

When Nonsense Makes Sense: Scribal Habits in the Space-intervals, Sense-pauses, and Other Visual Features in \mathfrak{P}^{46}

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**Edgar Battad Ebojo**

Translations Manager, Philippine Bible Society, Manila, Philippines

Abstract

This article explores the visual and paratextual features embedded in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , and assesses how these reflect a microcosm of ancient book production enterprise as well as its eventual construal by the reading community that used it. Accordingly, it also suggests ways in which the copying habits of the scribe who produced this manuscript may be similarly unveiled through these features.

Keywords

Scribal habits; space-intervals; sense-pauses; paratextual features; readers' aids; structure signals

One of the many sparkling legacies of Dr. Roger Omanson is his dedicated interest in helping Bible translators (and consultants) appreciate better and faster the “sense” of their Greek textual base, as is now reflected in the Discourse Segmentation Apparatus¹ of UBS⁴. Needless to say, this is a laudable effort, for indeed the history of New Testament textual transmission itself attests to a progression in better communicating the text of the New Testament through visual features (e.g., layout, punctuation, book titles, coloured inks, etc.), a progression discernible in our surviving manuscripts. But how were the texts of the New Testament laid out in the extant manuscripts? Does ancient scribal trade provide a window onto this attempt to better communicate the text of the New

¹ See UBS GNT⁴, v–vi, 39*–45*.

Testament? What significant implications do these practices have for our time, especially for those involved in Bible translation? This paper analysing scribal habits in the visual and non-textual features of Papyrus 46 (P⁴⁶)²—the earliest and most extensive surviving manuscript witnessing to the *corpus Paulinum*—is offered in honour of Dr. Omanson’s contributions to the task of Scripture transmission.³

Scripture, scribe, sense, and space-gaps: an introduction

Describing the way characters were copied onto the papyrus material of P⁴⁶, Prof. Henry Sanders noted keenly,

There are few cases of punctuation by a single dot in high position. . . . Double dots like a colon occur once. . . . On the other hand, there are very many slight spaces left in the text, often where they serve admirably for punctuation. Some of these spaces are sufficiently large so that one may be sure that the scribe intended them to mark the ends of paragraphs. Others are so narrow that they may be explained as *accidental*. (1935, 16–17, emphasis added)

A year later, Sir Frederic Kenyon picked up Sanders’s observation and despite his rather less optimistic assessment of these “slight spaces,” his conclusion nonetheless interestingly opens up new discussion: “[The space-intervals] suggest at any rate some perception by the scribe of the sense of what he was writing.”⁴

The use of space-intervals (and other visual features in the manuscript) as an established ancient scribal practice has implications for wider

² This condensed article is a section of a bigger research project on the scribal habits of P⁴⁶, carried out at the University of Birmingham under the supervision of Prof. D. C. Parker. My sincere appreciation to him for reading the initial draft. All inadequacies that remain, however, are mine.

³ My own personal academic interest has been indirectly influenced by Dr. Omanson, especially when I, as a postgrad student in Singapore, was still searching for a thesis topic. Instead of focusing my academic energy on the rating system of UBS⁴, particularly variation units with “D-ratings,” he gently suggested that I would do better to look for a more productive research topic. I heeded his advice . . . and it led me to P⁴⁶.

⁴ Kenyon offers his own analysis of these spaces, thus: “Pauses in sense are occasionally indicated by slight space-intervals between words. Sanders indicated a large number of such intervals, but most of them have, I think, no significance. Some are due to flaws in the papyrus (as at junctions of *κολληματα*), some to the scribe’s habit of leaving a slight space after an abbreviation, some seem to be purely *accidental* or hardly perceptible. I have thought it best to indicate them only when they are plainly intentional and denote a pause in the sense. Only an examination of the facsimile will show exactly what the facts are” (1936, xiv, emphasis added).

historical questions about early Christianity in general, and the early Christian book production enterprise in particular (see Hurtado 2006, 155–90). In fact, space-intervals not only serve the purposes of the copyists; to a larger extent they reflect a concern for the intended end-users of the manuscript being manufactured, for they serve as *readers' aids*.⁵ A few questions of theoretical interest immediately come to the fore: Did the scribe of \mathfrak{P}^{46} really have a sense of what he was copying, as Kenyon suggested? But how should space-intervals in the middle of a word be accounted for? Or should they just be regarded as products of unfortunate accidents, and therefore nonsensical, as Kenyon and Sanders seem to suggest? Are these space-breaks also reflected in other manuscripts (hence, indicating general scribal practice) or are these the peculiar products of the scribe of \mathfrak{P}^{46} himself?

Methodological considerations

Space-intervals, as a mode of punctuation, perform various tasks. Turner (1987, 9) mentioned the following: to separate a *lemma* (a quoted passage to be explained) from a comment, to close a period in conjunction with a *paragraphus*, and to indicate a change of speaker in dramatic texts. Some of these functions are present in \mathfrak{P}^{46} .

Sanders (1935, 17) identified over a thousand space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} . On the other hand, Kenyon (1936, xiv) downplayed the significance of many of these and attributed them to the flaws of the material, *nomina sacra*, and simple copying accident. Hence, Kenyon's 1936 transcription reflects fewer space-intervals than are actually in the manuscript,⁶ choosing only those that, in his judgment, are "plainly intentional and denote a pause in the sense" (Kenyon 1936, xiv). This immediately highlights methodological problems, foremost of which is the discernible

⁵ On the concept of scribal features as "aids to readers," see Roberts 1979, 21–22; Metzger 1993, 21–31; Gamble 1995, 74; and Hurtado 2006, 177–85. Turner (1987, 8), while noting that systematized use of punctuation is of late invention, affirmed that there were ways in which scribes conveyed modes of punctuating to help users or readers of the manuscripts being produced. In this regard, he specifically mentioned two features: deliberate space-intervals and the prolonging of the strokes in ϵ , α , and ζ . These two features, interestingly, are both present in \mathfrak{P}^{46} .

⁶ But this is not Kenyon's proclivity alone—it seems rather that earlier editors of ancient biblical manuscripts were also liable to do this. The pursuit of the traditional goal of textual criticism may have somehow influenced this "editorial tendency." Stanley Porter rightly observed that "editors are so concerned to establish the text for the purpose of collation with other texts that they often pass by distinctive features of particular manuscripts. In other words, there is a greater concern for the text itself, almost in an abstract sense, than there is for the particularities of individual manuscripts, with all of their differences in handwriting, size, and accompanying palaeographical features" (2005, 161–62).

subjectivity of such criteria (see Head 2009). Needless to say, more hard data are essential in analysing this phenomenon. In fact, space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} come at various measurements, and occur at various sense levels, and in view of this there is a high degree of arbitrariness involved if one formulates sense classifications based solely on the length/measurement of space-intervals (i.e., Kenyon's method [1936, xiv]). A less arbitrary methodology is indeed a *desideratum*.⁷

The project is, nonetheless, not totally impossible, as some patterns can be isolated where space-intervals may be located. Methodologically, all identifiable space-intervals will be documented at the first instance, without prejudice as to whether they genuinely have to do with “pauses in the sense” or not. The extant portions where these space-intervals occur will then be examined for the presence of certain “structure signals” which may be *grammatical* (e.g., pauses indicating punctuation requirements at the levels of phrase, clause, and sentence, or even at pericope level), or *aesthetic* (e.g., Old Testament quotations). The space-intervals will then be classified as to whether such signals occur or whether they can be explained by factors other than sense signals, especially if space-intervals occur at mid-word or in places they are least expected or are such as Kenyon and Sanders suspected to be “accidental,” and therefore nonsense.

