
ANNEMARIE LUIJENDIJK
aluijend@princeton.edu
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544

In this article I present a NT papyrus (P.Oxy. II 209/p10) as part of a known archive. Although scholars have been familiar with this papyrus and its NT text, they have not known its larger social context. The identification of this piece as part of an archive allows a glimpse into the life and social milieu of its owner: a literate man from the ancient Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus, a flax merchant and a member of a guild, with connections to a church reader. As such, it is the first and only ancient instance where we know the owner of a Greek NT papyrus.

I. The Papyrus and Its Texts

P.Oxy. II 209 preserves Rom 1:1–7, the proemium of the apostle Paul's Letter to the Romans. With its Pauline pericope, this papyrus is a constant witness to the text of the NT. It ranks as Papyrus 10 (p10) of the NT papyri and thus belongs

I am grateful to Roger S. Bagnall for his help in identifying this archive and for his other valuable suggestions in developing this project. I thank Laura S. Nasrallah, the members of the Papyrological Seminar in New York City, and the anonymous reviewer for this journal for their helpful comments and input. I presented different parts of this paper at the 25th International Congress of Papyrology (Ann Arbor, July 2007) and at the conference “Lire les papyrus du Nouveau Testament avec les autres papyrus d’Égypte” (Lausanne, Switzerland, October 2009) and thank the audiences for their feedback. William P. Stoneman of Houghton Library, Harvard University, kindly sent me digital images of the papyrus in advance of their publication online.
among that elite group of most important witnesses to the text of the Christian Bible.¹ In their Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period, Guglielmo Cavallo and Herwig Maehler described the handwriting of this papyrus as having “rather crude and irregular letters.”² Underneath the biblical passage a different hand has penned a couple of random phrases in cursive writing. On the back it reads “apostle.” The texts, the first in uncial letters, the second in cursive script, are written in black ink on a caramel-colored papyrus sheet of 25.1 by 19.9 centimeters. Property of Harvard University’s Semitic Museum, the papyrus is presently housed in Houghton Library.³ The sheet has survived in relatively good condition but has suffered some damage as a result of folding and the occasional nibbles of bookworms.

Below is my new transcription of the text based on a recent digital photograph of the papyrus. It does not alter the reading of the editio princeps, but shows the (present) state of the papyrus more accurately:

\[\text{Παῦλος· δοῦλος χρυς ἑλεός ἀπόστολος· [ἀφ]ωρισμός εἰς ἑυαγγελίαν διὰ [π]ροὶ [η]φητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐκ γραφῶν ἁγίας περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τὸ γενομένον ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυδ · τοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀναστάσει νεκρῶν ἡμῶν διὰ ὁ λάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολών εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πάσιν τοῖς Ῥώμη ἀγαπητοῖς θυ κλητοῖς ἁγίοις \text{προς ἡμῶν και χρυς ἁλαθοῖς τοὺς ἐν ὅ}]


³ The inventory number is Ms Gr SM 2218. Digital images of recto and verso are available online at http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/collections/papyrus/bibliographies.html (accessed November 13, 2009).
The text is copied sloppily. The writer made several spelling mistakes, as indicated below the transcription. The one variant, reading "Christ Jesus" instead of "Jesus Christ" (lines 11–12) does not contribute in any meaningful way to exegetical or other discussions on the apostle’s longest letter.6 As we will discover, the importance and interest of this papyrus stretch beyond textual technicalities of the Letter to the Romans. The papyrus is an artifact that allows us to catch glimpses into the circles in which it was produced and the people who owned it.

The sentences scribbled underneath the passage from Romans in cursive handwriting begin with the name "Aurelius Paulus," followed by ungrammatical expressions containing the words "produce" and "account" (γενήματος/γενημάτων and λογείας). They may have served to test the pen.7 Incomprehensible as these lines remain, these terms fit in the mercantile environment of the archive to which this papyrus belongs, as we will see next.

4 The papyrus has a lacuna at this spot that has obliterated the top parts of the letters. However, the reading of the omega is indisputable, as its bottom half has survived; it cannot have been an eta.

5 Conceivably, these words were already absent in the Vorlage. The strained handwriting, however, suggests that this scribe omitted them.

6 The expression “Christ Jesus” occurs in Rom 1:1. The ancient manuscripts are divided between reading “Christ Jesus” and “Jesus Christ” in Rom 1:1, but only P. Oxy. II 209/p has a different order in Rom 1:7. Grenfell and Hunt already observed this (P. Oxy. II 209, 8; Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, The Oxyrhynchus Papyri [London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898–]), ad loc.).

7 See also, e.g., the verso of the Karanis Tax Roll, P. Mich. IV 357 C.
II. Identifying the Archive

In their edition of this papyrus in the second volume of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt made the tantalizing remark, often repeated in scholarship, that "the papyrus was found tied up with a contract dated in 316 A.D., and other documents of the same period." This means that they found this papyrus as part of an archive, in Alain Martin's strict definition of the word, namely, a group of texts deliberately organized by their ancient users. But what archive? Grenfell and Hunt did not provide any further clues. They were not particularly interested in the social context of the texts they had unearthed, or perhaps they were too busy editing their enormous find.

Modern search engines and old-fashioned historical detective work led to the identification of this archive. A search on the *Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis* (HGV) for documents from Oxyrhynchus that date to the year 316 C.E. gives thirteen results. Only two of those documents qualify as contracts: *P.Oxy.* I 103, a lease of a plot of land, and SB XIV 11278, a contract for the sale of a donkey. Grenfell and Hunt cannot have referred to the latter papyrus, for it did not come from their excavations, conducted under the auspices of the Egypt Exploration Society. SB XIV 11278 also does not belong to a larger archive. That leaves *P.Oxy.* I 103 as the contract found attached to our papyrus. Indeed, the fact that Grenfell and Hunt had already published that contract in the first volume explains their mention of the

---


exact date of that document in the second volume of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. Moreover, and also in accordance with Grenfell and Hunt’s description, this lease forms part of a larger archive, the so-called Archive of Leonides, as can be found by searching the database for *Papyrus Archives in Graeco-Roman Egypt*. This archive consists of twelve documents—with the addition of this NT papyrus, now thirteen—relating to the flax merchant Leonides. I have appended a list of the texts in this archive.

