Reconsidering the Place of Papyrus Bodmer XIV–XV (\(\Psi 75\)) in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament

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Papyrus Bodmer XIV–XV (\(p75\)), a well-preserved Greek papyrus codex containing the Gospels of Luke and John, has been called the most significant New Testament papyrus so far discovered. The reason for this high estimation is the combination of the early date assigned to the manuscript on the basis of paleography (ca. 175–225 CE) and its close agreement with the text of Codex Vaticanus, which is thought to provide evidence that the “B text” of Vaticanus was produced as early as the second century and was very carefully transmitted. The evidence gathered in the present essay calls these conclusions into question by showing that both paleographically and codicologically, PBodm. XIV–XV fits comfortably in a fourth-century context, along with the bulk of the other “Bodmer papyri” with which it was apparently discovered. These observations, combined with the fact that the text of PBodm. XIV–XV so closely matches that of Vaticanus—a codex widely acknowledged to be a product of the fourth century—suggest that PBodm. XIV–XV was also itself produced in the fourth century. Thus, a number of previous arguments that relied on a second- or early-third-century date for PBodm. XIV–XV will need to be reconsidered.

Papyrus Bodmer XIV–XV is the well-known single-quire papyrus codex containing substantial portions of the Gospels of Luke and John in Greek.\(^1\) The bulk

I would like to thank the custodians of the manuscripts I have discussed here for their assistance and generosity. I am also indebted to Juan Chapa, David Parker, Michael Peppard, and Gregg Schwendner for extremely helpful feedback to earlier drafts of this article. I am grateful as well to Malcolm Choat and Christian Askeland for providing timely responses to queries. All opinions expressed in this article are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of any of the above-named persons. Finally, thanks to JBL’s anonymous reviewers for sharpening the argument and saving me from several slips. Research for this article was supported by a Macquarie University Research Fellowship (grant reference: 9201200891) and an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award (DE140100919).

\(^1\)Papyrus Bodmer XIV–XV is designated as \(p75\) by the Institut für Neutestamentliche

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of the codex was published in two volumes in 1961, complete with photographic plates of most of the extant pages. The editors calculated that the codex originally consisted of 144 pages, more than 100 of which have survived. From the time of its discovery until 2006, the codex formed a part of the collection amassed by the Swiss bibliophile Martin Bodmer in Geneva. In 2006, it was sold through Christie’s auction house for an undisclosed sum to American Frank J. Hanna III on behalf of a consortium. The codex was subsequently donated to the Vatican Library, where it presently resides. The Vatican now officially calls this codex “Hanna Papyrus 1, Mater Verbi.” For the sake of brevity, I will hereafter refer to it by its familiar INTF designation, p75.

ψ75 has been dubbed “the most significant” New Testament papyrus that has come to light in the twentieth century. This evaluation is based on the manuscript’s relatively good state of preservation, the early date generally assigned to it (usual descriptors for the date of the codex include ca. 200 CE and 175–225 CE), and the striking level of agreement between its text and what is now generally called the “B Text,” best represented in Codex Vaticanus (Vatican Library, Cod. Gr. 1209; LDAB Textforschung (hereafter INTF, accessible online at http://tinyurl.com/jbl1352e). It is assigned the number 2895 in the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (hereafter LDAB, accessible online at http://tinyurl.com/jbl1352f).


4 See http://tinyurl.com/jbl1352g.

5 In the illustrations in this article, I use the designations for the glass plates in which ψ75 is presently stored (described in Janz, “Per una edizione facsimilare,” 583).

3479), the famous parchment Greek Bible of the fourth century. This potent combination of \( \text{p75} \)'s early date and its text so closely matching that of Vaticanus has been taken to refute the idea, quite widely accepted in the first half of the twentieth century, that the text of Vaticanus was the result of a recension produced in the fourth century. \( \text{p75} \) has been understood to prove definitively that the "B Text" of the New Testament was not created in the fourth century but instead has roots in the early third and into the second century and that it was transmitted in a stable form.

The evidence gathered in the present essay calls these conclusions into question by showing that the date of 175–225 CE commonly assigned to \( \text{p75} \) represents only one possibility, and not the most probable possibility, for the date of the production of this codex. This early date was established solely on the basis of paleography (the analysis of handwriting), which cannot reliably produce such a narrow window of possible dates for Greek literary writing of the Roman era. In fact, good parallels for the handwriting of \( \text{p75} \) can be found in manuscripts produced in the fourth century. More importantly, too great a focus on paleography can cause us to neglect other evidence relevant to the dating of manuscripts. In terms of codicology (the format and construction of the codex), \( \text{p75} \) fits comfortably in a fourth-century context. Further, the other "Bodmer papyri" with which it was apparently discovered are for the most part products of the fourth and fifth centuries. These observations, combined with the fact that the text of \( \text{p75} \) so closely matches that of Vaticanus—a codex widely acknowledged to be a product of the fourth century—suggest that we should seriously consider the possibility that \( \text{p75} \) was also produced in the fourth century and hence that the "B Text" is also a fourth-century development.

7 The comments of Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman are representative: "The textual significance of this witness is hard to overestimate, presenting as it does a form of text very similar to that of Vaticanus" (The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration, 4th ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 59).

8 In 1954, Kenneth W. Clark wrote, "The most influential factor in recent criticism is the general view that the Neutral text [i.e., the text represented by Vaticanus] is itself a derived text which has passed through a process of revision" ("The Effect of Recent Textual Criticism upon New Testament Studies," in The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology, ed. W. D. Davies and David Daube [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954], 27–51, here 37).

