraph (v. 31) or verse (vv. 23, 27, 30, 42, 46, 51) break in NA, but strokes are not present in a number of places where spaces have been left (↓/ 6, 8, 25; →/ 12), and both ‘markers’ are also lacking in two places (vv. 38, 45). Moreover, although strokes often correspond to paragraph and verse breaks (vv. 22, 23, 27, 29, 32, 33, 36, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 49, 51) or verse sub-divisions (vv. 22, 25, 26, 27, 392, 40, 41, 42, 442, 45, 50) in NA, just as often there is no verse sub-division correspondence (vv. 212, 222, 24, 25, 262, 272, 31, 32, 33, 36, 39, 402, 453, 46, 472), or apparent sense divisions are nonsensical (vv. 242, 422, 43).

It is the last category in particular that calls into question the idea that the strokes may have assisted with reading in public. However, if the MS was altered by a second hand for liturgical usage, it was a private MS produced in an uncontrolled setting that was subsequently modified. The first hand is undoubtedly documentary and by no means bilinear, and for both reasons far from suitable for public reading. The second hand has attempted to insert, or perhaps to clarify or supplement, text division in the MS, but a number of the strokes appear to be study aids that mark something of interest in the text. So the modified MS was probably also for private use.

 Perez 46 (P.Beatty 176 and P.Vindob. G. 3197477): Public or Private?

Preserving the four gospels and Acts, Perez 46 is comprised of 30 fragmentary leaves of a codex dated c. 250. Not one complete page survives; the top of the single column is intact in most cases, but the column bottom is missing on every page. In Luke and John the whole column or one side of it survives, but in Matthew and Mark both sides of the column are damaged. Each page measured c. 20 × 25 cm (Turner’s Group 4). Judging from leaves 25-30 the upper margin was around 3.2 cm and the lower probably more; the inner margin where it is twice preserved is 1.9 cm, and Kenyon estimates that the outer margin was about 2.5 cm. This means the written area was about 15.5 × 19.5 cm. On
reconstructed figures there were 39/40 lines per page and 50 characters per line.\textsuperscript{81}

Skeat calculates the codex would have contained 56 sheets or 224 pages (Mt. 49, Jn. 38, Lk. 48, Mk. 32, Acts 55).\textsuperscript{82} The scribe managed to fit the gospels and Acts into a codex of this size only by using a small script and a larger page and written area.\textsuperscript{83} Kenyon describes the script as ‘small and very clear’, approximately square (in height and width), ‘very correct, and though without calligraphic pretensions, … the work of a competent scribe’. Although ‘characteristic of good Roman hands’, it has a marked slope to the right.\textsuperscript{84} In fact, the hand is more impressive in person than the photographs in his edition can manage to convey. It is an attractive and very competent hand that is certainly not bereft of literary style. Zuntz observes that the scribe’s hand is ‘on the whole amazingly even, and his practice with regard to orthography [and] punctuation … astonishingly consistent’.\textsuperscript{85}

Colwell concluded that the editorial activity in this MS is indicative of an uncontrolled tradition.\textsuperscript{86} The scribe feels no need to reproduce exactly his exemplar and freely omits words and recasts the text in the interests of conciseness, clarity and style. Clarification also motivates the scribe of \( \textsc{p} \), but most of the time is overcome by the desire to make an exact copy.\textsuperscript{87} In contrast, the copying in \( \textsc{p}^{66} \) is careless, but numerous corrections against a second exemplar are indicative of conscientious efforts to produce a good final copy.\textsuperscript{88} Therefore, it is fairly certain the scribe of \( \textsc{p}^{45} \) rather than the exemplar is responsible for the contents of the MS. This conclusion is supported by the unfashionable page size, the small script and compressed layout, the small number of corrections,\textsuperscript{89} and the absence of ekthesis, spaces and the paragraphe. This lack of the kinds of text division characteristic of controlled settings seems to mark the MS as an individualistic early witness.

Rough breathing is sometimes used with the article and relative pronouns, and the trema is used regularly over initial \( \eta \) and \( \upsilon \) (sometimes appearing as a small line over \( \upsilon \)).\textsuperscript{90} The text is divided by inconsistently employed medial points and acute-like raised strokes of variable length which appear more regularly.\textsuperscript{91} The latter are often thick, intrusive and rough, and in marked contrast to the elegant hand (see Figure 5). The only strokes that approach the size of this division marker in Mark are the downward strokes on \( \zeta \) and \( \vartheta \), but they are not as thick. There is no doubt that the markers were produced by a different reed and probably a different hand at another time and place.\textsuperscript{92} If the markers were made during production, they would have spoiled the efforts of the first scribe to produce an attractive MS. This goes a long way towards ruling out contemporaneity.

