

οἱ τοῦ θεοῦ  
οὐδὲν ἴσους  
τὴν χάριν  
ἐκκλῆσιν  
πολλοῦ  
καὶ ἐν  
αὐτῇ

Recto.

τοῦ θεοῦ  
οὐδὲν ἴσους  
τὴν χάριν  
ἐκκλῆσιν  
πολλοῦ  
καὶ ἐν  
αὐτῇ

Verso.

## AN UNPUBLISHED FRAGMENT OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL IN THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY.<sup>1</sup>

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*P. Ryl. Gk. 457. Fragment of a leaf of a papyrus codex, 8.9 × 6 cm. ; text 6.4 × 5.8 cm. ; upper margin and part of inner margin preserved. Written in dark ink on papyrus light in colour and of good quality. On verso a κόλλημα or perhaps part of a strengthening strip to cover the fold of the sheet. First half of the second century.*

THE discovery of the famous Chester Beatty biblical papyri now in course of publication,<sup>2</sup> followed close by that of the Unknown Gospel (P. Egerton 2) in the British Museum,<sup>3</sup> has added so much to our knowledge of the history of the text and of the way in which it was produced (with all that this involves for the study of early Christianity in general) and at the same time has opened up so wide a field for speculation that a new piece of evidence, however small, is of quite peculiar interest. This must be the excuse for the publication here of a small fragment whose text is given below, one of the as yet unpublished papyri in the possession of the John Rylands Library, which contains on the recto part of verses 31-33, on the verso part of verses 37-38 of ch. xviii. of St. John's Gospel. (The fact that it is part of a codex, not of a roll, need now cause no surprise ; thanks to recent discoveries we are coming to regard

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Dr. H. I. Bell for very kindly advising me on several matters in the preparation of this article.

<sup>2</sup> The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, fasc. 1-4, by F. G. Kenyon, London, 1933-1934. The codex of Gospels and Acts to which reference will be made is published in the second fascicule.

<sup>3</sup> *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Early Christian Papyri*, by H. Idris Bell and T. C. Skeat, London, 1935. The volume is henceforward referred to as *P. Lond. Christ.*

the codex as the normal vehicle for Christian literature even in the second century.)<sup>1</sup> Its importance may be stated very briefly : if the argument of the present article is correct, it is the earliest known fragment of any part of the New Testament and probably the earliest witness to the existence of the Gospel according to St. John. As this claim rests solely upon considerations of palæography, it is as well to turn our attention to this before embarking on the discussion of other problems, none the less interesting if incapable of a final solution, which such a text suggests.

Any exact dating of book hands is, of course, out of the question ; all we can do is to compare the script as a whole and the forms of particular letters with those found in other texts and particularly in dated documents. A glance at the accompanying photograph shows the distinct character of our text ; the scribe writes in a heavy, rounded and rather elaborate hand, often uses several strokes to form a single letter (cf. the eta and particularly the sigma in Recto, l. 3) with a rather clumsy effect and is fond of adding a small flourish or hook to the end of his strokes (cf. the omega, the iota and the upsilon) ; among particular letters the epsilon with its cross stroke a little above the centre, the delta, the upsilon and the mu may be noted. Some of these features can be paralleled from dated documents ; but before citing any of these it will be convenient to mention two literary texts to which it bears a striking resemblance. The first of these is no. 19 (c) in Schubart's *Papyri Graecae Berolinenses*, part of a roll containing Iliad, Bk. IX., assigned to the end of the first or beginning of the second century in the original publication, but which Schubart now prefers to date to the closing decades of the first century ;<sup>2</sup> in spite of some differences (notably the alpha which is of an earlier type) the Berlin text presents the closest parallel to our text that I have been able to find—a view which I was glad to find shared by so great an authority as Sir Frederic Kenyon. The second text—and this resemblance,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. F. G. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Greece and Rome*, pp. 94 *sqq.* Since that was written, there is the additional evidence of the papyri published in *P. Lond. Christ.*

<sup>2</sup> *Griechische Paläographie*, pp. 117-118.

