

3-1-1938

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Recommended Citation

Du Brau, R. T. (1938) "Recent Manuscript Discoveries," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 9 , Article 20.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol9/iss1/20>

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Recent Manuscript Discoveries¹⁾

The keeper of the manuscripts in the British Museum, Mr. H. Idris Bell, has announced the more or less recent acquisition, all within the last three years, of still more fragments of Greek papyri relating to the gospels and antedating any of the New Testament manuscripts hitherto known. He described the first of these acquisitions in an article in the *London Times* of January 23, 1935. Our own American news weekly *Time* considered this find of new papyri of sufficient newsworthy import to refer to it promptly in its issue of February 4, 1935, and with refreshing accuracy, as follows:

"Oldest Gospel. On the banks of the Jordan, Jesus Christ asked His hearers a 'strange question.' It embarrassed them. . . . Heckled by Pharisees and Herodians, Jesus countered: 'Why call Me with your mouth Master, when ye hear not what I say?' Last week episodes like these were half revealed, half suggested, in two papyrus leaves and one small papyrus scrap from a collection of Greek writings acquired in Egypt lately by the British Museum. The papyri, declared Keeper of Manuscripts Harold Idris Bell, are the oldest Christian writings extant. Of the second century, they antedate the Chester Beatty New Testament papyri (third century), which came to light four years ago. Paralleling and at times supplementing the gospels, the papyrus fragments are apparently close to the sources used by St. John in his writings."

This concluding sentence accords with Mr. Bell's suggestion that we are now brought into touch, either immediately or once removed, with a source used by St. John. With this particular critical view we disagree, remembering that as an eye-witness the beloved disciple needed no "sources" beyond his own Spirit-quickened recollection of events. But it is not impossible that the discovery may take us well into the subapostolic age.

The fragments are written in a literary hand dating from a period not later than the second century A. D. This is noteworthy, since, as *Time* correctly intimated, our until now oldest New Testament manuscripts, the Chester Beatty papyri of the gospels, the Acts, and the Pauline epistles, take us no farther back than the early third century.

The trustees of the British Museum lost no time to transcribe and publish these early gospel papyri. Their official monograph *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel, and Other Early Christian Papyri*, edited by H. I. Bell and T. C. Skeat (the assistant keeper of manuscripts), was off the presses by the end of March, 1935. The

1) It is but fair to the author to say that this paper was written about a year ago and not printed till now for lack of space. — *Es.*

first printing became almost immediately exhausted, and as a fine testimony to the prevailing interest in the papyri and things archeological and philological among English-speaking scholars, a large second printing became necessary in May, 1935. The present article gleans its more detailed information regarding these fascinating fragments from this second printing of the *Fragments*.

The papyrus leaves, owing to some technicalities in connection with the purchase funds, have been inventoried as the "Egerton Papyri," Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5.²⁾

Our chief interest, naturally, lies in Eg. P., 2, the first feature of the Museum publication. Not since the discovery of the *Logia Jesou* at Oxyrhynchus has a Christian papyrus come to light that is apt to raise so many interesting problems. It is unquestionably the earliest specifically Christian manuscript yet discovered in Egypt. Only the codex containing Numbers and Deuteronomy (P. Beatty VI), and the P. Baden 56 (Exodus) are its rivals as to age; and while it is probable enough that those manuscripts were written for the use of some Christian individual or congregation, we cannot be as certain of this as we can of the Christian origin of Eg. P. 2.³⁾

The early date is arrived at on grounds of script, e. g., the *epsilon* with its high cross stroke, sometimes begun at the left of the semicircle; the flat-bottomed *beta* with the bottom stroke extended to the left; the *delta*, et al., can all be paralleled in literary and documentary papyri actually dated in the first half of the second century. One of these, whose script has an unmistakable general resemblance, is the P. Berol. No. 6854, a document written in the reign of Trajan (who died in A. D. 117). Another of great comparability is the P. Lond. 130, a horoscope calculated from April 1, A. D. 81, and hence not likely to be later than the beginning of the second century. The third, a letter most alike to the handwriting of Eg. P. 2 is P. Fay. 110, which is specifically dated in A. D. 94.

