

The Habits of New Testament Copyists Singular Readings in the Early Fragmentary Papyri of John

1. Singular Readings and the analysis of Scribal Habits

This study is a somewhat belated sequel to my 1990 article “Some Observations on Early Papyri of the Synoptic Gospels, especially concerning the ‘Scribal Habits’”⁽¹⁾. There I discussed fourteen early papyri of the Synoptic Gospels in terms of their singular readings — readings unique to the particular manuscript — partly in order to assess the important dissertation on this subject by J.R. Royse⁽²⁾. By analysing the singular readings of the more substantial NT papyri firstly E.C. Colwell and then Royse had made significant advances in our knowledge of the individual scribal habits exhibited in the different manuscripts and also offered some suggestions about generalising rules or principles concerning early Christian scribal behaviour⁽³⁾. In relation to the individual characteristics of the scribes, for example, Colwell showed that the scribe of P⁶⁶ was undisciplined and sloppy (copying syllables; with a high proportion of nonsense readings and variant spellings; although under the overall control of a second text or reader); the scribe of P⁴⁵ was free and concerned with communicating the meaning of text, favouring concision and brevity (copying phrases and clauses); and that the scribe of P⁷⁵ intended to be a careful and accurate reproduction (copying letters one by one), favouring clarity and style⁽⁴⁾.

On more general matters Colwell showed that irregularities in spelling are the most prominent cause of singular readings (although this may be partly due to the fact that such variations are not always cited in the editions); and that harmonisation to the immediate context occurs far more often than harmonisation to remote parallels (i.e. in the gospels).

Royse’s dissertation generally supported Colwell’s results and extended

⁽¹⁾ *Bib* 71 (1990) 240–247.

⁽²⁾ J.R. ROYSE, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (ThD, Graduate Theological Union; UMI 1981); a summary was published: J. R. ROYSE, “Scribal Habits in the Transmission of New Testament Texts”, *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts* (ed. W.D. O’FLAHERTY) (Berkeley 1979) 139-161; more generally: J.R. ROYSE, “Scribal Tendencies in the Transmission of the Text”, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research. Essays on the Status Quaestionis*. Festschrift B.M. Metzger (eds. B.D. EHRMAN – M.W. HOLMES) (SD 46; Grand Rapids 1995) 239-252.

⁽³⁾ It is worth noting that although different methods are favoured by different textual critics — radical or thoroughgoing eclecticism, the so-called reasoned eclecticism and the more strictly documentary or genealogical methods — they all agree on the importance of transcriptional probabilities concerning how a scribe might be presumed to have behaved, that is the “scribal habits” of the era under discussion.

⁽⁴⁾ E.C. COLWELL, “Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text”, *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (ed J.P. HYATT) (Nashville 1965) 370-389; republished as “Method in Evaluating Scribal Habits: A Study of P45, P66, P75”, *id.*, *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (NTTS IX; Leiden 1969) 106-124.

the analysis to the three other major papyri: the scribe of P⁴⁶ was rather error-prone and often confused similar sounds and abbreviations in his exemplar, he often harmonised to the context and regularly omitted material (although 160 corrections suggest that it was a controlled situation); the scribe of P⁴⁷ exhibits numerous spelling errors, frequent omissions often due to scribal leaps, harmonisation to context, and a tendency to grammatical and stylistic improvements. P⁷² had a careless scribe with very irregular spelling, a habit of omitting one word at a time; and a theological interest in the deity of Christ⁽⁵⁾.

On more general matters Royse concluded that the commonest form of corruption was harmonisation, normally to the immediate context; stylistic and grammatical improvements and transpositions were also frequently found. His conclusions came to a pronounced focus on the consistent habitual omission of material: “the fact is that the six papyri studied here all demonstrate a tendency to shorten the text”⁽⁶⁾. This conclusion was at odds with the old rule “prefer the shorter reading”.