by no means the only one between the two manuscripts, is suggestive—is P. Egerton 2, assigned by the editors to the middle of the second century, a judgment which, as they remark, errs, if at all, on the side of caution.<sup>1</sup> Although P. Egerton 2 is written in a lighter and less laboured hand, the family resemblance between the two is unmistakable; the forms of the upsilon, the mu and the delta in the two texts are akin and most of the characteristics of our hand are to be found, though in a less accentuated form, in P. Egerton 2. To turn to dated documents: here the most important parallels are P. Fayum 110 (A.D. 94), which shows, as does our text, the simultaneous use of two forms of alpha, and, less close, *New Palæographical Society* II, 98 (P. Lond. 2078, a private letter written in the reign of Domitian), while of interest for forms of particular letters are P. Oslo 22, a petition dated in A.D. 127 (*n.b.* the eta, the mu and the iota) and Schubart, *Griechische Paläographie*, Abb. 34 (p. 59), a document written before the death of Trajan in A.D. 117. If only to exemplify the need of caution, it should be mentioned that Sir Frederic Kenyon, while of the opinion that the affinities of the text are early rather than late<sup>2</sup> and that one can hardly go wrong in dating it in the first half of the second century, points out that some similarities are to be found in P. Flor. 1, a cursive document of A.D. 153. In this text the upsilon, the omega and sometimes the alpha are similar to those in our text, but other letters are radically different and its general style is not very close to that of P. Ryl. Gk. 457. On the whole we may accept with some confidence the first half of the second century as the period in which P. Ryl. Gk. 457 was most probably written—a judgment I should be much more loth to pronounce were it not supported by Sir Frederic Kenyon, Dr. W. Schubart and Dr. H. I. Bell who have seen photographs of the text and whose experience and authority in these matters are unrivalled.

A few other palæographical niceties deserve mention. In

<sup>1</sup> *P. Lond. Christ.*, pp. 1 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> On this point Dr. Schubart writes: "Manche Züge erinnern sogar an das 1. Jahrhundert; aber in Ganzen führt der Stil der Schrift doch mehr ins 2. Jahrhundert."

employing the diaeresis both properly (as in R. l. 2 *οὐδὲναῖνα*) and improperly (e.g. in *ῥα* in V. l. 2) and in omission of the iota adscript our papyrus is in agreement with P. Egerton 2; that both these practices are not inconsistent with a date in the first half of the second century has been clearly shown by the editors of that text and needs no discussion here.<sup>1</sup> The writer of P. Ryl. Gk. 457 (as far as one can judge from the scanty evidence) used neither stops nor breathings; his orthography, apart from a couple of itacisms, is good and his writing, if not that of a practised scribe, is painstaking and regular. In this respect the verdict of the editors of P. Egerton 2 upon the writer of that text is applicable to ours: P. Ryl. Gk. 457 also has a somewhat "informal air" about it and with no claims to fine writing is yet a careful piece of work. But there is one point on which P. Ryl. Gk. 457 in all probability differs from P. Egerton 2, and as it may be of importance for the date, it is as well to consider it now: that is, the method of writing the *nomina sacra*. Throughout P. Egerton 2 certain *nomina sacra* are invariably contracted<sup>2</sup> in accordance with what is almost universal practice and the contraction marked by a horizontal line drawn over the top of the letters. Unfortunately none of the *nomina sacra* which are abbreviated either in P. Egerton 2 or in the Chester Beatty codex of Gospels and Acts occurs in the surviving text of our fragment, but in R. l. 5 where *Ἰησοῦν* must be supplied it is probable that this which, if any of the *nomina sacra* (to judge from later practice), would be contracted, was left unabbreviated;<sup>3</sup> if

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> For the *nomina sacra* in P. Egerton 2, *v. op. cit.*, pp. 2-4: for those in the Chester Beatty papyri *v. Kenyon's* article in *Aegyptus* XIII, pp. 5-10.

