

“THE CABLE GUY”: CONSTANTINE SIMONIDES AND CODEX MAYERIANUS¹

Tommy Wasserman *Ansgar University College and Theological Seminary*
and Malcolm Choat *Macquarie University*

Abstract. — Constantine Simonides (1824?–1890?) is known as one of the greatest manuscript forgers in history. During the 19th century, he travelled to many countries in Europe trying to sell forged as well as authentic manuscripts to collectors, scholars, and curators of prominent libraries. During his second stay in England, from 1858 to 1865, he used genuine papyri in the collection of Joseph Mayer in Liverpool to make forgeries of Biblical papyri, ecclesiastical writings, historical and geographical works, and letters. This article focuses on arguably the most spectacular of all his forgeries, “Codex Mayerianus,” an alleged first-century papyrus codex containing the autograph of Matthew alongside texts of James and Jude, which Simonides edited in 1861, before any (genuine) New Testament papyri had been published. We discuss its purported provenance, external features, text, and accompanying critical edition, and how it was introduced and received by contemporary scholars and the wider public. We argue that its creation is best understood in terms of Simonides’ efforts to promote his own expertise and identify for the first time the model Simonides used for this famous forgery.

Keywords: Constantine Simonides, Joseph Mayer, Greek New Testament manuscripts, forgeries, Codex Mayerianus, Matthew 19:24

Introduction

“The greatest forger of this century was undoubtedly Constantine Simonides, a Greek, who was born in 1824. To meet the requirements of modern critics who know styles of writing, the colours of the ink and paints of different times, and the very kinds of parchment used, there is need

¹ The authors would like to thank Dr. Ashley Cooke, Senior Curator of Antiquities, World Museum Liverpool, for facilitating access to the Simonides papyri and providing information about them. This research has been supported by two Australian Research Council Discovery Project Grants (DP170104196; DP190100240); we are grateful to the ARC for funding these projects, and to the project team, especially Dr Rachel Yuen-Collingridge and Vanessa Mawby, for their work on Simonides as part of it. We also thank the reviewers for their helpful comments.

of such a combination of intellect with versatility, industry with ingenuity, as is rarely found.”²

These are the words of Falconer Madan, renowned palaeographer and bibliographer at the end of the 19th century. Some years later Madan would become Librarian of the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford. Despite his best efforts, Constantine Simonides did not succeed in selling any of his forgeries to Madan’s predecessor at the Bodleian, but he did deceive a number of other curators, scholars, and collectors.³ In this article we examine Simonides’ activity as a forger, focusing on his forgeries of Greek New Testament papyri, which arguably mark the peak of his career. Limiting our examination to the papyrus texts from Matthew, James, and Jude in the “Codex Mayerianus,” which Simonides edited and published in 1861,⁴ we identify for the first time the model Simonides used for his biblical papyri and explore his motivations in forging these texts. We argue that, rather than economic gain, Simonides chief motive when creating these papyri was to participate in scholarship and augment his scholarly reputation, by advertising his own superior knowledge of manuscripts and the manuscript tradition, and using these to support his arguments on the nature of the text and its original language.⁵

² Falconer Madan, *Books in Manuscript: A Short Introduction to their Study and Use. With a Chapter on Records* (London 1893) 124.

³ On Simonides see most recently Andreas E. Müller, Lilia Diamantopoulou, Christian Gastgeber, and Athanasia Katsiakiori-Rankl (eds.), *Die getäuschte Wissenschaft: Ein Genie betrügt Europa – Konstantinos Simonides* (Göttingen 2017); see also J.K. Elliott, *Codex Sinaiticus and the Simonides Affair: An Examination of the Nineteenth Century Claim that Codex Sinaiticus was not an Ancient Manuscript*, *Analekta Vlatadon* 33 (Thessaloniki 1982); and *inter alia* in the many works of Luciano Canfora on the Artemidoros papyrus, e.g. *Il viaggio di Artemidoro: Vita e avventure di un grande esploratore dell’antichità* (Milan 2010). See also the popular treatment by Rüdiger Schaper, *Die Odyssee des Fälschers: Die abenteuerliche Geschichte des Konstantin Simonides, der Europa zum Narren hielt und nebenbei die Antike erfand* (München 2011), which has been translated and supplied with introduction by Canfora in *L’odissea del falsario: Storia avventurosa di Costantino Simonidis* (Bologna 2013); an older more sympathetic account in J.A. Farrer, *Literary Forgeries* (London 1907) 39–66; and an account strongly influenced or perhaps written by Simonides himself, Charles Stewart, *A Biographical Memoir of Constantine Simonides, Dr. Ph. of Stageira with a Brief Defence of the Authenticity of his Manuscripts* (London 1859).

⁴ Constantine Simonides, *Fac-similes of Certain Portions of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and the Epistles of Sts. James & Jude, Written on Papyrus in the First Century, and Preserved in the Egyptian Museum of Joseph Mayer, Esq. Liverpool. With a Portrait of St. Matthew, from a Fresco Painting at Mount Athos. Edited and Illustrated with Notes and Historical and Literary Prolegomena, Containing Confirmatory Fac-similes of the Same Portions of Holy Scripture from Papyri and Parchment MSS. in the Monasteries of Mount Athos, of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, of St Sabba in Palestine, and Other Sources* (London 1861).

⁵ While Simonides certainly offered for sale other manuscripts he stole or forged (see e.g. below, n. 51), as the forged papyri were not his property he could not sell them (see

We focus here in detail on Simonides and his biblical forgeries for a number of reasons. The recent prominence of textual forgeries indicates the contemporary importance of the topic.⁶ A deeper understanding of the sociology of forgery requires that we closely examine cases in which we know the identity of the forger, can deduce their methods and models, and are able to comment on their motivations. Yet so few of the forgers (now or historically) are actually known, that the context is difficult to reconstruct. With Simonides, we have not only the forged papyri themselves, but a vast archive of material in various repositories, including his own publications and those of others, contemporary media, and archival material, which allow us to reconstruct his ambitions, motivations, models, and methods. This in turn provides context to better understand more recent cases of forgery.

The career of Simonides provides an excellent example of how forgers respond to contemporary concerns; how they position themselves as authorities; and how they construct provenance for forgeries, something that has been identified as a key component in the propagation of

already the remarks of Farrer [n. 3] 55), and the economic dimensions of Simonides' enterprise may be set aside here. On the motivations of antiquities' forgers, see Christopher Rollston, "Forging History: From Antiquity to the Modern Period," in Matthew Rutz and Morag Kersel (eds.), *Archaeologies of Text: Archaeology, Technology, and Ethics* (Oxford and Philadelphia 2014) 176–197, at 176–177. For a profile of art forgers which aligns in some respects with that of Simonides here, see Noah Charney, "Profiling Art Forgers", in Saskia Hufnagel and Duncan Chappell (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook on Art Crime* (Basingstoke 2019) 289–299.

⁶ See especially the unmasking of a number of Dead Sea scroll-like fragments in the Schøyen collection, Museum of the Bible, and other collections as forgeries (on which see e.g. Kipp Davis, "Caves of Dispute: Patterns of Correspondence and Suspicion in the Post-2002 'Dead Sea Scrolls' Fragments," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 24, no. 2 [2017] 229–270; Kipp Davis et al., "Nine Dubious 'Dead Sea Scrolls' Fragments from the Twenty-First Century," *DSD* 24, no. 2 [2017] 189–228; Torleif Elgvin and Michael Langlois, "Looking Back: (More) Dead Sea Scrolls Forgeries in the Schøyen Collection," *Revue de Qumran* 31 [2019] 111–133). A lengthy report by Art Fraud Insights released in 2020 determined that the entire collection of Dead Sea Scroll-like fragments in the Museum of the Bible was fake. See also the revelation that the so-called "Gospel of Jesus Wife" was a fake (on which see the six articles in *NTS* 61, no. 3 [2015] by Simon Gathercole, "The Gospel of Jesus' Wife: Constructing a Context" [pp. 292–313]; Christian Askeland, "A Lycopolitan Forgery of John's Gospel" [pp. 314–334]; Andrew Bernhard, "The Gospel of Jesus' Wife: Textual Evidence of Modern Forgery" [pp. 335–355]; Myriam Krutzsch and Ira Rabin, "Material Criteria and Their Clues for Dating" [pp. 356–367]; Christopher Jones, "The Jesus' Wife Papyrus in the History of Forgery" [pp. 368–378]; and Gesine Schenke Robinson, "How a Papyrus Fragment Became a Sensation" [pp. 379–394]). See also Ariel Sabar, "The Unbelievable Tale of Jesus's Wife," *The Atlantic* 318, no. 1 (2016) 64–78. Online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/07/the-unbelievable-tale-of-jesus-wife/485573/>, and the same author's forthcoming *Veritas: A Harvard Professor, a Con Man and the Gospel of Jesus's Wife* (New York 2020).

fakes.⁷ We also suggest that a detailed text-critical examination of forgeries tells us something important about the attitude to the biblical text and the development of textual criticism in the 19th century. The study of this case is thus an important but neglected chapter in the history of the study of the textual record of the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

The Liverpool Simonides Collection

Unlike some of Simonides' forgeries, which have disappeared (such as his infamous copy of Uranius' *History of the Kings of Egypt*), nearly all his forged papyri are still held today in the World Museum in Liverpool, where they survived the bombing during the Second World War which destroyed many of the artifacts held in the Liverpool Museum (as it was then known).⁸ One papyrus, containing the beginning of the *Letter of Aristeas*, is now in the British Library, among the archive of material related to Simonides collected by the antiquarian John Eliot Hodgkin.⁹ Those at Liverpool are kept under 27 inventory numbers, 23 in a series M11169a–v and four under the inventory numbers 1978.291.245a–d.¹⁰ In

⁷ See for instance Årstein Justnes, "Fragments for Sale: Dead Sea Scrolls," *Marginalia. Los Angeles Review of Books*, June 22, 2018. Online: <https://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/fragments-for-sale/>, and in general Patty Gerstenblith, "Provenances: Real, Fake, and Questionable," *International Journal of Cultural Property* 26 (2019) 285–304.

⁸ To our knowledge, there has been one previous brief study of these papyri, Livia Capponi, "Visita ai papiri di Simonidis," in Luciano Canfora (ed.), *Il Papiro di Artemidoro* (Bari 2008) 457–461, followed by a table compiled by Vanna Maraglino, "I papiri di Simonidis nella collezione Mayer" (462–463). As Capponi points out (461), Farrer (n. 3) 56, speaks about three still unrolled papyri in the Liverpool collection: no such Simonides papyri are known to us, and it is probable that this statement refers to several fake rolls, constructed with papyrus wrapped round sticks of wood, which are now in the World Museum Collection and stored near the Simonides papyri at inventory nos. M11165–66. At least one of these seems to have been part of the Mayer collection by 1852, see Margaret Gibson and Susan M. Wright (eds.), *Joseph Mayer of Liverpool, 1803–1886* (London 1988), 52, speculating on no. 246 ("A Papyrus Roll, bound round with inscribed linen bands, which are sealed with clay") in the *Catalogue of the Egyptian Museum, No. VIII, Colquitt Street, Liverpool* (Liverpool 1852).

⁹ BL Add MS 42502B, fol. 185. See perhaps Hodgkin's letter to Joseph Mayer (on whom see below) of April 1868 (BL Add MS 42502B fol. 346) in which he asks to be allowed to keep one of Simonides' papyri now that the latter has left England. In Simonides (n. 4) 72, he talks about "two pages of the Works of Aristeas ... of the 1st century," but earlier in the same work, in a reproduction of a letter sent to the *Literary Gazette*, he mentions "The first page of a work by Aristaeus, written in the first century after Christ" (Simonides [n. 4] 8). On Simonides' earlier forgery of the same work, see Rosa Otranto, "Costantino Simonidis e la Lettera di Aristeas a Filocrate," *Vetera Christianorum* 48 (2011) 319–334.

¹⁰ The M11169 inventory numbers post-date the passing of these papyri into the Liverpool Museum; a separate, presumably earlier, and inconsistently applied, system of letters

total there are 33 surviving Simonides papyri; we provide a brief list in an appendix to the present article, and will provide a full synopsis in a future treatment.¹¹

The papyri fall into three basic groups: (1) Jewish and Christian scripture and related material, which in addition to the New Testament papyri include a portion of Genesis;¹² the *Letter of Aristeas* and an ecclesiastical history attributed to the second-century Christian writer Hegesippus should be grouped with these.¹³ There is unfortunately – but perhaps not surprisingly – no trace of “the Ten Commandments written in Greek and Egyptian Demotic characters” Simonides claimed to have discovered;¹⁴ (2) a sequence of Greek historical and geographical works, the centerpiece of which was an augmented version of the already-known *Periplus* of Hanno, via which Simonides continued his promotion of the history of his country;¹⁵ (3) a group of seven letters by “Hermippus, son of Eumenides of Berytus,” in which Simonides indulged his long-standing interest in Egypt and especially the Egyptian language.¹⁶ Among the latter group

is written in pencil on the cardboard mounting of a number of the papyri. The 1978.291 inventory numbers arise from a retrospective documentation that began in 1978 for any object without an accession number. It must be presumed that these four papyri had become separated from the others when the M11169 series was established.

¹¹ The Simonides papyri could be counted in different ways depending on what principles were adopted. We have counted together papyri which were asserted to be part of the same page or roll, but not (as one might in normal papyrological practice) assigned one number to the entirety of a codex (in which case there would be 26 papyri). To the extent inconsistencies are inevitable, the table in the appendix will provide further guidance.

¹² World Museum Liverpool M11169v, which contains Gen 7:23–9:10. This is presumably the item Simonides describes as a “portion of eight chapters of the Book of Genesis, written on papyrus in the Alexandrian style of Greek capital letters, which, from the purity of the text and the quality of the papyrus (being first class, and that called sacred) I conclude belongs to the first century before Christ” (Simonides [n. 4] 7).

¹³ World Museum Liverpool 1978.291.245b; see Simonides (n. 4) 78, with pl. XIII (no. 14); see also Simonides (n. 4) 20.

¹⁴ See Simonides (n. 4) 7.

¹⁵ See Constantine Simonides, *The Periplus of Hannon, King of the Karchedonians, concerning the Lybian Parts of the Earth beyond the Pillars of Herakles, Which He Dedicated to Kronos, the Greatest God, and to all the Gods Dwelling with Him* (London 1864); *idem*, *Λείψανα ἱστορικά* (Liverpool 1864). In addition to the *Periplus* (a genuine extract of which was contained in a geographical miscellany Simonides had earlier stolen from Mt Athos, now BL Add. MS. 19391), this group includes a fragment from the end of Thucydides including a colophon attesting it had been copied in the first year of the 197th Olympiad (9–12 CE), and the “Theban codex.” The latter was published in *Λείψανα ἱστορικά* along with a number of related texts. On Simonides’ nationalism see Lilia Diamantopoulou, “Konstantinos Simonides: Literarische Fälschungen und die Erfindung der Nation,” in Müller et al. (n. 3) 27–51.