In my earlier study similar tendencies were observed among the early papyri of the synoptic gospels: most singular readings concerned spelling, particularly place and personal names; harmonisation both to immediate context and to synoptic parallels were found, as well as frequent transpositions of word order⁽⁷⁾. Omission was more common than addition of material. In general this supported Royse’s conclusions, drawn, as we have already mentioned, from a much larger study⁽⁸⁾.

My own brief study has been relatively well received with an important qualification which has implications for the method used in this article. In several places I was not sufficiently rigorous in proving the singularity of a reading with the result that some readings were inappropriately included⁽⁹⁾. In order to be clearer in this study I shall take a singular reading to be one that is not known from NA²⁷, Tischendorf⁸, von Soden and Swanson⁽¹⁰⁾. We have not invoked the category of readings that might be described as sub-singular

⁽⁵⁾ ROYSE, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 282-283, 360, 488 for the respective summaries.

⁽⁶⁾ ROYSE, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 601-602.

⁽⁷⁾ HEAD, “Some Observations on Early Papyri of the Synoptic Gospels”, 246.

⁽⁸⁾ ROYSE accepted that “A subsequent study by Peter M. Head has given yet further confirmation of this view [i.e. the tendency to omit]”, in “Scribal Tendencies in the Transmission of the Text”, 246. The connection with Royse’s fuller study relativises Birdsall’s critique that it is impossible to draw such broad general conclusions from such a brief survey, see J.N. BIRDSALL, “A note on the textual evidence for the omission of Matthew 9:34”, *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*. The Second Durham Tübingen Research Symposium on Earliest Christianity and Judaism (Durham, September, 1989) (ed J.D.G. DUNN) (WUNT 66; Tübingen 1992) 117-122, on pp. 121-122.

⁽⁹⁾ ROYSE, “Scribal Tendencies in the Transmission of the Text”, 247, n. 51.

⁽¹⁰⁾ C. TISCHENDORF, *Novum Testamentum Graece: ad antiquissimos testes denuo recensuit apparatus criticum omni studio perfectum apposuit Commentationem Isagogicam praetexit Constantinus Tischendorf. Editio octava critica maior. Vol 1: Matt. Mark. Luke, John* (Lipsiae, 1869); H.F. VON SODEN, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt hergestellt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte*. Text und Apparat (Göttingen, 1913 [Sonderausgabe]); R. SWANSON (ed.), *New Testament Greek Manuscripts. Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus. John* (Sheffield – Pasadena, CA 1995).

(that is readings that are probably due to the scribe, but are also represented in one or two non-related sources).

This study examines the singular readings in the papyrus manuscripts of John's Gospel that can be dated with some confidence to the fourth century or earlier. Clear singular readings from each manuscript will be noted; singular readings deduced on the basis of what a fragmentary text reveals about line length will be noted as a special category, but will be credited for our purposes only when the reconstruction of the original editor is confirmed by subsequent scholarship. In this study (unlike the earlier one), I shall investigate the manuscripts in something that approximates to chronological order (depending not on a full independent analysis, but on consensual positions). Our task has been made simpler by the publication of the Johannine papyri (at least those which were then available) by W.J. Elliott and D.C. Parker for the *International Greek New Testament Project*⁽¹¹⁾. This includes twelve manuscripts from the fourth century or earlier. More recently four new manuscripts of John from Oxyrhynchus have been published by W.H. Cockle⁽¹²⁾. We thus have sixteen early papyri of John's Gospel. The three most extensive of these — P⁴⁵, P⁶⁶ & P⁷⁵ — have already been treated generally by both Colwell and Royse and are therefore not discussed here (with the exception of two leaves of John in P⁴⁵ and two newly identified portions of P⁶⁶ which were published subsequent to these earlier studies). That leaves thirteen other fragmentary texts, which have not previously been studied in relation to their scribal habits, which will be the focus of our study (three of these manuscripts close to our upper temporal limit — P²², P³⁹ and P⁸⁰ — contain no singular readings and are simply noted at the appropriate chronological point).