<sup>3</sup> Traube, *Nomina Sacra*, p. 113, remarks "Es gibt wohl keine griechische Handschrift, die die Namen des Gottessohnes mit vollen Buchstaben böte; kommt einmal ein ausgeschriebenes *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ* vor, so kann man meist ganz leicht die Absicht oder das Versehen nachweisen." The only exception to this rule among papyri quoted by Traube is P. Oxy. 407, a Christian prayer of the third or fourth century; probably (*v. Traube, op. cit.*, p. 90) this is a private copy and as such not evidence for the practice in theological texts proper. It is difficult to argue from the fourth and subsequent centuries to the second; but the paucity of manuscripts in which *nomina* other than *Ἰησοῦς* or *Χρίστος* appear uncontracted, even occasionally, is very striking, cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 53 *sqq.* In the Abinnaeus papyri, a group of official and business documents of the middle

it was uncontracted, the line would contain 32 letters, or 33 if *Πειλάτος* is read for *Πιλάτος*; if contracted to  $\overline{\text{IH}}$ , there would be only 28 letters, whereas the average number of letters per line for the four lines where no possible *nomina sacra* are to be supplied, is 33, ( $\overline{\text{IHN}}$ , found in the Chester Beatty papyri of the early third century is also a possibility, but the editors of P. Egerton 2 suggest that  $\overline{\text{IH}}$  may be the earlier form). In Recto l. 2 *Ἰησοῦ* could be contracted and there would remain either 31 or 32 letters to the line according to the form of the contraction; but the probability is that the *nomina* (or at least *Ἰησοῦς*) were uncontracted in this text. Not much stress can be laid on this argument, especially as we must reckon with the possibility of varieties of spelling or text in the missing passages; but still it remains a slight support for the early date to which the manuscript has been assigned on palæographical grounds. For while it is no doubt true that the presence of the abbreviated *nomina sacra* in a manuscript is no evidence against a second century date (as in the case of P. Egerton 2), especially as the practice was probably Jewish in origin and is found in early papyri of the Septuagint such as P. Baden 56 and the Chester Beatty codex of Numbers and Deuteronomy, both of the second century,<sup>1</sup> yet this would make it more difficult to assign a late date to a manuscript in which *Ἰησοῦς* at least—for *θεός* and *κύριος* the text supplies no evidence—remains uncontracted, suggesting

fourth century,  $\overline{\text{θεω}}$  and  $\overline{\text{θεον}}$  (P. Lond. II, p. 301) are found side by side with the contracted forms: Traube (p. 49) considers this as the mark of a "ganz ungebildeter Schreiber." See further, for the method of writing *nomina sacra* in the papyri, G. Rudberg, *Neutestamentlicher Text und Nomina Sacra*, p. 60, and, for a brief discussion of fresh evidence and theories advanced since Traube's publication, Franz Boll's introduction to Traube, *Vorlesungen und Abhandlungen* III, pp. vi-x.

<sup>1</sup> To the best of my knowledge the only biblical papyrus in which *θεός* and *κύριος* appear uncontracted is P. Oxy. 656, a codex of Genesis assigned to the early third century. In the introduction the editors remark that, although the absence of contraction may be no more than an individual peculiarity, it might be construed as evidence for the antiquity of the text. Traube, however (*op. cit.*, p. 90), classes this fragment with the fifth-century palimpsest of Aquila's translation of the Psalms (apparently the only MS. which consistently gives the uncontracted forms of these words), and regards both as being influenced by a secondary and non-Alexandrine Jewish tradition.

as it does that either the Christian sacred books were not yet on a par with the Septuagint or that a canon was not yet established.