For empirical reasons, I limit my analysis to the text of Hebrews in \mathfrak{P}^{46} since it is comparatively physically more complete than other epistles with reading marks (e.g., Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Philippians), and the reading marks in Hebrews are more constant throughout than in the other epistles.⁸

But let us first explore the more obvious visual features present in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , and evaluate how they fared against the wider tradition of ancient book production vis-à-vis actual scribal use in other ancient manuscripts.

Punctuation and other visual features in \mathfrak{P}^{46} as “reader’s aids”

David Trobisch (2005, 179), describing the paratextual features of \mathfrak{P}^{46} , stated, “Following the conventions of book publishing in antiquity, the text

⁷ A further difficulty in isolating the genuine space-intervals from the purely *accidental* cases (if any) lies in the fact that our codex in its actual size is relatively small (32 cm [B] × 28 cm [H]), making precise measurements quite a daunting task—and here again the issue of potential subjectivity on the part of the researcher must be consciously recognized.

⁸ Nonetheless, for purposes of illustration and emphasis I shall include at strategic junctures supplementary examples from other letters of our codex, especially those pertaining to physical matters, i.e., *κολληματα* and papyrus strands.

is written in capital letters and without spaces between the words. Structuring signals like paragraphs, punctuation marks, or chapter headings are missing.” Obviously, Trobisch’s remark resonates with the view that subsidiary palaeographical matters, that is, punctuation, accentuation, and the use of breathing marks, were rarely employed in ancient papyri (Kenyon 1899, 25–26; Thompson 1912, 58–59). However, contra Trobisch, there are in fact sporadic examples of structure signals scattered throughout \mathfrak{P}^{46} , although not as plentifully and systematically employed as in later parchment manuscripts. But this dearth of visual structural details simply points to the relatively early age of \mathfrak{P}^{46} . In fact, most of the earlier New Testament manuscripts are less elaborate and more restrained in their use of punctuation, but it would be misleading to construe this parsimony as a lack of interest in clarity, especially in aid of the readers.⁹ Turner’s comment that the absence of actual punctuation marks was compensated by other features derivable from the manuscripts themselves (particularly the presence of space-intervals and the elongated strokes of some portions of particular letters) is sufficient to convince us that manuscript readers (e.g., *lectors*) had visual access to structure signals from *within* the manuscripts themselves. In fact, both Kenyon and Sanders have already made general remarks about these structure signals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} . Hence, we need only provide the specific details here.

Like other earlier manuscripts, the text of \mathfrak{P}^{46} was written in a single-column *scriptio continua* format. The main scribe did not use periods (.), commas (,), or question marks (;). There are also no indented letters (*eistheses*) or protruding letters (*ektheses*).¹⁰ There are, however, a few instances of *colons* (:),¹¹ corresponding to breaks in sense at the clause level; they are also marked with space-intervals. Furthermore, in two cases where a *dicolon* (:) was used, both are equally marked with space-intervals. The *dicolon* in Heb 11.5 seems to signal the following Old Testament quotation, but the one at the end of the doxology in Rom 15.33 certainly calls attention to the conspicuous relocation of the doxology.¹²

⁹ On this point, see Johnson (2009, 261–62). Barbara Aland (2004, 109) noted that in contrast to other literary documents, the presence of reading aids in the earliest Christian papyri (such as accents, breathing marks, punctuations, marks to indicate foreign words, etc.) reflects more their function in the community as designed for reading in both worship services or private devotions.

¹⁰ The only existing instance of letter protrusion is in fol. 54r, line 7, where the letters $\tau\alpha$ are outside of the imaginary left-side text margin. However, in this particular instance $\tau\alpha$ is a correction.

¹¹ Rom 10.16; 11.36 (after $\alpha\mu\eta\upsilon$ of the doxology of ch. 11); Heb 1.7 and 1.9 (both within Old Testament quotations); 8.12; and 12.19.

¹² On the role of the *dicolon* in the “relocated” doxology and the wider implications of *dicola* to the production of the Letter to the Romans, see the differing opinions of Sanders

Another textual variation indicator is the *ancora* (↑)—a scribal feature which gives away the scribe’s level of astuteness while copying his exemplar. There are three passages marked with the *ancora*, all written upright and *within* the text area (not in the margin area as one would expect in the literary and the non-literary papyri (Turner 1987, 16). In all these, clusters of words were accidentally lost due to *homoioteleuton*: Heb 8.8;¹³ 12.6;¹⁴ and 9.14.¹⁵ Therefore, the manuscript reader is alerted as to the loss of text.

Apostrophes in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , some of which look like a grave accent and others like a smooth breathing mark, perform different functions. When it serves as an *elision marker* (Turner 1987, 8), the scribe used it with the elided *ἀλλα, ουδε, ουχι, τουτο, κατα, and ποτε*. It also functions as an *accent marker*, specifically between consecutive (liquid) consonants,¹⁶ in the root κριττων¹⁷ (Heb 2.8; 3.16; 7.7; 8.6 [2x]; 11.35 κριττωνος; 11.40 κριττων), and ηλαττωσας (Heb 2.7).¹⁸ Finally, there are also three instances of apostrophe appearing at the end of a word, the function of which is not immediately ascertainable (Rom 10.19 Ἰσραηλ̄ ουκ εγνω; Phil 3.5 Ἰσραηλ̄ φυλης; and Gal 3.8 ἀβρααμ̄ οτι).

Sanders found only one instance of an *accented* word (Heb 6.16 πέρας). But to this we can add four more: Eph 5.9 ἀληθείά; Heb 10.16 αὐτή;¹⁹ Heb 9.24 προσώπου/ω;²⁰ and 1 Cor 10.15 ὡς.²¹ All these have acute accents.

(1935, 16–17, 35) and Kenyon (1936, xviii). See also Gamble (1977, 33), who suggested that the doxology is set off from ch. 16, although he only mentions the “diagonal slash” (i.e., reading mark) and not the *dicolon*, which is the more important variation signal in this instance.

¹³ I.e., λειπει ιδου ημερα ερχονται.