2. Singular Readings in the early Johannine Papyri

P⁵² (Manchester, Rylands Library, Gr. P. 457) is normally dated to the first half of the second century. It is in fact a very small fragment, consisting of the top corner of one leaf of a codex with portions of 18,31-33 on one side and of 18,37-38 on the other. The scribe exhibits a tendency to leave slight gaps between words, and may, on one occasion, have corrected his text by over-writing (the epsilon in ἀληθείας in 18,37; verso line 3). In two places we find singular readings involving ε/ι variation: ημε[ι]ν (recto line 1; 18,31); ισ[η]λθεν (recto, line 4; 18,33). C.H. Roberts, supported by Elliott & Parker, also asserted that for reasons of space, εἰς τοῦτο must have been omitted at the second occurrence of the phrase in 18,37 (from verso, line 1) — with εἰς τοῦτο the line would be 39 letters long, compared with an average of

⁽¹¹⁾ *The New Testament in Greek IV. The Gospel According to St. John. The Papyri* (eds. W.J. ELLIOTT – D.C. PARKER) (NTTS XX; Leiden 1995) which includes the Johannine material up to P⁹⁵ (including a taxonomy of proposed dates, pp. 17-18). This includes plates of all the twenty-two papyrus manuscripts with portions of John (although only samples of P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵), and attempted to give enough information so that it would be able "to contribute to our knowledge of scribal practice" (p. 5).

⁽¹²⁾ *OxyPap LXV* (ed. M.W. HASLAM *et al.*) (London 1998); *P. Oxy 4445-4448* on pp. 10-20 (ed. W.E.H. COCKLE). On these and other new material see P.M. HEAD, "Some Recently Published NT Papyri from Oxyrhynchus: An Overview and Preliminary Assessment", *TynB* 51 (2000) 1-16.

thirty⁽¹³⁾. This would involve a singular omission of two arguably redundant words.

*P*⁹⁰ (P. Oxy 2523; Oxford, Ashmolean) consists of part of a full page (with extant margins at the top and bottom as well as one side) from a papyrus codex of the second half of the second century that coincidentally covers the same portion of text as *P*⁵² — John 18,36–19,7. In terms of singular readings we note one εἰ variation: ὑμεῖν in recto, line 18; 18,39^[21]⁽¹⁴⁾, the spelling of ἐκράζαν in 19,6 (verso, line 17: probably a nonsense reading for ἐκράζαν, as 01^r) and a transposed word order involving σὺ εἰ in 18,37 (recto, line 6). At 19,6 *P*⁹⁰ lacks the second σταυρωσον (an omission shared with *P*^{66c} 054^c 1010 it^{ae1}) combined with the addition of αὐτον (shared with *P*^{60(vid)} 01 A D^{supp} Θ 054 f¹³ *Maj.*) which results in a singular combination of two shared variants (although neither individual reading is singular).

*P*⁶⁶ (Geneva, P. Bodmer II) comprises substantial portions of John 1–21 from around 200, if not earlier. Although its singular readings were studied by Colwell and listed by Royse, one subsequently published fragment and fresh identifications of unidentified fragments add some additional evidence, which for the sake of completeness, we note here. The new portion (Köln, Univ.: Institut für Altertumskunde, Inv. Nr. 4274/4298) provides evidence for four consecutive pages from the inside of the penultimate quire (pp. 135-8: John 19,8-11.13-15.18-20.23-24)⁽¹⁵⁾. Here we find one singular omission of σὺ (19,9) and clear confirmation of the singular addition of λεγόμενου (19,13 already noted by Royse, following Martin's transcription, as *P*^{66(vid)}⁽¹⁶⁾). Among the identifications that may be regarded as certain we note the singular word order κἀγὼ ἀρῶ αὐτον (20,15)⁽¹⁷⁾.

