The papyrus fragment P.Vindob. G 42417 offers a new testimony to the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews. The fragment measures 3.3 x 5.2 cm.; its margins are no longer extant; there are parts of Heb. 2.9-11 on its recto and Heb. 3.3-6 on its verso. The script runs along the fibres on the recto, and across the fibres on the verso.

Several witnesses to the Letter to the Hebrews have come down to us from Late Antique Egypt. The catalogues of J. van Haelst\(^1\) and K. Aland\(^2\) list eleven which were written on various materials (papyrus, parchment or ostraca).\(^3\) Moreover, there is the papyrus codex P.Laur. IV 142 of the late fourth century,\(^4\) as well as the parchment codex Sinai,
Katharinen-Kl. MG 70 + St. Petersburg, Ross. Nac. Bibl., Gr. 9 (Gregory–Aland 0285) of the sixth century. The text on the recto of the fragment examined here is, however, to my knowledge, not attested by any of the papyri or other early Christian documents from Egypt. On the other hand, the text on the verso is attested by P.Oxy. IV 657, col. I (3rd/4th cent.), which contains a substantial part of the Letter to the Hebrews, as well as by a parchment codex from Egypt, Washington, Smithsonian Institute, Freer Gallery of Art, 06.275 (5th/6th cent.).

As is usually the case with Christian texts, it appears that the fragment in question, which is written on both sides, comes from a now lost codex. The preserved text allows us to calculate the rough dimensions of the original folio. The fact that there must have been around fifty words on either side of the fragment, which has a height of 5 cm., while there are 172 words missing between the preserved parts, suggests that the space needed for the missing words must have been 17 cm. high. If one adds the length of the preserved fragment, i.e. 5 cm., plus 3 cm. for each of the upper and lower margins, it could then be deduced that the original folio was 28 cm. high. The width of the written column can also be calculated. Since there are approximately eight letters to the line on the 3.3 cm. wide fragment, while there must have originally been 34 letters to the line, the original column must have been 14 cm. wide. If another 4 cm. are allowed for the left-hand and right-hand margins, it turns out that the original folio was 18 cm. wide. The codex, therefore, measured 18 x 28 cm., which is a perfectly normal size for the papyrus codices of the time.

From the point of view of textual criticism attention should be drawn to line 10, η ε κατα[. Here the manuscript tradition has ὁ δὲ πάντα (also τὰ πάντα attested) κατασκευάσας θεός. The reading πάντα κατα[σκευάς is, however, palaeographically impossible for our


fragment. A probable reconstruction that would remain as close to the original as possible would be: [... ὁ δὲ θεὸς κατά σκέυασίς (τα) πάντα ...], in which case the varying word order would have resulted from an error of the scribe or his model. It should, furthermore, be noted that there is a single case of accentuation in the text (a spiritus asper in line 4), whereas the nomen sacrum, ην, which is usual both in medieval manuscripts and in papyri, is also encountered here.

The fragment can be safely dated by applying palaeographical criteria. In fact, even though several characteristics of the elegant script point to an early dating, the drawing of specific letters such as ε and μ allows us to date the papyrus to the sixth or seventh century.

In what follows, a diplomatic transcription of the fragment is presented and then a reconstructed version of the text. It should be borne in mind that the allocation of the lost text in each line is hypothetical. Owing to the loss of the margins, there is no indication of the position the fragment originally occupied in the column and, consequently, as to exactly where a line stopped and the next began.


8. Cf., e.g., R. Seider, Paläographie der griechischen Papyri, II (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1970), no. 44 (P.Bodm. II, Jn 9.28–35; middle of the 2nd cent.) and no. 54 (P.Beatty VII, Ezek. 16.57ff.; 3rd/4th cent.).

9. Cf., e.g., K. Treu, ‘Neue neutestamentliche Fragmente der Berliner Papyrusammlung’, APF 18 (1966), pp. 23–38, esp. p. 36 (P.Berol. 3605) (Plate in R. Cribiore, Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt [American Studies in Papyrology, 36; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996], p. 410, plate 80) and A. Deissmann, Die Septuaginta-Papyri und andere altchristliche Texte (Pap.Heid., I; Heidelberg: Winter, 1905), no. 1 with plates (plate of a folio, also in Seider, Paläographie, II, no. 67, plate 37). Important elements of the same type of script are also to be found in papyrus documents of the period; cf., e.g., CPR VII 27 (6th/7th cent.).
Diplomatic Transcription