Unusual is the contraction employed for the name of our Lord. Usually we meet it as \overline{IC} or \overline{IHC} (as still in present liturgical usage), but here, in Eg. P. 2, we consistently have the form \overline{IH} . While rare,

2) The designation Egerton Papyrus No. 1 was assigned to the "Mimes of Herodas," an earlier find.

3) As this is being written, a dispatch from London hails the discovery of the "earliest fragment of the New Testament." According to this item, the earliest known fragment of the New Testament in any language has been discovered among a collection of Greek Papyri in the John Rylands Library of Manchester. It is a tattered scrap of papyrus containing on the recto John 18:31-33 and on the verso vv. 37, 38 of the same chapter. The fragment is dated in the first half of the second century A. D. and likewise comes from Egypt.

this is nevertheless not unprecedented. The subapostolic Epistle of Barnabas relates that the 18 men circumcised by Abraham represent Jesus, because the two letters *I* and *H* according to their numerical values add up to 18. This same idea occurs also in later writers, e. g., Clemens Alexandrinus, Stromata, VI, 11. There can be little doubt that the sign \overline{IH} was in use from the Apostolic Age downwards, and it may have been the very first to be adopted. The forms \overline{IHC} , \overline{IHN} , and \overline{IHY} , which occur in P. Beatty II, are but \overline{IH} with the case endings added.

In general, the hand of the papyrus is that of a practised writer, hardly that of a professional literary scribe. There are no accents; the punctuation shows a fairly frequent high point and a $\kappa\acute{\omega}\lambda\omicron\nu$ at the end of a sentence; it has an "informal air," which recalls the cursives of the earlier part of the second century. Spelling, apart from a few itacisms ($\alpha\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\alpha$, line 19; $\eta\mu\epsilon\upsilon\nu$, line 48, etc.), which are to be expected anywhere at this period, is rather correct.

The editors have used a very satisfactory method of publication. They print first, in parallel columns, a diplomatic transcript and a transcript, line for line, with accents and aspirations and with the more obvious restorations of the lacunae. Then follows a commentary on points of reading and restoration, after which are given, again in parallel columns, the Greek text and its parallels in the canonical gospels. Translated, the fragment reads:

- (1) ". . . And Jesus said unto the lawyers, (? Punish) every wrongdoer and transgressor, and not me; . . . And turning to the rulers of the people he spake this saying, Search the scriptures, in which ye think that ye have life;
- (5) these are they which bear witness of me. Think not that I came to accuse you to my Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. And when they said, We know well that God spake unto Moses, but as for thee, we know not whence thou art, Jesus
- (10) answered and said unto them, Now is your unbelief accused. . . .
- " . . . (? they gave counsel) to the multitude to (? carry) stones together and stone him. And the rulers laid their hands on him that they might take him and (?hand him over) to the multitude; and they could not take him, because the
- (15) hour of his betrayal was not yet come. But he himself, even the Lord, going out through the midst of them, departed from them. And behold, there cometh unto him a leper and saith, Master Jesus, journeying with lepers and eating with them in the inn I myself also became a
- (20) leper. If therefore thou wilt, I am made clean. The Lord then said unto him, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him. (and the Lord said unto him), Go (and show thyself) unto the (priests). . . .
- " . . . coming unto him began to tempt him with a question,

- (25) saying, Master Jesus, we know that thou art come from God, for the things which thou doest testify above all the prophets. Tell us therefore: Is it lawful (? to render) unto kings that which pertaineth to their rule? (Shall we render unto them), or not? But Jesus, knowing their thought, being moved with indignation, said unto them, Why call ye me with your mouth Master, when ye hear not what I say? Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they
- (35) worship me, (teaching as their doctrines the) precepts (of men). . . .
- “ . . . shut up . . . in . . . place . . . its weight unweighed? And when they were perplexed at this strange question, Jesus, as he walked, stood still on the edge of the river
- (40) Jordan, and stretching forth his right hand he . . . and sprinkled it upon the . . . And then . . . water that had been sprinkled . . . before them and sent forth fruit. . . .”