9 Most textual critics of the New Testament have agreed with the assessment of Bruce Metzger, issued in 1962: "Hitherto scholars lacked clear and unambiguous evidence that [the "B Text"] existed earlier than the fourth century codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Now it is proved that the scribes (or editors) of these two great parchment codices did not create this type of text, but transmitted it" ("The Bodmer Papyrus of Luke and John," ExpTim 73 [1962]: 201–3, here 203, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001452466207300703).
I. The Original Publication of P75 and Subsequent Discussions of Its Date

The original editors of P75, Victor Martin and Rodolphe Kasser, assigned the codex to a date between 175 and 225 on the basis of its handwriting, which the editors described as “une jolie onciale verticale, élégante et soignée.”10 In order to establish a date for the hand, Martin and Kasser referred in the first instance to a series of Oxyrhynchus papyri edited by Edgar Lobel: P.Oxy. XXI 2293 (“wretched scraps” of a commentary on Sappho from a papyrus roll assigned to the second century), P.Oxy. XXII 2322 (verses in Ionic on a papyrus roll assigned to the second or early third century), P.Oxy. XXIII 2362 (fragments of a papyrus roll of Bacchylides assigned to “the early part of the third century, or perhaps even late in the second”), P.Oxy. XXIII 2363 (fragments of a roll of Bacchylides “ascribable to the late second or early third century”), and P.Oxy. XXIII 2370 (fragments of a papyrus roll containing prose and verse in Boeotian assigned to “somewhere about 200 A.D.”).11 When one consults the plates of these papyri, some similarities with the writing of P75 are evident. Yet all of these papyri were themselves dated only on the basis of paleography and are thus of no independent value for establishing the date of P75.12 This point requires emphasis. Although many scholars place great faith in paleography as a means of dating Greek literary manuscripts of the Roman period, the process can become completely circular when an undated manuscript is assigned a date based on paleographic similarity to manuscripts that were themselves dated only by means of paleography, with no tether to a secure date anywhere in the process. In order for paleographic analysis to yield useful results for dating purposes, the discussion ought to focus on samples of handwriting for which a date can be determined by some method more objective than paleography, that is, a sample that contains an explicit date, such as a letter written in a similar hand or a literary manuscript that has at least a fixed terminus ante quem or terminus post quem (perhaps because the comparable literary manuscript was written on the reverse of a dated documentary roll or was found in a secure archaeological context).13

11 All quotations here are from Lobel’s introductions to the individual pieces.
12 Martin and Kasser also mentioned a resemblance to another paleographically dated papyrus, the Chester Beatty codex of the Gospels and Acts (p45, LDAB 2980), but they did not press the similarity (Papyrus Bodmer XIV, 13–14).
13 Yet, even under such optimal circumstances, a high degree of caution is still necessary. The use of paleographic comparison to establish a date for an undated manuscript depends on the assumption that graphic change is always indicative of temporal change (rather than, say, the ability or personal taste of the copyist) and that modes of handwriting change or “develop” in a regular and predictable manner. As Bentley Layton has phrased it in regard to Coptic paleography,
Fortunately, in addition to the undated Oxyrhynchus papyri they offered, Martin and Kasser did mention two samples of handwriting that are relatively datable on more objective grounds: item 12a in Medea Norsa’s handbook of literary papyri and item 15b in the paleographic handbook of C. H. Roberts.\(^{14}\) Plate 12a in Norsa’s handbook was published as P.Flor. I 61, a record of proceedings that took place in the year 85 CE. Norsa notes that this copy of the proceedings was probably “contemporanea o poco più tarda della data ufficiale del documento.”\(^{15}\) An image of this papyrus is reproduced below next to an image of a leaf of p75 (figs. 1 and 2).

Martin and Kasser did not suggest any particular similarities between this papyrus and p75, nor do I see any great degree of resemblance either in the forms of individual letters or in the overall appearance.\(^{16}\) Comparing strings of letters confirms that there is little resemblance between P.Flor. I 61 and p75 (fig. 3).\(^{17}\)

The situation is slightly better with the other datable parallel offered by Martin and Kasser. Item 15b in Robert’s handbook was published as P.FuadUniv. 19, a sale of land written in the year 145 or 146 CE. In spite of its poor state of preservation, this papyrus does show some similarities to the hand of p75. The published image of nine lines of P.FuadUniv. 19 is included below juxtaposed with nine lines from a leaf of p75 (figs. 4 and 5).

Parallels with p75 can be seen in the rounded mu dipping to the lower notional line and the rho occasionally descending well below the notional line. One can note also the relatively small omicron common in p75, which occasionally appears in P.FuadUniv. 19. Other letters, such as the epsilon and upsilon, are quite distinct in the two pieces. Overall, the hand of p75 is generally more compacted horizontally (that is to say, there is less space between the individual letters) and vertically (there is less space between the lines), and the strokes of p75 are considerably thicker. Yet, if one is determined, one can detect some similarity of appearance here.


\(^{15}\) Norsa, *La scrittura letteraria*, 26.

\(^{16}\) I must admit that I find this suggested paleographic parallel confusing. I am tempted to wonder if it might be a typographical error of some sort.

\(^{17}\) To facilitate close comparison of samples of handwriting in this article, I have magnified the samples and adjusted the sizes of the images to match each other more evenly. To give a sense of actual relative sizes, I have (when possible), included scales in the larger images of the manuscripts.
Figure 1 (top). P.Flor. I 61, column 2. Courtesy of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence (reproduction prohibited).

Figure 2 (right). Hanna Papyrus 1, Mater Verbi (p75), Plate 1B10R. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. © 2016 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Gift of the Hanna family and the Solidarity Association.
There has been little subsequent detailed discussion of the paleography of p75. In the second volume of his paleographic handbook, published in 1970, Richard Seider described the codex simply as “2.–3. Jh. n. Chr.” In 1973, Jean Duplacy urged caution in general terms: “mieux vaut donc ne pas oublier que la datation ‘début du III° siècle’ n’est pas une ‘constatation’ sur laquelle on pourrait construire un édifice inébranlable, mais une hypothèse que son sérieux n’empêche pas de

demuerer approximative et sujette à révision."¹⁹ Eric G. Turner has discussed the date of the codex in a handful of separate contexts. In his classic introduction to Greek papyrology published in 1968, Turner commented that P75 was “assigned by its editor to A.D. 175–225, and [is] not likely to be later than the third century.”²⁰ Later in the same work (in the context of addressing the question of the typical length of life of a papyrus roll), Turner observed that the “Bodmer St. Luke-St. John (P75), perhaps written c. 200–250, has marginalia in cursive and once in a heavy uncial of the fourth or 5th century.”²¹ By 1977, Turner seems to have adjusted his thinking about the date of the codex. In The Typology of the Early Codex, he wrote the following about his “Group 8“ (papyrus codices with page height roughly equal to twice the page breadth): “I regard the preponderance of c. iii or iii/iv instances in Group 8 as supporting my own dating, reached on the basis of morphological analysis, of P.Bodmer XIV/XV = P75 to c. A.D. 225–275 rather than to a period fifty years earlier.”²² Unfortunately, to my knowledge, Turner nowhere provided detailed arguments or precisely dated paleographic parallels to substantiate this proposed dating, and this later dating is only rarely cited in more recent literature.²³ I will return to the questions of the marginal writing that Turner mentioned as well as


²¹Ibid., 182 n. 37.


