

The Reading of 1 Timothy 3:16 in Codex C

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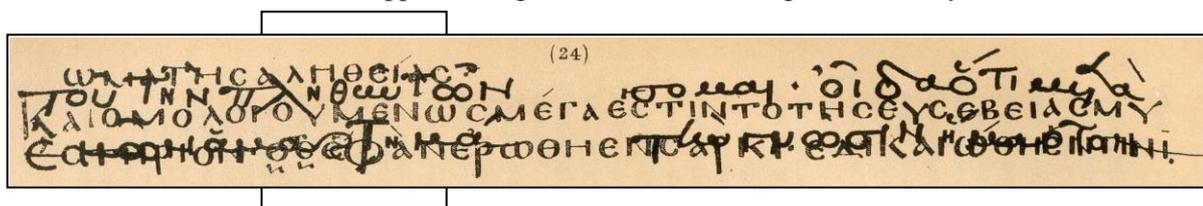
Revised slightly: 3 April 2018, 14 January 2023.

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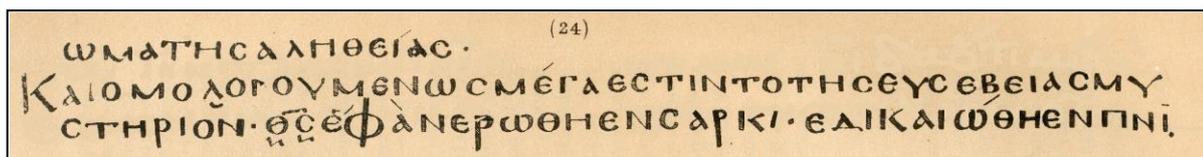
Does Codex C (technically known as *Codex Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus*) read **God** was manifested in the flesh, or as the modern critics claim with absolute certainty, **He** was manifested in the flesh? We are in the fortunate position of having a scan of the manuscript, so we can see with our own eyes what is going on. When reading the Greek manuscripts, we must be aware that certain “sacred” words are always contracted, and written with a line on top, so that *God*, ΘΕΟC, (*theos*) is written Θ̅C̅.

Here is a scan of the manuscript, from the facsimile in F.H.A. Scrivener's *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*. It is unfortunately a palimpsest, i.e. it has lower (original) writing, and has been scrubbed and re-used for upper writing. But the lower writing is still clearly visible.

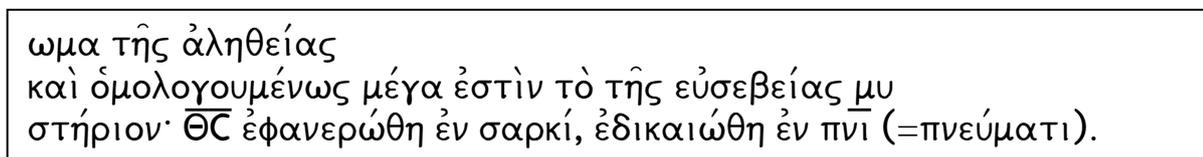


The box marks the contested area, with Θ̅C̅ or Ο̅C̅ at the bottom left, giving **God** or **He** was manifested in the flesh. We enlarge the box area and study it later.

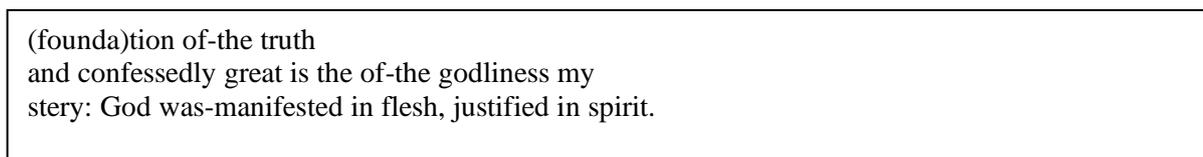
In order to help the reader orientate himself, the following shows the lower scripture text, produced by replacing the upper writing by the background colour. Where the lower text has been overwritten by the upper text, we make a fair guess as to how much black to remove so as to reveal how the lower text stood. *Nowhere has any black been added.*