Another question of bibliographical interest remains to which an answer must be attempted—what was the size of the original codex and how much did it contain? Part of seven lines both on recto and verso are preserved together with part of the inner margin so that it is possible to calculate not only the amount of text contained in a single page, but also the length of the line and the size of the page. The average number of letters to the line is 33 on the recto and 29/30 on the verso. (This disparity is explained, as Mr. T. C. Skeat has pointed out to me, by the fact that whereas on the verso the scribe was writing toward the inner margin and would be limited by the fold of the leaf, i.e. if he wrote too close the initial letters of the right-hand columns of the outer leaves would be obscured, on the recto he was writing towards the outer margin and so could allow himself more latitude.) Eleven lines would be required to fill the gap between recto and verso : this gives us a page of eighteen lines and allowing for a lower margin of the same height as the upper, the codex would have been a little over 21 cm. high while its breadth—assuming that the margin was uniform—would be c. 20 cm. Making allowance for the fact that the lines on the verso were slightly shorter than those on the recto, we can estimate that the entire Gospel of St. John would occupy 130 pages or, with title-page, probably 66 leaves. What is slightly surprising is the size of the codex relative to the quantity of text it contained. A comparison with the Chester Beatty codex of Gospels and Acts is interesting : this, measuring  $10 \times 8$  inches (as compared with the  $8.25 \times 8$  inches of P. Ryl. Gk. 457) with 39 lines to the page and nearly 50 letters to the line, contained all five books within 220 pages or 110 leaves. A codex written on the scale of P. Ryl. Gk. 457, in order to contain the four Gospels alone, would have to consist of approximately 288 leaves. Although it would be unsafe to be dogmatic, it is highly unlikely that, at this early date, a papyrus codex of such a size would have been manufactured. (The largest of the Chester Beatty codices, from the figures given by the editor, seems to have been that of Isaiah which when

complete would have consisted of a single quire of 112 leaves.)<sup>1</sup> It is far more probable that the codex to which this fragment belonged contained nothing but the one Gospel; we may then compare it with P. Oxy. 208 + 1781, a third-century papyrus codex of St. John's Gospel, which, with 27 lines to the page and 27 letters to the line, would have consisted when complete of 50 leaves. This is not in itself surprising, especially when we remember that this Gospel was not immune from attack as late as the end of the second century and in some circles at least was not regarded as being of equal authority with the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>2</sup> Kenyon has argued from the existence of the second-century codex of Numbers and Deuteronomy that we

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the size of papyrus codices v. Gardthausen, *Griechische Paläographie*, pp. 155-157 (who quotes none consisting of more than 40 leaves), Schubart, *Das Buch bei den Griechen und Römern*, p. 128, and Kenyon, *Greek Palaeography*, p. 25. I do not know of any full treatment of this subject; but the largest papyrus codices of Greek texts of early date known to me (apart from the Chester Beatty papyri, for which see Kenyon, fasc. 1, pp. 6-9) are as follows:

(i) P. Oxy. 1011 remains of a codex of Callimachus *Aitia* and *Iambi*, late fourth century, consisting originally of over 100 leaves.

(ii) The Michigan *Shepherd of Hermas* (ed. Campbell Bonner, University of Michigan Press, 1934), second half of the third century, 86 leaves, with originally 12 or 14 more.

(iii) The Menander codex (ed. G. Lefebvre, Cairo, 1907), fifth century, 70 leaves.

(iv) P. Oxy. 22, part of a codex containing the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, fifth century, at least 65 leaves.

(v) The Morgan papyrus of *Iliad*, xi.-xvi. (v. Plaumann, *SB. Preuss. Akad.*, 1912, pp. 1202 *sqq.*), probably the second volume of a three-volume edition, c. A.D. 300, 62 leaves.

(vi) The Washington MS. of the Minor Prophets (ed. H. A. Sanders, University of Michigan Humanistic Series, vol. xxi.), second half of the third century, probably 48 leaves.

(vii) The Berlin codex of Aristophanes (ed. Schubart-Wilamowitz, *Berliner Klassikertexte*, V. xviii), fifth century, of at least 40 leaves.

Among parchment codices of Egyptian provenance and comparatively early date the largest known to me is P. Ryl. 1, 53, a codex of the *Odyssey* of the late third or early fourth century, which when complete would have consisted of 207 leaves; it is run close by the fifth-century Washington MS. of the Gospels (ed. H. A. Sanders, New York, 1912) of 187 leaves. It may be noted that the earliest in this list is at least 100 years later than P. Ryl. Gk. 457; but that quite large papyrus codices were used at an early date is shown by the fact that the earliest of the Chester Beatty papyri, the codex of Numbers and Deuteronomy which is assigned to the second century, consisted of 108 leaves.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, pp. 436 *sqq.*