¹⁴ I.e., παιδευει μαστιγοι δε παντα υν̄ ον παραδεχεται εις παιδειαν υπομενετε ως υιοις υμειν προσφερεται ο θς̄ τις γαρ υιος ον ου.

¹⁵ I.e., υω καθαριει την συνειδησιν ημων απο νεκρων εργων εις το λατρευειν.

¹⁶ However, ηττημα (1 Cor 6.7) and ελαττωνε- (2 Cor 8.15; Heb 7.7) are unmarked.

¹⁷ Although occurrences of κριττων in Heb 1.4; 7.22; 9.23; 10.34; 11.16; 12.24; and 1 Cor 7.9 are unmarked.

¹⁸ Note also the case in Heb 3.16, ἀλλ̄ ου παντες. Interestingly, Turner (1987, 11, 19, 108) believes that the separating apostrophe between double consonants within a word is suggestive of a manuscript’s production date later than A.D. 200; also Johnson (2009, 262); but cf. Martinez (2009, 599, 613 n. 49).

¹⁹ This particular instance can also be interpreted as an unusually formed rough breathing mark, as in the case of ὡς of 1 Cor 10.15 (see Junack et al. 1989, 245).

²⁰ The first hand copied προσωπου at first, but *in scribendo* wrote omega above the omicron and upsilon and also added what appears to be an acute accent on the first omega, to read προσώπω.

²¹ Surprisingly, while the ink mark is quite obvious (both in the actual manuscript and the plate), this has not been noted yet in any of the transcriptions of \mathfrak{P}^{46} . It is likely, though uncertain, that in its present context, the accent functions as a rough breathing marker.

Turner (1987, 10; cf. Thompson 1912, 63) mentions two major functions of *diaeresis*: (1) “organically,” it separates vowels in a cluster that do not belong together, and (2) “inorganically,” it marks off an initial vowel or a final vowel. In \mathfrak{P}^{46} , *diaeresis* by and large has an *inorganic* function, for initial ι and υ²² are generally marked with a *diaeresis*, although there are many exceptions. Medial -i- occurs in thirty cases. This may be due to the fact that these are vowels forming a diphthong, although there are non-diphthong instances also. Conversely, there is a single instance of medial -ü- (Heb 2.8 ἀνῶποτακτον).²³ Cumulatively, such irregularities in use seem to point more to the caprices of the scribe than to the manuscript’s exemplar.

While there are no iota adscripts or subscripts, there are *rough breathing marks* appearing at various places in \mathfrak{P}^{46} . Sanders (1935, 19) noted twelve instances; I have identified over a dozen more. All these occur with monosyllabic words, and they seem to have been intended by the scribe to discriminate them from similar words that should be read with smooth breathing (Colwell 1937, 386), for example, the numeral ἐν vs the preposition ἐν; ἔις vs preposition εἰς; relative οὐ vs the negator οὐ, and so forth.

Abbreviations are not utilized in \mathfrak{P}^{46} merely for space-saving purposes; their functionality rests on the kind of abbreviation the scribe made. Abbreviations were used for nine *nomina sacra*—words usually having special theological implications—not only by way of contraction but also by putting a supralinear bar on the contracted letters. Hence, it provides a ready signal to the reader that the contracted letters in focus have a special function and should not be read verbatim.

Apart from the *nomina sacra* other abbreviations by the main scribe include a few cases of line-end final υ and the lone instance of a long line-end word abbreviation towards the ending of Hebrews (ἀπολελυ[μενων]). This indicates that the main hand, like any ancient professional scribe, was familiar with this scribal convention.

There are also *paragraphoi* in \mathfrak{P}^{46} .²⁴ While in general this feature functions aesthetically to facilitate reading, it was typically used to mark off

²² 41 cases in Romans; 55 in Hebrews; 121 in 1 Corinthians; 116 in 2 Corinthians; 36 in Ephesians; 28 in Galatians; 33 in Philippians; and 29 in Colossians. None is recorded from 1 Thessalonians because of its highly fragmentary state.

²³ Another interesting case is that of Gal 2.14 where a single word had two diaereses (i.e., ἰουδαϊζεν).

²⁴ Thus, fol. 21v (Romans and Hebrews); fol. 38r (Hebrews and 1 Corinthians); fol. 74v (with the *superscription* of 2 Corinthians); fol. 81r (Ephesians and Galatians); fol. 86r (for Galatians and Philippians); fol. 90r (for Philippians and Colossians); and fol. 94r (Colossians and 1 Thessalonians).

major breaks in the text in both literary and non-literary manuscripts.²⁵ Specifically, however, in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , *paragraphus* was used by the scribe to strictly mark the transition from one epistle to another, as all the seven extant *paragraphoi* (with the exception of the superscription of 2 Corinthians) are placed immediately between the last line of an epistle and the book title (*titlos*) line of the ensuing letter.

As with the *paragraphus*, our scribe also used *line fillers* in a number of instances, but most commonly to close off extra spaces of the last line of an epistle before the *paragraphus* line. This is true for fol. 21v (Romans), fol. 38r (Hebrews), fol. 74v (2 Corinthians), fol. 81r (Ephesians), and fol. 90r (Philippians). The lone anomaly is fol. 57r, line 18 (1 Cor 15.2), where the device indicates scribal doubt as to the text of the exemplar.

Cumulatively, these *visual* features²⁶ are for the immediate benefit of the readers; they help facilitate comprehension processing of the text. Some of them accentuate the existing textual tradition to which our scribe subscribed; others betray the conventions of the scribal trade; still others show the scribe's own facility in using them.

Space-intervals as “structure signals” for readers

We now turn to space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} —a feature that is strictly *non-visual* but functioned equally to aid readers *visually*. Three derivable functions of space-intervals are examined here: (1) as aesthetic signals, (2) as punctuation signals, and (3) as grammatical signals.

As aesthetic signals

A. *For nomina sacra*. The most consistent application of space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} concerns instances with *nomina sacra*, of which 128 cases are extant in Hebrews alone. Both Sanders and Kenyon have correctly recognized this phenomenon, but noted only the space-intervals *after* the divine contractions, ignoring equally frequent space-gaps *before* the *nomina sacra*. As a matter of fact, space-intervals, enough for one or more letters, occur *before* (almost always) and *after* (always) a *nomen sacrum*. For the former, the article preceding a *nomen sacrum* (unless a line-end case) is almost always

²⁵ Thompson 1912, 58. On how the *paragraphus* might have functioned and aided reader-speaker in a public address in antiquities, see Johnson 1994, 65–68, and 2009, 261.

²⁶ Since my aim in this article is to profile the habits of our scribe insofar as his use of visual features is concerned, I have deliberately excluded here other visual features such as the page numeration and *stichoi* (i.e., stichometrical notes), as they are not the original properties of our scribe.

marked with space-intervals, perhaps due in part to the apparent tendency of our scribe to put a space before articular phrases. Accordingly, however, even when a *nomen sacrum* is anarthrous²⁷ the space-gap is still distinguishable most of the time.