Some of the more striking similarities to the language of the canonical gospels might well bear comparison here; lines 3—5 of Eg. P. 2⁴) read in the Greek: 'Ἐραυνάτε τὰς γραφάς, ἐν αἷς ὑμεῖς δοκεῖτε ζῶν ἔχειν· ἐκεῖναι εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ; while the Johanneine (5:39) parallel reads: 'Ἐραυνάτε τὰς γραφάς, ὅτι ὑμεῖς δοκεῖτε ἐν αὐταῖς ζῶν αἰώνιον ἔχειν· καὶ ἐκεῖναι εἰσιν αἱ μαρτυροῦσαι περὶ ἐμοῦ. Our interest in these slight verbal differences lies in the fact that they are attested in one form of the “Western” text. The old Latin versions (a and b) and the Syrian version edited in 1858 by Curetonius also have “*in quibus putatis vos vitam habere, haec [b: haec] sunt quae de me testificantur.*” The Armenian and the Latin version ff2 (a European translation of the fifth century) have only the first clause.

Eg. P. 2, lines 20—22: 'Ἐὰν οὖν σὺ θέλῃς, καθαρίζομαι . . . θέλω καθαρίσθητι, καὶ εὐθέως ἀπέστη ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα. Now compare Matt. 8:2, 3: 'Ἐὰν θέλῃς, δύνασαι με καθαρῆσαι . . . (do. Luke 5:13) θέλω, καθαρίσθητι. καὶ εὐθέως ἐκαθερίσθη αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα. Mark 1:40, 41: ὅτι ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαι με καθαρῆσαι . . . θέλω, καθαρίσθητι. καὶ εὐθὺς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθερίσθη. Luke 5:13: θέλω, καθαρίσθητι· καὶ εὐθέως ἡ λέπρα ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ. The editors are of the opinion that this may be the same incident recorded in Matt. 8, Mark 1, and Luke 5, although the details differ. A comparison of the three synoptic accounts shows that these three agree throughout (with the exception of such vivid details as St. Mark's σπλαγχνισθεῖς ἐμβρομησάμενος or St. Luke's πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον) in substance and wording. It would seem that in the present papyrus the writer freely embroidered the story as we have it in the synoptic gospels,

4) For more convenient comparison, these line numbers refer to numbering of lines as given in the translation above; they do not agree with the lines in the original.

or he may have reduced to writing a story as handed down to him through another eye-witness. The statement of the leper that he had consorted with other lepers and thus gotten infected seems at first glance implausible, the writer not having knowledge of the circumstances attending the occasion, since Jewish law enjoined strict segregation of the leprous. However, because of the fact that these quarantine regulations were a matter of most common knowledge this detail becomes an argument for authenticity of the story rather than for invention on the part of the writer.

Eg. P. 2, lines 33—36: 'Ο λαός οὗτος τοῖς χεῖλεσιν αὐτῶν τιμῶσιν με, ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ' ἐμοῦ. μάτην με σέβονται, ἐντάματα. . . . Compare Matt. 15:7, 8: 'Ο λαός οὗτος τοῖς χεῖλεσιν με τιμᾷ, ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ' ἐμοῦ· μάτην δὲ σέβονται με διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας ἐντάματα ἀνθρώπων. It is certainly significant that also in this papyrus our Lord applies to Himself the language of Is. 29:13, referring to God. These lines offer striking parallels to the synoptists. Both, Matthew (15:7-9) and Mark (7:6,7) quote the passage in a different context, *viz.*, in connection with the eating with unwashed hands. Here, the ὑποκριταί is omitted, the wording of the introduction to the quotation is different, and the quotation itself differs from the synoptic. χεῖλεσιν αὐτῶν τιμῶσιν με (as in the LXX) replaces χεῖλεσίν με τιμᾷ. The question here asked of Jesus is of the same type and general purpose as that of the Herodians; no doubt the incident is the same, although it could be an earlier and similar attempt of the Lord's enemies to entrap Him.

Twice in Eg. P. 2, line 18 and line 25, our Lord is addressed as Διδάσκαλε Ἰησοῦ, a form of address not recorded in the canonical gospels. There the Lord is addressed διδάσκαλε often enough, true, but without the proper noun Ἰησοῦ.

