

‘God the Father’ or ‘God our Father’? Galatians 1.4–9 on a Miniature Parchment Leaf

MARCIN KOTYL 

*Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, 69 Prosta St., 6th floor, 00-838
Warsaw, Poland. Email: m.kotyl@uw.edu.pl*

This article publishes for the first time a Sahidic parchment leaf containing portions of Gal 1.4–9. Its main interest lies in the omission of the possessive in Gal 1.4d, which reads ‘God the Father’ as opposed to the mainstream ‘God our Father’. Two possible explanations are proposed: scribal error or translational assimilation, involving the more complex question of the relationship between the Coptic and Greek versions. Beyond the biblical textual criticism, this article also adds to the study of miniature codices.

Keywords: Coptic New Testament, Epistle to the Galatians, New Testament manuscripts, textual criticism, codex leaf, miniatures

1. Introduction

Paul’s greeting to the Galatians (Gal 1.1–5) ends with a phrase referring to Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for our sins and rescued us from evil according to the will of God. The Coptic version of this text is not entirely clear: it can be translated as either ‘the will of God our Father’ or ‘the will of God the Father’. Collating the Coptic with the Greek text does little to clarify the intended meaning, since the Greek version is also ambiguous, either referring to ‘the will of our God (and) Father’ or ‘the will of God and our Father’. Below I present a new textual witness, a Sahidic manuscript (P.Hal. inv. 58), which makes a contribution to this discussion.

The extant part of the manuscript contains two consecutive pages of Galatians 1, which, among other things, is shown by the original pagination, with Gal 1.4d–7a on page κζ (27) and continuing on page κη (28) with Gal 1.7b–9a. The page κζ begins with Gal 1.4d, which reads [- - - μπνογ]τε π̄ωτ, i.e. ‘God the Father’, and not μπνογτε πενειωτ, i.e. ‘God our Father’, which is provided in both Herbert Thompson’s and George W. Horner’s standard editions.¹ The former

¹ Here and elsewhere in the text, I refer to H. Thompson, *The Coptic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles in the Sahidic Dialect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 305

variant is supported only by Morgan MSS (M 570) and is not immediately obvious since at least two interpretations are plausible.

If we look at the sequence $\mu\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\omega\tau$ and $\mu\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon\pi\iota\omega\tau$, it is easy to confuse one with the other. Moreover, the confusion is further facilitated by the arrangement of the text and a scribe's eye-skip between the pages, as the last syllable of $\mu\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon$ was moved to the next page and ligatured to $\pi\iota\omega\tau$ so that it resulted in the isolated $\tau\epsilon\pi\iota\omega\tau$. The scribe might have therefore simply copied $\tau\epsilon\pi\iota\omega\tau$ instead of $\pi\epsilon\pi\iota\omega\tau$ due to the graphical similarity of the majuscule τ and π , and π and μ , especially in the *scriptio continua*. An analogous case is also applicable to Morgan MSS (M 570), where $\tau\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\omega\tau$ stands in a new line, thus more easily contributing to the omission (see Fig. 1).

A similar scribal omission might also have occurred in other parallel passages of the Pauline epistles such as 1 Thess 1.1: $\zeta\mu\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon\ \pi\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\omega\tau$ versus $\zeta\mu\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon\ \pi\epsilon\iota\omega\tau$ in Morgan MSS; 1 Thess 3.11: $\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon\ \pi\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\omega\tau$ versus $\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon\ \pi\epsilon\iota\omega\tau$ in Morgan MSS; and Eph 1.2: $\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon\ \pi\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\omega\tau$ versus $\pi\pi\omicron\gamma\tau\epsilon\ \pi\epsilon\iota\omega\tau$ in Morgan MSS. It is, however, not possible to ascertain if the copyist's error in our manuscript was primary or secondary, i.e. whether it was committed during copying from an already corrupted version. If it was secondary, this is probably not the tradition represented by Morgan MSS since, beyond one coherence in the variant in question, they differ in other places, namely: Gal 1.5: $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\zeta$ is omitted in Morgan MSS; Gal 1.8: $\mu\pi\upsilon\omicron\lambda$ reads $\pi\upsilon\omicron\lambda$ in Morgan MSS; and Gal 1.9a: $\mu\tau\alpha\iota\omega\rho\pi\chi\omicron\omicron\varsigma$ reads $\mu\tau\alpha\iota\omega\rho\pi\chi\omicron\omicron\varsigma$ in Morgan MSS.