For post-*nomen sacrum* space-gaps, the only exemption is a line-end scenario. This type might have been primarily occasioned by the writing of the crossbar after the contraction was written down—the gap seems to be a natural consequence once the scribe lifted his pen to draw the superscript line, which most of the time also extends to the still vacant space, before the following word or phrase is written. Consequently, the resulting space-gaps might have functioned as a sort of visual reinforcement of the crossbar in setting off the contracted word, facilitating comprehension of the coded abbreviation.²⁸

B. For Old Testament quotations. Old Testament quotations in UBS GNT²⁹ are easily distinguishable even by non-expert users, for they are indented and aesthetically set off in boldface. Such a format is decidedly useful to readers. However, this is not the case for our earliest surviving manuscripts, including \mathfrak{P}^{46} . As previously mentioned there are no indentations in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , neither does it start with a new line to signal Old Testament quotations, as in our modern printed Greek editions. Despite this, however, it must be noted that there are remarkably distinguishable space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} in most cases where Old Testament quotations *begin* and *end*.

Of approximately fifty Old Testament quotations in UBS GNT, only forty quote beginnings are extant in \mathfrak{P}^{46} . Of this number, one is a line-end scenario (Heb 1.5, fol. 21v, line 20), another involves a *homoioteleuton* (8.8, fol. 28v, line 25), and apart from five³⁰ that are unmarked, all the rest have a one- or two-letter space-interval before the first word of the quotation. Furthermore, at least seven instances are also prefaced with reading marks.³¹ On the other hand, only thirty-seven quote endings now survive in \mathfrak{P}^{46} . Of

²⁷ Anarthrous *nomina sacra*, with preceding space-intervals, include Heb 1.6, 10, 14; 2.6, 9; 3.1, 6; 4.12; 6.1, 4, 5, 20; 7.21; 8.10, 11; 12.23, 24; 13.6, 21.

²⁸ On the possible function of the crossbar in *nomina sacra*, see Paap (1959, 124). Hurtado (2006, 112), drawing inferences from pre-Christian instances of the horizontal stroke in the context of *gematria*, proposed that the crossbar “may be a clue to the origin of the *nomina sacra*.”

²⁹ For Nestle-Aland, Old Testament quotes are also indented but set off in italicized format (instead of boldface).

³⁰ The absence of space-intervals in 1.10 (fol. 22r, line 7) and 2.13 (fol. 23r, line 4) might have been due to the proximity of the other quotations before and after these particular quotes. On the other hand, I can offer no possible explanation for the absences in 10.5 (fol. 31r, line 20), 37 (fol. 32v, line 17), and 11.21 (fol. 34r, line 9).

³¹ Heb 2.6 (fol. 22v, line 9); 3.15 (fol. 24r, line 4); 4.3 (fol. 24r, line 23), 7 (fol. 24v, line 8); 6.13, 14 (fol. 26v, lines 1, 2); and 12.5 (fol. 35v, line 13).

these, five are line-end cases,³² and apart from 6.14 (fol. 26r, line 4),³³ all the rest are marked with space-intervals. Furthermore, eighteen of these also have accompanying reading marks.

Obviously, there is no exact one-to-one correspondence between space-intervals at quote beginnings and endings vis-à-vis the reading marks. Perhaps that should be expected of \mathfrak{P}^{46} , as the scribe (reader) who added the reading marks at a later time apparently has used the device selectively. The point, nonetheless, can still be made that this limited correspondence is not a coincidence, but rather systemic evidence of a *prevailing tradition* that was meant to help read sacred manuscripts more meaningfully in public (liturgical) contexts.

As punctuation signals

In the absence of a systematic use of punctuation, space-intervals may usurp the function of a sense-division marker. While this has already been essentially confirmed in earlier studies on other major New Testament manuscripts (e.g., Sanders 1912, 12–14; Roberts 1953, 234; Parker 1992, 31–34, 73–96; also Hurtado 2006, 180–82), we have yet to see a similar in-depth analysis for \mathfrak{P}^{46} . Hence, probing how space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} might have functioned as punctuation signals is worth pursuing. Our method here is quite straightforward, and only requires profiling the degree of (dis)agreements of \mathfrak{P}^{46} vis-à-vis other papyri with the text of Hebrews, as well as the reading marks integral to \mathfrak{P}^{46} itself, to probe the implications of such correlation.³⁴ To further check the correlation, we will also profile \mathfrak{P}^{46} 's (dis)agreement against the texts and layouts of NA²⁷ and UBS GNT⁴.

Space-intervals agreeing with reading marks in \mathfrak{P}^{46} and with other papyri. Strictly speaking, the reading marks are not the original property of the main scribe; they belong to another and that is an undeniable palaeographical fact. However, their collation here against the space-intervals of the text of \mathfrak{P}^{46} may

³² Heb 1.12 (fol. 22r, line 13); 3.11 (fol. 23v, line 22); 11.5 (fol. 33r, line 8), 21 (fol. 34r, line 10); and 12.26 (fol. 36v, line 18).

³³ It is possible that the scribe no longer placed a space-interval here for two reasons: first, $\sigma\epsilon$ was not part of the quote but was the last word in this sentence, and second, the following sentence starts with the conjunction $\kappa\alpha\iota$. Note also that a reading mark is placed after the word $\sigma\epsilon$.

³⁴ In investigating the degree of agreement–disagreement of \mathfrak{P}^{46} vis-à-vis these papyri, I used the cumulative data provided by Wachtel and Witte 1994; Junack et al. 1989; Comfort and Barrett 2001; and Jaroš 2006. Note, however, that apart from \mathfrak{P}^{46} , surviving papyri with Hebrews are not only few but also very fragmentary: third century (\mathfrak{P}^{114}), third to fourth century (\mathfrak{P}^{12} , \mathfrak{P}^{13}), fourth century (\mathfrak{P}^{17} , \mathfrak{P}^{89} , \mathfrak{P}^{126}), sixth to seventh century (\mathfrak{P}^{79} , \mathfrak{P}^{116}).

be justified on the grounds that these marks give us a documented historical window onto how \mathfrak{P}^{46} 's original layout was immediately construed by its intended users (see Turner 1987, 144), for reading marks were an aid for public reading (Gamble 1995, 203–31).

Kenyon recorded 350 reading marks in the thirty-four folios that the text of Hebrews was copied onto, while Sanders noted 212. Junack et al. noted 369 instances, while Comfort and Barrett documented 356. However, I have recorded a total of 392 reading marks in Hebrews,³⁵ the breakdown of which as per location in the lines is as follow: 343 at *mid*-lines; 18 *before* line-beginnings,³⁶ and 31 at *line-ends*.³⁷

Of the 392, 272 (69%) agree with the punctuation in NA and UBS GNT, marking clause, sentence, and paragraph units. Accordingly, the 31 line-end cases all mark various sense-levels: 10 sentence, 15 clause, and 6 phrase levels. Even in these line-end cases, the agreement with the punctuation placements in NA and UBS GNT is very high at 81% (25 out of 31). This remarkable degree of agreement can only be possible if viewed from the perspective of an existing sense-division tradition that has been transmitted through generations of manuscript production. But do we have evidence pointing to this ancient “existing tradition”? The agreement of the reading marks with the space-intervals seems to provide essential evidence to corroborate this proposal.

