

William F. Macomber

## The Nicene Creed in a Liturgical Fragment of the 5th or 6th Century from Upper Egypt

Some years ago, the Harold B. Lee Library of Brigham Young University received a donation of manuscript fragments from Egypt, some on papyrus, some on parchment or vellum and some on paper. The predominant language is Sahidic, from which one may conclude that the fragments originated from Upper Egypt; however, a little Arabic, Bohairic and Greek also occur. The age of the fragments varies widely from the 5th century to the 16th century and must be determined by palaeography.

The most interesting of the Greek fragments contains phrases that can be identified as belonging to the Nicene Creed, not the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that is used currently in the liturgies of most churches, both eastern and western, but the creed that was adopted by the Council of Nicea in 325, which is today used solely by the Armenian Church. Since the palaeography of the fragment is such that it can be assigned with considerable confidence to the 5th or 6th century, this makes this little fragment the oldest Greek witness by far to the text of the Nicene Creed. According to Schwartz, the oldest manuscript texts of the Creed date only from the 11th century<sup>1</sup>. It is true, of course, that the Nicene Creed is also found in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, but the manuscript witnesses to the texts of their works, according to Ortiz de Urbina, do not antedate the 10th century<sup>2</sup>. The only manuscript witnesses that are at all comparable in age to the Brigham Young University fragment are the Syriac translations, one manuscript of which dates from the year 501 A.D., and the Coptic translations of the 7th century<sup>3</sup>.

However, the primary interest of this fragment is not its witness to the text of the Creed. In fact, it provides only three relatively minor variants to the critical text, which, however, are supported by some ancient sources<sup>4</sup>. Its primary in-

1 E. Schwartz, *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, t. I, vol. 1, part 1 (Berlin, 1927), pp. 2 and 35.

2 I. Ortiz de Urbina, S.I., *El Símbolo Niceno*, (Madrid, 1947), pp. 19, f.

3 Ortiz de Urbina, op. cit., pp. 17, f.

4 It adds καὶ after γεννηθέντα, omits the τε in the phrase τὰ τε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ and substitutes in the same phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς for ἐν τῇ γῇ. According to G. L. DOSSETTI, *Il simbolo di Nicea e di Costantinopoli. Edizione critica* (Roma, 1967), p. 230, the first variant occurs in the Syriac version, found in the 7th century Br. Mus. Add. 14526, the Syrian canonical collection and

terest is rather that it places the Creed in the context of the eucharistic liturgy, that is, the Creed is preceded by the end of a prayer whose phraseology marks it rather clearly as belonging to a eucharistic liturgy, even though I have not found the prayer in any other source, ancient or modern.