¹⁶ Simonides’ interest in this topic can be seen in other manuscripts he forged, as well as a number of treatments of the theme he published elsewhere, notably the Uranius manuscript,

may perhaps be included two small fragments of the “ethical writings from the Oracles of Zoroaster Magus.”¹⁷ While Simonides edited substantial sections of this corpus, large parts of it remain unpublished, including a number of his New Testament papyri. Here, we focus on the centerpiece of his collection of New Testament texts, the “Codex Mayerianus.”

An Amazing “Discovery”

In the introduction to his facsimile edition of the “Codex Mayerianus,” a purported first-century papyrus manuscript named after its owner, the Liverpool goldsmith, antiquary and collector Joseph Mayer,¹⁸ Simonides describes in vivid words how he made an amazing discovery in February 1860 as he was searching through the collection in Mayer’s private museum:¹⁹

Meantime, after an illness from which I soon recovered, I began to search through the papyri in the Museum itself. These were, for the most part, so torn and damaged, lying pell-mell together, and offering neither connexion nor continuity, ... After separating the papyri into their different languages and their various subjects, and finally adjusting the comminuted fragments, I dipped a sheet of calico in water, stretched it on a board, and nailed it to the edges. Next, I softened the fragments in tepid water, and fastened them with paste on the frame prepared as above; others I pasted upon paper, and having completed these preliminaries, I commenced the deciphering and careful transcription, beginning my labours with the Greek portion. Herein, to my surprise, I discovered first three fragments, and subsequently two others, containing a portion of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, written about the fifteenth year after the Ascension of our Saviour, by the hand

on which see Farrer (n. 3) 45–53; Pasquale Massimo Pinto, “Simonides in England: A Forger’s Progress,” in Müller et al. (n. 3) 109–126, at 113–116, as well as the *Report of the Council of the Royal Society of Literature on some of the Mayer Papyri and the Palimpsest MS. of Uranius Belonging to M. Simonides with Letters from MM. Pertz, Ehrenberg and Dindorf* (London 1863), and below, n. 144. On Simonides’ interest in Egyptian language and history, see for example the report from the *Bath Chronicle* reprinted in Simonides (n. 15 [1864a]) 42–47.

¹⁷ See Simonides (n. 4) 8. On these papyri see Rachel Yuen-Collingridge, “Constantine Simonides and Papyrus Fragments of Gemistus Pletho’s *Μαγικά λόγια τῶν ἀπὸ Ζωροάστρου μάγων*,” *Analecta Papyrologica* 31 (2019) 369–385.

¹⁸ On Mayer, see Gibson and Wright (n. 8) 1–42.

¹⁹ For treatments of each part of the collection Mayer formed in the Egyptian Museum (the first of several titles he gave to the institution) he opened in Liverpool in 1852, see Gibson and Wright (n. 8); on the papyri see pp. 51–55, and on the Egyptian collection in general pp. 45–70. This collection was bequeathed to the Liverpool Free Library and Museum in 1867 and is now in the World Museum Liverpool. On Simonides’ time in England, see now Pinto (n. 16).

of Nicolaus the Deacon, that is to say, in the forty-eighth year after the Incarnation of the Divinity. For, at the end of the fifth fragment, which contains the latter part of the 28th chapter, the following words occur: “The writing by the hand of Nicolaus the Deacon, at the dictation of Matthew, the Apostle of Jesus Christ. It was done in the fifteenth year after the Ascension of our Lord, and was distributed to the believing Jews and Greeks in Palestine.”²⁰

This “discovery” arguably marks the peak of Simonides’ activities as a forger of Greek manuscripts, where he introduces to the world an actual autograph written no later than 15 years after Christ’s ascension and dictated by the evangelist Matthew himself.²¹ Eventually, Simonides identified nine fragments from Matthew and another four fragments from the letters of James and Jude.

We reserve a detailed technical description of these papyri to a future treatment and will note here only their basic characteristics. The “codex” consists of thirteen fragments, which purportedly come from eight leaves of a single two-column papyrus codex.²² Simonides talks of five fragments from Matthew, two from James and one from Jude, but the “first fragment” (no. i in the table below) is actually made up of five fragments from Matthew 1, and the “sixth” and “seventh” fragment from James are three separate fragments, bringing the total to thirteen. That all the pages published by Simonides in *Fac-similes* were to be understood as deriving from a single codex is clear from his comments in a number of places.²³ It is not entirely clear (and Simonides never explains) how the Matthew fragments could be written “by the hand of Nicolaus the Deacon” in 48 CE (as per the colophon in M11169o.5), but the same codex could contain letters of James and Jude. Presumably Simonides considered these (as many did at the time) as documents of the apostolic age, which Nicolaus copied into his codex.

²⁰ Simonides (n. 4) 5–6.

²¹ According to a report in *The Literary Gazette* August 24, 1860 (cited in Simonides [n. 4] 7), Simonides “pronounced it to be a portion of St. Matthew’s Gospel, bearing the date of the first century, and hence, if not the original text, at least one of its earliest transcripts.” In this version it is Joseph Mayer who submits the papyrus to Simonides thinking it is a Coptic writing relating to church history, whereas Simonides identifies it as a Greek portion of Matthew’s Gospel, dated and all. In spite of apparent differences with Simonides’ own narrative, it is cited approvingly without any comment.

²² World Museum, Liverpool, M11169o + M11169n + 1978.291.245a + 1978.291.245c + 1978.291.245d.

²³ E.g., Simonides (n. 4) 31–32, where the text of Fragments VI (= 1978.291.245c) and VIII (= M11169n “Lower”) are listed under the title “Codex Mayerianus;” see also his preface addressed to Mayer, Simonides (n. 4) 39.

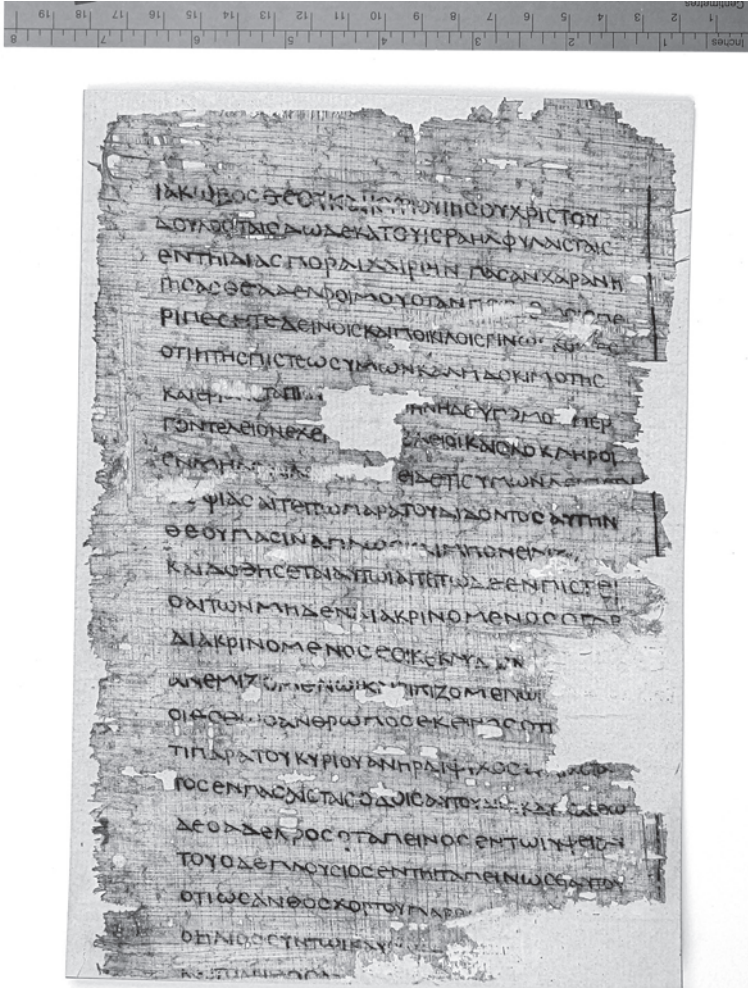


Fig. 1: World Museum, Liverpool, 1978.291.245c, James 1:1–11.
 Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool: World Museum.

Each fragment is written on one side only, with all the papyri pasted onto a white cardboard backing, with those in the M11169o-n sequence further mounted on a large sheet of gray cardboard, with each provided with accompanying notes in Greek by Simonides himself on this larger mounting.²⁴ The contents of each may be set out schematically as follows:

²⁴ At some stage this cardboard was cut, separating two of the pieces (now M11169n) from the rest (now M11169o); that they were once mounted on the same larger sheet of

Simonides number ²⁵	Inventory number	Contents	Publication
i	M11169o.1, 3	Five non-contiguous fragments (a–e) containing Matt 1:1–3; 1:4–5; 1:11–13; 1: 15–17; 1:20, respectively	Simonides, <i>Fac-similes</i> , 40, with plate on the following page.
ii	M11169o.2	Matt 2:6–12, 14–20	Simonides, <i>Fac-similes</i> , 42, with plate on the following page.
iii	M11169n.1 “Upper”	Matt 19:22–20:13	Simonides, <i>Fac-similes</i> , 44, with plate on the following page.
iv	M11169o.4	Matt 27:3–7, 12–20	Simonides, <i>Fac-similes</i> , 46, with plate on the following page.
v	M11169o.5	Matt 28:5–9, 18–20; followed by the colophon of Nicolaus the Deacon.	Simonides, <i>Fac-similes</i> , 48, with plate on the following page.
vi	1978.291.245c	James 1:1–11	Simonides, <i>Fac-similes</i> , 57, with plate on preceding page.
vii	1978.291.245a + 1978.291.245d	Two non-contiguous fragments, (a) James 2:5–10; (b) James 2:12–15, 2:23	Simonides, <i>Fac-similes</i> , 58, with plate on following page.
viii	M11169n.2 “Lower”	Jude 16–23	Simonides, <i>Fac-similes</i> , 67, with plate on preceding page.

cardboard can be seen not only by the shape of the cardboard but also by Simonides’ handwritten description along the bottom of the grey card, Ἀνεκαλύφθησαν ἐν τῷ ἐν Λιβερπούλῃ Αἰγυπτιακῷ Μουσείῳ τοῦ Ἰωσήπου Μαῦέρου ὑπὸ Κ: Σιμωνίδου τῷ ἀωξ’φ: (“Unrolled in the Egyptian Museum of Joseph Mayer in Liverpool by K. Simonides in 1860”), where the text up to the first *iota* of Αἰγυπτιακῷ is on the card containing M11169o.

²⁵ Here and below, these fragment numbers are those assigned by Simonides himself. On their inventorization, see above at n. 10.

The hand on all the fragments is upright and square. The letters are mostly formed separately, with some abutting but no ligaturing. The baseline is irregular, and bilinearity is aspirational rather than always maintained; it is broken at points by *phi*, *psi*, *rho*, and at times a flourished *xi*. All belong to the hand designated “Type 1” by Capponi,²⁶ which she characterizes in the following terms:

small and square, more or less bilinear, clumsy and awkward, written slowly and without ligatures. *Alpha* in two strokes, with a roundish eyelet. *Rho* in two strokes, with an eyelet clearly separated from the vertical. *Epsilon* with the central stroke slightly moved towards the other. *Xy* in three curved lines, of which the upper one is sometimes detached from the others.²⁷

To this description one might add that *beta* frequently sits on a horizontal stroke and that *upsilon* fluctuates between the forms υ and γ . The hand is generally similar, though less regular, to that of the other New Testament papyri, M11169b, c, and t.²⁸ While the hand of the “codex” is somewhat inconsistent across the fragments, with that of M11169n “lower” slightly larger, more regular, and more rounded than that of M11169o, it was no doubt intended to be the same hand, presumably that of “Nicolaus the Deacon” named in the colophon in v (M11169o.5).²⁹

In contrast to genuine early manuscripts of the New Testament, there are no *nomina sacra* in any of Simonides’ papyri.³⁰ While this convention is not to be expected in an autograph such as the fragments of Matthew purport to be, Simonides was well acquainted with medieval Greek manuscripts where *nomina sacra* appear almost universally;³¹ his own usage

²⁶ Capponi (n. 8) 458–459.

²⁷ Capponi (n. 8) 458–459.

²⁸ Despite their similarities, it is clear that all the biblical papyri are not all meant to be by the same scribe; indeed M11169t bears its own epistolary colophon which assigns its copying to a date much later than the alleged date of the codex.

²⁹ That the hand is far from uniform between all the fragments has more to do with Simonides’ success in maintaining a consistent style than any conscious decision to, e.g. differentiate the Matthew sections from the letters of James and Jude, as differences can be noted even within the sections explicitly ascribed to Nicolaus. A forthcoming article by Ast, Choat, Mawby, and Yuen-Collingridge will provide a full treatment of the styles of script used by Simonides.

³⁰ For the pioneering study of these contractions, see Ludwig Traube, *Nomina Sacra: Versuch einer Geschichte der christlichen Kürzung* (München 1907); for more recent discussion, Larry Hurtado, “The Origin of the *Nomina Sacra*: A Proposal,” *JBL* 117, no. 4 (1998) 655–673.

³¹ In his 1859 edition of the New Testament, Tischendorf included examples of uncial script including features like *nomina sacra*, and the *kai*-compendium (which Simonides used in reproductions of other forgeries in *Fac-similes*, plate vi). Tischendorf also explained that *iota* subscript was completely foreign to uncial script, whereas *iota* adscript was very

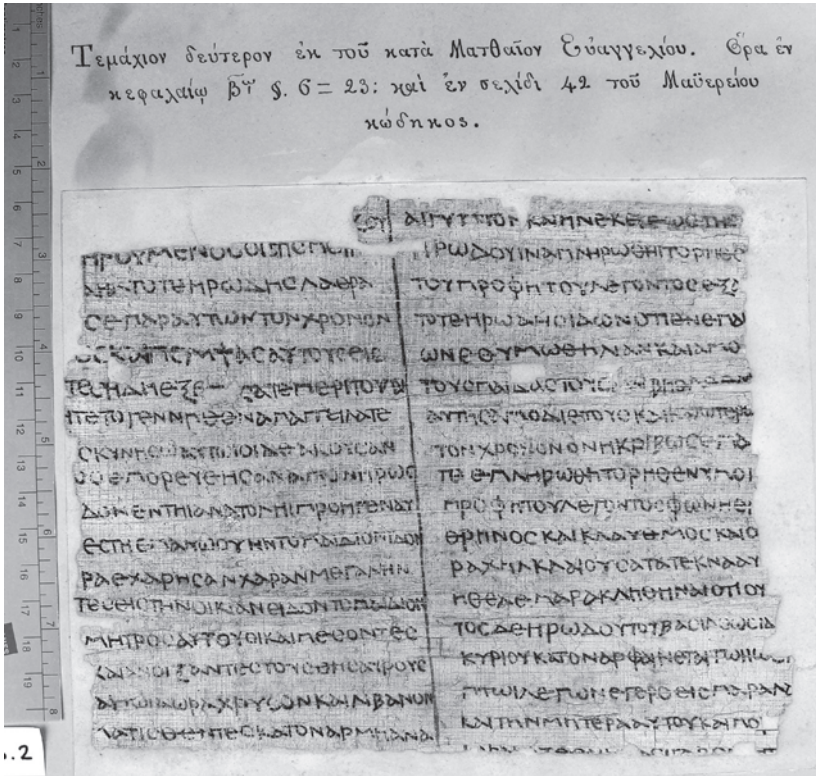


Fig. 2: World Museum, Liverpool, M11169o.2, Matt 2:6–12, 14–20. Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool: World Museum.

of the compendia in other forgeries illustrated in *Fac-Similes* is however inconsistent.³² While there are no diacritics of any sort, a consistent paratextual feature is a vertical line marking the division between columns, an unusual feature which Simonides took directly from his model.

rare, but found later on (here $\eta\delta\iota\sigma\alpha\nu$ in Codex Bezae, Mark 1:34 is the earliest example). Incidentally, in this connection, Tischendorf actually mentions Simonides’ forgeries in a footnote, where he expresses the need for a new handbook of Greek palaeography (which would prevent such deceit): *Tali libro quam opus sit nostra aetate litteras Graecas quum discantibus tum docentibus, historia Uranii atque Hermae palimpsestorum Simonidis, qui tot litterarum luminibus fucum fecerunt, mirum in modum docuit* (p. cxxxiii, n. 1).