In its relation to the canonical gospels it is easier to say what the papyrus is not than what it is. We have here neither a collection of sayings, as the Oxyrhynchus Logia, nor a series of excerpts and quotations. Not less clear is it that this may not be a gospel harmony, for the fragment contains matter not in any of the gospels, and where the incidents seem the same as those recorded by the evangelists, they are told in an entirely different manner. The editors of Eg. P. 2 decided that "it is in fact indubitably a real gospel, but it is easier to establish this than to decide whether it can be connected with any known uncanonical gospel." Their final honest conclusion is: "A harvest of unsolved problems. Some of these are likely to prove insoluble unless further evidence comes to light, but it may be hoped that others will at least be brought nearer to a solution by the labors of scholars more competent in the field of Biblical studies, to whose attention the fragments must now be left."

To classify Eg. P. 2 with the apocrypha is not so easy. Most of

the known New Testament apocrypha can be ruled out at once. Some are well-known "Passions" and "Infancy Gospels," whereas Eg. P. 2 is designed along much the same lines as the canonical gospels. The whole scale and scope of the narrative, the variety of incidents recorded, the mixture of sayings and miracles, surely suggest such conclusion. Again, most of the apocrypha are more or less heretical, often written in the interest of some dissenting and semiphilosophical sect. Here, however, is not the slightest tendency of any heresy nor the sensational exaggeration of traditional matter so characteristic of the apocryphal writer. The unknown author has an interest that is primarily historical. His style is sober and matter-of-fact.

In my personal opinion this fragment could well represent the unofficial notes of an interested bystander in the days of Christ, private recollections, which were not written down by inspiration and hence not included in the inspired canon. As corroborative, contemporary literature, portraying the great things that had come to pass in Jerusalem and set down in writing during the lifetime of Polycarp, Ignatius, or even St. John,⁵⁾ this Egerton papyrus certainly holds a thrill for the textual student.

Egerton Papyrus 3

Little doubt remains as to the character of Eg. P. 3, the second of the collection of fragments published and transcribed by Bell and Skeat. The fifteen small fragments which make up Eg. P. 3 are quite likely to have been written well before 250 A. D. Accordingly, they can be regarded as one of the earliest surviving manuscripts of Christian theological literature, for they obviously are a commentary on the gospels. While all intelligible passages are chiefly concerned with exegesis, the Eg. P. 3 also contains homiletic, dogmatic, apologetic, and polemic annotations. It seems to have been a very practical and serviceable commentary of that early era.

Of conjectures as to its probable authorship there have been several. While in this connection the thought of Origen is attractive, early exegete that he was, it is nevertheless highly improbable. The bulk of his exegetical work on the New Testament was accomplished after his flight from Alexandria in 232. After that tragic date there was no more room in Egypt either for Origen or for his writings.

But there are exegetic passages of some length in Irenaeus; nor is it improbable that these fragments might be from his pen. Additional probability is furnished by the fact that among the exceedingly sparse papyri of patristic literature, two are from third-

5) In the passages paralleled in St. John one can easily detect a Johannine phraseology but not necessarily a Johannine style.

century manuscripts of Irenaeus, one of which rivals the present papyrus in antiquity.⁶⁾ Apart from Irenaeus there was very little exegesis found among early Christian writers. In this intricate branch of theology they were outdistanced by the Gnostics. It has been thought that Eg. P. 3 might be a part of the large Gnostic 'Εξηγητά, in 24 books, by Basilides of Alexandria, who flourished in the reign of Hadrian. Our serious objection to this idea is that, according to Jerome, he, like Marcion and other heretics, rejected the epistles to Timothy,⁷⁾ a quotation from the second of which is easily recognizable in the papyrus, lines 132, 133.

The scribe's hand is clear and regular, and his orthography is good. Of abbreviations he uses ΚC̄ (Kyrios) and ΘC̄ (Theos) and their inflectional forms. Once he has ΙN̄ (line 68). There are no accents or punctuation marks; only the rough aspiration occurs a few times. The commentary contains Matt. 4:5; 5:8; 27:52, 53; John 1:14, 29; 6:55; Phil. 2:6; 2 Tim. 2:19; Ps. 11:7. In Matt. 27:52 the commentary agrees with the *textus receptus*, Codex Alexandrinus, Ephraemi rescriptus, the Freer Manuscripts, and the Oxford and St. Gallen Gospel Manuscripts, of the ninth century, as against the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Bezae, Seidelianus I, Paris Gospels, of the tenth century, and the Koridethi Gospels⁸⁾ in reading ἡγέρθη for ἡγέρθησαν.