At the same time, however, it cannot be ruled out that the omission may in fact be a true reading variant, which would involve the more complex question of the relationship of Coptic translations to one another and to the Greek source text.² The reading variant without the possessive in this passage is unknown in the Greek textual tradition, which unanimously reads $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \pi\alpha\tau\rho\varsigma\ \eta\mu\omega\upsilon\upsilon$.³ In addition, the Greek text including the formulation with the conjunction $\kappa\alpha\iota$ is indeed rare and is attested only three times in this particular configuration: Gal 1.4, 1 Thess 1.3 and 3.13. Much more frequently used instead is $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\alpha\tau\rho\varsigma\ \eta\mu\omega\upsilon\upsilon$, which, judging from statistics, seems to be a usual stereotyped formula

Press, 1932) and G. W. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect Otherwise Called Sahidic and Thebaic*, vol. v (Oxford: Clarendon, 1920).

2 A general discussion of this question may be found in C. Askeland, 'The Coptic Versions of the New Testament', *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the status quaestionis* (ed. B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes; NTTSD 42; Leiden: Brill, 2013²) 201–29, at 211–13.

3 For the Greek New Testament, I have used the 28th edition of E. Nestle and K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece, communiter ediderunt B. et K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

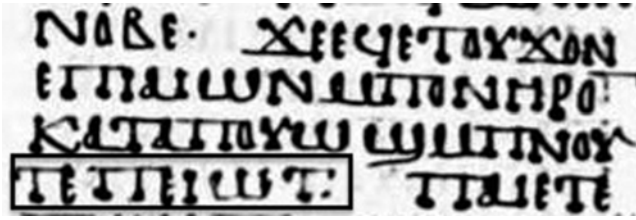


Figure 1. Morgan MSS (M 570), Gal. 1.4d

in the Pauline epistles (although not only found there), unlike the unusual version with καί.

Apart from this point, translators and interpreters also struggle with the question of whether the genitive ἡμῶν refers to both θεός πατήρ or only πατήρ.⁴ If we return to the Sahidic version, it becomes apparent that this version renders the phrase uniformly, entirely ignoring the καί, even in the cases of the three aforementioned exceptions found in the Greek text, and limits the possessive (if present) to 'Father' only.⁵ Two scenarios are therefore conceivable. On the first, the Sahidic translation adapted its formula to reflect the more common version without the conjunction καί and the possessive to harmonise with Gal 1.1 and 1.3, especially since this part is constructed as a chiasm.⁶ It may also be the result of a more general translational assimilation to parallel formulae without the possessive and conjunction found elsewhere, although these are fairly infrequent: examples include Eph 6.23, Phil 2.11 and 2 Thess 1.2. By comparison, the Bohairic version opts for a reading without the possessive but with the conjunction, thus reading ⲙⲫⲧ ⲟⲓⲟⲩ ⲫⲓⲟⲩ, i.e. 'God and the Father'.⁷ On the second scenario, the Sahidic translation simply made use of a Greek text which was

4 See e.g. the discussion in E. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921) 389–92.

5 Coptic translations tend to be fairly capricious regardless of whether they are made from a Coptic daughter translation or from Greek; and this is not only because of peculiar reading variants of the source text, but also because of differences in the structural features of Coptic and Greek: cf. G. Mink, 'Die koptischen Versionen des Neuen Testaments: Die sprachlichen Probleme bei ihrer Bewertung für die griechische Textgeschichte', *Die alten Übersetzungen des Neuen Testaments, die Kirchenväterzitate und Legionäre* (ed. K. Aland; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972) 160–299, at 233–7; P. J. Williams, 'On the Representation of Sahidic within the Apparatus of the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece', *JCOptS* 8 (2006) 123–5.