³² See e.g. Simonides (n. 4) plate vi (following p. 46) where he includes specimens of various imaginary manuscripts including regular forms of the *nomina sacra* ($\kappa\bar{\upsilon}$, $\chi\bar{\upsilon}$, $\theta\bar{\upsilon}$), some irregular forms ($\iota\bar{\upsilon}$, $\omicron\bar{\upsilon}$, $\theta\bar{\omega}$), but also peculiar abbreviations of the definite article, such as $\tau\bar{\upsilon}$, and $\upsilon\bar{\nu}$ (for $\upsilon\bar{\mu}\iota\nu$)!

Naturally no coherent codicology can be deduced from this assemblage. Among other observable issues, line length varies dramatically in places without observable reason; the number of characters on each reconstructed line is irregular;³³ the number of lines per page varies from 20 (M11169o.5) to 36 (M11169o.1);³⁴ the proposed reconstructions are sometimes impossible for the space left for them; and the reconstructed dimensions for pages presupposed by the amount of text on them varies considerably between fragments.³⁵

Texts from the apostle Matthew, and Jesus' two brothers James, and Jude are particularly fitting to represent the earliest Jerusalem church, and Simonides would prove, by reference to another fake manuscript, that the latter two were also among Jesus' twelve apostles. Besides the fame and fortune that this discovery would inevitably lead to, if he could persuade the world of its genuineness, Simonides clearly had several aims in creating this bold forgery.

The Autograph of Matthew in Greek

In his introduction to the published edition of Mayerianus, Simonides seeks to establish two facts about the Gospel of Matthew – when it was written and in what language. These problematic issues, debated by contemporary scholars, could now be settled once and for all by Simonides' discovery. One of the fragments (v, M11169o.5) contained the ending of Matthew followed by a colophon:

Η γραφή τη χειρι Νικολαου διακονου καθ υπαγορευσιν Ματθαιου αποστολου Ιησου Χριστου εγενετο δε τωι πεντεκαιδεκατωι της του κυριου αναληψεως ετει και τοις εν Παλαιστινη πιστοις ιουδαιοις τε και ελλησι διεδοθη

“The writing by the hand of Nicolaus the Deacon, at the dictation of Matthew, the Apostle of Jesus Christ. It was done in the fifteenth year after the Ascension of our Lord and was distributed to the believing Jews and Greeks in Palestine.”³⁶

³³ For example, in Fragment ii, col. ii. l. 8, Simonides supplies nineteen missing characters, but on the next line which is of same length, he supplies only four characters, Simonides, *Fac-similes*, 42 (cf. plate on next page).

³⁴ Fragment (i) 36 lines; (ii) 26–7; (iii) 32; (iv) 24; (v) 20; (vi) 28; (vii) 28; (viii) 24.

³⁵ The dimensions for fragment iv (M11169o.4) required by its text are c. 22 (h) × 25.5 (w) cm, while those of Fragment vi (1978.291.245c) would be c. 31.5 (h) × 31.5 (w) cm.

³⁶ Simonides (n. 4) 6 (Simonides' translation).

The colophon is an anomaly, since dated colophons are unattested in Greek manuscripts before the ninth century,³⁷ but such early manuscripts on papyrus were hardly known at the time. Through the colophon Simonides could date the Gospel exactly to 48 CE and establish, as he emphasized, that Matthew was written “in Greek and not in Hebrew.”³⁸ William Cureton and Samuel P. Tregelles were among those contemporary scholars who argued that Matthew was written in Aramaic and that the Old Syriac translation, represented by the Curetonian manuscript in the British Museum (now BL Add. MS 14451), reflected this translation of an Aramaic Matthew.³⁹ According to Simonides, this was “a most erroneous and ridiculous notion” entertained by “Dr. Cureton,” and “his friend Dr. Tregelles” – two of his many enemies who were now refuted by material evidence.⁴⁰

Further, as Simonides triumphantly announced in a letter to Mayer on March 25, 1861, some of the fragments contained noteworthy new textual variants, “one of them gives a reading which ... had, so far as I am aware, previously escaped both the researches and the conjectures of Philologists.”⁴¹ This particular reading was featured, but not yet revealed, in the very first “press-release” on May 2, 1860:⁴²

[Simonides] has already found parts of three leaves of a papyrus scroll containing the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, written in the Greek uncial character, the reading of which will cause a great sensation amongst Bibliophilists [sic], as it sets at rest that long misunderstood part of the 24th verse relating to the passing of a camel through the eye of a needle, which arose from the wrong reading of the Greek text.⁴³

³⁷ See recently Jeremiah Coogan, “Byzantine Manuscript Colophons and the Prosopography of Scribal Activity,” in Nicholas S.M. Matheou, Theofili Kampianaki and Lorenzo M. Bondioli (eds.), *From Constantinople to the Frontier: The City and the Cities* (Leiden 2016) 297–310.

³⁸ Simonides (n. 4) 20.

³⁹ Thus, William Cureton boldly claimed in the preface of his *Remains of a Very Ancient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac* (London 1858) vi, “this Gospel of St. Matthew appears at least to be built upon the original Aramaic text, which was the work of the Apostle himself.” Cf. Samuel P. Tregelles’ review article of “Dr. Cureton’s Syriac Gospels,” *Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal* 110, no. 3 (1859) 168–190 (esp. 187). The tradition that Matthew was written in Hebrew is of course ancient, see e.g. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1.

⁴⁰ Simonides (n. 4) 22. On the “date of publication” (of Matthew), Simonides characteristically states, “all these [scholarly] opinions, based as they are on suppositions, appear to me to have little authority, more especially as they are all upset by the incontestable note of the writer, Nicolaus the Deacon ... ” (14).

⁴¹ Simonides (n. 4) 39 (the letter is reprinted as a preface to the edition of Mayerianus).

⁴² The letter to Mayer is reproduced in Simonides (n. 4) 39.

⁴³ “Discovery of an Ancient Biblical Manuscript, at Mr. Mayer’s Museum of National and Foreign Antiquities,” *Liverpool Mercury* May 2, 1860, reproduced in Simonides (n. 4) 6, and Elliott (n. 3) 133–134.

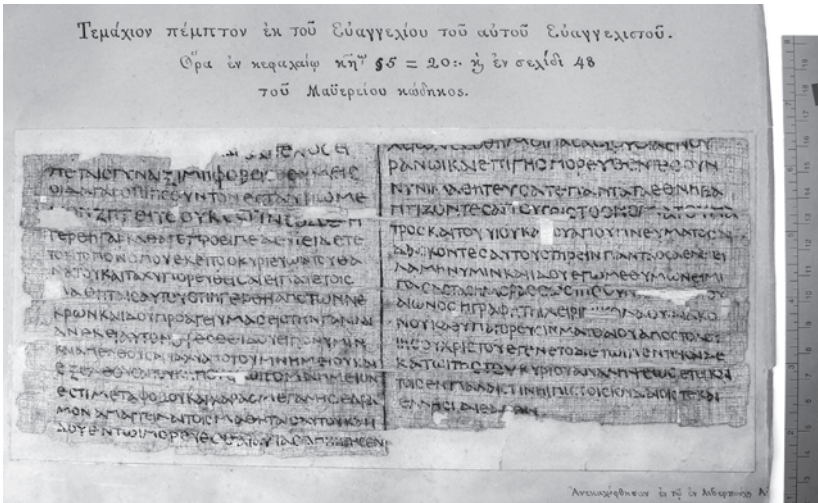


Fig. 3: World Museum, Liverpool, M11169o.5, Matt 28:5–9, 18–20; followed by the colophon of Nicolaus the Deacon.
 Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool: World Museum.

Simonides did not stop with the Codex Mayerianus – he certainly planned to publish more early Christian papyri. Among material he left unpublished when he left England in 1865 were several additional New Testament papyri containing parts of 1 Peter, 1 John, 1–3 John, Rev 1–3, and the one manuscript that Simonides singled out as “perhaps the most interesting of all, which contains portions of the last chapter of the Gospel of St. John.”⁴⁴ Thus, Simonides did not get an opportunity to present yet another spectacular colophon, which we can now confirm is appended to the Gospel of John.⁴⁵ Nor did he get the chance to further engage in textual criticism of the New Testament and deal another blow to Tregelles by presenting the papyrus containing 1 John which included his sensational version of the *Comma Johanneum* (1 John 5:7), which was still debated at the time.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Simonides (n. 4) 72. These papyri were all rolls (rather than being presented as codices as the papyri under discussion in this article). The list in Maraglino (n. 8) 462–463 needs correction, notably in regard to M11169b, c, and t, see the Appendix below.

⁴⁵ This manuscript (M11169t) was presented for the first time at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Boston 2017 by the present writers. This and the other unpublished New Testament papyri mentioned in the previous note will be treated in a separate publication.

⁴⁶ See in particular Grantley McDonald, *Biblical Criticism in Early Modern Europe: Erasmus, the Johannine Comma and Trinitarian Debate* (Cambridge 2016) 279–311.

“Meantime, After an Illness” – Provenance, Production, and Examination

In the present day, when the provenance (that is, collection history) of ancient manuscripts and other artifacts has become a central ethical concern of many scholars studying them, the establishment of a manuscript’s provenance has become a key factor in determining both its legality, in terms of its removal from the country in which it was discovered, and its authenticity.⁴⁷ In Simonides’ day – as indeed until relatively recently – there was less necessity to detail the circumstances of a manuscript’s recovery, although “thrilling tales of discovery” – find stories that would draw popular attention – are arguably a narrative genre in their own right that can be traced to antiquity.⁴⁸ Yet Simonides, by way of augmenting the claims of authenticity for his papyri, went out of his way to comment on “how, when, where, and in whose possession the papyri in question were discovered,” thus foreshadowing this key modern concern in a way that few of his contemporaries did.⁴⁹ Already in the 1840s Simonides had started to construct a credible story of provenance applied to most of the manuscripts he was trying to sell in Europe: they originated from a monastery on Mount Athos, where Simonides’ uncle Benedict had discovered them, and Simonides had access to more manuscripts which he had brought to Athens.⁵⁰ Some of his manuscripts were indeed authentic and came from Mount Athos.⁵¹ As time went on, he extended the monasteries to which he ascribed his creations to Mar Saba in Palestine and St. Catherine in Sinai. For his papyri, he was careful to construct a similar believable provenance.

⁴⁷ See recently Dennis Mizzi and Jodi Magness, “Provenance vs. Authenticity: An Archaeological Perspective on the Post-2002 ‘Dead Sea Scrolls- Like’ Fragments,” *DSD* 26 (2019) 135–169, who argue that investigation of provenance should take precedence over testing of an artefact’s authenticity.

⁴⁸ Eva Mroczek, “True Stories and the Poetics of Textual Discovery,” *BSR* 45 (2016) 21–31.

⁴⁹ Simonides (n. 4) 9.

⁵⁰ For Simonides’ period in Athens, see Marilisa Mitsou, “Der entlarvte Fälscher: Konstantinos Simonides in Athen (1847–1851),” in Müller et al. (n. 3) 71–86.

⁵¹ For example, on March 11, 1853 Simonides tried to sell five scrolls to Frederick Madden at the British Library, who rejected them as forgeries. However, Madden asked Simonides if he had any Greek codices, and on the next day Simonides appeared with a number of genuine manuscripts which Madden acquired (now BL Add. MSS 19386–92A–B), six of which were New Testament manuscripts (GA 502, 503, 640, 644, 1268 and L1053). In several of the manuscripts, Madden made a note of the purchase on one of the first folios, e.g., “Purchased of a Greek named Simonides by the agency of Mr. W. B. Barker, 12 March, 1853, FM” (in BL. Add. 19386 = GA 1268).

In the introduction to his publication of these papyri, Simonides claimed that they were brought to England from Thebes by Henry Stobart, “whose name is universally known,” in 1856.⁵² Several pages later, however, he added a reference to the collection of Mr. J. Sams.⁵³ Mayer had indeed acquired papyri from Stobart, who had purchased them in Egypt in 1854–1856,⁵⁴ but neither of them could confirm any of Simonides’ claims concerning their particular content.⁵⁵ On the contrary, Stobart would deny that he had sold these particular papyri to Mayer.⁵⁶ A few years earlier, in 1850, Mayer had also obtained papyri from the collection of Joseph Sams

⁵² Simonides (n. 4) 6, from the first report of the papyri in the *Liverpool Mercury* May 2, 1860 (reproduced also in Elliott [n. 3] 133–134); see also Simonides (n. 4) 72.

⁵³ Simonides (n. 4) 9: “These, then, were discovered in the Collection of the accomplished Mr. Stobart, and all the rest in the Egyptian Collection of Mr. J. Sams, now in the possession of Mr. Mayer;” what “all the rest” refers to is not clear, perhaps intentionally so. The statement shortly thereafter on the same page that the papyri “were not all obtained by them (sc. Stobart and Sams?), but that some were previously purchased by other persons, and some they procured in Egypt,” ascribed to Stobart himself (in conversation with Simonides), complicates the provenance narrative still further.

⁵⁴ See Henry Stobart, *Egyptian Antiquities Collected on a Voyage in Upper Egypt in the Years 1854 & 1855* (Berlin 1855). Stobart’s letters to his mother, copies of which are held in the National Library of Australia (where they are NLA MS 1033) show that he visited Egypt twice on this trip, in 1854–1855, and again in early 1856, and that he acquired papyri on both these occasions.

⁵⁵ Any records which may have related to these purchases were retained by Mayer when he donated the objects and would have been kept at his final residence at Pennant House in Bebington (where Mayer had an extensive second collection), which was all sold off and irretrievably scattered on his death, see Gibson and Wright (n. 8) 20.