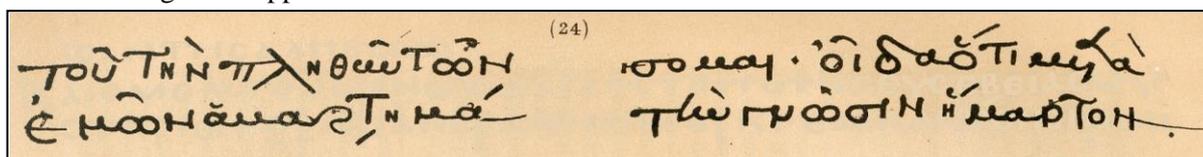
It reads:



A literal translation is:



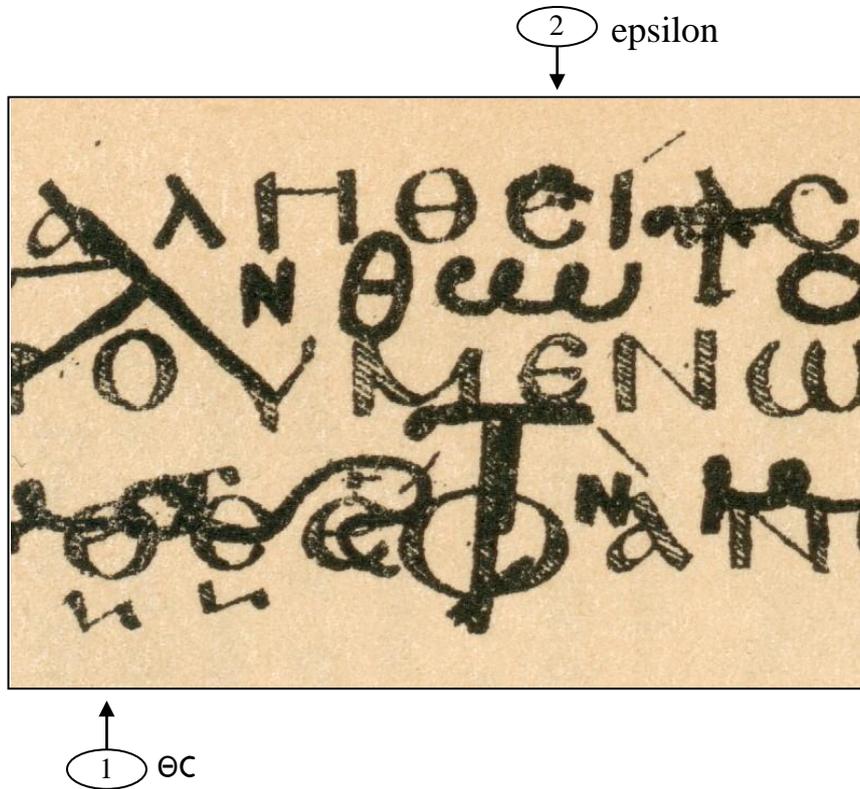
The following is the upper text.



It is, we are informed by Scrivener, a Greek translation of St. Ephraim the Syrian. It reads:

τοῦ τὴν πληθῦν τῶν ἐμῶν ἁμαρτημά	σομαι· οἶδα ὅτι μετὰ τὴν γνῶσιν ἡμαρτον
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Let us examine the contested area in more detail.



Tischendorf (the champion of modern textual criticism) claimed that the horizontal line in the theta of θC is an addition by a later scribe. His first argument is that the line slopes upwards. But observe the epsilon of ἀληθείας, marked (2). It also slopes upwards - and is in the scribe's thin style, showing that the theta is entirely consistent with the original scribe.

Tischendorf also argues that the line in the theta is grey, - but the whole underlying text is faint, as it always is with a palimpsest.

So Tischendorf's argument collapses. If there were no serious doctrine at stake, is it conceivable that this line would be questioned at all?

The reading in Codex C is established as $\theta C = \theta EOC = \theta \epsilon \acute{o} \varsigma =$ God was manifested in the flesh. Despite this, modern critics claim that the original reading in this manuscript is unquestionably \overline{OC} (Cf. Nestle-Aland 26 and Bruce M. Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*).

For proof that there was an original line in the theta of codex A (Alexandrinus), and for a thorough dissertation on the reading of I Timothy 3:16, see *The Revision Revised* by John W. Burgon.