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TWO UNIDENTIFIED CHRISTIAN FRAGMENTS IN THE MICHIGAN COLLECTION

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 186 (2013) 121–123

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P.Mich. inv. 547

5.8 × 3 cm; 6 × 3.2 cm

Provenance unknown

I present here P.Mich. inv. 547, two previously unpublished parchment fragments, which are housed in the University of Michigan Papyrus Collection.¹ The fragments were purchased around 1920 by Dr. David L. Askren for Prof. Francis Kelsey of Michigan.² Although the provenance of the fragments is lacking, it is possible that they came from Medinet-el-Fayoum (ancient Crocodilopolis Arsinoë), Askren's place of residence. The text of the fragments is written in dark brown ink on a fine, light-colored parchment. Hair and flesh side are distinguishable by color. Fragment 1 measures 5.8 × 3 cm and contains six partial lines of identifiable ink on the recto (Flesh side), and seven partial lines on the verso (Hair side). Fragment 2 measures 6 × 3.2 cm and contains six partial lines on the recto, and seven partial lines on the verso.

Both fragments are written in the same hand and presumably come from the same codex. The script can be characterized as biblical majuscule or unimodular, mostly detached and upright, strictly bilinear, and elegant. The letters ϵ , η , ρ , and σ occasionally display finials. In all six of its occurrences, β is connected to the following letter by means of a connecting base-stroke. The horizontal of η is high. In one of two occurrences of π the cross-stroke extends through to the end of the next letter; this wide stroke may actually signify the supralinear stroke of a *nomen sacrum* (see commentary below). μ is in three rounded movements and deep, and the middle stroke of θ extends into the next letter. The lower oblique stroke of λ rises only slightly, and when λ is preceded by β this oblique is completely horizontal, which gives the letter a triangular shape. The scribe regularly employs logical punctuation (raised dot) in the list of names (e.g., fragment 1 verso), as well as to mark the conclusion of a verse (e.g., fragment 2 verso).

Dating small Coptic fragments such as those here is notoriously difficult; wide dating parameters are necessary. There are essentially no reliable methods in the dating of Coptic manuscripts due to the lack of external and internal evidence, and so I have left the dating open. As for the dialect, the forms (discussed in the commentary below) clearly indicate a Fayyumic dialect, and this is further supported by the likelihood of a Fayyumic provenance and the general impression of the script.

Too little text has survived to make a positive identification, but a few observations can be made. First, the fragments can safely be described as Christian, likely a late monastic manuscript, on the basis of the *nomina sacra* for IHCOC in fragment 1 (recto), XPICTOC in fragment 2 (verso), and one possible *nomen sacrum* for PINETHMA in fragment 1 (recto).³ Second, fragment 1 verso appears to be a list of names of the disciples from the New Testament in the order that the Gospel of Matthew (10:3) presents them, beginning with Bartholomew: Βαρθολομαῖος , Θωμᾶς , Μαθθαῖος , Ἰάκωβος , Θαδδαῖος , Cίμων . Our fragments, however, do not represent a continuous-text manuscript of the Gospel of Matthew, since the other portions of text that have survived are not from Matthew.⁴ Perhaps what we have are fragments of a Christian commentary, homily, or some other type of theological work that cites Matthew's Gospel. There is an inventory

¹ For permission to publish the fragments here, I thank Prof. Arthur Verhoogt, Acting Archivist of the University of Michigan Papyrology Collection. Images have been digitally reproduced with the permission of the Papyrus Collection, Graduate Library, University of Michigan. In preparing the publication, I am most grateful for the comments of Alin Suciu, whose sharp eye was responsible for catching several mistakes on my part.

² In an e-mail dated 16 July 2012, Prof. Arthur Verhoogt communicated the following to me: "There is no precise date for the precise acquisition of these pieces in our inventory book, although our inventory is based on notes by Crum, 1921. And the next batch of purchased papyri is February 1921." Thus, a date of around 1920 for the acquisition of the fragments edited here is likely.

³ Malcolm Choat, *Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri* (Studia Antiqua Australiensia 1; Turnhout 2006), 1: "It is particularly in scribal features, such as the abbreviation of the so-called 'sacred names' (*nomina sacra*), that Christianity differentiates itself substantively from the Classical and Egyptian traditions."