⁵⁶ *Report of the Council of the Royal Society* (n. 16) 5–6. In a letter to *The Athenaeum* on December 14, 1861, 807 reproduced in Elliott (n. 3) 147–148, Stobart distanced himself from Simonides’ papyri, “At the time they came into Mr. Mayer’s hands they had not been fully unrolled. They were, at any rate, however, genuine MSS.; but all of them, I believe, in the Hieratic character. . . . All I can say is, that I cannot myself believe that they (sc. Simonides’ papyri) were ever in my possession. I examined my own MSS. sufficiently to feel convinced that they were in the Hieratic character.” Two genuine and famous Hieratic texts, Mayer A and B, do indeed survive in the World Museum from this time; “Κ. Σιμωνίδου ἀνακάλυψις,” “Unrolled by Constantine Simonides,” may be seen in Simonides’ handwriting at the bottom right of Mayer B. M11169k, a “letter of Hermippus,” also contains a section of Hieratic which Simonides did not erase, to allow him to give its “correct” transcription and translation below. This papyrus will be treated in detail in a future publication by Choat. For the assertion that Stobart was either tricked into buying forged papyri by Simonides, or was collaborating with him to produce and sell them, see Luciano Canfora, “The So-called Artemidorus Papyrus: A Reconsideration,” *Museum Helveticum* 70, no. 2 (2013) 157–179 at 173; Rosa Otranto, “Reconsidering the Origin and the Acquisition of P. Lond. Lit. 133,” in Paul Schubert (ed.), *Actes du 26^e Congrès international de papyrologie. Genève, 16-21 août 2010* (Geneva 2012) 581–590, especially 588; idem, “Una disputa tra due riviste sull’Epitafio di Iperide,” *Quaderni di Storia* 36 (2010) 240–255, especially 244–249. Nothing beyond an accusation in a Greek language newspaper supports this, and we find it inherently unlikely given Stobart’s testimony recorded earlier in this note.

(1784–1860),⁵⁷ but the unlabeled rolls were apparently mixed together, a confusion that Simonides clearly took advantage of.⁵⁸ In a letter to *The Athenaeum* Joseph Mayer confirmed his acquisition of the papyri from the two different sources and their subsequent disarrangement.⁵⁹ In the same letter, Mayer stated that he and the curator of the museum had been present as Simonides unrolled many of the papyri:

[Simonides] shortly afterwards commenced his operations in the Library of the Museum, the necessary materials for the unrolling, such as linen, starch, &c., being supplied by the Curator, who attended on him, and with myself saw many of the MSS. opened.⁶⁰

Neither of them, however, could read Greek and distinguish which papyri they had seen unrolled.⁶¹ Simonides was evidently permitted to take

⁵⁷ Charlotte Fell Smith, “Sams, Joseph,” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 50, edited by Sidney Lee (London 1897) 236–237. On the collecting of Sams (which took place earlier than that of Stobart) see also Gibson and Wright (n. 8) 47–49. By 1852, Mayer certainly owned a number of papyri. These included a late period Hieratic ritual text on a c. 1.75 m roll of papyrus, which was not used by Simonides as it was catalogued in 1879 as M11161 (Charles T. Gatty, *Catalogue of the Mayer Collection*, Part I: *The Egyptian, Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities*, 2nd rev. ed. [London 1879] 38 no. 187), and features already in the 1852 *Catalogue of the Egyptian Museum, No. VIII, Colquitt Street, Liverpool* as no. 217 (though there called a Demotic text, see also Gibson and Wright [n. 8] 52); this papyrus was later destroyed in the Second World War, along with Mayer papyrus K (M11559), likewise part of a late period Book of the Dead. Notes in the World Museum Liverpool indicate Mayer actually purchased M11161 in 1852 from the collection of Viscount Valentia. The 1852 catalogue also lists as nos. 218–245, “Papyri—in the hieroglyphic and demotic characters, as well as in the antient [sic] Coptic and Greek languages.” It is not known what if any Coptic and Greek papyri were in the Museum when Simonides arrived: a 1928 catalogue lists M11163, 11167 and 11168 as “unopened” or “unrolled” Coptic papyri, but these have now been lost, and presumably were also destroyed in the war. A papyrus of the Book of the Dead listed in Gatty (n. 57) 38, no. 186 may also have been part of these earlier purchases (see Gibson and Wright [n. 8] 52). This confused collection history merely serves to confirm Mayer’s remarks that by 1860 the provenance of his papyrus collection had become disordered; it is however likely that most or all of the papyri which Simonides re-used derived from Stobart’s purchases.

⁵⁸ See Simonides’ letter to the *Athenaeum* on December 21, 1861, 848–850, reproduced in Elliott (n. 3) 149–150. See also *Journal of Sacred Literature* 3, no. 5 (1863) 240 (a record of a meeting of the Royal Society of Literature on January 7, 1863); Simonides (n. 15 [1864a]) 1, where Simonides allows the possibility that some the papyri derived from purchases from Sams.

⁵⁹ As stated in a letter to *The Athenaeum* on December 28, 1861, 882, reproduced in Elliott (n. 3) 151–152. Simonides stated the same in a letter to the *Athenaeum*, December 21, 1861, 849–850: “it is, probably, almost impossible now to ascribe each papyrus to its original owner.”

⁶⁰ Letter from Joseph Mayer to *The Athenaeum* on December 28, 1861, 882, reproduced in Elliott (n. 3) 151–152.

⁶¹ Cf. C.W. Goodwin’s comment on a letter from Hodgkin to the *Parthenon*, reproduced in *Journal of Sacred Literature* 3, no. 6 (1863) 497–498, “Mr. Mayer’s letter in the

out the papyri from the museum to the house of Samuel Nicolaides, a Greek priest in Liverpool, where Simonides was lodging. In particular, he was absent for a long period because of an illness, during which he worked on the papyri at home.⁶² In the introductory description of the discovery, Simonides says he worked in the museum daily soon after his first encounter with Mayer on February 13, 1860. However, it was only after recovering from an illness that he made the great discovery which he communicated to Mayer, first “by word of mouth” and then in a letter on March 25.⁶³

In Simonides’ own account, then, there is no mention of unrolling the papyri with the curator (who is not mentioned by Simonides), but rather of Simonides working alone in the museum to sort out papyrus fragments “lying pell-mell together” according to their language, mounting them on canvas and deciphering them. It was now that Simonides identified a total of nine fragments from Matthew, and an additional four from the letters of James and Jude, and in communication to Mayer he could report that the fragments had already been “unrolled and deciphered.” In other words, no one else had been present when these texts were “unrolled,” and at this point no one could tell where the various texts had come from.⁶⁴

On the other hand, all the unpublished New Testament papyri, which we have examined in the Liverpool World Museum, have clearly been “unrolled,” before they were fastened on canvas (with one exception).⁶⁵ Interestingly, Hodgkin, the chief defender of Simonides at the time,

Athenaeum of December 28, 1861, does not tell us what opportunities Simonides had of manipulating the papyri without witnesses. Mr. Mayer is confessedly unable to identify the papyri now produced with those which he saw unrolled.”

⁶² Nicolaides would later make a statement to the Royal Society of Literature that Simonides had had the Mayer papyri in his house for a long time. Report from the Royal Society of Literature meeting on February 11, 1863, reproduced from the *Parthenon* in *Journal of Sacred Literature* 3, no. 5 (1863) 243. Simonides himself mentions being given “several rolls of papyrus discovered in the Egyptian coffins” by Mayer before he had even begun to work on the papyri in the Museum, as part of “confirmatory proofs” of the copies of Egyptian texts from the museum which Simonides had been given to translate; these coffin papyri seem never to be mentioned again (Simonides [n. 4] 5).

⁶³ Simonides (n. 4) 5 (the letter is published on p. 39). In retrospect, Hodgkin, the chief defender of Simonides, would argue that “it was only after his illness and his absence (for some two months) that on account of the close and unwholesome air of the Museum, he [Simonides] commenced to trace them [the papyri] at home.” Letter from John Eliot Hodgkin to *The Parthenon* on February 7, 1863, reproduced in Elliott (n. 3) 158–160.

⁶⁴ Simonides (n. 4) 39. See also “The discovery was imparted first to Mr Mayer” (6).

⁶⁵ Cf. Simonides (n. 4) 72, “While these pages have been going through the press, I have unrolled papyri from the same collection, which contain all the second part of the First Epistle of St. Peter, and a small part of the First Epistle of St. John, and the greater part of the Second and Third Epistles, and the first three chapters of the Apocalypse,

reported that the roll with the Gospel of John (now M11169t) had been unrolled at his house in his presence, undoubtedly prepared beforehand by Simonides for the occasion.⁶⁶ This tactical move, however, was taken more than a year after the original discovery, the integrity of which had been contested as soon as it was announced.⁶⁷ Incidentally, the spectacular colophon appended to the Gospel of John, unrolled before Hodgkin’s own eyes, would serve to authenticate most of the other New Testament papyri in the Mayer collection and provide a neat explanation how these copies eventually came to Thebes.⁶⁸

The standard practice in many collections at the time, to fasten the papyri with paste on calico or paper, was particularly suitable for Simonides’ purposes.⁶⁹ A special report of the Royal Society of Literature, including the opinions of many scholars who had examined the papyri, stated that “it was impossible to see what had been on their reverse sides; and that, thus, no opinion could be formed as to the state of the papyrus when first unrolled ...”⁷⁰ At least one papyrus, an epistle of Hermippus, was also shown by one of the members of the society,

besides one, the most recently opened, but perhaps the most interesting of all, which contains portions of the last chapter of the Gospel of St. John.”

⁶⁶ Letter from John Eliot Hodgkin to *The Parthenon* on January 31, 1863, reproduced in Simonides (n. 15 [1864a]) 2–3; and Elliott (n. 3) 155–157.

⁶⁷ Simonides (n. 4) 72, states that he made the discovery of 3 John and two pages of the Works of Aristeas, “both of the 1st century” on March 2, 1861, which was noticed in the *Daily Post* and *Liverpool Mercury* on March 8. The Aristeas papyrus is now in the British Library, see above, at n. 9. Subsequently, he had discovered the other unpublished New Testament manuscripts, see above, n. 65.

⁶⁸ We will account for this and other unpublished New Testament papyri in a separate publication.

⁶⁹ For examples of the mounting of papyri on cardboard, cloth, or paper from the nineteenth century, see for instance P.Carlsberg 250 (Thomas Christiansen and Kim Ryholt, *Catalogue of Egyptian Funerary Papyri in Danish Collections* [Copenhagen 2016] 2); *P.Count* 19 (Frag. 4); P.Minnesota 13 (*BASP* 44 [2007] 55); *P.Lond.* 5.1764 (see *ZPE* 94 [1992] 180, n. 36); Bibliothèque Nationale de France Suppl. gr. 1106, *Egyptien* 5, 6, 46, 203; and the papyri discussed in C.W. Goodwin, “Account of Three Coptic Papyri, and other Manuscripts, brought from the East by J. S. Stuart Glennie, Esq.,” *Archaeologia* 39 (1863) 447–456. On papyri in the Egyptian Museum Cairo conserved in this manner see Mario Capasso, “The Restoration of Egyptian and Greek Papyri Housed in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (1997-2000),” in Z. Hawass and L. Pinch Brock (eds.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo, 2000*. Volume 3: *Language, Conservation, Museology* (Cairo-New York 2003) 149–152, at 150.

⁷⁰ *Report of the Council of the Royal Society* (n. 16) 5. The report mentions “one exception” without further specification. In the collection, there is one papyrus which has not been pasted on canvas or cardboard, M11169u, with the Lord’s Prayer and other material on the recto. According to Capponi (n. 8) 460, there are visible traces, or dots of ink on the verso which have changed color, perhaps because someone (Simonides) applied

C.W. Goodwin, to exhibit clear signs of existing text having been removed,⁷¹ sufficient evidence for some that it was “a rank forgery, probably of very recent date.”⁷² A devastatingly critical anonymous review of *Fac-similes* in the *Athenaeum* drew attention to the similar handwriting of all the papyri (“probably the work of some scribe of the nineteenth century”), and to the idiosyncratic supporting evidence that Simonides had assembled, especially some of the palaeographically inconsistent epigraphic material.⁷³ Yet there were others who came to Simonides’ defense and drew different conclusions, so the controversy over his manuscripts continued for some years.⁷⁴

To a modern scholar with some knowledge of papyrology, palaeography, and textual criticism, this controversy over Simonides’ production, and Madan’s judgment at the turn of the century of Simonides as a highly skillful forger who met “the requirements of modern critics,” may sound odd, since Simonides’ papyri are rather obvious forgeries. Their execution, script, and formatting; the texts on which they are based; the fact that many are clearly composites of pieces of more than one original papyrus (sometimes with vertical and horizontal fibers on the one side!);⁷⁵ and not

chemicals to remove the ink. Autopsy of the papyrus by Choat has confirmed these traces, which give the impression of something having been removed.

⁷¹ This papyrus contained some lines of genuine Hieratic writing in the midst of the Greek text, which Simonides left to allow him to give its transcription and translation. Goodwin noted traces of pink tint and flecks of blotting paper on the surface of this papyrus (thus creating “an island of truth floating in the midst of a red sea of falsehood”, in Goodwin’s phrase), evidence of the removal of the original text. For the debate over this papyrus (which John Eliot Hodgkin asserted showed no evidence of the tint or blotting paper Goodwin observed), see John Eliot Hodgkin, letter to *The Parthenon* on January 27, 1863, with Goodwin’s reply, where he took the opportunity to suggest that some of the longer texts were written on the backs of papyri, with their original texts hidden by being pasted on cardboard (re-printed in *Journal of Sacred Literature* 3, no. 6 [1863] 497–498).

⁷² Report from the meeting of the Royal Society of Literature on February 11, 1863, re-printed from the *Parthenon* in *Journal of Sacred Literature* 3, no. 5 (1863) 242 (cf. *Report of the Council of the Royal Society* [n. 16] 6–7).

⁷³ *The Athenaeum*, December 11, 1861, 755–756 (reproduced in Elliott [n. 3] 143–147). Christopher P. Jones identifies the reviewer as the great Indologist Max Müller, Christopher Jones, “A Syntax of Forgery,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 160 no. 1 (2016) 26–36, at p. 28. In a note, Jones says this identification is based on “unpublished information kindly supplied by Chris Stray” (35, n. 8). Elsewhere, the *Report of the Council of the Royal Society* (n. 16) contains a number of technical criticisms on the papyri, see especially 4–5.

⁷⁴ In particular, John Eliot Hodgkin defended the genuineness of the papyri (even of the Hermippus epistle with lines of Hieratic writing) in several meetings and via a considerable number of letters to the editors of various newspapers (Elliott [n. 3] 155–163).