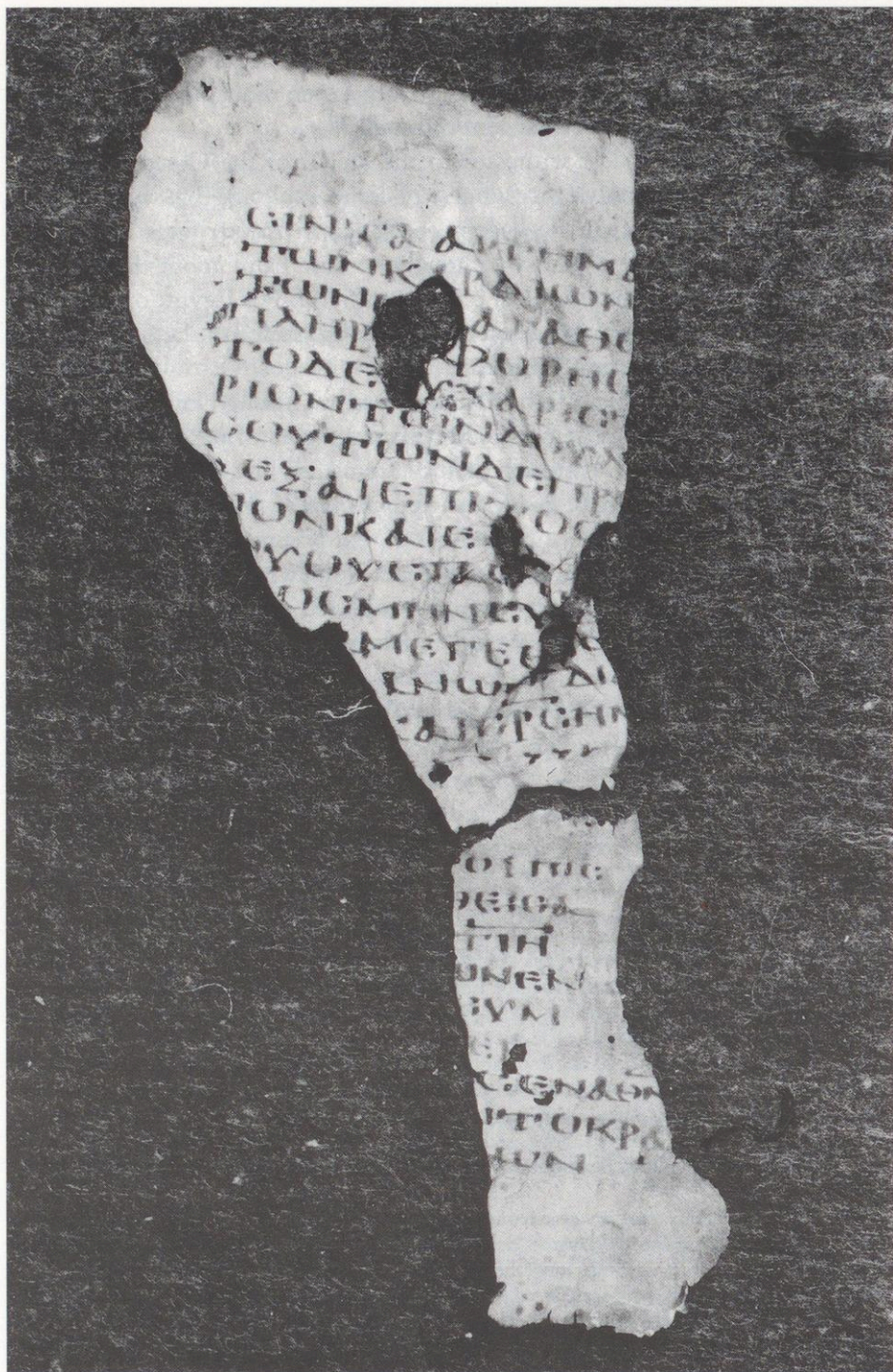
This is one of the oldest witnesses to the recital of the Creed during the eucharistic liturgy. The only other witness of comparable age that we have is the commentary on the eucharistic liturgy contained in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, which is thought to date from about the year 500 A.D. and to testify to the liturgical practice of Syria. For Egypt, on the other hand, we have lacked until now direct evidence to the recital of the Creed during the Mass until as late as the 12th century.

The fragment in question is No. 90 in the Brigham Young University Collection of Coptic Fragments. It is actually two fragments of parchment that are barely contiguous, one measuring 11.9×9.3 cm. and the other 8.3×4.6 cm. The complete leaf must have measured approximately 20×12 cm. When the two fragments are joined, there are 24 lines of text on both the recto and verso. There are holes in the parchment, which is also somewhat wrinkled.

In the following edition of the text a dot is placed under doubtful readings, and square brackets enclose missing letters. I here most gratefully acknowledge the very significant help that I have received in reestablishing the text of the fragment from Professor Hubert Kaufhold of the University of Munich<sup>5</sup>.

the acts of the East Syrian Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon of 410, and also in an Armenian version in the commentary of the Catholicos Sahak on the Epistle to Proclus; the second variant occurs in the acts of the sixth session of the Council of Ephesus (ACO I, 1, 7, 89), four Greek codices of a liturgical or canonical nature, the commentary of John of Antioch on the Epistle to Proclus, the ecclesiastical history of Gelasius of Cyzicus, the same Syriac sources indicated above and the Coptic canonical collection; the third variant is found in Athanasius of Alexandria's *Epistula ad Iovianum Imperatorem*, in some manuscripts of Cyril of Alexandria's *Epistula tertia (synodica) ad Nestorium*, also in his *Liber primus contra Nestorium*, in the same four Greek canonical or liturgical manuscripts mentioned above, in the Coptic canonical collection, in Marcellus of Ancyra's (or his disciple's) *Libellus iustificationis* and in Theodotus of Ancyra's *Expositio in Symbolum Nicaenum*.

<sup>5</sup> Kaufhold, besides correcting my erroneous reading of more than one letter of the text, has also corrected my false impression that the "tail" of the recto side came from near the center of the entire leaf, when, in fact, it comes from the right hand edge, as is evident from a consideration of the verso. In addition, he has located two parallel passages in the Coptic ordinary of the mass and in the Anaphora of St. Mark in E. Renaudot, *Liturgiarum orientalium collectio*, vol. I (Francofurti ad Moenum, 1847), pp. 60 and 136, with the help of which he has been able to suggest many of the missing words of the prayer that precedes the Creed, and he has also offered a probable reconstruction of the rubric that introduces the Creed.