*P*⁹⁵ (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana PL II/31) is a small fragment of John 5,26-29.36-38 dated by the editor early in the third century⁽¹⁸⁾. A singular reading occurs at 5,28 (recto, line 7) with ἀκουσαντες (other forms of the same verb are attested in other manuscripts at this point). This may be a harmonisation to context (the same participle occurs in v. 26)⁽¹⁹⁾. Two other singular readings have been suggested for material which is not extant: firstly either additional words or a complex transposition is needed in the first line

⁽¹³⁾ *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library Manchester. Volume III: Theological and Literary Texts (No3. 457–551)* (ed. C.H. ROBERTS) (Manchester 1938) 3; ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 72.

⁽¹⁴⁾ T.C. SKEAT, the editor, also suggested ὑμεῖν in recto, line 17; *OxyPap L* (1983) 3-8; but the epsilon has not been confirmed by subsequent viewers, cf. ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 116 who read ὑμ[ιν] (which my own viewing confirms).

⁽¹⁵⁾ M. GRONWALD, “Johannes-evangelium, Kap. 19,8-11.13-15.18-20.23-24, Kölner Papyri 5”, *PapyCol* 7 (1985) 73-76, 296-298.

⁽¹⁶⁾ ROYSE, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 389; cf. V. MARTIN – J.W.B. BARNS, *Papyrus Bodmer II, Supplément Evangile de Jean, 14-21* (Geneva 1962) 36.

⁽¹⁷⁾ K. ALAND, “Neue neutestamentliche Papyri III”, *NTS* 20 (1974) 357-381, on p. 378 re fragment 2 = 20.15-16/19.

⁽¹⁸⁾ J. LENAERTS, “Un papyrus de l’Évangile de Jean: PL II/31”, *CEG LX* (1985) 117–120.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Minuscule 579 reprises v. 25 at the end of v. 28 by adding καὶ οἱ ἀκουσαντες ζήσουσιν (SWANSON, *John*, 61).

of the recto (5,27) to fill up the space available — Elliott & Parter suggest $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega$ $\tau\omega$ $\upsilon\omega$ (a singular addition), while Lenaerts declined to offer a suggestion; secondly Elliott & Parker suggest the omission of $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega$ in line two of the recto (5,27), where Lenaerts thought the space was sufficient for the pronoun⁽²⁰⁾. In this regard there is not agreement between the original editor and Elliott & Parker, and the fragment is hardly large enough to build up a consistent picture of line length, so we cannot have confidence that these are true singular readings.

*P*¹⁰⁶ (P. Oxy 4445; Oxford, Ashmolean) is the top portion of a single leaf from a codex of John from the first half of the third century containing the text of John 1,29-35.40-46 (with page numbers 3 and 4 in the upper margin). The fragment is both stained and damaged in various places, making it rather difficult to read. A number of singular readings are evident. At 1,33 (p. 3, line 16) this manuscript reads $\epsilon\omicron\nu$ in place of $\alpha\nu$ (a singular substitution); at 1,40 (p. 4, lines 3-4) the most likely reconstruction suggests that $\eta\kappa\omicron\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$ was read rather than the participle $\eta\kappa\omicron\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta\eta\sigma\alpha\nu\tau\omega\nu$ ⁽²¹⁾. In 1,41 (p. 4, line 4) $\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ is omitted (a singular omission of a potentially redundant term)⁽²²⁾; and in 1,42 (p. 4, line 8) the definite article $\tau\omicron\nu$ (before $\text{I}\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\nu$) is also omitted.