Egerton Papyrus 4

This papyrus consists of two fragments containing 2 Chron. 24: 17-27, the remnant of a codex of 2 Chronicles of the third century. The hand is a regular uncial of that century. There are no accents. High point is frequent. *Nomina sacra* employed are: ΚC̄ and ΘC̄. Prof. Alfred Rahlfs of Septuaginta fame has assigned to this leaf the number 971 in his list of Old Testament manuscripts.

In line 43 occurs a unique spelling (or misspelling) of David: Δαουιδ.

Egerton Papyrus 5

The last selection in Bell and Skeats's publication of recent papyri discoveries is a fascinating "leaf from a liturgical book" of the fourth or fifth century. When we consider our scant knowledge of the early liturgics of the Church, the finding of a complete page from a liturgical book written 1400 or 1500 years ago becomes an important event. Closer study reveals this fragment to be part of a definite common service book. In the upper margins appear numbers referring to a certain succession and recurrence of prayers.

6) P. Oxy. 405, and a papyrus at Jena, published by H. Lietzmann in *Nachrichten der Ges. der Wissenschaft zu Goettingen*, 1912, pp. 291-320.

7) Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* I, 266.

8) TR, A, C, W, Γ, Δ, vs. Aleph, B, D, G, L, Θ, et famm. 1, 13.

Both phraseology and vocabulary are somewhat removed from those of the other extant liturgies.⁹⁾ The wording is Biblical throughout, but there is little direct quotation from the Scriptures. In the body of the text the all-important *ἄφεις ἀμαρτιῶν* comes to our attention almost immediately. The editors translate the liturgy as follows:

"... sanctify,¹⁰⁾ sustain, gather, govern, establish, glorify,¹¹⁾ confirm, pasture, raise up (?), enlighten, pacify, administer, perfect — the people which Thou hast established, the peculiar people, the people which Thou hast ransomed,¹²⁾ the people which Thou hast called,¹³⁾ Thy people, the sheep of Thy pasture. Thou art the only Physician of our ailing souls, keep us in Thy joy (?), heal us in sickness, cast us not away as unfit to receive Thy healing. The word of Thy mouth is the giver of health.

"II. These things we beg of Thee, Master;¹⁴⁾ remit whatever we have done amiss;¹⁵⁾ check [?] whatever leads [?] us to sin; neither record against us all that we have done unlawfully. Forgiveness of sin is the expression of Thy long-suffering; it is a fair thing, O Immortal, not to be wroth with mortals doomed to destruction, short-lived, inhabiting a toilsome world. Never dost Thou cease to do good, for Thou art bountiful; Thou givest all, taking naught, for Thou lackest nothing; every righteous thing is Thine; unrighteousness alone is not Thine. Evil is that which Thou wouldest not, the child of our imaginations. . . . Receive from us these psalmodies, these hymnodies, these prayers, these supplications, these entreaties, these requests,¹⁶⁾ these confessions, these petitions,¹⁷⁾ these thanksgivings, this readiness, this earnestness, these vigils, these . . ., these couchings upon the earth, these prayerful utterances.¹⁸⁾ Having a kindly Master in Thee, the eternal King, we beseech Thee [to behold?] our pitiful state. . . ."

Closely echoing the style of 2 Cor. 11:27 and the vocabulary of Ps. 79:13; 95:7; 99:3, *et al.*, this fourth- or fifth-century prayer in its liturgical interchange of thesis and antithesis and heaping of metaphors, often rises to beautiful poetic heights. Thus, a searching study of each scrap of papyrus yielded by the desert sands may bring us rich reward.

R. T. DU BRAU

9) P. Wuerzb. 3; G. Ghedini, "Frammenti liturgici in un papiro milanese," 1933; and C. Del Grande, "Liturgiae Preces Hymni Christianorum e papyris collecti," Neapoli 1934; also P. Oxyr. 925, a Christian Prayer, fifth century.

10) ἁγιάσον.

11) θείξασον.

12) ἐλυτρώσω.

13) ἐκάλεσας.

14) Δέσποτα.

15) ἡμάρομεν.

16) εὐχάς, παρακαλήσεις, δεήσεις, ἀξιώσεις.

17) τὰς αἰτήσεις.

18) εὐκτηρίου φωνάς.