⁴ In addition to complete Bohairic copies of Matthew, the only other dialect to preserve the complete Gospel of Matthew is the Sahidic dialect and only in one manuscript: Pierpont Morgan M569. See Gonzalo Aranda Pérez, *El evangelio de san*

of religious vocabulary: obedience, honor, Christ, Jesus, prayer, righteousness. My own searches have come up empty, but I publish the fragments here on the hope that it will lead to their identification. I provide a fuller discussion of the contents in the “commentary” section below.

Text

Recto (Flesh side): Fragment 1

- 1 [...]ⲁϸ[...]
 [...]ⲡⲒⲎ[...]
 [...]ⲁⲛⲁⲭⲱⲡⲓ[...]
 [...]ⲛⲃⲁⲗ ⲙⲙⲁⲓ [...]
- 5 [...]ϸⲛⲁϸⲓ ⲛⲏⲏ[...]
 [...]ⲛⲏⲏ[...]



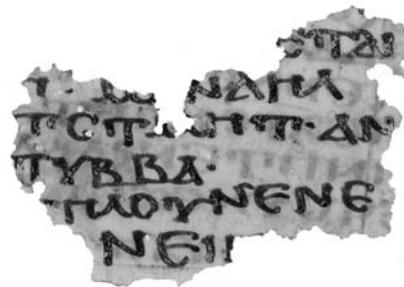
Verso (Hair side): Fragment 1

- 1 [...]Ϸ[...]
 [...]ⲛⲃⲁⲡ[...]
 [...]ⲙⲉⲟϸⲉ ⲑⲱⲙⲁ[...]
 [...]ⲑⲉⲟϸⲉ ⲓⲁⲕⲕⲱ[...]
- 5 [...]ⲉⲟϸⲉ ⲑⲁⲧⲧ[...]
 [...]ⲡⲓⲓⲁⲛⲁⲛⲓ[...]
 [...]ϸ ⲙⲓ[...]



Recto (Flesh side): Fragment 2

- 1 [...]Ϸⲧⲁⲓ
 [...]ⲏⲓ ⲙⲏⲁⲏⲗ
 [...]ⲧ ϸⲙⲏⲧⲉ ⲁⲛ
 [...]ⲧⲱⲃⲃⲁⲉ
- 5 [...]ⲧⲏⲗⲟⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉ
 [...]ⲛⲉⲓ Ϸ[...]



Verso (Hair side): Fragment 2

- 1 [...]Ϸⲓⲟ[...]
 [...]Ϸⲃⲁⲗ[...]
 [...]ⲧⲉⲛ ⲛⲟⲓ Ϸ[...]
 [...]ⲡⲉⲭⲣϸⲉ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲧⲉ[...]
- 5 [...]ⲓ ⲛⲏⲧⲉⲛ ⲓⲁⲃⲁ[...]
 [...]Ϸⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲉⲭⲱ ⲛ[...]
 [...]Ϸⲱⲭⲏⲉ [...]



Commentary

Fragment 1 (recto)

2. ΠΗ: In view of the wide horizontal stroke of the Π, perhaps we have here the *nomen sacrum* for ΠΝΕΥΜΑ.
3. ΔΗΔΧΩΡΙ: This reading is most probably a Greco-Coptic word; ἀναχωρέω or perhaps ἀναχωρητής. The scribe initially wrote Η (still clearly visible in the photograph), but then washed it off and replaced it with Ρ. The inventory notes for P.Mich. inv. 547 indicate that the recto of fragment 1 is “possibly” from Matthew 9:24 since the Greek verb ἀναχωρέω does appear there and since it is in close proximity to Matthew 10:3, of which the verso appears to be a copy. However, the rest of the text on the recto of fragment 1 demonstrates that it does not belong to Matthew.
4. ΝΒΔΛ ΜΜΔΙ: The reading ΒΔΛ is the Fayyumatic of ΒΟΛ (“outside, away”). With the word ΔΗΔΧΩΡΙ in the previous line, a distinctly possible translation of lines 3-4 is, “withdrew away from me”.
5. ΟΗΔΩΙ ΝΗΗ: It is most probable that the last two letters form part of the *nomen sacrum* for ΙΗCOYC. Here, the conflated form is expected (i.e., ΙΗC).⁵ The entire line here may well be restored as [ΠΕ]ΟΗΔΩΙ ΝΗΗC (“The blood of Jesus”).