²³Turner’s suggested date does not appear in standard reference works, such as Metzger and Ehrman, Text of the New Testament, or in Aland and Aland, Text of the New Testament: An Introduction, in which P75 is regularly described as “early third century” or “the beginning of the third century” (pp. 37, 44, 51, 75, 87, and 91).
the codicology of \( \text{p}75 \) below. For now, however, I continue the survey of studies of the paleography of the manuscript.

In their handbook of early New Testament manuscripts, Philip Comfort and David Barrett, who advocate a date of “late second century; possibly early third” for \( \text{p}75 \), reasserted the validity of Martin and Kasser’s parallels, and they proposed another dated parallel, “\( \text{P. Michigan 3} \),” by which they must mean \( \text{P.Mich.inv. 3} \) (\( \text{P.Mich. I 3} \) is a Ptolemaic papyrus).\(^{24}\) \( \text{P.Mich.inv. 3} \) (LDAB 801) is a portion of a roll of Dioscurides on the back of which is a somewhat curious isolated cursive dating formula read by Campbell Bonner and Harold Idris Bell as referring to the year 192/193 CE, which would seem to provide a \textit{terminus ante quem} for the production of the Dioscurides text on the front.\(^{25}\) It can thus be dated with some confidence to the second century.\(^{26}\) An image of a portion of this papyrus is reproduced below (fig. 6).

Bonner described the writing as “a good, small, sloping book-hand.” It does bear a certain vague resemblance to the hand of \( \text{p}75 \). Closer inspection, however, shows the similarity to be somewhat limited, as the comparisons below indicate (fig. 7). Overall, the writing of the Michigan piece appears rather more compressed, both horizontally and vertically, and it inclines more to the right. At the level of individual letters, the “loop” of the \textit{alpha} differs markedly between the two pieces, as does the \textit{mu}, which shows a much more prominent medial dip as well as more curving strokes in \( \text{p}75 \). The \textit{upsilon} of \( \text{p}75 \) generally has a broader top, and the initial \textit{upsilon} carries the diaeresis. The \textit{omega} is much more well defined in \( \text{p}75 \); in \( \text{P.Mich.inv. 3} \), it lacks the central vertical stroke.

We may thus summarize previous paleographic discussions of \( \text{p}75 \) by noting that, of the three proposed parallels for its handwriting that have relatively secure dates, only two show any similarity with \( \text{p}75 \), and this similarity is not impressive. Neither \( \text{P.FuadUniv. 19} \) nor \( \text{P.Mich.inv. 3} \) is especially close to \( \text{p}75 \) in terms of either the formation of individual letters or the overall appearance of the handwriting. In sum, the evidence so far mustered in support of a late-second- or early-third-century date for \( \text{p}75 \) is surprisingly slim, especially given the important role that the date of \( \text{p}75 \) has played in the textual criticism of the New Testament in the second half of the twentieth century.


\(^{26}\) This is the date assigned by Rebecca Flemming and Ann Ellis Hanson in \textit{Greek Medical Papyri I}, ed. Isabella Andorlini (Florence: Istituto papirologico G. Vitelli, 2001), 11–12.
Figure 6. P.Mich.inv. 3, upper half. Courtesy of The Papyrology Collection, Graduate Library, The University of Michigan.
II. Reassessing the Paleographic Range for the Hand of \P75\n
The type of writing displayed in \P75\ is classified by some paleographers as belonging to the “severe style,” a type of writing that seems to have emerged in Egypt in the second century and flourished in the third century.\(^{27}\) When one compares \P75\ to datable examples of the “severe style,” some similar qualities are apparent, but the overall appearance of \P75\ aligns more closely with examples of what some paleographers call the “inclined or sloping ogival majuscule,” which seems to have arisen in the fourth century.\(^{28}\) Turner’s somewhat looser classification, the “formal mixed” style, encompasses both of these types, and it is probably best not to be too dogmatic about rigidly assigning samples of writing to particular named styles, as such styles are generally modern conventions and not ancient classifications. The important point is that the type of writing that characterizes \P75\ persisted well beyond the 175–225 CE window usually proposed for \P75.\ In fact, Turner has observed that the features of the “formal mixed” style span the period

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\(^{27}\) See most recently Willy Clarysse and Pasquale Orsini, “Early New Testament Manuscripts and Their Dates: A Critique of Theological Palaeography,” \textit{ETL} 88 (2012): 443–74, http://dx.doi.org/10.2143/ETL.88.4.2957937, who classify \P75\ as a type of the “severe style” (p. 457) and assign it a date range of “200–250” (p. 471). A recent list of 248 examples of this style of writing found among the Oxyrhynchus papyri is available in Lucio Del Corso, “Lo ‘stile severo’ nei P.Oxy.: una lista,” \textit{Aeg} 86 (2006): 81–106. The sixteen relatively securely datable examples in his list range from the middle of the second to the second half of the third century.

\(^{28}\) On the “inclined or sloping ogival majuscule,” see Guglielmo Cavallo, \textit{La scrittura greca e latina dei papiri: Una introduzione} (Pisa: Fabrizio Serra, 2008), 111–16.
from the middle of the second century down into the fifth century. It will be useful, then, to examine some securely datable examples of this “formal mixed” writing in order to establish a more appropriate paleographic range for p75.