More remarkable than the agreement of the reading marks with the punctuation placements in NA and UBS GNT is the fact that 336 out of the 392 reading marks (86%) agree with the space-intervals. The agreement percentage may even increase to 94% (367 out of 392) if we include the line-end cases. This stupendous agreement confirms the presence of a

³⁵ The breakdown for each edition is as follows:

Comparative chart of reading-marks count in Hebrews														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Totals
Kenyon	1	26	24	20	25	45	43	16	34	37	42	25	12	350
Sanders	1	28	24	20	25	44	43	11?	16?	0	0	0	0	212?
Junack et al.	1	27	24	19	26	45	44	18	37	41	48	27	12	369
Comfort and Barrett	1	26	25	21	25	43	42	16	37	38	44	26	12	356
Ebojo	2	28	26	23	26	49	48	18	38	46	49	26	13	392

³⁶ Heb 3.10; 4.16; 6.4, 17; 7.7, 11 (2x), 23; 9.18, 24; 10.12; 11.6, 10, 22, 35, 36; 12.3, 27.

³⁷ Heb 3.4, 5, 10, 17, 18; 6.2, 16, 17, 18 (2x); 7.2, 6, 11 (2x), 14; 8.3; 9.6, 7, 12, 24; 10.3, 25; 11.5, 20, 21, 35 (2x); 12.2, 13, 26; and 13.24.

prevalent tradition of sense-divisions among ancient manuscripts and how their ancient users construed them, even before the era of more visually elaborate manuscript production.

Such a proposal is further reinforced if we consider the degrees of agreement when we compare the space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} vis-à-vis other papyri. Unfortunately, apart from \mathfrak{P}^{46} , most of the eight other papyri with Hebrews are in a very sorry physical state. In fact, not much information is available from \mathfrak{P}^{12} owing to its nature as an amulet manuscript, containing only the first verse of Hebrews.³⁸ The situation is similar for \mathfrak{P}^{114} (with only ten lines of a few letters each [1–6 characters invariably]), containing Heb 1.7–12), \mathfrak{P}^{116} (containing very disjointed portions of Heb 2.9–11 and 3.3–6), and \mathfrak{P}^{126} (containing fragmentary portions of Heb 13.12–13 and 13.19–20).³⁹

Fortunately, the more extensive of these fragmentary papyri can provide ample information to bear out our argument. For instance, in portions where \mathfrak{P}^{46} and \mathfrak{P}^{13} are both extant, there are 122 occurrences of a *dicolon* or high dots in \mathfrak{P}^{13} , where NA and UBS GNT also invariably indicated sense-pauses at various levels (paragraph, sentence, clause, and phrases). Notably, the agreement in the presence of space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , the *dicolon* and high dots in \mathfrak{P}^{13} , and punctuation in NA and UBS GNT is at 63% (seventy-seven instances);⁴⁰ agreement in absence occurs at 6% (seven cases), giving a total of 69% agreement. These agreements are found in sentence, clause, and phrase levels. Interestingly, within these mutual agreements, there are thirteen instances where only \mathfrak{P}^{46} and \mathfrak{P}^{13} distinctively agree together. Disagreements, on the other hand, stand at 31% (thirty-nine cases), the majority of which are cases of the absence of a *dicolon* or high dots in \mathfrak{P}^{13} where \mathfrak{P}^{46} has space-intervals.⁴¹

\mathfrak{P}^{17} preserves only twenty-one very fragmentary lines corresponding to Heb 9.12–19. In portions where both \mathfrak{P}^{46} and \mathfrak{P}^{17} are extant, \mathfrak{P}^{46} agrees with \mathfrak{P}^{17} in two cases (both at sentence level) and disagrees in one (clause level).⁴² On the other hand, in portions where both \mathfrak{P}^{46} and \mathfrak{P}^{89} are extant, no agreement in presence has been noted. But this is quite misleading as \mathfrak{P}^{89} is very fragmentary, and there is a possibility that it did not utilize any

³⁸ For its earliest transcription, see Grenfell and Hunt 1900, 31; see also Wachtel and Witte 1994, 243. For image and transcription, see Jaroš 2006, 4389–91.

³⁹ See Clivaz 2010, 158–62.

⁴⁰ Sanders (1935, 18) noted only thirty-four times, due to the still fragmentary state of Hebrews at the time he compared the two papyri.

⁴¹ There are also two instances of a “singular witness” in \mathfrak{P}^{13} (3.4b and 4.12a) that are in neither \mathfrak{P}^{46} nor NA-UBS.

⁴² Agreements: Heb 9.12 and 9.15; disagreement: 9.16.

punctuation marks throughout.⁴³ Finally, \mathfrak{P}^{79} preserves Heb 10.10–12 (recto), 28–30 (verso),⁴⁴ and there is a very high percentage of agreement in portions where \mathfrak{P}^{46} and \mathfrak{P}^{79} are both preserved. It agrees⁴⁵ with \mathfrak{P}^{46} five times, with a possibility of one more.⁴⁶

All these (dis)agreements in \mathfrak{P}^{46} vis-à-vis the reading marks and markings in other papyri with Hebrews cannot simply be dismissed as nothing more than coincidences; the agreements are glaring and attest strongly to the observation that there were indeed general patterns, while diversities also exist, on how sense-divisions were marked by ancient scribes and construed by their immediate reading patrons.

As grammatical markers

Space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} also functioned as grammatical markers, as is evidenced by the patterns of grammatical groupings deducible from looking at where in particular these gaps occur, both at the micro- and macro-grammatical levels.

A. Phrase and clause levels

Before prepositional phrases. There are certain marked prepositional phrases that are more likely to receive slight space-intervals than others. Topping the list are those preceded by the preposition εἰς which are almost always spaced, if they occur at mid-lines or at line-ends;⁴⁷ but compound words prefaced with εἰσ- are very seldom spaced. Other prepositional phrases that are commonly spaced include those preceded by κατά, πρὸς, πρὸ, ἐν, and ἀπο. These prepositions seem to have functioned as “cue words” insofar as space-intervals are concerned.

Before conjunctive and articular phrases. The conjunction καί, when at mid-line or at line-end, almost always receives a slight space-interval when it forms a phrase (or a short clause); when it begins the line it is immediately followed by a slight space-interval before the next word is written. Conversely, γάρ and δε are spaced either before or after they are written. There is also a marked tendency by our scribe to put space-intervals of varying measurements before phrases preceded by an article.