The probable reason they were added is inconsistency in the usage of the medial point by the first scribe. In the few small fragments of Matthew that are preserved, medial points have been inserted quite regularly\textsuperscript{93} to mark verse breaks or verse sub-divisions (many of which correspond to those found in NA\textsuperscript{27}). Apparently because this was the case the second hand did not add any raised strokes. This is, however, no guarantee that the same situation pertained in the rest of Matthew. In contrast, in the early fragmentary folios of Mark the first copyist neglected to mark text division with points, so a second hand added strokes to indicate verse breaks or sub-divisions.\textsuperscript{94} From Mark 7:36 points begin to appear occasionally but not consistently at the end of verses, so it seems the second editor decided to continue the use of strokes (see Figure 6 which shows the stroke being added, sometimes where medial points had already been placed). In Luke and John points were used with moderate consistency by the first scribe, and for this reason strokes were probably not entered by the second hand.\textsuperscript{95} But once again, there is no way of knowing if this was the case throughout both of these books.

In Acts the first copyist again ceased using medial points and raised strokes are reintroduced by the second hand. From the end of 6:9 the strokes become small, dark oval blobs and then dots which Kenyon records as high points in his edition.\textsuperscript{96} The scribe apparently decided to decrease the size of the division marker while continuing to use the same reed.\textsuperscript{97} There is little doubt, however, that the same second hand is again at work, because although the strokes are generally shorter and thinner from this point (than in Mark), small raised ovals or blobs also occur along with the occasional longer stroke (of Mark) from fol. 27 onwards.\textsuperscript{98}

The irregular text division in \( \textsc{p}^{65} \) is more indicative of a MS made for private use,\textsuperscript{99} than one ‘intended for the edification
Certainly, the paucity of the original punctuation/text division along with the small hand, compressed layout, and the odd size of the codex (when pressure to conform to third-century fashion or expectations in terms of size must have been significant\(^\text{100}\)), appear to rule out an intended liturgical use. As far as text division or punctuation is concerned, at times the scribe is completely indifferent to the needs of any prospective lector. In stark contrast, the later addition of the intrusive strokes in Mark underlines the importance of reading aids if MSS were to be read publicly. Despite the fine hand, all of these factors when combined with the very paraphrastic modus operandi of the scribe and the lack of correction against the exemplar or another MS in order to ensure accuracy, suggest production in an uncontrolled setting. Although the text division in \(\text{π}^66\) can be almost as inconsistent at times, none of these other factors comes into play.

**Elaborating on Public and Private Production Settings**

Ancient literary works were distributed as individuals borrowed and copied texts owned by their friends.\(^\text{102}\) Copies might be made by hired scribes or by the one borrowing. This was probably also the case when individual Christians wanted copies of gospels for private use. However, the third-century evidence supports the proposition that when private borrowing and casual copying took place, the gospels borrowed and copied generally had private characteristics; i.e., they lacked text division, punctuation and lectional aids. In other words, private/uncontrolled production usually involved the copying of private rather than public MSS. Indeed, the MS evidence demonstrates that by the third century the majority of copying was private and uncontrolled and probably took place at a distance from major Christian centres.

In contrast, Christian scriptoria in major centres would have maintained master copies of public gospel MSS. Though several different copies of each gospel may have been held, greater consistency in the transmission of public features (text division, punctuation and lectional aids) characterised controlled production in Christian scriptoria. This would apply regardless of who was doing the copying in uncontrolled or casual settings. Clergy, educated church members, slaves or freedmen of wealthy Christian estates, or Christian public officials or business people accustomed to writing, might undertake private production.\(^\text{103}\) There may have been scribes trained to a level consistent with guild membership\(^\text{104}\) among these groups, and non-Christian scribes might also be commissioned to do the work,\(^\text{105}\) but in all likelihood they would have been copying private MSS.