I can further demonstrate this identification of *P. Oxy. II 209/p* as part of the Leonides archive by following a different investigative approach, namely, by checking the date of publication and the excavation seasons. Grenfell and Hunt conducted six excavation seasons at Oxyrhynchus/Behnasa, collecting about half a million fragments. Our NT papyrus appeared in the second volume of the series *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, published in 1899. This means that Grenfell and Hunt must have found this papyrus, *P. Oxy. II 209*, during their first excavation season at Oxyrhynchus in 1896–1897, for their second season of excavating at Oxyrhynchus took place only in 1903. Published in 1898, *P. Oxy. I 103* evidently also came with the first batch from Oxyrhynchus. Furthermore, the inventory numbers of the papyri belonging to the Leonides archive published in volume 45 of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri (P. Oxy. XLV)* indicate that these texts were found together during the first excavation season at Oxyrhynchus. This confirms conclusively the association of *P. Oxy. II 209* with the archive of Leonides. This identification has a slight implication for the date of *P. Oxy. II 209* and is especially important for understanding the social context of this NT papyrus, issues to which I now turn.

13 The archive was published by Susan Stephens in *P. Oxy. XLV* (1977).
15 Beginning with the publication of *P. Oxy. XL* (1972), Oxyrhynchus papyri have inventory numbers that reflect the season in which they were found and the box in which they were stored. An explanation for the system appeared in *P. Oxy. XLII* (1974), xiv: “Note on Inventory Numbers.”
16 Although Grenfell and Hunt did not conduct a stratigraphy of their finds, they noted in their archaeological reports that they attempted to keep together papyri that were found at the same time. Grenfell stated: “Each lot [of papyri] found by a pair, man and boy, had to be kept separate; for the knowledge that papyri are found together is frequently of the greatest importance for determining their date, and since it is inevitable that so fragile a material should sometimes be broken in the process of extricating it from the closely packed soil, it is imperative to keep together, as far as possible, fragments of the same document” (“Excavations at Oxyrhynchus (1896–1907),” in *Oxyrhynchus: A City and Its Texts* [ed. A. K. Bowman et al.; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007], 349). Apparently, one of the documents from the Leonides Archive, PSI V 469, became separated from the archive (at what time is unclear) and ended up among the finds of the Italian excavators.
III. A New Testament Papyrus from a Documentary Archive

With only the knowledge that the papyrus was found together with a contract from the year 316, as reported in the *editio princeps*, scholars dated the papyrus either as "early fourth century" or "fourth century."¹⁷ The additional information now provided by the archival context of the NT papyrus allows for a more precise dating. The dates in the Leonides archive range from 315 C.E. to 334 C.E. (see the appendix). It is unknown when the archive was discarded, but in view of the dates in the archive it is likely that the NT papyrus was written early in the second quarter of the fourth century, that is, in the 320s or 330s.

The identification of *P.Oxy.* II 209/p¹⁰ as part of the archive of Leonides has important implications for its "social life."¹⁸ What we have here is a rare instance of a "literary papyrus in a documentary archive."¹⁹ In an article on that topic, Willy Clarysse rightly emphasized that, unlike the division among scholarly disciplines, literary and documentary papyri do not constitute two separate worlds; rather, the people that figure in the papyrus documents were the ones who possessed the literary fragments.²⁰ But only seldom can we catch glimpses of the owners of books


¹⁹ I use here a broad definition of literary texts, following Peter van Minnen, who stated for his research on literary texts in the Fayum villages: "school texts have been included. Ancient schools provided a context for getting acquainted with at least some literature" ("Boorish or Bookish: Literature in Egyptian Villages in the Fayum in the Graeco-Roman Period," *JJP* 28 [1998]: 99–184, here 102). NT textual critics disagree about the question whether a school exercise counts as a literary papyrus. For Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, p¹⁰ should not feature on the official list of NT papyri, because it is a school exercise: "Unter den heute 96 Nummern der offiziellen Liste der Papyri des NT ist auch manches verzeichnet, was eigentlich nicht hierhin gehört . . . ja selbst Schreibübungen (P10)" (*Der Text des Neuen Testaments: Einführung in die wissenschaftlichen Ausgaben sowie in Theorie und Praxis der modernen Textkritik* [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982], 95). With more appreciation for a child's hand, David C. Parker approves of school exercises on that list, writing: "we should not exclude a document on the grounds that it is a child's writing exercise. If the child made an accurate copy of a page of an ancient manuscript, how happy should we be!" (*An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 42). On the borderline status of school exercises between literary and documentary text, see also Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students*, 26.

²⁰ Clarysse, "Literary Papyri in Documentary Archives," in *Egypt and the Hellenistic World:*
in antiquity. Clarysse cautioned: "One must keep in mind that it is often very difficult to connect literary texts with an archive because we usually cannot base ourselves on internal evidence of the texts, and secondly, that in many cases a person's papers are preserved but not his library (or vice versa)."\(^2\) This dearth of evidence for the owners of literary texts pertains not only to those who possessed classical writings, but equally to those who had Christian texts on their shelves. For most early NT manuscripts, we do not know where they were found, let alone who had owned them.