I begin with P.Oxy. VII 1012 (LDAB 5448), a collection of fragments of a roll containing a literary treatise that can be dated with a reasonable degree of certainty. P.Oxy. VII 1012 was written against the fibers on the reverse of an account (published as P.Oxy. VII 1045) described by Arthur S. Hunt as “dating from the reign of Septimius Severus, and apparently after his thirteenth year.” Hunt thus concluded that “the literary text on the verso is therefore subsequent to A.D. 204–5, while from the character of the handwriting it would be placed at no great distance from that date…. A period of from thirty to fifty years will be sufficient to allow for the recto to become antiquated and useless, and the conditions will thus be well satisfied if the manuscript on the back be assigned to about the middle of the third century.”

A selection of the surviving fragments of P.Oxy. VII 1012 is reproduced below next to a leaf of p75 to facilitate comparison (figs. 8 and 9).

One can detect an affinity between this hand and that of p75. A more detailed comparison of strings of letters highlights both the similarities and differences (fig. 10). The positioning and spacing of the letters in P.Oxy. VII 1012 are quite similar to that of p75. The relatively small omicron and sigma are common to both hands, but the omicron in P.Oxy. VII 1012 tends to sit higher up, just below the upper notional line. The epsilon of P.Oxy. VII 1012 is narrower and its crossbar less clearly articulated. The pi and upsilon are differently formed in the two pieces. Again, the mu of p75 tends to have a more prominent medial dip. On the whole, however, P.Oxy. VII 1012 provides a reasonably close parallel for the writing of p75.

In the same cache of literary texts that included P.Oxy. VII 1012, B. P. Grenfell and Hunt discovered another piece written in a similar style that can be relatively securely dated to a period after 234 or 235 CE. This piece was published as P.Oxy. VII 1016, a copy of Plato’s *Phaedrus* (LDAB 3811). I reproduce an image of the last fifteen lines of one of its columns alongside an image of the last fifteen lines of a leaf of p75 (figs. 11 and 12).

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30 The quotation is from Hunt’s introduction to P.Oxy. VII 1012, p. 84. As Turner has shown, the reverse sides of documents could be reused quickly (under a year) or only after a long period of time (over a century); therefore, Hunt’s proposal of “a period of thirty to fifty years” before reuse seems reasonable (see Eric G. Turner, “Recto and Verso,” *JEA* 40 [1954]: 102–6, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3855558).

Figure 8 (top). P.Oxy. VII 1012 (Toledo Museum of Art 1915.44), fragments 13 and 14. Courtesy of the Toledo Museum of Art (Toledo, Ohio). Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey.

Figure 9 (right). Hanna Papyrus 1, Mater Verbi (B75), Plate 1B8V. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. © 2016 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Gift of the Hanna family and the Solidarity Association.
Again, a closer comparison of strings of letters will help to clarify similarities and differences between this hand and that of \( \text{p75} \) (fig. 13). While the hands are recognizably similar, the writing of \( \text{p75} \) appears more carefully and deliberately executed. The \textit{iota} of P.Oxy. VII 1016 more regularly and emphatically extends above and below the notional lines. And the notional lines themselves tend to drift upward as one moves from left to right in P.Oxy. VII 1016. At the level of individual letters, the pronounced curve in the right-most stroke of the \textit{alpha} in P.Oxy. VII 1016 stands out, as does (again) the deeply curved central stroke of the \textit{mu} in \( \text{p75} \).

Finally, we may consider two letters from the archive of Theophanes, a government official who traveled from Hermopolis to Antioch in the 320s.32 The letters, P.Herm. 4 and 5, were likely written by the same person and can be dated to the period of Theophanes’s trip in the 320s. The script of these letters is not usually classified as “severe style” but rather as the “inclined or sloping ovigal majuscule” (which, again, still falls in the broader “formal mixed” classification of Turner). Images of these pieces are reproduced below (figs. 14 and 15).

These papyri provide the closest securely datable paleographic connection known to me for the script of \( \text{p75} \). Turner described P.Herm. 5 as “a slowly written, bold, medium to large capital, having a slight slant to the right. It is very roughly

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32 For the context of the archive, see the discussion of John Matthews, \textit{The Journey of Theophanes: Travel, Business, and Daily Life in the Roman East} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), http://dx.doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300108989.001.0001.
bilinear.” Such a description would also nicely fit the writing of $p75$. Indeed, Turner suggestively observed that the writing of P.Herm. 4 and 5 “would not have disgraced a Gospel or a work of classical literature.” When placed side by side, the visual similarity of the writing is striking. Figure 16 presents a detailed comparison of several words from P.Herm. 4 and 5 and $p75$.

A number of similarities in the two samples are immediately apparent. The relative thickness of the strokes is nearly equivalent. The relative sizes and positions of the letters are quite comparable, evident especially in the examples of $\nu\mu\omega\nu$, $\iota\alpha$, and $\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron$. The noticeably smaller $\omicron$ and $\sigma$ that characterize this hand are closely proportional in these manuscripts, and their positioning relative to other letters is also quite similar. In terms of the formation of individual letters, the deeply dipping central curve of the $\mu$ is often nearly identical in $p75$ and P.Herm. 4 and 5. The $\mu$–$\epsilon$ ligature and the flattened $\psi$ are additional commonalities (though the horizontal stroke of the $\psi$ is usually lower in $p75$). Also noteworthy is the use of the diaeresis over initial $\iota$. There are some differences to be taken into account. The writing of P.Herm. 4 and 5 is generally more compressed horizontally. There tends to be a bit less vertical variation in letters in $p75$. In P.Herm. 4 and 5, $\iota$, $\rho$, $\psi$, and $\upsilon$ more regularly and more prominently extend above and below the notional lines. On the whole, however, I would maintain that P.Herm. 4 and 5 constitute the closest securely dated paleographic match thus far proposed for $p75$.

This close similarity does not, however, mean that $p75$ must also be dated in the fourth century. Rather than definitively ruling out an early-third-century date for $p75$, the paleographic proximity of $p75$ and P.Herm. 4 and 5 indicates that the first half of the fourth century should certainly be regarded as a possible date for the copying of $p75$. To attempt to establish a more precise date, we must consider factors aside from paleography. Doing so means a change in our orientation toward $p75$. We must move from thinking of it simply as a carrier of text and a sample of handwriting to considering it as a three-dimensional archaeological artifact.