⁷⁵ See e.g. M11169n.2 “Lower fragment” = Fragment VIII, Jude, where the bottom half of the sheet (ll. 13–24) is from a different original papyrus, and gives the impression of being written against the fibres (↓) while ll. 1–12 is written along the fibres (→).

least, the supporting evidence from invented and idiosyncratic inscriptions, fake ancient Greek writers, and other fantastic manuscripts purported to have been examined by Simonides in various Greek monasteries, combine to suggest their inauthenticity. Now that we have a substantial number of New Testament papyri, we can see that Simonides’ papyrus “codex” does not resemble any of the ca. 140 which are extant today. It must however be remembered that papyrology was in its infancy in the mid-19th century. Greek palaeography, despite Montfaucon and his successors, was not (with the partial exception of epigraphy) well-developed for the early period, and papyri had not found a place within it. The great manuscript discoveries of the eastern monasteries were not widely known, and hardly anyone had ever seen a New Testament papyrus;⁷⁶ indeed, very few people had seen papyri at all.⁷⁷

A report on Simonides’ discoveries in the *Literary Gazette* for 1860 reflects well the popular belief that such forgeries were difficult if not impossible to accomplish:

We should also remember that the date of a papyrus document is most easily ascertainable, and consequently any attempt at fraud open to immediate detection; and, moreover, that forgery is impracticable, not only from the fact that the peculiarity of the material admits of no erasure or obliteration, but also because the species of papyrus anciently employed for manuscript purposes is now extinct.⁷⁸

Not only were such (largely incorrect) beliefs current, but there were few papyri to serve either as a model for Simonides or a basis of comparison for others to assess his creations. The first discovery of Greek papyri had been made in 1752 at Herculaneum, and these had already started to be published by the end of the eighteenth century, by which time the first documentary papyrus had been published.⁷⁹ The first half of the

⁷⁶ On the earliest discovery of a (genuine) New Testament papyrus, which was not published until 1868, see below at n. 100.

⁷⁷ Through his spokesperson, Hodgkin, Simonides made this point himself as he presented his facsimile edition to the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire in Liverpool and referred to the confirmatory evidence from “papyri and parchment MSS. in the monasteries of Mount Athos, of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai, of St. Sabba, in Palestine,” some of which were three hundred years earlier than what had been discovered so far – “This would not be very much wondered at when we remembered that these monasteries had been in a very small degree ransacked, and their contents now, for the first time, brought to light.” Letter to *Liverpool Daily Post* on December 6, 1861, reproduced in Simonides (n. 15 [1864a]) 48.

⁷⁸ *The Literary Gazette*, August 24, 1860, reproduced in Simonides (n. 4) 6–7.

⁷⁹ On the Herculaneum papyri, see David Sider, “The Special Case of Herculaneum,” in Roger S. Bagnall (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (Oxford 2009) 303–319.

nineteenth century – “the first age of papyrus-revelation” in the words of Frederic Kenyon – brought further literary papyri to public attention.⁸⁰ Via the adventurer Giovanni Finati, W.J. Bankes acquired a roll containing Homer’s *Iliad* in Elephantine in 1821, the same year that the British Museum purchased its “Papyrus I” from Henry Salt, later recognized as the *Acta Alexandrinorum*. Among the literary papyrological purchases over the next 40 years, one might also note the separate parts of a roll of speeches by Hyperides, *Against Demosthenes*, *For Lycophron*, and *For Euxenippus*, purchased independently by Joseph Arden and A.C. Harris in Luxor in 1847–1848. As Kenyon points out, this was “the first previously unknown classical author to be recovered on papyrus.”⁸¹ Stobart’s purchases in Egypt would soon provide another, which became crucial to Simonides’ project.

The Perfect Model of a First-Century Papyrus

Most textual forgeries have a model, either for their content or script, and often for both. The model can provide a general appearance, such as the “nonsense-script” papyri commonly produced in early twentieth-century Egypt, many of which resemble at a glance Byzantine cursives hands.⁸² Or an existing text can provide the content, but not an exact physical model, such as the so-called “Gospel of Jesus’ Wife” or its companion fake Gospel of John.⁸³ In some cases, a known papyrus forms an exact

For the ‘Charta Borgiana’, published in 1788, see Neils Schow, *Charta papyracea Graece scripta Musei Borgiani Velitris qua series incolarum Ptolemaidis Arsinoiticae in aggeribus et fossis operantium exhibetur* (Rome 1788); Mario Capasso, “La nascita della papirologia: la ‘Charta Borgiana.’ Dal Museo di Velletri al Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli,” in *Annali della Facoltà di lettere e filosofia dell’Università di Napoli* 29 (1986–1987) 151–168.

⁸⁰ For Frederic G. Kenyon’s characterization of this era, see his *The Palaeography of Greek Papyri* (Oxford 1899) 3–5. This period also witnessed the first acquisitions and publications of documentary papyri. The British Museum’s papyrus collection comprised over 100 Greek and Coptic papyri by the late 1850s, mostly documentary material. A selection had been published with facsimile by Josiah Forshall, *Description of the Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, Part I (London 1839); these were overwhelmingly Ptolemaic period papyri from Memphis (acquired via Henry Salt).

⁸¹ Kenyon (n. 77) 5.

⁸² On the “nonsense-script” papyri, see Malcolm Choat, “Forging Antiquities: The Case of Papyrus Fakes,” in Saskia Hufnagel and Duncan Chappell (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook on Art Crime* (Basingstoke 2019) 557–586, at 563–564, with further references.

⁸³ On the models for the “Gospel of Jesus’ wife” and “John” papyri see Bernhard (n. 6), showing the dependence of the former on the Coptic Gospel of Thomas in Nag Hammadi Codex II; and Askeland (n. 6), highlighting the similarities of the latter – which include

model, such as a papyrus copy of the *Odyssey* in Strahov Library, Prague, which mirrors its exemplar in the British Library (or a plate of it at least) in every way.⁸⁴ Simonides’ model for Codex Mayerianus, which has not hitherto been known, and which we identify here for the first time, has something in common with both these types, taking the visual characteristics, but not the text, of a known papyrus.

The most significant literary papyrus for Simonides’ purposes proved to be a copy of Hyperides’ *Funeral Oration* over Leosthenes, acquired in Thebes (in whose neighborhood it was presumably found) by Stobart on the same trip as that on which he purchased the Mayer papyri in 1854–1856.⁸⁵ It was the only Greek literary work that Stobart had purchased on his trip, which otherwise yielded the Hieratic and Demotic texts that ended up in Mayer’s collection, and a number of Greek and Coptic documentary papyri most (or perhaps all) of which were purchased by the British Museum.⁸⁶ The Hyperides papyrus was almost immediately bought by the British Museum, and Churchill Babington, who had already been involved in editions of Hyperides’ works (the papyri of Arden and Harris found a decade earlier), was granted permission in 1857 by the Trustees to transcribe the papyrus and have a facsimile of it engraved.⁸⁷ The *editio princeps* appeared in 1858, dedicated to the members of the Royal Society

line divisions but not script or sheet format – to its obvious source, the Cambridge “Qau codex” edited by Herbert Thompson in 1924.

⁸⁴ See Ulrike Horak, “Fälschungen auf Papyrus, Pergament, Papier und Ostraka,” *Tyche* 6 (1991) 91–98, at 97.

⁸⁵ See above, at n. 54. On which of his two visits to Egypt on this trip he purchased the Hyperides papyrus is not known: it can at least be said that it does not feature in Stobart’s *Egyptian Antiquities Collected on a Voyage in Upper Egypt* published in 1855 (n. 54), but perhaps it may be recognized in a letter sent to his mother from Upper Egypt on January 29, 1856 (National Library of Australia MS 1033 no. 31), where he reports buying papyri in Thebes, “one of them ... a ‘prize,’ being written in the Greek character which is always the most valuable.” This remark may however have been made about the Will of Bishop Abraham (see the following note).

⁸⁶ These Coptic papyri came overwhelmingly from the monastery of Phoibammon at Deir el-Bahri in Thebes, as did the one other Greek document in the lot, the Will of the monastery’s abbot, Bishop Abraham, P.Lond. 77. On the circumstances of their discovery, see Włodzimierz Godlewski, *Deir el-Bahri V: Le monastère de St Phoibammon* (Warsaw 1986) 53–56.

⁸⁷ The papyrus was inventoried as P.Lond. 98, see also *P.Lond.Lit.* 133. Otranto (n. 56 [2012]) points to inconsistencies in the acquisition history of the Hyperides papyrus to suggest that the authenticity of the Hyperides papyrus itself might be reconsidered, but outside of the difficulty of identifying the Hyperides papyrus among the earliest descriptions of the papyri Stobart sold to the British Museum (though see above, n. 85) and the assertion of one of Simonides’ Greek opponents at the time, there is little to recommend this suggestion, which has not been taken up in work on the Hyperides papyrus itself.

of Literature.⁸⁸ In the introduction Babington discussed the date of the papyrus: “If I must hazard a more definite conjecture, I should suppose that the second century after Christ is as far a guess as can be made: but if not this, then I would conjecture an earlier rather than a later century.”⁸⁹ In other words, here was a potential first-century literary papyrus in Greek from the same lot which Stobart had brought home from Thebes – a perfect model for Codex Mayerianus. When Babington’s edition appeared, the exciting new text prompted great interest and resulted in several publications from a number of prominent scholars.⁹⁰

It is quite apparent from the characteristics of the Hyperides papyrus as well as Babington’s ensuing edition that Simonides used the manuscript and its edition as models for Mayerianus. Early in the introduction to the volume, he mentions their common provenience:

In publishing, according to promise, the fragments of the New Testament, I may remark, first, that they were brought to England from Egyptian Thebes in 1856, by the Rev. Henry Stobart, whose name is universally known. ... Along with these, several other famous works of Grecian intellect were brought by the same gentleman from Egypt into England; among which is to be found the Funeral Panegyric by Hyperides, the winner of the oratorical prize, which he pronounced by command of the Athenian people over the tomb of Leosthenes, and those who heroically fell with him in the Samian war, and which was first edited by the Rev. Churchill Babington, Cambridge, 1858. The original, also on papyrus, is deposited in the British Museum, and was purchased for a large sum of money. Those who are curious in such matters may see all that relates to the Funeral Panegyric in the Editor’s Preface and Introduction.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Churchill Babington, *The Funeral Oration of Hyperides over Leosthenes and His Comrades in the Lamian War* (Cambridge 1858). A digital image of the papyrus may be seen at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=papyrus_98_f001r.

⁸⁹ Babington (n. 88) x. In the second corrected edition, Babington repeated his judgment that the papyrus was “at least as old as the second century after Christ” (*The Funeral Oration of Hyperides over Leosthenes and His Comrades in the Lamian War* [Cambridge 1859] 3). Subsequent investigation of the text on the front of the papyrus showed it bore a horoscope in Greek and Old Coptic dated to 13.4.95 CE, which seems to have been prepared in the first half of the second century; see first C.W. Goodwin, “Sur un horoscope grec contenant les noms de plusieurs décans,” *Mélanges Égyptologiques* 12 (1864) 294–306, *idem*, “On an Egyptian Text in Greek Characters,” *ZÄS* 6 (1868) 18–24; and more recently J. Černý, P. E. Kahle, and R.A. Parker, “The Old Coptic Horoscope,” *JEA* 43 (1957) 86–100. The papyrus was then reused for the *Funeral Oration*, probably in the second half of the second century; see Judson Herrman, *Hyperides Funeral Oration: Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford 2009) 29.

⁹⁰ In the second edition, Babington refers to publications by Dehèque, Caffiaux, Classen, Vömel, Spengel, Kayser, Caesar, Comparetti, and Cobet (n. 89) 5–6.

⁹¹ Simonides (n. 4) 9.

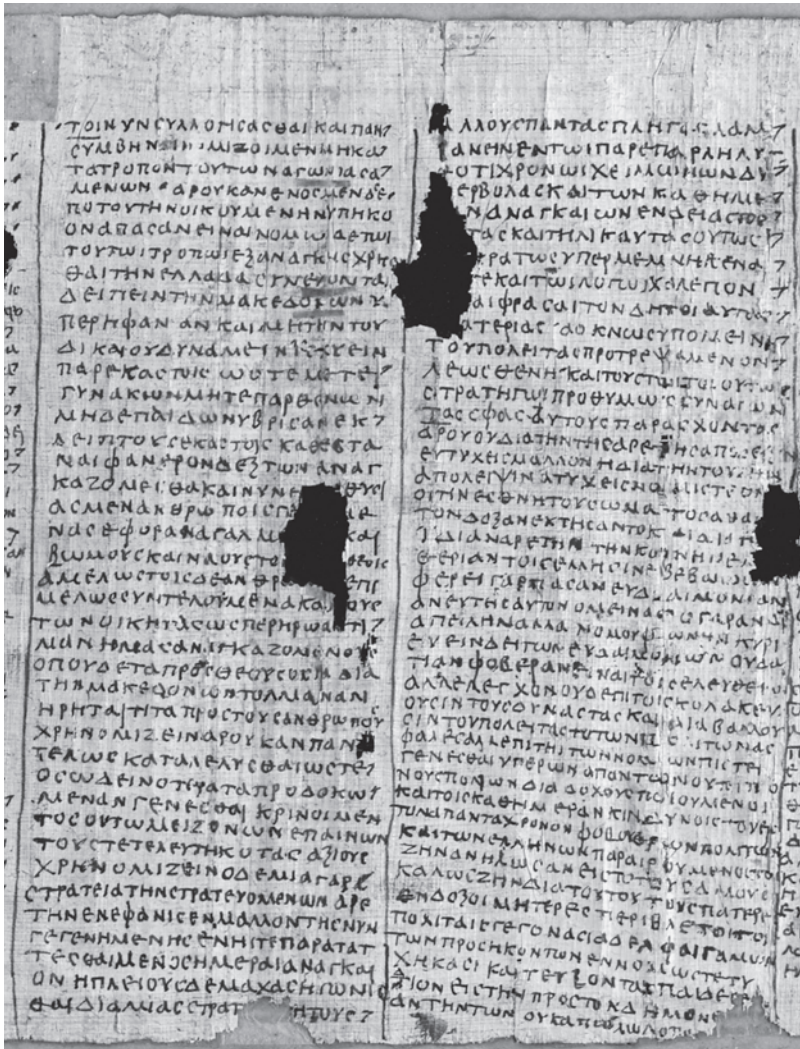


Fig. 4: P.Lond. 98r, cols. 9–10. © British Library Board.

A number of elements familiar from Codex Mayerianus are readily apparent in the Hyperides papyrus. These include most prominently the same intercolumnar vertical lines, a feature which Simonides in reference to Isocrates described as a “paragraphus,”⁹² which separate the columns

⁹² Simonides (n. 4) 25. Perhaps he had in mind *Antidosis* 59, where however Isocrates is clearly speaking about a *paragraphos* in the terms commonly understood, that is, a horizontal line marking out a section of the text.

of the Hyperides text with hardly any blank space on either side. The script of the Hyperides, with letters written separately and irregularly, variable skew of the lines, and inconsistent observation of bilinearity, is also similar to the script that Simonides adopted for the codex, though Simonides' version is more regular and the inspiration for some letter shapes have clearly been drawn from elsewhere. A feature which is almost universal in Simonides' papyri, but uncommon in papyri of the date he assigned to them, is the use of *iota* adscript. It is, however, regularly written by the scribe of the Hyperides papyrus.⁹³ Simonides' inconsistencies of orthography and format, including irregular column width, number of letters per line, and number of lines per column find a type of model in the Hyperides papyrus, on which the width of the columns varies between 6.25 to 8.5 cm, and the number of characters on each line varies between 12 and 31 characters,⁹⁴ and which Babington characterised as follows: "it is worse written (sc. than the other papyri with Hyperides' speeches), the blunders are decidedly more numerous, and the orthography is somewhat more barbarous."⁹⁵ These crude features of Mayerianus, which it shared with other ancient manuscripts preserved in museums including the papyrus of Hyperides, could not disprove their genuineness, as Simonides pointed out.⁹⁶ It has subsequently been suggested that the Hyperides papyrus was written as a school exercise, both because of the nature of the script, and the presence of the vertical lines, extremely rare outside an educational context.⁹⁷ No doubt Simonides, who was naturally not aware of

⁹³ Herrman (n. 89) 32–33. For Tischendorf's comments in 1859 on the use of use of *iota* adscript in uncial biblical manuscripts, see above, n. 31. For Simonides' remarks on the use of *iota* adscript in Mayerianus see Simonides (n. 4) 25.