In his article "New Testament Papyri and the Transmission of the New Testament," Eldon Jay Epp provides a useful overview and discussion of all NT papyri for which we possess more or less reliable archaeological data.\(^2\) In a few cases, a known archaeological provenance, ranging from city or village level to building, gives glimpses into the milieu of the texts. Epp calculated that the site of Oxyrhynchus has yielded the majority of NT papyri with a known provenance, and that these "provide an unparalleled opportunity to assess a large number of copies of Christianity's earliest writings within the literary and intellectual environment of Oxyrhynchus."\(^2\) Other NT papyri have been discovered in or near churches and monasteries—an indication, it seems to me, that they had been used in an ecclesiastical or monastic setting.\(^2\) A fragmentary third- or fourth-century papyrus codex with parts of Pauline epistles (\(p^{92}\)) was found in ancient Narmouthis (Medinat Madi) in the Fayum Oasis in a building filled with debris near the sacred way (\textit{dromos}) to the main local temple of Renenutet.\(^2\)

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 61. See also van Minnen's combined archaeological and papyrological approach to materials found at Karanis in his "House-to-house Enquiries: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Roman Karanis," \textit{ZPE} 100 (1994): 227–51.


\(^{23}\) Ibid., 324.

\(^{24}\) NT papyri (reportedly) found at ancient churches or monasteries are \(p^{43}\), \(p^{55}\), \(p^{56}\), \(p^{17}\), \(p^{59}\), \(p^{60}\), \(p^{61}\), \(p^{66}\), \(p^{72}\), \(p^{75}\), \(p^{83}\), and \(p^{84}\).

\(^{25}\) Published by Claudio Gallazzi, "Frammenti di un codice con le Epistole di Paolo," \textit{ZPE} 46 (1982): 117–22. He remarks that the codex was "found in the winter of '69 in the debris that had filled a building west of the \textit{dromos} of Medinet Madi ("rinvenuti nell' inverno del '69 in mezzo ai detriti che colmavano un edificio a ovest del dromos di Medinet Madi" [p. 117]). The excavation report for 1969 mentions the find of some one hundred Greek papyri, among them a "frammento biblico," but not the exact location where these papyri were found; see Edda Bresciani, \textit{Missione di scavo a Medinet Madi (Fayum–Egitto): Rapporto preliminare delle campagne di scavo 1968 e 1969} (Istituto di papirologia dell’università degli studi di Milano; Milan: Cisalpino–La Goliardica, 1976), 29. I agree with Paola Davoli when she complains about the lack of recording of the specific archaeological context of the papyri in that publication (\textit{L'archeologia urbana nel Fayyum di...})
Even in those instances of identifiable origin, the actual owners of these manuscripts still elude us. With the identification of P.Oxy. II 209/p10 as part of the Leonides archive, we now have a NT papyrus with a known owner. In fact, this is the first and only instance where we can get to know the ancient owner of a NT papyrus. So let us make our acquaintance with this person and some of the people mentioned in his papers.

**IV. Leonides, Son of Theon: Merchant and Member of a Professional Association**

The protagonist of the archive is Aurelius Leonides, son of Theon, resident of Oxyrhynchus City. The newly identified addition to the archive, the NT papyrus, reveals Leonides' religious affiliation. Given that his business papers contained a piece with the opening verses of the apostle Paul's Letter to the Romans, it seems reasonable to conclude that Leonides was a Christian. Further examination of the documents leads to other insights into his background and position in society.

Leonides’ appearances in the archive span almost twenty years: the earliest one falls in the year 315, the latest in 334. Leonides was therefore probably born in the last quarter of the third century. We behold his family only in the vaguest contours. The name of his father, Theon, occurs as a patronymic in most documents in the archive, as is standard in official papers. Theon is mentioned as Leonides' father in P. Oxy. I 103.4; XXXI 2585.5 XLV 3254.3–4; 3257.4; 3258.5; 3259.7; 3260.4; and PSI V 469.5. In his own letter, P.Oxy. XLV 3262,
a common feature of such documents, just as we cannot ascertain whether Leonides had a wife and children.

One document subtly discloses that Leonides probably came from a somewhat well-to-do family, because the archive includes a letter penned in his own hand with his subscription: “I, the same Leonides, have signed” (ὁ αὐτὸς Λεωνίδης [σε]ση(μείωμαι), P.Oxy. 3262.7). Leonides was thus a literate man, who had enjoyed an education.29 This then indicates that his parents had some means, since they would have paid for their son’s schooling. As we will see later, it appears that Leonides himself also valued education, for he kept among his papers a writing exercise.

In addition to these glimpses of Leonides’ religion, family, and education, the documents in the archive provide interesting information about his business activities and social status. In the archive we encounter him, sometimes in partnership with a man called Dioscorus, conducting business in two villages in the upper toparchy of the Oxyryhchite nome (the administrative region of which Oxyrhynchus City was the capital).30 Most documents in the archive are applications for the lease of land for the cultivation of flax; another records Leonides’ purchase of flax (P.Oxy. XLV 3254). Through these business papers, Leonides emerges as a merchant “engaged in the preparation and marketing of linen fibre, tow, and perhaps linseed” and a member of the tow guild.31 Leonides even occupied a rotating lead-

Leonides does not give his patronymic but styles himself as meniarch. The Theon that appears as one of the four meniarchs in P.Oxy. XLV 3261.3 cannot be securely identified. He may have been Leonides’ father but could also have been an unrelated man.


31 Stephens, P.Oxy. XLV, 129.
ership position in this professional association, for he functioned repeatedly as its monthly president (μηνιάρχης). 32

Guilds, or, better, professional associations, formed strong and colorful pieces in the quilt of ancient local society. These groups provided business advantages for their members and functioned as central points for their fiscal obligations. 33 That latter aspect is recorded in one papyrus, when Leonides and three fellow meniarchs take on a compulsory service to furnish newly chosen army recruits. 34 This same papyrus also gives an indication of Leonides' financial situation, as Susan Stephens, its editor, concluded: "If guild officials were selected like other officials at this time on their ability to assume financial burdens, then Leonides may have been a man of some affluence." 35 Indeed, as a member and monthly president of a professional organization, Leonides belonged in social and economic class to a “middling” group in society. 36 Onno van Nijf observed: "The craftsmen and traders who formed the core of the demos were, in an economic sense, spread across a broad band of society. Although many of them were poor in the eyes of the senatorial elite . . . they were often, in local terms, relatively well off." 37

---

32 Leonides' functioning as meniarch is recorded for the years 324 and 328 (respectively POxy. XLIV 3261 and 3262). The precise reconstruction of POxy. XLIV 3262.1, μηνιάρχης στιπ... is not clear, but certainly has to do with the tow guild (so Stephens, POxy. XLIV 3262, 143). In one lease, Leonides and Dioscorus are called στιπποτιμητ(αί), “tow-valuers” (POxy. I 103.28, trans. LSJ, 1646, with reference to this papyrus). In POxy. LIV 3753, dated March 26, 319, there are also four meniarchs of the tow guild, just as in POxy. XLIV 3261. For Oxyrhynchite guilds, see Revel Coles, POxy. LIV, appendix II, "The Guilds of Oxyrhynchus," 230–32.