*P*¹⁰⁷ (P. Oxy 4446; Oxford, Ashmolean) is a small fragment from a codex page, containing a portion of John 17,1-2.11, which has been ascribed to the third century. The fragmentary nature of the surviving text precludes certainty about all the proposed readings, and there appears to be only one certain singular reading: $\iota\nu\alpha$ $\kappa[\alpha]$ $\omicron\upsilon$ $\sigma\zeta$ $\delta[\omicron]$ $\xi[\alpha]$ $\sigma\eta$ $\sigma\epsilon$ at 17,1. The singularity does not consist of either addition (since other witnesses also include the $\kappa\alpha\iota$ — although note that all of these also include $\sigma\omicron\upsilon$ after $\upsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$) or omission (since other witnesses also lack $\sigma\omicron\upsilon$ after $\upsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$) but in the resulting singularity compared with the three other versions of the phrases attested in the manuscripts (i.e. $\iota\nu\alpha$ \omicron $\upsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ $\delta\omicron\xi\alpha\sigma\eta$ $\sigma\epsilon$ 01 B C^s etc. [NA²⁷], $\iota\nu\alpha$ \omicron $\upsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ $\sigma\omicron\upsilon$ $\delta\alpha\chi\alpha\sigma\eta$ $\sigma\epsilon$ A D Θ etc., $\iota\nu\alpha$ $\kappa\alpha\iota$ \omicron $\upsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ $\sigma\omicron\upsilon$ $\delta\alpha\chi\alpha\sigma\eta$ $\sigma\epsilon$ C⁽²⁾³ L Ψ f¹³ 33 *Maj.*).

*P*¹⁰⁸ (P. Oxy 4447; Oxford, Ashmolean) consists of two adjoining fragments providing evidence for the bottom half of a codex page, from the third century, containing John 17,23-24; 18,1-5. The only singular reading is the itacistic spelling variation of $\gamma\epsilon\iota\nu[\omicron]$ $\sigma\kappa\eta$ at 17,23 (verso, line 5).

*P*¹⁰⁹ (P. Oxy 4448; Oxford, Ashmolean) is another small fragment from a third century codex page containing John 21,18-20.23-25. There is no certain singular reading, although Cockle proposes a singular version of 21,18: $\alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$ $\zeta\omega\sigma\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\omicron\iota\sigma\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\nu$ $\sigma\epsilon$ to account for the traces and spaces extant on the rather obscured recto, lines 2-3⁽²³⁾.

*P*⁴⁵ (Dublin, P. Chester Beatty I) was originally a codex of around 220 leaves containing the four gospels and Acts, from around the middle of the third century (although John was represented only by three fragmentary leaves representing John 10,7-25.29-11,11 and 11,17-37.42-57). In 1991

⁽²⁰⁾ ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 120.

⁽²¹⁾ For this see COCKLE, *OxyPap LXV*, 13.

⁽²²⁾ Cockle notes that a single Old Latin manuscript e omits *hic* (*OxyPap LXV*, 14).

⁽²³⁾ COCKLE, *OxyPap LXV*, 20.

some additional fragments of this manuscript were published providing text from John 4,51-52; 5,21-25⁽²⁴⁾. Although the fragments are small, two singular readings are found. First, the omission of αὐτῶ (4,52; frag b recto, line 3); second the reading ἐδ[ῶκε for δεδῶκε (at 5,22, frag b verso, line 3): an aorist for the perfect (possibly harmony with 5,26-27?).

P^s (P. Oxy 208, 1781; London, BL Inv 782, 2484) comprises two fragments of a late third century codex. The first fragment contains portions of John 1,23-31.33-41 and 20,11-17.19-25 (it is probably the penultimate sheet of a codex containing John's Gospel in a single quire). The second fragment contains portions of John 16,14-30. There is no doubt that these come from the same original document. The rounded upright uncial is clear and strong. The scribe uses *nomina sacra* (although not for *anthropos*), has a tendency to leave small spaces between words and definite spaces for punctuation purposes, and rough breathings. Particularly characteristic are a number of corrections or alternative readings added to the text, possibly by the original scribe (or possibly made by a *diorthotes* practically contemporary with the original scribe).

At fol. 1, recto, line 15 (John 1,38): the scribe initially omitted οἱ δε and has then written these letters above the line (above a longish space reflecting a natural pause in the syntax before εἰπὼν) Although this singular omission was corrected (probably by the original scribe) it is clearly an acceptable indication of the habits of this scribe, albeit of a different character to uncorrected singular readings.