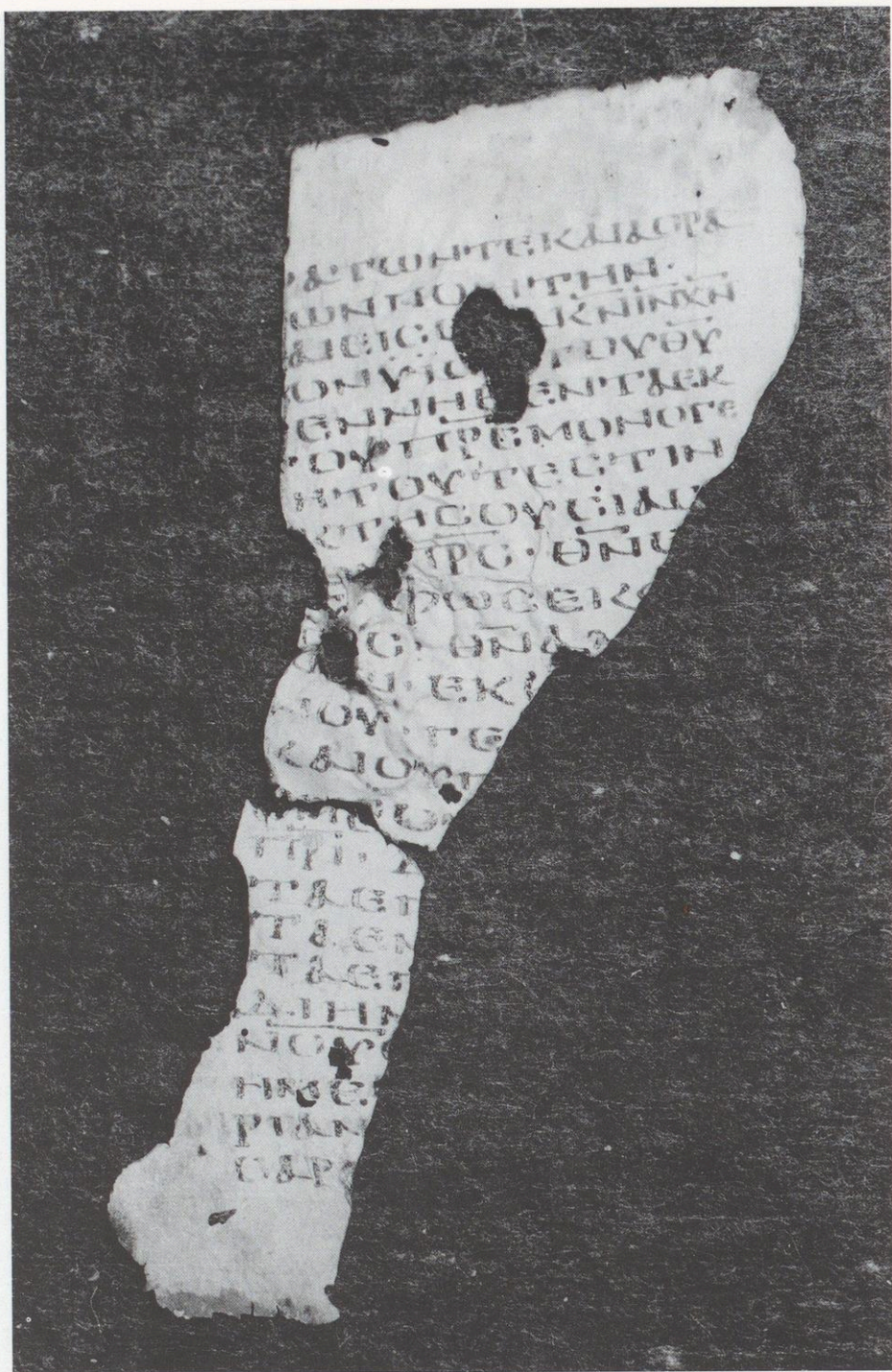
## Recto

	CINTAAITHMA[--]		σιν τὰ αἰτήμα[τα]
	ΤΩΝΚΑΡΔΙΩΝ[---]		τῶν καρδιῶν [πάν?]
	ΤΩΝ[---]ΑΓΑΘΩ[-]		των [τῶν] ἀγαθῶ[ν]
	ΠΛΗΡ[-]ΦΟΡΗÇ[-]		πληρ[ο]φορήσ[αι,]
5	ΤΟΔΕ[-]ΥΧΑΡΙCΤ[-]	5	τὸ δὲ [ε]ὐχαριστ[ή]
	ΡΙΟΝΤΩΝΔΟΥΛ[---]		ριον τῶν δούλ[ων]
	CΟΥΤΩΝΔΕΠΡ[---]		σου τῶνδε πρ[όσ]
	ΔΕΞΑΙΕΠΙΤΟΟ[---]		δεξαι ἐπὶ τὸ ο[ὐρά]
	[-]ΙΟΝΚΑΙΕ[ ]		[ν]ιον καὶ ε[ὐλογημένον]
10	[-]ΥΘΥCΙΑÇ[ ]	10	[σο]υ θυσιασ[τήριον]
	[-]ΟCΜΗΝΕΥ[ ]		[εἰς] ὁσμὴν εὐ[ωδίας <sup>6</sup> ,]
	[ ]ΑΜΕΓΕΘ[-]ΤΩ[-]		[εἰς τ]ὰ μεγέθ[η] τῶ[ν]
	[ ]ΑΝΩΝΔΙ[ ]		[ οὐρ]ανῶν <sup>7</sup> δι[ὰ]
	[ ]ΚΑΙΠΡCΗΜ[ ]		[τοῦ θεοῦ] καὶ πατρὸς ἡμ[ῶν]
15	[ ] >>>	15	[ ] >>>
	[ ]ΟΙΠΙC		[ ]οι πίσ
	[ ]ΘΕΙCΑ		[τις ἐκτε]θεῖσα
	[ ]ΤΙΗ		[παρὰ τῶν] τῇ
	[ ]ΩΝΕΝ		[πατέρων τ]ῶν ἐν
20	[ ]ÇΥΜ	20	[Νικαίᾳ] συμ
	[ ]ΕΥ		[βάντων <sup>8</sup> . Πιστ]εῦ
	[ ]CΕΝΑΘΝ		[ομεν εἰ]ς ἓνα Θεὸν
	[ ]ΝΤΟΚΡΑ		[πατέρα πα]ντοκρά
	[ ]ΩΝ		[τορα, πάντ]ων

6 Cf. Renaudot, I, 60.

7 Cf. Renaudot, I, 136.

8 It is hard to imagine how the -οι relates to the rest of the rubric. One would expect a definite article modifying πίστις. It is quite possible that πίστις ἐκτεθεῖσα should be put in the accusative, instead of the nominative, case.



## Verso

[-]ΡΑΤΩΝΤΕΚΑΙΑΟΡΑ [-]ΩΝΠΟΙΗΤΗΝ· [-]ΑΙΕΙCΕ[-]ΑΚΝΙΝΧΝ	[ό]ρατῶν τε καὶ ἁορά [τ]ων ποιητήν, [κ]αὶ εἰς ἔ[ν]α κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν
[-]ΟΝΥΙΟ[-]ΤΟΥΘΥ	[τ]ὸν υἱὸ[ν] τοῦ θεοῦ