35 Stephens, POxy. XLIV, 129.

36 So van Nijf, Civic World of Professional Associations, 243: "in social and economic terms the members of collegia occupied a middling position of which the Latin term plebs media seems a particularly apt description."

37 Ibid., 21 (emphasis in the original). Also: "The members of collegia . . . came from a level of society intermediate between the rich and the poor (plousioi and penetes); they constituted the groups which Aristotle describes as the mesoi, and of which the Romans used the specific term plebs media. We should not, of course, confuse these men with a ‘middle class’" (p. 22).
The activities of professional associations were not limited to doing business and paying taxes. Rather, in Jean-Michel Carrié's words: "plaisir et devoir n'étaient pas nécessairement incompatibles." These *collegia* also offered their members the opportunity to socialize and worship, an aspect that Philip Harland aptly summarized as "honoring the Gods, feasting with friends." Ancient inscriptions evoke rich dining and lavish banquets. A first-century C.E. papyrus with the rules for the *collegium* of salt merchants in the Fayumic town of Tebtunis contains, besides specific tax- and trade-related issues, the following sternly phrased stipulation that the members should consume alcoholic beverages together: "It is a condition that they shall drink regularly on the twenty-fifth of each month each one *chous* of beer." Thus the social side of the association was deemed integral to its proper functioning.

What about Leonides? The association rules for the Oxyrhynchite tow guild in the fourth century have not survived, but we have ancient parallels in the rules of other guilds that instruct us to envision Leonides as a member of his professional organization: He likely not only wrote memos and closed on land leases, but he must also have participated in its social life through local festivities and meals shared with fellow members. What role worship played in those gatherings, and especially worship of what god, remains a fascinating question.

Scholars of early Christianity have long pointed out parallels in organization and function between ancient professional and other voluntary associations, on the one hand, and synagogues and churches, on the other. In his *Associations, Syn-

---

38 Carrié, "Associations professionnelles," 330. These professional associations involved not only fiscal obligations ("*munus fiscal*") but also "sociabilité, convivialité, pratique culturelle" (ibid., 311). According to Carrié, these associations were not voluntary but obligatory in this period (ibid., 312–13, 315, and further). Many associations also had a funerary component, as they took care of a proper funeral for a deceased member; see, e.g., van Nijf, *Civic World of Professional Associations*, 31–69 ("1: Funerary Activities of Professional Associations in the Roman East"); and John S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and *Thiasoi*: Issues in Function, Taxonomy and Membership," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson; London: Routledge, 1996), 16–30, esp. 20–23 and 24: "professional associations . . . often saw to the burial of their members." This funerary aspect attracted the scorn of third-century ecclesiastic writer Commodian, who warned: "What advantage has a deceased from a funerary procession? You will be called to account [sc. by God] if you seek membership of a collegium for this reason!" (Instructions 2.33.8; trans. van Nijf, *Civic World of Professional Associations*, 31 n. 1).

39 Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 55. Harland provides a wonderful epigraphic example that brings together the various interrelated elements of association life in his discussion of a stele from Panormos (p. 57, with image on p. 56). On banquets and drinking, see also van Nijf, *Civic World of Professional Associations*, respectively 109–10 and 13–14.


41 See van Nijf, *Civic World of Professional Associations*, 131–46 ("3: Reading Ancient Festivals") and other chapters. Van Nijf based his work mainly on epigraphical evidence from Asia Minor.
agogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society, Harland explores the analogies between these groups, while John S. Kloppenborg thinks it possible that “some of Paul’s churches began as domestic collegia.”42 The Pauline congregations are, of course, chronologically and geographically far removed from Leonides’ fourth-century Oxyrhynchite tow guild. Oxyrhynchus at this time boasted at least two church buildings for worship and had a bishop.43 Perhaps half of the Egyptian population was Christian.44 I do not know how zealous a Christian Leonides was, but in these early years of the fourth century, a professional association could still provide opportunities for evangelization through networking, the importance of which L. Michael White has demonstrated.45 Therefore it is interesting to see a Christian among the membership. And, as it happens, at least some other members of Leonides’ social circle also appear to have been Christians.

V. Leonides and His Network

Besides Leonides, the archive features several other people. Most intriguingly, the NT papyrus itself contains a personal name, scribbled underneath the Pauline section: Aurelius Paulus. Unfortunately, a person named Paul does not occur among the business relations of Leonides mentioned in the other documents. Moreover, the name Paul occurs commonly in this period. Without patronymics or other identifiers, such as profession, it is not possible to spot this Paul in other papyri from this period and thus obtain more information about him.46 Nor is it clear how the name Paul relates to the NT passage on the top of the page. Was it penned in relation to the apostle Paul’s letter quoted above? Was a fourth-century Paul himself the writer of the scribbles, or was he the subject of a document that the scribe was about to compose?47 While this name Aurelius Paulus does not match with any person known, other people in Leonides’ circle have more to say for themselves.