Early Christian texts were not products of the book trade,\(^\text{106}\) but the idea that there were not private texts among them\(^\text{107}\) cannot stand up to scrutiny. As far as casual copying is concerned, there is no reason to think that writing or access to writing tools\(^\text{108}\) was limited to scribes.\(^\text{109}\) When students at school progressed from the first two levels of letters and alphabet to syllabaries, lists of words and writing exercises, papyrus and its requisite tools were needed.\(^\text{110}\) Though expensive for ordinary villagers or farmers, papyrus was quite affordable in higher social contexts.\(^\text{111}\) The school papyri from villages and towns as against \textit{metapoleis} come from the social level represented by ‘landowners, soldiers, businessmen and so on’.\(^\text{112}\) So a limited number of individuals went to school, and most did not stay ‘long enough to develop firm habits of writing’.\(^\text{113}\) But three years was long enough to learn to read and write slowly, and a range of abilities should be envisioned even at this stage of literacy.\(^\text{114}\) Some pupils in the larger cities and also in the larger villages reached ‘rather high levels’ of instruction.\(^\text{115}\)
Although many probably came from the middle class, private writers of modest ability and income certainly existed. Apollonios and his brother Ptolemaios, who lived in the Memphite Serapeum in the mid-second century BC, were able to copy Greek literature with different levels of ability. Apollonios, the younger and more proficient writer with an education extending ‘somewhat beyond the primary level’, was capable of writing letters to officials. He joined the army and eventually became assistant to the chief of police on the necropolis. In a similar vein, Apion, a new recruit to the Roman army in the second century AD, wrote to his father at Philadelphia in large, round capable letters that resemble a teacher’s hand. All of the indications are that he had ‘at least some grammatical’ or secondary education.

Though early Christian papyri are few in number, in the early third century a certain ‘Antonius Dioskoros, son of Horigenes from Alexandria’, was considered suitable for minor public office in his home town of Arsinoe. Like the other applicants he was ‘an urban shopkeeper or craftsman of moderate means’, but he was also a Christian. His double name ‘after the Roman fashion, with a Roman gentilicum and Greek cognomen’, and the Alexandrian connection suggest a social position somewhat above the other candidates. Generally speaking, administrative officials had duties requiring literacy, and Antonius Dioskoros should not be seen as an isolated example. He might also have been among those who attended a church conference held at Arsinoe in the third century. At the conference the bishop of Alexandria called together the presbyters and teachers of the surrounding villages to examine a book containing the millenarian teachings of a former local bishop. Clearly, ‘Egyptian priests were not the only ones assiduously reading and interpreting [and copying] religious texts in the villages of the Fayum’. Moreover, despite its privileged Greek constituency and large bureaucracy, the situation in Roman Egypt may not have been so atypical, and is probably comparable with areas of limited hellenization (e.g., Thrace, Galatia, Cappadocia, Syria, Judea, Arabia) where literacy was generally confined to specific ‘social and geographic milieus’.

When working from a provided exemplar rather than an in-house master copy, trained scribes working in Christian scriptoria would understand their task involved copying text division, punctuation and lectional aids where they were original to the exemplar. If they were lacking in the exemplar, they could be inserted at sense breaks or from a second MS (an in-house master copy). In contrast, in a private/uncontrolled setting untrained copyists would not attach the same importance to reproducing readers’ aids and would be more likely to overlook or reproduce them only some of the time. The same could probably not be said of Christian scribes working in secular public settings, of commissioned non-Christian scribes, or indeed of trained copyists among the clergy, church or public officials, educated Christians, or slaves and freedmen of wealthy Christians. That is why it is not possible to insistently equate the public/controlled and private/uncontrolled categories with professional/trained scribes and untrained copyists respectively. When gospel MSS were produced in private/uncontrolled settings, trained scribes with apprenticed training sufficient for guild membership could be involved. But the evidence strongly suggests that in most cases such scribes would be working from gospel exemplars with private characteristics. The needs of the customer in terms of projected non-liturgical use might also ‘govern the presence or absence of lectional signs’.