should be prepared to admit that the codex may have been used for the books of the New Testament in the second century (a suggestion amply confirmed by P. Egerton 2 and the present text), and also that the Christians of that period may have been accustomed to see the four Gospels in a single book ;<sup>1</sup> while this discovery by no means invalidates this second suggestion, yet we may do well to reflect that in circles where the Gospels still circulated in separate codices, i.e. where the stage of including the four in a single book and consequently of regarding them as an authoritative unity had not been reached, it would be considerably easier to explain the existence of such an apparently orthodox and respectable "fifth gospel" as that represented by P. Egerton 2.<sup>2</sup> Why the early Christian communities should have preferred to have their sacred books written in the codex form rather than in the common roll form remains as obscure as ever ; it may be remarked in passing that the papyrus codex was cheaper than the roll in that both sides of the papyrus could be utilised with the minimum of inconvenience to the reader, although in this case, to judge from the spacing and the size of the hand, it is unlikely that the format was affected by considerations of economy.

Unfortunately, the provenance of the papyrus cannot be exactly determined. It was one of a large number purchased for the Library by the late B. P. Grenfell in 1920 ; the group to which it belongs consists of some literary texts and documents of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, all of which are stated to have come either from the Fayum or from Oxyrhynchos. In view of the enormous number of papyri found in both of these districts, this information is not of very much value. The editors of P. Egerton 2 note that Oxyrhynchos is "the most natural place of origin for the Gospel fragments" :<sup>3</sup> it would be most

<sup>1</sup> *Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the Greek Bible*, pp. 32-35.

<sup>2</sup> For the general character of this Gospel, cf. *P. Lond. Christ.*, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7. On the hypothesis that both P. Egerton 2 and P. Ryl. 457 came from Oxyrhynchos, the fact that the former is more closely connected with St. John's Gospel than with the Synoptists, as is clear from the verbal parallels pointed out by the editors, gives an added interest to the relationship of the two papyri ; in this connection Dr. Bell has pointed out to me that the date of composition of the Unknown Gospel and the date of the papyrus may be nearer together than was originally allowed for.

interesting if it could be proved that these two texts, similar in several respects, were of the same provenance, but the evidence at our disposal is too slight to admit of any such proof, and we must be content with the hypothesis that they *may* both have originated from the same early Christian community in Middle Egypt.

Clearly no deductions can be drawn from so small a fragment as to the affinities or quality of the text itself; the only new contribution it has to make to textual criticism is the probable omission of the second *εἰς τοῦτο* in v. 38 (v. note). But it may well have some bearing on the wider problem as to the date of the Gospel according to St. John. Not only is it the earliest text of the Gospel; it is also most probably the earliest substantial evidence for the existence of the Gospel. It is clear from Justin Martyr that the Gospel was known in Rome soon after the middle of the century, and it is possible that Papias, whose writings are placed between 135 and 165, alludes to it though he does not mention it by name;<sup>1</sup> on the basis of the present discovery we may assume that it was circulating in Middle Egypt in the first half of the second century. This would imply a slightly earlier date for composition, especially if with some critics we hold that the Gospel was first intended for a select circle at Ephesus; from Ephesus to Middle Egypt is a far cry, and in the case of the Unknown Gospel the editors (*The New Gospel Fragments*, p. 17) allow for a time-lag of about thirty years between the date of composition and that of the MS. But all we can safely say is that this fragment tends to support those critics who favour an early date (late first to early second century) for the composition of the Gospel rather than those who would still regard it a work of the middle decades of the second century.<sup>2</sup> But to trespass on these fields is to go beyond the limits proper to the present writer: *de hac re viderint sapientiores*.

In our fragment the recto—the side on which the fibres of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Streeter, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13, 19 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> E.g. M. Loisy who in his recent *La naissance du Christianisme* (1933), p. 59, is of the opinion that there were two reductions of the Gospel, the first c. 135-140 A.D., the second c. 150-160. But the balance of modern critical opinion seems to favour an earlier date, cf. Streeter, *op. cit.*, pp. 456-457, who would date it c. 90-95 and, in general, W. F. Howard, *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation*.

the papyrus run parallel to the writing—precedes the verso ; if, as was the usual practice,<sup>1</sup> the sheets before folding were laid with the recto side uppermost, the succession of pages on the sheet would have been verso, recto, recto, verso and our fragment would belong to the second leaf of the bifolium ; but there is nothing to determine the arrangement of the codex. There are no traces of numeration.