43 P. Oxy. I 43 gives evidence of a north and south church in the city sometime after the year 295; see Luijendijk, Greetings in the Lord, 19–20. On Oxyrhynchus as a bishopric, see ibid., 95–102 (“Habemus papam”).
46 Paul was a popular name for Christian boys, as Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, already remarked in the middle of the third century (apud Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 7.25.14).
47 In school exercises, pupils often penned their name (Cribiore, Writing, Teachers, and Students, 45). Petaus, village scribe of Ptolemais Hormu, practiced writing his own name (P.Petaus 121).
Dioscorus, son of Ammonius, features in three of the archive’s documents. Once he leases land by himself (P.Oxy. XLV 3255), and twice he partners with Leonides (P.Oxy. I 103 and XLV 3256). I mention him here because he may be the son of another person in the archive who is both more colorful and more relevant for the contextualization of our NT papyrus: his father, Ammonius.

This Ammonius, son of Copres, was another of Leonides’ business partners, and presumably Dioscorus’s father. Together with our protagonist, he leased five *arouras* of land for cultivating flax in the upper toparchy of the Oxyrhynchite nome in the year 318 (P.Oxy. XLV 3257). Interestingly, this same Ammonius appears in another document, which pertains to the confiscation of church property during the so-called Great Persecution (P.Oxy. XXXIII 2673, 304 C.E.). In that document, he is identified as “Ammonius, son of Copres, lector of the former church of the village of Chysis.” So besides Leonides, at least one other person in this archive was a Christian, even a Christian *lector*, whose task it was to recite biblical passages during worship. Thus, through his business relationship with a church reader, we detect another, albeit more indirect, connection between Leonides and Christian

---

48 The appearances of Dioscorus fall in the years 315–317; in later documents he is absent, for reasons unknown.

49 An *aroura* is an Egyptian land measurement for a plot about the size of half a soccer field or ca. 2,750 square meters; see P. W. Pestman, *The New Papyrological Primer* (2nd ed., rev.; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 49.


51 ἀναγνώστης τῆς ποτε ἐκκλησίας κώμης Χύσεως (P.Oxy. XXXIII 2673.8–9). Sarah Pomeroy also interpreted these two instances as referring to one person (“Copronyms and the Exposure of Infants in Egypt,” in *Studies in Roman Law in Memory of A. Arthur Schiller* [ed. Roger S. Bagnall and William V. Harris; Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 13; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 147–62, here 154 (no. 184). Chysis is a village in the upper toparchy, that is, in the same general area where Leonides conducted his business; see above and n. 30.

52 His son, Dioscorus, was probably a Christian as well, as children tend to take the religion of their parents; see Bagnall, “Religious Conversion and Onomastic Change,” 109. Taking a clue from his name, the person called Evangelus in P.Oxy. XLV 3254 may also be a Christian. On Christian names, see, ibid., 105–24; and Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 40–55.

manuscripts. This scenario opens up an intriguing set of questions. Did Leonides put his literacy to use in a local church, for instance, as lector, just like his business partner Ammonius? And who possessed the codex that served as the Vorlage for copying the passage? Did Leonides own a codex with the Letter to the Romans and perhaps other Pauline epistles? In his *Early Christian Books in Egypt*, Bagnall notes that “we have little evidence for the private lay ownership of biblical texts at any early date, and even later, ownership of Christian books by individuals may not have been extensive.” Among individuals, Bagnall continues, members of the clergy “were both the persons likely to acquire scriptures for their churches and the individuals most likely to need biblical texts for their own use.” That puts the focus on Ammonius, the church reader. In view of the high costs of books, however, Bagnall considers it unlikely that church readers had sufficient income to acquire books. He concludes: “Many customers for Christian books were . . . churches and monasteries.” Unless the tow guild was very lucrative for Ammonius, allowing him the means to buy a manuscript, we should locate this Vorlage in a church library and imagine that our passage was copied from the church exemplar. Yet, although our Romans passage may have been copied from such a codex, as we shall see, the papyrus sheet itself did not belong to a Bible manuscript intended for reading in church.

VI. Amulet, Pious Penmanship, or School Exercise?

Unlike many other NT fragments discovered at Oxyrhynchus, II 209/p is not the sole surviving ragged page of a once integral manuscript but a largely intact

54 Stephens, the editor of the archive, noted that the names Sarmates and Matrinus occur both in the archive of Leonides and in *P.Oxy.* XXXIII 2673 (*P.Oxy.* XLV 3261, note to line 3). A Matrinus features in *P.Oxy.* XLV 3257.3, 18, and perhaps in 3261.3, and a Sarmates in 3261.4. Does this mean that there is another link between the Leonides archive and that text from the Great Persecution? If that were the case, the two officials responsible for dismantling the church of Chysis would twenty years later be members of the same guild as the owner of a NT papyrus and business partner of the church’s reader. This link, however, cannot be securely established, for these names are not rare and other identifiers are either lacking or do not overlap. In *P.Oxy.* XXXIII 2673.5, the two men occur as “Sarmates and Matrinus,” with their civic titles, but no further genealogical information, such as patronyms and/or nomina gentilia. *P.Oxy.* XLV 3261 ranks them as meniarchs (also, the reconstruction of Matrinus in line 3 is very doubtful). *P.Oxy.* XLV 3257.18 indicates a Valerius Matrinus.