It should also be said that in both public/controlled and private/uncontrolled production settings there were different levels of trained copying ability. Some scribes were capable of calligraphy or shorthand (tachygraphy), while others were limited to documentary work. So in the event that a public gospel MS was copied in a private/uncontrolled setting, it is certainly possible that transmission of readers’ aids could be adversely affected. MSS like \( \Sigma^{103} \), \( \Sigma^{106} \) and \( \Sigma^{108} \) could fall into this category. In addition, in some areas churches might have had no option but to use gospel MSS with predominantly private characteristics in public worship. In such cases lectors would need to have become very familiar with the contents of the text. But the evidence shows that this level of familiarity must have been the exception rather than the rule. The use and consolidation of text division, punctuation and lectional aids in second- to fourth-century public MSS, the adding of stroke division markers to \( \Sigma^{137} \) and \( \Sigma^{145} \), and even the much later shift to minuscule script, all demonstrate that a gospel text with private characteristics was difficult to read and/or memorize. When nothing better could be obtained, MSS with private characteristics were no doubt used in rural churches. Indeed, the steep increase in private copying in the third century was probably linked to an increase in the number of churches. Nevertheless, reading of private gospels in public settings would have been compromised by the inherent deficiencies of the MSS themselves. This is underscored by the text division, punctuation and lectional aids that facilitated the liturgical use of second- and second/third-century gospel MSS (with the exception of \( \Sigma^{52} \) and possible exception of \( \Sigma^{108} \)).

But in many cases churches must have been able to obtain gospel MSS for liturgical use from Christian scriptoria in major urban centres. Most of the earliest gospels were copied within broad conventional parameters, and control was present in the form of checking and correction.

The churches in Rome, Antioch, Caesarea, and Alexandria (to name only the most obvious) were probably centers almost from the beginning for the composition of Christian writings and also for the confluence of Christian writings composed elsewhere. By virtue of possessing both texts and regional influence, these communities would have been instrumental in the further circulation of Christian literature.

Gamble adduces as evidence the rapid reproduction and distribution of the letters of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, at...
the beginning of the second century, and of *Hermas* which circulated in Alexandria and provincial Egypt and at the same time in Gaul and North Africa ‘well before the end of the second century’. Thus, ‘larger Christian communities, such as Antioch or Rome, may have already had scriptoria [where two or more scribes operated] in the early second century’. The role of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, in distributing Christian literature, also leads him to suggest that minimalist scriptoria may also have existed at Smyrna and Oxyrhynchus towards the end of the second century. ‘If so, that is all the more reason to postulate scriptoria in Alexandria and other Christian centers at an earlier time’. That such a reasonable picture of an inter-connected early church should occasion controversy is due in large degree to the disproportionate influence of perspectives that overlook the amount of diversity in early Christianity. Much early Christian literature is clearly written with a wide readership in mind, e.g., the Apocrypha and the catholic and pseudonymous epistles.

**Conclusion**

It seems as the number of churches and the demand for gospel MSS increased, so did the number of gospels produced in private/uncontrolled settings. Space does not allow examination of other MSS that have been designated private. But has demonstrated that there are sometimes a number of complicated factors to be weighed against each other when deciding whether a particular MS is ‘public’ or ‘private’. Although there was clearly variation in the use of lectional aids and text division markers in particular, conventional textual and codicological features when considered as a group are important indicators of the setting in and purpose for which gospel MSS were produced. Such knowledge also provides an additional way of weighing the reliability of textual witnesses. The same controls were not in place when gospel MSS were copied privately in casual settings.

The influence of convention on production of the four gospels in the second and third centuries can be seen in preference for the codex in certain sizes, the ubiquitous presence of the *nomina sacra* convention, and the use of text division, punctuation and lectional aids. Thus, when third-century gospel MSS lack reading aids and text division, it is likely that private/uncontrolled copying and/or production for non-liturgical use are responsible. As the canonical status of the four gospels was cemented in the third century, it was to be expected that uncontrolled copying of gospel MSS for private use would increase. Uncontrolled copying can be discerned in poor quality hands, an absence of collation, correction, or similar quality control, and in scribal approaches that take excessive liberties with the text. Thus, even an impressive MS like can be designated private.

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**Endnotes**

1 See H.Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) on the private use of Christian books (231-7) and the difficulties of reading *scriptio continua* (203-4, 228-30). On the latter see also R. Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (American Studies in Papyrology 36; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) 148-9; and id., *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 190, 203, where it is noted that teachers used syllable and word division, enlarged initial letters and other aids to make texts ‘user-friendly’ for beginner students, and presented the same texts in *scriptio continua* to more advanced students.


4 Roberts, *Manuscript*, 21 and n. 4. The use of accents is rare.

5 The following details are taken from Roberts, *Manuscript*, 21-2.


11 P.Ryl. 3.458, P.Fouad inv. 266a-c, 4QPapLXXLev, 4QLXXNum, 8HevXIIgr, P.Oxy. 50.3322, and P.Yale 1.1: see Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 299-315, esp. 304-5, 311.