6 See A. M. Buscemi, *Lettera ai Galati: commentario esegetico* (Analecta 63; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2004) 13–14; H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1979) 39.

7 This is based on the edition of G. W. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect: Otherwise Called Memphitic and Bohairic*, vol. III: *The Epistles of S. Paul* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905).

already missing the conjunction and the possessive as its base. This is, however, less likely as no such Greek textual witness is known to exist so far. Whatever the case, it is difficult to identify a potential *Vorlage* since the Sahidic translation could have been produced from either.

In addition to the more significant variant reading discussed above, the text transmitted by our manuscript also represents some other minor variants, which are mostly orthographic in nature. These include, for instance, the tendency to write $\iota > \epsilon\iota$ (line 1), $\mu\pi > \eta\pi$ (line 8), $\epsilon\eta > \eta$ (line 8), $\eta\eta > \eta$ (line 28), $\epsilon\tau > \tau$ (line 29) (see also the critical apparatus below).

2. The Manuscript

The manuscript belongs to the small papyrus collection of the Seminar für Klassische Altertumswissenschaften at the University of Halle⁸ and is assigned the inventory designation P.Hal. inv. 58 (Figs. 2 and 3). According to the scarce information available to us,⁹ it was purchased by German Egyptologist and teacher Max Pieper on behalf of the German Papyrus Cartel from local dealer Mansur Ismain at Kafr el Haram at Giza on 2 December 1912. It was subsequently bequeathed to the collection by lot in 18 July 1913, as was common practice in the cartel. There is no clear evidence that would indicate the provenance of the fragment.

The extant portion is a complete single parchment leaf, which measures 7.1 x 8.2 cm and can be classified in terms of Turner's typology of miniatures as belonging to group XIV, i.e. less than 10 cm broad.¹⁰ All margins have been preserved, with the upper one being *ca* 1 cm, the lower one *ca* 1.5 cm, the outer one 1.2–1.8 cm and the inner one 0.7–1.0 cm on either side. The small rounded gaps visible at the edge from the side of the inner margin may be suggestive of the string-holes.

8 Excluding the Kurth papyri, which are found in the Archaeological Museum of the Martin-Luther-University in Halle (see M. Gerhardt, 'Die Papyri der Sammlung Kurth', *APF* 57 (2011) 221–7). For a short history of the present collection, see the preface to G. Halensis, ed., *Dikaiomata: Auszüge aus den alexandrinischen Gesetzen und Verordnungen in einem Papyrus des Philologischen Seminars der Universität Halle (Pap. Hal. 1)* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1913) v–vii.

9 See the Papyrus Projekt database at <https://papyri.uni-leipzig.de/content/start.xml> (accessed November 2019). I also received some further details from Holger Essler in a private correspondence exchanged on 16 November 2019. He based these on unpublished material from the German Papyrus Cartel.

10 See E. G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977) 29–30. Our exemplar was added as no. 66 to Alin Suciu's recent list of Coptic pocket and miniature manuscripts, which is accessible at <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/miniature-manuscripts>.