Fragment 1 (verso)

- 1-7. The text seems to preserve the list of disciples as recorded in Matthew 10:3. The Greek -αιος endings for Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thaddaeus are given a -ΕΟC ending here.
4. ΘΕΟC: The Coptic should read ΜΔΘΘΕΟC ΠΤΕΛΩΝΗC (“Matthew the tax collector”). However, the modifier ΠΤΕΛΩΝΗC is lacking in our fragment; Jacob immediately follows.
- 4-5. ΙΑΚΚΩ...ΕΟC: Probably ΙΑΚΚΩΒΟC ΠΔΛΦΕΟC. There does not seem to be enough room for ΙΑΚΚΩΒΟC ΠΩΗΛΙ ΠΔΛΦΕΟC.
5. ΘΔΤΤ: The deltas of Θαδδαῖος have been replaced with taus. This orthographic shift reflects Egyptian-Coptic influence (Δ = Τ).⁶
6. ΠΓΔΝΔΝΙ: Our manuscript appears to read ΠΓΔΝΔΝΙ for (CΙΜΩΝ) ΠΚΔΝΔΝΙΤΗC (“Simon the Canaanite”). I have read Γ in our fragment instead of Κ. This spelling can be explained as another orthographic variation based upon Egyptian-Coptic influence.⁷
7. C M: The C probably completes the word ΠΓΔΝΔΝΙΤΗC from the former line, and the M and following illegible letter can be safely reconstructed as ΜΗ. We can only assume that the rest of this line read ΜΗ ΙΟΥΔΔC (“and Judas”).

Fragment 2 (recto)

1. ΕΤΔΙ: Most probably a feminine Greco-Coptic word beginning with ΔΙ, such as ΤΑΙΡΑΙΟCΥΝΗ. The Η on the next line would support this reconstruction.
2. Μ.ΝΔΗΛ: Based on the last two letters (i.e., ΗΛ), perhaps we have here a Jewish name (e.g., ΓΔΒΡΙΗΛ, ΔΔΝΗΛ). Or perhaps it is a Fayyumatic word with a “lambdacism” (λ for Ρ).
3. ΟΤΗΗΤ: “Obedient” (see Crum 364b).
4. ΤΥΒΒΔ: ΤΥΒΒΔ is the Fayyumatic spelling of ΤΒΒΟ.
5. ΤΗΛΟΥ: Possibly the Fayyumatic spelling of the inflected modifier ΤΗΡ= (“all, whole every”) with the 3rd person pl. personal suffix.

Fragment 2 (verso)

1. ΕΖΟ: Possibly restore as ΕΖΟΥΗ.
2. ΕΒΔΛ: ΕΒΔΛ is the Fayyumatic form of ΕΒΟΛ.
4. ΠΕΧΡC ΝΤΕ ΤΕ: Like most *nomina sacra* in Fayyumatic manuscripts, the *nomen sacrum* for ΧΡΙCΤΟC here is written in the conflated form (cf. ΙΗCOYC in l. 5 of fragment 1, recto). ΝΤΕ may be the “construction of appurtenance” (see Layton (n. 6), 113), “the Christ of ...”
5. ΝΗΤΕΙ: “To you” (pl.) in Fayyumatic (from Π-, ΝΔ=).
6. ΕΤΟΥΝΕΞΩ Η: A relative phrase with future auxiliary (ΠΕ in Fayyumatic) possibly composed of the verb ΞΩ.
7. ΕΥΧΗ: The fragment may be restored to read some form of the Greek word for “vow” or “prayer” (προσευχή or εὐχή).

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⁵ For a treatment of the various forms of *nomina sacra* in Greek manuscripts and a lengthy discussion about the origin of the system, see C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (Schweich Lectures 1977; London 1979), 26–48. See also Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids 2005), 95–134.

⁶ On the Coptic spelling of Greek morphs, including the Δ = Τ orthographic shift, see Bentley Layton, *A Coptic Grammar, with Chrestomathy and Glossary, Sahidic Dialect* (Porta Linguarum Orientalium, Neue Serie 20; Wiesbaden 2000), 33.

⁷ Ibid.