5 [-]ΕΝΝΗΘΕΝΤΑΕΚ ΤΟΥΠΡCΜΟΝΟΓΕ [-]ΗΤΟΥΤΕCΤΙΝ [-]ΚΤΗCΟΥCΙΑC [---]ΠΡC·ΘΝΕ[-]	5 [γ]εννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς μονογε [ν]ῆ, τουτέστιν [ἐ]κ τῆς οὐσίας [τοῦ] πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐ[κ]
10 [-]ΥΦΩCΕΚΦ[-] [---]C·ΘΝΑΔ[---] [---]Ν·ΕΚΘ[-]-----] ΝΟΥ·ΓΕ[-]-----] ΚΑΙΟΥΠ[-]-----]	10 [θεο]ῦ, φῶς ἐκ φω [τό]ς, θεὸν ἄλ[ηθι] [νὸ]ν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθι νοῦ, γε[ννηθέντα] καὶ οὐ π[οιηθέντα,]
15 ΟΜΟΟΥ[-]-----] ΠΡΙ·Δ[-]-----] ΤΑΕΓ[-]-----] ΤΑΕΝ[-]-----] ΤΑΕΠ[-]-----]	15 ὁμοού[σιον τῷ] πατρί, δι' οὗ τὰ πάν τα ἐγ[ένετο] τὰ ἐν [τῷ <sup>9</sup> οὐραωῶ καὶ] τὰ ἐπ[ὶ τῆς γῆς, τὸν]
20 ΔΙΗΜ[-]-----] ΝΟΥ[-]-----] ΗΜΕ[-]-----] ΡΙΑΝ[-]-----] CΑΡ[ ]	20 δι' ἡμ[ᾶς τοὺς ἁ] νθρώπου[ς καὶ διὰ τὴν] ἡμε[τέραν σωτη] ρίαν [κατελθόντα καὶ <sup>10</sup> ] σαρκωθέντα ]

9 We do not seem to have sufficient space in the missing part of this line to accommodate all of the letters here. Perhaps this τῷ, which is lacking in a few of the less significant witnesses to the Creed should be omitted. However, parallelism with the phrase, ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, would seem to call for it.

10 As in line 18, we do not seem to have sufficient space to accommodate all of the letters. Perhaps this καὶ, which is lacking in a few less significant witnesses, should be omitted.