56 Ibid., 62: “let us imagine a reader (anagnôstês) who received 10 solidi per year. A complete Bible would cost him half a year’s income. Such a purchase would be entirely out of reach. Even an unbound book, a single gospel on papyrus of the sort that cost a third of a solidus . . . would amount to one-thirtieth of a year’s income—in proportionate terms . . . the equivalent of $1,000 today, let us say, for someone earning $35,000.” On the high cost of books, see ibid., 64.
57 Ibid., 60.
sheet with a short quotation of a NT passage.\textsuperscript{58} Examining the contents of the archive, one wonders what kind of text this was and what this piece was doing among Leonides’ business papers. The style of handwriting, pagination, and format provide clues that this papyrus served as a writing exercise. Grenfell and Hunt described the script as “a large rude uncial” hand.\textsuperscript{59} Adolf Deissmann typified it as farmer’s handwriting (\textit{Bauernschrift})—in my opinion, more an indication of an unfavorable estimation of the peasantry than an adequate description of penmanship.\textsuperscript{60} In her detailed and influential study on school exercises, Raffaella Cribiore described this as an “evolving” hand with problems in aligning.\textsuperscript{61} The newly available digital photograph of the papyrus enables the researcher to view from intimately close-by the smudged letters and the writer’s general difficulty in forming the letters. This inexperienced handwriting and the mistakes made in copying prompted most scholars—and I join them—to characterize the text as a school exercise.\textsuperscript{62}

Deissmann, however, proposed that \textit{P. Oxy.} II 209/p\textsuperscript{10} had functioned as an amulet for the Aurelius Paulus mentioned in the cursive script below the Pauline quotation, especially in view of the folds in the papyrus.\textsuperscript{63} Deissmann has a point, as our papyrus indeed shows vertical lines of wear caused by folding, and amulets were typically rolled up into a small package that was worn on the body. Moreover, a host of amulets with biblical texts have surfaced in the papyrological record, an indication of a common practice.\textsuperscript{64} Nevertheless, this piece was not an amulet. How

\textsuperscript{58} See also Junack: “sicher gehörte [das Blatt] nie zu einer Gebrauchshandschrift” (\textit{Das Neue Testament auf Papyrus}, 2.1:XXI). Only one other papyrus contains the opening verses of Romans; it is a page from a papyrus codex, \textit{P.Oxy.} XI 1354/p\textsuperscript{6}, ca. 600, Rom 1:1–9 (r) and 1:10–16 (v).

\textsuperscript{59} Grenfell and Hunt, \textit{P.Oxy.} II 209, 8.

\textsuperscript{60} Deissmann, \textit{Licht vom Osten: Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt} (4th ed.;Tübingen: Mohr, 1923), 204.

\textsuperscript{61} Cribiore, \textit{Writing, Teachers, and Students}, 247 (no. 302).

\textsuperscript{62} For Grenfell and Hunt the papyrus was “no doubt a schoolboy’s exercise” (\textit{P.Oxy.} II 209, 8). So also Aland: “es handelt sich bei diesem fol mit größter Wahrscheinlichkeit um eine Schreibübung” (\textit{Repertorium}, 1:357); Cavallo and Maehler, \textit{Greek Bookhands}, 8 (no. 1a); Junack, \textit{Das Neue Testament auf Papyrus}, 2.1:XXI; Cribiore, \textit{Writing, Teachers, and Students}, 246–47 (no. 302).

\textsuperscript{63} Deissmann, \textit{Licht vom Osten}, 203 n. 4 and plate on 204: “Ich gebe jetzt, nach längerer Beschäftigung mit altchristlichen Amuletten, der Deutung den Vorzug, daß das Blatt dem unter dem Römtexte in Kursivschrift sich nennenden Aurelios Paulos als Amulett gedient hat. Die Faltungen sprechen wohl auch dafür.”

this great scholar reached his faulty conclusion becomes apparent upon examination of the image of the papyrus on which he based his conclusions. Deissmann used the photograph that Grenfell and Hunt had published in their edition and reproduced it in his own book *Licht vom Osten*. The real papyrus, however, differs significantly from the one Deissmann saw on the photograph. His image was cropped and missed the unwritten bottom half of the papyrus. The full piece (some 25 by 20 cm) would make an amulet of unprecedented size, as the preferred format for amulets was long and narrow. The sheet was indeed folded, but folding is not limited exclusively to amulets; papyrus letters and other documents in antiquity were also folded. Amulets were often rolled up, creating wear lines that vary in size from small at the beginning of the rolling to larger toward the end. Moreover, amulets do not have page numbers on top, as this piece has. In a Christian amulet one would rather expect *alpha* and *omega* flanking a cross monogram.

I interpret the style of handwriting, pagination, and format as clues that this papyrus served as a writing exercise. But before I turn to the specifics, I should address an observation regarding Christian writing exercises made by Cornelia Römer. In her article “Ostraka mit christlichen Texten aus der Sammlung Flinders Petrie,” Römer cautioned against taking all Bible texts written in inexperienced hands as school exercises. She suggested that Christians copied biblical passages as pious practice, and that only the Psalms were used as writing exercises. In a foot-
note, she classified our papyrus as a "witness of humble penmanship, not of a student who is learning how to write." Römer makes a valid point, yet it seems to me that the one position does not necessarily exclude the other, that in a Christian educational setting the boundaries between pious copying and school exercise may have been fluid. Nevertheless, as I will show next, this papyrus has certain features that emphasize its educational setting.

The papyrus has two items: the section from Romans, to which someone added the documentary scribbles. Although we do not have other texts written by Leonides in uncial script to which to compare this papyrus, the exercise may have been Leonides' own school text, or alternatively someone else in the household may have penned it. Other writing exercises also have been found in private archives; apparently these were pieces that people saved among their papers, just as we today keep our notebooks or our children's school papers but eventually discard probably most of them. Inspired by Cribiore's approach of paying attention to papyrological and paleographical details in school exercises, I will show that this papyrus teaches us a lesson in Christian education.

Examining the manuscript from the top down, I must first address an omission: in other manuscripts, the Pauline letters are customarily prefaced by the designation of the addressees (ΠΡΟΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΟΥΣ, etc.), but our papyrus lacks the

70 Ibid., 188 n. 22: "P.Oxy. II 209 und P.Berol. 3805 . . . möchte ich als Zeugnisse devoter Schreiberkunst sehen, nicht aber eines Studenten, der Schreiben lernt." 71 Charles Wessely interpreted the hastily written lines of the second item on the papyrus as another school exercise. He suggested reading in the second line of the cursive hand: καὶ τοῦ ἐπιλοί(που) λογείας, adding, "cependant ce travail ne peut avoir pour résultat de donner des phrases entières; les mots ainsi rétablis présentent un sens plus ou moins insignifiant" (Les plus anciens monuments du christianisme écrits sur papyrus: Textes grecs édités, traduits, et annotés [PO 18.3; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1924], 150, no. 11). Another combination of biblical and documentary text is, e.g., P.Rylands Coptic no. 223b, with Ps 50:3–5 and the beginning of a letter. See Scott Bucking, "Christian Educational Texts from Egypt: A Preliminary Inventory," in Kramer et al., Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, 132–38, here 133.