Recto

1 Ἰην διὸ[ ]
2 ἦ εἴτε[ ]
3 ἅτος γε[ ]
4 ὁ δὲ οὖν τὰ π[ ]
5 οὐς εἰς δο[ ]
6 ἐπιτηριάς[ ]
7 ε γαρ[ ]

Line 4 ὁν

Verso

8 ὡ οἰκ[ ]
9 ὡς κα[ ]
10 ἐ κατα[ ]
11 πιστος εὐ[ ]
12 ἀρτύριον τ[ ]
13 ε υιος επι τ[ ]
14 ὑ ημε[ ]

Line 10 ὁ δὲ πάντα κατασκευάσας θεός εδ.
Reconstructed Version

Recto

[ ... 2.9 τὸν δὲ βραχὺ τι παρ’ ἄγγέλους ἡλι−]

1 [απωμένον βλέπομεν] Ἰη(σού)ν διὰ [τὸ πάθημα τοῦ]

2 [θανάτου δόξη καὶ τιμ]ῇ ἐστε[φανωμένον, ὅπως]

3 [χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ πα]γῶς γε[ύσηται θανάτου.]

4 [2.10 Ἐπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτ[ω], δι’ ὄν τὰ π[άντα καὶ δι’ ο[ῦ]

5 [τὰ πάντα, πολλοὺς υἱ]οὺς εἰς δό[ξαν ἀγαγόντα]

6 [τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς] σωτηρίας [αὐτῶν διὰ παθη−]

7 [μάτων τελειώσαι. 2.11 ὁ τ[ὲ γὰρ [ἀγιάζων κτλ.]

Verso

[ 3.3 καθ’ ὄσον πλείονα]}

8 [τιμὴν ἔχει το]ῦ ὦκο[υ ὁ κατασκευάσας αὐτὸν.]

9 [3.4 πᾶς γὰρ ο[ίκ]ος κατ[ασκευάζεται ὑπό]

10 [τινος, ὁ δὲ θεὸς κατα[σκευάσας πάντα. 3.5 καὶ]

11 [Μούσῃς μὲν] πιστὸς ἐν [ὁλῳ τῷ ο[ίκω αὐτο[ῦ ὡς]

12 [θεράπων εἰς μ]ν]ηρτύριον τ[ῶν λαληθησομένων,]

13 [3.6 Χρι[στός δὲ ὧς] υἱὸς ἐπὶ τ[ῶν ο[ίκον αὐτο[ῦ]]

14 [οῦ ο[ίκος ἐσμε]ν ἡμε[ῖς κτλ.]
Jesus is the Perfection that was Promised: The Letter to the Hebrews is essentially an exhortation not to leave the perfect to go back to the imperfect. The Temple and what takes place there is now no more than a movie set filled with actors playing their roles. Jesus is the true and perfect High Priest, who enters into the true and actual Holy of Holies. To this he adds this warning: By speaking of a new covenant, He has made the first one obsolete, and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear (Heb 8:13). Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Ancient Christian writers consider the Epistle to the Hebrews as the 14th Letter of the Pauline Corpus in the New Testament of the Bible. An example of typology is given: “and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel” (12:24). Noteworthy is the admonition: “do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for some have entertained angels unawares” (13:2). Hebrews 10:1-3 refers to the Temple liturgy as a present reality, and as such would have had to occur before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, which suggests an early writing to the Letter to the Hebrews. Hebrews 11:13-16, which speaks of pilgrims, served as an inspiration to William Bradford and the Pilgrims on the Mayflower! Finally, the melodies are analyzed in the light of the surviving oral traditions as a source for historical study of Italian Jewish music traditions. This book deals with the theology of the Church of Smyrna from its foundation up to the Council of Nicaea in 325. The author provides a critical historical evaluation of the documentary sources and certain aspects particularly deserving of discussion. He makes a meticulous study of the history of the city, its gods and institutions, the set-up of the Jewish and Christian communities and the response of the latter to the imperial cult. A New Testimony to the Letter to the Hebrews (2. 9-11 and 3.3-6). January 2002. Amphilochoi Papathomas. Letter to the Hebrews, New Testament letter traditionally attributed to St. Paul the Apostle but now widely believed to be the work of another Jewish Christian, perhaps one of Paul’s associates. The letter was composed sometime during the latter half of the 1st century and is the 19th book of the New Testament canon. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Letter to the Hebrews". Encyclopedia Britannica, 20 Aug. 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Letter-to-the-Hebrews. Accessed 25 July 2021. Copy Citation.