



Seminar

## IVAN MIROSHNIKOV

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### *Textual Fluidity in Coptic Literary Manuscripts: An Interactive Seminar*

Tuesday, 18 May 2021, 2:15 p.m.

Due to the precautions imposed by the current Corona pandemic, the Thunberg Hall will be closed to the public until further notice.

You are therefore invited to join the seminar via Zoom instead:  
<https://uu-sc.zoom.us/j/62709835279>

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## ABOUT IVAN MIROSHNIKOV

Ivan Miroshnikov was born in 1986 in Moscow, USSR. In 2008, he received his Specialist Diploma (equivalent to an MA) in Religious Studies from the Department of Religious Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, Moscow State University. As a student, he became interested in the Gospel of Thomas, an early Christian text whose only complete copy survives in Coptic (i.e., the last developmental stage of the Egyptian language), which would later become the topic of his candidate's (Moscow State University, 2012) and doctoral dissertations (University of Helsinki, 2016). Miroshnikov's doctoral dissertation, entitled "The Gospel of Thomas and Plato: A Study of the Impact of Platonism on the 'Fifth Gospel,'" was recently published in the series *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

During the recent years, Miroshnikov's research interests have shifted from early Christian studies to Coptic philology. He is currently working on publishing various hitherto unedited manuscripts in Coptic, both documentary and literary. He is especially enchanted with Coptic dialectology, an area of research focusing on the dialects of Coptic, which in many respects remain unexplored. In 2019, for instance, his publication of the first edition of fragments of the Epistle to the Hebrews – written in the early Bohairic dialect of Coptic he discovered at the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg – became only the fifth manuscript written in this dialect to be published. Miroshnikov's fascination with Coptic dialects lies at the heart of his Pro Futura project, entitled *The Neglected Dialects: A Study of the Manuscripts and Literature in Fayyūmic and Bohairic Coptic*.

## ABSTRACT

Studying ancient and medieval manuscripts is always a lot of fun, but sometimes also a serious challenge. When it comes to the literary manuscripts written in Coptic (the final developmental stage of the Egyptian language), the challenge is usually twofold. First, most of our manuscripts survive in fragments. Quite often the extant leaves of a parchment codex are scattered across a dozen of manuscript collections in Egypt, Europe, and North America, and even when digitally reunited they would still bear witness to a mere fraction of the original book. In such cases, a Coptologist's task resembles both detective work and the piecing together of a jigsaw puzzle (most of whose fragments are long lost). The second challenge lies in the great liberty with which Coptic scribes altered the text of their exemplars. Of course, the human heart is a mystery, and often we cannot know why our scribe decided to rewrite the text the way he did. Yet sometimes we can make a learned guess based on our understanding of Coptic literary culture, history of Egyptian Christianity, or even the inner logic of the text itself. Thus, during this interactive seminar, we will together look at three cases of textual fluidity. First, we will investigate various manifestations of divine wrath in the apocryphal *Preaching of Philip the Apostle*. Second, we will explore the reasons as to why Satan was banished from the heavens according to different versions of the *Martyrdom of Saint George*. Finally, we will take a look at a biblical manuscript from the Fayyūm, which makes a rather surprising change in the text of the apostle Paul's *First Epistle to the Corinthians*. In the handouts, you will find the texts into which we are going to take a deep dive. You do not need to prepare anything for the meeting, but feel free to skim the handouts if you have a few minutes to kill.