33 Turner, Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World, 22, 118.
34 Ibid., 118.
35 I am surprised that the similarity between this script and that of $p75$ has not previously been noted. It is possible that a perceived difference in size prevented comparisons from being drawn. The plates of $p75$ provided in the editio princeps included no measurement scale and were reduced by a factor of about 12 percent (presumably to allow for printing in the standard size of the Bodmer series). The resulting impression that the writing of $p75$ is quite minute may thus help to account for why the close paleographic similarities with P.Herm. 4 and 5 have been overlooked.
Figure 11. P.Oxy. VII 1016 (Toledo Museum of Art 1915.38), bottom of column 5. Courtesy of the Toledo Museum of Art (Toledo, Ohio). Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey.
Figure 12. Hanna Papyrus 1, Mater Verbi (p.75), Plate 1B1R, bottom of leaf. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. © 2016 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Gift of the Hanna family and the Solidarity Association.

Figure 15. P.Herm. 5. Courtesy of The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester. Copyright of The University of Manchester.
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</table>
III. The Context and Codicology of \( \Psi 75 \)

There is wide agreement that \( \Psi 75 \) was part of a discovery that included a group of papyrus and parchment codices, the so-called Bodmer papyri. The exact area of the find and the extent of the collection are not entirely clear. There is consensus that the books are to be associated with Upper Egypt. James M. Robinson has argued that they were found near the cliffs of Jabal Abû Manâ Neb and constitute the remains of the library of the monastic community in nearby Pbow. Others situate the find farther north and envision the books emerging from an educational setting in Panopolis.\(^{37}\) According to Kasser, the find contained nineteen codices, but Robinson has argued on different occasions for adding anywhere from five to ten codices to that number as well as some material in roll form.\(^{38}\) For the purposes of the present argument, I do not need to resolve these disputes. To begin to contextualize \( \Psi 75 \), it suffices to describe the codices that everyone agrees were part of the discovery. The chart on the following page distills the data (the dates are those assigned by Kasser in his inventory in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*; see the footnotes for alternative dating proposals).

Robinson’s larger corpus would include three additional codices with Greek Christian materials, all assigned to the fourth century.\(^{39}\) Robinson’s collection would also add at least two Coptic codices that are generally assigned to the fifth century.\(^{40}\) Thus, most of the Bodmer codices are assigned to the third to the fifth centuries with a clustering in the fourth century. I will suggest that the physical features of \( \Psi 75 \) render it plausible that it too was a product of the fourth century.

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\(^{38}\) See Kasser’s entry for “Bodmer Papyri” in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. Aziz S. Atiya, 8 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 8:48–53. The most recent version of Robinson’s inventory (Story of the Bodmer Papyri, 169–72) contains thirty-five items, but the discussion after the inventory mentions items numbered 36 and 37. His past lists have become jumbled, and it is unclear which list is authoritative.

\(^{39}\) These are Chester Beatty ac. 1499 (LDAB 3030; a Greek grammar and Greco-Latin lexicon of Paul’s letters) and two fragmentary codices of the Psalms at the Chester Beatty Library (LDAB 3158 and 3159).

\(^{40}\) These are P.PalauRib. inv. 181–183 (LDAB 107760, 107904, and 107905; Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John) and Chester Beatty ac. 1493 (LDAB 108402; the Apocalypse of Elijah).
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<tr>
<th>Designation(s)</th>
<th>Language(s)</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. XXV, IV, XXVI</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Menander (Samia, Dyskolos, and Aspis)</td>
<td>3rd cent. 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. II (p66)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Gospel of John</td>
<td>2nd–3rd cent. 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. V, X, XI, VII, XIII, XII, XX, IX, VIII (the Bodmer “Composite” or “Miscellaneous” Codex)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Genesis of Mary; Corr. of Paul and the Corinthians; 11th Ode of Solomon; Jude; Melito, On Passover; hymn; Apology of Philæas; Pss 33–34; 1–2 Peter</td>
<td>3rd–4th cent. 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. XXVII, XIV, XLI, XLVI, XLVII</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Susanna, Daniel, Moral exhortations, Thucydides</td>
<td>3rd–4th cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Monts.Roca inv. 126–178, 292, 338 (the Barcelona/Montserrat Greek-Latin “Miscellaneous” Codex)</td>
<td>Latin, Greek</td>
<td>Cicero, Cat. 6–8, 13–30; acrostic hymn; drawing; eucharistium; hexameters on Alcestis; story about Hadrian; list of words</td>
<td>4th cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. VI</td>
<td>Coptic</td>
<td>Proverbs</td>
<td>3rd–(4th) cent. 44</td>
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41 Turner has provided securely dated parallels placing the Menander codex in the early fourth century (see Turner, “Emendations to Menander’s Dyskolos,” BICS 6 [1959]: 61–72; and Turner, review of Paläographie der griechischen Papyri, by Richard Seider, Gnomon 41 [1969]: 505–7).

42 For both paleographic and codicological reasons, P.Bodm. II is more likely to be a production of the fourth century. See Nongbri, “Limits of Palaeographic Dating of Literary Papyri,” 1–35.

43 The Bodmer “composite” or “miscellaneous” Codex contains texts copied in a number of different hands, all assigned by Turner to the fourth century (see Turner, review of Apologie de Philæas, by Victor Martin, JEA 52 [1966]: 199, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3855853).

