



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

University Library

Dear Visitor,

We hope you enjoyed your visit to Cambridge University Library and the Palimpsest exhibition. Attached, you will find the image you created from the Codex Zacynthius palimpsest. You can print it out or share it online.

About Codex Zacynthius

Codex Zacynthius is a *palimpsest* – a reused manuscript that has two layers of text. It is named after the Greek island of Zakynthos, where it was found. It is the oldest manuscript of the New Testament to contain a *catena* (commentary of sayings of the Church Fathers) alongside the biblical text of the Gospel of Luke. The manuscript was written around 700 CE in the eastern Mediterranean. Centuries later, a monk in the 12th or 13th century washed and cleaned the parchment to erase the text, and wrote an *evangelary* over the top (parts of the Gospels that are read in the church service).

How to read a palimpsest

The earliest scholars to work on palimpsests used sunlight and mirrors to try to read the faint undertext. Some scholars used chemicals ammonium bisulfate to try and enhance the undertext. These chemicals were very destructive. While they were effective at first, the chemicals would eventually damage the manuscript and cause it to turn black and unreadable. Today, *multispectral photography* – photographs using different parts of the visible and invisible light spectrum – helps scholars read the undertext of palimpsests like Codex Zacynthius. The images can be manipulated to digitally enhance ink that is too faded to be seen by the naked eye in normal light.

We hope to see you again soon!

Cambridge University Library