Three singular readings occur in the second fragment of this manuscript (P. Oxy 1781). The first two involve spelling variants. At recto, line 20 (John 16,20) for λυπηθησεσθε this text reads λουπηθη[σεσθε (it is likely that the scribe originally wrote λουπ before crossing through the omicron and changing the iota into an upsilon). At recto, line 22 (John 16,21) instead of λυπην this text reads λου[πην (a correction subsequently added an upsilon). These two similar singular readings may have arisen through an idiosyncratic pronunciation.

A major omission from John 16,23-24 occurred at verso line 8 where the scribe omitted ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι μου εἰς αἴτιον οὐκ ἠτήσατε οὐδέν. This is most plausibly attributed to confusion caused by the repetition of ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι μου at either the beginning of successive lines in his exemplar (*homoioarcton*) or at the end of successive lines (*homoeoteleuton*). These words were subsequently incorporated in a correction that was added at the bottom of the page (possibly by a different hand)⁽²⁵⁾. At verso line 20 (16,27) this text singularly omits ἐγώ. At line 2 of the second folio of the verso of the first fragment (i.e. P. Oxy 208; John 20,19) the scribe has omitted καὶ^[51] and subsequently added this word above the line. This is another example of a singular omission that has been subsequently corrected.

In addition to these readings a number of other singular readings may be

⁽²⁴⁾ T.C. SKEAT – B.C. MCGING, "Notes on Chester Beatty Biblical Papyrus I (Gospels and Acts)", *Her.* 150 (1991) 21-25. ELLIOTT – PARKER also provide photographs and a transcription in *John. The Papyri*.

⁽²⁵⁾ B.P. GRENFELL – A.S. HUNT, *OxyPap XV* (1922) 12.

deduced from the length of lines in the manuscript⁽²⁶⁾. One word missing: At fol. 1, recto, line 12 there appears to be insufficient space for the *αυτου* of John 1,37 (after *μαθηται*): this would require a line length of 32 letters, whereas a line with 27 letters is already at the long end of the possible range⁽²⁷⁾. A substitution: At line 19 of the second folio of the recto of the first fragment (P. Oxy 208) the editors all agree that the space is insufficient for *ο λεγεται διδασκαλε* (John 20,16) and have suggested *ο λεγεται κ̅ε [κυριε]* (which would be much neater in terms of space)⁽²⁸⁾.

Two other singular readings have been suggested, but neither seems very secure. At fol. 1, recto, line 22 (P. Oxy 208) there is insufficient space for *α[δελφος Σιμωνος Πιτρου εις εκ των δ]υο* (John 1,40), which would require 28 letters in the missing space (or 33 letters for the line). Since *των* is omitted in several other manuscripts (01 C) it is probably not necessary to presuppose a singular omission of some other word; on the other hand Elliott & Parker think the space requires the omission of another word, most likely *Πιτρου* (which would be a singular omission)⁽²⁹⁾. At line 7 of the recto of the second fragment (POxy 1781; John 16,17) there appears to be extra space which would require some additional material. The text of NA²⁷, *συν εκ των μι]αθητων*, offers only 9 letters to fill a space proportionally available to about 15 letters. Elliott & Parker introduce *ειπαν* from the preceding line (despite the evidence of final nu which can be seen in the photograph and is given, in my view correctly in the *editio princeps*). This suggests that our scribe may have added a word singularly or may have made some other error in this section.

In summary, therefore, the singular readings of this manuscript include two singular omissions of single words, another of two words, and another of nine words (although all but a single word omission were subsequently corrected), along with two singular spellings. Further evidence of probable omissions is present in material that is not actually extant but where the reconstruction is agreed by two different editors are: one case of the omission of a single word; and one case of the substitution of a new word in place of another. We could note that Grenfell & Hunt had already rightly noted the “tendency to brevity, especially in omitting unnecessary pronouns, conjunctions, etc.”⁽³⁰⁾.