12 Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 304-5. The point is also found in P.Ryl. 3.458 and P.Yale 1.1 and may have been added later (311). In 8HevXII gr and P.Fouad inv. 266 a small vacant space followed by an enlarged letter marks a new phrase, while verses are denoted by larger spaces (Roberts, *Manuscript*, 18 and n. 3). Cf. A. Millard, ‘Ancient Abbreviations and the *Nomina Sacra*’, in C. Eyre et al. (eds.), *The Unbroken Reed: Studies in the Culture and Heritage of Ancient Egypt in Honour of A.F. Shore* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1994) 224.


17 According to Millard (‘Ancient Abbreviations’, 224) the use of the paragraphos ‘in the fifth century: Aramaic papyrus of Alalia casts doubt on the opinion that it is probably Greek in origin’. Cf.

18 Cf. Gamble (*Books and Readers*, 224-31) where the influence of synagogue practice on public reading in early Christian worship is discussed. R.A. Kraft, *From Jewish Scribes to Christian Scriptoria: Issues of Continuity and Discontinuity in Their Greek Literary Worlds* (paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting, San Antonio, Nov. 2004, see http://coat.sas.uea.ac.uk/ru/rak/earlyxls/SBL2004.htm, accessed 27 Feb. 2007) suggests that Jewish scribes may have been influenced by the text division markers used in Graeco-Roman commentaries and paraliturgical texts (cf. the discussion concerning n. 3 above), and then in turn influenced Christian scribes.


22 Johnson, *Bookrolls*, 58-9. Cf. *As a rule, scribes copied the divisions between section units from their Vorlagen, but they sometimes deviated from them, and it is difficult to determine under which conditions they did so*. Beyond this description, scribes must have felt free to change the section divisions of their Vorlagen and to add new ones in accord with their understanding of the context (Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 150; regarding section divisions in Hebrew MSS).

23 Johnson, *Bookrolls*, 36. Later readers often added *breathings, accents and adscripta, just as they added punctuation*, so ‘in the case of lectional aids it seems the scribe copied from his model the essentials but remained attentive to the need to reproduce a clean, unencumbered text’ (36).


25 The similarities to Graeco-Roman commentaries have been alluded to above. On commentaries see Turner, *Greek Papyri*, 112-24.

26 Cf. Johnson (*Bookrolls*, 102; cf. 161), whose three categories parallel those listed here: (1) formal, semi-formal, or pretentious, (2) informal and unexceptional (but for the most part probably professional), (3) substandard or cursive. The vast majority of literary rolls in his samples fall into the first and second categories. On the ‘rapid, informal hand’ of scholars and other identifying marks of scholarly texts see Roberts (*Manuscript*, 15, 25, 66) and Turner (*Greek Papyri*, 92-4).

27 See, for example, K.W. Clark, *The Gentle Bile and Other Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 1980) 127: ‘All the manuscripts so far discovered, including the most sensational of recent discoveries, may enable us to reply correctly to the query by early than the text itself’. Turner, *Greek Papyri*, 124.


31 Cf. Roberts, *Manuscript*, 18. Chance preservation also applies in the case of Christian MSS that escaped deliberate destruction. This adds weight to the possibility that the gospel papyri are representative.


33 Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 120-1. It is reasonable to assume that early scriptoria could not be compared with the number of assistants used by Origen early in the third century (see Eusebius, *H.E. 6.23.2*).


36 E.G. Turner’s rule of thumb that 2:3 is generally the proportion of upper to lower margins is followed here (*The Typology of the Early Codes* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1977] 25). Thus, 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). In the absence of physical testimony (the hypothetical lower limit) and 4 cm (the hypothetical upper limit) are added to estimates of column height, while side margins are assumed to be 1.5 cm wide (total 3 cm).


38 For details see Turner, *Typology*, 13-34.

39 There are a number of problems with the effort of T.C. Skeat, ‘The oldest manuscript of the four Gospels’, *NTS* 43 (1997) 1-34. In *Letters on the Gospels* (reprinted in *New Testament Studies* 3 (1957) 261-9). Gregory dated the manuscript iv-vi., but it was never photographed and has been lost, so the dating cannot be checked or the original format (roll or codex) determined. (J.H. Sanders, *Repertorium*, 225-5; van Haelst, *Catalogue*, nos. 1224, 1225.