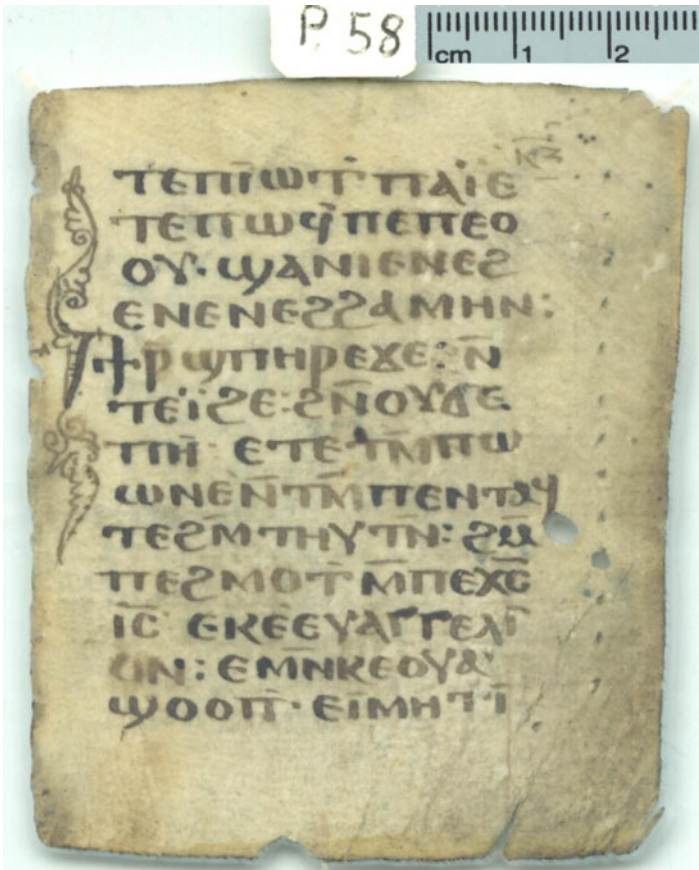


Figure 2. P.Hal. inv. 58 (Flesh side)

In the upper right/left corner of the flesh/hair side directly above the columns the numerals κζ (27) and κη (28) indicate the ancient pagination. This also suggests that the present text was preceded by 26 other pages. If we assume that 2 pages of the codex contain roughly 4.5 passages of text (Gal 1.4d to 1.9a), this results in approximately 55–60 passages that correspond to the missing 26 pages. This number is not enough to reconstruct either Hebrews (taking into account the peculiar Sahidic order of books)¹¹ or 2 Corinthians (in the general tradition) preceding Galatians, hence this allows us to suppose a shorter text, such as Titus, Philemon or 2 Thessalonians, if any, from the Pauline epistles. The exemplar was therefore probably not a regular copy of the New Testament

11 For further discussion on this, see W. H. P. Hatch, 'The Position of Hebrews in the Canon of the New Testament', *HThR* 29 (1936) 133–51.