*P*²² (P. Oxy 1228; Glasgow, UL MS General 1026/13) consists of two fragments from the top of two consecutive columns of a roll (the recto is

⁽²⁶⁾ At fol. 1, verso, line 5 there is insufficient space for all the introductory material in John 1,25. Between line 5 (*και ηρω[...]*) and line 6 (*...πιτιζεις*) there is space for 15-20 letters while the text of NA²⁷, reflecting the manuscript tradition, contains 29 letters. The suggestion of Grenfell & Hunt, the original editors, that P⁵ lacked *και ειπαν αυτω* (12 letters), remains the most plausible solution, *OxyPap II* (1899) 6; supported by ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 28. This is not, however, a singular omission since the same words are omitted in minuscule 251 (according to Von Soden).

⁽²⁷⁾ So GRENFELL – HUNT, *OxyPap II* (1899) 7; supported by ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 29.

⁽²⁸⁾ GRENFELL – HUNT, *OxyPap II* (1899) 7; supported by ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 34. Codex Bezae has *ο λεγεται κυριε διδασκαλε*.

⁽²⁹⁾ GRENFELL – HUNT, *OxyPap II* (1899) 7; cf. ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 29.

⁽³⁰⁾ GRENFELL – HUNT, *OxyPap II* (1899) 9.

blank at this point); no beginnings or ends of lines are visible, and the second fragment is considerably damaged after the first eight lines. It is normally dated to the end of the third century and contains John 15.25–16.2.21–32. There are no singular readings in the extant text.

*P*²⁸ (P. Oxy 1596; Berkeley, Pacific School of Religion, Palestine Institute, Pap. 2) consists of the lower part of a single leaf (10.7 × 5.2 cm.) containing John 6,8–12.17–22, and was found with other documents of third-fourth century. Grenfell & Hunt noted that the text was “not very correctly spelled”⁽³¹⁾; and this manuscript has five singular readings reflecting spelling variations. In terms of spelling we find the following: πεντακισ]χιλειοι (recto line 7, at 6,10), which is a common enough confusion; ελεβεν (recto line 7, at 6,11): cf. ελαβεν, which seems like nonsense, but which could conceivably be a confusion caused by pronunciation; ενγυς (verso line 7, at 6,19): cf. εγγυς, which clearly is a spelling which reflects pronunciation; φοβεισθαι (recto line 9, at 6,20): cf. φοβεισθε, a common error also related to pronunciation; ιδεν (recto line 13, at 6,22): cf. variants (for ειδεν with 01 D lat), also probably due to pronunciation.

Both the original editors and Elliott & Parker agree in a further singular reading involving the omission of τον (before Ιησου) at verso, line 6 (6,19), there not being sufficient space for it to the left of the nu which is extant⁽³²⁾. Both the original editors and Elliott & Parker also agree on the need for a singular omission at verso line 2 (6,17), which would otherwise be an unusually long line. They do not, however, agree on what is proposed: Grenfell & Hunt suggested that *P*²⁸ might follow the word order: και ουπω προς αυτους εληλυθει ο ις (with *P*⁷⁵ B N Y 579), but have the shorter ου in place of ουπω; while Elliott & Parker propose a larger singular omission of προς αυτους⁽³³⁾.

*P*³⁹ (P. Oxy 1780; formerly: Rochester, Ambrose Swasey Library, Inv. 8864; sold June 2003, current location unknown) contains one side of a whole leaf from a papyrus codex, of perhaps late in the third century, in handsome and spacious layout, with pagination numbering 74 on the recto (text: John 8,14–22). There are no singular readings. Nor are there any singular readings in *P*⁸⁰, which in any case only contains a small portion of John 3,34 (III–IV or perhaps later).

*P*⁶ (Strasbourg, Bibl. Nat. & Univ., Pap. Copt. 379, 381–382, 384) perhaps barely warrants treatment here on the basis of its date (some scholars date it as late as VII–VIII; Röscher, the original editor, suggested V; but Aland has given IV in the *Liste*); and its general type: it is a bilingual text with alternating portions of Coptic and Greek (Greek text: John 10,1–2.4–7.9–10; 11,1–8.45–52). It is also somewhat out of character in terms of its singular readings, which consist of the following: at first page, line 17–18 (John 10,5)

⁽³¹⁾ GRENFELL – HUNT, *OxyPap XIII* (1919) 8.