44 Kasser had earlier assigned P.Bodm. VI to the fourth or fifth century; see Kasser, Papyrus Bodmer VI: Livre des Proverbes, CSCO 194 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1960), xiii. Albert Pietersma’s inventory of Bodmer papyri also places this codex in the fourth or fifth century (see his entry “Bodmer Papyrus,” ABD 1:766–67). Malcolm Choat describes P.Bodm. VI as “III/IV” and briefly discusses the possible relationship of the manuscript’s dialect and its date (“Coptic,”
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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. XVI</td>
<td>Coptic</td>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>5th (–6th) cent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. XVIII</td>
<td>Coptic</td>
<td>Deuteronomy</td>
<td>4th cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. XXI</td>
<td>Coptic</td>
<td>Joshua, Tobit</td>
<td>5th cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. XXII</td>
<td>Coptic</td>
<td>Lamentations, Epistle of Jeremiah, Baruch</td>
<td>4th cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. XXIII</td>
<td>Coptic</td>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>4th cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Bodm. XL</td>
<td>Coptic</td>
<td>Song of Songs</td>
<td>5th cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby-Schøyen Codex</td>
<td>Coptic</td>
<td>Melito, On Passover; 2 Macc 5:27–7:41; 1 Peter; Jonah; exhortation</td>
<td>4th cent.</td>
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According to Martin and Kasser, P75 measures 13 cm (width) x 26 cm (height). In terms of Turner’s typology of papyrus codices, it falls into Group 8 (height of page roughly double the width). Among the codices generally agreed to be a part of the Bodmer find, P75 aligns most closely in terms of codicology with the Bodmer Menander codex (13 x 27.5 cm), published separately as P.Bodm. XXV, IV, and XXVI (LDAB 2743), and P.Bodm. XXIV (about 13 x 24 cm), a Greek book of Psalms (LDAB 3098). All three of these books are single-quire papyrus codices.

As I mentioned above, Turner took the large number of third- and fourth-century codices in his Group 8 as an indicator that P75 should probably be assigned a date of roughly 225–275. But here we encounter a problem with Turner’s typology that he himself noted: The dates of the majority of the codices in his


47 Pietersma’s inventory in *ABD* includes three additional Coptic texts: P.Bodm. XLII (2 Corinthians), P.Bodm. XLIII (an apocryphon), and P.Bodm. XLIV (Daniel), but Kasser considers these texts to be “clearly distinct in origin from the Bodmer papyri proper” (“Bodmer Papyri,” 48).

typological groups were assigned on the basis of paleography. That is to say, many of these dates are not themselves secure.49 We are fortunate, however, that among the codices in Turner’s Group 8 and its aberrants, there is a set with reasonably secure dates.

The Bodmer papyri were not the only group of codices to emerge from Egypt in the middle of the twentieth century. Indeed, another hoard that appeared a few years before the Bodmer papyri is considerably more famous, the so-called Nag Hammadi codices (LDAB 107741–107753). These papyrus books were discovered in close proximity to the most likely proposals for the find spot of the Bodmer codices.50 Several of the codices fall into Turner’s Group 8 along with p75, and the Nag Hammadi codices can be reasonably securely dated.51 After the Nag Hammadi codices were taken apart, their leather covers were disassembled. It was a common practice in antiquity to use waste papyri to stiffen these leather covers, and in the case of the Nag Hammadi codices, some of these papyri carry precise dates that reveal the earliest possible point at which the codices were produced. The cover of Codex VII contained the latest firmly dated material—papyri with dates as late as the year 348. Thus, this group of codices is generally dated to a period no earlier than the middle of the fourth century.52

I stress that I am not arguing that p75 must therefore also date to the same period. Rather, I am simply pointing out that artifacts that physically resemble p75 were being produced in Upper Egypt in the middle of the fourth century (just as we have seen that handwriting quite like that used in p75 was also in use in the fourth century).53 Furthermore, a fourth-century date for the production of p75

49 Ibid., 3–4.
50 The Nag Hammadi codices are generally believed to have been found at Jabal al-Tārif. If the Bodmer codices are to be associated with Jabal Abū Manā, then the two finds are in extremely close proximity, roughly 10 km apart. If the Bodmer codices are to be associated with Panopolis, the distance between the two finds would be more in the order of 100 km.
51 Turner’s Group 8 includes the following Nag Hammadi codices: Codices I, II, VI (Turner’s C46, mistakenly identified in the chart as Codex IV), X, XI, and the loose leaves designated as Codex XIII. Codex IV and Codex V are classified in Group 8 under the heading “Aberrant 2” (height not quite twice breadth). Codex VII is in Turner’s Group 5 (codices roughly 18 cm x 30 cm) (Turner, Typology of the Early Codex, 20–21).
53 Nag Hammadi Codex II is an especially close match in terms of format (15.8 x 28.4 cm). For a concise physical description of Nag Hammadi Codex II, see Bentley Layton, Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7, 2 vols., NHS 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1:2–5. On the date of Codex II, Hugo Lundhaug has surveyed the relevant evidence and concluded that “even though the manuscript may conceivably have been manufactured as early as the first half of the fourth century, it seems wise to allow for the possibility that the codex may actually have been manufactured as late as the fifth century” (Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of
would not run afoul of the context of the other codices that were part of the Bodmer find. It is the contention of some scholars, however, that \( \Psi 75 \) was not created with the majority of the other books but entered the collection from outside, having been produced much earlier. According to this line of argument, by the fourth century \( \Psi 75 \) was no longer in use and was a “venerated relic.” This argument is based on the supposedly early date for the codex (late second or early third century) and on the damaged state of the outer leaves of the codex when it emerged from the antiquities market. While it is true that \( \Psi 75 \) must have gone out of use at some point, what is the evidence that it went out of use before the other Bodmer codices with which it was found? A discussion of the physical condition of the codex and evidence for its continued use is in order.

### IV. The Binding and Continued Use of \( \Psi 75 \)

The original binding of \( \Psi 75 \) seems not to have survived. Martin and Kasser state that, when the codex arrived in the Bodmer collection, it consisted of a stack of twenty-five leaves along with fragments of other leaves. Some of the pages had already been “crudely” repaired with tape. There was also a leather cover to which more fragments of pages were attached in layers. Along with the pieces of \( \Psi 75 \) in the covers was a fragment of a Coptic text on parchment. The editors speculated that the first and last pages of the codex were damaged in antiquity and that some of the remaining fragmentary pieces were “sacrificed” for use in stiffening the leather covers of the codex.

As I noted above, a number of authors have speculated that \( \Psi 75 \) and other Greek codices in the Bodmer collection were not actually used as books in the fourth century but rather were “relics.” These claims raise the question of when \( \Psi 75 \) went out of use. First, it is necessary to strive for greater clarity on the actual physical condition of the leaves of \( \Psi 75 \). Robinson has described \( \Psi 75 \) as follows: “This very valuable old codex was rebound in late antiquity … by sewing the binding thongs through the inner margin of the quire so near the writing that the codex could not be opened wide enough to actually be read.” I have found no evidence for this claim, either in the photographic plates (where one would expect to see some trace of holes in the inner margins of the pages) or in the literature describing the codex (outside

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56 The editors wrote, “Au dos de l’une des moitiés de la couverture (pl. 3) s’est collé un fragment de parchemin copte, plus tardif, sans rapport avec \( \Psi 75 \). Ces deux documents paraissent avoir séjourné longtemps ensemble là où ils furent découverts” (*Papyrus Bodmer XIV*, 9 n. 2).
of Robinson’s own discussions). In fact, aside from the damaged outer leaves, there does not seem to have been a physical impediment to the use of the codex.