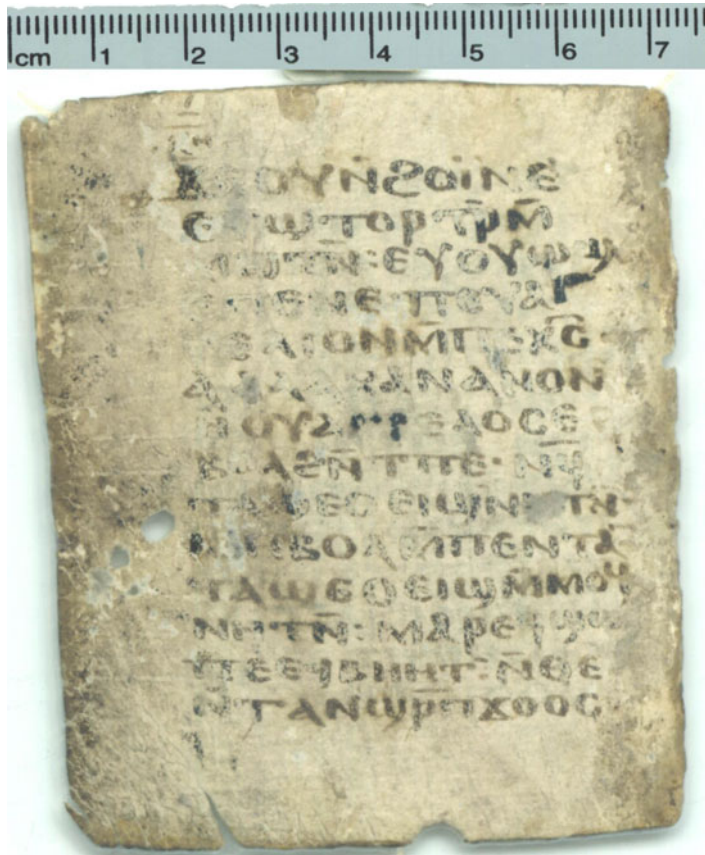


Figure 3. *P.Hal. inv. 57 (Hair side)*

or of the Corpus Paulinum, but rather it might have been a kind of vade mecum comprised of selected texts, in all likelihood from the New Testament, which were intended for personal use, as is also suggested by its small format and calligraphic decorations, which were not uncommon in such exemplars.¹²

The text is arranged in a one-column format of 13 lines (on the flesh side) and 14 lines (on the hair side) per page. The average number of letters per line is between 10 and 13. The surface of the flesh side is almost fully intact while the hair side is partially abraded. However, although the ink has faded in some areas on the hair side, the letters are still largely readable because they are 'engraved' in the parchment.

The script may be briefly described as unimodular, executed in a neat and elegant manner. The pagination and superlinear strokes are written in a smaller

12 See A. Suciú at <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/miniature-manuscripts>.

and more delicate script, but probably by the same hand. Generally speaking, it reveals a striking resemblance to the Apa Jeremias codices, which are dated to ca 600 AD on the basis of coins discovered alongside them.¹³

Along the outer margins, the scribe has drawn a row of dots at the level of each line. It is not clear what purpose they served: they may have been an aid to count the lines or had something to do with the ruler to guide the scribe. Also, at the left margin of the flesh side, the same scribe has ornamented the text with sketches resembling flowers or something similar originating from the letter † in line 5.

The scribe is inconsistent in the use of a single letter or connective superlinear strokes for consonants such as τΜ (line 7), τΝ (l. 9) and ΜΝ (line 12). Moreover, the scribe uses the superlinear stroke not only above the sonorants but also quite often above the vowels. In ΜΠΕΝΤΑ|ΤΑΩΘΟΙΩ (lines 25–6) the superlinear stroke over the preceding vowel replaces the line-final Ν, most likely to save a space.¹⁴ The superlinear stroke above ι in ΠΩΤ (line 2), represents the contraction of the vowel ε.¹⁵ Additionally, the two *nomina sacra* ΙC and ΧC are marked in the conventional way with superlinear strokes. Superlinear strokes are also used above and below the page numbers.

The punctuation marks are not always used logically and consistently. For instance, in line 5, the double dot followed by a spacing indicates a full stop and transition to another section. In the following lines 5, 6 and 7, the same punctuation is employed capriciously and does not signal a full stop. We may also discern the middle dot in line 4 to indicate a colon or comma, and the high dot in line 14 to indicate a colon. The trema is written over ι three times (line 1: ΠΑΙ, lines 6–7: ΝΤΕΙ2Ε, line 2: ΟΥΝ2ΟΙΝΕ) with no apparent meaning.

3. Edition of the Text

P.Hal. inv. 57

7.1 x 8.2 cm

6th–7th cent. CE

Provenance unknown

The restoration of lacunae and word divisions is based on the Thompson edition, but I also consulted the Horner edition. Punctuations, diaereses and superlinear strokes have been reproduced as they appear in the original. The transcript was compared with Horner (= H), Thomspson (= Th) and Pierpont Morgan MSS 570 (= M).

¹³ See Thompson, *The Coptic Version*, x.

¹⁴ See B. Layton, *A Coptic Grammar with Chrestomathy and Glossary: Sahidic Dialect* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000) 32.