⁴³ Palaeographical details are few for this manuscript; see Pintaudi 1981, 42–44.

⁴⁴ See Treu 1966, 37–48.

⁴⁵ Here I have documented the dual reading mark (‘ ’) in \mathfrak{P}^{79} instead of *dicola* or high dots (as in \mathfrak{P}^{13}), vis-à-vis the space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} .

⁴⁶ Heb 10.10, 11, 28, 29 (2x). In 10.29, some parts of [ε]νυβρισσας have already eroded and the dual reading marks may have been lost with the eroded portion.

⁴⁷ In Hebrews alone, the phrase εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα is always written without a space between words.

B. Sentence and paragraph/pericopal levels. For the book of Hebrews, NA identified forty-six instances of paragraph units, thirty-nine of which agree with UBS GNT at sentence level and two at non-sentence levels;⁴⁸ NA disagrees with UBS GNT in five cases.⁴⁹ On the other hand, UBS GNT identified forty-two paragraph units, with one paragraph disagreeing with NA (Heb 12.13). Except for Heb 4.13, all these instances are extant in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , although four are line-end cases,⁵⁰ and therefore space detection is not clearly certain.

It is noteworthy that in most of these paragraph units in NA and UBS GNT, reading marks are also present in \mathfrak{P}^{46} . For instance, in forty-five extant cases in Hebrews the reading marks are present in thirty instances. This considerably high degree of agreement (67%) indicates that whoever added these reading marks must have been either using a model manuscript with existing mark-ups for reading or following a tradition of sense-division already in wide circulation for public reading of sacred manuscripts.

But even more remarkable than the presence of the reading marks is the correspondence of space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} with what NA and UBS GNT identified as endings of paragraph units. In fact, in cases where identified paragraphs are extant (and also not line-end cases) in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , space-intervals of varying measurements can be detected in all these, a 100% agreement! This no doubt indicates that the presence of space-intervals of this type betrays an existing scribal paragraphing practice already reflected in the exemplar of our scribe.⁵¹ It may not be as elaborately visual as in the tradition of later parchment manuscripts—Hurtado’s description (2006, 181) of it as “emergent and developing” fits well—but nonetheless it serves the purpose of paragraph structure markings. I could not agree more with Sanders’s suggestion (1935, 17) that some of these space-intervals were intended by the scribe “to mark the ends of paragraphs.” For this high degree of correspondence, we can only commend our scribe for faithfully reflecting his exemplar insofar as space-intervals are concerned. However, it would be misleading to attribute this correspondence too readily to the original work of our scribe. The presence of reading marks or derivative features in other equally old manuscripts points more to a prevailing sense-division system than to the ingenuity of our scribe. In fact, the correspondence does not reflect our

⁴⁸ Heb 8.5 and 9.10.

⁴⁹ Heb 11.23, 26; 13.4, 8, 24.

⁵⁰ Heb 10.25; 12.13; 13.21, 24.

⁵¹ Here we can cite in support the observation of Roberts regarding the spaces in \mathfrak{P}^{64} corresponding to the same spaces present in codices Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, and Bezae; to wit, “This system of division can now be carried back a couple of centuries if our dating of the papyrus [\mathfrak{P}^{64}] is correct” (1953, 234).

scribe's peculiar writing habits at all but it definitely betrays his astute attention to minute details.

Is there anything, then, about the space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} that we can confidently attribute to the copying proclivities of its scribe? The answer seems to lie in instances where \mathfrak{P}^{46} preserves space-intervals that are unequally attested by the manuscript tradition.

Space-intervals as a window to the scribal writing habits of \mathfrak{P}^{46}

Space-intervals at mid-words

Occasionally, we find space-intervals occurring in the middle of a word. Some of the mid-word space-breaks are due to the scribe's attempt *to avoid blemishes in the papyrus*. Kenyon (1936, xiv) already mentioned the papyrus joins of *κολληματα* as "flaws in the papyrus" that resulted in "accidental" pauses.⁵² Kenyon seems to have made this a major reason for space-intervals. However, this kind of break is very rare; I have found only five other cases in Hebrews.⁵³ The small number is perhaps due to the characteristic pliability of the papyrus during the codex production and the joins may have hardly posed a writing problem to our scribe at the time he copied the text of his exemplar onto it. The gluing of the joins was also very dexterously done, so much so that our scribe in fact wrote characters on them in most cases, avoiding them only in very extreme cases,⁵⁴ and whoever was directly responsible for the construction of the papyrus materials into a codex was a skilled artisan.

A more common material defect causing mid-word space-intervals is the *manufacturing problem related with the vertical papyrus strands*, either very slightly broken off or improperly pasted, that must have accidentally happened *before* the scribe copied his text. One very good example is fol. 23r, lines 12–14, involving Heb 2.15–16, where the overlapping joins of two vertical papyrus strands may have accidentally broken off beforehand, prompting the scribe to wisely avoid it, although unfortunately creating noticeable

⁵² Heb 2.4 (fol. 22v, line 4) may be cited as an example, where the gap between *sigma* and *iota* in the word *δυναμειν* must have been stimulated by the *κολλησις* which our scribe consciously avoided.

⁵³ The list includes fol. 21v, lines 7, 15 (Heb 1.2, 4); fol. 22v, line 4 (Heb 2.4); fol. 23v, line 26 (Heb 3.13); and fol. 28v, lines 3, 16 (8.1, 5).

⁵⁴ Of the eighty-six surviving bifolia, I have found fifty-five locations where *kolleseis* are extant or evident. But in most cases, it seems that our scribe had taken these *kolleseis* as inconsequential to his copying task, and de facto wrote characters, including the divine abbreviations (*nomina sacra*), on them.

space-gaps in the words in the proximate region of that page. Outside Hebrews, fol. 65v, containing 2 Cor 5.5–13,⁵⁵ also provides a good illustration. This type obviously does not mark grammatical sense units, but it nevertheless points to our scribe's degree of attentiveness with regards to the physical minutiae of the material he was using. At least twenty-nine other cases of space-intervals are attributable to this sort of issue in the book of Hebrews.

It is noteworthy that there is a singular instance, outside of Hebrews, where the presence of conspicuous space-intervals at mid-words in almost all the lines of the page was caused neither by the *κολλησις* nor the vertical strand, but by broken *horizontal* strands. In fol. 70r, containing 2 Cor 9.7–10.1, the upright breakage across horizontal fibres must have happened either at the time of the codex production or immediately after it, for our scribe had detected it already and judiciously avoided it, skipping at least 0.3–0.5 cm in between letters. Fortunately, this breakage did not cause any textual variation in the process.