Our best evidence for the continued use of the codex comes in the form of corrections and other bits of writing present in the codex and not assignable to the original copyist of p75. In his exhaustive study of the scribal practices in p75, James R. Royse counts 116 corrections in the codex. He assigns nearly all of these to the original copyist but notes that in five instances, we likely have the work of later correctors. Royse attributed the first three corrections to a single hand and concluded that “these 3 places we probably see the activity of some reader who noticed (or thought he noticed) that a few words were missing and inserted them.” Royse refrained from assigning the last two corrections to a single individual and concluded that “the most that can be said about these two additions is that they demonstrate that P75 was read at some later date.” What that later date might be is not discussed.

Royse also pointed out that his discussion would not take into consideration “three marginal additions that seem to have no relation to the text.” These additions are reproduced below (figs. 17–19). It seems likely that one of these examples must be the marginal writing “in a heavy uncial of the fourth or 5th century” to which Turner had referred in 1968. While I would hesitate to assign a precise date to any of these marginal additions based on such small samples of what seem to be less-than-competent hands, I can offer nothing to invalidate Turner’s cautious two-hundred-year range of fourth or fifth century for any of the examples. In whatever way we interpret these examples of marginal writing, the implication seems to be that the codex was in use during the fourth century and possibly in the fifth century. The damaged state of the outer portions of p75 does suggest that the codex

58 Robinson has cited Kasser’s introduction to PBodm. XXV (a portion of the Menander codex, LDAB 2743) in this regard, and Robinson’s claim may be based on a misreading of Kasser’s statements (see Robinson, Story of the Bodmer Papyri, 31–32). In the course of describing the binding of the Menander codex, Kasser noted that the book was rebound using the method of stabbing. In the case of the Menander codex, this stitching was so close to the inner margin of the writing that the beginning and ending of many lines would have been impossible to see. Kasser suggested that this type of binding showed that the codex was no longer used but kept instead as a “vénérable relique.” He then noted that other Bodmer codices, including p75, were “traités de la même manière.” It seems clear that Kasser is expressing his opinion that p75 was a “relic” because it was rebound despite being damaged and incomplete, not that it was necessarily rebound by using the same technique as that employed in rebinding the Menander codex (see Rodolphe Kasser and Colin Austin, Papyrus Bodmer XXV: Menandre, La Samienne, Papyrus Bodmer 25 [Geneva: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1969], 15–16).


60 Ibid., 646.

61 Ibid., 647.

62 Ibid., 621.

63 Turner, Greek Papyri, 182 n. 37.
Figure 17. Hanna Papyrus 1, Mater Verbi (p75), Plate 1B1V, detail of writing in upper margin. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. © 2016 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Gift of the Hanna family and the Solidarity Association.

Figure 18. Hanna Papyrus 1, Mater Verbi (p75), Plate 2B6V, detail of writing in lower margin (upside down). By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. © 2016 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Gift of the Hanna family and the Solidarity Association.
experienced a period of decay before its deposition with the other Bodmer codices. But the same is true of Coptic codices in the collection, such as P. Bodm. XIX (LDAB 107759), a codex containing the second half of Matthew and the beginning of Romans. This codex was also rebound despite the loss of substantial parts of the text, and the last page of the extant portion of Romans (containing Rom 1:25–29) was pasted to the inside of the back wooden cover.64

Determining the date when these books were deposited in antiquity depends on the items that one believes were included in the find. In Kasser's inventory, the latest material is dated to the fifth or possibly sixth century, meaning that the cache of codices was deposited in the late fifth century or the sixth century at earliest. In Robinson's expanded corpus, the latest material has been assigned to the seventh century, pushing the deposition date even later.65 Thus, even if p75 was produced in the fourth century, it still would have had plenty of time to be used, damaged, and repaired before its final deposition with the other Bodmer codices at a period no earlier than the late fifth or early sixth century.

V. THE TEXT OF P75 AND THE TEXT OF CODEX VATICANUS

We may now turn to the most discussed aspect of p75, namely, its text of Luke and John. When B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort published the explanatory

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65 In Robinson's inventory, the latest items in the find (Chester Beatty ac. 1494 and 1495, small papyrus rolls containing copies of Horsiesios's letters 3 and 4 in Sahidic assigned to the seventh century, LDAB 108131 and 108132, respectively) would indicate a deposition date for the hoard in the late seventh century at earliest.
introduction to their edition of the Greek New Testament in 1882, they declared that the “special excellence” of Codex Vaticanus showed that its text was very near to the early text of the documents of the New Testament.66 By the late 1950s, however, the prevailing wisdom was that the text of Codex Vaticanus was the result of a recension created at some point in the early fourth century. The discovery of papyri such as the Chester Beatty codex of the Gospels and Acts (p45, LDAB 2980) was thought to show that the text of the New Testament was more fluid in the second and third centuries and that texts of the quality of Vaticanus were produced only by the scholarly efforts of the fourth century.67 The publication of p75 radically changed this situation. Within just a few years of the publication of p75, it was clear that its text was remarkably similar to that of Codex Vaticanus.68 Several different studies showed that, for the text of both Luke and John, where variation exists in the textual tradition, p75 and Codex Vaticanus agree between roughly 90 and 94 percent of the time, once one accounts for small orthographic errors and obvious scribal errors.69 To gain a sense of the impressiveness of this level of agreement, one need only consider that Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, generally acknowledged to be closely related, agree at a rate of roughly 75 percent under similar conditions of comparison.70 The online tools produced by Münster’s INTF for Luke and the early chapters of John provide more data to reinforce this close relationship between p75 and Vaticanus.71