40 ‘Group 10 is only a special case in a slightly smaller format of Group 9’ (Turner, *Typology*, 25).

41 Turner (*Greek Manuscripts*, 25) gives biblical majuscules (which had developed by the fourth century) as one example of three types of formal, round, bicoloninear (written between two notional lines) hands: ‘each letter (i) only excepted’ occupies the space of a square (θ or o being broad circles) and only g and w reach below the two lines’ while ‘regularly and p often reach below the line’. For a succinct but more detailed description see G. Cavallo and H. Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period A.D. 300-800* (University of London Institute of Classical Studies Bulletin Supplement 47*, London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1987) v.

42 Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 120-1. It is reasonable to assume that early scriptoria could not be compared with the number of assistants used by Origen early in the third century (see Eusebius, *H.E. 6.23.2*).


101 As seen above, other third-century gospel MSS designated private nevertheless conform to third-century fashion or expectations concerning the size of gospel codices.


117 See D.J. Thompson, ‘Ptolemaios (a detainee in the Serapeum at Memphis) after the death of their father Glaucias in 164 BC (106).

118 Cf. Cribiore, Gymnastics, 245-6 (BGU 2.423).

120 See the Conspectus of Texts concerning the rise of Christianity in Egypt at http://www.anchist.mq.edu.au/doccentre/CEC homepage.htm (accessed 30 March 2007). Papyri from the Rise of Christianity in Egypt is a project of the Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University.


122 See P.Col. 8.230 (early third century? Karanis), the deacons Anephos and Sanseneus are nominated as sittologos, POxy. 10.1254 (260, Oxyrhynchus), Petrus is appointed to an expensive public office; and P.Catr. lsid. 114 (304, Karanis), Johannes, a former gymnasiarch. For other papyri containing Christian names (some involving activities requiring literacy) and letters see M. Naldini, Il Cristianesimo in Egitto: lettere private nei papi di secoli II-IV (Studi e testi di Papirologia 3, Firenze: Le Monnier, 1968), Judge and Pickering, and the Conspectus of Texts at the Papyri from the Rise of Christianity in Egypt website (see n. 119).


124 Van Minnen, ‘Boorish or Bookish?’ 184. He argues that Christians must have comprised at least 25% of the population of Egypt in the early fourth century (‘The Roots of Egyptian Christianity’ 73).

125 Morgan notes that the ‘atypicality of Egypt’ has been challenged by a number of comparative studies and concludes that the socio-cultural implications of this would vary from place to place and between social groups (Literature Education, 45).

126 W.V. Harris, ‘Literacy and Epigraphy’, Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 52 (1983) 97 (87-111), contrasts such areas with ‘thoroughly hellenized’ areas like mainland Greece, Macedonia, the Aegean, coastal areas of varying depth and character in Asia Minor.

127 This was more likely to occur in controlled settings. Tov’s observations probably hold good here: ‘Since we do not believe that scribes were so actively involved in content analysis, it appears that scribal decisions on the type of relation between section units should often, but definitely not always, be considered ad hoc, made upon the completion of one unit and before embarking on the next’ (Scribal Practices, 144; cf. 150).

128 Johnson, Bookrolls, 159-60.

129 Johnson, Bookrolls, 17.

130 Cf. the brief discussion of P² in comparison with P² above.

131 Documentary work could also involve the use of shorthand.


133 Gamble, Books and Readers, 121-2.

134 Gamble, Books and Readers, 122.


136 In comparing text division in P² and P² Martin and Kasser (Papyri Bodmer XIV-XV, 1-15) noted agreement and disagreement and concluded that the practice was still in its developmental phase. By the time of the great fourth- and fifth-century codices, the primary markers of text division (ekthesis and vacant line ends) are virtually settled, but there are still individual differences. My own examination of quality facsimiles found that Codex Sinaiticus has ekthesis, vacant line ends, the occasional medial point or dicolon, but not the paragraphos. Likewise, Codex Vaticanus contains ekthesis, vacant line ends, and very occasionally a high point, but also vacant spaces in the text, the paragraphos, and dicola at the end of Matthew, Mark and John, but not Luke. While Codex Alexandrinus has ekthesis, vacant line ends, vacant spaces in the text and medial points, but not the paragraphos.

137 The second-century evidence itself vitiates any perceived circularity in the argument.