But not all mid-word space-breaks are due to the physical defects of the material; some are simply because *the word at issue is comparatively long*. Almost all of the longer words, those comprising four or more syllables, receive a slight space-interval either at the last or the second to last syllable. The placement of the space-break may have to do with where the word is to be accented, or perhaps with marking the point where the scribe lifted his pen and moved his hand a bit toward the right to continue writing the word. At any rate, this type of space-interval points to our scribe's writing regimen rather than to grammatical sense-units.

Another scribal writing habit causing mid-word space-intervals is the use of *the apostrophe functioning as accent between consecutive liquid consonants*. Our particular example for this is the lemma κριττονος and its derivative forms, which whenever accented always receive a very slight space-interval at the point of accenting, particularly between the consecutive consonants, that is, κριτ-τονος.⁵⁶ (Accordingly, both the lone occurrences of accented ηλατ-τωσας [Heb 2.7] and αλ-λ [Heb 3.16] also receive the same slight space-interval.)⁵⁷ On the other hand, none of the unaccented forms⁵⁸ shows any sign of slight spacing. Hence, in these

⁵⁵ To this may be added fol. 54r (12.24–13.1) where the space-gaps at mid-words are comparatively very pronounced.

⁵⁶ So is 7.7; 8.6a and b; and 11.35. In 11.40, the word is the last on the line and runs through the next line, yet a space between the consecutive τ's seems to have been intended by the scribe.

⁵⁷ Both the ηλαττωμενον (Heb 2.9) and ελαττω Heb 7.7) are unaccented, and are unmarked between the two consecutive τ's.

⁵⁸ Heb 1.4; 7.22; 9.23; 10.34; 11.16; and 12.24; κριττονος in Heb 7.19 is not extant.

instances, the space-interval does not function as a grammatical marker, but has been necessitated by the accent stroke when the scribe momentarily lifted his pen.

Space-intervals due to calligraphic requirements

Some of the slight space-intervals that occur before, in the middle, or after a word at any time are due to the *calligraphic nature of particular characters*, especially for the broad letters δ, ζ, ξ, φ, and occasionally for β—a very slight space is left both before and after these letters. Also, initial ĩ- and ü- are normally marked with slight space-gaps before and after these letters. In these instances, the space-gaps are occasioned by the requirements of calligraphy more than of sense. However, in instances where initial ĩ- or ü- clearly precedes a clause, the presence of space-intervals is probably due more to the requirements of sense, especially for clauses starting with the result/purpose conjunction ἵνα.

Space-intervals indicating correction events

When our scribe spotted an error—either from his exemplar or his own doing—and *in scribendo* initiated corrective measures, space-intervals were used to call attention to these correction events, particularly those involving correction with expunging dots. In Hebrews, the first example of this type is in fol. 23v, line 12 (3.7), involving the expunging of the first-person possessive pronoun (i.e., μὸῦ) and correcting it to the third-person αὐτοῦ. It is evident that in between these two words a two-letter gap was deliberately placed by our scribe to signal the correction event. Other correction events of this sort include 10.22 (ἡμῶν __μετα); 11.21 (αὐτῶν<ιωσεφ>||ἔϋῶ __εὐλογησεν); and possibly 7.1 (ἑῶν __αβρααμ).⁵⁹

Space-intervals involving line-end words running through the following line

Another scenario where we detected a remarkably consistent employment of slight space-intervals involves cases where the final word of a line runs onto the following (or line-end word divisions). I have documented 282 cases of this sort in Hebrews. However, twenty-six of these are not

⁵⁹ Outside of Hebrews, we may cite fol. 47v, lines 1, 12, showing correction events involving single letters by expunging dots and slash marks as well as the space-intervals after it, i.e., εσθιουσιν--και and ειδωλα<ο>--θητα-εσθειειν.

practically helpful in the analysis, as the portions of the following line have already broken off,⁶⁰ leaving us with 256.

Of the 256 valid samples, I found only eighteen instances (or 7%) where the continuing syllable/s of the broken word in the following line did not have a space-interval after it. But the number can get even smaller if we consider possible valid reasons for its absence. In fact, in eleven cases, the absence was caused by one of the following: (1) a physical defect in the earlier part of the word;⁶¹ (2) elision of a familiar combination (e.g., involving $\epsilon\sigma\tau\upsilon\nu$);⁶² (3) the attraction of final ζ to initial τ and θ ;⁶³ (4) proximity to the usually marked prepositional phrases;⁶⁴ or (5) a comparatively longer word.⁶⁵ This leaves us with only seven cases where the absence of the slight space-intervals is inexplicable.⁶⁶ Converted to percentage, the presence of space-intervals involving one or another of the reasons given then translates to 97%.

What this reveals about our scribe's writing habits is that the division of a line-end word and the writing of the remaining syllables onto the following line are done in rapid sequence, most likely without the scribe looking back at his exemplar for the next word or phrase to copy until he copied the last character.

Moreover, these data also tell us that our scribe copied the text of his exemplar by *word or a series of words rather than by letters*.⁶⁷ This observation is cumulatively implied already by what has been indicated in the foregoing discussion. But that is not all. Another clue to this writing practice of our scribe may be discerned in the way the space-intervals recur and are situated in each line. Lest we be drowned with details, I attempt to illustrate this point by using the first page of Hebrews, containing twenty-one extant lines, which is representative of the rest of the pages of the book (Figure 1).

⁶⁰ Heb 1.5; 3.3 (2x), 13 (2x); 4.4, 13; 5.7; 6.13; 7.11, 20, 28; 8.7; 9.9 (2x), 25, 26; 10.7, 20 (2x); 11.26 (2x), 34 (2x); 13.2, 19.

⁶¹ Heb 2.2 ($\kappa[\alpha\ \pi\alpha=]\sigma\text{-}\alpha\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$); 5.1 ($\pi\rho\sigma=||\phi\epsilon\rho\text{-}\eta\delta\omega\rho\alpha$); and 11.7 ($\delta\upsilon\ \eta\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha=||\tau\epsilon\text{-}\kappa\rho\epsilon\iota\nu\epsilon\nu\tau\omicron\nu$).

⁶² Heb 2.14 ($\tau\omicron\nu=||\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\upsilon\nu$) and 9.5 ($\omicron\nu=||\kappa\epsilon\sigma\tau\upsilon\nu$).

⁶³ Heb 10.1a ($\alpha\nu=||\tau\alpha\iota\varsigma\theta\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha\iota\varsigma$) and 10.1b ($\pi\rho\sigma\epsilon\rho\chi\omicron=||\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omega\sigma\alpha\iota$).

⁶⁴ With $\pi\rho\sigma\text{-}$ (Heb 11.40, $\kappa\rho\iota\tau=||\tau\omicron\nu\tau\iota\text{-}\pi\rho\sigma\beta\lambda\epsilon\psi\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota$) and with $\pi\rho\text{-}$ ($\tau\rho\epsilon\ [\chi\omega=||\mu\epsilon\nu\tau\omicron\text{-}\pi\rho\kappa\epsilon\iota\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu]$).