⁹⁴ Herrman (n. 89) 28.

⁹⁵ Babington (n. 88) x.

⁹⁶ "Neither is spuriousness or genuineness to be proved by the correct or incorrect spelling of this or that manuscript, as some who are entirely inexperienced in such matters assert and ignorantly dogmatize, for all the MSS. that have come down to our time, and are preserved in the libraries of western Europe, abound in false spelling, infinite solecisms, and anacolutha. Does it follow from this that they are all spurious? If so, what are we to consider genuine? The inscriptions on stone. Or shall we say the papyri of Hyperides and others, preserved in the various museums? But these are not exempt from the same category, as their editors confess, so that at this rate they are all spurious and supposititious, according to the fanciful judgment of our modern palaeographers" (Simonides [n. 4] 27).

⁹⁷ See Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta 1996) 240–241 (no. 283), who characterizes the hand as "evolving," and that of "an apprentice scribe or a student copying a text." On vertical dividing lines in educational texts, see Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students*, 77–78, who suggests they are never found in literary texts, and outside of educational papyri appear only in astrological papyri (as indeed they do in the text on the front of P.Lond. 98); see also E.G. Turner,

this theorized origin for the Hyperides, did not mean to imply the same for his codex.

It is thus likely that the Hyperides papyrus was the model not only for the format of Simonides’ biblical papyri, but also elements of their script. Simonides’ edition of Mayerianus also shares many similarities with Babington’s 1858 Hyperides edition. Two columns of texts are edited on a page with accompanying column and line numbering, with the textual notes laid out in a very similar fashion. Characteristically, the color plates typically reproduce two columns of texts divided by the vertical line divisions. Babington indicated reconstructed letters in square brackets, whereas Simonides provided missing text in red color – a practice that Babington had used in his 1850 edition of Hyperides’ *Against Demosthenes*.⁹⁸ While the imitation of an earlier edition’s format in itself does not indicate forgery, in this case it heightens the sense of Simonides’ dependence on the work of Babington. It is interesting to note that two of Simonides’ worst critics, Constantine von Tischendorf and Samuel Tregelles, were included in the list of subscribers of Babington’s 1858 edition among many prominent scholars of the time. No doubt Simonides knew that his enemies would compare the two papyri.

This peculiar Hyperides papyrus, then, served as the model for Codex Mayerianus, the first ever published edition of a New Testament manuscript written on Egyptian papyrus, “an unquestionable token of the highest antiquity,” as Simonides pointed out.⁹⁹ It was not until 1862 that Tischendorf revealed to the world an authentic New Testament papyrus. This papyrus, now Gr. 258A in the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg and registered as Φ^{11} , contains parts of 1 Corinthians, and had been brought to the library of St. Petersburg from the Monastery of St. Catherine’s at Sinai by Bishop Porphyrius Uspensky.¹⁰⁰ Tischendorf thought that the papyrus was no later the fourth century, but today it is assigned to the seventh century. In other words, there was no precedent for Codex Mayerianus.

Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World (London 1987) 5. However, we have found similar lines drawn without ruler that frame the text in P.Oslo 1661 (4th cent.) which contains Biblical texts (most likely a lectionary) in Greek and Coptic (= Gregory-Aland P62; *ed. pr.* in Leiv Amundsen, “Christian Papyri from the Oslo Collection,” *SO* 24 [1945] 121–140).

⁹⁸ Churchill Babington, *The Oration of Hyperides against Demosthenes* (Cambridge 1850).

⁹⁹ Simonides (n. 4) 46.

¹⁰⁰ Constantin von Tischendorf, “Vortrag des Geheimen Hofrath Professor Dr. Tischendorf: ‘Griechische Paläographie,’” in *Verhandlungen der fünfundzwanzigsten Versammlung Deutscher Philologen und Schulmänner in Halle*, vol. 25 (Leipzig 1868), 44–45; Frederic G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London 1912), 43.

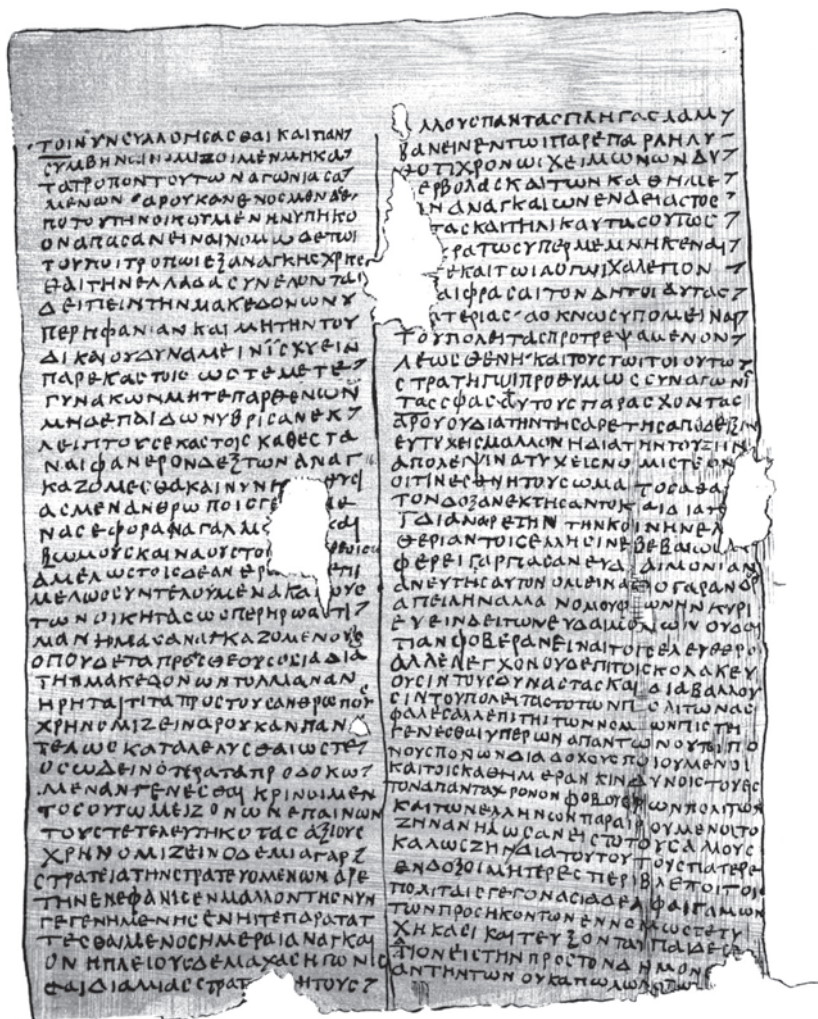


Fig. 5: Facsimile from Babington [n. 88], pl. 5, showing P.Lond. 98r, cols. 9–10.

A Sensational New Reading in Matt 19:24: “It is Easier for a Cable ...”

In the final part of this article, we review the text of Codex Mayerianus, and its contribution to textual criticism in the day. While it may seem counterintuitive to talk about forgeries making a contribution to textual

criticism, they should be considered in this context, not so much for the text itself (as naturally no known forgery will ever appear in a critical apparatus¹⁰¹), but for how they illustrate interaction with the Biblical text in the period in which they were created. While Simonides’ papyri feature a number of deviations from the commonly reconstructed text of the New Testament, one reading in particular in the Matthew papyri was immediately heralded.¹⁰²

The sensational new reading in Matthew 19:24, which Simonides had announced to the press in May 1860, was revealed in public at a soirée held in the Liverpool Town Hall on October 19, 1860, where the Uranius palimpsest, the *Periplus of Hannon*, and the new fragments of Matthew, James and Jude were on display among many other items.¹⁰³ Simonides presented on most of the manuscripts including James and Jude, but apparently saved the highlight for the owner, Joseph Mayer, who presented on the Matthean papyrus, “the earliest Christian manuscript in existence, written 48 years after Christ” (as the colophon indicated).¹⁰⁴ Significantly, the news report also mentions one New Testament manuscript outside of Mayer’s collection containing the “6th Chapter of Acts” – Simonides had probably brought to the exhibition a parchment manuscript, perhaps genuine, that contained the list of deacons in Acts 6:5 including Nicolaus, who was said to have written down the autograph of Matthew, so that one, in this case authentic, ancient manuscript authorized the other, in this case a forgery.¹⁰⁵

The unique reading in Matt 19:24 was finally revealed in public: “It is easier for a *cable* [κάλων] to pass through the eye of a needle.”¹⁰⁶ Whereas the word κάλων was unique, however, the specific meaning in this passage (and its parallels), “cable,” in fact was not. For example,

¹⁰¹ Note, however, the forged minuscule 2427 (“Archaic Mark”) which was included in the 1993 edition of Nestle-Aland (NA²⁷) but removed from the most recent edition (NA²⁸) after it was exposed as a forgery (cf. n. 122 below).

¹⁰² Simonides’ papyrus of 1 John contained a similar textual intervention in the *Comma Johanneum* (1 John 5:7), which he however never had the chance to publish; we will return to this in a future article.

¹⁰³ *Liverpool Mercury*, October 20, 1860; Simonides (n. 4) 34–35. The fragments with Matthew 19:22–20:13 and Jude 16–23 are now registered under a shelf mark (M11169n) distinct from the other Matthean fragments (M11169o), but were once all pasted on the same large sheet of cardboard; see above, n. 24.

¹⁰⁴ *Liverpool Mercury*, October 20, 1860; Simonides (n. 4) 35.

¹⁰⁵ *Liverpool Mercury*, October 20, 1860; Simonides (n. 4) 35.

¹⁰⁶ *Liverpool Mercury*, October 20, 1860; Simonides (n. 4) 35. In the printed edition, Simonides highlights this and a few other differences from the Textus Receptus in the new papyri (n. 4) 27–31.

Cyril of Alexandria, following Origen, interpreted the word κάμηλος (or κάμιλος) as a thick rope in his commentary on this passage.¹⁰⁷ In the apparatus to Simonides' edition there is a long footnote explaining how κάλων became altered into κάμηλον, a *camel*.¹⁰⁸ Here he appeals to no fewer than six other fantasy manuscripts described in the introduction and cited here and elsewhere in the apparatus, to give further credence to Mayerianus and its readings, the earliest being a papyrus copied by Hermodorus (allegedly one of the 70 disciples sent out by Jesus in Luke 10:1–24).¹⁰⁹ In fact, Simonides even included a plate of this manuscript which he claimed to have inspected at St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai.¹¹⁰ The plate shows the portion with the title, another portion from ch. 10 where James and Jude are included among the twelve apostles, and the colophon giving its date – “in the fifteenth year after Matthew's death.” There is also another part of ch. 19 including v. 24 where Hermodorus confirms the peculiar reading attested by Mayerianus saying that “it is easier for a cable (κάλων) to pass through the eye of a needle ...” By the attestation of κάλων in two first-century manuscripts, Simonides could definitively set to rest an old *crux interpretum*.

It may seem like overkill to invent another first-century papyrus (reproduced on a plate) to confirm the reading in Mayerianus. However, in the extensive note in the apparatus to Matt 19:24 there is a clue to the reason why Simonides did this – he had already invented a host of imaginary manuscripts including Hermodorus in order to solve the riddle in Matt 19:24, even before he “discovered” Codex Mayerianus. Simonides' host in Liverpool, Samuel Nicolaidis, had written a commentary on Matthew and incorporated various notes from Simonides including an earlier version of the note on Matt 19:24 (in Greek) without acknowledging the source –

¹⁰⁷ Cyril refers to two distinct words with the same meaning: Κάμηλον δὲ ἐνταῦθα φησιν οὐ τὸ ζῶον τὸ ἀχθοφόρον, ἀλλὰ τὸ παχὺ σχονίον, ἐν ᾧ δεσμεύουσι τὰς ἀγκύρας οἱ ναῦται (*Comm. Matt.* 19:24; PG 72:429). Cf. Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament*, WUNT 167 (Tübingen 2004) 533–534. The translation “rope” is also attested in the Georgian version (the Adysh Gospels reads, ზომთსაბლოსაჲ, “cable”). The Babylonian Talmud (*Berakhot* 55b) talks about an elephant going through the eye of a needle. The confusion of cable and camel may go back to a very early period, since the meanings “camel” and “thick rope” are derived from the same stem in Semitic languages. On camels in the Gospels, including this passage, see further Martin Heide, *The Camel in the Biblical World* (forthcoming).

¹⁰⁸ Simonides (n. 4) 45–47. In his note, Simonides acknowledges in passing that “most ancient expositors understood the word Κάμηλος or Κάμιλος in the passage under consideration, in the sense of cable” (46).

¹⁰⁹ Simonides (n. 4) 16–18.

¹¹⁰ Simonides (n. 4) Plate II (after p. 40).

something which Simonides complains about as he takes credit for the note and supplies a slightly different version in English.¹¹¹

It is highly instructive to compare the two versions of this note. In the first version, Codex Hermodorus is called, “the remarkable and truly the archetype Gospel of the Evangelist Matthew ... written in the fifteenth year after Matthew’s death. It is written on Egyptian papyrus, which is an unquestionable token of its antiquity.”¹¹² In the rewritten note in the edition of Mayerianus, Hermodorus, previously the “archetype Gospel,” is now introduced as a “most ancient manuscript.”¹¹³ In the Greek note, several other imaginary manuscripts which reappear in Simonides’ edition are mentioned, reflecting the fact that Codex Mayerianus fitted into a previously invented scheme of manuscripts existing in Simonides’ world of imagination.¹¹⁴ Further, in the older note Simonides states that the reading KAMIAOΣ (“cable”) is found in the oldest manuscripts although some have KAMHΛOΣ (“camel”), whereas the later note states the opposite, “in most ancient manuscripts the reading is KAMHΛON, but in some it is KAMIAON.”¹¹⁵

This change was likely occasioned by an interaction with Tregelles. Contemporary scholars including Tischendorf had thought that κάμιλος was the reading of the sixth-century Codex Dublinensis (Z 035) following the *editio princeps*.¹¹⁶ However, Tregelles had applied chemicals to the palimpsest in order to reveal the underwriting and could correct several uncertain readings including this variant in Matt 19:24, where the codex had read KAMHΛOΣ.¹¹⁷ Most likely, Simonides was made aware of this correction only when Tregelles published his *Additions to the Fourth Volume of the Introduction to the Holy Scriptures* in 1860 “with an especial notice of Professor Tischendorf’s Codex Sinaiticus,” in which he both praises

¹¹¹ Samuel Nicolaides, *An Evangelical and Exegetical Commentary upon Select Portions of the New Testament Founded on the Writings of Nicephoros Theotoces*, vol. 1 (London 1860) 183; and Simonides (n. 4) 45, 71–72.