What made this level of agreement even more remarkable was the perceived

68 Indeed, Martin and Kasser already noted the similarities in their edition (Papyrus Bodmer XIV, 29).
71 See the online tool showing manuscript clusters based on the test passages used in the Text und Textwert series at http://tinyurl.com/jbl1352h. For the test passages in Luke, Vaticanus and p75 agree at a rate of 86.1 percent (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus agree at a rate of 67.9 percent). For the test passages in John, p75 and Vaticanus agree at a rate of 79.1 percent (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus agree at a rate of 41.3 percent).
temporal distance between Codex Vaticanus and \( \text{p}75 \). Vaticanus was (and is) generally agreed to be a product of the fourth century, and \( \text{p}75 \) has been thought to represent a text of about the year 200 CE faithfully copied from a second-century exemplar.\(^{72}\) The discovery of \( \text{p}75 \) was thus viewed as redeeming Hort's contention that Vaticanus "must be regarded as having preserved not only a very ancient text, but a very pure line of very ancient text."\(^{73}\) In the words of Gordon D. Fee, \( \text{p}75 \) showed that "Hort was correct about [Vaticanus] on both counts."\(^{74}\) This conclusion had obvious effects on the theory that the text of Vaticanus was the result of a large-scale revision in the fourth century. As Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland have phrased it, the text of \( \text{p}75 \) was "so close to that of Codex Vaticanus (B) that the theory of

\(^{72}\) Yet both the date and the provenance of Codex Vaticanus are open to question. It has been agreed for some time that Vaticanus is a product of the fourth century, but credible estimates of the date of its production have ranged from the early part of the fourth century to the 360s. The paleographer Guglielmo Cavallo has assigned Vaticanus with extraordinary precision to "intorno al 350 ca." (Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica [Florence: Le Monnier, 1967], 55). Others have argued for a date earlier in the fourth century. These earlier estimates are based primarily on possible historical circumstances that may have caused the production of a Bible of this level of quality, most often Eusebius's account of Constantine's request for fifty parchment copies of the Scriptures in the early 330s (Vit. Const. 4.36) or Athanasius's report of having produced copies of the Scriptures at the order of Constans (Apol. Const. 4.2). The location of the production of Vaticanus is generally thought to be either Alexandria in Egypt or Caesarea Maritima in Palestine. H. J. M. Milne and Theodore Skeat made a case for Caesarea (Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus [London: British Museum, 1938]). Skeat vigorously argued this point again in 1999 ("The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus, and Constantine," JTS 50 [1999]: 583–625, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jts/50.2.583). Skeat writes with the confidence of having settled the issue, but in this later argument he is strangely silent on the salient objections raised by Kirsopp Lake in his review of Scribes and Correctors in CP 37 (1942): 91–96. Further reasons to doubt Skeat's certainty are provided in two studies by D. C. Parker: Codex Sinaiticus: The Story of the World's Oldest Bible (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 19–22; and Textual Scholarship and the Making of the New Testament, Lyell Lectures, Oxford, 2011 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 73–74. For recent bibliography on Vaticanus, see Patrick Andrist, ed., Le manuscrit B de la Bible (Vaticanus graecus 1209): Introduction au fac-similé, Actes du Colloque de Genève (11 juin 2001), Contributions supplémentaires, HTB 7 (Lausanne: Zèbre, 2009).


\(^{74}\) Gordon D. Fee, "P75, P66, and Origen: The Myth of Early Textual Recension in Alexandria," in New Dimensions in New Testament Study, ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 19–45, here 40. While this opinion represents a broad consensus, there have been dissenting voices. William L. Petersen has noted that \( \text{p}75 \) "is often regarded as having the 'purest' text of the early papyri," but he alleges that "this claim is made, of course, only because \( \text{p}75 \)'s text is closer to our modern, critically reconstructed text. If it were the text of Clement of Alexandria that came closest to our modern critical text, then it would be Clement who would be hailed as the preserver of the 'true text,' and not \( \text{p}75 \). A more unscientific, hubris-filled, and self-serving approach to scholarship is hard to imagine" ("The Genesis of the Gospels," in New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis: Festschrift J. Delobel, ed. A. Denaux, BETL 161 [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002], 33–65, here 60 n. 89).
recensions, i.e., of thoroughgoing revisions of the New Testament text made in the fourth century, was no longer defensible. One of the main pillars supporting the dominant theory of New Testament textual history was now demolished.75

The present study, however, places us in a position to evaluate this textual evidence from a rather different perspective. Because the paleographic and codicological characteristics of p75 are not inconsistent with a fourth-century date of production, the close similarity between the text of p75 and that of Vaticanus may instead be seen as an additional piece of evidence in favor of a fourth-century date for the production of p75 itself. Furthermore, if both of these codices can be assigned to the fourth century, then textual critics of the New Testament may need once again to entertain the idea that the "B Text" is indeed the result of some sort of recensional activity in the fourth century.76

VI. Conclusion

Since the 1960s, p75 has held a central place in the textual criticism of the New Testament. Yet much of the importance imputed to p75 has rested on the presumed late-second- or early-third-century date for the codex. As we have seen, the actual evidence used to establish that date was not strong. While one cannot absolutely rule out a late-second- or early-third-century date for p75 on the basis of the evidence presently available, the materials analyzed in this essay point toward the fourth century as an equally likely, if not more likely, date for this codex.77 If the guild finds this argument persuasive, we will need to rethink one of the twentieth century’s most significant conclusions in New Testament textual criticism.


76 It is intriguing that William H. P. Hatch presented a paper at the 1952 Annual Meeting of the SBL arguing that Vaticanus was copied in Upper Egypt, the locale in which p75 was most likely discovered. A short abstract of Hatch’s paper appeared in *JBL* 72 (1953): xviii–xix. I have been unable to locate a full version of this paper.

77 If p75 is in fact a product of the fourth century, we are faced with several other implications in addition to the issue of the transmission of the "B Text." The supposed early date of p75 plays an important role in discussions of the development of the codex, canonization of the New Testament, and a variety of Christian scribal practices. See, e.g., Larry W. Hurtado (who endorses a date of 175–225 CE for p75), *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 36, 88, 140–42, 180–82.