¹⁵ See J. Brankaer, *Coptic: A Learning Grammar (Sahidic)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010) 5: 'In many manuscripts the use of the superlinear stroke is not entirely consistent. Sometimes the superlinear stroke seems interchangeable with ε.'

Flesh side

1	<u>κζ</u> τε π̄ωτ παῖ ε- · Gal 1.4d-Gal 1.5 τεπω̄ϋ πε πεο- · ογ. ω̄ανιενε̄ζ ·
5	ενενε̄ζ ζαμην: · †ρ̄ωπρηε̄ χε: [[ζ]]̄ν- · Gal 1.6 τεῖζε: ζ̄νωγβε- · π̄ν: ε̄τετ̄μπω- · ωνε̄ ν̄τ̄μ̄πενταϋ- ·
10	τεζ̄μ̄τηγ̄τ̄ν: ζ̄μ̄- · πεζ̄μοτ̄ μ̄πε̄χ̄ς · τ̄ς: εκ̄βε̄γαγγε̄λ̄- · ον: ε̄μ̄ν̄κεογα · Gal 1.7a ωοο̄π̄· ε̄τ̄μ̄ητ̄ι ·

Hair side

15	· κη · χ[ε] ογ̄ν̄ζοῖνε Gal 1.7b · ε[γ]ω̄τορτ̄ρ̄ μ̄- · μ̄ω̄τ̄ν̄: ε̄γογ̄ωω · [ε]π̄ε̄νε̄πε̄γαγ- 20 · [γ]ε̄λιον̄ μ̄πε̄χ̄ς · αλλ̄ᾱ κ̄αν̄ αν̄ον · η̄ ογᾱγγε̄λος ε- Gal 1.8 · βο̄λ̄ ζ̄ν̄τ̄πε̄· ν̄ϋ- · τᾱω̄εο̄ειω̄ ν̄η̄τ̄ν̄ 25 · μ̄π̄βολ̄ μ̄πεντᾱ- · τᾱω̄εο̄ιω̄ μ̄μοϋ · ν̄η̄τ̄ν̄: μᾱρε̄ϋω̄ϋ- · πε̄ ε̄ϋβ̄η̄η̄τ̄: ν̄θε̄ Gal 1.9a · ν̄τανω̄ρ̄π̄χοο̄ς.
----	--

1 π̄ωτ: πε̄νε̄ιω̄τ H, Th; πε̄ιω̄τ M 5 ενενε̄ζ: ν̄ενε̄ζ H, Th, M omits
6-7 [[ζ]]̄ν|τεῖζε: ν̄τε̄εῖζε H, Th 8-9 ε̄τετ̄μπω̄ωνε̄: τε̄τ̄μ̄πω̄ωνε̄ H, Th
25 μ̄π̄βολ̄: π̄βολ̄ H, Th, M 28 ε̄ϋβ̄η̄η̄τ̄: ε̄ϋβ̄η̄τ̄ H, Th, M
29 ν̄τανω̄ρ̄π̄χοο̄ς: εν̄τανω̄ρ̄π̄χοο̄ς H, Th, ν̄τανω̄ρ̄π̄χοο̄ς M

4. Notes

Flesh side (page κζ)

- 2 τε π̄ωτ: μπνογ]τε π̄ωτ:]τε undoubtedly belongs to the final syllable of [μπνογ]τε divided over two pages. The remains of a meaningless dot above τ in π̄ωτ is visible.
- 6–7 [ζ]η|τεϊζε: ζ was erased by the scribe and replaced by the double dot.
- 8–9 ετετ̄ηλω|ωνε: above the final ε there is a short diagonal stroke that does not have a clear purpose.

Hair side (page κη)

- 25 μηβολ: the initial μ is uncertain but is more likely than ν. This would tie in with the tendency to write μ instead of ν before π (cf. lines 8–9: ετετ̄ηλω|ωνε).