¹¹² Nicolaides (n. 111) 183 (our translation from Greek).

¹¹³ Simonides (n. 4) 46.

¹¹⁴ Four manuscripts mentioned in Nicolaides’ commentary (the first-century copy of Hermodorus; the second-century copy in the Monastery of Sabbas; the copy of Theodosius in the same monastery, 421CE; and the copy of Menas, 539CE), reappear in the Mayerianus edition along with two other manuscripts (the copy of Nectarius, 255CE and a copy in the Monastery of Dionysius, 832CE). Incidentally, Simonides claimed that all these six manuscripts also attested to the date of the Gospel of Matthew, fifteen years after Christ’s ascension (Simonides [n. 4] 16–18).

¹¹⁵ Nicolaides (n. 111) 182; Simonides (n. 4) 45 (indicating the words in the accusative).

¹¹⁶ Tischendorf cited Z in his major Leipzig edition of 1849.

¹¹⁷ Samuel P. Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament* (London 1854) 168.

Tischendorf's discovery and rejects the rumors of Simonides' unrolled papyri.¹¹⁸ It is clear that Simonides referred to this publication as "the rather hasty pamphlet" at a time between his two notes on Matt 19:24 and it clearly triggered him:

Dr. Tregelles has publicly boasted of his discovery, by chemical means, that the word supposed to be κάμιλος in the Dublin Codex (Z), is really κάμηλος, but if he considers the reading κάμιλος an important one, and thinks that only the Dublin Codex possesses it, I refer him to Pl. VI., and description, p. 147, for three fac-similes which contain the reading κάμιλος, ... I know that he [Tregelles] has sharpened against me his critical pen with mistaken expectation of the applause of his countrymen, but he has done it with little judgment or discretion, relying too much on his supposed reputation; ... It must be remembered that it is not in the Codex Mayerianus alone that the reading κάλων is found, but also in that of Hermodorus, and many others of great antiquity, which were discovered by myself many years ago and communicated to others – among the rest, to the former pastor of the Greek church (Nicolaides) in Liverpool, of which circumstance mention has been made in the note on page 45 – this took place seven months before my introduction to Mr. Mayer.¹¹⁹

Simonides claimed to have found the Hermodorus papyrus in St. Catherine's monastery – the same monastery where Tischendorf had discovered Codex Sinaiticus – and he promised that he was going to publish a facsimile of the whole Gospel after the codex of Hermodorus.¹²⁰ Interestingly, Hermodorus has some similarities with Sinaiticus – most strikingly, the text is arranged in parallel columns of 49 lines.

The Text of Codex Mayerianus

In regard to the text of Matthew, James and Jude, Simonides clearly used the Textus Receptus as a textual base. The edition he used is most likely that which he states he used to supply missing text printed in red,

¹¹⁸ Samuel P. Tregelles, *Additions to the Fourth Volume of the Introduction to the Holy Scriptures* (London 1860) 758–760 (with notes). In the additions, Tregelles immediately placed Codex Sinaiticus among "Greek MSS. of the most ancient class," stating "It appears, undoubtedly, to belong to the fourth century" (p. 758). In the same section where he treats the new discovery, he rejects the rumours of Simonides' discoveries, which had been announced in two different Liverpool papers on May 3 in an extensive footnote (759–760, n. 1). Tregelles would later defend the antiquity of Codex Sinaiticus against Simonides' claim to have copied it.

¹¹⁹ Simonides (n. 4) 71–72.

¹²⁰ Simonides (n. 4) 42.

Henry G. Bohn’s edition of *Textus Receptus* (1859).¹²¹ An earlier forgery, a putative ancient copy of Homer, had been unmasked when it was noticed it was “a most accurate copy of Wolf’s edition of Homer, with all its errata,” a mistake Simonides would not repeat.¹²² For the *Codex Mayerianus*, he modified his base text with a number of additions and substitutions (virtually no omissions).¹²³ Occasionally he appeals to reasons why certain words, present in *Mayerianus*, were omitted in the textual tradition, e.g. καὶ οὐδὲν ἀδύνατόν ἐστι at the end of Matt 19:26 because of “repetition of the same words” in the context (a haplography).¹²⁴ In spite of Simonides’ assurance that he made a “careful transcription,” a comparison with the supplied plates reveals errors, most often at the beginning or end of lines.¹²⁵

The textual variants cited in the highly selective apparatus are mostly attested in Tischendorf’s 7th edition (1859), and otherwise cited from Simonides’ imaginary manuscripts, which are often mentioned by the name of their scribes.¹²⁶ Simonides repeatedly refers to the authority of

¹²¹ Simonides (n. 4) 39. Bohn’s edition likely refers to *Hē kainē diathēkē. Griesbach’s Text, with the Various Readings of Mill and Scholz, Marginal References to Parallels, and a Critical Introduction* (3rd rev. and corr. ed.; London 1859). In using red to print missing text Simonides seems to have been following Babington’s practice in his 1858 *Oration of Hyperides against Demosthenes*; see above, at n. 98.

¹²² *The Athenaeum*, February 23, 1856, 233. For a more recent parallel, see the so-called “Archaic Mark,” which turned out to be a copy of an 1860 edition of the Greek New Testament by Philipp Buttmann including errors, Stephen C. Carlson, “‘Archaic Mark’ (MS 2427) and the Finding of a Manuscript Fake,” *SBL Forum* [August 2006]. Online: <http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=577>.

¹²³ Cf. also Simonides’ comment on a few readings where he placed the reading of *Codex Mayerianus* and the *Textus Receptus* (Received Version) in parallel columns for comparison (Simonides [n. 4] 27–30).

¹²⁴ Simonides (n. 4) 28.

¹²⁵ For example, Fragment i, col. i., l. 5 omits the last two letters on the line (νη); col. i, l. 26 commences with three letters missing from the manuscript (τοι); the first two letters (ερ) are missing in the transcription of Fragment iii, col. ii, l. 18; the words οἱ ἔσχατοι are missing from the manuscript in fragm. iii, col. ii, l. 25; and he wrongly supplies ἐποίησας on ll. 26–27; Fragment vi., l. 18 omits αἰεί (it is included in the apparatus). In the reconstruction of fragm. viii (Jude), l. 24, Simonides changed his reconstruction from ἐλεεῖτε Κυρίῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ μιῖσοῦντες (p. 32) to ἐλεεῖτε Κυρίῳ μιῖσοῦν[τε]ς (p. 67). Further, there are itacisms and confusions of vowels in the transcription, e.g., Fragment iii, col. ii, l. 7 and 14 have Ὑπάγεται (x 2); l. 12 has ἐστήκαται; and ll. 21–22 have ἐνόμησαν; Fragment iv, ll. 3–4 has ἡγήσασθαι; l. 9 has ἡμῶν (for ὁμῶν); l. 12 has αἰτήτω. That there are occasionally differences between the facsimiles (which Simonides seems to have traced himself, see i, 4–5) and the papyri themselves further complicates the relationship between the editions and the papyri.

¹²⁶ For example, the note Matt 28:8–9 reads, “Such is the reading of the codices of Hermodorus and Stachys, and the copies made from them. In the common version the passage is defective, as has been shown at pp. 30, 31. In other codices it is varied thus . . . In the MS. of Nectarius the reading of this passage is as follows: . . .” (Simonides [n. 4] 50).

“ancient MSS,” but only in one case, in Matt 2:21, does he mention an authentic early manuscript, “In the codex of Beza τὸν παῖδα instead of τὸ παιδίον, and in others we find Διεγερθεῖς and εἰσηλθεν instead of ἐγερθεῖς and ἦλθεν.”¹²⁷ These three variation-units in v. 21 are listed in Tischendorf’s edition. The manuscripts attesting to the reading εἰσηλθεν are Vaticanus (B 03) and Ephraemi Rescriptus (C 04), but here Simonides merely refers to them as “others” and elsewhere as “European” (deposited in the libraries in Western Europe) or “common MSS,” known from “common editions,” juxtaposing them to superior manuscripts in the East that he has examined in the monasteries on Mount Athos, Mount Sinai, in Palestine and other places.¹²⁸

It is not surprising that Simonides never refers explicitly to any critical edition, since he regarded other scholars as incompetent and ignorant of the manuscripts he had access to; in the apparatus he explains that “they know nothing of the royal libraries in Mount Athos, &c., nor will they ever see one of them, for reasons which I am well acquainted with, but omit so as not to give rise to scandal.”¹²⁹

In addition to the textual variant in Matt 19:24 (“cable”), a few other readings are noteworthy. In Matt 27:16 Mayerianus reads, εἶχον δὲ ἐπίσημον ληστὴν Ἰησοῦν Βαραββᾶν καλούμενον. Simonides does not indicate in the apparatus that other manuscripts and church fathers attest to “Jesus Barabbas” but again refers only to two imaginary manuscripts, the codices of Hermodorus and Nectarius, for support.¹³⁰ Elsewhere, however, he refers to a scholion (“a note on the subject which others have

¹²⁷ Simonides (n. 4) 44; for references to “ancient MSS [manuscripts],” see 42, 45, 61–63. Elsewhere in his edition, Simonides comments on the reading of Codex Z (035) in Matt 19:24 (71), but in the apparatus he merely refers to “ancient manuscripts” at this point (45).

¹²⁸ Simonides refers alternatively to “European MSS” ([n. 4] 42–43); “known codices in Western Europe” (49); “common MSS/codices” (43–44, 46); “common versions [known variants]” (58). Approximately 300 readings of Codex Vaticanus are included in Tischendorf’s 7th edition (1859). The readings of Codex Sinaiticus (which also attests to εἰσηλθεν in Matt 2:21) were not yet publicly known or included in any critical edition of the New Testament.

¹²⁹ Simonides (n. 4) 42. In this connection he exhorts the Bible Society (!) to “undertake the comparison of all the copies of the New Testament extant in Europe, Asia, and Egypt, by means of men really competent in Greek palaeography, and not superficial pretenders” (42). Elsewhere he expresses doubt that there is any other scholar (than himself) “in the present century,” who can ascertain “the genuineness of a MS. . . . from various secret evidences, known only to those who have had the good fortune to inspect a large number of MSS. of different nations, on various material and in various handwritings . . . and to have verified them one against another, several times and in many ways, by numerous tests” (27).

¹³⁰ Simonides (n. 4) 49.

published before myself”) attributed either to Anastasius, bishop of Antioch or to Chrysostom which mentions the reading; the scholion is included in Tischendorf’s edition.¹³¹

Simonides’ special interest in names, their meaning, and etymology is further reflected in the spectacular variant in Matt 27:19 where Mayerianus provides the name of Pilate’s wife, Πεμπέλη (Pempete). Simonides explains, “It would seem as though the noun Πεμπέλη had been converted into ἔπεμψεν, for ἔπεμψεν is also found in some codices ... , and that ἀπέστειλε was expunged as meaning the same thing.”¹³² Thus, from the reading ἔπεμψεν, included in Tischendorf’s apparatus, Simonides created the name Pempete, a reading attested only by Mayerianus and the other manuscripts that Simonides had access to, “the MSS. of Hermodorus and of Stachys, and the copies made from them.”¹³³ Simonides goes on to cite “five inscriptions dug up in Palestine in the year 1852,” to demonstrate that Pempete was a common name in Palestine, and further states that the name was “decidedly Greek,” “an epithet of the goddess Aphrodite,” signifying “extremely old,” and “derived by some from πέπω; by others from πέμπω. Whence, as above remarked, the copyists altered the proper name Πεμπέλη into ἔπεμψε.”¹³⁴

In Matt 27:19, most manuscripts (and the Textus Receptus) read πολλὰ γὰρ ἔπαθον σήμερον κατ’ ὄναρ δι’ αὐτόν. Simonides cites other extant variants that substitute either νυκτός or τῆ νυκτι ταύτη for σήμερον – these are smoother readings since people normally dream at night. On the basis of this variation, however, Simonides creates a unique conflation in Mayerianus, πολλὰ γὰρ ἔπαθον κατ’ ὄναρ δι’ αὐτόν ἐν τῆ νυκτι τῆς παρελθουσῆς καὶ, πολλὰ καθ’ ὕπαρ εἶδον σήμερον ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐκεινοῦ, “For I have suffered many things in a dream this day because of him during the past night, and have seen many things in a waking vision this day concerning the same person” (Simonides’ translation), claiming that the shorter reading was occasioned by an omission due to haplography (ἐκείνω ... ἐκείνω).¹³⁵

¹³¹ Simonides (n. 4) 29.

¹³² Simonides (n. 4) 29. No such name is attested in any ancient text we have been able to consult. Another example of Simonides’ interest in names is reflected in the apparatus to fragment 1 and Jesus’ genealogy (Matt 1:1–17). In Matt 1:12, for example, he notes the spelling Σελαθιήλ, but claims that Σαλαθιήλ in Mayerianus is correct referring to the meaning “renown.” In the same verse Simonides notes the spelling Ζοροβάμβελ in some MSS (all the readings are listed in Tischendorf’s edition).

¹³³ Simonides (n. 4) 49.

¹³⁴ Simonides (n. 4) 29–30. The inscriptions, which naturally never existed in these forms outside of Simonides’ imagination, are illustrated in Plate XI, with further commentary on the preceding page (68).

¹³⁵ Simonides (n. 4) 30, 46.

Simonides creates another conflation in Matt 28:8 based on the variation between ἀπελθοῦσαι (B C L *al.* listed and adopted by Tischendorf) and ἐξελθοῦσαι (A D W *al.* TR; cf. Mark 16:8) and the parallel in John 19:41, so that Mayerianus reads ἀπελθοῦσαι ταχὺ ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι τοῦ κηποῦ ἐν ᾧ τὸ μνημεῖον ἐστι, “They departed quickly from the sepulchre and went out of the garden in which the sepulchre stood.”¹³⁶ The reading of the TR, ἐξελθοῦσαι (... ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου), was apparently problematic for Simonides, since it implied that the disciples had entered “into the interior of the sepulchre, so that the evangelist should describe them as coming out.”¹³⁷

In the next verse, Simonides recognizes the “unmeaning repetition” in the TR of the phrase from v. 8, ἀπαγγεῖλαι τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ – he is aware of the shorter text “in some editions,” but he chooses to retain ὡς δὲ ἐπορεύοντο from the longer reading, but in modified form in Mayerianus, ἐν τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτάς, “more consistent with correctness.”¹³⁸

There is considerably less variation between the texts of James and Jude in the TR and Codex Mayerianus; Simonides has mainly added small words, adverbs, adjectives, pronouns, the definite article, and changed the word order here and there. In James, the most noteworthy variant is found in the first verse, where Simonides’ papyrus indicates the addressees as ταῖς δώδεκα τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ φυλαῖς, “the twelve tribes of Israel,” where the modifying genitive, τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, is unique.¹³⁹

Two units of variation are of interest in Jude. First, the addition of the instrumental dative, τοῖς σχίσμασι in v. 19, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἀποδιορίζοντες εἰς τοὺς τοῖς σχίσμασι, “These be they who separate themselves *by schisms*” (Simonides’ translation, our italics).¹⁴⁰ This addition was certainly inspired by an authentic scholion included in Tischendorf’s edition, τουτέστιν οἱ τὰ σχίσματα ποιῶντες. In the apparatus, Simonides refers to a number of similar scholia in manuscripts.