⁶⁵ Heb 13.7 ($\alpha\nu\alpha=||\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\omicron\nu\text{-}\nu\tau\epsilon\zeta\eta\nu$). In this example, the space-interval occurred earlier, at the fourth syllable, instead of the last. It is also possible that the final $\text{-}\varsigma$ was attracted to the initial τ of the immediately following word.

⁶⁶ Heb 2.9, 12; 4.1; 9.26; 10.16, 38; and 12.2.

⁶⁷ Colwell (1969, 116–17) also found similar copying characteristics for the scribe of \mathfrak{P}^{45} , concluding that its scribe, as opposed to \mathfrak{P}^{66} and \mathfrak{P}^{75} , copied phrases and clauses, whereas the latter two copied by letters and syllables.

<-> represents a one-letter space-interval <--> represents a two-letter space-interval	Space- interval recurrence per line
προς εβραιους	
line 4: πολυ<-->μερωσ <-> και πολυ<->τροπωσ	3
line 5: παλαι<->ο<->θς<->λαλησας<->τοις πατρασιν ^{<ημων>} <-->εν	5
line 6: τοις προ<->φηταις <-> επ εσχατου <-> των ημε=	3
line 7: ρων <-> τουτων <-> ελαλησεν ημειν <--> εν	3
line 8: υῶ <--> ον εθηκεν <-> κληρονομον <-> παντῶ	3
line 9: δι ου <-> εποιησεν <-> τουσ αιωνασ <--> οσ ων	3
line 10: απανγασμα <-> της δο<->ξ<->ης <-> και χαρα=	4
line 11: κτηρ <-> της υποστασεωσ <-> αυτου <--> φερων τε	3
line 12: τα παντα <-> τω ρηματι της <-> δυναμειωσ	2
line 13: δι αυτου <-> καθαρισμον <-> των <-> αμαρτιων	3
line 14: ποιησαμενοσ <-> εκαθισεν <-> εν δεξια της	2
line 15: μεγαλλω<->συνης <-> εν υψηλοις <-> τοσου<->των	4
line 16: κριττων <-> γενομενοσ <-> αγγελων <-> οσ=	3
line 17: ω <-> διαφορωτερον <-> παρ αυτουσ <-> κεκλη=	3
line 18: ρονομη<->κεν <-> ονομα <-> τινη <-> γαρ ειπεν	4
line 19: ποτε των <-> αγγελων <--> υῖς <-> μου ει συ <-->	3
line 20: εγω <-> σημερον <-> γεγεννηκα σε <-> και παλιν <->	3
line 21: εγ]ω <-> εσομαι αυτω <-> εις πατερα <-> και αυ=	3
line 22: τοσ ε]σται μοι <-> εις υῦν <--> οταν <-> δε παλιν	3
line 23: αγα]η <-> τον πρω[τ]οτοκοκ <-> εις την οικου	2
line 24: μενην] <-> λεγει <-> κ[α]τι προσκυνησα<->τωσαν	3
line 25: αυτω παντε]ς <-> αγ[γ]ελοι <-> θῦ <--> και προς μεν	4(?)

Figure 1. Fol. 21v, lines 4–25.

The space-interval recurrence pattern is thus: 2 intervals (3x), 3 (14x), 4 (3x), and 5 (1x). Two intervals create three word groups, three intervals create four word groups, and so on. Three intervals is the average number of space-intervals per line; the four and five space-intervals are caused either by the presence of *nomina sacra* or by longer words or a physical defect. On the other hand, the three instances of two intervals are basically due to the presence of consecutive phrases in the line. But the more important detail we need to underscore here is the point that, unless the scribe was constrained by a material blemish or the presence of longer words, the space-intervals are most consistently situated at strategic junctures where

sense-groups of words or phrases are formed. In fact, on this particular page, the number of characters per line ranges from twenty-two to thirty. This shows that our scribe is capable of biting off at one time as many as five to ten characters representing a word or seven to fourteen representing a phrase. Our scribe does not copy by the number of letters but by words or groups of words. He does not leave a space-interval just for the sake of inserting one—he carefully selects each placement; some must have already been present in his exemplar which he willingly replicated, but some definitely betray his own copying proclivities.

Conclusion

How our modern Bible versions and translations are laid out is not without precedence. Long before any audience need-driven formats were formally integrated in marketing strategies to heighten Scripture engagement opportunities, scribes of old had already paved the way for “reader-friendly” formats for the biblical manuscripts that were transmitted throughout Christian history. They may not be as elaborate as our modern typesetting and printing capabilities make possible but they were sophisticated enough to help ancient readers better appreciate how their “Scriptures” were laid out.

In view of the foregoing, there are a good many reasons to re-assess how we methodologically judge a particular scribe’s level of understanding of what he is copying. While visual scribal features, more evident and systematic in later parchment manuscripts, are a good indicator of structural signals, the presence of space-intervals in earlier manuscripts, with or without the frugal use of punctuation, is an equally good gauge of how scribes understood the grammatical and sense structures of their exemplars. Hence, there is a need to re-evaluate the premise that the absence of punctuation and other visual features in the earlier manuscripts necessarily means the absence of the scribe’s sense of what he is copying—the example of P⁴⁶ makes this point evident. But along this line, we also need to reassess the *measurement-based* methodology for isolating “sense-pauses” in the surviving biblical manuscripts, particularly the earlier ones with *scriptio continua* format. What are usually understood as “accidental” space-intervals may after all not necessarily be accidents, insofar as particular scribes are concerned, but may rather reflect our lack of knowledge about how particular scribes made use of this literary convention vis-à-vis the physical material available to them at the time of production. Analysing what factors produced these “accidental” space-intervals, especially by looking at the material make-up of the manuscript, is of unquestionable importance.

Space-intervals in \mathfrak{P}^{46} are indicators not only of pauses in *sense*, but also of temporary (split-second?) pauses in *copying activity*, demarcating actual spots where our scribe momentarily lifted his pen, glanced back at his exemplar for the next word or group of words to copy (and perhaps verbalized them), returned to his manuscript, and continued his copying assignment. This copying flow is only disturbed intermittently by defects in the papyrus itself or by some other factors beyond his control (or at times punctuated also by re-inking or re-sharpening of the pen).

Our scribe never leaves a space-interval in mid-word unless out of necessity where his only option is to sensibly avoid physical limitations of the material. Space-intervals that are also evident before and after broader letters are not necessarily blunders, but on the contrary unveil the marked professionalism of our scribe, fully cognizant of the stylistic requirements of a good and beautiful calligraphy. That he left space-intervals after textual errors, or what he perceived to be errors, and appropriately corrected them, also gives us an idea of the extent of his knowledge about his responsibilities as a scribe—he did not only view himself as a paid copyist but also as an ad hoc corrector endowed with the authority to effect textual changes when warranted. These are all marks of a scribe who knew his job and was passionately committed to it, and that makes a lot of sense to me!

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