72 For the method, see Cribiore, Writing, Teachers, and Students. I briefly discussed nomina sacra and Christian education in Greetings in the Lord (66–69, with this papyrus mentioned on p. 69) and treat it here in more detail. Bucking presented an overview of texts pertaining to Christian education at the 1995 papyrological congress ("Christian Educational Texts from Egypt"). He does not mention P.Oxy. II 209, but refers to other practices with Pauline epistles.
This absence of a title can have several explanations. The Vorlage may not have contained the title, or perhaps the title was placed only at the end of the work, as is the case in other manuscripts. Alternatively, our student-copyist may have omitted it when copying from the exemplar, accidentally or purposefully.

While the Pauline passage bears no title, an alpha present in the top line of the sheet proves significant for the contextualization of the piece. The letter indicates a page number: alpha, page 1. It makes the most sense to take this as evidence that the student copied from a Vorlage that had pagination. If so, then this student worked from a codex that began with the Letter to the Romans, and possibly contained more Pauline epistles. Such a codex would be a requisite item in most church libraries, among others, for reading during worship. As discussed above, Bagnall considered it more likely that churches rather than individuals had the financial means to purchase these expensive books. Yet in light of the fact that Leonides, the owner of the papyrus, was literate, it remains also possible that he himself or his household owned the codex that served as the exemplar for this piece.

The exercise consisted of copying the proemium of Romans, the first seven verses of the letter, which form a clearly delineated textual unit. Why did the student copy this section? For one, it marks the beginning of Paul’s most important and most famous letter, which could be found at the beginning of a codex. Several other writing exercises also display this quite logical preference to start with the opening sections of works, for instance, the Psalms and the book of Job. There is also a writing exercise of Romans 1 in Coptic.

73 Only one other Greek papyrus manuscript preserves this passage of Romans 1, POxy. XI 1354/p. Also found at Oxyrhynchus, this page from a codex dates to around the year 600, much later than our papyrus. That manuscripts lists the title: [ΠΡΩΣ ΡΟΜΑΙΟΥΣ]. The beginning of Romans unfortunately has not been preserved in p46, a Pauline codex from ca. 200, but the other letters are prefaced with the indication of their addressees and therefore I assume a title was originally written above the Letter to the Romans also.


75 Eric G. Turner observed: “The favorite place for [pagination] is undoubtedly the center of the upper margin” (The Typology of the Early Codex [Haney Foundation Series 18; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977], 76).

76 Alternatively, the number 1 may signal the first exercise.

77 As is well known, the order of the Pauline epistles varies in ancient manuscripts; for a good overview of the evidence, see Parker, Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts, 249–56. The oldest extant manuscript of the Pauline epistles, the famous p46 from around the year 200, also started with Romans.

78 For instance, Ps 1:1–2, ed. Rosario Pintaudi, “Frammento di manuale scolastico (LXX, Ps.
An additional motive probably also played a role in the selection of this passage. I propose that these verses were assigned to allow the student to practice writing *nomina sacra*, that Christian scribal practice of contracting special words. The papyrological record has preserved many school exercises for the alphabet, syllabus, or names. Yet so far, no school exercises exist that exclusively train the student in writing *nomina sacra*. In this short passage from Romans of only seven verses, as many as eighteen contractions occur for seven different *nomina sacra*. An important benefit of copying this section, therefore, was to gain experience in recognizing and writing this widespread Christian scribal custom. Thus, in Leonides' household, writing constituted not only the bureaucratic language of land

---

79 Since *nomina sacra* are already present in the earliest preserved Christian manuscripts, the scribe of this passage probably did not have to contract the forms, but copied them from the exemplar.

80 With so many contractions in this piece, one opportunity to write a nineteenth *nomen sacrum* was missed: that for David in line 5 (Rom 1:3), even though according to Anton H. R. E. Paap, contractions of David are "a rarity, for only 9 out of the 40 sources know it" (*Nomina sacra in the Greek Papyri of the First Five Centuries A.D.: The Sources and Some Deductions* [Papyrologica Lugduno Batava 8; Leiden: Brill, 1959], 106). Instead of writing δαδ with a supralinear stroke, the student wrote δαυδ᾿ followed by an apostrophe, as if hesitating between the practice of writing an apostrophe after a Hebrew name and that of a *nomen sacrum*. Some Christian scribes wrote apostrophes after noninflected Hebrew names (see Eric G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971], 13), e.g., *P.Yale I* (Genesis; second or third century) and *P.Bodmer II/p* (Gospel of John, third century). The Vorlage of our papyrus may have contained the longer form of the *nomen sacrum*; the scribe of a fourth (?) century manuscript of the Psalms (*P.Lit.London 205*) wrote δαδ᾿ with supralinear stroke as *nomen sacrum*. See Aland, *Repetorium*, 1:115–16 (AT 50) = *P.Lit.London 205*. The only other NT papyrus with this passage, *P.Oxy. XI 1354/p*²⁶, significantly later than our piece (ca. 600) has the *nomen sacrum* for David: δαδ᾿.