⁽³²⁾ GRENFELL – HUNT, *OxyPap XIII* (1919) 9; supported by ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 45.

⁽³³⁾ GRENFELL – HUNT, *OxyPap XIII* (1919) 9, 10; cf. ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 45.

we find the singular word order τ[ην φωνην των αλλο]τριων⁽³⁴⁾; on line 20 (John 10,6) we read τι ην ά (cf. τινα ην ά; P^{66*} has τι, corrected with να ην α); on line 28 (John 10,10) we have a singular addition: δε (between ο and κλεπτης); on the second page, line 9 (John 11,1) we have another singular addition of εκε[ι; in line 12 we find an unusual spelling of Mariam (John 11,2), using a Coptic letter: μαριθα[μ; finally at line 23 evidence supports the addition of two words at 11,5: τη]ν μ[αριαμ, this addition is found in other manuscripts, but the resulting reconstructed word order here is singular: της μαρθαν και την μαριαμ την αδελφην αυτης⁽³⁵⁾.

*
* * *

If we simply collect the various singular readings that we have discussed in the main section of this paper we would find that spelling variations account for the vast bulk of singular readings: thirteen in all (most of these variations are probably due to pronunciation). In four places we found singular transpositions of word order (involving two, three, four and eight words). In general, omission was more common than addition with seven separate omissions totalling seventeen words (6 × one word, 1 × two words, 1 × nine words [although again we should note that the two latter omissions were corrected]); indeed the only singular additions, of two words in total (2 × one word) occurred in one manuscript, a late bilingual text. We also found four examples of word substitution or the use of a different form of a verb, in two of these cases harmonisation to context was suggested. Two cases of complex singularities, or singularities arising from a new combination of otherwise attested readings were also noted.

Taking further account of non-extant material that has to be calculated on the basis of line length, on which both Elliott & Parker and the original editor agreed, we collected four further examples of singular omissions amounting to 4 words in total (2 × one word, two words) and a single word substitution. Granted the agreement between the editors, and the fact that we have not here included several more examples which only one editor suggested, these are highly probable, if not certain, and they are in line with the more secure results just summarised.

Broadly speaking these results serve to confirm the picture presented in our previous study of the early manuscripts of the synoptic gospels, and thus serve as further confirmation of the much fuller study of Royse. Some categories are not invoked (e.g. harmonisation to a parallel text in another gospel), and this may reflect a peculiarity of the transmission of John's

⁽³⁴⁾ Following here ELLIOTT – PARKER, *John. The Papyri*, 36 (on the basis of their plate 6 — NB the relevant fragment is upside down!), against F. RÖSCH who recorded τη]ν φωνην των αλλο]τριων (*Bruchstücke des ersten Clemensbriefes nach dem achmimischen Papyrus der Strassburger Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek mit biblischen Texten derselben Handschrift* [Strassburg 1910] 119). It is possible that the original revealed more than the photographs, but the reading is sufficiently established by the presence of τριων at the beginning of the following line.

⁽³⁵⁾ Rösch and Elliott & Parker agree on all these readings; cf. also SWANSON, *John*, 152.

gospel, if not simply the limited evidence surveyed here. Once again it seems that the evidence suggests that most early scribes are more likely to omit than to add material.

Tyndale House
36 Selwyn Gardens
Cambridge, CB3 9BA

Peter M. HEAD

SUMMARY

After an introduction that discusses the role that singular readings have played in the analysis of scribal habits, including an earlier study of synoptic gospel manuscripts by the same author, this study examines singular readings in the early fragmentary papyri of John's Gospel. The study confirms earlier research showing that the most common singular readings concern spelling and that word order variations, word substitutions and harmonisations to context are also not uncommon. Omission of words is more common than addition.