A CHRISTIAN AMULET ON PAPYRUS

BY

R. W. DANIEL

P. Vindob. G 348 of unknown provenance may be assigned on palaeographical grounds to the 6th or 7th century AD. It measures 12.0 × 7.5 cm. The scrap is dark brown and of poor quality. Top, bottom and right edges are all at least partially preserved. There is next to no free space above and below the text, and the writing runs up to the right edge. To the left the papyrus is unevenly broken away, but the restored text suggests that the sheet was originally between 8.5 and 9.0 cm in width. A kollesis is to be found 5 cm. from the right edge, and the writing runs against the fibers. The text is thus inscribed on the verso. The back is blank.

The small writing gives an unusually cramped impression, though in other respects it is similar to that of P.Oxy.XIII 1614 (= E. G. Turner, Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World, Oxford 1971, no. 23) and that of P.Ryl.III 466 recto (cf. P.Ryl.III, Pl.I; = R.Seider, Paläographie der griechischen Papyri II, Stuttgart 1970, no.70). The former papyrus was assigned on palaeographical grounds to the 5th or 6th century AD and the latter to the 7th or 8th. For the hand of Vienna text, however, 5th and 8th centuries strike me as too early and too late, respectively.

The text comprises the incipits of the four gospels in their canonical order and then LXX Psalm 90 (= Masoretic 91) with the omission of vs. 73-82. The Christian amulet P.Oxy.XVI 1928 verso (= J.van Haelst, Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens, Paris 1976, no. 183) is our closest parallel. It contains Ps.90 in lines 1-15 and then in line 16 reads: κατὰ Ἰωάννης καὶ {ς} τὰ Λουκᾶ κατὰ Μαρκός κατὰ Ματθαῖος.

Other amulets are similar in that they quote from the evangelists and the Psalms with a predilection for the incipits. BKT VI vii 1 (= van Haelst, no. 731), for instance, cites in lines 2-20 the following passages of Scripture: Ps. 90, 1, Jn. 1, 1-2, Mt. 1, 1, Mk. 1, 1, Lk. 1, 1, Ps. 117, 6-7, Ps. 17, 2, Mt. 4, 23. And PSI VI 719 = PGM 19 (= van Haelst, No. 423) has Jn. 1, 1, Mt. 1, 1, Jn. 1, 24, Mk. 1, 1, Lk. 1, 1, Ps. 90, 1, Mt. 6, 9 and a short doxology. Comparable also is PGM 5c (= van
Haelst, no. 897) which, after a command to God to protect a woman, cites Lk. 1, 1, Mt. 1, 1 and Jn. 1, 1.

As in the above-cited P. Oxy. XVI 1928 verso, the presence of Ps. 90 in its virtual entirety is the outstanding feature of our text, and we have seen that Ps. 90 is also cited in BKT VI vii 1 and PSI VI 719 (= PGM 19). As has often been noted, the 90th Psalm is, in fact, the Psalm most frequently used for Christian phylacteries. Large portions are cited also in the following amulets: P. Gen. I 6 (= van Haelst, no. 198) with vs. 1-7 and 10-13; BKT VIII 13 (= van Haelst, no. 199) with vs. 1-13; P. Oxy. XVII 2065 (= van Haelst, no. 200) with vs. 5-10; P. Laur. inv. III/501 (ed. R. Pintaudi, ZPE 35, 1979, 50-54) with vs. 1-6. For the numerous other amulets which cite just the incipit of Ps. 90 or other small sections of it, cf. van Haelst, nos. 184-197, 345, 917, 967. To the papyrological references should be supplemented the epigraphic material cited by L. Amundsen in Symbolae Osl. 24 (1945) 145f., nos. 13, 14, 22-27 to which may be added M. Martin, La laure de Dér al Dik à Antinoé (Cairo 1971) 85. Needless to say, the fondness with which Ps. 90 was used as an amulet is due to its contents which, in Greek, are reminiscent of other protective charms; see especially S. Eitrem, Die Versuchung Christi (Oslo 1924) 11ff. and 36; L. Amundsen, loc. cit., 146ff.; R. Pintaudi, loc. cit., 51.

The text of the Psalm on the papyrus is collated with that of A. Rahlfs, Septuaginta X: Psalms cum Odis (Göttingen 1931). The places of our text which diverge from that of the Göttingen edition are dealt with in the line-by-line commentary, where Rahlfs' siglae are used for manuscripts, but the conventional abbreviations for papyri (see J. F. Oates - R. S. Bagnall - W. H. Willis, Checklist of Editions of Greek Papyri and Ostraca, BASP Supplements 1, 1978). Like most papyrus texts of the Psalter, this one falls into Rahlfs' category of Mischtexte. The only significant variants are the additions of βορευόκα μου and of ξαι in vs. 2, which may indicate the influence of traditions within the Lucianic mss.; see line 7 note.

For the phonetic and morphological irregularities displayed both by some of the words of the present text and by some of the variants, see F. T. Gignac, A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods 1-II (Milan 1976, 1981). The writer used no punctuation.

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