

AN UNIDENTIFIED THEOLOGICAL
FRAGMENT FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY IN A
PRIVATE COLLECTION IN CAMBRIDGE
(DE HAMEL MS 373)

Peter M. Head

1. Introduction

This small fragment of a Christian text was purchased early in 2003 along with other small portions of Greek manuscripts on parchment which all turned out to be manuscripts of the Greek Bible.¹ Like the other texts, it appears to have been cut and re-used in the binding or repair of other manuscripts. This small square piece of text measures slightly less than 4 by 3 centimetres, and has only four clear lines of text (with some traces of a line above the first readable one), without any extant margin or edge. Most of the text is easily readable (at least on one side).

The hand may be described as a biblical majuscule, quite similar in style and general appearance to Codex Alexandrinus, and to be dated quite confidently to the fifth century.² Alongside a transcription we have reproduced high-quality long-exposure UV photographs of the manuscript.³

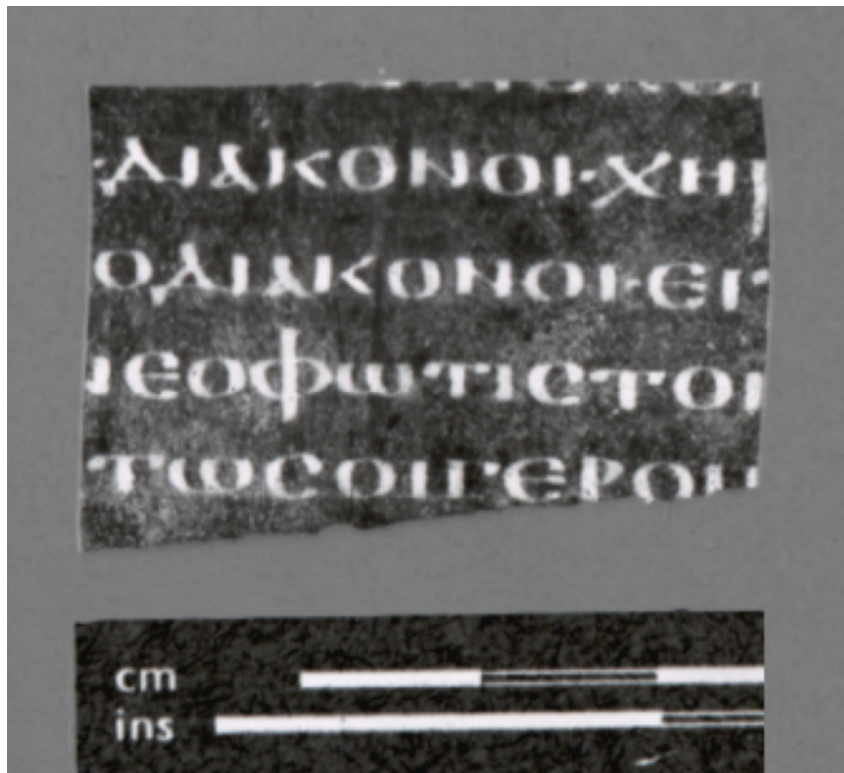
¹ For a preliminary report based on a presentation to the Cambridge Senior New Testament Seminar see: P. M. Head, 'Fragments of Six Newly Identified Greek Bible Manuscripts in a Cambridge Collection: A Preliminary Report', in: *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* [see <http://purl.org/TC>] 8 (2003). P. M. Head, 'A New Manuscript of Jeremiah in Greek according to the Lucianic Recension (de Hamel MS 391; Rahlfs 897)', *BIOSCS* 36 (2003): 27-37 [publication date 2004] (the opening two paragraphs cover similar ground). For the NT manuscripts see P. M. Head, 'Five New Testament Manuscripts in a Cambridge Collection' (forthcoming).

² For other comparable manuscripts of this era see G. Cavallo & H. Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period A.D. 300-800* (BICS Supp. 47; London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1987): 24 a-c.

³ Thanks for the photographs are due to Mark Scudder of the photographic department of the Cambridge University Library.

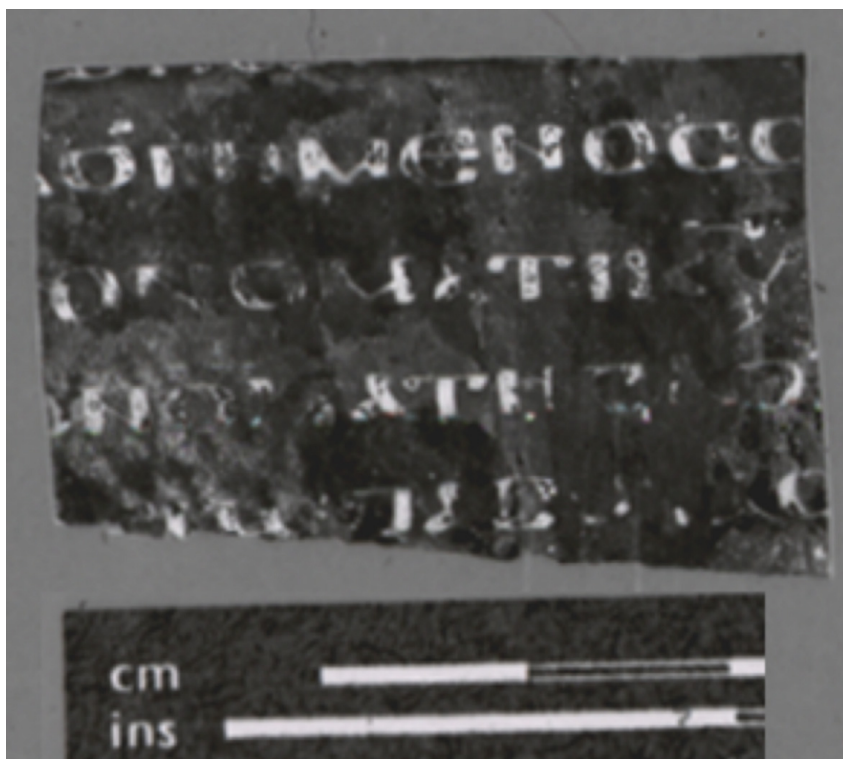
2. Side A

	traces visible	
...]	διακονοι· χηρ[αι ?	deacons, widows (?)
...]	ο διακονοι· ει.[...	... deacons ...
...]	νεοφωτιστοι[...	newly enlightened
...]	τως οι γερον[τες?	those who are married (?)



3. Side B

	traces visible	
? ευ]λογημενος σ[... ⁴		blessed (?) ...
...]ονοματι κυ[...		in the name of the Lord
...]ονομα της δο[...		name of the ...
...] . . . πας . . [...		... all/every ...



⁴ Line 1: possibly: ὁμολογημενος or εὐλογημενος.

3. Analysis

The vocabulary and the use of a nomen sacrum for κύριος suggest Christian content, possibly involving a discussion of church order, or a list of offices or church personnel. Repeated and varied searches on the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: A Digital Library of Greek Literature*, where searches on different word or letter combinations in association can be attempted on virtually all ancient Greek literature, have failed to turn up any match.⁵

⁵ Although the task of identifying the fragment has proven unsuccessful I acknowledge the help and encouragement of Dirk Jongkind, Peter J. Williams, Simon Gathercole, and Thomas Graumann in the process.