The text is given below exactly as it appears in the papyrus except that the words have been divided. A dot below a letter denotes that it is either badly mutilated or that very small traces of it remain ; square brackets [ ] indicate *lacunae* (which have been filled up from the text of Westcott and Hort),<sup>2</sup> double square brackets || an erasure by the scribe, angular brackets < > an addition to the text of the MS., round brackets ( )—in this publication only—a letter whose presence or absence in the text is uncertain.

## RECTO (c. XVIII, vv. 31-33)

οι ἰουδαι[οι] ημε[ιν ουκ εξεστιν αποκτειναι]  
 ουδενα ἵνα ο λο[γος του ιησου πληρωθη ον ει]  
 πεν σημαινω[ν ποιω θανατω ημελλον απο-]  
 θνησκειν ιο[ηλθεν ουν παλιν εις το πραιτω-]  
 5 ριον ο π[(ε)ιλατος και εφωνησεν τον Ἰησουν]  
 και ειπ[εν αυτω συ ει ο βασιλευς των ιου-]  
 [δ]αιω[ν απεκριθη ιησους κτλ.

. . . . .

## VERSO (c. XVIII, vv. 37-38)

[βασι-]

[λευς ειμι εγω εις το]υτο γ[ε]γεννημαι  
 [και <εις τουτο> εληλυθα εις τον κο]σμον ἵνα μαρτυ-  
 [ρησω τη αληθεια πας ο ων] εκ της αληθε[ι-]  
 [ας ακουει μου της φωνης] λεγει αυτω  
 5 [ο π(ε)ιλατος τι εστιν αληθεια κ]αι τουτο  
 [ειπων παλιν εξηλθεν προς] τους ιο[υ-]  
 [δαιους και λεγει αυτοις εγω ουδ]εμι[αν]

. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> v. Schubart, *Das Buch*, pp. 129-130, Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of conformity with the text, the iota subscript, accents and breathings have been omitted from the supplements as well.

Recto 1 l. ἡμῖν : 4 l. εἰσῆλθεν.

Recto 1-2. It is clear that the scribe did not adopt the common practice, found among other texts in P. Egerton 2, of indicating either the beginning or the end of a speech by leaving a small blank space ; so we cannot reckon with this in calculating the length of the lines or the size of the page. In l. 1 a diaeresis should perhaps be placed over the final iota of *ιουδαιοι* ; the traces are too faint to decide whether this is the case or whether the scribe, as in v. l. 6, made an iota reaching above the level of the line.

4-5. In placing *πάλιν* before *εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον*, our papyrus agrees with the Vaticanus, the Codex Ephraemi and the restored text of the Codex Bezae, some other MSS. and the Armenian and one of the Syrian versions (followed by the text of Westcott and Hort) ; the reverse order is supported among MSS. by the Sinaiticus and the Alexandrinus, by the Gothic version and another Syriac version and is maintained by Tischendorf.

Verso 2. If the full text is supplied in this line, we are left with 38 letters to the line in place of the average 29/30 ; consequently it is fairly certain that our text represents a shorter version. Most probably we should reckon with the omission of the repeated *εἰς τοῦτο*, perhaps a slip, but more probably a genuine variant, although unsupported by any other MS.

3. The letter after *αληθ* seems to have been corrected or erased : possibly we should read *αληθ*[[θ]] but probably the scribe's pen slipped while he was making the epsilon.

#### ADDENDUM.

To the list of papyrus codices in note on p. 51, the following additions should be made :

P. Oxy. 2072, a leaf from a codex dated in the late third century A.D., containing a Christian apologetic writing and consisting of over 50 leaves.

P. Uppsala 114, a codex of Isocrates to be dated near the middle of the third century and containing over 110 leaves (v. G. Björck in *Symbolae Osloenses*, xiv. pp. 68-72).