Secondly, in vv. 22–23, one of the most complex passages in the New Testament, transmitted in a large number of forms, it is interesting to note that Mayerianus has a three-clause form, καὶ οὖς μὲν ἔλεεῖτε ... οὖς δὲ σῶζετε ... οὖς δὲ ... ἔλεεῖτε, albeit unique, where the TR and the majority of manuscripts have a two-clause form. Tischendorf preferred the

¹³⁶ Simonides (n. 4) 30–31.

¹³⁷ Simonides (n. 4) 30.

¹³⁸ Simonides (n. 4) 31.

¹³⁹ This is the only textual variant in James that Simonides comments on outside of the actual apparatus (Simonides [n. 4] 31).

¹⁴⁰ Simonides (n. 4) 67.

three-clause form, and Simonides likely realized that it was more ancient, but he creates a unique version by adding something to each clause: a dative of manner, ἐλεεῖτε τῆ ἐλέγξει “have compassion, and reprove them;” an instrumental dative, σώζετε διδασκαλίᾳ, “save by instruction;” and an adverb, αὖ ἐν φόβῳ ἐλεεῖτε κυρίου, “again have compassion in the fear of the Lord” (Simonides’ translation). The addition of ἐλέγξις, “reproof,” was no doubt derived from the three-clause version printed in Tischendorf’s edition which includes the verb ἐλέγχετε, “reprove.”

As we have seen, in regard to the more noteworthy readings that Simonides created, these were almost always based on other genuine textual variants or scholia included in Tischendorf’s edition. The foundational principle of textual criticism is to prefer the variant that best explains the rise of the other(s).¹⁴¹ Simonides, on the other hand, used the principle backwards in a manner similar to conjectural critics, to create “original readings” in Mayerianus, which could explain existing readings as scribal corruptions. This procedure, however, more often resulted in awkward but spectacular conflateions.

The Ensuing Debate Over the Papyri

Despite his many supporters, most notably the indefatigable Hodgkin, Simonides’ track record of proven forgery meant that the authenticity of any manuscripts he brought forth would be questioned.¹⁴² Earlier incidents, stretching from the unmasking of his Homer forgery in the late 1840s,¹⁴³ to his arrest (but not conviction) in Leipzig and Berlin in the mid-1850s

¹⁴¹ See Tommy Wasserman, “Criteria for Evaluating Readings in New Testament Textual Criticism,” in Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (eds.), *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, 2nd ed.; NTTSD 42 (Leiden 2012) 579–612, at 582–583.

¹⁴² See for instance a letter to the *Allgemeine Zeitung* in December 23, 1862 by Tischendorf, in the course of which he remarked “Any one in Germany who recollects the palimpsest forgeries of Simonides, by means of which, notwithstanding previous brandings and imprisonments in Greece, he contrived to outwit some of the most renowned German savants, until he was unmasked by myself towards the end of January, 1856, and arrested as a forger in consequence of similar convictions obtained against him simultaneously in Berlin, will probably find it incredible that this same [we refrain from translating the epithet used in the original] should yet at this present moment find in England papers ready to print his insane fancy, that he had in his youthful days (in 1856 he gave his age as thirty-three years ...) the pleasure of writing the Codex Sinaiticus;” the letter was translated to English in the *Parthenon*, January 17, 1863, and is reproduced in the *Journal of Sacred Literature* 3, no. 6 (1863) 478. The German term suppressed by the *Parthenon* was “Schwindler.”

¹⁴³ See above, at n. 122.

over the Uranius palimpsest,¹⁴⁴ were well-known. An account of his earlier activity had been widely shared in England already in 1856, and a lengthy review of *Fac-similes*, as witheringly negative as it was well-informed, appeared in the *Athenaeum* soon after its publication; it opened by asking “Is there no limit to public credulity? Is there no limit to the power of abusing this credulity?”¹⁴⁵ Mayer, initially so supportive, became progressively less so, perhaps partly because of growing suspicions that he had been deceived, but also because of a financial dispute with Simonides, who claimed he was owed a considerable amount for the costs of his services and the publication of the Mayer papyri. Microscopic examination which Hodgkin had arranged in an attempt to prove the authenticity of the Uranius, instead found the opposite.

The debate over the papyri, largely prosecuted via letters to the editors of various newspapers, proceeded rather unabated in the three years between Simonides’ publications of *Fac-similes* and the *Periplus of Hannon* in 1864, by which time he could fill some twenty pages with letters and reports about the controversy over his papyri, virtually without comments.¹⁴⁶ Soon, however, the debate over the papyri and the Uranius was overtaken by a new controversy. Simonides had clearly harbored the desire to take his revenge on his sworn enemy Tischendorf since the unravelling of the Uranius affair in 1856. Tischendorf’s announcement on April 17, 1859 of his discovery of Codex Sinaiticus at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai provided the perfect opportunity.¹⁴⁷ Shortly after he heard this sensational news, Simonides not only brought forth a New Testament manuscript on papyrus which was three hundred years older than Sinaiticus, but claimed that he himself had copied Codex Sinaiticus on Mount

¹⁴⁴ This protracted episode, which began with much celebration of such an amazing discovery by Classicist Karl Wilhelm Dindorf and Egyptologist Richard Lepsius, ended with the former instructing Oxford University Press to halt publication once the Academy of Berlin had reversed its earlier finding that the manuscript was authentic, on the advice of Lepsius, Tischendorf, and a panel of German microscopists. See *Simonides und sein Prozess* (Berlin 1856); Alexander Lykurgos, *Enthüllungen über den Simonides-Dindorf’schen Uranios unter Beifügung eines Berichts von Herrn Prof. Dr. Tischendorf* (Leipzig 1856); and the material collected in *Report of the Council of the Royal Society*. The affair had been reported already in England in 1856 in *The Athenaeum*, February 16, 1856, 200–201, reproduced in Elliott (n. 3) 123–126.

¹⁴⁵ *The Athenaeum*, December 11, 1861, 755–756; see above, n. 73.

¹⁴⁶ Simonides (n. 15 [1864a]) 1–5; 42–67.

¹⁴⁷ The first announcement was published in the *Leipziger Zeitung*. Tischendorf had seen parts of the manuscript already in 1844 and published 43 folios of it (LXX) under the title *Codex Frederico-Augustanus*. He published a scholarly report in *Notitia Editionis Codicis Bibliorum Sinaitici Auspiciis Imperatoris Alexandri II susceptae* (Leipzig 1860).

Athos in 1839 before it was deposited at St. Catherine’s where Tischendorf discovered it.¹⁴⁸ Despite the implausibility of the claim, the status of Sinaiticus in particular was subject to lively debate among scholars and in British and German journals and newspapers for several years to come.¹⁴⁹ Simonides, however, was soon to move on again. Faced with growing debts and dwindling supporters, Simonides left England in 1865. He was reported to have died of leprosy in Alexandria in 1867, only to be sighted soon after in Russia preparing a new publication. That a copy of his 1864 volume *Λεϊψανα ἱστορικά* given to Alexander Craig Gibson appears to be inscribed in Simonides’ own hand with the date August 9/21, 1869 also strongly suggests that the notice of his death which appeared in 1867 was premature.¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

Unlike many forgers, who are anonymous and known only through their creations, Simonides provides an opportunity not only to study forged manuscripts in great details, but also, via the wealth of material he left

¹⁴⁸ As Elliott (n. 3) 26, notes, Simonides first made the claim in 1860 but, it was not until 1862 that “the scholarly world at large took notice,” as a letter was published from Simonides in the *Guardian* on September 3, 1862, concerning “The Sinai MS. of the Greek Bible.” The news of Simonides’ discovery of an ancient biblical manuscript (the Matthew papyrus) first appeared in the *Liverpool Mercury* on May 2, 1860. When one critic, W.A. Wright pointed out that Simonides could not have achieved such a great task at the age of 15 in 1839, Simonides replied in a letter to the *Guardian* on January 21, 1863 (reproduced also in Elliott [n. 3] 41) that he was actually born in 1820, that is to say, he faked his own birth date.

¹⁴⁹ The back and forth is exhaustively chronicled in Elliott (n. 3). One might note in particular Tischendorf’s reminder of Simonides’ terrible track record in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of December 23, 1862 (translated to English in the *Parthenon*, January 17, 1863, and reproduced in the *Journal of Sacred Literature* 3, no. 6 [1863] 478). Interestingly, there are still groups and individuals today who hold the conspiracy theory that Codex Sinaiticus is not a fourth-century manuscript (which is the scholarly consensus), but that it was copied entirely or in part by Simonides in the 19th century. This is part of a larger argument for the superiority of the text of the King James Version as the exclusive word of God. See e.g., the “Codex Sinaiticus Authenticity Research” at <http://www.sinaiticus.net/>, the “Pure Bible Forum” at <http://www.purebibleforum.com/>, or David W. Daniels, *Is The “World’s Oldest Bible” a Fake?* (Ontario 2017).

¹⁵⁰ The testimony of Rev. Donald Owen that Simonides was active in St. Petersburg soon after his supposed death, working on a volume of historical documents relating to Russia, is reported by Samuel P. Tregelles, “Codex Mayerianus and Simonides,” *Notes and Queries: A Medium of Inter-Communication for Literary Men, General Readers, etc.* 4.4 (1869) 389. For the dedication of the *Λεϊψανα ἱστορικά* (whose double date reflects the differences between the Gregorian and Julian calendars), see Pinto (n. 16) 123; we thank Dr. Pinto for sharing with us a scan of this copy of the booklet (ultimately from the library of A.S. Hunt). For the obituary itself see *Notes and Queries*, October 26, 1867, 3rd Series, xii, 339.

behind, to position a forger in sociological terms within the networks of patronage and scholarship which characterized, and still in many ways do, the discovery and publication of ancient manuscripts. As we have argued here, Simonides' forging of these papyri illustrates an often-overlooked motivation of forgers, their positioning of themselves as part of scholarly networks and as an authoritative source of knowledge – and truth – about the past within them. In identifying the Hyperides papyrus as the model Simonides used for this forgery, we are able to see more clearly his awareness and use of contemporary scholarship. In his publications about his own fakes, we can read clearly his motivations. In contrast to his previous forgeries, Simonides did not attempt to sell the papyri (which were not his property).¹⁵¹ Rather than economic gain, his primary goal in forging them was to promote his own superior knowledge of palaeography, ancient languages, and textual criticism, and the history which they – and especially his own work on them – revealed. In displaying his own knowledge, Simonides took every opportunity to slight that of his academic rivals, either those with whom he had come into direct conflict, or those whose understandings of the ancient world or its languages conflicted with Simonides' theories. In bringing forth the earliest biblical manuscripts, with hitherto ignored or unknown readings, Simonides attempted to position himself, and his expertise, at the center of debates over the original form and language of the text, its authorship, and its transmission.

To call this a vanity project makes it seem more tangential that it was; indeed, it was Simonides' main focus for several years. Yet Simonides' vanity, his self-assuredness in his own expertise, and confidence in his own creations, are critical to understanding his career. No less than his own, the vanity of those collectors, scholars, and interested members of the public to or for whom he sold, displayed, or discovered precious relics of the past was critical to Simonides' project, creating a self-perpetuating system of adherents and defenders to balance the constant attacks on Simonides' manuscripts and credibility. The "Simonides affair," and especially the production and propagation of the papyri examined here, not only chronicles a neglected chapter in the history of work on the text of the New Testament, but allows us to see a forger in action, providing an insight into a problem no less prevalent now than it was in Simonides' lifetime.

¹⁵¹ How much (if any) money Simonides made from the entire enterprise is debatable. While he invoiced Mayer for costs associated with the work and the production of the publications of the papyri (see for example BL Add MS 42502A fol. 388, from 1863), he seems to have ended up in Mayer's debt, see Pinto, (n. 16) 122.

Appendix: The Forged Papyri of Constantine Simonides

The table below lists those papyri forged by Constantine Simonides which are extant. It is highly likely that others once existed, as Simonides at times mentions or in some cases provides facsimiles of papyri which cannot now be located. We provide here a basic list and will provide a fuller synopsis with more information on the papyri in a future publication. The list follows the inventory order in the World Museum Liverpool (WML in the table below), with the single papyrus extant in the British Library (BL) following at the end. For an explanation of their inventory numbers and an overview of their contents, see above at n. 10. For Simonides’ publications of and commentary on these papyri, see Simonides (n. 4), (n. 15 [1864a], [1864b]). For an earlier overview, which requires corrections at some points but to which we are nevertheless indebted for some of the identifications of content, see Maraglino (n. 8). Titles in quotation marks are those of Simonides on the mounting of the papyrus or in his publications.

Inventory number	Contents
WML M11169a.1–2	“Two fragments of an unknown historian”
WML M11169a.3–4	“Two fragments of the wise instructions of Zoroastros the Magos”
WML M11169a.5	“Fragment from the end of the book of the historian Thucydides” (8.109 followed by colophon)
WML M11169b	1 John 4:20–5:21; 2 John; 3 John; Rev 1.1–3.8
WML M11169c	1 Peter 4:17–5:14; 2 Peter 1:1–3:18; 1 John 1:1–2:3
WML M11169d	Greek Historical text
WML M11169e	Greek Historical text
WML M11169f	Letter of Hermippus
WML M11169g	Letter of Hermippus?
WML M11169h	Letter of Hermippus
WML M11169i	Letter of Hermippus
WML M11169j	Greek Historical text
WML M11169k	Letter of Hermippus
WML M11169l	“The Periplus of Hannon, king of the Karchedonians”
WML M11169m	“The Theban Codex” (Greek Historical text)

Inventory number	Contents
WML M11169n.1 “Upper”	Matt 19:22–20:13
WML M11169n.2 “Lower”	Jude 16–23
WML M11169o.1	Matt 1:1–3; 1:4–5; 1:11–13; 1: 15–17
WML M11169o.2	Matt 2:6–12, 14–20
WML M11169o.3	Matt 1:20
WML M11169o.4	Matt 27:3–7, 12–20
WML M11169o.5	Matt 28:5–9, 18–20, followed by the colophon of Nicolaus the Deacon
WML M11169p	Letter of Hermippus
WML M11169q	Letter of Hermippus
WML M11169r	Letter of Hermippus
WML M11169s	Greek Historical text
WML M11169t	John 20:24–21:25 + epistolary colophon.
WML M11169u	Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9–13) with other text before and after
WML M11169v	Gen. 7:23–9:10
WML 1978.291.245a	James 2:5–10
WML 1978.291.245b	Ecclesiastical History of Hegesippus
WML 1978.291.245c	James 1:1–11
WML 1978.291.245d	James 2:12–15, 2:23
BL Add MS 42502B, f. 185	Letter of Aristeas, 1–3(? Extent unclear)