81 A striking feature in the Romans papyrus is the preference to write the *nomina sacra* for "Jesus" and "Christ" with the three letter forms, instead of the more common two letter forms with first and last letter. In 1959, Paap concluded for these longer forms: "... is attested through the period we deal with [the first five centuries], but the number of sources decreases as the centuries proceed" (*Nomina sacra*, 109, overview of forms on 108; for Χριστός, 109–11). According to Roberts, "the form Χριστός... may have been an intermediate form between Χρις and Χριστός" (*Manuscript, Society, and Belief*, 36–37). Larry W. Hurtado interpreted the three-letter form as a "conflation" between the suspended and the contracted form (*The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006], 113). See also Scott Charleworth, "Consensus Standardization in the Systematic Approach to *Nomina Sacra* in Second- and Third-Century Gospel Manuscripts," *Aeg* 86 (2006): 37–68, here 38.
leases and memos; someone also copied a biblical passage and practiced Christian symbols.

VII. Conclusion

An interesting feature of this papyrus is that it defies conventional classification according to genre. With its Pauline passage and cursive scribbles underneath about accounts and produce, P.Oxy. II 209/p\textsuperscript{10} contains both literary and documentary elements. Moreover, its literary component, the biblical quotation, is not a traditional literary text but a writing exercise.

The main importance of the piece, however, is that it gives an intriguing glimpse into the social context of a NT papyrus. A private copy of a Christian text, it was penned as a writing exercise from the first page of a codex that started with Paul’s Letter to the Romans and was intended as practice for writing nomina sacra. It was deposited on a trash heap at Oxyrhynchus tied up with official papers from Leonides, the son of Theon. Leonides, the only known ancient owner of a NT papyrus, was a literate Christian from the city. A flax merchant and member and monthly president of the Oxyrhynchite tow guild, he belonged to a “middling” group in society and was probably moderately well-off. He conducted business in the Oxyrhynchite countryside in the first half of the fourth century. Sometimes he partnered with Ammonius, son of Copres, who was a reader in a church during the Great Persecution.

While in antiquity some Christian manuscripts were venerated and at the end of their useful lives preserved and buried, others were thrown away like a grocery receipt.\textsuperscript{82} The archival context of P.Oxy. II 209/p\textsuperscript{10} thus allows us to see one side of how sacred texts were part and parcel (literally) of ancient society.

Appendix: The Archive of Aurelius Leonides, Son of Theon\textsuperscript{83}


P.Oxy. XXXI 2585 Lease of 2½ arouras near Ision Panga (315): To Aurelius Dioscorides alias Julianus, from Aurelius Leonides,\textsuperscript{84} son of Theon.

\textsuperscript{82}This article is part of a larger research project on the use and disuse of early Christian literary papyri. For a discussion of the discarding of Christian manuscripts as garbage, see Luijendijk, “Sacred Scriptures as Trash: Biblical Papyri from Oxyrhynchus,” VC 64 (2010): 217–54.

\textsuperscript{83}Adapted from Stephens, P.Oxy. XLI, 129.

\textsuperscript{84}In the edition translated as Leonidas.
P. Oxy. XLV 3255 Lease of 6½ arouras near Ision Panga⁸⁵ (315): To Aurelia Eutropion, daughter of Theodorus alius Caeremon, from Aurelius Dioscorus, son of Ammonius.

P. Oxy. I 103 Lease of 1 aroura near Ision Panga (316): To Aurelius Themistocles alias Dioscurides, from Aurelius Leonides, son of Theon, and Aurelius Dioscorus, son of Ammonius.

P. Oxy. XLV 3256 Lease of 13 arouras near Antipera Pela (317): To Aurelius Heron also called Sarapion, from Aurelius Dioscorus, son of Ammonius, and Aurelius Leonides, son of Theon.

P. Oxy. XLV 3257 Lease of 5 arouras near Ision Panga (318*): To the heirs of ?, son of Valerius, through Maximus, from Aurelius Leonides, son of Theon, and Aurelius Ammonius, son of Copres.

P. Oxy. XLV 3258 Lease of ? arouras near Antipera Pela (319): To Aurelius Dius, son of Zoilus, from Aurelius Leonides, son of Theon.

P. Oxy. XLV 3259 Lease of ? arouras near Antipera Pela (319): From Aurelius Apollo- lonius alias Serenus, son of Apollonius, to Aurelius Leonides, son of Theon.

P. Oxy. XLV 3260 Lease of 6 arouras near Antipera Pela (323): Gaianus, son of Ammonius, to Leonides, son of Theon.

P. Oxy. XLV 3261 Letter to four meniarchs (324): Leonides, Theon, Matrinus (?), and Sarmates.

P. Oxy. XLV 3262 Receipt (?) written by Leonides (328): To Comon, son of Tho- nius, from Leonides, meniarch of the tow guild.

PSI V 469 Lease of 14 arouras near Ision Panga (334): To the heirs of Ammonianus from Aurelius Leonides, son of Theon.⁸⁶


*Overlap:

P. Oxy. XLV 3257 (318): Leonides and Ammonius, son of Copres, lease 5 arouras of land near Ision Panga.

P. Oxy. XXXIII 2673 (304): Declaration of church property by Ammonius, son of Copres, lector of the former church of Chysis.

A search for Leonides from Oxyrhynchus in the DDBDP (Duke Data Bank of Documentary Papyri) gives fifty-four results. Most of the men that share their name with our protagonist can be ruled out based on the date of the text. Three papyri

---


are, however, roughly contemporaneous with our archive from Oxyrhynchus, so that an identification is possible. I mention them here for the sake of completeness but have found no evidence that would confirm that they refer to our Leonides, and I remain very doubtful as to the identification:

*P.Oxy.* XIV 1771, a letter about wine from the late third or early fourth century, features a Theon and Leonides. Could this be Leonides and his father, Theon? *P.Oxy.* XXXVI 2796, “accounts of expenditure on heating, possibly for the public baths,” dated to the late third or early fourth century, among the men listed is “Leonides, ex-gymnasiarch.” While other men listed in the papyrus have a patronymic, Leonides unfortunately has not. It remains to be seen whether a former gymnasiarch would also be active in a guild. *PSI* VII 808, “conti,” that is, accounts, from the third (?) century. A Theon and a Leonides are listed, but this Theon is an oil manufacturer (ἐλαιουργός), and the date may be too early.